Welcome to the 2012 issue of Update, an annual publication that highlights programs and activities sponsored by the Center for Academic Programs. We want to share some of the exciting initiatives that have taken place in the last year. Our staff has been very busy delivering the highest quality services to our constituents. The articles inside will give you an idea about some of the meaningful experiences that students have been involved with.

In July the Educational Talent Search program was awarded a 5-year grant from the U.S. Department of Education totaling $1,415,142. This grant ensures the continuation of programs and services to help Windham and New Haven students finish high school and pursue a college education. The Student Support Services (SSS) program continues to solidify its strong partnership with the Office of Study Abroad in its efforts to increase these experiences for first generation and low-income students. There has been a remarkable increase in the number of SSS students participating in the study abroad program. During the 2011 academic year, a total of 51 students studied abroad; this represents an 18% increase from the previous year. Most encouraging is that SSS students who have studied abroad have a 92% graduation rate, which underscores the importance of continuing to provide opportunities for first generation, low-income students to travel and study overseas.

This year the Center played a critical role in National TRIO Day. During this day, federal education programs throughout the U.S. were recognized for their hard work and achievements. Students from all over New England attended workshops, a college fair, and had the opportunity to visit local colleges. This year it took place in Connecticut, bringing over 500 high school students to the state. Members of our staff were part of the planning team for this special event.

The Center for Academic Programs is proud of its students’ achievements. Every year we reaffirm our commitment to access and educational opportunity for low income, first generation, and underrepresented populations. As always, I express my appreciation to the staff and to the readers for your continuous support.
ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT CEREMONY AT THE GREATER HARTFORD CAMPUS

On Thursday, February 9, 2012, the 2nd Academic Achievement Ceremony was held at the Greater Hartford Campus in the Zachs Community Room at the School of Social Work. The program honored both Student Support Services (SSS) and business majors for high academic achievements in their respective programs during the spring and fall 2011 semesters. Almost 80 guests attended, including students, parents, community supporters, staff and faculty. Keynote speaker Ivelisse Maldonado, a Travelers EDGE Consultant, delivered a heart-felt message which included her personal story as a TRIO program alumna from Penn State. Chad Munroe, a 4th year business and technology major, was the student speaker. Chad started with the SSS Program during the summer of 2008. He is an exemplary scholar with an array of accomplishments during his tenure at UConn. Most recently, Chad was offered a position at Hamilton Sundstrand, UTC, while interning in the Windsor Locks location. Congratulations to Chad and to all of our scholars for their accomplishments. This event was made possible by the Travelers Group, the UConn Greater Hartford campus, the School of Business, the Office of Diversity Initiatives and the Center for Academic Programs (CAP).

UPWARD BOUND/CONNCAP STUDENTS ATTEND ACADEMIC DAYS

Students participating in the UConn Upward Bound/ConnCAP programs were recently provided with several opportunities to learn more about their post-secondary options through a series of Academic Days in the fall. The events were designed to encourage students to become actively involved in their plans for higher education, and to expose them to various college and career experiences.

The first Academic Day featured the Southern Connecticut Hispanic College Fair held at the University of Bridgeport on November 4th. The fair gave students access to representatives from colleges and universities across the nation, as well as a chance to tour the University of Bridgeport campus. Admissions counselors from schools such as Western New England University, Keene State College, The Art Institute, Mitchell College, Bloomfield College, Long Island University, Norwich University, Clark Atlanta University, the University of Maine-Farmington, Ithaca College, Syracuse University, and Columbia College (Chicago) were present at the fair. Students were able to ask questions about the institutions’ admission requirements, majors, housing options, costs of attendance, and extracurricular activities.

Another Academic Day was held at the University of Connecticut Storrs campus on November 19th. Representatives from Eastern Connecticut State University, the University of New Haven, and UConn spoke to students about their respective institutions. The information sessions were followed by several workshops conducted by Upward Bound/ConnCAP staff. Students researched majors and colleges, and seniors focused on completing their college applications and searching for scholarships.

