

# CENTER FOR ACADEMIC PROGRAMS

# Update

October 2006

## A LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

**Maria D. Martinez, Director, Center for Academic Programs**

It has been another productive year for the Center for Academic Programs (CAP). We've been growing as a department through our increasing enrollment numbers, new funding sources, addition of new staff members, and creation of innovative programming. Most importantly, through it all we have maintained our high level of service and student success.

We are delighted to announce that Educational Talent Search program (ETS) has been awarded another four years of funding. The grant application process was truly a departmental effort as during that time ETS was undergoing changes in staffing. Due to the combined efforts of staff members from all of the CAP programs we were able to submit the ETS proposal and secured funding to continue providing services to present and future ETS participants. In addition we said a fond farewell to Donna Miller-Benjamin who retired after serving as director of ETS for the past eleven years and had been a member of the CAP department for the past thirty.

SSS has been expanding with new programs, more students and additional funding. A new record has been set with the number of summer program participants, increasing enrollment to 309 incoming freshmen at the regional and Storrs campuses combined. In May a new partnership with the MassMutual Foundation for Hartford, Inc. emerged. In an effort led by UConn's Office of Admissions, the SSS program was able to secure funding to support 60 students over four years from Hartford high schools to attend UConn at the Storrs campus. The participants will meet the SSS selection criteria and begin their college careers with the summer pre-collegiate program in Storrs. The addition of the MassMutual Hartford Huskies

Scholars Program to our long list of educational opportunity initiatives speaks to the excellent work with students that's being done by the Center's staff.

Three additional programs, Pre-College Enrichment Program (PCEP), College Enrichment Program (CEP), and High School Student Research Apprentice Program (HSSRAP) are now being administered by CAP. These three initiatives work with students who wish to pursue careers in the health profession. Also this past year CAP hosted its first annual Sophomore Leadership Conference. This forum provided students with the opportunity to address new sets of questions and concerns unique to the sophomore year. Guest speakers from ACES, CAP, Career Services, and SSS alumni offered extremely valuable advice through their presentations. Overall the two-day conference was a resounding success and will be continued.

GEAR UP has had another eventful and successful year. The program received additional funding from AT&T/NCCEP (National Council for Community and Education Partnerships) which allowed for out-of-state college visits for students, among other initiatives. Program participants visited Columbia University in New York City as well as the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, and Georgetown and Howard Universities. This funding also allowed GU to implement a summer program which prepared 80 rising 9<sup>th</sup> grade students for the academic rigor at the high school level. GU also organized the first "High School Transition Night" to provide information for eighth graders and their parents as

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they choose among the ten high schools in New Haven. New this year was the addition of Texas Instruments as a program partner. A very successful initiative for staff at Wilbur Cross High School in New Haven which began in 2003 continues to flourish and develop. The UConn GEAR UP Professional Development Academy increases a teacher's capacity to incorporate the use of technology into the classroom environment. Funding for the academy is provided by AT&T/NCCEP, GEAR UP and the New Haven Public Schools.

Upward Bound/ConnCAP (UB) celebrates its fortieth year as a proven intervention program for at-risk youth in the state of Connecticut. We are very proud to report that 100% of the UB senior class graduated from high school. There were 43 seniors who finished the program successfully with the majority, 91%, moving on to post-secondary educational institutions. Fifteen students will begin their studies at UConn in the fall semester and this represents 38% of the graduating class. UB continues to expand the work study op-

opportunities for seniors participating in the summer component. In the summer 2006, twenty-six students worked at various University departments and offices, gaining an introduction to different professions in higher education, career paths and possible majors. This initiative has been highly successful and has received much positive feedback. Also new this past summer was the partnership with the UConn Physics Department. This program introduces high school students to the world of physics with exposure to hands-on activities. Many

thanks go to Professor Phil Best for his outstanding work with the students.

We are very pleased to welcome four new staff members to the Center. Maribel Sanchez joined ETS as a program advisor for Windham; Milagros (Milly) Velez became a new member of the GEAR UP team; ETS director Nella Signorello came on board in January; and Yaritza Gonzalez was hired for the Upward Bound Program.

The Center for Academic Programs fulfills its mission by continuing to improve and expand existing programs and by taking on new initiatives. My appreciation goes to the entire CAP staff for their commitment and dedication to providing outstanding services for our students. I also would like to thank members of the University community who work arduously to support CAP's mission. We hope you will enjoy reading about the Center's activities, student accomplishments, and program highlights during this past year.

