

**University of Connecticut
Campus Appearance Committee
Summary Report
January 20, 2012**



Introduction

President Susan Herbst and Vice President Barry Feldman formed the Campus Appearance Committee to facilitate conversation and feedback for the administration. Twenty-one members of the University community (4 students, 8 faculty & 9 staff) were afforded the opportunity to have conversations centered around a strongly shared value of how the appearance of the physical campus should and does reflect the quality of our academic programs and pride in our University. The committee discovered that there is a widely shared, deeply heartfelt value for how the University appears. There is a belief that the appearance of the campus matters both internally and externally, but this value is one that is not often articulated.

Although the committee's focus was on the appearance of the campus environment, there was no diminishment of the importance of safety, accessibility, ecology and economy as values we hold in equal importance to aesthetics. This focus should not be limited to the Storrs campus but extend to the regional campuses as well.

This group engaged in a series of collegial meetings which generated rich discussions about the UConn campus. This report is a summary of ideas that were expressed during five meetings which occurred during the fall semester, 2011. It is intended to expand the conversation of the committee to include all members of the University. Recommendations for continuing this important work and discussion are detailed below.

Committee Charge

The charge to the committee defined four distinct tasks. The following report is organized to address these tasks. The original charge of the committee was as follows:

The Campus Appearance Committee fosters and encourages "ownership" of the campus generally, and specifically in the buildings and grounds in which students, faculty and staff live or work. Creating a sense of "ownership" includes but is not limited to:

- Advice on and supporting initiatives such as the Access Management Plan, especially in helping to develop a communications plan for Access Management;
- Recommend priorities for grounds maintenance actions, including an action list of cost effective priorities to enhance the campus appearance;
- Develop guidelines for appropriate placement of notices or flyers on windows, doors and hallways and encouraging a tidying of immediate work areas;
- Outline an education/communications plan to promote how the campus community can ensure that the appearance of our grounds and buildings reflects the quality of our academic programs. This education/communications initiative is critical to building an atmosphere of "ownership" of our campus.

Analysis and Recommendations

Advice on and supporting initiatives such as the Access Management Plan, especially in helping to develop a communications plan for Access Management;

Over the past two years the University has developed and is now in the process of implementing an Access Management Plan. This plan is designed to achieve the following five goals:

- Provide a safe, more vibrant campus.
- Reduce vehicular traffic on the campus.
- Preserve pedestrian corridors.
- Improve service and delivery processes.
- Preserve landscape and hardscape.

One central purpose of this project is an effort to control service access in the core portion of the campus. This is an important component of the ongoing Access Management effort to reconfigure access routes and parking locations for service and delivery vehicles. The project must also address several accessible parking locations throughout the campus that do not meet current standards. This project will address approximately twenty-two locations on the campus. Larger and more complex locations to be addressed include access to the Student Union from Hillside Road, access to the Library loading dock, Gentry/CUE area, and Auditorium Road will include relocation of site features. Others will merely require signs and roadway striping changes.

The majority of this project involves the placing of curbing, pavement and striping to create service parking spaces near buildings which require service or delivery access but do not currently have appropriate facilities. Other site improvements such as drainage, lighting or signage may also be needed in order for the facilities to work appropriately.

The committee reviewed this plan and wholeheartedly supports its complete adoption. There was particularly strong agreement about the importance of enhancing pedestrian safety as it relates to the movement of service and delivery vehicles. Given the huge impact of both University and non-university vehicles on campus appearance, there was also very strong support for dramatically limiting vehicular traffic on campus walkways as soon as possible. The committee recommends a communication campaign that includes public service announcements, training for University staff and appropriate discipline measures if necessary to achieve compliance.

In only two instances did the committee seek and achieve unanimous consensus. With regard to the access management plan the committee is making its only recommendation that relates to budgetary issues. The committee recommends that priority funding, in the amount of \$250,000 be made available to advance the implementation of the access management plan.

Recommend priorities for grounds maintenance actions, including an action list of cost effective priorities to enhance the campus appearance;

The committee dedicated a considerable amount of time to discussions that could be characterized as problem solving. Particular attention was paid to the blemishes of the appearance of the campus as well as omissions. There was considerable consensus developed regarding the priority of improvements but there was also a more general discussion about opportunities. In particular, the committee discussed opportunities for learning, student engagement and for creating notable destinations in the campus landscape.

Cost Effective Recommendations

Cost efficiency is defined herein as producing optimum results for the expenditure of time and financial resources. Therefore, the following series of recommendations are considered to be cost efficient in relationship to the relative improvements that would be created.