On December 10th, students traveled to UConn Health Center in Farmington to learn about medical and dental careers from current students and professionals working in these fields. Sophomore students participated in Discovery and Research lectures and workshops led by fourth year research student Keshia Ashe. Junior and senior students worked with Dr. Michael T. Goupil, Assistant Dean for Dental Students, during a workshop that focused on dental careers. The students were excited to learn more about their options for college.
ETS ALUMNA SHOWS HER APPRECIATION
By Destiny Wade, ETS Alumna 2011
1st year Pharmacy student, Rutgers University (Newark, New Jersey)

I began participating in the Educational Talent Search program (ETS) in the eighth grade and I can honestly say it was very beneficial in improving my future plans. Being in ETS was such a great experience for me and I loved every second of it. In the summer program I took math and English classes. During the academic year we went on college tours and learned all about the basic aspects of applying to college, financial aid, and succeeding in the future. I met a lot of amazing people, made many new friends, and shared moments with ETS staff and students that I will forever cherish.

The field trips were enjoyable. They opened up my eyes to new opportunities, especially the field trip to Rutgers-Newark, where I am currently a first year pharmacy student. When I told my ETS advisor, Ms. Ricketts, that I was interested in applying to Rutgers, she told me that she knew people there that she could talk to on my behalf. I applied on the spot and got accepted! If it was not for Ms. Ricketts’ guidance and recommendation, and for the opportunities I received from ETS, I would not have gotten to where I am today. I am thankful for having participated in this program and would highly recommend it to others, just for the simple fact that it gives young people so many future opportunities. Now I will take this experience and what I have learned with me and become a successful individual.

Ms. Ricketts has been such an outstanding role model, not only to me, but to others who are participating in the program as well. She has the ability to make youth begin a path of success. She’s always there to help you whenever you need her. She has been a great inspiration to me and I cannot thank her enough for everything she has done. Ms. Ricketts has guided me on the right path and she has watched me grow throughout the years.
The UConn Upward Bound (UB) staff had the opportunity to meet with Congressman Joe Courtney during a luncheon hosted by The New England Council and the Metro Hartford Alliance at The Hartford Club on November 7, 2011. UB Advisors Ruben Garcia and Lisa Brasile, along with representatives from the Connecticut Association of Educational Opportunity Programs, met with the Congressman to garner his support for federal TRIO programs. The programs, which include UB, Student Support Services (SSS), Educational Talent Search (ETS), and GEAR UP, exist to provide educational opportunities and access to higher education for first-generation, low-income, and/or underrepresented students.

Though the focus of the event was bringing the Congressman's attention to issues impacting Hartford residents, it was clear to Garcia and Brasile that he viewed TRIO programs as playing a vital role in enhancing the well-being of our local communities. During his keynote address, Congressman Courtney, who is currently serving a third term representing Connecticut’s 2nd district, provided insight on how to further expand TRIO’s influence in the state. He noted that one of the best ways to educate politicians about the value of the programs in order to gain their support is to continuously provide them with letters and face-to-face contacts that highlight the incredible success stories of TRIO participants.

The Upward Bound staff, on behalf of its many students, would like to thank Congressman Courtney for his time and continued support of TRIO programs.

Several students participating in the Student Support Services (SSS) program at UConn’s Waterbury campus have found a way to give back to both the university and the surrounding community through their involvement with the Latin American Student Organization (LASO). The organization, whose mission is to share the Latin American culture on campus as well as in the city of Waterbury, is excited to be involved in community service. “Community service is the best way to have a positive impact in the community,” said Tomas Olivo, the current LASO president and an SSS senior. “It benefits both the community and the university. We find ourselves in such a great location, downtown Waterbury, and we have so many different organizations around us. Why not take advantage of these great resources?”

The majority of LASO members are SSS students including Melody Gonzalez, Secretary and Steffi Frias, Treasurer. Mariah Benjamin, Julisa Duran, Emmanuel Marte, and Katherine Ferreira are also SSS students who are active members.