## **CONGRATULATIONS TO THE FOLLOWING SSS STUDENTS WHO GRADUATED DURING THE 2005-2006 ACADEMIC YEAR!**



Adnan Ayrula  
Alexis Correa  
Ann Rodriguez  
Ari Mountzoure  
Arti Patel  
Ashley Papanos  
Ashley Perkins  
Bianca Smith  
Calvin White Jr.  
Carol Greene  
Christina Vincente  
Christopher Baptiste  
Christopher Farmer  
Daniel Nadolski  
Daniela Rivera  
David Pierre-Louis  
Denetria Eady  
Dominique Wallace  
Ebony Smith  
Ellen Fetrow  
Emil Kandic  
Fernando Chan

Folson Almezy  
Gabriel Davis  
Gabriel Garmendia  
Giselle Vasquez  
Henry Villanueva  
Jacqueline Garcia  
James Desir  
Jane Sampaour  
Janiris Sanchez  
Jason Blake  
Jayra Quiles  
Jerry Sonendrong  
Johane Saintfluer  
John Gary Jr.  
Kadijah Laud  
Kajal Armin  
Karen Guerrier  
Kenneth Gravell  
Korey Ann Jarjura  
Latanya Grant  
LaToya Maitland  
Lauren Messina

Lavickie Jefferson  
Luis Rodriguez  
Maria Zeco  
Mariedy Collazo  
Marina Vracevic  
Marisa Nicolo  
Maryliam Alvarado  
Mauricio Montoya  
Melynda Ganesh  
Michelle Dollard  
Mike Trinh  
Mildred Triana  
Monika Dziegielewska  
Nhung Ngoc Tran  
Owen Chin  
Rachelle Watson  
Redis Kelmendi  
Richard Morin  
Roble Aden

Rohan Trambadia  
Rosa Perez  
Rosangela Almonte  
Ruth Valentin  
Shanna Morgan  
Sharon Scinto  
Shaun Bucchere  
Soukanya Khamvongsa  
Stacy Bentil  
Surbhi Patel  
Tares Vazquez  
Tyana Brooks  
Vicky Velez  
Youssouf Kane  
Zulma Rios



## SSS WATERBURY STUDENT GRADUATES IN ONLY THREE YEARS

Michelle Yan graduated with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Psychology from the University of Connecticut in only three years. Her early graduation would be source of pride and accomplishment for any college student but it is especially for a SSS student. SSS students typically graduate in an average of 4-6 years. Michelle came to UConn through the Student Support Services program and stayed at the Waterbury campus throughout her tenure. Michelle credits her success to the close bond she developed with her SSS advisor Lillie Wright.



## SSS WATERBURY STUDENT REFLECTS ON CHOOSING TO ATTEND UCONN THROUGH THE SSS PROGRAM

By: Yadira Figueroa



Being in the CAP/SSS Program has been a true blessing. During my senior year of high school, I thought I would not have been able to make it through college. It was not an easy decision for me to choose to come to UConn through the SSS program. All of my friends were going their separate ways to different colleges and I was

going to be all alone in a huge world that was practically new to me. Also, I did not want to give up my summer plans in order to attend a six week program just to come into UCONN especially since I knew that I could have made the choice to attend a different college where I would not have had to give up my summer. However, I believe I made a wise choice. The SSS Program gave me a smooth transition from high school to college. I met people that I now call my best friends. The program has helped me educationally, spiritually, physically and emotionally. It has given me the strength to pursue my goals and accomplish my dreams of becoming a professional. I was given the opportunity to flourish in an area I did not know I was good in, English. I have been working

hand in hand with the coordinator of the program. I have had the privilege to work and mentor the incoming SSS freshmen. I became an English tutor, and I was able to do what I like most, help other people in an area that I enjoy. As a result, I also received extensive training from the Tri-Campus writing center, where I now work during the school year. The SSS Program is a great opportunity and a huge advantage. I was glad to be accepted into such an honorable program and was able to work closely, not only with the students, but also with staff members. I do not regret the choice I made my senior year of high school because what I gained far surpasses what I lost.



SSS 2006 Storrs Freshmen

## UPWARD BOUND WORK-STUDY COMPONENT FOR SENIOR STUDENTS IS A SUMMER HIT!

The Upward Bound (UB) program now provides work-study opportunities for seniors participating in their summer program. During the summer of 2006, twenty seven UB high school seniors worked at various University departments and offices including Student Activities, the School of Business, Student Financial Aid Office, Family Studies, the School of Nursing, First Year Experience Programs, ACES, the Political Science Department, and the School of Nursing. Selected work-study students are supervised and evaluated during this working experience and are introduced to different professions related to higher education. All work-study participants must take a workshop that prepares them for the professional work environment. The workshop presents to students a full range of topics that include working responsibilities, timeliness, dressing appropriately, and how to communicate with a supervisor. Overall, the Upward Bound/ConnCAP summer experience seeks to provide students with a learning environment that helps program participants build the skills necessary to succeed in high school and college.

