



Welcome to the spring 2022 edition of the Center for Academic Programs Update, our annual publication featuring stories about the exciting activities our students and staff have been engaging in this year. This has been a year of growth and innovation for CAP; we've added new programs and staff, transitioned back to in-person activities, and witnessed the outstanding perseverance and achievements of CAP students. We hope you enjoy reading this newsletter edition.

FAREWELL, WITH GRATITUDE FROM THE DIRECTOR

BIDYA RANJEET
DIRECTOR, CENTER FOR ACADEMIC PROGRAMS
AND MCNAIR SCHOLARS PROGRAM



I would like to start by sharing that effective April 1, 2022, I will be retiring from my position as CAP Director. For more than 30 years, I have been fortunate to work in this department. In the 1990s, I was given the opportunity to contribute to UConn's commitment to educational access through these programs, standing on the shoulders of those who came before me: Fred Simon, Roger N. Buckley, Iris Kinnard, Maria D. Martinez, Alma Maldonado-Cordner, Bob Brown, and Marie McCain, to name a few. It has been my life's work and passion to continue this progress in providing educational access and opportunities to students who have been underserved. Starting as a graduate student and continuing to work progressively in almost every available position, I am proud to have grown professionally with CAP and to have developed impactful programs which align with my own personal passion for equity and social justice.

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CENTER FOR ACADEMIC PROGRAMS

Farewell, with Gratitude from the Director continued

As I move into this new stage of my life, I cannot help but reflect on the support CAP has garnered over the years. I am very grateful to all of the many departments at the University who have shared in CAP's mission of promoting educational equity through access and support services for our neediest students. Through the commitment of the leadership, faculty, and staff, CAP has developed into a national model, with many of our initiatives being implemented at the entire University and serving as exemplars across the country. I am so proud of what we have been able to accomplish in our work together.

I am especially grateful to the CAP staff, both past and present, whom I fondly call my CAP family. I have been

blessed to work with so many dedicated, passionate people over the years, and to watch them shine their light. I am fortunate to be retiring from a department that I have loved so much, and as much as I will miss my CAP family, I know that our students and our programs will be in great hands. In my retirement I look forward to continuing to learn about the impact CAP makes in the lives of our first-generation, low-income, and underrepresented students, including supporting their holistic development, helping them achieve their academic and career goals, and opening their world to new possibilities through our SSS study abroad programs. In closing, I want to thank everyone who has supported me, and CAP, through the years, and to those who will continue transforming students' lives.

ANNOUNCING BIDYA RANJEET EXPERIENTIAL GLOBAL LEARNING FUND

In honor of CAP Director Bidya Ranjeet's 30 years of dedicated service to CAP and its students, CAP staff created The Bidya Ranjeet Experiential Global Learning Fund. A passionate and tireless advocate for educational access and equity, Bidya has devoted her entire career to CAP, helping to transform the lives of thousands of underserved students. One of Bidya's many contributions to the University is the founding of the SSS Summer Education Abroad programs, which she developed 20 years ago to meet the unique needs of first-generation, low-income, and underrepresented students. The Bidya Ranjeet Experiential Global Learning Fund will allow more CAP students to access experiential learning programs within the U.S. and abroad. Donations to the fund can be made through the UConn Foundation at s.uconn.edu/ranjeet-egl-fund.



DR. RANJEET (FAR LEFT) ON STUDY ABROAD TRIP TO CROATIA WITH SSS STUDENTS.

PROMISE SCHOLARS TO BE **SERVED BY CAP**

CAP is proud to be the hub for New Haven Promise and Hartford Promise Scholars enrolled at the University. At the start of the fall 2021 semester, Promise Scholars attended exclusive Meet and Greet receptions where they connected with CAP staff along with many other University staff and

administrators who are invested in their success. CAP looks forward to continuing support services for Promise Scholars in partnership with the New Haven Promise and Hartford Promise organizations.

