

Home > News > A change in UConn's drug-enforcement policy may be on the horizon

News

# A change in UConn’s drug-enforcement policy may be on the horizon

By **Alison Cross** - March 31, 2021

413 0

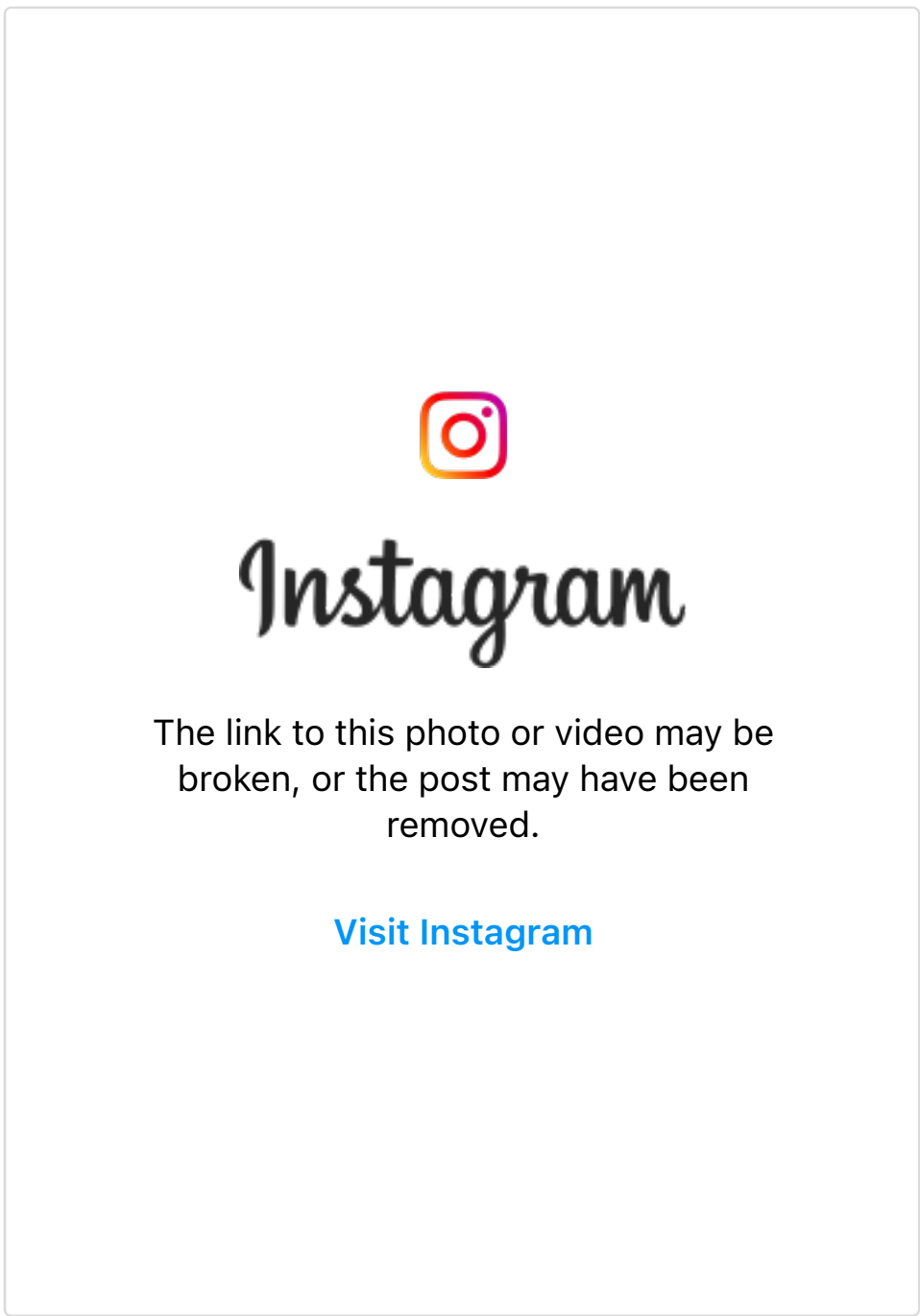


The University of Connecticut Police Department, Residential Life and Undergraduate Student Government are discussing modifications to the university's cannabis-enforcement policy, according to USG and UCPD representatives.

The new proposal would limit UCPD's interaction with students suspected of possessing cannabis in residence halls say USG legislators.

In a 16-3-2 vote last week, the USG Senate passed new legislation titled “[Cannabis Enforcement by Residential Life and the UConn Police Department](#),” which opposed the current policy that requires Resident Assistants to call the police when they suspect cannabis use. The new legislation instead favors a reduced police presence similar to how residential life handles alcohol violations.