The students found this experience to be very productive and helpful in exposing

them to different career paths and possible majors. As Shanado Williams, from Weaver High School, explained his "job experience at the Physics Department was very interesting and helped him to explore different areas of physics as a possible major of studies."

Abigail Morales, from Hartford Public High School, wants to major in education. She found that "the experience of working with the University of Connecticut American English Language Institute (UCAELI) was fun and educational. I had the opportunity to have conversations with students from places like North Korea, Japan, Kuwait, Thailand, and Chile. The experience that I gained working for UCAELI could never be replaced with any class on teaching offered in school."

Xavier Agron, from Bulkeley High School, was so amazed by his experience that he feels that "working around people like Dr. LoTurco has inspired me to become someone that might change the world someday in the future. If I can't fulfill that much of my dream then I want to influence someone's life just like Dr. LoTurco has influenced mine."

**Supervisors also had comments to share. A few examples are:**

"I would like to thank all the organizers for facilitating this great opportunity for the young and talented high school student. It was our pleasure to participate and be a part of it. Good luck in your future plans!"

Alireza Senejani and Kristen Swithers, Molecular and Cell Biology

"I can't begin to tell you what a wonderful experience this was for us. Esmeralda was mature beyond her years and conducted herself as a young professional for the duration of her assignment. She was dependable, took initiative, and did her job cheerfully and thoroughly. She has a wonderful future ahead of her. This was our first experience with hosting an Upward Bound student and I look forward to future opportunities."

Susan Bartlett, Clinic Director

Many thanks to all the site supervisors for participating in this wonderful opportunity!

## SSS HARTFORD STUDENTS' REFLECTIONS ON THEIR INTD EXPERIENCE

By Natalia Tabakin and Yesenia Grados  
Urban and Community Studies Majors

Every Spring semester at the University of Connecticut, Greater Hartford Campus an INTD 182 Peer Involvement/Community Outreach course is offered. This class, which is led by advisors Mr. Robert Brown and Ms. Lola Elliott Hugh, gives students an overview of the state of our community and how it has declined and progressed throughout the years. This course also encourages students to present ideas on how to help improve the community. Throughout the semester we attended different sessions where speakers talked about the non profit organizations that they were involved with. Topics

such as volunteer work, welfare issues, housing for the homeless, community renovations, and ways to help those in need were discussed in class. After learning more about the organization we became interested in giving back. Recently we volunteered at a non profit organization called Food Share. Our volunteer work consisted of packaging food to be distributed to the homeless shelters and other caring organizations. We will continue



helping the community through Food Share and other organizations, and we encourage others to work with us. Ms. Elliott Hugh and Mr. Brown are wonderful teachers that helped us realize the value of our community, and how important our dedication is to society.

## SPOTLIGHT ON CAP/SSS ALUMNUS SAMUEL BEAMON, JR.



Sam Beamon enrolled at the University of Connecticut in 1988 through the Student Support Services program. He graduated from UConn with a Communication Sciences Bachelor of Arts degree in 1992 and even after graduation Sam did not abandon his academic pursuits. He continued his education throughout his career by getting several professional certifications including Contracting

Officer's Technical Representative (COTR) Certification, Leadership and Management Certificate Program, and Grants Management Certificate Program. In addition to these certifications he also participated in multiple job training programs in order to improve his skill set and performance in his career.

Since leaving UConn Sam has achieved significant professional success. He began his career as a grant writer for the City of Waterbury Police Department. In this role he strove to secure funds to improve the policing services offered to the people of Waterbury. He proved to be a great success in this role by securing as much as \$2 million in grant funds each year of his tenure. He rolled his experience in Waterbury into a position for the federal government on the other end of the grant giving spectrum. In this role he served as a monitoring specialist for the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) for the US Department of Justice in Washington, DC. His work at COPS served as a springboard to his current position as a Program Specialist for the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). Throughout his career Sam has been given

a great deal of responsibility, encountered many trials, and has risen to meet each one with success.