DR. BIDYA RANJEET RETIRING AFTER **OVER 30 YEARS WITH CAP**

Written by SSS Director Kimberly Gorman and SSS Assistant Director Carl Dean



Even before she came to the United States from Nepal to pursue a graduate degree at UConn, Dr. Bidya Ranjeet had found her passion. The daughter of parents who were political and social activists, Bidya was inspired at an early age to advocate for access, equity, and social justice. Bidya's parents grew up during a time when education was not available to the general public but was reserved only for the elites. Despite lacking a formal education, Bidya's father understood its importance and founded a school for poor children, enlisting relatives to teach. He also valued public health care as did Bidya's mother, who was a nurse through apprenticeship. Her father spearheaded an initiative to found a free public health clinic along with her mother and other community leaders.

At age 24, Bidya co-founded a school for students of all ethnicities and socioeconomic backgrounds. At the time she was married, had one daughter and had little money, so she collected jewelry from the women in her family and used it as collateral to secure a bank loan to start the school. She named the school Indreni, which means rainbow. With this name Bidya hoped to convey the value of diversity and the importance of inclusion. Scholarships were available for children who needed financial support to attend. Through a connection with her aunt, Dr. Geeta Lawot Pfau, Bidya met Drs. Jerry Rowe Minaya and Lilliana Minaya Rowe from UConn's Neag School of Education while they were in Nepal visiting schools. After visiting Indreni, the professors saw potential in Bidya and encouraged her to pursue graduate studies at UConn. At age 27, Bidya arrived at

UConn in Storrs, where she would earn an MA in Educational Administration and a Ph.D. in Adult and Vocational Education.

It was as a graduate assistant with UConn's Center for Academic Programs that Bidya found the department that would become her home and passion for over 30 years. Bidya held many positions within CAP, including graduate assistant, Upward Bound advisor, Student Support Services counselor, Upward Bound director, SSS director, and eventually CAP and McNair Scholars director.

Through her work at the University, Bidya has been integral in providing access to higher education for students from Connecticut's urban centers. She has made significant contributions to the University's mission of promoting diversity through her collaboration with other campus departments, and by developing innovative programming to aid in the retention and graduation of low-income and first-generation students.

Her commitment to students extends beyond just ensuring their success at the University; she was the primary force behind the creation of the UConn SSS Education Abroad Programs. Starting this programming was no simple task,

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Dr. Bidya Ranjeet Retiring After Over 30 Years with CAP continued

as funding was not readily available. But this did not deter Bidya. Through ceaseless determination, she was able to find resources for SSS students to study abroad. Since those early days, the SSS Education Abroad Program has provided hundreds of students with life-transformative education.

Bidya has served as president of the Asian American Faculty and Staff Association at the University and the Nepali Women Global Network and as senior vice president of the Non-Resident Nepali National Coordinating Council, USA. Her volunteer and professional involvement in these organizations, and her tireless advocacy on behalf of

advancing the interests of underrepresented groups within both her local and world-wide South Asian communities, has provided countless people with opportunities to learn, grow, and improve their lives.

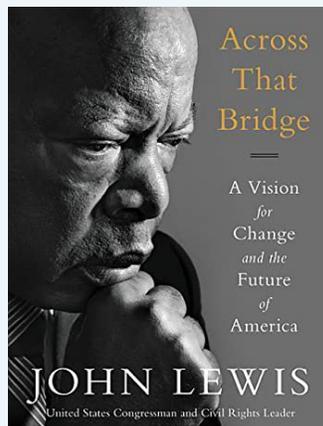
The CAP staff congratulates Dr. Ranjeet on her well-earned retirement and wishes her all the best on this next step in her life journey. On behalf of the thousands of CAP students whose lives she has touched and transformed, and the many CAP staff she has mentored and guided, we thank her for her many years of dedication and service to CAP and UConn.

