A MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

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It is my pleasure to welcome you to the 2015-2016 edition of Update, the annual newsletter of the Center for Academic Programs (CAP). Through this publication we are able to share with you exciting news about the Center and showcase some of our student accomplishments.

You will read about the first New England McNair Conference hosted at UConn-Storrs, an update on the First Star Academy Inaugural Cohort, SSS students studying abroad in South Africa, the acting career of an SSS alum, a student’s research on hummingbirds in Costa Rica, how high school students gain college survival skills, and more. We hope you enjoy learning more about these activities in the articles and stories that were selected to be included in this newsletter.

In July 2015, we were awarded a five year, $1.5 million TRIO Student Support Services grant by the U.S. Department of Education. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the offices and departments on campus who assisted the Center during the grant writing process last year. This award would not be possible without your expert guidance and contributions. In an effort to secure funding to expand the services to students, the Center has steadily increased its grant writing activities. This fall we will be submitting the application for funding to continue support of the McNair Scholars program.

Every year we reaffirm our commitment to access and educational opportunity for low income, first generation, and underrepresented populations. On behalf of our staff and students I want to thank you for your continuous support.

We look forward to seeing you at our programs or dropping by our offices in the Rowe building!
On August 6, 2015, Congressman Joe Courtney returned to the UConn Storrs Student Support Services Summer Program Closing Ceremony for the second consecutive year. In addition to congratulating all program participants on their successes and greeting the student award recipients, he talked about the importance of the programs within the Center for Academic Programs.

About SSS he said, “What this program does is at the heart of the university’s mission.” He added that if CAP did not exist, “we [would be] abandoning what was meant for the University of Connecticut.”

The six-week, residential summer program at Storrs is a unique opportunity for first-generation and/or low-income students to be introduced to the academic rigor expected in college. During the summer, students take two courses for credit, participate in weekly workshops and seminars, receive one-on-one counseling and advising, and acclimate to university academics and campus life prior to the start of their freshmen year.

The Congressman also recognized SSS Director Dr. Bidya Ranjeet for securing the highly competitive federal TRIO SSS grant. The five-year, $1.5 million U.S. Department of Education grant provides critical funding to help run the SSS summer program and provide continued support services throughout the academic year.

CAP thanks Congressman Courtney for his continued support of UConn SSS and TRIO programs nationwide.
Chances are if you’ve seen SSS alumnus Rene Rosado it was on your television or the big screen. After graduating from UConn in 2003 with a bachelor’s degree in sociology, he landed his first starring film role in the 2005 Columbia University thesis short “St. Paul.” The film won Best Short at the New York Latino Film Festival and helped launch Rosado’s acting career. Since then Rene has had roles in Law and Order, The Sopranos, Criminal Minds, and Star Trek, amongst others. His current film, Asher, features Rene costarring with Danny Glover, Mekhi Pfeiffer, and Kevin Kline.

Rene, who entered UConn with the intention of going into education, made the transition toward an acting career when he traveled with a friend to a photo shoot in New York City during his junior year. Of the hundreds of hopefuls that showed up that day, Rene continued to make the cuts, eventually landing jobs doing commercials and MTV videos.

During this time, he met his academic responsibilities and acting schedule in NYC, all the while supporting himself as a substitute teacher. When conflicts prevented him from accepting a teaching assignment, ever mindful of his SSS peers, he would offer to help fill the vacancy by phoning SSS with position details.

During this period his SSS counselor was concerned that the stress of fulfilling his multiple commitments along with the exhilaration of landing acting roles might influence Rene to leave school. He remained determined, however, to earn his degree and justify the investment of his participation in Wesleyan University’s Upward Bound program and SSS in his academic and personal development.

Now fully established in his acting career, Rene has continued to find ways to motivate students toward academic achievement. Together with Candelario Franco, director of the National Hispanic University’s Upward Bound program in San Jose, California, Rene has created an after-school reading program, LIFTT 4 Literacy, designed to inspire children about the importance of reading and the value of higher education.

The intersection of Rene’s two passions – acting and academic achievement – has allowed Rene to make a significant impact in his community. He has remained humble while overcoming the odds, in both the entertainment circle and the educational system.

