

# CENTER FOR ACADEMIC PROGRAMS

# Update

October 2005

## A LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

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

It has been another exciting year for the Center for Academic Programs (CAP). We have increased enrollment numbers, received new grant awards, added new staff to our team, and most importantly, attained a high level of continued success across all of the Center's programs.

We are pleased to welcome four new staff members to the Center. Noemi Maldonado joined CAP as an Upward Bound program advisor in January. Noemi enjoys helping students develop skills to increase their motivation and promote academic and personal growth to prepare them for future success. Nanette Adesso, the new CAP administrative assistant, was also hired in January and has worked with students of all ages. Miguel Falcón joins CAP as a new counselor in the Student Support Services/ConnCAS program (SSS). Miguel has an impressive background of working with individuals from underrepresented and low-income backgrounds. After serving 6 ½ years as the SSS regional coordinator at the Stamford campus, we said goodbye to Tom Gibson in April. Tom accepted a position as assistant director of the Search for Education, Elevation and Knowledge (SEEK) Program at Queens College in New York City and we are proud of his accomplishments. We are pleased to announce the appointment of Kwasi Gyambibi as the new Student Support Services regional coordinator at the Stamford campus. These new members of the CAP team all received degrees from the University of Connecticut. For more

information, please refer to the inside of this newsletter.

The Educational Talent Search program (ETS) has much to be proud of this past year. ETS assisted and placed 150 seniors in college and 94% of high school graduates are enrolled in a program of post-secondary education this fall. Additionally, as much as 90% of high school program participants are enrolled in a curriculum appropriate for college placement. ETS is in the process of developing new partnerships with the City Wide Youth Coalition, a member organization for more than 20 local agencies in New Haven that provide youth services; the Connecticut Children and Family Center; the University of Connecticut Writing Center; and the Urban and Community Studies department at the University of Connecticut, Waterbury campus.

The GEAR UP (GU) program continues to flourish with the successful implementation of its Professional Development component. The Professional Development Academy provides technology training to ensure that 60% of program participant teachers have a basic awareness of technology so that they can begin to integrate software applications and computers into their teaching. Also, this year GU students planned and implemented their own Tsunami Relief Effort called "Our Kids Care: Tsunami Relief." The New Haven Board

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of Alders publicly recognized the students at both schools with an official citation for their efforts. On the financial front, a 6<sup>th</sup> year was added to the original five year GU grant. In addition, following the submission of a new proposal, GU received funds to continue operating for the next four years. This will allow GU to maintain their services to students while implementing innovative programming.

We are pleased to announce that the SSS program was once again funded for four more years. This was a significant accomplishment as the federal rules and regulations were changed making it extremely difficult for programs like ours to get funding. In addition, SSS was invited to compete for funding to increase the number of students in the program by the Connecticut Department of Higher Education. As a result, SSS received \$100,000 which made it possible for us to bring 149 incoming freshmen to the pre-collegiate program this summer. We hope you will enjoy reading about our

students' accomplishments, our programs, activities and more during this past year. All summer participants matriculated in the fall. SSS has also continued to expand its academic interventions by fine-tuning the supplemental instruction offerings. Similar to last year, mandatory supplemental instruction (SI) in the subjects History 101 and Anthropology 100 is being provided to all freshmen in the fall of 2005. So far, preliminary analysis of grades received by SI participants demonstrate that this intervention had a positive impact on students' academic outcomes.

Upward Bound/ConnCAP (UB) continues its successful partnerships with Connecticut high schools in various priority school districts in the state. UB has

earned an excellent reputation as a proven intervention program for at-risk youth. We were proud to see all seniors in the program successfully complete all of the necessary requirements and graduate from high school. We are delighted to report that 96% are moving to post-secondary institutions and of this group 36% chose to attend UConn this fall. Once again UB received a supplemental grant from the U.S. Department of Education to offer a work study opportunity to selected students in the summer program. Working in a college environment students are able to gain first-hand experience in higher education issues, explore possible careers, and earn up to \$300. The work-study component has demonstrated to be a great tool to further enrich the academic and college experience

for students. They are able to build their résumés and receive a certificate for their successful participation in this endeavor. Several departments such as the Student Financial Aid Office, the School of Business, the Mathematics Department, and the School of Pharmacy benefited from having students placed in their offices.