Inspired by the campus’s commitment to developing partnerships with the Waterbury community, LASO is making great progress toward accomplishing its goal for the year, which is to make a positive difference through volunteer service. “Our club is really big on volunteering,” said Gonzalez. “It is great to feel how united we are when all of us as a group reach out to our community. We are tutors and mentors to the children of the Boys and Girls Club and for the ‘Festival of Learning Program’ at St. John’s Episcopal Church. We also volunteer our time at the United Way’s annual Project Homeless Connect event. This is our passion!”

The students are excited that their college education and experiences are benefiting the community, and plan to utilize the many skills they have acquired through volunteering to enhance their academic and professional endeavors.
UCONN UPWARD BOUND ALUMNI ASSOCIATION NEWS

An effort to raise awareness of and increase membership in the University of Connecticut Upward Bound/ConnCAP Alumni Association (UBAA) is currently underway. UBAA is comprised of UB graduates who are committed to supporting the educational, professional, and post-graduate pursuits of their fellow alumni. Through the use of email and social media, such as the UBAA Facebook page, the organization is building a database of current and prospective members whose goal is to help each other navigate college and explore career opportunities.

According to Rebeca Gomez, a 2006 graduate of Upward Bound and UBAA’s vice-president, the organization is especially reaching out to alumni who are in the process of pursuing undergraduate and graduate degrees at UConn. Members serve as mentors to students making the transition from high school to college and from college to graduate school or careers. “The association also provides a network for alumni,” she said. “It’s a way for people to stay connected, to share their experiences, and to give back.”

Gomez, who will graduate from UConn in May 2012 with a bachelor’s degree in History, attributes her involvement with Upward Bound as critical to her college success. “If I didn’t have the opportunity to be in Upward Bound, I wouldn’t have known nearly as much about the college process. I might not even have applied,” she said.

Gomez is part of a new leadership team for the 2011/2012 academic year that includes new president Shanoa William, a 2006 UB graduate and current UConn graduate student, and Chante Lewis, a UConn freshmen who began serving as secretary in fall 2011.

UCONN UPWARD BOUND ALUMNI RECEIVE TRIO ACHIEVERS AWARDS

University of Connecticut Upward Bound alumni Pedro Santiago and Enid Rey were recognized and honored for their outstanding professional accomplishments in separate ceremonies held in 2011. Both credit their participation in the program as a key factor in their success.

Santiago received the Council for Opportunity in Education (COE) National TRIO Achievers Award during a ceremony held in Washington, D.C. During his acceptance speech, he noted that his involvement in Upward Bound during high school helped him not only to succeed academically, but also to understand that “education is a powerful tool that can be yielded, even by those with humble beginnings, to fix the most challenging problems in society.” After earning a bachelor’s degree in mechanical engineering from North Carolina Agricultural and Technical University, Santiago designed cars at General Motors for 15 years before leaving to join Enpulse Energy Conservation Inc., an alternative energy sources company where he currently serves as Vice-President.

Rey was awarded the Connecticut Association of Educational Opportunity Programs (CAEOP) TRIO Achievers Award at a ceremony held at UConn’s Stamford campus. After participating in Upward Bound in high school, she went on to study International Relations and Latin American Literature at Mount Holyoke College before earning a J.D. from the UConn School of Law. Since then, she has dedicated herself to improving the lives of countless at-risk Connecticut youth and their families in a variety of leadership positions, most recently as the Director of School Choice for Hartford Public Schools. Whenever possible, she makes a point of hiring TRIO graduates to help advance her mission to serve the community’s neediest citizens. Rey’s hard work and commitment have earned her the 2012 New England Educational Opportunities Association Achiever and Rising Star Award.

Upward Bound and the entire TRIO staff at the Center for Academic Programs (CAP) at UConn congratulate Santiago and Rey for their outstanding accomplishments and contributions to their communities.
SSS PARTNERS WITH STUDY ABROAD OFFICE

Student Support Services is excited to announce a new program for SSS students who are interested in studying abroad. The SSS London Study Abroad Program is a unique opportunity for Pell eligible SSS students to experience the many benefits of studying abroad in a supportive environment. Led by SSS staff, the program offers students the opportunity to earn UConn credit while immersed in the history, arts and culture, and social life of London. This life-changing experience, which includes a weekend in Paris, fosters global citizenship while promoting students’ academic, personal, and professional growth.

