

## A LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

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

Welcome to the first spring edition of the CAP Newsletter. In an effort to balance the major demands of the Center in a more efficient manner we have decided to distribute our Newsletter in the spring instead of the fall semester. In the past few years it has become extremely challenging to produce this publication when we are also working on several residential and non-residential summer programs. The new cycle will allow us to share with you more exciting news about summer and fall student outcomes.

Since the last newsletter in October much has happened in our fiscal environment. As a result we have been working hard coming up with strategies to lessen the impact of the proposed budget cuts. The loss of one of our counselor positions has presented a challenge but also an opportunity to increase collaborations with other staff members in our unit. Fortunately, the significant amount of financial support from non-UConn sources has allowed the Center to continue growing in a few areas. One of those is the Educational Talent Search Program (ETS); Antony Wormack has joined the Center as one of the ETS Advisors effective December 29, 2008. Antony earned his bachelor's from Lesley University in Cambridge, MA. Currently, he is working on his master's degree in organizational management at Eastern Connecticut State University. Antony has a rich background in advising youth and adults from underrepresented populations. He understands the barriers our students may face as they deal with financial issues, family values and educational preparation. Antony's strong student focus and commitment to professional growth and opportunity in an academic environment come from his position as a student advisor at the Hartford Consortium for Higher Education in Hartford, CT. His previous work experience also includes being a substitute teacher in the Hartford Public School System and a placement and testing advisor at the College of Staten Island/City University of New York.

I am also very pleased to announce that Douglas Wilour joined CAP as the Administrative Assistant on Friday, February 13, 2009. Doug comes to CAP from the UConn School of Pharmacy. With over nine years of experience at

UConn he brings an impressive background in administrative, fiscal, and technical support in higher education settings. Prior to working at the University of Connecticut, Doug provided administrative support at Ohio State University in the Office of International Education and Undergraduate Admissions.

Doug earned his bachelor's degree in Human Development and Family Relations from UConn. I hope you will all join me in welcoming our two newest additions to the department.

Despite the short time between the last newsletter and this one, we have numerous highlights to share with you about our students. Two SSS students have been selected for the prestigious Connecticut Leadership Legacy Experience Program. Through a highly competitive process students are chosen to participate in a year-long leadership enhancement experience. Some of the components of the program include scheduled lectures, workshops, faculty and alumni mentoring and attending a summit.

Further, this past semester we began collaborating with the UConn English Department to offer three sections of SSS Learning Community for 47 students. This initiative has proven a very successful retention strategy for the SSS students. The preliminary reports show a significant difference in academic performance between the group that participated in the SSS Learning Community and those that didn't. Recently, SSS partnered with STRONG-CT to take 40 students to see the Body Exhibit in New York City as part of the efforts to offer cultural activities to their participants.

## *Inside This Issue*

GEAR UP Students Attend Inauguration.....	3
"Young Poets".....	4
College Goal Sunday.....	4
SSS Students in Leadership.....	5
Brandon Graham Received CAEOP Trio.....	5
CAP Completes Self-Evaluation.....	6
SSS Staff Member Honored.....	6
Taking Action Today.....	7
Scholarship Awarded.....	7
SSS Students Study Abroad.....	8
Collaborating to Enhance Student Success.....	9
Robotics ... It's Alive!!!.....	10
INDT Class Raises Funds.....	10
ETS and the Blumen Database.....	11
SSS Remembers Bertozzi Mposo.....	11

In the fall the Upward Bound program organized an out-of-state college trip in New York for their high school seniors. Students and staff visited Marist College, SUNY New Paltz, Vassar College, and the Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library. Of particular note is that one of UB program alumni, Brandon Graham, was recognized with the TRIO Achiever Award presented by the Connecticut Association of Educational Opportunity Programs (CAEOP) at their annual conference on December 4, 2008, at Wesleyan University.