GETTING INTO GOOD TROUBLE: SSS AND MCNAIR STUDENTS PARTICIPATE IN COE'S NATIONAL GOOD TROUBLE BOOK CLUB

Student groups from the UConn McNair Scholars and Student Support Services Summer Programs participated in the Council for Opportunity in Education (COE's) "Good Trouble Book Club." The Book Club was a national initiative developed, in part, to honor the life and legacy of the late Georgia congressman and civil rights leader, John Lewis. UConn McNair and SSS students worked through Lewis' book *Across That Bridge: A Vision for Change and the Future of America*, meeting regularly to discuss the book and its themes of effective activism, the history of the civil rights movement, and fighting for social justice.

As a part of the broader COE initiative, UConn McNair and SSS Book Clubs were among hundreds of other participating TRIO programs from across the country. Book Club participants joined national discussions through WebEx that were facilitated by high-profile leaders and elected officials, including UConn alum and Secretary of Education under President Joe Biden Miguel Cardona. Sabrina Diana from the SSS Book Club and Myra Cerrato from the McNair Scholars Book Club asked questions on the national stage.

After the experience, Cerrato commented, "I was especially excited to talk to Secretary Cardona, a fellow Latino full of passion for his work. I wanted advice about how to be a better advocate and how to react to resistance with 'peace and love,' and he gave me just that. He told me that it was



important to see the humanity in others as I want others to see in me and that he would not be in the position he is today had he not grasped his emotions and continued to spread light even in the face of darkness." Participants of the UConn McNair Scholars and SSS Good Trouble Book Clubs were also privileged to have an in-person discussion about Lewis' book with Vice Provost Michael Bradford. Vice Provost Bradford shared wisdom and experience with students during a capstone meeting for both student groups on Saturday, July 17, at the Storrs Campus.

Taking them one at a time, Bradford addressed questions on the topics of racial separatism, the level of spirituality in the current civil rights movement, the struggle of people-of-color solidarity, and the importance of language in fighting oppression. When asked about the merits of violent as opposed to non-violent approaches to change, Vice Provost Bradford acknowledged having grappled with this issue and concluded that "no matter what, we must enter and exit conflict with love, or else we lose our humanity."

The UConn McNair Scholars Program and Student Support Services were grateful to be a part of COE's national Good Trouble Book Club and to connect with local leaders, national leaders, and one another through the important lessons in Lewis' book. Both programs look forward to participating in the 2022 COE national "Opportunity Matters Book Club."

CAP WELCOMES NEW STAFF

CAP welcomed new staff to the department since our last newsletter:



Gideon Ampeire began a new role as ConnCAP Advisor on the Avery Point campus serving students at Norwich Free Academy. Previously, Gideon worked as a Counselor in Student Support Services until November 2021 when he made the transition to the ConnCAP Program. Gideon holds an MA in Ethnomusicology from Wesleyan University (2011) and a BA in Culture, Rights, and Indigenous Music from UConn (2009).



Jasmine Cardona joined CAP as a ConnCAP Advisor in Waterbury in December 2020. For Jasmine, this is a return to her roots, as she both a UConn SSS alumna and, before that, a ConnCAP Waterbury alumna. Jasmine is an LMSW with eight years' experience as a social worker. She earned her BAs in Urban Community Studies and Sociology (2013) and her MA in Social Work (2019) from UConn.



Susana Herrera is a ConnCAP Advisor on the Stamford Campus. She is a proud UConn and SSS alumna having earned her BA in Human Development and Family Studies (2018). She also holds an MS in College Student Counseling and Personnel Services from the University of Bridgeport (2021). Before coming to ConnCAP, Susana worked as Professional Academic Success Coach at Southern Connecticut State University.



Fiorela Hidalgo came aboard as the PASS (Promoting Academically Successful Students) Success Advisor in September 2021. In this role, she supports and advises students who are placed on scholastic probation. Prior to joining CAP, she served as an Academic Advisor for the School of Nursing and Health Professions at Goodwin University. Fiorela is a proud alumna of UConn, earning a BA in Communication Disorders (2010). She has also completed an MS in Counselor Education, specializing in Higher Education, from Central Connecticut State University (2017).



