Welcome to the spring 2019 edition of the Center for Academic Programs Update. This annual publication features exciting stories about our staff and students. A lot has happened since our last newsletter in spring 2018. The students have been busy traveling abroad, receiving awards, helping those in need and, more importantly, excelling academically. I am sure you will enjoy the collection of articles selected for this publication.

We are proud to highlight individuals such as Desi Nesmith, Chelsea Garcia and Justis Lopez who were recognized throughout the year. Our McNair Scholars and Student Support Services students jumped at the opportunity to lead by example through serving as mentors in the STEM is Amazing Conference and the National TRiO Day.

CAP strives to serve low-income, first-generation, and underrepresented populations. Without your continued support, success stories like the ones presented in these pages would not be possible. I invite you to join us in celebrating the many accomplishments of our students.

I look forward to seeing you at Rowe so you can learn more about what we do in CAP.

Thank you for making 2018-19 yet another extraordinary year for CAP!
The Center for Academic Programs received a $75,000 grant from the Connecticut Office of Higher Education (OHE) to implement a new program to support UConn students of color on academic probation. The Promoting Academically Successful Students (PASS) program is a new initiative that seeks to redress the academic standing of students who may benefit from intensive support as they work to improve their grades. UConn is one of several institutions of higher education in the state to pilot the program.

OHE reports, “There has been a consistent pattern that minority students (particularly African American and Hispanic American students) enroll and graduate college at lower rates. Data show that there is a need for additional support for minority students to increase their college enrollment and college graduation rates.”

The program is a collaboration between CAP Student Support Services (SSS) and the Academic Achievement Center (AAC). SSS provides access to the University and support services to UConn students who are first-generation to college, from low-income families and/or from populations underrepresented in higher education. The AAC offers myriad academic support services to UConn students, as well as manages UConn Connects, a mentoring and academic intervention program designed to provide students with the skills and support needed for academic success.

The PASS grant, known at UConn as Blueprint for Success, allows funding for 50 students to be served during the spring 2019 semester. They are required to join UConn Connects, and to develop an individualized Blueprint for Success plan with their SSS Counselor, which includes intensive counseling and advising, along with other requirements designed to support each student’s unique strengths and challenges. The expectation is that students who meet all Blueprint requirements will return to good standing.

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**SSS Political Science Major Continues to Raise the Bar**

SSS student and Political Science major Leann McLaren has had a busy year. In spring 2018 she interned for Connecticut Congressman John Larson in Washington, DC as part of the UConn Honors Congressional Internship Program. At the same time, she was awarded an IDEA (Imagine, Develop, Engage, Apply) grant through the University’s Office of Undergraduate Research to study the ways in which Jamaican immigrants contributed to and influenced the Hartford area during the 1980s. Leann then spent her summer at the American Political Science Association’s Ralph Bunche Summer Institute at Duke University, where she took graduate level courses, conducted research, and presented her paper in Boston, MA. Stay tuned, as we are sure there is more to come from this outstanding SSS student.

**University Scholar Chelsea Garcia**

Chelsea Garcia is the first UConn McNair Scholar to earn the prestigious honor of University Scholar. Her related research project, “The Effects of Bacterial Lipid, Lipid 654, on Neuroinflammation”, will build on research experience she gained as a McNair Scholar and Fellow, and in the lab of Dr. Christopher Blesso. Congratulations Chelsea!

**Bold Move for McNair Scholar**

McNair Scholar Tanya Miller was selected to be part of UConn’s BOLD Women’s Leadership Network 2018.
inaugural cohort. Established in honor of Helen Gurley Brown, editor-in-chief of Cosmopolitan magazine, BOLD cultivates courageous female leaders who become agents of positive social change. Participants receive scholarship support, develop a service project, and have access to unique leadership and career development opportunities. Kudos to Tanya!

