



USG MERIT workshops begin

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The University of Connecticut Undergraduate Student Government has begun its MERIT workshops, a program designed to support multilingual students. The program was piloted this semester by USG's Academic Affairs Committee. It's a two-hour pop-up program that runs in the USG lounge in the Student Union from 4:30 to 7 p.m. The first event was held on Wednesday. The next two sessions will be on April 8 and April 22, according to USG's Instagram. The first hour of the program is "faculty open hours," according to Deputy Director of Academic Affairs Isabella Norato. The second hour consists of workshops. Each MERIT session will focus on a different aspect of work-

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ISABELLA NORATO

place or academic culture. The first session of MERIT was focused on faculty communication, where UConn faculty "from diverse backgrounds will help multilingual students build confidence communicating with faculty and navigating U.S. academic expectations," according to USG's Instagram. It featured two UConn faculty members: Orlando Gonzalez, a graduate assistant for the learning community La Comunidad Intelectual, and Elva Morozco, an assistant professor of political science. The next workshop will focus on workplace culture. It's designed to help multilingual students find internships, research and career opportunities while helping them understand U.S. workplace expectations. The third and final workshop of the semester will be about identity and belonging. It'll be a space for students coming from diverse backgrounds to talk about their



Professor assisting a student in a lecture hall.

PHOTO COURTESY OF PEXELS.COM.

experiences and build community with one another. Norato said she was inspired to start the program after taking a class in Africana Studies, along with Academic Affairs Director Caroline Kelly. "[The professor] showed us research, basically saying that students experience racial slurs in the classrooms by their own professors," Norato said. "And I think hearing that, it changed my perspective a lot on how our campus is set up and, like, the culture of everything, and it made me want to do something about it." The workshops are meant to help students deal with any of this discrimination they might face in their classes. Norato said that options for students to deal with classroom discrimination can be limited, especially when it's a course that a student is required to take. "What do you do in that situation where you're experiencing discrimination? You can't drop the class... you need it to graduate. You need it for your major," Norato said. "Who do you really go to to talk about that?" Norato said another issue she's heard a lot from students learning English as a second language is that professors might think they are being rude in their tone or their words, but the student is really just translating as they're speaking. "For example, when you translate things from Spanish to English, it sounds different," Norato said. She and her older sister experienced living in Columbia and the U.S., while her younger sister was born and raised in the U.S. "When my mom, for example, speaks to us, I know she's not talking to me in an attitude, but when she speaks

English, she speaks in the structure of how she would speak in Spanish," Norato said. "That comes off rude to my little sister, and I had to explain to her, like, no... she's just translating as she's speaking." She said instances like this can make it scary for a student to talk to their professor and could result in them falling behind. Norato said she hopes that the program will attract students of all cultures and languages, not just Spanish-speaking students. "I want like, for example, the students of color...who are experiencing [discrimination] in their classroom. I want them to know they have resources here," she said. "I'm very big on multiculturalism, and to me, that's not just language. It's also major, it's also experiences, it's economic background." As an organization paid-for

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CAROLINE KELLY

directly by fee-paying Storrs students, Norato said USG has been looking for more opportunities to make students feel more comfortable in spaces like the USG lounge. She wants to host more events that would directly help the students. "They're repaying for all of this," she said. "It's made for them." While Norato is graduating this May, she hopes that this program will continue after she's gone. She said that Academic Affairs and USG are flourishing and already providing so much more for students. Kelly, the director of the committee, is in her sixth semester. She said that if she's still part of Academic Affairs next year, she hopes to partner more with the cultural centers and with the future chief diversity officer, and also wants to make MERIT a permanent feature. "USG is really passionate about embracing diversity and all the different groups that exist on our campus," Kelly said. "So hopefully, I think it's only up from here."



Man lecturing to a group of students.

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Ex-chief justice faces ethics questions over return to old case

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Former Connecticut Chief Justice Richard Robinson is facing ethics questions after joining a firm that he previously heard appeals from in the case Clinton v. Aspinwall, according to CT Mirror. Robinson sat on the panel that heard the first appeal in Clinton v. Aspinwall and took part in the court's internal deliberations about the case. After retiring from the court, he joined the law firm Day Pitney LLP, which represents the

of impropriety, even where no actual advantage would be gained," Paul Chill, a clinical professor of law emeritus at the University of Connecticut School of Law, wrote in an email. "Most states have a similar if not identical rule." The plaintiff, John Clinton, sued the other co-owners after they used their majority ownership to amend the company's operating agreement, maintain a \$3 million capital reserve and ultimately remove him as a member. Clinton claimed these actions breached the operating agreement and violated fiduciary duties owed to him.



Former Chief, Richard Robinson, on the bench for the last time.

PHOTO COURTESY OF HARTFORD BUSINESS ON FACEBOOK.

plaintiff in that same dispute. Robinson began working on a case again in 2024, despite having overseen the same matter two years earlier, as CT Mirror reported. The dispute involves co-owners of CCP Equity Partners, a private equity firm organized as a Delaware limited liability company. Billing records submitted by Day Pitney as court exhibits on Feb. 25 show that on Sept. 20, 2024, Robinson recorded three time entries on the bill for reviewing the case. According to CT Mirror, the defendants were preparing to submit their second appeal at that time. The defense is represented by West Hartford attorney Garrett Flynn's client, who is now asking a Superior Court judge to disqualify Day Pitney from the case and to order a hearing compelling Robinson to testify about how deeply he was involved, according to Hartford Business. According to Hartford Business, Flynn is arguing that Robinson's work violates Connecticut Rule of Professional Conduct 1.12, which generally bars a former judge from later representing a party in the same matter without all sides' informed and written consent, and that Robinson's knowledge of confidential deliberations gave Day Pitney an unfair advantage. "CT Rule 1.12 is a common sense conflict-of-interest rule that prevents a party to a lawsuit from gaining an unfair advantage by capitalizing on knowledge gained by the party's lawyer while earlier serving as a judge (or other neutral) in the same case. The rule also tends to increase public confidence in the courts by preventing any appearance

The central legal issue was how to interpret a "duty of care" clause in the operating agreement and whether language referencing bad faith, gross negligence or willful misconduct created affirmative duties for the company's managers or simply functioned as an exculpatory clause limiting their liability under Delaware LLC law. A jury initially ruled in Clinton's favor and awarded damages and attorney's fees, but the Connecticut Appellate Court and later the Connecticut Supreme Court reversed that outcome, con-



Logo of Day Pitney LLP.

PHOTO COURTESY OF DAY PITNEY LLP ON FACEBOOK.

cluding that the trial court had misinterpreted the operating agreement by treating the exculpatory language as if it imposed duties. Because the jury instructions were based on that incorrect interpretation, the courts determined the judgment could not stand, making the case an important precedent on how courts interpret operating agreements and liability provisions in LLC governance disputes.

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