ETS has expanded its programming and continues to develop new initiatives. The new program advisor will further facilitate the delivery of services to students and clients seeking to re-enter secondary or post-secondary institutions. In New Haven ETS has been working very hard to establish the Leadership Academy which is a partnership between Wilbur Cross CT Scholars Academy, UConn ETS, and the CT Business Bureau. This 12-week course takes place during the academic day and was founded with the goal of providing students with career exploration opportunities and college preparatory workshops. The success of the Leadership Academy at Wilbur Cross CT Scholars has attracted the interest of staff at James Hillhouse High School, another school serviced by ETS. School administrators at Hillhouse are in full support of the efforts being made to implement the Leadership Academy at their school in fall 2009.

Five lucky students from the University of Connecticut GEAR UP Program participated in a unique opportunity called *The People's Inaugural Project*. The Project was created by Mr. Earl Stafford as a way to give the homeless, poor, wounded soldiers, non-profit employees and others the chance to be part of a historic event such as the 2009 Presidential Inauguration Ceremony. Our students, Aharon Walker, Christian Aviles, Gabriel Cartagena, Felix Garcia, and Carlos Catalan stayed at the luxurious J.W. Marriott Hotel and attended a prayer breakfast with gospel legend Shirley Caesar performing, a Martin Luther King Jr. luncheon where his oldest son was the keynote speaker, and a youth ball, among other events.

These students were able to experience first-hand the energy of the most historic inauguration while watching the parade from a special sky box on the 12<sup>th</sup> floor of the J.W. Marriott. For three days, these 11<sup>th</sup> graders had the opportunity to meet people from all over the country while taking in all of the special moments the different events provided. According to the students and their chaperone it was truly a joyous and exciting time to be in Washington, DC. For our students it is something they will treasure forever and be able to look back and someday say, "Wow! We were part of history."

The SSS regional programs are thriving and this is evidenced by the activities and events taking place in the past few months. The Greater Hartford campus is pleased to have four students making Dean's list last fall and extends congratulations to the following December graduates: Genesis Coss, Audrene Dias, Todd Esson, Devenia Facey, Svetlana Jovanovic, and Yamaris Ortiz. On January 29, SSS Storrs alum, Michelle Roman, '01, visited the SSS Hartford Coordinator's INTD 1820, Peer Involvement/Community Outreach class, to recruit student mentors for the Nutmeg Big Brothers/Big Sisters program. So far three SSS students joined the program to serve as mentors. In Waterbury, SSS students continued their community involvement by participating in the Thanksgiving Food Distribution sponsored by Interfaith Ministries Food Pantry. Several SSS students served as Husky Ambassadors at the Waterbury Fall Open House for incoming students and their parents. At the Stamford campus, SSS students were very active in the campaigns of Congressmen Christopher Shays and Jim Himes with both legislators visiting the campus. CAP alumni were privileged to be reconnected with former SSS regional coordinator Tom Gibson at CUNY in Queens, NY. These SSS alum plan to be fully engaged with CAP alumni activities beginning with the summer program 2009. At the Avery Point campus, students and staff appeared on a cable access TV program to encourage others to become involved in mentoring. This mentoring program developed in spring 2005 continues to expand and is gaining popularity among SSS students at the Avery Point campus. Last December Dr. Joe Comprone, Associate Vice Provost; Jose Matias Rojas, SSS student; Tedman Martinez, guidance counselor at Bennie Dover Jackson Middle School in New London; and SSS regional coordinator Marcia Orcutt were interviewed on a show hosted by Peg Curtin in her New London station. The participants were also provided an opportunity to thank the Community Foundation of Southeastern Connecticut for funding the UConn Avery Point mentoring program.

Other highlights of the last few months involve the completion of the first phase of the Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS). The CAS Self Evaluation Report was completed in January. I invite you to read the article inside summarizing the CAS related activities. Also, the staff of the pre-collegiate programs participated in a training program to update their skills in working with the database and record keeping system called Blumen (more details about the Blumen system inside). I hope you enjoy this spring edition of the CAP newsletter, particularly the students' highlights. As always, I express my appreciation to the staff and to the readers for your continuous support.