SSS Avery Point Student Excel on and Off Court
SSS’s very own Mia Brennan was named National Player of the Week for the second time this year. Mia is a sophomore and plays on the Women’s Basketball team at UConn Avery Point within the National Junior College Athletic Association Division III. She is averaging 29 points, 6.9 rebounds, and 7.8 assists per game. Mia also earned Dean’s List distinction multiple semesters in a row. She plans to major in one of the Social Science disciplines and seeks a career helping people in some capacity. Way to go, Mia!

CAP Students Selected for Leadership Legacy Experience
SSS students Natalie Calletano and Omaniel Ortiz were selected for UConn’s 2019 Leadership Legacy Experience. Natalie, a sophomore, is also a McNair Scholar double majoring in Communication and Cognitive Sciences. Her accomplishments include completing 250 hours of service as a Jumpstart participant during her freshman year, serving as an SSS peer advisor, being a Floor Mentor for the Innovation House Learning Community, and interning with the Center for Career Development. Omaniel is a junior majoring in Exercise Science. He served as a Community Leader in the 2018 SSS Summer Program and is currently a resident assistant and METAS mentor, as well as being involved with numerous student organizations. We wish these young leaders well with their Legacy Experience.

SSS Students “Feel the Love” at The Lion King
SSS Summer Program students from Storrs and Hartford were treated to a roaring good time when they attended The Lion King at The Bushnell Theater in Hartford on August 4, 2018. For most of the students, it was their first time seeing the popular Broadway musical. For many, such as Luis Gonzalez, it was their first ever theater experience. “Seeing The Lion King really made me see the beauty of plays as a whole,” said Gonzalez. “All of the visuals I witnessed coming to life from a childhood movie was beyond amazing. I definitely recommend others to see a play of any kind.”
First Star Alumna Speaker Lights Up Closing Ceremony

UConn First Star Academy alumna Soledad “Sole” Castellano was the honorary alumna speaker at the program’s summer closing ceremony, which took place on August 2, 2018 in the Student Union Ballroom on the Storrs Campus. Her inspiring speech was the highlight of the event, which included First Star students, staff, and university and community friends and partners. In it, Sole shared her own experience as a First Star participant.

“I applied to The First Star Academy in 2014 because I felt like it was a great way to seek mentorship and to connect with and get to know others,” she said, before highlighting opportunities that became available to her through the program, including the chance to earn six college credits.

After sharing some of the challenges she faced as a foster youth, Sole encouraged the First Star students to take full advantage of all that the program has to offer, and to continue to work hard and pursue their dreams. “An amazing future lies ahead of you all,” she told them.

Susana Ulloa, Director of High School Initiatives, which oversees First Star, said that Sole was chosen as the honorary alumna speaker because she is an incredible example of hard work, perseverance, and resilience.

After completing The First Star Academy program and graduating from high school in 2015, Sole enrolled at the UConn Hartford Campus, where she is part of the Student Support Services (SSS) Program. She is an active member of the campus community, serving on the Undergraduate Student Government, and on the executive boards for the Mexican Student Association, the Multicultural Business Society, and Noche Boricua (Puerto Rican Night). The dedicated economics major has already secured a job with Travelers after she graduates in May 2019.

Learning is Fun! First Star Students Experience Project Oceanography

Scavenger hunts, games, and catching ocean critters were just some of the activities enjoyed by UConn First Star Academy students on the first Academic Day of the year, held on September 15, 2018, at UConn’s Avery Point campus in Groton.

Staff from Project Oceanography, a Marine Science organization that aims to inspire interest in science and the marine environment, led the students through a series of hands-on learning activities designed to educate them about local marine life. In preparation for their adventures on nearby Pine Island, the students learned proper use of water and safety gear, and the basics of safe skiff operation. On the island, students were introduced to local marine life adaptations to the environment.

The students also had the opportunity to tour the campus and have a Q & A session, both led by Avery Point SSS student Jonathan Figueroa. Jonathan answered student questions and spoke openly about his experience at the regional campus.