Sam has also found an outlet for his creative nature. Sam performs as a stand-up comedian and performs a "clean act" at famed comedy clubs including Caroline's, Gotham, Stand-up New York, DC Improv and Foxwoods Casino. He has also been an opening act for top headliners including Louie Anderson, Jeff Dunham (seen on Comedy Central), and Aries Spears (MADtv). His comedy has yielded several accolades including being Regional Finalist at the Aspen Comedy Festival, Finalist in "Funniest Person in Connecticut", and being featured in a article for the Washington Post Sunday Source ("Funny Man", October 19, 2003). Since leaving UConn Sam has found a way to express himself, continue to build his academic foundation, and has chosen a profession which challenges him both personally and professionally and all of which provides a tremendous sense of satisfaction because these activities allow him to grow as a person, find personal fulfillment as well as give back to his fellow citizens, community, and country.

## SSS HONORS TWO FACULTY MEMBERS

Each year the CAP/SSS department holds a 3.0 Recognition Reception in order to honor those SSS students who have achieved a 3.0 GPA in the past academic year. Securing a place on the 3.0 list has become mark of pride amongst SSS students and the Reception is eagerly looked forward to each year. Faculty and staff from across the university were present to lend support and Vice Provost of Academic Affairs, Veronica Makowsky served as the keynote speaker at the reception.

This past year additional individuals were honored along with the 3.0 achievers. Awards were presented to faculty and staff members who have consistently supported the mission of CAP as well as advocated for the students in their various roles on campus. This year two professors,

David Gross and Ron Sabatelli, were chosen to receive awards.

David Gross joined the University of Connecticut's Math department in 1994 and from the onset of his time at UConn David has played an active role in supporting the Student Support Services program. He was the Coordinator for the math component of the summer SSS precollegiate program from 1995-1998 and he has also served on the Center for Academic Programs Advisory Board since its inception in 1999. As a member of the Advisory Board, David aids in the creation of initiatives and activities to augment the academic and social experience of students served by the Center in addition to providing support and advocacy. Also through his work on other committees, David has shown the

depth of his dedication to and belief in access and educational opportunities for students.

In 1983 Ron Sabatelli joined the University of Connecticut as a professor for the Human Development and Family Studies program. He has worked, in conjunction with the Student Support Services (SSS) Peer Advisors, in the creation of a special discussion group to provide academic support for the SSS students that are in his HDFS classes. Professor Sabatelli also takes the time to provide one on one advising on possible career paths for the SSS students who major in HDFS. To this end he often goes out of his way to help the students secure appropriate internship opportunities.

## NATIONAL TRIO DAY EVENTS

National TRIO Day is a day of celebration on which federal education programs, throughout the US, are recognized for their hard work and achievements. Programs are also acknowledged for their contributions in creating greater access to higher education for low-income, first generation students. National TRIO Day was enacted by congress in 1986 to recognize programs for preparing non-traditional college bound students for placement at an institution of higher education. This year, National TRIO Day 2006 was proclaimed a "National Day of Service," therefore students were asked to bring food and hygiene items which were donated to the Connecticut Food Bank.



As a tribute to the success of TRIO programs; students, alumni, and staff have celebrated National TRIO day on the last Saturday in February since its inception in 1986. On February 24th and 25th, 2006, the Center for Academic Programs, Educational Talent Search and Upward Bound programs, participated in the festivities. Students from all over New England attended workshops, a college fair, and had the opportunity to visit colleges throughout Connecticut. Participants also attended a reception at the Legislative Office Building in Hartford, CT where TRIO alumni and legislators spoke to increase awareness and rally the needed support for our programs. The students walked away from the event with a plethora of information about the college application process.

## COUNCIL FOR OPPORTUNITY IN EDUCATION POLICY SEMINAR

Yolanda Caldera-Durant



On March 26 – 28, 2006, I participated in the annual Council for Opportunity Education (COE) Policy Seminar held in Washington, D.C. Bidya Ranjeet, Program Director for Student Support Services at the University of Connecticut's Storrs campus, asked me to participate in the conference and to share my story with Congressman Christopher Shays and Congressman Rob Simmons. I felt privileged to have

the opportunity to share with them how the Student Support Services program had positively affected my life. I was eager to share my story with others, including policy makers, to demonstrate that programs like SSS are a tremendous help to students, including young people of color from low-income families, who would otherwise not have access to higher education.