The London program is closely modeled after the SSS Liverpool Study Abroad program, which due to programmatic changes at the University of Liverpool came to a close last year. This successful 10 year partnership with SSS resulted in over 100 students experiencing the benefits of studying overseas. Fortunately, UConn’s Office of Study Abroad stepped in to assist SSS in developing this new opportunity for its students. Beginning in summer 2012, ten to twelve SSS students will be selected to study in London each year from mid-May through early June. During the three weeks, students will take two courses to help them understand their roles in this increasingly globalized world. SSS is looking forward to this new partnership with the Office of Study Abroad, and encourages their students to take advantage of this and other opportunities.

HARTFORD SSS STUDENT STUDIES ABROAD IN RHODES, GREECE

When she first arrived in Greece, Stephanie was welcomed by the people there. They were eager for her to experience their lifestyle and culture. Although it took her some time to adapt to the new environment, she said the sense of closeness she felt within the families comforted her and helped her acclimate to the culture. “The people in Greece are grateful and humble, which rubbed off on me,” she said. “The experience made me a better person.”

Stephanie spent time exploring the country and comparing it to what America has to offer. For example, she observed differences between the educational opportunities in Rhodes versus those in the United States. The schools in Rhodes do not provide the same luxuries that American schools provide, such as internet access and transportation. Stephanie said that going to Greek schools made her a lot more grateful for what American schools have to offer. “We’ve got it a lot easier and yet we take things for granted,” she said.

Stephanie is eager to return to Greece and encourages other SSS students to take advantage of the many study abroad opportunities available to them at UConn.
STAMFORD SSS STUDENTS ORGANIZE TRIP TO GHANA

Seven SSS students from UConn’s Stamford campus journeyed to Ghana for two weeks in August, 2011. The trip was initiated by SSS senior Cristina Fajardo who, upon learning that SSS Regional Coordinator Kwasi Gyambibi would be traveling there to visit family, coordinated an effort to recruit other SSS students to accompany him on what would become a life-changing experience. The students organized, planned, and paid for the trip themselves.

Although Cristina had previously organized student visits to New York City and Boston, traveling overseas was a far more daunting task that required intricate planning and many details. However, encouraged that Kwasi would be traveling alongside them, and inspired by the prospect of learning about the Ghanaian culture, she turned what had once been a dream into a reality. “My own hopes and dreams blossomed once I arrived in the West African nation of Ghana,” she said, “partially because I conquered my own fear of traveling to a new country.”

In addition to Cristina, participants included Mat Villamil, Kyle Mayers, Jonathan Delgado, Ana Diez Canseco, Marcos Ramos, and Ricardo Desouza. The students spent a significant amount of time in the homes of the native Ghanaians. They also visited historical sites, made village visits, met local leaders, and participated in educational excursions and intercultural activities that provided them with a deeper understanding of a culture that is very different from the United States. “The very things I took for granted,” said Cristina, “getting a good education and feeding your family...translated into life and death situations for people my age in this country.”

As a way to share their overseas adventure with friends, family, and the campus community, the students kept personal journals during the trip, and created a website and produced a DVD upon their return. Kwasi, who generously shared his time abroad with the students, said, “Witnessing their growth as global citizens was very inspirational to me.”
LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE

The 2011 Student Support Services Leadership Conference, an annual program that provides personal and professional development opportunities for rising sophomore, junior and senior SSS students, was held on the Storrs campus in late August. Seventy-five students participated in the three-day event. This year’s theme was “Being the Change.”

The conference kicked off with a welcome and networking reception. This was followed by a showing of the inspirational film *Emmanuel’s Gift*, a documentary about one man’s quest to change the perception of physically handicapped people in Ghana. Keynote speaker Dr. Bidya Ranjeet spoke to students about the importance of leading by example, and shared several stories about Mahatma Gandhi that highlighted this concept. SSS student Sharielle Applewhite, SSS alumna Nana Amos, and former SSS counselor Marie McCain presented the workshop *Living Out Our Global Vision*, in which students explored the question of what makes an effective leader and were introduced to leadership opportunities on and off campus.