Based on student reactions to the first Academic Day of the year, it was a great success. The 21 students headed home feeling energized and excited about all they had learned, and they unanimously expressed interest in having this experience again next year.
SSS NEAG STUDENTS SHINE IN MEMPHIS

Five UConn SSS students enrolled in the Neag School of Education’s Integrated Bachelor’s/Master’s (IB/M) program had the incredible honor of presenting at the National Association for Multicultural Education (NAME) annual conference, held November 2018 in Memphis, TN. Led by Anne Denerville, an SSS Neag graduate student, the team gave a presentation on how to attract teachers of color to an audience of educators, administrators, and superintendents.

“This was an amazing opportunity for us to network, learn ways to advance multicultural education, equity and social justice in our classrooms, as well as gain resources on how to do so,” said Denerville.

In addition to presenting, the students had the opportunity to march to the Lorraine Motel, located in the National Civil Rights Museum, where Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was assassinated. A highlight of the trip was the chance to sing “We Shall Overcome” alongside actress and civil rights advocate Donzaleigh Abernathy, MLK’s goddaughter, who shared stories about the events leading up to the Civil Rights leader’s death.

Along with Denerville, the presentation team included SSS undergraduate students Shanza Hussain, Kimberly Duhart, D’Andre Gibbs, and Kyre McBroom. All five students also serve on the Executive Board of the student-run organization Leadership in Diversity (LID), which works to support and encourage students of color as they pursue a degree in the field of education. SSS alumnus Justis Lopez, a Neag graduate, also attended the conference.

SSS ALUMNA LIVING THE DREAM IN JAPAN

As a new undergraduate at UConn, SSS alumna Virginia Robinson never imagined she would ever leave the United States, let alone be living in Japan, teaching English to elementary and middle school students after graduation. The travel bug bit her when she studied abroad in South Africa with the SSS Summer in Cape Town program in 2016. It was the first time she had been on a plane.

Virginia credits her SSS counselor, Chelsea Cichocki, with helping her to step out of her comfort zone, “I couldn’t have gotten this far without her. I always used to show up to her office so confused. I remember being undecided my whole freshman year and halfway through my sophomore year. Now look at me! Living my dream in Japan.”

Inspired by Cape Town, Virginia then traveled to Puerto Rico and to Italy, where she visited an exchange student she had met at UConn. These experiences, along with her role as a conversation partner with the UConn American
SSS ALUMNA LIVING THE DREAM IN JAPAN (CONT.)

English Language Institute (UCAELI), gave her the confidence to spend an entire summer traveling through China alone. She also enrolled in several Japanese language courses.

When faced with the opportunity to teach English in Japan after graduation, Virginia jumped at it. Her first year of teaching overseas has gone so well, she plans to sign up for another year.

“I love my job,” Virginia said. “I love all my kids. They’re so cute and eager to learn English. I teach them English, and they teach me Japanese. My Japanese has improved so much.”

In addition to teaching, Virginia is busy immersing herself in Japanese culture. She is taking a free Japanese class once a week, and learning the Nagasaki dialect so she will sound more like a local. She joined a badminton group and played in her first doubles tournament in December 2018. Her passion for Pokémon has increased now that she is chasing after one that can only be caught in Asia.

Despite the excitement and adventure of Japan, Virginia is still infected with the travel bug. During the winter break, she traveled to South Korea and Tokyo with a friend who was visiting from the U.S., and in April, she will visit Thailand alone.

“It’s going to be scary,” she said. “But I think I’ll be ready by then!”

Virginia graduated from UConn in 2018 with a BA in Human Development and Family Studies and a minor in Psychology.

UConn SSS community.

Nesmith entered UConn in 1997 through the SSS Summer Program. As an undergraduate student, he was active within the Center for Academic Programs and broader campus communities, mentoring high school students and serving as an Upward Bound counselor, resident assistant, and tutor. After graduating in 2001 with a degree in Elementary Education, Nesmith taught fifth grade in East Hartford, where he was named Teacher of the Year in 2006. While a Teacher-in-Residence for the State of Connecticut Department of Education’s School Improvement Unit, he assisted with the implementation of learning initiatives to underperforming school districts. Under his leadership as Principal of America’s Choice SAND School, the school went from having the lowest Connecticut Mastery Test performances in Hartford to the highest.