The Center for Academic Programs continues to meet the goal of increasing access to higher education for high potential students who come from underrepresented ethnic or economic backgrounds and/or are first-generation college students. We hope you will enjoy reading about our students' accomplishments, our programs and activities during this past year.

## **UPWARD BOUND STUDENTS PARTICIPATE IN THE GREAT HOLLOW WILDERNESS SCHOOL**

Each year the incoming Center for Academic Program/Upward Bound (ConnCAP/UB) class heads off to the Great Hollow Wilderness School in New Fairfield, CT to spend three days in the 1,000 acre wilderness reserve. Founded in 1970, the Great Hollow Wilderness School is an adventure-based leadership program which provides year-round programming for educational opportunity programs throughout Connecticut.

During their time at Great Hollow, UB students hiked through the preserve, learned to navigate high ropes, climbed rock formations, and confronted whatever challenges nature sent their way. One of the main goals of this trip is to promote group cohesiveness; it gives the new class a chance to learn about themselves and their



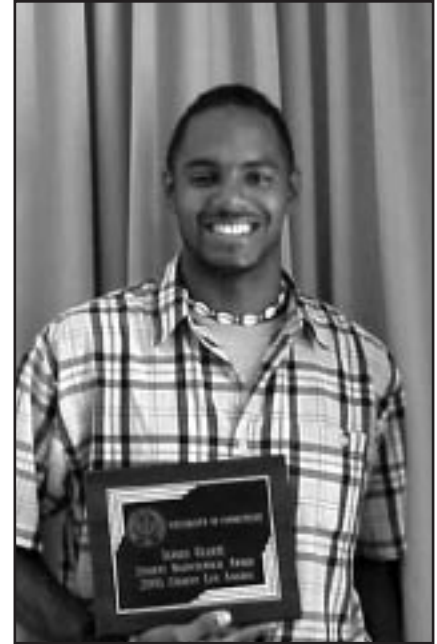
classmates. Many of our students remarked on how much they enjoyed their experience. Willie Smokes stated, "we are all one team . . . my experience at Great Hollow was fun-filled and exciting." Indeed, Rebeca Gomez is ready for another trip, "I learned that I am a much stronger person than I think. I learned that I can trust [my fellow UB students] and that I will never forget them." Meeting new people and

establishing group bonds are important but it is also the goal of this outing to help foster the individual students' sense of confidence, self-knowledge, self-worth, as well as a determination to succeed. Viljan Kristollari remembers, "I faced obstacles but I surpassed them . . . I learned that sometimes things don't always go right but you try again and fix them."

## ALFRED GUANTE RECIPIENT OF THE 2005 STUDENT MULTICULTURAL AWARD

**Alfred Guante**, a recent UConn CAP/SSS graduate, received the *2005 Student Multicultural Award* from the Office of the Vice Provost for Multicultural and International Affairs. The requirement for this award was that the nominee be a student who has encouraged and enhanced diversity at UConn. This was an easy requirement for Alfred to meet. He has been involved in many aspects of University life since he joined UConn through the Center for Academic Programs, Student Support Services (CAP/SSS). He has shown his interest and commitment to the SSS program by attending numerous conferences to give presentations on the benefits of study abroad for students of color; acting as a SSS peer advisor; and as a FYE men-

tor. He has also served as treasurer as well as public relations and promotions chair for the West Indian Student Awareness Organization whose goal is to promote and nurture unity among West Indian students. Finally, he served as the president of the Voices of Freedom Gospel Choir. This choir is a unique ensemble that is open to all students, faculty, staff, and alumni, as well as members of the community. It provides personal elevation and enlightenment of the gospel and spiritual music, from the Black Experience Church, and has recently released a CD entitled "I'll Stand." Alfred is currently making the transition to employment at the UConn Center for Health/HIV Intervention and Prevention, which is a research center dedicated to the



study of the dynamics of health risk behavior and behavioral change in individuals and targets at-risk populations.