Mariane Ibrahim started as a ConnCAP Advisor on the Hartford/Storrs campus in September 2021. She is an Upward Bound alumna from New Jersey City University. Mariane earned her BA and MA in Public and Non-Profit Affairs and Business Management in an accelerated program from Rutgers University (2017).

Before joining the CAP family, she was the Manager of Outreach and Operations Support for New Jersey Transit's Business Development Department. In addition, Mariane has worked in instructional and mentorship roles for Rutgers Upward Bound and New Jersey City University's Pre-College Program.



Lisa Minn comes to her position as ConnCAP Advisor for Hartford/Storrs after having worked as a high school advisor for Brown University's College Advising Corps and the College Crusade of Rhode Island. Lisa has also served at the Rhode Island Educational Opportunity Center and Rhode Island Educational Talent Search. Lisa joins us

after having earned her MA in Public Administration, along with a Graduate Certificate in Labor Relations, from the University of Rhode Island (2021).



Jordan Ochs joined CAP in October 2021 as a Learning Services Specialist for the McNair Scholars Program and Student Support Services, providing both programs with data management, programs analysis, reporting, and administrative support. Jordan earned a Ph.D. in Philosophy with specialization

in epistemology and philosophy of mind from UConn (2020). She also holds an MA in Philosophy and a Graduate Certificate in Cognitive Science from UConn (2017) as well as a BA in Philosophy from UMass Dartmouth (2013). As a graduate student at UConn, Jordan taught Philosophy and Social Ethics in the SSS Summer Program.



Jenny Ortiz took on the position of ConnCAP Advisor in Stamford in September 2021. Jenny has worked for over ten years providing administrative, counseling, and instructional services to graduating high schoolers and first-year college students in Danbury, CT. Most recently, Jenny worked as an Academic Success Counselor for Post University

in Waterbury, CT where she earned an MS in Higher Education Administration (2021). Jenny also holds a BA in English Literature from Western Connecticut State University (2012).

CAP'S COLLEGE ACCESS PROGRAMS DIVISION BEGINS NEW INITIATIVE: **UConn COLLEGE ADVISING CORPS (UConnCAC) STUDENTS IN NEED**



college advisers in selected Connecticut high schools to help students from underserved communities realize their dream of attending college.

In its first year, UConnCAC trained six advisers who are collectively serving over 800 seniors at the following Connecticut high schools: East Haven, Griswold, Warren Harding, Windham, Bristol Eastern, and Bulkeley. Advisers also work with sophomores and juniors to create a college-going culture and provide parents and guardians with workshops to help their children achieve their personal and academic goals.

The Institute for Student Success has established the UConn College Advising Corps (UConnCAC) in conjunction with the Office of Undergraduate Admissions, AmeriCorps, the College Advising Corps, and the State of Connecticut Department of Education.

The College Advising Corps is a national non-profit organization that works to increase the rates of college enrollment and completion among low-income, first-generation college and underrepresented high school students. As a member of this national movement, UConnCAC places

UConnCAC Advisers are already shining in the national CAC community. They participated in the national CAC organization's 2021-2022 Virtual Adviser Assembly with keynote speaker Chris Soto, Senior Advisor in the Office of the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Education. During the assembly, Adviser Caitlin Pichette of Griswold High School was nominated for the 2022 True North Award, which is given annually to an adviser exemplifying excellence and consistently demonstrating grace and humility. CAP is excited to continue supporting Connecticut high school students through the CAC initiative.

UConnCAC IN THE NEWS!

UConnCAC advisers are making a difference for Connecticut students and making waves in the broader community. Connecticut WTNH News 8 featured the work of UConnCAC at Griswold High School during its "What's Right With Schools" report which aired on March 8th. WTNH 8 reported that more students in Connecticut are going onto college because of the CAC initiative. Griswold High School Adviser Caitlin Pichette told WTNH, "Speaking personally, that whole college application process is very intimidating, so having that one-on-one attention that I can just be there to answer questions for them as a support, I think that's a huge benefit." Watch the broadcast online at [s.uconn.edu/wtnh-cac](https://www.uconn.edu/wtnh-cac).



