



USG Elections Overview: Who's running?

by Mikayla Bunnell
STAFF WRITER
SHE/HER/HERS
mikayla.bunnell@uconn.edu

The University of Connecticut Undergraduate Student Government (USG) elections are less than a week away. Students will be electing their new president and vice president, chief diversity officer and comptroller, as well as academic and multicultural and diversity senators. Voting opens on March 3 at noon and will close March 5 at noon on UConn.

So, who's running? The office of the president and vice president has two tickets this election: Joel Harris and Eliyahu Cohen, and Venice Montanaro and Keira Conrad.

Harris is a fourth-semester mechanical engineering student and currently serves as a senator for the College of Engineering according to his campaign Instagram page. He's also part of the UConn Honors Program and the Special Program in Law.

His running mate, Cohen, is a fourth-semester financial technology major. He currently serves as the Busby residential senator and is the founder and president of two student organizations, according to the campaign page: Connect.AI and UConn Financial Technology.

The two are running on the slogan "Leadership That Listens." They want to ensure that USG will collect input across campus with "open town halls, surveys and direct channels," according to their Instagram. They are seeking to provide more funding for Tier-II organizations and student activities.

"I'll transform USG into an organization rooted in transparency, fiscal responsibility, and student empowerment, one that truly works for you," Harris wrote in his candidate biography on the USG website.

Montanaro is running for USG president on the other ticket. She's a sixth-semester political science and sociology major and Latino studies minor. Montanaro started her student government career at the Stamford campus as a senator before becoming the Director of Special Events according to her campaign Instagram page. After moving to the Storrs campus, Montanaro became the Deputy Advocacy Director of Student Services, where she currently serves.

Montanaro's running mate, Conrad, is a fourth-semester political science and economics major. She served as a senator and then an Advocacy Coordinator, where she led the development of USG's free professional clothing closet, according to her campaign Instagram page. She currently serves as Deputy Director of the External Affairs Committee.

Together, Montanaro and Conrad are running their



The Undergraduate Student Government candidate debate was held on Feb 24, 2025. This debate gives students a chance to hear from candidates running for office in the upcoming USG elections. PHOTOGRAPH BY CONNOR SHARP, PHOTO EDITOR/THE DAILY CAMPUS

campaign on three principles: "Quality of Life, Affordability and Transportation and Safety," Montanaro's candidate biography said. According to their Instagram page, the two are looking to expand programs like Husky Harvest, promote financial literacy for students and start a learning community for transfer and campus-change students, among other initiatives.

There are two candidates for chief diversity officer: Syna Patel and Sadaf Zarei.

Patel is a fourth-semester political science major. According to her campaign biography, she has studied at UConn's Waterbury campus and abroad in Italy, which made her realize how "different and valuable each UConn experience can be," something she says student government should reflect.

If elected, Patel hopes to use her position to advocate for initiatives to make UConn more supportive and engaging "across campuses and experiences." She says she is looking to make UConn a more transparent and inclusive place.

Zarei is a sixth-semester economics and math major and an international student. If elected, she seeks to address the university's "absence of structured interfaith dialogue, the avoidance of serious civic debate and unclear access to legal or administrative support for students facing immigration or financial constraints," which she says harms students' academic performances.

"If elected, my focus will be execution: clear pathways to legal and advisory resources, forums that allow rigorous disagreement without penalty, and initiatives tied directly to academic and career outcomes," she wrote.

There are also two candidates for comptroller: incumbent William Lipinski and challenger Andrea Perez-Meneses.

Lipinski is a sixth-semester political science major and currently serves as comptroller. During his term, Lipinski has handled funding for Tier-II organizations, serving nearly 200 of them according to his

campaign biography. He has also maintained an "open door policy," often encouraging student leaders to reach out to him with funding questions.

"I ask you to re-elect me to the Comptroller position so that I can continue to be a voice for the students, but also so that I can continue meeting and supporting you all in the various, incredible clubs you create and events you hold," he wrote in his campaign biography.

Perez-Meneses is a fifth-semester economics major with a minor in financial analysis. She has been active in USG since she arrived at UConn, serving as an ACES senator and a multicultural and diversity senator. Currently, she serves as the engagement coordinator of the Senate.