Larry Williams was a participant of the Student Support Services Program (SSS) at the University of Connecticut in 1969, when the program was entering its third year of existence and was known as the UConn Summer Program. Larry's many accomplishments include earning a B.S. degree in Business Administration,

## SPOTLIGHT ON CAP/SSS ALUMNUS

### Lawrence (*Larry*) Williams

a Master's degree in Higher Education Administration, and a Sixth-Year Diploma in Professional Education, all from the University of Connecticut. He has served on panels at academic conferences, been published, and has received numerous certificates from various accredited institutions on subjects ranging from leadership, management development, and enrollment planning for minority college admissions.

Larry has served as Senior Admissions Officer and as Senior Assistant Admissions Director at the University of Connecticut since 1999. In this position Larry has worked hard to serve as a liaison with various agencies and community organizations seeking to encourage the enrollment of minority, low income, and first generation students in an institution of higher education. Larry is involved in

and initiated many programs at UConn. He played an integral part in the coordination of Project Recruit, a university visitation program for minority high school students; Yield Receptions, informational meetings for minority students on the services available at UConn; inner city Guidance Counselor Programs; Day of Pride, the selection and honoring of the top 15 and top 100 minority students in Connecticut; and the University of Connecticut Leadership Scholarship, that awards students based on leadership qualities and diversity experiences. In addition, Larry has played a vital role in the improvement of UConn admissions publications and press coverage through his coordination of educational information spots with radio stations in minority communities (College Beat).

## NEWS! NEWS! NEWS!

### Educational Talent Search (ETS)

With the beginning of fall just around the corner, ETS is gathering up last year's successes and looking forward to new ones in the coming school year. This year's highlights include the Fair Haven Middle School graduation which included all eighth graders in the program. Of special note were two students, **Robin Graham** and **Shaquitta Sellers**, who received special recognition in math, science, English, and athletics. Also of interest is the main ETS staff offices' move to the University of Connecticut's Waterbury campus. The new location in UConn's new Waterbury facilities will help create more opportunities for contact between ETS students and the University community.

### Upward Bound (UB)

Again this year, Upward Bound participated in the New England TRIO Day Celebration, which was held in Warwick, Rhode Island. Thirty of the UConn Upward Bound students participated in the event and were accompanied by other TRIO students in various programs from Vermont, Massachusetts, and Maine. During the celebration, the students were given a campus tour of Bryant University just a few miles northwest of Providence. **Josh Thomas** noted, "the campus was very nice and had state-of-the-art facilities." **Bayron Rodriguez** stated, "This college would be an excellent choice for me; I plan on applying here when I am a senior." Students were given the opportunity to listen to a keynote speaker who spoke about motivating the students to fulfill their dreams of becoming college graduates. UB students also participated in a TRIO Day Banner Competition. Special thanks to **Crystal**

**Cruz** for creating the banner and to **James Moye** who presented the banner and did a terrific job representing the ConnCAP/UB Program.

### Student Support Services (SSS)

This past summer has brought record breaking enrollment numbers for the Student Support Services program. On the Storrs campus there are 149 incoming freshmen, which is an increase of approximately 20% over the 117 incoming freshmen last year. The SSS Hartford campus has 72 incoming freshmen, which is more than a one-third increase over last year's enrollment numbers. It is partly due to the SSS commitment to increasing the enrollment and retention of low income and first generation students that UConn can boast high levels of diversity within its student population.

During the 2004-05 academic year SSS implemented mandatory Supplemental Instruction (SI) in the subjects History 101 and Psychology 132 at the Storrs campus. SI requires that an upper division undergraduate attend classes with the students, take their own notes, meet with the professors for additional advice, and then meet once a week with the freshmen in order to answer questions, provide additional exercises, and help the students study effectively.

### GEAR UP (GU)

This past year the GU program added a Professional Development component which focused on technology at Wilbur Cross High School. Technology support and training is provided to ensure that at least 60% of the teachers have an increased

awareness of technology assistance in integrating software application and computers into their teaching methodology. Prior to implementation of this component, GU assessed the teachers at the school and found that 77% required training in the use of computers, basic software applications, email and/or how to infuse technology into their teaching and classroom administration. Forty-two percent of the entire school's faculty is receiving technology training in the areas of MS Office, Internet, e-mail, and computer navigation skills. A mid year assessment was conducted to benchmark teacher's progress toward goals and found that 100% of the teachers had increased their knowledge of technology.