Rosado was awarded the National TRIO Achievers Award at the 35th annual Council for Opportunity in Education (COE) conference in September 2015 in recognition of his professional success and commitment to giving back to the programs that helped him along the way. During his acceptance speech, Rene thanked his TRIO counselors for their support. “Your love for what you do opened my trust for you. You made me realize that nothing is impossible. You showed me how to overcome obstacles. You showed me that I’m not alone, that out there, there are students just like me striving. You embraced me for who I am. I am a living, breathing example of…TRIO.”
GRADUATING FROM THE SCHOOL OF NURSING WITH HONORS

Rubby Koomson never imagined when she started her college journey in the 2011 SSS summer program that it would lead to a career in nursing. She entered the university as an allied health major set on becoming a medical lab technician, but a trip to Ghana with UConn’s Global Medical Brigades the summer after freshman year placed her on a different path. The opportunity to provide direct medical care alongside doctors and nurses inspired a passion for nursing.

Rubby is now set to graduate from UConn’s School of Nursing with honors in May 2016. During her tenure at UConn, Rubby has exhibited outstanding academic achievement and campus involvement. In addition to being a participant in the Honors Program, she is a member of the John and Valerie Rowe Health Professions Scholars Program. She was also part of UConn’s 2014 Leadership Legacy Experience.

Despite her rigorous program of study, Rubby found time to serve as an Orientation Leader and a Resident Assistant. She studied abroad in Ireland with the School of Nursing and, in summer 2015, took part in the Learning Communities Summer in Cape Town, South Africa program. There she put her nursing skills to good use during a service learning experience at Talfesiq Medical Clinic.

“College was my academic goal after I graduated high school,” said Rubby. “As a first generation college student, I did not know what to expect, but I am grateful for that summer I spent in the SSS program. It exposed me to lots of resources and people who would later make my college experience more remarkable than I ever imagined.”

Rubby is currently completing her nursing clinicals and evaluating job offers.

CONNCAP STUDENTS ATTEND CALAHE CONFERENCE

For the October Academic Day, ConnCAP students attended the Connecticut Association of Latinos in Higher Education (CALAHE) 20th Annual Student Conference. Hosted by Eastern Connecticut State University, the conference featured a college fair and a series of helpful workshops on the theme “Is College Worth It?” Students attended panels on credit counseling, résumé building, and networking. They also learned how to take advantage of scholarship opportunities and make informed decisions when choosing colleges, majors, or internships. The keynote speaker, Justis Lopez especially impressed many students. A senior from Bulkeley High School commented that he thought the speaker was “pretty cool” because he was “real about his experiences.” Mr. Lopez, a participant in UConn’s Student Support Services program, completed an internship with the Council for Opportunity in Education in Washington, D.C. in summer 2014, during which he participated in legislative activities related to shaping education policy. In May 2015, he graduated from UConn’s Neag School of Education with a master’s degree in education. He is currently working as a social studies teacher at Manchester High School and DJs in his spare time.

At the college fair students were able to use what they learned in the conference sessions while talking with college representatives from around the state. One student thought, “It was great to experience a college fair as a sophomore. The college representatives were really nice and had a lot of information about different programs offered.” Participating institutions included community colleges to 4-year residential colleges, small liberal arts schools to large research universities, and Connecticut private institutions such as Fairfield University, University of Saint Joseph, and Albertus Magnus College.
Virgilio Lopez III, a McNair and LSAMP scholar, is an example of what ambitious young students can accomplish with the right amount of institutional support and personal perseverance. A biology major with an intense interest in ecology and a special fondness for parasites, Lopez has pursued a wide variety of academic opportunities outside the classroom. He has participated in many fascinating projects that are helping to build knowledge about various animal species.

Lopez had an opportunity to work with his mentor, the biologist Dr. Janine Caira, in developing a global database of tapeworms. He also assisted Dr. Caira in identifying a new tapeworm species that lives inside sharks’ intestines. He even got to name it: Platybothrium jeremiahi in honor of his younger brother.

Lopez has also done fieldwork outside of UConn. As part of Duke’s Organization for Tropical Studies Research Experiences for Undergraduates, he spent ten weeks in the Costa Rican rainforest studying the long-billed hermit hummingbird. For this project Virgilio used the hummingbird’s song variations to assess its cognitive abilities. Based on the data he collected, Lopez argues that the more intelligent a hummingbird is, the more likely it will produce song variations that distinguish it from other hummingbirds. He has presented his findings at three different conferences and is collaborating on an article with his summer research advisor, Marcelo Araya-Salas.