I participated in the team of TRIO program staff and alumni from across the state along with Glenn Casis, CAEOP President and Executive Director of the Connecticut Pre-Engineering Program. In Washington, D.C. I told the story of how SSS helped me to get accepted into UConn. Once as an undergraduate, I explained how the program's counseling, tutoring and other

important resources allowed me to successfully earn my Bachelor's Degree and ultimately pursue my Master of Science Degree in Nonprofit Management. I was emotional when I told my story to the staffers for Congressman Shays and Congressman Simmons. I remembered the personal and academic difficulties I encountered as a college student and how critical it was for me to have the SSS support system. The personal stories of alumni from SSS and other TRIO programs, including Upward Bound, is more important than ever because of the challenges that these programs face in receiving continued and even increased federal funding to help educate thousands of young people from underprivileged backgrounds. As the logo on the pins that we all wore at the Policy Conference emphatically stated "TRIO Works!" and it continues to work for thousands of other students across the country that otherwise would not have the opportunity to pursue higher education.

## BLACK ROOTS STUDY TOUR IN LIVERPOOL

This summer marked the fifth year that Student Support Services (SSS) offered SSS students the opportunity to engage in a three-week study tour program at the University of Liverpool. This program provides the opportunity for students to study black roots history, focusing on the cultural and political context of 400 years of black settlement, development, and the role that the city played in the African slave trade. Students met with individuals and community groups, attended lectures on contemporary issues and visited various social, political, and cultural sites. In addition to traveling throughout Liverpool, this program included extra traveling such as side excursions to Conway, London, and Chester in Britain as well as to Berlin, Germany as a means of augmenting their educational experience.



### Gyna Villard

UCONN CAP/SSS - Stamford

This summer was the best summer of my life. Being apart of the SSS Black Roots Study Tour changed my life forever. I gained educational knowledge, learned about cultural differences, and got a chance to travel to some beautiful countries. I recommend that if anyone has a slight interest in going jump at the opportunity because you only get this opportunity of a lifetime once. Sitting here now I wish I could go back with all the same people and experience what I experienced when I was over there. After you come back from a great trip like this, you're a totally different person.

### Carlton Jones

UCONN CAP/SSS - Storrs

I am very glad that I had the privilege of attending Liverpool, England and Germany. I have never crossed the Atlantic Ocean before so I was very nervous about flying. Once I got on the plane I told myself that this opportunity probably will not happen again in my lifetime and I should be excited about going. Experiencing a different culture and living in a completely different environment helped

me to see that my life in the United States is similar to life in Europe. The people there go through the same things we do such as discrimination, poverty, economic problems, etc. I thought that life in England was pretty good and the people there get along. When I found out that racism is still present there I was very surprised. If I did not attend the trip, then I would not have known those things.

### James Rico Jr

UCONN CAP/SSS – Storrs

You can't know much about this country without looking at it from a different perspective. You can't know much about where you are from, without going somewhere else. The fact that we as humans are never too different from each other is not best understood from a book, but from an actual experience. To truly understand your identity, you must step on new ground and to step on new ground is to be a leader. Your views, your world, your character will change if you take this opportunity and make the most of it.

## ETS SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS

The Educational Talent Search program at Windham High School (WHS) would like to recognize the 2006 scholarship recipients. **Julissa Mendez** who is a Willimantic native and a 2006 graduate will be attending UCONN on a full scholarship for her first year. Julissa is also the proud recipient of the Capitol Scholarship, University of Connecticut Alumni Scholarship, the Josephine and Philip Lauter Scholarship and Windham Scholars for Dollars. Other notable scholarship recipients from WHS this year are **Emily Rasicot**, **Kyle Kowalsky** and **Kyle Larned**, all of whom will be attending UCONN Storrs in the fall; **Terrell Roberts** who will attend the City College of New York; **Joan Dejesus** attending Eastern Connecticut State University; and **Mabel Perdona** who will be attending Three Rivers Community College. We are proud of all their accomplishments and wish them luck on their future endeavors.

## "I FIND IT HARD TO SAY"

Dadrian Ellington



I am not an outwardly conversational person, with good reason. A native of the beautiful island of Jamaica, my family and I migrated to the United States in the late 1980s. My entire American socialization has been impacted by unique experiences; and my undergraduate career at the University of Connecticut is no exception. My undergraduate study began in July of 2001. Immediately following my release from Basic Entry Training for the United States Army, I had to report to Northwest Residence halls for a six week intensive immersion summer session.

With steady advice from the Student Support Services counselors and peer advisors, I was able to carve out a path within the UConn curriculum fitting of my likes, dislikes, expectations and hopes. In the spring of 2003, I ventured on my first "out of UConn academic experience" and participated in National Student Exchange, which enabled me to study at the Inter-American University of Puerto Rico in San German, Puerto Rico. As an International Relations and Political Science double major, I have a keen interest in other cultures and languages so I was able to fulfill all my major expectations by taking 4 courses that encompassed my fields of concentra-

tion and supplemented my foreign language fluidity. After a typical commuter semester during the fall of 2003, I was given another opportunity to represent the University as a Congressional Intern for Senator Chris Dodd in Washington, D. C. during the spring semester of 2004. Through word of mouth I was informed about this program, and with added support of Marie McCain, my SSS academic counselor and Kathleen Usher of UConn Honors, I was accepted as an intern and continued my

UConn career hundreds of miles from the University. After completing my internship in DC, I joined the Upward Bound team, and was a tutor/counselor for Biology in the summer of 2004.