### The Center for Academic Programs Welcomes New Staff Members

**Noemi Maldonado** joined the Upward Bound Program as a Program Advisor in January. Noemi has a long history with the Center as an alumnus of Student Support Services, a former tutor and coordinator for Educational Talent Search, and a former volunteer for GEAR UP. Dedicated to the mission of TRIO, she has a vested interest in helping students overcome barriers to their education. Noemi graduated from the University of Connecticut in 2002, receiving a Bachelor's degree in Human Development and Family Studies. While completing her Master's in Social Work at the University Pennsylvania, she gained valuable experience as a social worker in the field.

A new CAP administrative assistant, **Nanette Adesso**, also joined the Center in January, earning her B.S. from the

University of Connecticut in Human Development and Family Services. Her professional background is in social services and she has over nine years of experience providing administrative support in various settings including higher education. Prior to joining CAP, she was as an Educational Assistant in the Windham Public Schools where she worked with young people in a multicultural setting. Nanette's talents extend into the musical arena; she is both a violinist and singer for a Bluegrass band called Sodbusters.

**Miguel Falcón** recently joined SSS as the department's fourth counselor. He earned his bachelor's degree in Sociology from the University of Connecticut. Since leaving UConn Miguel has spent the past

five years working with at-risk youth in a variety of capacities including at the Salvation Army Marshall House in Hartford and the Connecticut Juvenile Training School. He begins the academic year at UConn by creating his own FYE course for the fall. Miguel is designing this course to focus on the issues that incoming students deal with during their transition to college life. He hopes that this open format will encourage students to raise topics and concerns as they encounter them.

**Kwasi Gyambibi** has joined SSS as the new Regional Coordinator at Stamford. He received both an undergraduate dual-degree, B.S. in Human Development/Family Studies and B.A. in Sociology, and Master's Degree in Sports Management

and Sociology of Sports at UConn. Kwasi worked for SSS Storrs both as an undergraduate student worker and as a graduate assistant. In 2003-2004 he received the inaugural Graduate Peer Educator of the Year award for "outstanding dedication to undergraduate peer education" for both his role as a supervisor for the Peer Advisor program and as Graduate Academic Advisor for UConn's football team. Most recently, Kwasi comes to us from a position as a manager for Chicago Bulls player, Ben Gordon.

## THE CENTER FOR ACADEMIC PROGRAMS' ADVISORY BOARD REFLECTS ON THE IMPORTANCE OF THE SSS PROGRAM

We have all been involved in the Center for Academic Programs (CAP) in various capacities throughout the years. We have learned a lot, personally and professionally, through our affiliation with the various programs housed in CAP.

Specifically with the SSS program, we have learned, or more accurately reaffirmed our belief, that enthusiasm, a desire to succeed, a need to learn, and a will to help others is not limited to the traditional "top" of our high school graduates. The summer SSS program infuses students with an esprit de corps that develops from their own sense of connection to their peers, teachers, and administrators in the Program, all of whom mutually influence each other in powerful ways. To witness such enthusiastic self-abandonment to the classroom experience, as is routine in this program, is truly rewarding. Under normal class-

room conditions, students are isolated from each other; they are strangers to each other and as a result, are intensely shy and guarded. In contrast, students in the Summer SSS program take classes together, study together, eat together, and live together. They bond over that first English paper, the first math exam. They very quickly bond to the point where each feels like they have 100 brothers and sisters rooting for them, not to mention a whole cadre of parental substitutes looking out for them and keeping them focused on what is important.

This level of support would benefit any group of students, but it is essential in order to "fast track" the students in this program. In most cases participants are the first generation in their families to go to college and generally come from economically, socially and academically disadvantaged regions of the state. We are

so thankful to have had the opportunity to be involved with a program that has such an immediate and clearly beneficial impact on our society. Just look at what some of our alumni from these programs have accomplished.