GRISWOLD HIGH SCHOOL UConnCAC ADVISER, CAITLIN PICHETTE

UConn CONNCAP STUDENTS EXPERIENCE MANY “FIRSTS” DURING ACADEMIC DAY

The University of Connecticut’s Collegiate Awareness and Preparation Program (ConnCAP) held its first team-building activity with high school students from Bulkeley, Windham and Hartford High Schools. As it turned out, this was a day of many “firsts” for ConnCAP students, including their first time visiting the UConn Storrs campus.

Students gathered at the Learning Community Innovation Zone (LCIZ). There, they painted holiday portraits and later, in the LCIZ makerspace, learned about Zing laser technology from LCIZ Supervisor Cody Ryan and his graduate assistant Uche Anne. Students crafted snow-globe ornaments and customized their work using Zing laser techniques such as 3D cutting and engraving.

Due to prior pandemic restrictions, this ConnCAP Academic Day was also the first time in quite a while that students could come together, meet students from other high schools, and bond over new learning and social experiences. For new

high school students in the program, this Academic Day was their first experience of connection and excitement in a university setting. ConnCAP intends it to be the first of many.



CONNCAP STUDENTS LEARN TO USE ZING LASER TECHNOLOGY IN THE LCIZ MAKERSPACE

UConnCAC PERFORMING STRONG IN CT FAFSA CHALLENGE



The Connecticut Governor’s Office and the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) are hosting the 2021-22 FAFSA Challenge, an initiative to boost FAFSA completion

rates among Connecticut high school seniors graduating in 2022. Participating UConnCAC advisers at Bristol Eastern, Warren Harding, Griswold, and Windham High School are up to the challenge!

The CT FAFSA Challenge began as a corrective effort after FAFSA completion rates began declining in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Completing the FAFSA has been shown to increase the likelihood of high school seniors going to college by 84% (National College Attainment Network). Thus, the state of Connecticut awarded grants to eligible “challenge” high schools to increase their FAFSA completion rates. So far, not only have CAC Advisers shown that they can rise to the challenge, but they have shown that they are major contenders.

As part of the challenge, advisers received additional FAFSA training sessions and learned best practices for promoting FAFSA completion among students and families. Advisers hosted workshops and provided individualized assistance to families as they completed the FAFSA. They also incentivized FAFSA completion for students through large raffle prizes and discounts on graduation regalia and have even hosted FAFSA completion sessions over breakfast.

The work of CAC Advisers is evident. Windham High School (CAC Adviser Daniela Iniestra-Varelas) was recognized during the month of December 2021 as having the highest rate increase of all challenge schools in the state!

With momentum on their side, UConnCAC Advisers are not backing down. They will have until May 2022 to increase the FAFSA completion rate at their respective high schools. Winners of the CT FAFSA Challenge and the high school receiving the governor’s \$5,000 prize will be announced September 2022.

CONNCAP EXPANDS TO ALL REGIONAL CAMPUSES

CAP has received grant funding from the Connecticut Office of Higher Education to implement the work being done by the Connecticut Collegiate Awareness and Preparation Program (ConnCAP) on all UConn regional campuses. With the hiring of six new advisors, low-income and first-generation-to-college high school students from across the state are now receiving access to tutoring, advising, college visits, enrichment seminars, and more throughout the academic year. Students at all ConnCAP sites will also have access to intensive multi-week college preparation programs this summer.

