



## METAS: Connecting Latino Students to UConn

### Of Special Interest

The ACUI regional conference is being hosted by UConn this year and will be held in the Student Union November 17-19.

By Jackie Guzmán

Last year, the Puerto Rican/Latin American Cultural Center (PRLACC) created a new and exciting peer mentoring program! The METAS (Mentoring, Educating, and Training for Academic Success) Program is designed to assist first-year and transfer Latino students with their college transition by pairing them with a peer mentor who provides guidance and support.

In the program, new students (mentees) learn about resources and opportunities at UConn, attend educational, cultural, and social events, and meet other students who are going through the same experience. This program

is also great for existing students (mentors). Peer mentors have the opportunity to interact and work closely with UConn students, faculty, and staff; gain valuable experience in leadership; earn 3-credits toward degree requirements through coursework; develop skills in interpersonal communication; and build friendships with other students who are committed to the same goals in helping students succeed.

METAS establishes a sense of community where students unite with the purpose of learning new things, establishing connections, and making new friendships. According to

Brandon and Brian, two mentees who entered the program this year, they enjoy the program because it gives them a chance to meet students prior to arriving at UConn and allows them to feel united to the Latino community on campus. "The program is a great stepping stone to get started at UConn as a freshman" says Brian. When asked about their plans for the future, both students are on the lookout for an application to be a mentor for next year. Recruitment and mentor selection is held in the spring semester. For an application, you can drop by PRLACC or download it from our website at [www.latino.uconn.edu](http://www.latino.uconn.edu)

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## Message from the Director

By Monica Rudzik



*Megan Vesce, president of SUBOG, addresses the crowd during the Rededication ceremony.*

What a glorious day! The Rededication and Ribbon Cutting ceremony for the Student Union was held on October 21, a perfectly gorgeous autumn day. I want to thank everyone who participated in the program and readied the building for this historical event. I think everyone will agree that it was indeed a special day, from the opening of the Doug Bernstein Game Room to the SUBOG Alumni Dinner.

I was reminded many times throughout the day just how special the Student Union has been and will be to the UConn community. There were so many highlights during this extraordinary day but I really do want to focus on just two.

I was very fortunate to be seated with some true veterans of SUBOG and the Student Union during dinner. About half way through my salad, I had the idea to run to my office and retrieve some pamphlets out of the archives, dating back to the late 1950's. Sure

enough, several of my dinner companions found themselves pictured in those historical student union brochures. It was so heart-warming to hear as they began to share their stories from almost fifty years ago – special events, traditions, appropriate attire for the day, etc. I was completely struck by how meaningful the Student Union was and still is to each one of them. And I was overwhelmed with the sense of responsibility I felt to continue this legacy of community and connection.

My second highlight was also during dinner. Dr. Lee Williams, Dean of Students, delivered a keynote address that was probably one of the best I've ever heard regarding the role of a student union on campus. With her permission, I'd like to share one of my favorite passages with you:

*This building will evolve every day, every year. A true union can never be complete, can never be complacent. It has to be a*

*living, breathing thing, a symbol of what is best about us. It is a place that holds echoes of the past, of all those who've walked through its doors already and it's been given to us at this moment in its history. Our job is to hold it in trust for those who haven't even arrived here yet. And that's the best that a union can be—an idea that connects us, right now, to those who've walked its floors, looked out its windows, been embraced by its energy, and to those who will come after us and reshape it, improve it, care for it, and leave it in trust for those who are on their way.*

I don't think anyone has ever said it better. I'm looking forward to working with UConn students, SUBOG and all our building partners to continue this evolution. I hope each of you is creating your own memories of this special place every day.

## This Husky is Here to Stay!

By Colleen Ruppert



The winner of the Husky Dog Decorating Contest, Katie Soltys stands with her winning dog titled "UConn Dairy Bark" at its unveiling in the Student Union Food Court. The husky dog will be on

permanent display. Katie's inspiration was UConn's famous Dairy Bar. The bottom half of the body is an ice-cream cone topped with UConnfetti ice-cream, symbolizing 125th

anniversary flavor, and hot fudge tops it all off! Katie received a check for \$125 as a reward for her creative work!