### CAP Advisory Board Members:

Joyleen Albarracin  
Maureen Armstrong  
David Gross  
Steven Jarvi  
Debra Ledey  
Joanne Lewis  
Jean Main  
Jose Manautou  
Maria D. Martinez  
Lee Melvin  
Thomas Recchio  
Angela Rola  
Susana Ulloa-Beal

## REFLECTIONS ON SOUTH AFRICA

Ashley Papanos



Two years ago I had an experience that altered my life and the way that I view the world forever. I became the first in my family ever to venture abroad by traveling to Liverpool, England. I learned that it is true what they say, you can not really understand what it is to be an American until you have spent time abroad. I never would have been able to afford such an opportunity had it not been for the partnership between the Center for Academic Programs and the University of Liverpool allowing me to take part in TRIO's Black Roots study tour at the University of Liverpool. I loved England and took a deep interest in hearing the story of the North Atlantic slave trade from the other side of the world. This trip ultimately sparked my interest to see more of the world and to learn more sides of the stories that I thought I had known so well. In 2004 my SSS counselor forwarded an e-mail to all of her students that advertised a semester in South Africa, I knew immediately that I would apply. The prospect of being able to go overseas again, and this time to Africa, was too much to resist. When I received the acceptance letter I couldn't believe my eyes. My time spent in South Africa was more amazing than I could have ever

imagined. I could never have foreseen the experience that was awaiting me. The work was challenging, the people were incredible, the country was gorgeous, and I can't wait to go back.

While in South Africa I studied at the University of KwaZulu Natal where I chose not to study at the main campus with the other U.S. students but decided to pursue study at the Edgewood campus, which is home to the University's school of education. I studied at the honors level, which is equivalent to our first year of grad school. I loved this element of difficulty and feel that I was able to learn far more about the realities of South African education. My courses allowed me a chance to explore many of the most pressing issues facing South Africa's educational system and also to offer and gain insight on the positive and negative aspects of the American educational system.

My favorite part was the people I met. I believe that I have a unique perspective because I am American and white. Being American, I was readily accepted by black, colored (which is a unique term used by South Africans to refer to racially mixed groups traditionally of Dutch or British and Koi San or other native African heritage) and Indian South Africans. It was assumed that being American meant I wouldn't be racist because they don't see America as having the same level of social problems that they face. I was always encouraged by my peers to break through the color barrier and often found myself standing out as the only white person in the area. On the flip side, being

white was very significant to how my experience in South Africa unfolded. It allowed me to be accepted by the other white people that I met in ways that would not have been the case had I not been. I noticed quickly that they clearly saw me as white first then American; there were times when I was astonished by comments my peers were making in front of me as if they did not realize that they could have been taken as offensive. I loved everyone, and the people were so friendly and helpful. I've already been exchanging e-mails with my new friends.

I have officially fallen in love with South Africa's beautiful country. The scenery was just captivating. There is a perfect mix of everything I love including the Indian Ocean which provided some awesome scenery; the impressive mountains, lush hills and the incredible weather were all more than I could have ever asked for. The flowers and plants were very interesting and I have never had such delicious fresh fruits. South Africa is a unique country and certainly seen as the most westernized country in Africa as it offers a mix of the first and third worlds. I certainly will be back to visit and encourage everyone to make this trip (if you're still in need of motivation they are hosting the world cup for soccer in 2010).



## GEAR UP STUDENTS ORGANIZE A FUNDRAISER TO BENEFIT TSUNAMI VICTIMS

The article's information was adapted from *Engaging Youth through Service Learning* by Nadia L. Ward, Ph.D.



Students at Edgewood and East Rock middle schools, working in collaboration with the Consultation Center at Yale, participated in a program, through UConn GU, called Maximizing Adolescent Academic eXcellence (MAAX). The MAAX

program is a valuable education program, offered both as an in-school and after-school component, which is designed to heighten student awareness of college as a viable option for their future. The after-school component incorporates a service-learning element that is designed to apply important skill sets acquired during the in-school program in an engaging and interactive format.

This year the students were committed to support Southeast Asian and African countries impacted by the Tsunami as their service-learning project. In collaboration with youth, parents, teachers, and school administrators,

East Rock and Edgewood students planned and implemented their own Tsunami Relief Effort called 'Our Kids Care: Tsunami

Relief.' Middle school students organized a special fundraising event, with proceeds going to the Save the Children USA charity, in order to assist these countries in the rebuilding of their communities.