The ConnCAP Hartford/Storrs branch already served Bulkeley High School, Hartford Public High School, and Windham High School in Willimantic. The new grant funding allows ConnCAP Hartford/Storrs to also serve students at McDonough Middle School in Hartford. Beyond this, ConnCAP now extends to three additional high schools including Norwich Free Academy through ConnCAP Avery Point, Stamford High School through ConnCAP Stamford, and Kennedy High School through ConnCAP Waterbury. An expansion of this magnitude required strong leadership to



connect with regional campuses and corresponding high schools, not to mention training and overseeing new staff. CAP called on its current Director of College Access Programs, Dr. Susana Ulloa and Dr. Christina Irizarry, who has since become the Director of ConnCAP, to spearhead the expansion. In less than one year, through tireless work and collaboration, Dr. Ulloa and Dr. Irizarry have successfully instated support programming at all newly afforded locations throughout the state.

FIRST UCONN MCNAIR SCHOLAR EARNS DOCTORAL DEGREE FROM HARVARD UNIVERSITY



ROBERT STICKELS, PH.D.

Robert Stickels is the first UConn McNair Scholar to earn a Ph.D. Stickels, a member of the UConn McNair Scholars Program in its first year, earned his Ph.D. in Biophysics from Harvard University under the advisement of Evan Macosko, MD, Ph.D., and Fei Chen, Ph.D. Stickel's doctoral thesis is entitled "Technologies for Assaying the Spatial Position

of Biomolecules in Situ." This work resulted in a technology that allows researchers in the biomedical field to glean greater amounts of biomolecular signaling and spatial information from tissue samples.

While at UConn, Stickels worked in an evolutionary genomics lab under Dr. Andrew Pask. Dr. Pask's mentorship greatly impacted Stickels and shaped his approach to science as an undergraduate. Ultimately, it was pursuing a life's work

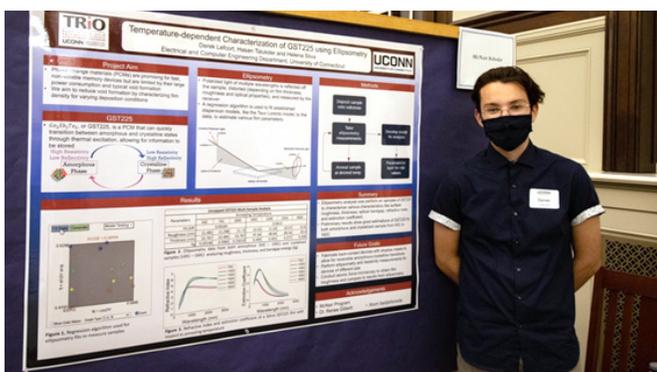
dedicated to cultivating a data driven and critical thinking mindset that attracted Stickels to pursue a Ph.D. In graduate school at Harvard, Stickels' mentors guided him to a research path at the intersection of biological technology, microscopy, engineering, and chemistry. As a result of his doctoral work, Stickels produced a biomolecule measurement technology for use in biomedical sciences.

Now a research scientist at Stanford University, the newly minted "Robert Stickels, Ph.D." (affectionately referred to in the McNair Scholars Program as "Dr. Bob") is carving out a career path, seeking to produce technologies that will make medicines more affordable and widely available to the public. He is especially interested in working on new vaccine and antibody therapy technologies. Dr. Bob also strives to help individuals like himself enter careers in science or increase their scientific literacy. CAP is exceptionally proud of Dr. Bob and looks forward to learning of his continued professional contributions in the STEM fields!

MCNAIR SCHOLARS POSTERS TAKE **FIRST AND SECOND PLACE AT REGIONAL CONFERENCES**

McNair Scholars Derek Lefcort and Shihao Zhai won first and second place awards for their research posters at regional conferences last fall.

Zhai took second place for his poster “Designing a Portable Particulate Matter Monitor” at the annual American Institute for Chemical Engineers (AIChE) conference held in Boston, MA while Lefcort’s poster, “Temperature-dependent Characterization of GST225 using Ellipsometry” won a first-place cash prize at the American Physical Society’s New England Fall Meeting, which occurred virtually.



DEREK LEFCORT



SHIHAO ZHAI

While winning these awards was a positive aspect of the conference for the scholars, both commented that the best part of the experience was making new connections and hearing fascinating talks by experts in their fields. Congratulations to Derek and Shihao!

