

RWA makes waves on campus Page 2



Michael Jackson movie Page 4



From Ukraine to the U.S. Page 6

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School funding at risk over DEI policies

By Victoria Cruz
Contributor



PHOTO | NED GERARD/HEARST CONNECTICUT MEDIA

Charlene Russell-Tucker, Commissioner for the Connecticut State Department of Education, speaks during a public hearing in front of the State legislature Education Committee in Hartford on March 15, 2023.

In an April 3 memo, the U.S. Department of Education announced states have 10 days to return a certification assuring compliance with the current administrations' interpretation of federal civil rights law that rejects Diversity, Equity and Inclusion provisions. Otherwise, they risk losing federal funding.

While the letter does not in and of itself call for the immediate termination of DEI programs it highlighted the "discrimination" that comes with these programs.

"DEI programs that give preference to certain racial groups and teach students that certain racial groups bear unique moral burdens that others do not," according to the letter.

The administration has declared said practices to be discriminatory and failure to comply may result in the withholding of federal funding to K–12 schools.

As of April 7, a court filing that challenged the order has resulted in an agreement between the department and groups suing to pause enforcement until April 24 .

Some states such as Minnesota and New York have already announced they will not comply with the demands outlined in the April 3 memo. Connecticut has yet to take a firm stance on the issue.

The memo threatens to withhold Title I funding, which supports districts with a high percentage of low–income families.

While it is illegal for the U.S. Department of Education to withhold federal funding as a means of controlling states, it is unclear at this time what the scale of consequence for failure to comply will be.

Districts were encouraged to consult with legal counsel to prepare themselves for potential fallout.

Some critics have called on Connecticut to take a stronger stance in the matter.

"Title I funding is currently specific funding that aims to increase academic achievement within low–wealth areas regarding elementary and secondary education," Interim Vice President for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion at the university, Kelvin Rutledge said.

"This certification letter request does not impact colleges and universities in the same manner."

While these potential cuts do not directly impact colleges yet, they will have an implicit consequence, as many of our current and future students gained access to higher education through Title I programming.

"Colleges and universities will continue to track the ramifications of certification and investigate how it impacts our partner and feeder schools for admissions, enrollment and outreach programming," Rutledge said.

Biology major Wahid Chowdhury, a freshman, said that he worries about the impact the letter could have on his education.

"I come from that lower class and that money is very helpful," Chowdhury said. "I'd like to continue my education and that is a giant hinderance, a lot of people already can't afford education and we are losing talent."

Communication major Cassie Flanagan, a senior, said that she is thankful that Connecticut is one of the main supporters of retaining DEI programs and benefits for all students.

"I am concerned about what could happen but overall, I would be more worried if we were in a different state," Flanagan said.

"If there were potential state cuts to universities, each university across the CSCU system would develop a response plan. At Southern, we view diversity, equity and inclusion as assets to both the academic and outside of the classroom experience," Rutledge said.

The CSCU system legal team and university leadership are closely tracking relevant information that could impact operation.

While the university remains diligent in monitoring the situation and is prepared to implement strategies to combat any funding cuts that may detrimentally impact students, it is important for the campus community to stay informed.

Actively engaging with education policy updates and remaining thorough in understanding their potential effects can help ensure students and educators are prepared for any future developments.

Education Career Fair

By Victoria Cruz
Contributor



PHOTO | VICTORIA CRUZ

Students at the Education Career Fair in the Adanti Student Center on April 7.

On April 7, the Office of Educational Services hosted its third annual Education Career Fair. The event is a collaborative effort with the Career and Professional Development Center.

The OES office believes access to opportunities in education to be vital, thus eliciting the need for a stand–alone event outside of other industry fairs that happen throughout the semester.

"We know that current professional development does a number of industry fairs," Angela Todaro–Kraszewski, the current Director of Educational Services said. "But felt like education was unique enough that we wanted to make sure that we created a space for our students in the College of Education — who are looking for jobs, whether it's part–time or full–time."