The eternal experience that has impacted my way of thinking and being more than anything was my 2004 deployment in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. As a soldier in the Army National Guard, I along with countless other young students and citizens were required to defend democracy while seeking vengeance for the lost souls of 9/11 and seek out Weapons of Mass Destruction via Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom. As traumatizing and unforgettable as it was, my experience in Iraq is not a regrettable one. My deployment thrust me full on into the real world, in a way that college, nor an internship, or study abroad opportunity had before. As a combat medic I worked 24, 48, or 72hr shifts at the hospital, or as a 911 respondent in conjunction with the Air Force Fire Department. I encountered everything war had to offer, and was blessed to return home in much the same physical condition that I had left. Upon returning to civilian life a lot of mental adjustments

had to be made or dealt with. Coming from a culture of determined individuals, and a family of survivors, I am determined to maintain. Post Traumatic Stress Disorder is a real condition facing an increasing number of soldiers returning home from combat. More now than ever, soldiers are in need of support from civilians whose rights and freedoms are defended on a daily basis at home and abroad. Too many young men and women have paid the ultimate sacrifice in defense of freedom. We recognize and honor those who have lost their lives rightfully so. I encourage all soldiers who come home and feel "fine" to seek out relief from the burden of war that weighs on your heart and soul upon leaving the combat zone.

After returning from Iraq, I continued my undergraduate studies at UConn starting in spring 2006. The UConn I returned to seemed different from the one I had left, but SSS was still here and continued to provide academic support for this, I am forever grateful. In January, I hope to travel to South Africa to soak up some more of the good and bad that this world has to offer in an attempt to make the most of life as an undergrad. Though my term here at UConn has been longer than most, I am excited for the things that life has to offer.



## SSS FIRST SOPHOMORE LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE

This year SSS, with the support of Vice Provost Veronica Makowsky and Assistant Vice Provost Steven Jarvi, held the first annual Sophomore Leadership Conference. Despite having completed a year at UConn many of the SSS students find themselves with new sets of questions and concerns unique to their upcoming second year. In addition with having had a successful previous summer rising sophomores have been interested in having a repeat summer program. In response to this the SSS staff created the SSS Sophomore Leadership Conference. The purpose of this two day conference was to refocus the students' goals and ensure that they are on the right track to achieve them as well as provide support and answer their questions and concerns. The conference examined topics such as choosing a major, exploring career options, the advantages

of networking, and getting the most out of your college experience. Staff from the Center for Academic Programs, ACES, career services center, and SSS alumni addressed the students and provided their unique and specialized wisdom on these topics. Below are student reflections on the conference.

*Overall, the conference was informative as well as a confidence builder... [it] was very helpful in guiding us to carefully choose our majors which will determine the success of our futures. I personally want to thank you for putting the conference together because it was a major help to me.*

D'Andra Whyte

*I found the Sophomore Conference to be a great success. The information that was provided by Larry [Career Services]*

*was extremely helpful to me and I am sure that it was also helpful to others as well. I also enjoyed the speakers who were former graduates of the SSS program and of the University. Their insights and opinions were very helpful and it was very nice to hear success stories from those who have been in the same position as I am currently in. I would definitely recommend [that] this conference be continued in the years to come.*

Ashley Combs

*The conference was a good experience for me as a rising sophomore [who will be transferring from the Stamford campus to Storrs]. I learned that I need to stay focused in order to do what I want to do with my life. Thanks for the experience.*

Mario Bailey

## UCONN GEAR UP SUMMER 06

How do you transition successfully into high school? The students from the UCONN GEAR UP Program participated in a 4 week intensive summer program that allowed them to experience high school before they commenced in the Fall! 8<sup>th</sup> graders from East Rock, Edgewood and Truman School had the opportunity to take interactive classes in Algebra, English, chemistry and computers.

The goal of the summer program was to prepare 8<sup>th</sup> grade students for the academic



rigors at the high school level. Students earned a ½ credit towards their high school graduation for their participation in the program. "GEAR UP has helped me in my preparation for high school by teaching me how to study in small learning groups, how to use the TI 84 calculator and prepare for the CAPT test!" says Aharon Walker an incoming freshman at New Haven Academy. Claudia Frias, a freshman at Hill Regional Career says that she enjoyed learning how to use the West Point Bridge Design and learning how to use technology in her Algebra Class.