Lopez also contributes to helping other students in the UConn community. He is a Supplemental Instruction leader for introductory biology courses through the Academic Achievement Center and he serves as a mentor for UConn’s LSAMP program. Aspiring to become a professional scientist and teacher, Lopez is currently applying to graduate programs in ecology and parasitology.
Greater Hartford Campus

On November 20, 2015, seven Greater Hartford campus SSS students and their SSS counselors kicked off the holiday season by volunteering with Foodshare, an organization dedicated to ending world hunger and alleviating poverty. The students worked together in the organization’s Bloomfield warehouse to organize boxes of food to be distributed to families in need in the Greater Hartford area. Way to go SSS!

Greater Hartford campus student **Dacia Walcott** has mastered the art of time management. The full-time Honors student is not only a voting member of the Academic Board of Misconduct, a member of Alpha Lambda Delta, and a National Society of Collegiate Scholar, but she also works two part-time jobs and landed a coveted internship in Senator Richard Blumenthal’s office for the spring 2016 semester. Hats off to Dacia!

Waterbury Campus

Graduating with her Bachelor of Science degree in human development and family studies hasn’t stopped Waterbury SSS graduate **Nazle Jalaludin** from taking an active role in the UConn community. The alumna, who was a student worker in the SSS office during her undergraduate years, is now employed as a Community Based Educational Specialist at the UConn Health Center in Farmington. Congratulations, Nazle!

Before they even completed their freshmen year at the Waterbury campus, SSS students Maria **Frias Colon** and Maline **Brijlall** knew they wanted to give back to the program. Currently, they’re serving as SSS peer mentors, helping to guide this year’s freshmen as they make the transition from high school to university. Thanks to both women for their commitment and dedication to SSS.
Storrs Campus

Storrs SSS students Marinela “Ela” Maxhari and Maman Cooper were selected to participate in UConn’s 2016 Leadership Legacy Experience. Ela is pursuing dual majors in mathematics and secondary education. Maman is double majoring in communication and political science. Both women are committed to improving educational opportunities for people from underprivileged backgrounds. Congratulations to Ela and Maman!

UConn’s Center for Academic Programs was once again awarded a five year, $1.5 million TRIO Student Support Services grant by the U.S. Department of Education in July 2015. The funding will enable CAP to continue providing academic support services to select UConn students who are first generation to college and/or from low socioeconomic backgrounds. The university obtained its first federal SSS grant in 1970 to supplement what was then known as Summer Program. It has been awarded the grant consecutively ever since.

Avery Point Campus

SSS students at the Avery Point campus remain active in the West Side Middle School mentoring program in Groton. The program is a partnership between the two institutions that matches youth with college students who serve as mentors and role models. Weekly mentoring sessions take place at the middle school and include activities such as sports, reading books, playing board games, and arts and crafts. The program was started by former SSS coordinator Marcia Orcutt. Aaron Collins, current coordinator, is continuing the tradition by overseeing the related mentoring course.

Stamford Campus

SSS undergraduate student Linda Rivera was selected for the 2015-2016 Dream Award from Scholarship America, Incorporated. She is the first UConn Stamford student to receive the award, which was established to provide renewable scholarships to help college students complete their degrees. Linda, a sophomore, plans to change to the Storrs campus to pursue a degree in chemical engineering. Congratulations, Linda!
Center for Academic Programs

DECEMBER ACADEMIC DAY: COLLEGE SURVIVAL 101

Fifty-two high school students from Hartford and Windham got a crash course on college survival from UConn student leaders during ConnCAP’s December Academic Day. Members from the UConn Black Student Association (BSA) gave a presentation about their first-hand experiences adjusting to college life, offering advice on everything from coping with homesickness to managing finances. They stressed the importance of creating a strong community—starting here in ConnCAP and continuing through college. Their motto is: “Lift as you climb.”

To illustrate this, the BSA led ConnCAP students through a team-building activity where they competed to build the tallest, freestanding tower using only paper and tape, all without talking. Afterwards, students discussed the balance between competition and community in college. They realized that the best leaders can pursue their own goals while still supporting each other.

The day ended with a traditional “stroll,” led by members of Phi Beta Sigma, Lambda Theta Alpha, and Zeta Phi Beta. Strolling, also known as “party walking,” is a dance unique to each fraternity or sorority that celebrates the African-American roots of many Greek Life organizations.

STUDENTS SELECTED FOR COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP PROGRAM

SSS seniors Elismary Valle and Ronny Heredia were among a group of select area college students tapped to participate in the Leading Off Campus Collegiate Leadership Program during the fall 2015 semester. Sponsored by Leadership Greater Hartford, the program provides opportunities for students nearing degree completion who have demonstrated leadership to continue to grow and develop these skills through community service.

