

Demand for Abortion Access and Obstetrician-Gynecologist at the University of Rochester

UR Students for a Democratic Society & UR College Feminists

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I. Introduction

UR SDS is an association of the student left at the University of Rochester. We aim to win a new society free of racism, sexism, heterosexism, classism, authoritarianism, war, and ecological devastation by instilling democratic values throughout campus. We seek to achieve a truly participatory society, consisting of liberatory institutions in all spheres of social life.

The purpose of the University of Rochester College Feminists is to educate the university community about comprehensive feminist issues to encourage activism on campus and beyond. In doing so, we discuss gender identity and gender-based issues, in the context of how gender intersects with race, culture, sexuality, and other marginalized experiences. We aim to enhance the campus community by raising awareness of intersectionality, inclusivity, diversity, and equity.

II. Overview of the Issue

Abortion procedures are fully legal in the state of New York, but the same cannot be said for the rest of our country. Restrictions surrounding abortions vary from state to state.

In June of 2022, the U.S. Supreme Court overturned the Roe V. Wade decision, opening the door for several “trigger bans” to take effect in states such as Idaho, Tennessee, and Texas, which effectively banned abortion in these states. Abortion procedures are life-saving healthcare

for many people, and life-changing for others. SDS and CF believe that access to abortion is an inalienable right, and that no individual should ever be separated from their bodily autonomy.

The NYS gubernatorial election of 2022 was a period of stress for college healthcare and healthcare in general. The fate of abortion access hinged on Governor Hochul's re-election, and even after she was re-elected, her support for abortion rights is questionable, especially following her nomination of Hector LaSalle for the position of Chief Justice on the New York Court of Appeals, a judge notably criticized for his stance on abortion and support for "crisis pregnancy centers." While New York laws currently uphold abortion rights, a judiciary opposed to abortion rights can easily overturn existing legislation. Even though LaSalle's nomination ultimately failed, the point that precautions need to be taken to protect abortion access still stands.

III. Abortion Access on Campus

Following the Dobbs decision, the University of Rochester released a statement detailing the continued support of legal abortion by UR Medicine. Despite this, for students on the University of Rochester campus, getting an abortion is not a simple process.

Currently, the University Health Service does not employ an Obstetrician-Gynecologist, and for abortion-related care, students are referred to clinics out in the Greater Rochester Community such as Trillium or Planned Parenthood, which are not easily accessible for all students. Furthermore, UR's lack of an OBGYN places undue stress on the other medical care systems in place within the greater Rochester area. For emergencies, Strong is available as a resource for OBGYN-related problems. However, UHS is a medical resource on campus where students can access care much more easily. Unfortunately, because of the lack of specialized

services available, and the difficulty scheduling appointments at the clinic, UHS is underutilized by the student body.

As the host institution of a former ACHA president and current chair of the ACHF (Dr. Ralph Manchester) the University of Rochester should be serving as an example for other institutions when it comes to on-campus healthcare. Abortion and gynecological care are services that are currently under fire across the United States, and we believe that if the University takes a strong stance early on, other institutions across the country will follow suit in providing better abortion and gynecological care for their student populations.

IV. Our Demands

i. Free abortion care on River Campus:

a. Hiring of an OB/GYN *and/or* REMS certification of a UHS Primary Care

Provider: SDS and College Feminists are calling for the hiring of an obstetrician-gynecologist to work at UHS. The presence of an OB/GYN on campus is a reasonable demand, given that 52% of the undergraduate student population is female, non-binary, or trans men. (IPEDS, 2021) This will only become a more pressing issue as the undergraduate population at the University continues to grow. If this demand is not feasible, at least one UHS Primary Care Provider should be REMS certified.

b. Obtain any necessary equipment *and/or* funding: We expect the University of Rochester to supply UHS with equipment and funding necessary to provide free abortion care on campus. Suggestions to fiscal concerns that arise may include

reallocating funding from DPS, sports programs, or other expressly unnecessary expenses in the name of expanding healthcare for the student body.

- c. Require the Provider(s) be trained to provide gender-inclusive care:** We expect the University to provide menstrual services to students regardless of gender identity. Despite the fact that the University of Rochester prides itself on diversity and inclusivity, numerous students have reported bad experiences with the current UHS physicians while dealing with their menstrual health. Everyone should be able to trust their healthcare provider, so we must ensure that any new staff will be capable of providing health services while simultaneously being inclusive to students all across the gender spectrum.
 - d. Ensure all abortion procedures remain confidential:** We expect that all abortion related healthcare maintain reasonable anonymity including, but not limited to, information released to insurance providers that could put students at risk of greater harm.
- ii. Free and confidential emergency contraceptives:** We expect the University of Rochester to revise current access to contraceptives to provide all students with free and confidential methods of contraception. This means, waving the current co-pay and ensuring that students will have their privacy protected including, but not limited to, information released to insurance providers.
- iii. Transparency in the prospective hiring process:** Lastly, we expect the University of Rochester to be completely transparent about the process they undertake to hire an OB/GYN, and we expect that members of the student body will be involved in the decision. In a similar fashion to the UR Student Health Advisory Committee, we suggest that the hiring process put the

candidate(s) through at least two rounds of student interviews with three students each, the students for which would be selected by the Students' Association Government.

V. University Response

We expect all recipients of this document to read through our demands carefully, and to take each of them seriously. We are asking that the University responds to this call-to-action by **February 16th** at the latest. If a response from faculty is not received by then, or if the response chooses to dismiss our grievances, **further action may be taken by SDS and College Feminists to ensure that this important issue is not brushed aside.**

The University of Rochester is a leading body in medical research. It's an institution on the forefront of progress, and we believe that it's an institution that truly strives to be "ever better." We hope that the recipients of this document will respond to it not as an attack, but as welcome criticism. Hiring an OBGYN to work at UHS is not only something completely feasible, but is an action supported by students and faculty members alike.

SDS and College Feminists are more than willing to meet in person with representatives from the University to discuss our demands and what might be done about them. Please contact Sebastian Lauer (slauer@u.rochester.edu) and Eleya Maves (emaves@u.rochester.edu) from SDS as well as Navya Soogoor (nsoogoor@u.rochester.edu) and Sarah Unowsky (sunowsky@u.rochester.edu) from College Feminists as soon as possible.