Funding from AT&T/NCCEP allowed the UCONN GEAR UP Program to coordinate out of state college visits that exposed students to college life, admissions, and the financial aid process. The young ladies in the program visited



Columbia University in New York City as well as the Schomburg Institute for Black History and had lunch at the Harlem Tea Room! The boys in the program traveled to Washington DC and visited Georgetown and Howard Universities. In addition to visiting and interfacing with high achieving college students the young men in the program met with Congresswoman DeLauro and had the opportunity to gain civic and cultural awareness by visiting the nation's capitol.

## SSS AVERY POINT STUDENT RECEIVES THE AVERY POINT AWARD OF EXCELLENCE

-Eddie Gonzalez

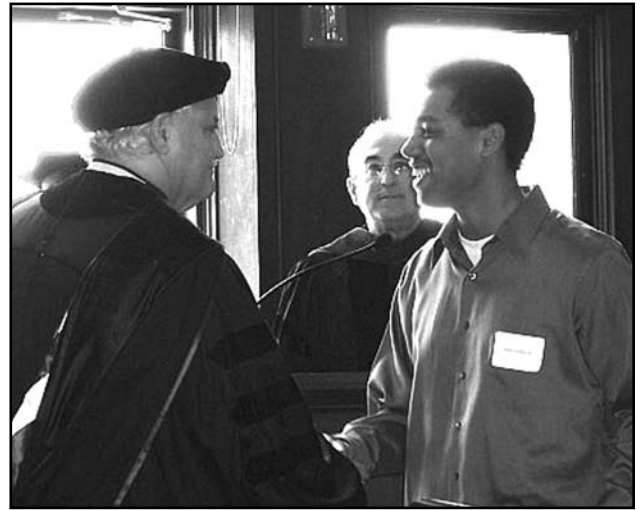
Eddie Gonzalez, a UConn SSS Avery Point student, recently received the Avery Point Award of Excellence. In order to receive this honor a student must both have a high gpa and have contributed to the Avery Point community or community at large. Eddie's contribution to the community is illustrated through his work at the West Side Middle School. Below are his reflections on his volunteer experience.

I have volunteered at West Side Middle School since 2004. Another Avery Point SSS student, my SSS advisor Marcia Orcutt, and I were the original members of the pilot program in 2004. During that time we were paired with three students who needed guidance from mentor figures. The three of us were able to interact with the young students without the children feeling embarrassed or overwhelmed. We were able to fully connect with the students and help them with their work as well as assign journals and play games. I really liked the fact that we at the CAP/SSS office were able to help these kids; however, I knew that there were other young students who would benefit having a mentor.

The following year the other two mentors and I focused on recruiting people

to volunteer and the turnout was impressive. We had a class full of mentors who would volunteer their time once a week. Our goal that year was to focus on the children and their reading. Thanks to the Community Foundation of South Eastern Connecticut grant we were able to buy fun, educational books that we read during our mentoring time. We presented the books to the students as a parting gift at the end of the year. By the end of the semester a large number of students were impacted for the better.

I remembered when I was a middle school student at West Side. I wanted to help the students with all of the things that I had struggled with as a middle school student. This in turn made me become a better mentor, offering advice based on my experiences, and help on schoolwork based on my education. I was sure to praise the child I worked with when he accomplished his assignments which in turn



made him happy and willing to complete other obligations. I was also sure to be a good example to the student I mentored, making sure that my advice and actions showed a better way to work around any problems. I tried to bring out the best in the child I mentored as I tried to bring out the best in myself.

I really enjoyed being a mentor for both years and I enjoyed the children I worked with. I find it amazing how much change one hour a week can bring upon a student and upon the person volunteering. Being a mentor is a practice that more students should be willing to try.

## MASSMUTUAL HARTFORD HUSKIES SCHOLAR PROGRAM ADDS MORE STUDENTS TO THE SSS FAMILY

The Student Support Services (SSS) program has gained the reputation for excellent programming specifically designed for low income and first generation to college students. As a result, agencies and organizations outside the university community have taken notice. For example last year the Department of Higher Education (DHE) awarded SSS \$100,000 to add 25 students to their program. These students were chosen from Hartford, New Haven, and Bridgeport. Most recently the MassMutual for Hartford Foundation, Inc. wanted to increase access to education for Hartford students and found a way through the development of a partnership with SSS.