In addition, entrepreneur and singer Michele Colletti facilitated the workshop *Living Out Our Life Vision*, in which she inspired students to design lives that support their deepest dreams and goals. SSS counselor Leo Lachut held a highly informative and entertaining discussion on proper dining etiquette during the banquet dinner. The conference ended with a delicious brunch that included a presentation from career counselor Mike Petro, who offered valuable tips and advice on achieving career satisfaction and success. As one student remarked about the conference, “Everything was outstanding! I’m really thankful for the experience.”

TRAVELERS EDGE SCHOLARS

First year SSS students Begum Abadin (West Hartford) and Teodoro Garcia, Jr. (Storrs) were recently selected as 2011-2012 Travelers EDGE Scholars. Travelers EDGE (Empowering Dreams for Graduation and Employment) is a national program run by the Travelers Companies which provides financial support and professional development opportunities to first-generation, underrepresented college students majoring in business or actuarial sciences. EDGE scholars receive a four-year full in-state tuition and fees scholarship, a textbook scholarship, a professional mentor, and opportunities for job shadowing, paid internships, and professional development workshops.

Begum is a pre-business major with an interest in marketing. She is also a member of UConn’s Hartford Business Society. In 2005, her family relocated from Bangladesh to the United States. She entered the eighth grade without knowing any English and still managed to achieve high honors. At the end of Begum’s junior year, she lost her father to a terminal illness which left her family with emotional and financial hardships. Regardless of the obstacles that may arise, Begum is determined and focused on accomplishing her educational goals.

Teodoro is a mathematics and actuarial science major. A dedicated student, Teodoro also displays strong leadership qualities through his involvement in his community. As a member of the St. Rose of Lima parish, Teodoro was instrumental in advocating for undocumented students pursuing higher education. Teodoro also assisted his parish to work on passing legislation providing these students increased access to post-secondary education. Teodoro attributes his motivation to succeed in life to his Mexican immigrant parents, who instilled in him the importance of hard work and education in life.

SSS would like to thank Travelers for fostering this program and sends its best wishes to Begum and Teodoro on their future success.
STUDENTS VOLUNTEER AT THE AETNA WELLNESS COMMUNITY GARDEN

On November 18, 2011, six Hartford SSS students along with Luis Ramos, counselor, volunteered to work on the Aetna Wellness Community Garden at Niles. The Aetna Wellness Community Garden is one of the fifteen Knox Parks Community Gardens found in Hartford. It has long served the Asylum Hill neighborhood, providing local, nutritious produce and recreation to community members. Our volunteers pulled weeds, cleared brush, pruned shrubs and put down wood chips on the garden’s paths. These dedicated students gave up their Friday morning, which marked the start of their Thanksgiving break, to connect with the Earth. All the students involved had no previous gardening experience but now consider themselves novice agriculturists.

The Knox Parks Foundation was started by Betty Knox in 1966 when she established a trust fund to help improve the city. Following her death, during its first decade, Knox developed two areas of focus – funding community development and operating “greening” programs. A large majority of SSS students live in urban areas in Connecticut; the mission of The Knox Parks Foundation is to serve areas such as these, making the volunteer opportunity very appealing to our students. The importance of volunteers in making community changes was obvious by the presence of the garden in an urban community. Thank you to the SSS students for dedicating their time and energy to a worthy cause.

UCONN TEAM WINS TRAVELERS IT CASE COMPETITION

Chad Munroe, an SSS senior at the University of Connecticut’s Hartford campus who is majoring in Business Technology, was part of the winning team in this year’s Travelers IT Case Competition. UConn’s School of Business team worked diligently for three weeks prior to the competition and their dedication paid off. The team won the competition and was awarded $1,200. Six schools participated in this year’s event, which was held by the Travelers IT Leadership Development Program. The program pairs college students with realistic business scenarios. This year’s competition dealt with Agile software development and project management.