MCNAIR/LSAMP **FACULTY MENTOR AWARDS**



ISS VICE PROVOST DR. TADARRAYL STARKE, MCNAIR SCHOLARS PROGRAM/CAP DIRECTOR DR. BIDYA RANJEET, DR. SABATO SANTANIELLO, DR. KRISTINA WAGSTROM, MCNAIR SCHOLARS PROGRAM COORDINATOR, DR. RENEE GILBERTI AND LSAMP DIRECTOR, MICHAEL PETRO.

SSS EVENTS



Throughout each year, Student Support Services hosts many exclusive events to engage SSS students and foster their academic, professional, and personal development. Here is a look at just some of these events from 2021-2022.

SUMMER 2021

REGIONAL CAMPUSES HOLD IN-PERSON SUMMER COMMUNITY EVENTS

During a summer of online classes, SSS students at regional campuses were excited to participate in in-person community events at the end of the 2021 SSS Summer Program.

First-year students from the Avery Point campus enjoyed a Summer Field Day event where they were treated to kayaking lessons by UConn Avery Point's Water Programs Manager, Prescott Littlefield. They also participated in team bonding activities, games, and a campus tour, which included a visit to the historic Branford House. Later in the afternoon, students enjoyed lunch and UConn Dairy Bar ice cream over music and conversation.



SSS Stamford hosted two Community Connection Events for first-year students. During the first, students participated in volunteer work, weeding and gardening in Mill River Park, which is located across from the UConn Stamford campus. The

second was held at Seaside Park in Bridgeport, CT. Students enjoyed beautiful weather as they engaged in Peer Mentored icebreaker and bonding activities. During both events, students interacted with staff and learned about university offices and resources.

Both Avery Point Coordinator Aaron Collins and Stamford Coordinator Rawan Shilleh reported that these events were a great opportunity to build confidence for students and create connections with the SSS community as they began college in the fall.



FALL 2021

STORRS: GRIT RETREAT

Before the fall semester, 25 SSS students moved in early to the Storrs campus to participate in the second annual Growing Resilience and Inspiring Transformation (G.R.I.T.) Retreat. The retreat engaged students in workshops and activities designed to empower them to be self-driven. Talks commenced with a keynote address by Eredit Abedini, a UConn SSS Alum and the Founder/Executive Director of the Hartford Sports Foundation. Abedini's address energized attendees as he shared his experience of success and provided motivation from the perspective of an SSS alum. One participant remarked, "This retreat was an awesome opportunity to experience not just campus life, but to also make connections and bond."

STORRS: SOPHOMORE SUNSET SOCIAL



SOPHOMORE SUNSET SOCIAL: STUDENTS FROM THE SSS 2020 COHORT, NOW SOPHOMORES, GATHERED FOR AN IN-PERSON CELEBRATION OF THEIR PROGRESS AT UCONN AT LAST FALLS' SOPHOMORE SUNSET SOCIAL.

together remotely for the last year and a half. Gathering in person engendered a spirit of joy and togetherness that permeated the Sunset Social. The students, now sophomores, spent the evening playing games, dancing, socializing, and making friends. The event was a well-deserved moment for SSS sophomores to celebrate their accomplishments and perseverance throughout their time at UConn thus far.

The Sophomore Sunset Social was an evening dedicated to celebrating the students who began their time at UConn in the summer of 2020 during the height of the pandemic. This was a special experience for students and SSS counselors who had worked



T-SHIRT GIVE AWAY: AT THE START OF THE FALL SEMESTER, SSS STUDENTS GOT OUT OF THEIR ROOMS AND RECONNECTED WITH THE SSS COMMUNITY DURING A T-SHIRT GIVE-AWAY! STUDENTS FLOCKED TO THE SSS OFFICE, EXCITED TO SEE ONE ANOTHER IN PERSON AND RECEIVE FREE UCONN T-SHIRTS AND DRAWSTRING BACKPACKS.