Approximately 120 students and parents came to hear the students share what they had learned about countries affected by



the Tsunami. Students at East Rock engaged teachers and parents by presenting a moving pictorial account of their projects

and elementary students performed a mini-recital. Collectively, the youth at both schools raised \$1,400 to support the rebuilding of communities affected by the Tsunami! And for all of their hard work and effort, the New Haven Board of Alders publicly recognized the students at both schools with an official citation for their commitment to global outreach, community revitalization, civic responsibility, and leadership.



## BLACK ROOTS STUDY TOUR IN LIVERPOOL



This summer marked the fourth 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 London and Chester in Britain as well as to Berlin, Germany as a means of augmenting their educational experience.

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**Andres Romero**  
UCONN CAP/SSS - Stamford

This tour has opened my eyes to different cultures and lifestyles. I brought

home with me a lot of memories from the study tour such as: Liverpool's football championship celebration, tours within the different cities throughout Europe that we visited, lectures and other anecdotes that I had with the friends that I made during the program.

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**Jean Argant**  
UCONN CAP/SSS - Stamford

I learned from our tour guide, Eric Lynch, that sometimes its good to take a look at what's around you, because in



Liverpool the history was right before my eyes in the buildings' structures and fixtures. Liverpool, like the United States, is a diverse melting pot and deals with the same issue, racism, which we've dealt with in the past. Traveling to England and being a part of the Black Roots Study Tour was amazing, and has given me motivation to see more of the world.

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**Melissa Martinez**  
UCONN CAP/SSS - Storrs

Our side excursion to Berlin was an eye opener. I was able to walk on the street where Hitler's bunker still lays, see the steps where he gave his speeches, and visit a synagogue with 24 hour security guards because of the threats they still face. We heard that 5000 Neo-Nazis marched there just two weeks prior to our arrival. To hear that this was still happening and not hearing about it at home made me wonder if what happened years ago could happen again? Overall, these past three weeks have been an opportunity of a lifetime and something that a history book could have never replaced.



## CONGRATULATIONS TO THE FOLLOWING SSS STUDENTS WHO GRADUATED DURING THE 2004-2005 ACADEMIC YEAR!

Jamie Baker  
Ayisha Bennett  
Travis Bish  
Luther Blackwell  
Andrew Brown  
Jillian Brown  
Youngman Byun  
Vasti Centeno  
Angel DeLosSantos, Jr  
Richard Devillier  
Ruth Diaz  
John DiPaola  
Jeiman Dosky  
Alvin Douglas  
Veronica Flores  
Mirza Galeano  
Tarray Gibbs

Maggy Girgis  
Anfrea Gomez  
Carmen Gonzalez  
Erica Granoff  
Alfred Guante  
Agnieszka Halas  
Leah Hamel  
Darrell Hardy  
Elizabeth Hazelwood  
Magdalena Jajkieqicz  
Tylon Jenkins  
Mirat Joshi  
Jinny Klimas  
Jeronica Lawrence  
Janaya Lewis  
Michael Lopez  
Amara Luong

Luis Mendez  
Denisa Miliku  
Christina Monsalve  
Angelo Monsalve  
Kevin Nketia  
Karen Noguera  
Chirag Parikh  
Sabrina Pires  
Rene Rosado  
Katherin Rubiano  
Michelle Russell  
Ricardo Salmon  
Charmaine Smith  
Dario Soto  
Khanh Ton  
Earlando Torres  
Henry Tran

Enobong Ukpeh  
Giselle Vasquez  
Liana Vazquez  
Monique Vega  
Jennifer Vega-Hall  
Lloyd Waldron  
Jonelle Wallace  
Tanicka Ward  
Lovette Watson  
Bogumila Wdowik  
Matthew Wentzel  
Katrina Williams  
Monty Young  
Qiuhua Zhang



### SSS STUDENT EMILY DUTRA REFLECTS ON HER STUDY TOUR IN PORTUGAL

This past summer, SSS participant Emily Dutra, along with ten other UConn students, participated in the Avery Point's Maritime Study Abroad program in Portugal for three weeks. The trip focused on internships at a marine mammal facility, Zoomarine. While there the students were given the opportunity to work with trainers and caretakers of all kinds of sea animals including: seals, sea lions, sharks, birds of prey, and dolphins. In addition to working with marine mammals, the program presented the chance to explore Portugal by visiting different sites throughout the country including Sagres, Evora, and Silves. Below are Emily's reflections on her experience:

Thanks to the generous scholarship given to me by Dr. Comprone, Vice Provost of the University of Connecticut's Avery Point campus, I was able to travel to Portugal with the UConn Maritime Studies Summer program. Traveling to Portugal has always been one of my dreams, and this past May, I was finally able to fulfill that dream. My ancestors originated from the Açores Islands, which are off the coast of mainland Portugal. Until recently, I had only experienced a small portion of the Portuguese ethnicity in my family. When I traveled to Portugal, however, I had the chance to experience Portuguese culture to the fullest. Traveling to Por-

tugal changed my life by allowing me to see another society other than my own, experiencing traditional ceremonies, and the cultural aspects of daily life. While I was in Portugal, I interned at Zoomarine, which was a marine theme park in Guia, Portugal. I interacted not only with the animals, but also learned from the trainers who were passionate about the animals they worked with. What I am bringing back from this trip is a greater appreciation for my friends, family, and animals which I acquired by living in Portugal for a month.

## SSS COUNSELORS EFFORTS EXTEND BEYOND THE CAP OFFICE TO SERVE THE UNIVERSITY COMMUNITY

Center for Academic Programs/Student Support Services (CAP/SSS) counselors find time to bring their interests and expertise on various subjects into the classrooms to teach students, including those outside of the CAP/SSS program. SSS counselors are some of the most industrious staff on campus. In addition to advising students on issues regarding academics, majors, careers, internships, study abroad, financial aid, career planning, graduate school, and personal matters, the SSS counselors are involved in numerous activities that impact the lives of students University-wide.

Marie McCain is involved in issues of peace and justice and was awarded a scholarship to attend the Facing History and Ourselves Institute in 2002. Marie has brought her interest in human rights into the classroom. She teaches INTD 182 Human Rights: Facing History and Ourselves. Marie's dedication to increasing the awareness of human rights to students has

inspired others to teach and has led to the emergence of two new classes. She encourages those who are interested in human rights to consider developing an INTD 182 seminar to expand the opportunities for freshmen and sophomores.

Leo Lachut is often requested to do presentations, workshops and training sessions for other departments and classes at the University. Leo presents topics such as stress management, student development, peer involvement, and working with special populations. Leo, who is involved in regional and state organizations, has facilitated workshops around the country. He also serves on several University committees including PeerFest where he is heavily involved in training and preparing University students for leadership. It is for efforts such as those listed above that Leo received an Outstanding First Year Experience Teaching Award from the University.

Carl Dean is a published author of the book entitled, *Life...Through the Words & Between the Lines*. Carl is a poet and spoken word artist who has performed in various venues in Connecticut, Massachusetts, New York, and Maryland. He has also performed at literary socials, high schools, youth centers, and correctional facilities. Carl coordinated, hosted and performed in a poetic showcase which raised \$500 for the creation of a poetry library collection for a Hartford elementary school. Carl brings his love of poetry into the classroom by teaching an INTD 182 Performance Poetry class. He created the class to provide a venue for poets of all levels to express themselves and to step out of their comfort zones.

## A RECORD BREAKING YEAR FOR SSS STORRS!

This has been a very busy yet rewarding year for Student Support Services (SSS)! The department applied and was recently awarded another four years of federal funding. Also, \$100,000 was obtained from the Connecticut Department of Education through a proposal competition, to support a larger number of SSS eligible students coming to UConn. Indeed, on the Storrs campus there are currently 149 incoming freshmen for the 2005-2006 academic year. These incoming students have only recently completed their summer pre-collegiate program. The pre-collegiate experience is meant to prepare participants for the rigors of college courses and the stress of adjusting to university life. **Porscha McLean**, pre-med and international

studies major, felt that this summer has prepared her for the upcoming academic semester. "The intensive courses helped me explore college studies and become familiar with the aspects many incoming freshmen struggle with such as organization, time management, and punctuality." Also, **Tim Fortin** noted, "the summer program has made an impact on the way I will study. This experience has shown me what it will be like during the fall." The summer program is also a way for students to have fun and forge friendships that will carry them through their challenging first year. **David Rivera**, chemistry major, shared one of his most memorable experiences this summer. "My favorite memory would be rehearsing for our skit the day