If elected as comptroller, Perez-Meneses is looking to establish more transparency in the Tier-II funding process, according to her campaign biography. She wants to make financial decisions, appeals and processes easier through better communication and feedback.

"I'm a strong believer that student money should reflect student values, and with your vote I will make sure that your voice is heard," she wrote in her campaign biography.

Students can hear directly from these candidates at USG's annual debate on Monday, March 2 from 6 to 8 p.m. in the Student Union Theatre. Students will be able to hear the candidates dive deeper into their platforms and ask questions of their own. Pizza will be provided.

Though they won't be at the debate, students will also be able to vote for their academic and multicultural and diversity senators.

Running for College of Liberal Arts and Sciences academic senator positions are Zohaib Saleem, Layla Garner, Quinn Geier, Julia Petro, Aditi Hemant Thaker, Kayla DeLuca, Vishal Rampur, Ramin Mirzaee, Daphne Kam, Javed Ahamed, Adan Bernard and Debora St Surin.

Running for engineering senator positions are Harris, Larissa Chiarito, Auveen Beheshti, Raby Meelar and Dave Silvestri.

Gwyneth Dubail is running for fine arts senator. Laura Wagner is running for senator of the College of Agriculture, Health and Natural Resources, including the Ratcliffe Hicks School of Agriculture.

Running for multicultural and diversity senator positions are Perez-Meneses, Patel, Zarei, Kiara Kelly, Mirolla Boules, Vedika Patel, Damian Howson, Katherine Gutierrez and Ana Clara Apolinario.

For the candidates' biographies, visit the USG website.

CT Hall honors Rare Disease Day today

by Jenna Outcalt
NEWS EDITOR
SHE/HER/HERS
jenna.outcalt@uconn.edu

The Connecticut Hall dining facility is raising awareness for Rare Disease Day today led by Gabby DiSalvo, a student employee with myofibrillar myopathy. There will be a baked potato bar hosted by DiSalvo, and students can wear purple to show support, according to University of Connecticut Dining Services. DiSalvo, who originally pitched the idea to raise awareness for Rare Disease Day, is a senior at UConn with an individualized major. According to Dining Services, "her goal is to host her own cooking show to advocate for people with disabilities and rare diseases and to teach adap-



Gabby DiSalvo, Cooking on Wheels, preparing Butterfly Pea Tea for the Rare Disease Awareness Dinner at Connecticut Dining Hall. PHOTO COURTESY OF CONNECTICUT DINING HALL STAFF

tive cooking techniques."

Kian McEnerney, the student manager at CT Hall, said this was an opportunity to showcase how much DiSalvo contributes to the dining hall since she's usually "behind the scenes."

"People don't really see her contributions — it's definitely felt by the chefs and our cooking staff, but she's kind of like an unsung hero around here," McEnerney said.

DiSalvo, a wheelchair user, makes a cooking show with UConn Student Television called Cooking on Wheels, where she showcases accessibility-friendly cooking. She has also made multiple ap-

pearances on The Rachael Ray Show, according to a profile from UConn Today. The episodes, along with the most

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recent Cooking on Wheels video and more information, are on DiSalvo's Linktree.

DiSalvo is one of only three people with myofibrillar myopathy at birth, according to Dining Services. Most people with the disease develop symptoms around age 30 to 40. McEnerney said that her diagnosis is "not stopping Gabby from accomplishing what she wants to."

"There's a lot of mystique out there for what's truly going on, but Gabby doesn't let that stop her," McEnerney said.

DiSalvo described the myofibrillar myopathy as a "low-muscle tone condition that affects what she wants to" in her UConn Today profile. Although she works on an adjusted schedule at CT Hall, McEnerney said she is always ready to get involved and go above and beyond.

"We assign her to do things, and she takes everything with grace, just looking to do more all the time," he said.

Although Rare Disease Day takes place tomorrow, CT Hall is celebrating one day early to align with DiSalvo's work schedule. Student workers are asked to wear purple, DiSalvo's favorite color and a color often associated with disability advocacy, as well as jeans for "genes."

McEnerney noted that every dining hall is encouraged to wear purple clothes and jeans on Friday to show support, not just CT Hall.

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Connecticut Dining Hall. CT Hall will host Rare Disease Awareness dinner today.

PHOTOGRAPH BY NATHAN GALICINAO/THE DAILY CAMPUS



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