In his award acceptance speech, Nesmith expressed gratitude to SSS for its role in his successes. “No matter the position I was in or the role I held, SSS came through,” he said. “Whether it was helping me facilitate a team building activity with my fifth grade students, or giving me the opportunity to expose my lead teachers and myself to present in a professional learning forum during my principalship, SSS has remained a constant in my life.”

Lopez entered UConn in the 2010 SSS Summer Program. From the start, he shone on campus in roles that included New Student Orientation Leader, Resident Assistant, Leadership Legacy Experience participant, and even a stint as the Jonathan Husky mascot. A graduate of the Neag School of Education’s IB/M (Integrated Bachelor’s/Master’s) program, Lopez’s passion for education led him to intern at the University of Albany’s Office of Intercultural Student Engagement, and with the Council for Opportunity in Education, based in Washington, DC, where he was able to meet President Barack Obama. After graduation, he taught history in Connecticut and the Bronx, New York, before turning his focus to entrepreneurial pursuits.
UConn SSS and McNair Scholars students welcomed over 50 high school students from all over New England to the Storrs campus on February 23, 2018 for tours and discussions on college life as part of National TRIO Day. The group represented a fraction of the nearly 250 high school students that came to Connecticut to celebrate the annual event, which included tours at several colleges and universities. UConn, which has supported TRIO and other educational opportunity programs for over 50 years, was a proud sponsor of the event.

SSS and McNair students answered questions about their experiences as TRIO participants, the SSS and McNair programs at UConn, and the University in general. They also gave advice on how to prepare for higher education and navigate college life. After the discussion, there was a brief campus tour led by guides from the Welcome Center.

SSS student Drew-Asia Keating, a high school alumna of Upward Bound, was excited by the chance to speak with other TRIO students. “It felt good to be able to share my experience with the group, and to be in charge and give back,” she said.

Connecticut had the honor of serving as regional host for the annual event, which began in 1986 as a congressional resolution (H. Con. Res. 278) to commemorate the achievements of the Federal TRIO programs in communities across the country. TRIO programs serve middle school, high school, and college students that are first generation to college and/or from low-income backgrounds, preparing them for access to and success in higher education. The programs include Upward Bound, Educational Talent Search, Student Support Services, Educational Opportunity Programs, Ronald E. McNair Postbaccalaureate Achievement program, Upward Bound Math Science, and Veterans Upward Bound.

Many thanks to SSS students Drew-Asia Keating, Sadejah Blake, Stephanie O’Neill, Tyrique Lindo, Nathan Nugent, and Keyshawn Webb, along with McNair Scholar Britney Reynolds, for volunteering to assist with this event.
SSS Leadership Conference Inspires Truth to Power

Nearly 70 students attended the 2018 SSS Leadership Conference, held on the Storrs Campus in late August. Within the theme, Cultivating UConn Leaders: Providing the Tools for Leadership, a sub-theme arose throughout the annual three-day event: remaining true to oneself while developing as a leader.

Keynote speaker and SSS alumnus Armando Jimenez, who earned a BS in Business Management in 2013, kicked off the event by discussing the tremendous power of remaining true to oneself while navigating college, career, and leadership. He also emphasized the importance of networking with leaders who will support one’s future endeavors.

In keeping with Armando’s theme, SSS alumnus Brandon (Madden) Alexander reiterated, through poetry and discussion, that students’ greatest power comes from being true to who they are, and by supporting other young professionals to be successful in society. Alexander, who earned a BS in Accounting in 2016, inspired students with a spoken word presentation featuring select poems from his autobiographical collection, The Winter’s Cactus, which chronicles his experiences as a first-generation college student of color on a predominantly white campus.