Elismary was part of a small team of student leaders representing universities throughout Hartford County. The team worked closely with community leaders and organizations to raise awareness of local resources available to area families through an event held at the YMCA. During the event, various state, health and non-profit organizations had a station where parents could stop by and gather information while also engaging in family activities with their children.

Ronny worked with peers from various universities throughout Greater Hartford County to create a college informational session at Bulkeley High School in Hartford. In addition, he and his peers developed a video presentation that featured established professional leaders sharing their views on why obtaining a higher education is so valuable.

Elismary is currently a senior working on a double major of English and urban community studies. She is in the process of applying to the University of Connecticut’s Higher Education and Student Affairs Master’s program. Ronny, who started his UConn career at the Greater Hartford campus, is finishing up his senior year at the Storrs campus while also participating in the Fast-Track Program for a master’s in public administration.
UConn had the honor of hosting the first New England McNair Scholars Program Conference for Undergraduate Researchers, a two-day event that brought together students, faculty, and staff associated with McNair Programs from six different universities and colleges. Forty-four McNair scholars came to Storrs to present their exciting scientific research and network with UConn faculty members in the STEM disciplines. In the convivial and collegial atmosphere, students from UConn, Boston College, Suffolk, Wesleyan, and University of New Hampshire were able to meet their peers and share their experiences as rising young scholars.

The conference not only provided a platform for these talented students, it gave them an opportunity to meet faculty and learn more about graduate study, providing a showcase for UConn’s Graduate School. Events included a faculty networking luncheon and panel presentations given by current graduate students and graduate school representatives. The highlight came at the end of the first day when the McNair scholars took part in a poster symposium on campus in which they condensed their research into exciting visuals and talked about it to the general public.

Given the success of this inaugural conference, all the participating institutions agreed to continue supporting it. Next year’s conference will be hosted by the University of New Hampshire.
The UConn First Star Academy is excited to announce that 100% if its inaugural cohort of twelve students graduated from high school in 2015. Equally as exciting is that eleven out of twelve students enrolled at four year institutions in fall 2015, and one began studies at a local community college. This represents a 100% college-going rate for the First Star graduates.

The overall goal of the First Star Academy is to help reverse the troubling national statistics associated with youth transitioning out of foster care. With the various support systems now established through the program, the future for First Star students is starting to look much more promising.
FIRST STAR GRADUATES GIVE BACK TO PROGRAM

The UConn First Star Academy is proud to welcome back two members of its inaugural graduating class of seniors. Ronaele Williams and Dominic Schaedler, who are currently attending UConn and participate in the Student Support Services (SSS) program, have been hired as student workers. They provide program staff with office support and serve as mentors for current First Star participants.

Ronaele and Dominic joined the UConn First Star Academy in the summer of 2014. Both made the most of their opportunities during the program and utilized lessons learned to finish their high school careers and enroll in higher education. Each student recognizes the unique opportunity they have to be a resource for others in the foster care system. They understand the value of education, and plan to use their experience to guide other students who come from similar backgrounds.

Ronaele views her experience as a First Star participant as an “eye-opening” opportunity that allowed her to “get a taste of her future in college.” Prior to participating in First Star, going to college had not been a priority for her, but the program helped her realize how necessary college was to achieve her goals.

Ronaele now hopes to earn a master’s degree and a Ph.D. She wants to become involved in policy and advocacy work for youth in foster care. Her own experiences in that area and her desire to help others are the driving force behind her ambitious goals.

Dominic credits First Star with being the catalyst for him going to college. Previously, he thought that college “wasn’t for him.” Dominic especially appreciated the assistance First Star provided with the college application process. Now he wishes to provide that same support to his peers.

“This program is so necessary and needed for students like me,” he said. “I want to be a part of changing things for them.”

Drawing upon their own experiences and acting as a mentor to current high school students in the program, Dominic and Ronaele are examples of how hard work, perseverance, and using the supports around you can translate into achieving their goals. Both are interested in serving as tutor/counselors during the summer program where they can continue to mentor students.

FIRST STAR ACADEMY FINDS PARTNER IN DCF’S WILDERNESS SCHOOL

The UConn First Star Academy completed its second year of partnering with The Wilderness School, a state Department of Children and Families (DCF) supported program that provides Connecticut adolescents with a variety of skill building, team building, and confidence enhancing programs. This partnership provides an excellent opportunity to offer suitable programming for the First Star participants. The pre-summer activities lay the foundation for the summer program and the post-summer events reunite the students.