## Let the Games Begin!

By Colleen Ruppert

During the week prior to the opening of the Game Room, the movement of our staff in the room and the gradual addition of games led to the increased curiosity of many students. While setting up the room, students were constantly knocking on the doors and windows asking when they could come in. Needless to say, the students were excited for the new addition to Union Street!

The Game Room opened on Saturday, October 21. It is named in honor of Doug Bernstein, a 1985 graduate of UConn and a former SUBOG President and McCullough Award winner. Doug and his wife Melissa made a \$100,000 gift to the Student Union which will endow a student leadership program beginning next January. The Game Room features four arcade video games, an air hockey table, a

foosball table, and a TV with DVD player to be used with the DVD board games. In addition to those, there are also many different popular board games that students can play in the room or check out for a day to play elsewhere. All games in the Game Room require a UConn ID and are free to UConn students through the end of the semester.



*"Doug and his wife Melissa made a \$100,000 gift to the Student Union which will endow a student leadership program beginning next January."*

## Why Are We Here?

By Colleen Ruppert

What is it about working with college students that makes it all worth while? Because I am currently studying in UConn's Higher Education and Student Affairs (HESA) program, I am continuously considering this.

During one of my classes Dr. Christine Wilson, Director of Student Activities, spoke to us about the basic principles behind Student Activities on a college campus. It struck me when she pointed out the natural need for people to socialize. I found this to be so logical but something that I had not really thought about.

As we grow up our most memorable times are those spent with others, both friends and family. It is from the people we interact with that we learn the most about the world and ourselves. In the work we do every day we are creating environments where students can build new memories and feel comfortable to experience those important interactions. If college only consisted of going to class and studying, students would miss out on a huge component of their learning during such an important time in their lives.

Knowing that we can help students even in the smallest ways is why each of us continues to come to this building every day. In the short time that I have been on this campus I have seen the making of many memories, and it is because of that I know I am in the right place, helping the right population. When I reflect on my time working with students and see the many memories and learning moments of my own, I can be thankful for our innate need to be social. Without that we all might be out of a job!



## The Positives about Negativity

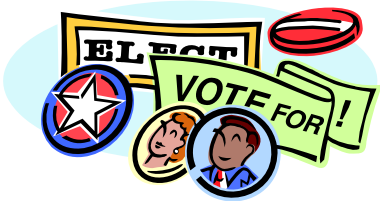
By Bobin Forapples

You see constant ads today immortalizing and demoralizing candidates for political offices. What strikes me as interesting is how easy it is to believe them. They criticize their opponent then explain how great they themselves are. They all do it, but where were they before the elections? I've never seen any ads on what they're actually doing in office; it's just during

election time. At this point, it looks like all of them are corrupt. Each of them tells how the other was taking bribes or spending our money on trips for themselves. So how could I vote for either?

I've heard people say "I'm going to vote for so-and-so because he looks like a nice guy." Are you kidding me? Has it gotten to a point where we rely

on the most basic form of observation and what a person looks like is how we judge them? I see why there are many people who do not vote. I'm not saying that's the right way but, boy, are our options limited. I'm thinking that maybe I should learn more about the candidate's political positions, but, nah, forget it, that's too hard. I'll just vote for the guy with the best hair.



## Chatting with a Rainbow Center Student

By Colleen Ruppert

As I entered the Rainbow Center, I was excitedly greeted by Allen Burton, the student working at the desk. Allen is a junior here at UConn majoring in English. He has been working in the center since August. I had a chance to ask Allen some questions to get to know him a little better.

### What do you like best about working here?

*I love that it's such a great community. I love the other employees and that I get to be active on campus. And I love my boss Stephanie Marnin!*

### What other activities or organizations are you involved in?

*I'm the executive chair of Queers United Against Discrimination (QUAD) and a member of the Vice Presidential Leadership Cabinet. I'm also involved in Allies & Queers Undergraduate Association (AQUA).*

### What do you want to do once you graduate?

*I have no idea where life may take me. I could get a job or go to grad school; I just don't know. I do know I want to travel!*

### If you could travel anywhere, where would you go and why?

*I would want to go to Europe; Spain, Italy, France – backpacking around to all the countries.*

### What is something that most people wouldn't know about you?

*In my senior year of high school I won the Mr. Avon High School pageant. I have a crown and a sash!*



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***See you at the U!***