“UCPD should not be called to or enter student residences where the danger of imminent harm is not present,” the legislation read. “USG calls on the UConn Police Department and the Department of Residential Life to work in collaboration with students to design a cannabis enforcement policy that minimizes the involvement of UCPD in areas under the jurisdiction of Residential Life.”



UCPD Deputy Chief Andrew Fournier said that the department had several conversations with Residential Life and UConn students about changes to cannabis enforcement.

“While no policy changes have been put into effect, we will also continue to engage our partners in Residential Life to help support their approach to the handling of cannabis within residence halls,” Fournier said. “UConn Police are interested in examining the issue further in the coming months and will continue towards a sensible approach, especially in light of proposed changes to state law. Additionally, we continually examine the best way to serve the community and balance our services with students and their needs.”

University Spokesperson Stephanie Reitz said that UConn supports Fournier’s comments on UCPD’s approach. Reitz said that the current cannabis-policy abides by the law and the Student Code of Conduct.

“UConn asks its RAs to report possible marijuana use because it is a violation of current state and federal law, and because students agree in their housing contract to follow the Student Code of Conduct, which prohibits possession and use of illegal drugs,” Reitz said.

Resident Assistant Willow Yang, a fourth-semester finance and Chinese double major, said that she supports USG’s proposed policy change.

“Generally, I agree with having less police involvement,” Yang said. “[We] call the police, wait for them to show up then 99% of the time they can’t locate a [cannabis] source, and they have to walk away. It seems like a waste of time and energy on both the RA and the police.”

The Daily Campus contacted Executive Director of Residential Life Pamela Schipani for an interview but Schipani declined.

With the new USG Senate support, talks on policy revisions will continue between USG, UCPD and Residential Life. Vice President-Elect Ethan Werstler, a sixth-semester political science and communications double major and co-author of the USG cannabis bill, said that proposals include creating drop boxes where students can deposit cannabis and other substances.

*“WE’RE NOT TALKING ABOUT LEGALIZATION, WE’RE NOT TALKING ABOUT DECRIMINALIZATION. SAY I GET CAUGHT WITH CANNABIS IN MY DORM ROOM, THERE WILL STILL BE REPERCUSSIONS. WE’RE NOT TRYING TO CHANGE THAT,” WERSTLER SAID.*

A few senators opposed the bill, including current USG President Michael Hernandez, a sixth-semester political science and economics double major, citing safety and legal concerns.

“We’re not talking about legalization, we’re not talking about decriminalization. Say I get caught with cannabis in my dorm room, there will still be repercussions. We’re not trying to change that,” Werstler said.

President-Elect Mason Holland, a fourth-semester political science major and bill co-author, said that he was caught with cannabis his freshman year.

“I saw very quickly the discrepancy in how alcohol and marijuana are dealt with. I was with two of my friends and when the police were called there ended up being six police officers in the dorm room, they ended up bringing a dog, and there were about three to four RAs in the hallway,” Holland said.

Holland and other USG members said that such interactions with police are anxiety-inducing, especially for students of color who fear violent interactions with the police. He said that this is an opportunity for students to collaborate with the UCPD to create a cannabis enforcement policy that is equitable, safe and effective.

“The goal of this legislation is to open the door for more meaningful ways in which Residential Life and the Public Safety sector of UConn can deal with cannabis and make sure that it is safe,” Holland said. “To be clear, we are not saying that we believe every student should smoke, we are not saying UConn should legalize [cannabis], all we are saying is we believe that UConn should not send police officers to deal with nonviolent cases in which students are using cannabis.”

TAGS Residential life UCPD USG

Like 0



Previous article

Women’s Basketball: Huskies hold off Lady Bears late, headed to 13th straight Final Four

Next article

Carson’s Commentary: Mr. President, please enforce our immigration laws



Alison Cross

RELATED ARTICLES

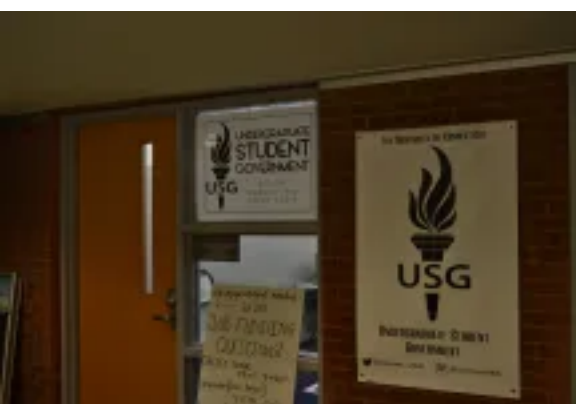
MORE FROM AUTHOR



Track Star Sha'Carri Richardson Visits UConn: Mental health & being a Black female athlete



Examining Disparities in Public Health Through the Social Lens: ‘Separate but Unequal’ with the Justice Now initiative



USG Sustainability Subcommittee back again for student activists



Leave a Reply

Enter your comment here...