Todaro–Kraszewski who is responsible for putting the event together, said that the main objective of the event is to connect students with potential employers for prospects beyond student teaching.

The offices' primary objective is to arrange placements for undergraduate and graduate education candidates in P–12 schools.

This is to fulfill their required clinical and field hours in regard to their student teaching.

These placements happen in districts all over the state of Connecticut.

Long–established districts and district partners are looking to the university to provide candidates eligible for hiring and placement.

One attendant, Gianna Ciarleglio, a school counseling graduate student, expressed her excitement and relief for this type of event.

"Job searching is like another job so when I saw this opportunity it was like everything's right at my feet," Ciarleglio said. "I felt like it was a perfect time to just come and like explore the different schools and different opportunities that are given to me through Southern."

Master of arts and teaching graduate student, Nic Page said that the event was a good opportunity to network with professionals.

"It's really nice to actually be able to come here and still branch out," Page said. "It's been a very positive experience you know got some contact information that I'm hopefully going to be able to use in the future."

The event has garnered a favorable response from students and employers.

"We get positive feedback from our employers and from our students," Todaro–Kraszewski said. "Word seems to have gotten out so we're seeing a nice flow of students and we see a lot of employers returning every year."

As the demand for educators continues to grow, events like the Education Career Fair serve as a crucial bridge between students and the professional world.

With dedicated support from the Office of Educational Services, students at the university are not only gaining access to valuable opportunities but are also being empowered to take the next step in their careers.

Whether seeking a full–time role or simply exploring options, the fair stands as a testament to the university's commitment to preparing future educators for success both inside and beyond the classroom.

Weekend van serivce brings students to local hotspots

By Brianna Wallen
News Editor

Students now have a new and convenient way to get off campus on the weekends. Thanks to a new collaboration with the Office of Residence Life, a van service now offers free transportation to three popular local destinations: Milford Post Mall, Union Station in New Haven and Hamden Plaza.

Available every weekend, the van service is designed to help students explore nearby areas, run errands or catch a train without needing their own vehicle.

"People who stay on campus over the weekend can go out and enjoy the city," Hannah Rosario, the Grad Intern of Neff Hall said.

Rosario said the van service, which launched this semester, started due to a need for transportation.

"We heard residents say we wanna go to this place," Rosario said. "So, I hope they get a great experience and begin to explore."

The van service replaces the old shuttle system that previously served students. It offers a more flexible way to travel off campus.

Rosario said she utilized the shuttle service her freshman year, so she is happy to see another form of transportation make a comeback.

"I got to go around and explore the area and not get cooped up in the area," Rosario said.

She encourages students to use the service as a way to discover New Haven beyond campus.

"They should see what it has to offer and get involved in their community," Rosario said.

Interdisciplinary studies major Priscilla Adebambo, a junior, said after seeing flyers of the van service she was immediately interested.

"This is something that my friends and I would definitely take advantage of because sometimes you just wanna get out of the dorms or get off campus and see what there is," Adebambo said.

Adebambo said this is a beneficial way for students to leave campus, especially for those who do not have cars.

"They're able to still get a sense of social life without the worry of additional cost," Adebambo said.

For students who have cars, the van service offers a convenient way to save on expenses.

"It's a good way to save gas money," nursing major Zach Fong, a freshman, said.

Rosario said the van service also provides students with an opportunity to explore local businesses in the area and, in turn, expand their experiences and knowledge.

"We're very fortunate where we were placed, we have some great stuff downtown,"

The service was created to improve student life and make off–campus resources more accessible. Rosario emphasized that since it is already covered by tuition, students should make the most of it.

"It can broaden your college experience and that's what you're here to do," Rosario said.

Whether students are interested in shopping, traveling or just looking for a change of scenery, the weekend van service offers a reliable and free way to get around.

Pickup and drop–off times are scheduled throughout the day, and spots are available on a first–come, first–served basis. Students can sign up in advance online via the provided link.



PHOTO | SOLÉ SCOTT

Van service flyer in Hickerson Hall Lobby on April 11.