SSS student and McNair Scholar Paris Pruitt shared experiences that have personally allowed her to develop and flourish as a leader, which included making hard decisions about her future career path. Her book of poetry, Unshackled: Confronting 22 Years of Pain Held Captive, is now a bestseller on Amazon, thanks to Alexander practicing what he preaches and helping her to navigate the world of self-publishing.

Other workshop presenters helped students explore questions of what makes an effective leader. Eran Peterson, Counselor with the Center for Career Development, tapped a recruitment specialist from Synchrony Financial Services to speak to students about the value of networking and putting their best professional feet forward in the workplace to advance as leaders. Amanda Waters, Staff Psychologist at Counseling & Mental Health Services, and Harry Twyman of the Academic Center for Exploratory Students (ACES), designed workshops to support students’ leadership development through a growth mindset and major choice.

The SSS Leadership Conference is in its 13th year. In addition to providing rising sophomores, juniors, and seniors with personal and professional development, the event holds special programming to help ease the transition for regional campus SSS students coming to the Storrs campus for the fall semester.
When he came to the United States from Albania with his family in 2014, UConn SSS student and ConnCAP alumnus Erdit Abedini knew no English and not a soul in Hartford, his new hometown. He brought with him a passion for soccer that morphed into a dream - to start a free summer soccer camp at Bulkeley High School, where he had enrolled, so students there could learn and play the sport off-season.

Abedini had been an avid soccer player in Albania, playing for a U-17 professional team, but he found the cost to play year-round in Connecticut prohibitive. He knew that other students at Bulkeley, many refugees like him, were in the same predicament. He resolved to one-day find a way to turn his dream into reality.

The opportunity finally arose during his freshman year at UConn, when he learned about the UConn Co-op Legacy Fellowship, which provides grants to students to develop summer research projects, service initiatives or creative endeavors. Abedini applied and was thrilled when he was awarded a $5,000 grant for one year to get his soccer camp up and running.

Partnering with the Hartford Soccer Club, and with the support of several key staff at Bulkeley, Abedini launched the camp in summer 2018. More than 35 players registered. Abedini ran the camp at Bulkeley, with several volunteer assistant coaches. Players newer to the sport learned the foundations of the game, and those with experience worked on developing their skills. The grant funding was used to purchase equipment and uniforms, and for transportation to and from the High School Summer League at Farmington Sports Arena, where the team played.

“I wanted to create an opportunity for those who had a passion and love for the sport, who wanted the chance to play off-season to improve their skills,” Abedini said. “The hardest part was to get this started, but now I have learned. I know what areas need improvement and will use the knowledge that I gained from the first year to make the camp better and more efficient.”

After the success of the camp’s first summer, Abedini anticipates the number of players to increase in summer 2019. He has plans to add two new teams and eventually incorporate middle school players into the mix. With the Fellowship over and its funds expired, he is actively pursuing sponsorship and private donors to cover the costs associated with running the camp.
UConn Hartford Campus creates new opportunities for SSS students

UConn’s new downtown Hartford campus is creating exciting opportunities for students in the Student Support Services program to engage with the local community. During the 2018 SSS Summer Program, the first at the new location, students had the chance to visit the Connecticut Science Center, Hartford Public Library, and the Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, all within walking distance of the campus. In addition, Community partners from INROADS, Travelers, and Hartford Promise visited the Summer Program to talk about opportunities available within their organizations.

“Although I live in Hartford, I didn’t know about the opportunities the city offered,” said Virgen Guadarrama.

SSS helped me learn about them, and helped me grow not only academically, but personally and professionally.”

The new campus, located near the heart of the city in the historic Hartford Times building, officially opened on August 23, 2018. Hartford SSS Coordinator Lynn Papacostas-Ginolfi is working on programming to immerse students in the community so they can make meaningful connections and utilize the many resources available throughout the city.

“The students are excited about the opportunities they had during the Summer Program and those yet to come,” she said.

