

# Student groups demand access to reproductive healthcare



COURTESY ALYSSA KOH, EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

By **RACHEL CAREN** and **ALYSSA KOH**

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On Feb. 9, in the midst of a drizzle, Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) and College Feminists held a rally to voice their concerns with the lack of abortion care access directly on campus.

On the steps of Rush Rhees Library, a banner with the words “Student Power” was held up behind the speakers at the rally — with the “O” in “Power” replaced by a red fist. Umbrellas were hoisted, cardboard signs

were brushed off, and a cavalcade of students marched through Rush Rhees, around the First Year Hill where UHS is located, down to Wilson Commons, and back up.

“Students are referred to other treatment centers in Rochester with no assured transportation and no guarantee that the service they receive off- campus will be covered by their health plan,” said junior and SDS Communications Director Eleya Maves. “This makes abortion, a life-saving medical procedure, extremely inaccessible for students without reliable transportation and without private healthcare. It also puts undue stress on the abortion care centers of the greater Rochester area, as students are forced to go off campus for abortion care — this only makes wait times longer for Rochester citizens and further stretches the already sparse staffing and funding that these clinics have.”

According to sophomore and SDS Publicity Chair Some Schwinghammer, being able to prescribe medical abortions requires a REMS certification. Currently, there is a lack of professionals at UHS with that certification, and a lack of trained OB/GYNs.

“There’s no follow-up meeting, there’s no transportation meeting or anything, we just send people off campus,” Schwinghammer said.

“We’re part of the Rochester community, but we’re in a bubble, and we have people coming to the same resources from different states because their states banned abortion.”

Access to “free and confidential methods of contraception” was another standing demand of the rally. Increased access to and use of contraception is widely acknowledged to decrease the incidence of abortion.

Full-time students at the University are required to pay a mandatory health fee to assure “the availability of accessible, high quality healthcare services on campus.. In addition to the fee, all full-time students are required by the University to have health insurance. They

are expected to enroll in the University's student insurance plan as provided by Aetna, or else waive the health insurance if their own plan meets the University's criteria.

Aetna, as per their UR Student Health Insurance Plan, covers "medically necessary abortions including abortions in cases of rape, incest or fetal malformation." UR Medicine has pledged to continuously support access to safe pregnancy termination and post-procedure care. The UR Medical Center's website provides a number of resources regarding contraception, abortion access, and reproductive health.

However, UHS does not provide students on-campus access to abortion services and instead outsources their care — often to the University of Rochester Medical Center.

The *Campus Times* reached out to Vice Provost and Director of the Department of University Health Service Ralph Manchester, M.D., for comment.

"While sexual health care is part of primary care, our ability to provide certain sexual health care services is currently somewhat limited due to staffing shortages," Dr. Manchester said. "We are actively recruiting staff to address this need."

According to Manchester, UHS has not had an OB/GYN physician on staff "since the Meliora Plan reduced the UHS budget in the mid-1990s."

Students can instead obtain routine sexual health care from the University's primary care providers, he said. UHS has previously discussed having URM C Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology faculty see patients at the on-campus UHS location, but URM C does not have enough staff to do so.

"We are not having any difficulty referring students who are in need of pregnancy-related care, including abortion, to OB/GYN physicians at URM C and other practices nearby," Manchester said. However, he

noted that “adding the staff and equipment to provide that care within UHS without billing insurance would require a significant increase in the Mandatory Health Fee.”

Information on the section of the UHS website dedicated to pregnancy resources points students to external resources, and specifically details “a word of caution” and listing concerning crisis pregnancy centers in the area that “will mislead you when seeking pregnancy-related information.” According to Manchester, the UHS website also contains information about “community resources for abortion care” and information about UCC services. “We are in the process of adding the link to [abortionfinder.org](https://abortionfinder.org), which has a list of telemedicine abortion providers,” he said.

Moving forward, Manchester stated that they are working on scheduling a meeting with students from College Feminists and Students for a Democratic Society.

According to the student organizations’ demands, of which were posted to Instagram on Feb. 10, “if a response from faculty is not received by then [Feb. 16], 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.”

SDS will be meeting on Feb. 26 to discuss further actions they will take in regards to abortion access.

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## Updates on alumni-funded religious centers

By SARAH WOODAMS on Feb 19, 2023

The seemingly obvious solution would be to expand the Chapel. However, that is not as easy as it sounds.

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