## GEAR UP STUDENTS ATTEND PRESIDENTIAL INAUGURATION

Five students from the University of Connecticut GEAR UP Program were invited to take part in the historic inauguration of the 44<sup>th</sup> President of the United States. This opportunity was made possible due to the generosity of *The People's Inaugural Project*. This Project was created by Mr. Earl Stafford with the purpose of providing an opportunity for individuals, who would have lacked the means otherwise, to attend and enjoy the Presidential Inauguration

Ceremony in style. GEAR UP students, Aharon Walker, Christian Aviles, Gabriel Cartagena, Felix Garcia, and Carlos Catalan were able to enjoy lodging at the luxurious J.W. Marriott Hotel. The students, along with staff member Alfred Guante, had



*GEAR UP Staff Alfred Guante with Earl Stafford*

the great honor of meeting Mr. Earl Stafford and Mr. Ben Cox who is one of the original "Freedom Riders" from the 1960's. For three days, these high school juniors were able to meet people from all over the country while taking in all of the special moments the different inauguration celebration events provided. They attended a Prayer Breakfast where Gospel Legend Shirley Caesar performed. They went to a luncheon where Martin Luther King Jr.'s oldest son was the keynote speaker. They also attended the Youth Ball and were able to watch the Inaugural Parade from a special sky box on the 12<sup>th</sup> floor of the J.W. Marriott. It was truly a joyous and exciting time to be in Washington D.C. Our students and staff were extremely fortunate to be part of this historic, once in a



*GEAR UP students and staff with Ben Cox*

lifetime event. Each of them will treasure these memories forever and be able to look back and someday say, "We were there."

GEAR UP would like to thank Noel Grant of Regional Water Authority and William P. Villano, Executive Director for Workforce Alliance in New Haven, for providing the funds to cover the cost of the formal wear for the students.



*Students' View from Hotel*



*GEAR UP students with actor Keith Davis*

## ETS STUDENTS PARTICIPATE IN "THE YOUNG POETS"

Four years ago a group of Windham High School and Windham Academy students, many of whom participate in the Educational Talent Search program (ETS), came together to share their voices and experiences through poetry. They have become a well known group in the Willimantic area.

The Young Poets have performed at Curbstone Press in Willimantic, at the Julia de Burgos Pocket Park. Soon their open mic poetry readings were a monthly event at Wrench in the Works, located at 861 Main Street in Willimantic. They opened for the Freedom Writers Diary movie at the Movie Plex Theater in Mansfield, and were guests on the Wayne Norman morning show at WILL. In March of 2006 they raised enough money to see Erin Gruwell and Maria Reyes at the Bushnell Theater in Hartford. Erin invited them to the VIP room where the Poets performed for Erin and guests. The Poets continue to perform in our community and throughout Connecticut. The Young Poets group is comprised of about 11 students, half of which are participants in CAP's Educational Talent Search program. They have been working diligently to follow in the footsteps of the original Freedom Writers; thus they are working towards raising funds to bring Maria Reyes, an original Freedom



Writer student, back to Connecticut so that she may share her amazing story with the Willimantic community. These student poets are fundraising through a series of poetry slams in Willimantic and a Pancake Breakfast that was held on February 28<sup>th</sup> at the Willimantic Applebee's. If you want to find out more about how to support this talented group of young individuals, please visit their website at [www.whsliteracyzone.com](http://www.whsliteracyzone.com).

## COLLEGE GOAL SUNDAY

On Sunday, January 25, 2009 volunteers including University of Connecticut Upward Bound staff members reported to 12 different sites around the state to help in the 2<sup>nd</sup> annual College Goal Sunday event. During College Goal Sunday, students and parents spoke in Spanish or English with experts giving in-depth help in registering for the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). In addition to receiving assistance in filling out the online FAFSA, participants received general information regarding state and federal financial aid programs.

In Connecticut, the event was held at Capital Community College, Eastern Connecticut State University, Gateway Community College, Manchester Community College, Middlesex Community College, New London Science Technology High School, Norwalk Community College, Post University, The Discovery Museum and Central High School in Bridgeport, Saint Joseph College, and Western Connecticut State University.