The 2015 pre-summer Wilderness School event introduced students to “The Wall”, a thirteen foot vertical structure which teams need to help their fellow students get over. Once a team member reaches the top, he/she must turn around and help the next person scale the wall, while another teammate assists from the ground. A post activity reflection showed that students enjoyed the challenge and were motivated by their teams to get over the wall.

For the post-summer activity, students were treated to their most exciting and challenging obstacles yet. The Macy’s Day Parade is an approximately 20 foot high ropes course that requires students to jump from “island to island” with a partner while a team of helpers hold the islands steady. In addition, the zip line had students dangling 35 feet in the air and soaring for approximately 50 yards. The teamwork and mutual support required for each activity inspired the First Star students and staff.

The Wilderness School offers high impact programs intended to promote positive youth development. Its programs are based on philosophies rooted in experiential learning.
HIGH SCHOOL SENIORS EXPLORE NEW LONDON COLLEGES

ConnCAP seniors headed to the coast for their annual senior trip. Students toured several New London-area colleges to explore a range of in-state options. New London is a historic New England seaport community and vibrant college town.

Our first stop: UConn’s Avery Point campus, where they’ve been known to say, “It’s all UConn, but at Avery Point, it’s UConn with an ocean view.” The Avery Point campus is distinguished by its excellent Marine Sciences and Waterfront programs, which provide students “recreational, instructional, and competitive on-the-water programming” using a fleet of sailboats, kayaks, and powerboats. ConnCAP seniors were pleasantly surprised to realize that UConn is more than just Storrs.

Students also visited small, private institutions like Mitchell College and Connecticut College. At Connecticut College, a nationally-ranked liberal arts school, students were warmly welcomed by Antonio Jefferson, Director of Unity House—a multicultural center that offers academic advising, mentoring, and community-building. Unity House student groups showed real hospitality by preparing a delicious Puerto Rican meal and giving our seniors some much-needed advice and encouragement. Senior Shakira James was especially grateful to learn about applying for financial aid. “I now know to apply for it early,” she said.

This college trip expanded the horizons of ConnCAP seniors. They even had the chance to learn about the rich history and culture of Connecticut’s Native American populations at the Mashantucket Pequot Museum. For one senior, this trip opened up new possibilities. “Seeing the small colleges gave me a different perspective on where I might go to college,” said Khalil Bradley. Connecticut has much more to offer than our seniors thought.
RECIPIENTS OF GILMAN INTERNATIONAL SCHOLARSHIP FOR EDUCATION ABROAD

For three consecutive semesters UConn SSS students were recipients of the Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship. Tarif Brown, Emily Eaton, and Tashana Brown were each awarded substantial scholarships to study abroad in Singapore in fall 2014, South Africa in spring 2015, and Brazil in fall 2015, respectively.

For Tarif Brown, the opportunity to study abroad during the 2014-2015 academic year was life-transforming. “In fall of 2014 I received the Gilman Scholarship to study abroad in Singapore. Without it, I would not have been able to do so. Along with the opportunity to take engaging courses while in Singapore, I interned at the U.S. Embassy, and I also had the chance to travel to Malaysia and Thailand. Studying abroad has truly been a transformative experience for me. I’m fortunate to have had the Gilman Scholarship support my endeavors.”

After studying abroad for three weeks in the SSS Summer in London program, which also included a weekend in Spain, Tashana Brown was inspired to not only pursue a full semester abroad, but to experience a region of the world that she might not have considered prior to going to Europe. A unique aspect of the Gilman Scholarship is its emphasis on encouraging students to study abroad in non-traditional countries. It was this aspect that prompted Tashana to set her sights on Brazil. “The Gilman Scholarship allowed me to venture into unchartered territory, the exotic,” said Tashana. “I would never have been able to afford to study abroad in Brazil without it.”

The opportunity to study abroad in Cape Town, South Africa in spring 2015 enabled Emily Eaton to apply her coursework in Human Development and Family Studies (HDFS) in a hands-on way. While interning at City Mission Educational Services Support Centre, she worked with students who had academic and emotional needs and assisted with art therapy sessions. Emily graduated from UConn in 2015 with a Bachelor of Arts degree in HDFS.

