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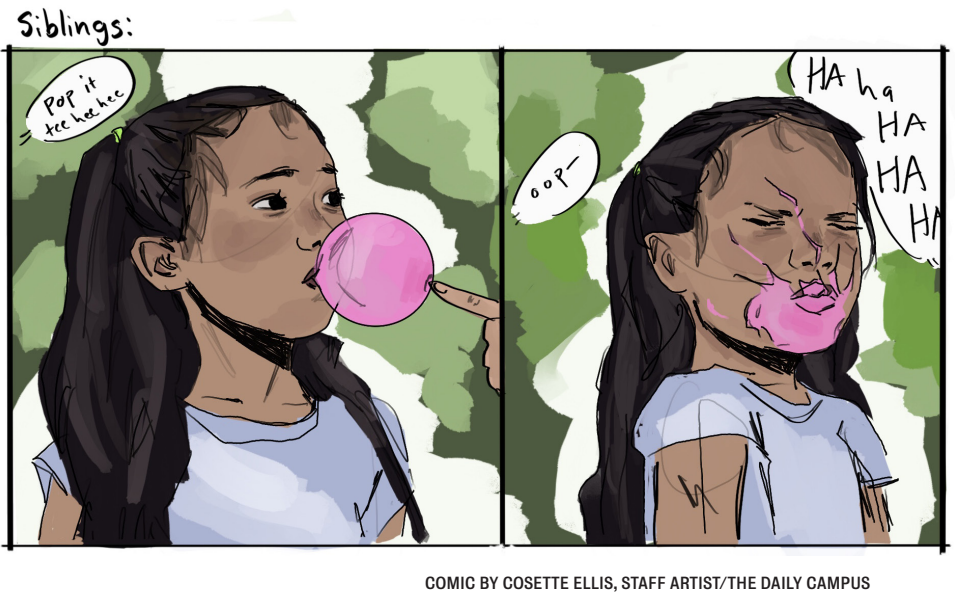
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UConn should do more to protect against ICE

by Nadav Asal
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Last week, students, faculty and staff received a one-sentence long official announcement titled, “Guidance on Potential Interactions with Immigrations Authorities” directing community members to a UConnToday article published that same day. The article is similarly brief, centered around a single infographic providing three simple steps should anyone encounter federal immigration authorities (ICE) on University of Connecticut campuses.

When encountering federal immigration authorities, the UConn administration recommends that UConn community members politely inform the agent that they are required to contact University Safety and kindly ask them to wait while they then call the safety number, which is the same phone number as the UConn police department’s standard dispatch phone number.

This announcement is the most recent codification of UConn’s half-baked, milquetoast policy to protect its campus community. Petrified by the mere possibility of federal retribution, the university has decided its best course of action is to throw its students, staff and faculty to the wolves, adhering to the idea that the “line of neutrality” is one that does anything other than push threat into the hands of those at risk and not the institution that should be protecting them.

As seen from its extreme violence nationwide, Immigration and Customs Enforcement encounters are often quick and chaotic. Their common practices do not include waiting for their targets to make a phone call. Agents are trained to assume their targets are dangerous “terrorists,” according to the federal government. In video evidence of ICE abductions, agents display a clear hostility towards those brandishing phones. In the case of Alex

Pretti this hostility resulted in murder.

It is ridiculous to ask those under threat of violence by a federal agent directed to ignore federal warrants to ask their attackers to politely wait for them to place a call. These policies are even more ridiculous for a campus that is home to The Dodd Center for Human Rights; established in honor of Thomas J. Dodd’s dogged pursuit of human rights in the wake of the Holocaust. I cannot imagine that Dodd would be enthused by UConn’s current approach. Would we ask Jewish people in Nazi Germany to ask for the SS to wait patiently while they informed their families, superiors, what-have-you of their impending abduction?

The UConn administration’s response to this exigent crisis has been far too little, far too late.

University administration refuses to identify private spaces on campus, saying that doing so would be impossible, yet in 2024 the administration had no issue with clarifying that an open air encampment was taking place on private property, using this as justification for the arrest of 25 students with the very same police force that UConn directs those at risk to contact in case of immigration enforcement’s arrival. The incompetence and administrative negligence is astonishing.

The university administration is more interested in protecting its financial investments than they are in protecting the very thing that keeps this institution standing: faculty, staff and students. An institution built on the good graces of faculty, staff and students does a grave disservice when they do not protect those very same people who allow it to flourish.

A firm stance with students, faculty and staff would be just the kind of “good press” that UConn craves; to take a stance and put their foot down against a tyrannical injustice circling ever closer, with ICE abductions

as close as Willimantic, Windham, and Eastford. The time for a firmer stance was yesterday. Yet university administration is paralyzed by their fear of retribution, a self-indulgent fear. Tyrannical federal authorities have larger things to contend with than the opinion of a flagship university in a blue state. Federal grants for research have already been cut. Visas for international students have already been revoked. There is nothing left to lose but dignity, and the UConn administration has misplaced even that in their mishandling of this situation.

The past year has made it more than clear that the UConn Administration is not interested in protecting its community; only lining its pockets. As residence halls fall into disrepair and class sizes swell, UConn has shown where its priorities lie: in achieving another “largest freshman class ever.”

With a backdrop of betrayal, outrage is only understandable, but outrage will not fix the problems UConn ignores. It is up to the people to stand with the people; to demand that the university take responsibility for those it employs and educates. If that plea is ignored, like it so often is, the power will lay where it always has, with the people.

We, the people, can identify private and public spaces on campus. We, the people, can form communities of solidarity and protection for those most at risk. We, the people, can identify ICE. We the people can impede their tyranny on our campuses. We, the people, keep us safe.

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Tomas Hinckley, the opinion editor at The Daily Campus is a member of the organization calling for the University of Connecticut to take a clearer stand against ICE; however, he did not edit or fact check the article

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