1. The committee unanimously supports the immediate elimination of the temporary structures in the center of campus known as Mobile Building #1 and Mobile Building #2. The committee discussed what we consider to be the core destinations of our campus. With the historic area formed by the Benton Art Museum, Wilbur Cross Library and Wood and Hall Dorms as being the most significant to our campus' heritage. Generations of UConn students have now passed through our campus without the benefit of enjoying the unobstructed use of the green spaces that are intended to surround this heritage area of campus. To quote one of the faculty members of the committee: "we should use the most pejorative language possible to communicate this recommendation."
2. The cataloging and systematic evaluation of the existing "desire paths," for the purpose of eliminating or creating a permanent path. Desire paths are the ruts created by the erosion from foot traffic. They are often the shortest distance between two desired points. Priority should be given to those paths that have been created around the Fairfield Way area of campus. Perhaps other areas where there are paths that do not save much distance or time for pedestrians might be marked with low fences to encourage walkers to stay on the paths.
3. The launch of a communications campaign to encourage the proper disposal of cigarette butts. Cigarette butts are the single largest object of litter on campus. Instead of the more Draconian idea of adopting a no smoking policy for all of campus, the committee recommends an effort to have students design a more useful and attractive ash urn.
4. The immediate evaluation and repair of the stairs behind Garrigus Suites leading to the Field House. This is a key pedestrian transportation corridor for students; its disrepair is unsightly and constitutes a safety hazard.
5. The removal and/or repair of the chain link fence along Stadium Road with particular attention to removing the very "un-university" like barbed wire. The use of chain link fence as a permanent structure should be discouraged whenever possible.
6. To engage the town of Mansfield to work collaboratively with the University to improve signage on Rt. 195, creating a more welcoming and effective wayfinding communication.
7. The enhancement of the parking, outdoor seating and wayfinding signs in the vicinity of The Dairy Bar. The Dairy Bar is a recognized destination point on our campus for both the community and our guests.

8. The enhancement of the Fine Arts Complex. The areas around the Fine Arts Complex should be artful and energetic; currently it is stark and landlocked in a sea of asphalt and concrete. With Storrs Center coming on-line in 2012, our University fine arts spaces should be inviting and welcoming. This should include tree plantings consistent with the Landscape Master Plan.
9. The designation of places scattered around the campus whereby former students, faculty and staff may be honored with “living gifts.” These park-like areas could be enhanced with seating.

Learning Landscape

There was considerable discussion about how the landscape of the campus can be actively integrated with learning. For example the campus’ wonderful specimen tree collection is actively used for classroom instruction. The following are some additional activities that were recommended by students and faculty for how the curriculum can extend into the landscape.

1. A significant contributor to the achievement of learning outcomes can be active and experiential community service opportunities that extend the classroom. Community Service opportunities for classes and student organizations are abundant in the landscape. We recommend that facilities staff provide support in both identifying and equipping opportunities for outdoor campus community service projects.

The centerpiece for fostering this initiative could be reviving the Campus Service Day concept which engages the entire campus community in clean-up projects across academic, residential, and common areas. Historically, UConn students held clean up days each spring which included removing debris, raking fields, and re-seeding areas. Today’s students are eager to contribute and demonstrate their UConn pride.

2. The opportunities to challenge students with design projects that would both enhance the landscape and create a powerful sense of ownership and belonging are plentiful. The committee would strongly encourage the inclusion of students in all design opportunities; these could include everything from the aforementioned development of ash urns to the creation of canvases to adorn construction fencing.
3. Two examples of student initiated projects that were brought to the attention of the committee are noteworthy opportunities for expanding the learning landscape. The students in Ecohouse have suggested the creation of an edible landscape in the area surrounding their residence hall as an opportunity to teach and learn about an ethos of sustainability. The students are recommending the use of plant materials that could provide them with direct sustenance but also engage the broader student community. The second example was provided by the student organization, UNESCO Ambassadors. They have imagined a labyrinth as an opportunity for introspection and meditation by members of the community. The committee highly recommends that opportunities be created for students to engage in the discussion and creation of public art.
4. Every opportunity should be sought to create outdoor rooms through the use of landscape and architecture. Students have remarked that moving classroom discussions and small group projects into the sunlight are memorable moments of their college education.

Creating Notable Destinations

There was a discussion of future projects that could create more notable destinations that require long term resource planning and design.

1. A more identifiable entrance to the UConn campus for those arriving northbound on Rt. 195.
2. A plan for all heritage and historical structures that are currently not in active use. Most notably the former faculty houses on Gilbert Road.
3. The surrounding area south of the Lodewick Visitors Center needs to be enhanced to create a more memorable visual impression for prospective students and their families as they arrive on their initial visit to campus.
4. Several geographical areas of concern were identified by the committee, including the intersection of Auditorium and Hillside Rd – this is the ugly eroded slope in front of Jorgensen that welcomes thousands to campus each year, the area around the Whetten building, the area behind Ratcliff Hicks, Kinghill Road and the area near the Math/Science Building (Gant Complex).

Develop guidelines for appropriate placement of notices or flyers on window, doors and hallways and encouraging a tidying of immediate work areas;

The committee is recommending the formation of a separate group to address the issues raised in this charge. That group should not only evaluate the policy for posting but should engage in a broader discussion similar to this committee regarding furniture, painting, and conditions of the interior of the buildings. Currently the University has posting policies in specific departments (the Library, School of Business & Residential Life) which could be adapted for the broader campus.

Outline an education/communications plan to promote how the campus community can ensure that the appearance of our grounds and buildings reflects the quality of our academic programs. This education/communications initiative is critical to building an atmosphere of “ownership” of our campus.