CAP High School Programs’ alumni reunite at event in Hartford

“Upward Bound was a major part of my life and I look back on those years fondly. [The program] prepared me for the college years and helped shape me into who I am today. I am grateful for the lifelong friendships I have made through UB. [I love] the countless memories made along the way.” –Rachel DiLonardo, Upward Bound Class of 2007

The City Steam Brewery and Restaurant in Hartford, CT was brimming with alumni from past and present UConn high school programs on December 12, 2018. They gathered there to celebrate, network, and reminisce about their high school days. The historic event drew over 70 alumni from as far back as the late 1970s and as recent as 2018. The gathering provided an opportunity for past program participants to reconnect with current and former CAP staff.

“It’s always a challenge to reach out to high school programs’ graduates,” said Susana Ulloa, Director of CAP’s High School Initiatives, which currently includes UCAP (UConn College Access and Preparation Program) and First Star Academy, an initiative that serves high school youth in foster care. “Our students come to us in their early teens, and it is difficult to track them down once they graduate from high school and move on to college.”

Upward Bound was one of several CAP college access and preparation programs that served high school students who were first-generation to college, from low-income families and/or from populations underrepresented in higher education. “Upward Bound made such an impact on my life,” said alumna Tyqua Gibson, Class of 2000. “I met my husband there, and a lot of my friends. Such a great experience!”

Before it was known as Upward Bound, alumnus Glenn Spenser participated in what was then called the Connecticut College Pre-Collegiate Enrichment Program (CONNPEP) in 1977. “CONNPEP changed my life,” he said. “It gave me the opportunity to go to college.”

Raul Pereles, ConnCAP (Connecticut Collegiate Awareness and Preparation Program) Class of 2005, said, “[This program] gave me a clear path to achieve my dream of completing college and breaking a generational curse. I have become a leader in my community. ConnCAP taught me to never squander an opportunity.”
Regardless of their age or which CAP program they participated in, attendees shared a feeling of gratitude for the opportunities provided to them and joy at the chance to reunite with former classmates and staff.

“The Center for Academic Programs has a rich history of assisting high school students who are the first in their families to go on to pursue college educations,” said Robert L. Brown, a former CONNPEP advisor who remains strongly tied to CAP and its alumni. “The reunion was a great way of reconnecting . . . [and recognizing] the achievements of these now adults, who are doing great things professionally in their communities in the state of Connecticut.”

UConn’s Center for Academic Programs has served underrepresented high school students for over 50 years, helping them to achieve their goal of earning college degrees. Ms. Ulloa hopes that the success of the event will inspire many alumni to remain engaged and organize other events in the near future.
The UConn Center for Academic Programs’ second annual STEM is Amazing Conference, held November 3, 2018 on the Storrs campus, brought together undergraduate and high school students to explore the world of STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math).

Led by participants in UConn’s McNair Scholars Program and the Louis Stokes Alliance for Minority Participation (LSAMP), 73 high school students in the UConn College Access Program (UCAP) and The First Star Academy took part in a series of workshops designed to bring biology, chemistry, engineering, and physics concepts to life. Activities included making elephant toothpaste, building a roller coaster, and demonstrating disease transmission. Each workshop included time to discuss the purpose, hypotheses, and results of each activity.

The students also took part in a question and answer session about topics related to college life, such as being a first-generation college student, succeeding in STEM disciplines, and balancing academics and social life. The McNair and LSAMP students used this forum to share their own experiences as UConn students, and specifically as students of color at a predominantly white institution.

The UCAP and First Star students were excited to learn about STEM in fun ways and to connect with undergraduate students, both academically and personally. McNair and LSAMP students were glad for the opportunity to share their passion for STEM, and to inspire an interest in science among younger students. Planning is already underway for the third annual CAP STEM Conference.
Kendall Greer, an SSS senior at the UConn Waterbury campus, may be graduating in May 2019, but his contributions to the campus and local communities will no doubt carry on long after he accepts his diploma. The Human Development and Family Studies and Psychological Sciences double major founded the Black Student Association soon after beginning his freshman year in 2015. Under Kendall’s leadership, the organization, whose members include many SSS students, has volunteered in numerous efforts both on and off campus.