The Gilman scholarship is offered to U.S. citizen undergraduate students of limited financial means who are pursuing academic studies and credit-bearing internships abroad. According to summary statistics on the Gilman Scholarship website, 28% of applicants were awarded the scholarship in the 2014-2015 academic year. Of the 3,666 applicants who are first-generation to college, 1,164 were awarded.
TWO UCONN SSS ALUMNI HONORED AT STATE CONFERENCE

The Connecticut Association of Educational Opportunity Programs (CAEOP) awarded two UConn SSS alumni with Achiever Awards at its annual conference on October 9, 2015 in New Britain. Johnnie Bird and Jose Santana were honored for their professional achievements and commitment to giving back.

Johnnie Bird earned a bachelor’s degree in economics from UConn in 2007. During his tenure at the University he was a walk-on for the men’s basketball team. After graduating, he turned his love for the sport into an opportunity to educate youth about money management and going to college through the organization he founded, Hoop Stars Academy. He has authored a book, The Toughest Two: A Journey of a Walk-On, detailing his challenges while transitioning from an inner-city high school in Bridgeport, CT to college. Currently, he works in the financial aid office at Yale University.

Jose Santana earned a bachelor’s degree in chemistry in 2007, master’s degree in 2010 and most recently a Ph.D. in material sciences, from UConn. Currently, he manages the Wet Chemistry & Analytical Chemistry Laboratories at United Technologies Research Center. Jose serves as a mentor for the UConn McNair Scholars program, and has been a keynote speaker at the SSS Leadership Conference.

CAP is proud of its alumni and congratulates Johnnie and Jose on their many achievements.

STUDENTS CREATE GOOD YEAR QUALITY

It was during the 2012 SSS Summer Program that six young men who had quickly bonded while housed together in the Northwest Goodyear residence hall first dreamed of creating a campus organization dedicated to making a positive difference in the world. The result was Good Year Quality, fondly named after the residence hall in which they had forged their friendship.

Justin Walters, Isaiah Mohammed, Anton Mills, Schneider Jean-Baptiste, Brandon Madden, and Jesse “Jay-R” Richeeds settled on an organization mission to foster the wellness and enrichment of urban and suburban youth through mentoring programs, community service events, scholarships, and workshops. None of the men could have imagined that one of them would be taken too soon. Jesse Richeeds passed away on August 25, 2013 from natural causes related to asthma, just one day before fall classes began. His family, friends, and the entire campus community were stunned by this loss.

The remaining founders of Good Year Quality resolved to honor their friend through the work of the organization of which he’d been such an integral part. Today, it is a thriving organization that has held numerous successful events to raise money for community causes and to foster awareness of the importance of service.

On October 24, 2015, in collaboration with Phi Beta Sigma, Good Year Quality held a Hip-Hop Showcase event in support of the Clean Water Project. Their goal was to raise $1,800 to build a well in honor of Jesse in a village in Ghana, where many of his family is from. The event was a success, and the timing of the honor is fitting; Jesse would have graduated from UConn in May 2016.
STUDY ABROAD IN SOUTH AFRICA

Eleven SSS students had the opportunity to study in Cape Town, South Africa in summer 2015 thanks to partnerships with the Office of Education Abroad and First Year Programs and Learning Communities. The four-week program, which ran mid-May through mid-June, enabled the students to earn four UConn credits, complete a service learning experience, and live with a local family for a weekend.

The students joined a cohort of Learning Community students participating in the Cape Town program. The two groups lived, studied, and traveled together during the four weeks. It was an opportunity for them to gain insight into the history and politics of South Africa while immersed in the culture.

For SSS student Alexander Cruz, the chance to step out of his comfort zone as well as fly on an airplane for the first time, was life transforming. “Traveling to Cape Town was a climactic time in my life,” said Alex. “It allowed me to see a reality that was not my own. The program allowed for a safe space to talk about social injustices and ways to help create change. I loved every second.” Alex was so inspired by his experience that he is currently enrolled in a semester-long exchange program in Australia.

UConn SSS is no stranger to developing short-term summer education abroad programs designed specifically for first-generation, low-income students. In 2000, it launched a three-week program in Liverpool, England, which ran for 10 years before the location shifted to London due to programmatic changes.
Center for Academic Programs

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CENTER FOR ACADEMIC PROGRAMS

MISSION
The Center for Academic Programs provides educational opportunities and access to higher education for students who are first-generation to college, from underrepresented populations, and/or from low-income backgrounds.