Students and parents registered online or walked-in at noon to receive a tote bag filled with financial aid infor-

mation. Participants were able to enter their name into a scholarship drawing before moving on to the refreshments, a welcome address, and then to the computer lab where they were able to fill out and submit their completed FAFSA application.

College Goal Sunday is funded by the Lumina Foundation for Education, a private, independent entity that strives to help people achieve their potential by expanding access and success in education beyond high school. College Goal Sunday efforts are also being led by the Connecticut Association of Professional Financial Aid Administrators (CAPFAA) and the Connecticut Association for Educational Opportunity Programs (CAEOP). Sponsors included: Citizens Bank, Key Bank, Sallie Mae, Citi, Connecticut Student Loan Foundation, American Student Assistance, Student Loan Xpress, ED Fund, Bank of America. Various partners include: ASPIRA, the Urban League of Greater Hartford, State of Connecticut Department of Higher Education, Connecticut State Department of Education, and the Hartford Public Library.

## SSS STUDENTS IN LEADERSHIP

Student Support Services Program participants have been involved in the University of Connecticut's Leadership Legacy Program from its inception in 2007. Each year an elite group of students is selected from a highly competitive pool of campus leaders to participate in this year long program of events and experiences designed to build their personal, academic, and professional repertoire.

The first Leadership Legacy group of thirteen students included one SSS student, Adonis Chamble. Adonis was very active on campus, participating in the Student Union Board of Governors, Voices of Freedom, Black Students Association, and the SSS Peer Advisement Program. The twelve member 2008 Leadership Legacy Program again included two SSS students, Juan Carmona and Camille Patterson. Juan serves as a Community Assistant, First Year Programs mentor, and as a Eucharistic Minister at St. Thomas Aquinas in Storrs. Camille, preparing for

law school, serves as a mentor in the Peer Leadership Instructor program, mentors middle school students and works as a building manager in the Student Union. The newly selected Legacy Leadership group for 2009 includes Brandon Luna and Akina Warner. Brandon serves as Vice President for Bringing Awareness into Latino Ethnicities (BAILE), Program Coordinator for Puerto Rican Latin American Cultural Center's (PRLACC) Relay of Life team and is a member of Homecoming and Latin Fest committees. Akina serves as a peer mentor in the Peer Leadership Instructor program, Program Director for the Generations Family Health Center through UConn's Community Outreach Program and as an intern for the Episcopal Church Medical Trust. Our congratulations to Adonis, Juan, Camille, Brandon and Akina as well as all SSS students who take on leadership roles and serve their University community.

## UPWARD BOUND ALUMNUS BRANDON GRAHAM RECEIVES CAEOP TRIO ACHIEVER AWARD



*Upward Bound Director Susana Ulloa with CAEOP TRIO Achiever Brandon Graham*

(CAP) Upward Bound (UB) program, who has never forgotten the "wonderful foundation" he received from UB.

Mr. Graham attended Sacred Heart University where he earned both his Bachelor of Science degree in English with a concentration in journalism and an MBA. His commitment to education continues on as he is currently pursuing his PhD at Columbia University.

Professionally, Brandon Graham has been innovative,

At the 22<sup>nd</sup> Annual Conference of the Connecticut Association of Educational Opportunity Programs (CAEOP), a UConn CAP Alumnus was honored as a TRIO Achiever. The recipient, Brandon M. Graham, is a successful alumnus of the University of Connecticut's Center for Academic Programs

daring and successful. His publishing company, Brownstone Publishing Foundation, Inc., founded in 2007 is a non-profit organization aiming "toward the elevation of social consciousness concerning issues of race relations, peace, and overall socio-intellectual thought through readings/workshops, slams, showcases, and a detailed lecture series on the importance of literature, physical wellness, and music."