SSS at UConn has been innovative

and successful in selecting, retaining and graduating their students. Hartford school officials teamed up with the UConn Admissions office to secure funding for a total of 60 students or 15 students each year for four years. MassMutual has generously begun this financial assistance scholarship program for graduating seniors from Hartford high schools. The selected students are expected to participate in the SSS program. This initiative promotes and supports the Center's mission of access, retention, and graduation from the University of Connecticut.

Specifically, the MassMutual Hartford Huskies Scholar Program will cover the costs of the students' participation in the SSS summer pre-collegiate program,

provide the students with a laptop computer, and supply the funds for textbooks throughout their tenure at UConn. Ronald A. Copes, executive director of the MassMutual Foundation and corporate vice president of community relations was quoted in the May 15, 2006 issue of the *Advance* as stating, "we're especially proud of this new MassMutual Hartford Huskies Scholars Program because it was designed to fulfill a specific need in Hartford, where so many students deserve the opportunity to continue their education at Connecticut's flagship university."

The Center for Academic Programs is delighted with the interest that SSS has generated throughout the state.

## THE UPWARD BOUND PROGRAM ESTABLISHES A NEW PARTNERSHIP WITH THE PHYSICS DEPARTMENT

This summer a new partnership was established between the Upward Bound/ConnCAP Program and the Physics Department. We offered students participating in this pilot component the opportunity to earn four UConn credits for a total of 60 hours of class work this summer. Professor Phil Best taught Physics 101Q and found the experience “very rewarding.” The Summer Physics Enrichment Program will introduce high school students to the world of physics by exposing them early on to hands-on activities. The main purpose is to encourage the students to pursue their

college education as Physics majors.

According to Professor Best, “the idea is for students to take Physics 101 in terms appropriate to this level. The topics of that course can be described as introductory- mechanics, thermal physics, E&M (Electricity and Magnetism), optics and atomic physics. The second year topics would be intermediate- mechanics, thermal physics, E&M, optics and atomic physics, and the third year topics: advanced- mechanics, thermal physics, E&M, optics and atomic physics. This third year would bring the students to a

level of achievement equivalent to that acquired by students in the Physics courses 121 and 122, and so students passing the third year would earn University credit for those courses. The advantages of this curriculum are several fold, not the least of which is the availability of many proven assessment tools. In addition, the granting of college credit for passing grades should act as an incentive to students to sign up for the physics option. This approach is the one most likely to ‘turn the students on’ to physics. We hope to inspire physics teachers in this program.”



*Summer 2006 UB Students*

## US DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AWARDS \$281,773 TO UNIVERSITY OF CONNECTICUT EDUCATIONAL TALENT SEARCH PROGRAM

It has been announced that the Educational Talent Search (ETS) program at the University of Connecticut (UConn) has been funded \$281,773 for the next four years. Grant programs like ETS are funded by the U.S. Department of Education and authorized by Congress through the Higher Education Act of 1965. Initially funded in 1994, ETS participates in the grant application process every four years.

The University of Connecticut ETS program serves schools in the neediest, most poverty-stricken, and under-resourced parts of the state. The two-site operation, in New Haven and Windham, allows ETS

to reach students in major urban centers – areas with disproportionate numbers of families below the poverty level which exhibit high dropout and unemployment rates, and low educational achievement. Students begin participation in the program in sixth grade and continue through successful completion of high school and placement in an appropriate post-secondary institution.

ETS target areas suffer from many social and economic problems that make it very difficult for the youth in these areas to obtain a quality education. Educational Talent Search helps to address these obstacles,

while promoting secondary education, by offering programs such as:

- Early college awareness for students in 6<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> grade;
- College/university visits, fairs and career awareness days;
- Assistance in completing college/university applications and federal financial aid forms;
- SAT preparation workshops;
- Tutoring and homework assistance;
- Financial aid workshops for students and parents/guardians.

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### Center for Academic Programs Mission Statement

The Center for Academic Programs (CAP) increases access to higher education for high potential students who come from underrepresented ethnic or economic backgrounds and/or are first-generation college students. CAP prepares students for successful entry into, retention in and graduation from a post-secondary institution through its four constituent programs. *Educational Talent Search, GEAR UP, and Upward Bound/ConnCAP* provide programming to increase middle and high school students' college access and retention; *Student Support Services* provides programming to facilitate students' retention in and graduation from the University of Connecticut. CAP designs and implements these programs in accordance with guidelines set forth by its funding bodies, including the University, the State of Connecticut and the U.S. Department of Education and other programs which promote educational opportunity for all.