before graduation. We all were in this hot classroom. While we were rehearsing I felt like a piece of the puzzle. We just all seemed to fit in perfectly with each other." Porscha McLean also shared that her, "favorite experience was when Lucy Hurston came to share her experiences with us. I was greatly intrigued by her confidence and many accomplishments. She inspired me to excel in my studies and go beyond the average by making a difference in the world." **Sean Davis**, a psychology major, felt that this summer he "had made many friends and had fun with [his] new friends as well as with the Resident Advisors." David Rivera agreed noting, "I definitely have met friends good enough to be called brothers."

## EDUCATIONAL TALENT SEARCH PARTICIPANT REFLECTS ON HER INVOLVEMENT WITH ETS

*"Wherever you have an opportunity... take advantage of it!"*

**Kathy Santiago**, a graduate of Windham High School, joined the Educational Talent Search (ETS) program as a sixth-grader. She brought with her many talents including a gift with numbers which is exhibited through her success in math. Kathy has been an ideal model of what a dedicated ETS student ought to be. As a high school student, Kathy often found herself working two jobs after school in order to support herself. Even though she typically worked until 10 or 11 at night, Kathy maintained her honor roll status and continued her involvement with ETS as well as with her plans for college.

Kathy credits the many career fairs, university fairs, and aptitude exercises

that ETS offered with her decision to go to college as an accounting major. "It's a way to focus more on math," she says, and adds that ETS helped her realize that she wanted a better future – and how to go about achieving it. Now an incoming freshman at UConn Storrs, Kathy is glad that she followed her ETS counselor's advice and applied to the University. She says she loves the big, beautiful campus, but particularly she appreciates the chance to polish up her math and English skills by participating in the University's Student Support Services (SSS) program before the fall semester. Kathy notes that at first she was homesick, living away from friends and family, but the camaraderie among her fellow SSS students quickly made the dormitory feel like home.



Kathy hopes one day "to travel overseas to Europe and Africa – anywhere!" To current ETS students, she has this advice: "Wherever you have an opportunity, take advantage of it. Don't let anyone stop you!"

## COMMUNITY BUILDING AT THE SSS WATERBURY CAMPUS

This past year the Student Support Services (SSS) Waterbury students were very active on a variety of fronts including many of the activities sponsored by the Associated Student Government, Admissions, and especially in the Puerto Rican/Latin American Student Organization (PR/LASO) and African American Organization. Two students shared their experiences with these organizations:

### **Creating the African American Student Organization**

**Martina Persaud**

I am a third year SSS student majoring in Human Development and Family Studies. The African American Student Organization was started in the 2005 spring semester by Waterbury campus students. Though the union had a late start, there were a significant number of people interested in joining the group. The

members of the organization have already begun formulating ideas for the upcoming academic year including getting involved with other community agencies in an effort to foster a better relationship between the African American community and the University. With a new academic year ahead, our goal is to become very active in assisting the University in the promotion of cultural awareness through various educational and social events at the UConn Waterbury Campus.

### **The Puerto Rican/Latin American Student Organization**

**Iris Lopez**

I am a third year student majoring in Nursing. As a SSS student on the Waterbury campus I have been involved in the Puerto Rican/Latin American Student Organization (PR/LASO) since it was formed in January of 2004. I am, however,

only one of the many SSS students who are active in the organization. Indeed, the offices of president, secretary and publicist were all held by SSS students this past year. As an organization we try to keep active by reaching out to the University community as well as to the community at large. This past fall semester, PR/LASO sponsored a toy drive and a parade where we collected toys for less fortunate children and sang Christmas carols around campus. In the spring semester, PR/LASO co-sponsored, along with the Literacy Volunteers of Greater Waterbury, the Caribbean Caliente. Additionally, a Latino Open House for the community and a school picnic, "Fiesta Caliente," for the students were sponsored by PR/LASO. Finally, organization members participated in the 5<sup>th</sup> Annual CLAS (The Congress of Latin American Students) Conference and College Fair.

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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.