Mr. Graham's love for the written word has translated into other areas of his life. He is a popular lecturer who travels around the country providing educational and personal empowerment workshops entitled: "Mind, Body, and Soul." In addition to publishing the work of other authors through his company Brandon has also published several of his own works including *Untie Me Up: A Poetic Explanation on Loneliness*, *A Love Supreme: Amputated Feelings and Prosthetic Apologies*, and has a soon to be released work titled *The Cost* in the works.

Brandon will also be representing the Connecticut TRIO alumni at the policy seminar in Washington, D.C. There he will meet with our state's representatives to give testimonials regarding the necessity of TRIO programs for student success.

## **CAP COMPLETES THE FIRST PHASE OF A SELF-EVALUATION FOLLOWING THE COUNCIL FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF STANDARDS (CAS) FOR TRIO AND EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY PROGRAMS**

About a year ago we began discussing ways by which the Center could evaluate its programs and services. This has been a topic of discussion in our department for a few years. We have always been interested in finding out more about the effectiveness and efficiency of our programs. However we knew that conducting a departmental evaluation was a huge undertaking, especially given the lack of administrative support for these types of projects.

Regardless of the work ahead of us, in January 2008, we decided to embark on the process. We chose the Council for the Advancement of Standards (CAS) in Higher Education for TRIO and Other Educational Opportunity Programs as the guide to implement the departmental self-evaluation process. We selected CAS because of its relevance to TRIO programs. After consulting with other TRIO professionals and participating in a training session to explore CAS in more depth, we realized that an evaluation of this type for the Center carried a number of hurdles. Most of these are due to the programmatic structure; the Center is the umbrella for three TRIO programs and one GEAR UP partnership grant. In other words, unlike other programs that have implemented CAS we are not a single operation (one program) but rather a compilation of programs under one umbrella, CAP.

We decided to evaluate each individual program, Student Support Services, Educational Talent Search, Upward Bound and GEAR UP, and also the Center and its University-wide services. This was a complicated and, at times, overwhelming process. The self-evaluation of each program and the Center was conducted methodically, carefully, and thoughtfully.

All staff members in the department were involved in the self-evaluation and were assigned to one of five teams. Each team was responsible to evaluate two to three standards and sub-standards. Team members met several times over the last year and conducted research to address each evaluation standard and sub-standard. Team members gave careful ratings and produced action steps for further follow up.

Some of the highlights of this self-evaluation process included:

A special presentation on November 2, 2007 to the CAP staff facilitated by Mr. Michael Dennehy, Upward Bound Director at Boston University. The main topics for discussion included an explanation of the CAS Standards and a description of the 13 parts of the evaluation process. It also answered questions about how these Standards can address challenges for TRIO Projects and how to implement an action plan adopting Professional Standards. In addition, we had two professional development activities to further examine the concept of CAS on Friday, February 1, 2008 that were facilitated by the CAP staff.

In December 2008, team members finished their specific sections and responsibilities. A final report of findings and recommendations is in progress and will be available for distribution to the CAP staff and University constituencies. Once we have an opportunity to review the self-evaluation report, we will be poised to undertake the implementation phase.

### **SSS STAFF MEMBER HONORED BY CFES**



The Center for Academic Programs is proud to announce that the SSS Coordinator at Stamford, Kwasi Gyambibi, was honored by the Vermont-based nonprofit organization College For Every Student (CFES). Kwasi was presented with the 2008 Mario Peña Award at the National Conference in Bolton Landing, NY this past November. This recognition is given to those individuals who have strengthened CFES school-college partnerships. The recipients of this award are committed to raising the academic aspirations and performance of underserved youth so they can prepare for, gain access to, and succeed in college. Kwasi was chosen for his many roles in preparing students for post secondary education and supporting them throughout their collegiate experiences, i.e., his involvement in UConn Mentors, UPals, and North Castle Scholars. Congratulations to Kwasi

for this well deserved achievement and recognition.