Despite being in his senior year, Kendall has shown no signs of slowing down as the BSA president. Academic year 2018-2019 began with the organization registering 30 students to vote during its Voter Registration Initiative. As part of their long-standing mentoring partnership with the Granville Academy of Waterbury, which serves students in grades 8-12, BSA members volunteered at the school’s Career Fair in October 2018, and again in December 2018 as part of a college readiness panel.

In November 2018, BSA volunteers assisted Greater Waterbury Interfaith Ministries Inc. in distributing food for Thanksgiving meals. “Giving back during this event was fulfilling and heartwarming,” Kendall said. “BSA members take the time to do community service over Thanksgiving break because we are committed to living by the organization’s mission, which is to promote the enhancement of the academic and social environment for all UConn students while also giving back to the Waterbury community.”

In addition to the BSA, Kendall has been involved in the Associated Student Government, the Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, and as a volunteer at the Ronald McDonald House soup kitchen. The Associated Student Government named him Student of the Year, and he is a multi-year recipient of the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Scholarship. After graduation, Kendall plans to attend graduate school to earn a degree in psychology, with the goal of becoming a psychologist. CAP thanks Kendall for his hard work and service, and wishes him all the best in his future endeavors.
STEM SUCCESS AT UCONN AVERY POINT

Eighteen SSS students attending the 2018 Summer Program at UConn’s Avery Point campus took part in a pilot program designed to increase retention among declared STEM majors through exposure to scientific concepts and laboratories. Marine Sciences Postdoctoral Associates Dr. Emma Cross and Alejandro Cifuentes-Lorenzen developed STEM Success with assistance from Avery Point SSS Coordinator Aaron Collins and Continuing Education Counselor Elizabeth Kading.

Throughout the summer, the SSS students took part in laboratory workshops led by graduate students, where they gained hands-on experience and exposure to microscopes, plankton tows, and titration experiments. In addition, each student was paired with a Marine Sciences graduate student who served as a STEM mentor.

Though the summer STEM Success program was indeed a success, the ultimate goal of the new initiative is to provide students with a peer-driven network throughout their undergraduate careers that supports their learning and perseverance in their respective STEM majors.
UCAP Honors Robert L. Brown

UConn Center for Academic Programs’ staff emeritus Robert “Bob” L. Brown is practically a legend among current CAP staff, so it is only fitting that a student award was named in his honor. The Robert L. Brown Award is an homage to Mr. Brown’s 36 years of dedicated service to CAP students. Presented to an outstanding senior for the first time at the UCAP (UConn College Access Program) Summer Program Closing Ceremony, on July 23, 2018 at the Storrs Campus, the award recognizes a student who has demonstrated outstanding academic achievement, dedication to education, and community service.

Mr. Brown began his career at UConn as a counselor with ConnPEP (Connecticut Pre-Collegiate Enrichment Program) a precursor to UCAP, based at the Storrs campus. The program prepared underrepresented high school students from Hartford and New Haven for college success. In this role, he worked extensively with students and their families throughout the academic year, and ran a residential summer program in Storrs that enabled participants to experience college academics and life. After 16 years with ConnPEP, Mr. Brown became Coordinator of the Student Support Services program at the UConn West Hartford campus, a role he held for 20 years before retiring in 2009.

Though Mr. Brown retired from UConn, he continues to work tirelessly for educational equity. He is a Mentoring Consultant for the City of Hartford Department of Families, Children, and Youth. He also serves on the board of multiple community organizations related to education and mental health. Currently, he is a Juvenile Review Board Facilitator at the Village for Families and Children, Inc.

Hartford Public High School Academy of Engineering and Green Technology and UCAP senior Kyaira El-Amin was the first recipient of the Robert L. Brown award. Kyaira is the student representative for Parent University, a parent-led organization that advocates for positive change within the Hartford Public School system. An honor student with perfect attendance, she is a role model and mentor to other UCAP students.
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.