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BELONGING from cover

Following the announcement, some students had concerns about the potential reasoning behind the office's name change.

"So, when it initially changed, it made me very worried because of the trends when it comes to higher education regarding DEI," senior Behavioral Neuroscience major Victor Constanza said. "I thought that Quinnipiac was either being pressured by the federal government or just capitulating so they wouldn't get targeted by them."

Following talks with the office, Constanza stated that they no longer had those concerns and cited shortcomings of the office's previous name.

"It was actually because the term inclusive excellence; no one knew what that meant," Constanza said. "They would talk to students, they would talk to parents, they would talk to faculty. No one knew what that meant. So, obviously, like any kind of inclusive office, they want to bring in people together, make sure that they feel good here.

This change was intended to reach more students around campus and clarify the office's position in the Quinnipiac community.

"We wanted to find something that would resonate with people that would be easy for someone to explain. Inclusive excellence really didn't support that," Armendariz said.

Armendariz stated the newly renamed office now has resources for Pell grant recipients, commuters, first-generation students and transfer students. In addition, Title IX is no longer a part of the office's services and has moved elsewhere.

Even with these new additions, the core principles and ideas behind the office have remained throughout this transition.

"I want to be clear: the office hasn't changed. We still do all the same work. We still have all of the same people," Mayo said.

Mayo stated that the use of the word 'belonging' painted a clear picture of what the office provides for students.

"We didn't get as many quizzical looks as people walked up when our sign said inclusive excellence because people needed an explanation of what that was," Mayo said. "Belonging was more colloquial, more understandable right from the outset."

While the new name may create clarity for some students, Constanza points out the need for students to interact with the office in order for it to have success.

"The issue with the office, and it's an issue that it's been for years, the office is underutilized," Constanza said. "It has a very low engagement rate for anything. So the real test is how can they provide services that can help students, especially marginalized students, to come to their office more and more."

Due to the Office of Belonging's new services for specific student categories, Armendariz projects greater usage of the office.

"I think we'll get busier as more people become cognizant that we're supporting these four additional groups," Armendariz said.

The changes in the Office of Belonging have already drawn in more commuter students, as they have gained a new resource from this transition.

"So more commuters are coming in because they now know there's an office that they can go to find support, whether it's issues with parking, whether it's issues with classes; they can come to a singular place and know there's someone here to support them," Armendariz said.

This academic year has marked a new chapter in the history of the Office of Belonging, which has extended its reach to new branches of the Quinnipiac population.

Quinnipiacs' donation to Hamden Public Schools keeps middle school sports funded for 2026-27 year

By AVA HIGHLAND
Managing Editor

Hamden Public Schools planned to cut the organized middle school sports program for the 2026-27 academic year, however, Quinnipiac University will fund the programs for the current year as part of its three-year pledge, per The New Haven Register.

The Hamden Legislative Council approved an approximate $103.9 million budget for the 2026-27 school year at a May 18 meeting. This includes an approximate $3.5 million deficit mitigation plan.

Part of that plan was to cut the sports programs at the middle school level.

"At the time, Superintendent Gary Highsmith said middle school sports would have to go, not knowing that Quinnipiac University's donation agreement concluded at the end of the 2025-26 school year," The New Haven Register reported.

Across Hamden Public Schools, the board of education had approved a deficit mitigation plan that included a reduction of "support for 7 leagues" in the amount of $200,000. The deficit mitigation plan was presented at a May 20 BOE meeting and approved in a May 26 meeting. The plan was approved prior to the realization that there was one more year left in Quinnipiac's donation agreement.

The school district is facing a $3 million budget shortfall for the 2026-27 school year and was recommended a budget of $107.49 million, as reported by the New Haven Register. In total, the schools received $2.75 million less than they had requested from the town as well as the Hamden Legislative Council.

In 2024, Hamden Public Schools faced similar issues, with plans to cut the middle school sports program due to funding restrictions. This is when Quinnipiac pledged to donate $48,000 to reinstate the programs.

During budget negotiations for the 2024-25 school year, the district planned to cut middle school sports after receiving $2.75 million less than they had requested.

"Quinnipiac University is proud to have provided funding— covering the 2024-25, 2025-26, and 2026-27 school years—to support Hamden's middle school sports program," John Morgan, associate vice president for public relations at Quinnipiac, wrote in a statement to The Chronicle. "This initiative has been an important way for Quinnipiac to help ensure continued access to athletics and the many benefits they bring to middle school students in Hamden."

Morgan also confirmed that 2026-27 is the final year in the commitment.

Following the news that the programs would continue for the current year, Hamden residents immediately took to a Facebook group, "Hamden Residents Unite." Residents shared gratitude for the university, but confusion toward the town.

Hamden resident Al Lotto shared the news once it broke from the New Haven Register.

"Suddenly the board of Ed has found a years worth of money, right??????," Lotto wrote.

"After they threatened to cut everything because they had no money! THERE IS ZERO TRANSPARENCY IN HAMDEN."

Other residents shared similar sentiments.

"How do the folks in charge lose track of this?" Hamden resident Jennifer Distasio Grady wrote.

While facing the lower than recommended budget, Hamden Public Schools made several other cuts in the district.

After receiving their budget, the Hamden BOE voted in favor of a plan that eliminated 38 full-time positions in the 2026-27 school year.

"These proposed reductions are a reaction. They're a reaction to the allocation that we received," Superintendent Gary Highsmith said at a May 20 Board of Education special meeting, according to The New Haven Register.



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Hamden Public Schools faces a budget shortfall of $3 million for the 2026-27 school, causing significant cuts across several departments .