## TAKING ACTION TODAY FOR A BETTER TOMORROW



On October 3, 2008 over 130 teens participated in the Connecticut Environmental Action Day (CEAD) hosted by the University of Connecticut and sponsored by the College of Agriculture and Natural Resources, the Cooperative Extension System, the Jr. Science & Humanities Program, the Center for Academic Programs, the CT State Museum of Natural History, and the Year of Science. The goal of this conference was to give students an increased understanding of the environment and ways to protect it. Students attended a variety of workshops throughout the day, which included everything from food safety and green chemistry, to forest ecosystems and using Global Positioning System (GPS) technology. Asontwa Bryant from Hillhouse High School in New Haven said, “Come interested and you won’t leave here without learning something.”

Windham High School students who attended this conference have taken on the conference’s challenge of “going green.” Through a small grant, funded by the CEAD program, Educational Talent Search students in Mrs. Carey-Lyon’s and Mrs. Handler–Ruiz’s classes at Windham High school have started the “Green Up Your Room” project.

This project will bring plant life into selected classrooms. The students will research the growth of the plants as well as study the effect these plants have on the classroom. The students are also sharing their knowledge and importance of “Going Green” with their peers through weekly “Going Green” tips in the school’s morning announcements.

In addition, UConn Upward Bound students who attended CEAD are researching *environmentally friendly* guidelines to spread awareness on how to effortlessly “go



green.” They will distribute this information carried in reusable cloth shopping bags to parents and students from New Haven and Hartford high schools during social events, such as Parent-Teacher Conference Nights. Both the UB and ETS students plan to present the findings from these projects at next year’s Connecticut Environmental Action Day.

## SCHOLARSHIP AWARDED TO UCONN GREATER HARTFORD CAMPUS STUDENTS

This past summer the Greater Hartford Chapter of the UConn Alumni Association awarded six \$200 book scholarships to Student Support Service students for their academic performance. The recipients were Vanessa Adu-Baffour, Catherine Byun, Diana Cortavarria, Maribel Garcia, Quenton Narcisse, and Tamarah Swan. These incoming freshman students were very appreciative of this award as it helped them to purchase their books for the fall 2008 semester.

## **SSS STUDENTS STUDY ABROAD**

The Student Support Services program continues to encourage students to enroll in study abroad opportunities during their undergraduate career. Since the creation of the SSS Study Abroad Program in 2001, more than 100 students have participated in the SSS Study Abroad Program in Liverpool, England. Of this number twenty students have returned to Liverpool for an internship the following summers. The number of students participating in other UConn Study Abroad programs has also increased tremendously. Thirty-seven students will have completed a study abroad during the 2008-2009 year alone in a variety of places including Singapore; Greece; the Dominican Republic; Paris, France; Stuttgart, Germany; Granada, Spain; Liverpool, England; London, England; Cape Town, South Africa; and Oaxaca, Mexico. Below are two student reflections.



*SSS Students in Liverpool*

### **Greece**

**By Azdar Choudhury**

I traveled to Greece as part of a study abroad program sponsored by the Hellenic Center at UConn. Our group had 45 students from institutions such as NYU, BU, UNC, Fordham, URI and a student from Perth, Australia. Upon arrival we went straight to Rhodes, which people claim is the sunniest island in Greece. Our hotel located right in the center of the city gave us walking access to the most popular and historic places in the city. Most days after class we would walk to the old city, which was located inside the historical 14th century Grand Master's Palace, where we would play capture the flag. We also took field trips to historic cities like Delphi, Olympia, the ancient city of Kamiros, Lindos,



and the island of Simi. We stayed in Athens for 3 days on our way back to the United States. There we visited the Parthenon and several archaeological museums including being allowed to tour the Greek National Archaeological Museum that had not yet opened to the public. The Greek National Archaeological Museum was built on top of the ancient city that lies at the bottom of the hill from the Parthenon. The museum floors are made out of glass so visitors can see the excavation going on below. We also had the rare opportunity to visit the Greek National Parliament by invitation of a Parliament Member. For me the most exhilarating experience was running in the stadium where the original Olympic Games took place. Just thinking about the historical implications of that experience gives me goose bumps. This was by far one of the greatest trips of my life.