The UConn team consisted of Dr. Wei-Kuang Huang, faculty advisor and the following students: Chad Munroe, Dean Richards, Joshua Rome, Reuben Ruppert, and Justin Iriondo. Congratulations to Chad and his team for demonstrating strong leadership in the areas of research, teamwork, and presentation skills.
The New England Educational Opportunity Association held its annual TRIO Day celebration at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Cromwell, CT on February 23, 2012. The two-day event brought together hundreds of TRIO students, staff, and alumni from all six New England states and New York to celebrate the positive impact of federal TRIO Programs in communities throughout the nation. The programs help low-income, first-generation students gain access to higher education and earn a college degree.

Event organizers and participants included staff and students from the University of Connecticut’s Center for Academic Programs (CAP), which houses several TRIO programs: Educational Talent Search (ETS), Upward Bound (UB), and Student Support Services (SSS). Nella Signorello, Director of ETS, chaired the TRIO Day committee, which spent months planning the event. CAP staff members Maribel Sanchez, Tashesha Ricketts, Leo Lachut, and Lisa Brasile also served on the committee, along with staff from several other institutions.

Day one of the event included welcome addresses by Nella Signorello and academic success, college admissions, financial aid and athletic recruiting. SSS Counselors Leo Lachut, Carl Dean Jr. and Joanna Rivera facilitated several of the workshops.

Rebeca Gomez, UConn Upward Bound alumni and current SSS participant, said that some of her best memories from UB were participating in TRIO Day. “The atmosphere of everyone being together and celebrating was amazing. I loved TRIO Day.” The next TRIO Day will be held in New Hampshire in February 2013.
SPOTLIGHT ON DR. MARIA D. MARTINEZ

Dr. Maria D. Martinez, Director of the Center for Academic Programs (CAP), was appointed Assistant Vice Provost (AVP) of the Institute for Student Success (ISS) at the University of Connecticut in March 2011 after serving as Interim AVP since 2010. The goal of ISS is to provide undergraduate students with tools for success, and to become a tutoring, teaching, and learning focal point of undergraduate activities. In her role as AVP, Dr. Martinez continues to provide leadership and administrative oversight to CAP, the Academic Center for Exploratory Students (ACES), First Year Programs and Learning Communities, Peer Education Programs, and UConn Connects.

Dr. Martinez joined the UConn community in 1986 when she was hired as a Counselor for the Student Support Services (SSS) program. Her background in social work, strong interpersonal skills, and passion for providing educational opportunities to low-income, first-generation, and underrepresented students made her a natural fit for the program. In 1995, after several years of successfully helping countless SSS students achieve their goal of graduation, Dr. Martinez was appointed Director of SSS and CAP, where she turned her attention to leading and growing the department.

Under Dr. Martinez’s direction, CAP expanded its existing programs and added new ones. The SSS and Upward Bound/ConnCAP programs secured grants and institutional support that enabled them to greatly increase the number of students they serve and make significant improvements to programming. In addition, CAP was awarded grants to establish Educational Talent Search (ETS) and GEAR UP programs at UConn, both of which promote educational opportunities and access to higher education to first-generation, low-income, and underrepresented middle and high school students in the New Haven and Windham areas.

As Assistant Vice Provost, Dr. Martinez remains committed to helping all students meet their personal, professional, and educational goals. She works collaboratively with all divisions at the University in the development of programming for undergraduate students which also includes retention strategies. She is a member of and serves in leadership positions on numerous boards, committees, and organizations whose missions are to promote diversity, equity, and educational opportunities in higher education.

As the only Hispanic female to hold a managerial position at UConn, Dr. Martinez is among a small but highly successful group of Latinos in Connecticut’s higher education system that has achieved national recognition; The Hispanic Outlook in Higher Education recognized her as one of the “Hispanics on the Move” in their October 2011 issue due to her appointment as AVP. A highly effective and well-liked leader, she is a role model, mentor, friend, and inspiration to students and staff alike. The CAP staff is thrilled to have Dr. Martinez as their AVP, and congratulates her on her many accomplishments!
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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.

“Celebrating 45 years of access and educational opportunities at UConn”