The committee believes that through a series of communications initiatives, we will:

- Inspire and encourage the University community to be active participants in shaping campus aesthetics.
- Enact educational/outreach programs to inform students, faculty and staff about upcoming construction, maintenance, and safety projects.
- Provide mechanisms for the campus community to report concerns and make suggestions.
- Elevate the level of expectations as well as our response to and accountability for campus concerns.

Specific Communication Tactics

1. Include presentations for students and staff that provide audience members with information about the University's history, traditions and achievements. The presentations should be included in venues such as New Student Orientation, staff and faculty orientation programs, and First Year Experience courses. A common theme of the sessions would be "how to be a Husky," an introduction to acceptable campus behaviors.
2. Develop a Public Service Announcement (PSA) campaign to raise awareness and encourage efforts to keep the campus clean and people to stay on the sidewalks. Communications efforts will include videos, posters, bus ads, signage, email, Jorgensen LED sign, banners, UConn Today, The Daily Campus, and Student Union Theater ads.
3. Tie school spirit and campus aesthetics together with creative slogans and messages.
4. Organize competitions/events which illustrate how beauty is all around us. Examples could be photos or drawings of campus which are displayed on the monitors in the Student Union that tie in with a slogan such as *"Your UConn. My UConn. Our UConn."*
5. Celebrate "coming attractions" by erecting temporary signage to build awareness of planned capital transformations. For example, University planners have scheduled a makeover of the Whetten courtyard. Installation of "Coming Soon" sign with architectural drawings informs the campus community that the problem area is recognized as a concern, corrective actions and what they can look forward to seeing in the future.
6. Camouflage unsightly areas (construction zones, vendor trailers, garbage sites, electrical transformer farms...) with "dressed up" fencing or permanent visual barriers that are aesthetically pleasing. Instead of using construction grade fabric to cover temporary fences, use designs with illustrative messages that support campus beauty, instilling a sense of UConn pride.
7. Create a process which provides a place for people to submit help requests/photos and a 72-hour response to the submissions for assistance.
8. Use technology to promote beautification initiatives such as a website (similar to <http://www.umass.edu/myfavoritesplaces/> or a Foursquare check-in for beautiful or favorite places).
9. Reward student organization or departments which support beautification efforts (through planting of trees, decorative planters, flowerbeds...) with recognition on community announcement boards (websites), notes on The Rock, on the Jumbotrons at athletic events, and through articles in The Daily Campus and Today websites.
10. Conduct bi-annual evaluations of the path tour guides use and identify trouble spots which are seen by prospective students and their families.
11. Develop a UConn website link to the various elements that promote UConn features e.g., Union Events, Jorgensen events, the campus tree walk, the sculpture walk, the shows at the Benton or the Museum of Natural History.

Conclusion

The committee appreciates the time that President Herbst and Vice President Feldman have provided us to consider this important campus value. The collegial discussions were rich and engaging exchanges that affirmed the strong sentiment the UConn community has for the appearance of our campus. We sincerely hope that our work will help enlarge the pride and care that we collectively share for our place. We believe that our campus is a “notable destination” in the life of our students, faculty and staff. It is and should be a place that we excitedly anticipate arriving for the first time, and every day thereafter.

Raising expectations and a stronger sense of shared accountability are ultimately the most desired outcomes of this committee. One of the most valuable aspects of the committee was the interaction between the folks that have the job to maintain and improve our campus with members of the general university community. This dialogue and sharing is worthy of a more permanent forum. We recommend that the following suggestions would continue to support the work of the committee:

1. Form a 4-6 member Campus Appearance Working Group to work directly with a designated staff person to assist with the implementation of the Campus Appearance Committee’s recommendations.
2. Schedule re-occurring dialogue with representatives from construction, maintenance and safety departments with the campus community so that questions and concerns can be actively addressed.

Committee Members

First	Last	Title
Salina	Abid	Senior/Nutritional Sciences
Greg	Anderson	Distinguished Professor, Ecology & Evolutionary Biology
Maureen	Armstrong	Executive Assistant, Residential Life
John	Armstrong	Assistant Director of Operations, Residential Life
Mark	Brand	Professor, Plant Science and Landscape Architecture
Richard	Brown	Distinguished Professor, History
Michael	Dietz	Assistant Extension Professor in Residence
Dan	Doerr	Assistant to the Vice President for Student Affairs
Katie	Histen	Senior /Exercise Science
Steve	Kremer	Assistant Vice President for Student Affairs (Committee Chair)
Brett	Lehner	Senior/Individualized
Dave	Lotreck	Manager, Building Services
Meg	Malmborg	Executive Program Director, University Communications
David	Martel	Director, University Communications
Sarah	Oravec	Senior/Individualized
Hans	Rhynhart	Captain, UConn Police Department
Carl	Salsedo	Extension Educator, Sustainable Landscapes
Kristen	Schwab	Associate Professor, Plant Science and Landscape Architecture
Bill	Wendt	Director, Transportation, Logistics and Parking
Mark	Westa	Associate Professor, Plant Science and Landscape Architecture, and Landscape Architect, Architecture and Engineering Services (AES)
Mark	Zurolo	Associate Professor of Design