### **Denmark**

**By Leslie Gumbs**



*continued on page 9*

During this study abroad trip I was able to learn about the health care system and the role of nurses in Scandinavia compared to the United States. There were integrated study tours to Western Denmark and Sweden in which we learned about nursing history and the possible future of the career in Scandinavian countries. One of the major differences between the nursing profession in the U.S. and Denmark is that in Denmark nursing is considered a bad job. While we

were there, nurses went on strike for higher wages, hindering some of the activities that were planned. I would love to go back again. With 20 hours of sunlight per day during the summer, there is a lot to do and discover in Denmark. The best advice I would offer anyone who wants to study abroad would be to try and experience whatever the place has to offer. It will make for an excellent experience!

## COLLABORATING TO ENHANCE STUDENT SUCCESS

### SSS English Learning Communities

This past fall semester, SSS in collaboration with the UConn English Department, created three sections of Learning Communities for 47 SSS students. So far, this pilot program has proven a very successful academic intervention for the participants. The preliminary reports show a significant difference in academic performance between the group that participated in the SSS Learning Communities and those that didn't. These students attained a higher overall GPA at the end of the semester. The Center would like to thank the English Department for making this pilot program possible and we look forward to future collaborations.

### SSS Students Meet Young Poets

Carl Dean's FYE Performance Poetry course at UConn-Storrs benefited from a recent collaboration with the ETS Advisors and a teacher from Windham High School. The Young Poets is a poetry performing group organized by Lynn Frazier at Windham High School. The majority of the members in this group are also UConn ETS students. These young poets were invited to attend Carl's class and perform for his students. After a short conversation among the participants, The Young Poets spoke about their desire to write and what poetry meant to them which was followed by their performance. The activity gave the high school students an opportunity to experience a college class while interacting with undergraduate students at UConn. The SSS students were inspired by the talent and ingenuity of the young poets; at the same time they were able to motivate them to pursue higher education.



### SSS Students go to New York

This past January, SSS Counselor Leo Lachut, in collaboration with STRONG-CT, accompanied SSS students to New York City to see Bodies: The Exhibition. Bodies features real preserved specimens that are dissected to show various parts and functions of the human anatomy. This exhibit provided a fascinating inside look for our students, especially those interested in pursuing a medical career. All the trip participants enjoyed both the exhibit as well as their time in the city.

## ROBOTICS ... IT'S ALIVE!!!

### Columbus Family Academy Gear Up Afterschool Program



Since October, students at Columbus Family Academy have been learning how to make objects move. They've used everything from every day materials found in the classroom to the newly purchased K'Nex and Lego Mindstorm manip-



ulative systems. These programs have been made available by the GEAR UP Program to supplement academic courses and assist students in improving their grades. The Robotics program was organized in an effort to create interactive activities that link math, reading, science, and technology (STEM) to the district's academic curriculum and at the same time connect the curriculum to real world experiences. One of the objectives of the program is for students to be able to build a robot. Once a robot is completed, students need to test their work and mathematical computations by having the robots complete obstacle courses to test the



movement. If the robots meet this "challenge" then the students have successfully built the robots. "We are excited to see students integrate what they have learned ...says," Ms. Hart, Robotics Teacher. "We hope to bring our students to the Robotics competition in the future!"

## INTD CLASS RAISES FUNDS FOR BEST BUDDIES

As part of the spring 2009 INTD 1820 Peer Involvement/Community Outreach course, students from the UConn Hartford SSS program, participated in the Best Buddies Connecticut bowling fundraiser. Frankie Huertas, Carlos Rodriguez, and Alberto Rosado, along with the SSS Program Manager, joined seventeen other teams in the fund raising event which raised over \$10,000. The Best Buddies organization is dedicated to enhancing the lives of people with intellectual disabilities by providing opportunities for one-to-one friendships and integrated employment.

## ETS AND THE BLUMEN DATABASE

The Educational Talent Search Program (ETS) is a federally funded program that services 675 middle and high school students in the towns of Windham and New Haven. Because we are federally funded we must report our program outcomes to the US Department of Education on an annual basis. To help with mandated reports, and the data management of so many participants, the Blumen Database was purchased in the fall of 2006.

Blumen has been specifically designed to cater to the needs of TRIO programs such as Educational Talent Search and Upward Bound. The database is designed to assist directors in creating an Annual Performance Report (APR) which can be very time consuming without the appropriate data management tools. The APR is the only mechanism that the government has to measure the success of our program. It is crucial that we develop a strong and accurate reporting system as this will increase the chances of getting funded. In addition, there are over 150 reports within Blumen that help staff fulfill the mission and objectives of the ETS program.

The database holds all student and parent contact information and significant amount of data that need to be kept in a very secure place. Blumen is password protected and secured through encryption so the program cannot be easily accessed without the proper information and passwords. Blumen also provides screen level passwords which allow the director to provide separate user accounts with customized levels of access for each individual user.

In the fall of 2008 a two day training was held for the ETS and Upward Bound staff which covered topics on data entry procedures, generating reports, submitting the APR, and sending general emails, to name a few. Both ETS and Upward Staff were very pleased with the training and were able to walk away with a plethora of information that will help us assess the effectiveness of our services.

## SSS REMEMBERS BERTOZZI MPOSO

**May 21, 1989 – November 5, 2008**

Bertozzi Mposo came to UConn through the Student Support Services program in 2008. She was only with us a short time before she passed away on November 5, 2008 after collapsing at the Election Night Celebration that was held in the Student Union on the Storrs campus.

Bertozzi, a pre-medicine major, came to the United States with her family as a refugee from the Democratic Republic of Congo in 2005. She eagerly began working on improving her English skills by participating in the Yale University Summer English Language Institute and the Mentor Connection Program. She took Advanced Placement courses at Wilbur Cross High School in New Haven. Bertozzi dreamed of spending her life helping and healing



people and this was evident by her community service work with the Integrated Refugee and Immigrant Service (IRIS) and the New England Board of Higher Education Conferences. Bertozzi was a beautiful spirit and will be deeply missed by everyone in the Student Support Services program.

The Center wants to thank the Dean of Students office for their support throughout the semester. The transportation to the funeral in New Haven was greatly appreciated by students and staff, as well as the support given to students in the organization of the Campus Memorial Service which was held on January 29<sup>th</sup> in Storrs. We also want to extend our gratitude to the students who supported Bertozzi's family and friends at her funeral and the memorial service.

Memorial donations may be made to The Bertozzi Fund c/o Saint Thomas More Chapel, 268 Park Street, New Haven, CT 06511.

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Center for Academic Programs  
University of Connecticut  
368 Fairfield Way U-2170

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## **CENTER FOR ACADEMIC PROGRAMS PROGRAM STAFF**

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

***SSS Regional Campus  
Coordinators***

Avery Point: Marcia Orcutt  
Hartford: Robert L. Brown  
Stamford: Kwasi Gyambibi  
Waterbury: Lillie Squires-Wright  
Torrington: Christine Mosman

***Director, Student Support Services***

Bidya Ranjeet

***SSS Counselors, Storrs***

Leo Lachut  
Marie McCain  
Carl Dean

***Director, GEAR UP***

Ada Rivera

***GEAR UP Program Aide***

Marisol Lopez

***GEAR UP Program Assistants***

Milagros Velez  
Alfred Guante

***Director, Upward Bound/  
ConnCAP***

Susana M. Ulloa

***UB/ConnCAP Advisors***

Cliff Marrett  
Lisa Brasile

***Director, Educational Talent  
Search***

Nella Signorello

***ETS Program Advisors***

Maribel Sanchez  
Tashesha Ricketts  
Antony Wormack

***CAP Administrative Assistant***

Doug Willour

***CAP Financial Assistant***

Kathy Delude

***CAP Program Assistant***

Cathie Mirakian

### **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.