SSS TRICK-OR-TREAT: SSS STAFF DONNED THEIR HALLOWEEN BEST AND WELCOMED STUDENTS INTO THE SSS OFFICE FOR SOME TRICK-OR-TREATING FUN.



SSS DESTRESS: BEFORE FINAL EXAMS FOR THE FALL SEMESTER BEGAN, SSS STUDENTS CAME TOGETHER TO ENGAGE IN SELF-CARE ACTIVITIES. STUDENTS PAINTED, MADE SEASONAL CRAFTS, PLAYED GAMES, LISTENED TO MUSIC AND ENJOYED A HOT COCOA BAR! THEY ALSO RECEIVED DESTRESSING ESSENTIALS INCLUDING STRESS BALLS, FACE MASKS AND SNACKS.

SPRING 2022

STORRS: STUDENTS STRIVING FOR SUCCESS

Students laid the groundwork for achieving their spring semester goals at the Students Striving for Success event. Students were led through a visualization exercise and conferred with SSS staff and representatives from the Academic Achievement Center and Center for Career Development to discuss their goals and identify action steps for reaching them. Students then relaxed with music and snacks while creating vision boards to serve as an inspiration as they strive for success.



2021 SSS SUMMER PROGRAM IN STORRS GOES LIVE



After spending months planning another online SSS Summer Program in response to the continuing COVID-19 pandemic, CAP received word in March 2021 that it could move forward with an on-campus program in Storrs. Knowing our incoming first-year students would benefit most from being in-person, SSS did a complete 180 and fast-tracked planning a residential summer program. The result was 128 students moving into Watson and Eddy Halls on June 27, 2021.

Having a residential summer program in the midst of a pandemic had its challenges, but all were overcome with the support of Student Health and Wellness and Residential Life and the dedication of the SSS residential, counseling, and instructional teams. Thanks to these efforts, students

were able to engage in their classes, take advantage of study hours and extracurricular activities, and overall make the most of what for many was their first all-out, in-person educational experience in over a year. Students abided by the health and safety protocols and there was not one COVID-19 case during the entire five-week program.

As SSS heads into summer 2022, all five campuses are planning in-person summer programs. Though we have learned over the past two years that even the best laid plans are sometimes thrown off track, the good news is we now have a blueprint for either scenario, in-person or online. We will continue to hope for the best and plan for the rest.



SSS STUDENTS BACK TO **STUDYING ABROAD**

While many travel plans were put on hold during the pandemic, SSS still sought every opportunity to support students in accessing impactful experiential learning opportunities. In addition to supporting 19 students in securing Virtual Global Internships in Spring and Summer 2021 during the pandemic, SSS also collaborated with Experiential Global Learning in recruiting and supporting 11 SSS students in a Winter in Hawaii program in January 2022.

For many students, studying away in Hawaii was a bright light after a challenging two years. SSS senior Luis Gonzalez said, “After a couple of years being mostly isolated, it felt relieving and exciting to finally be able to travel, and knowing that I was with other SSS students made me feel comfortable. This program was much more than reading about Hawaiian culture and their history. I got to broaden my horizons with an unforgettable experience.”

Students also continued to seek out semester-long study abroad experiences. Three SSS students, Shafina Chowdhury, Arianna Mullings, and Adrienne Bruce, studied abroad in South Korea in Fall 2021, where they immersed themselves in the culture of Seoul. As Arianna Mullings put it, “There was always something to explore and see in Seoul and if you ever got lost, you could use that as an experience to feel the culture.” From the Korean language to the food, karaoke nights, and cat cafes, these students had no shortage of enriching experiences to seize outside of coursework. Mullings continued, “I miss the scenery, going to karaoke, and the many different themed cafes. I definitely recommend going to Korea for anyone who wants to study abroad!” SSS students who study abroad experience tremendous benefits academically and personally, including increased confidence in their studies and a 92% graduation rate.

Looking ahead, SSS is excited to offer its programs again in Summer 2022. Thirty students will have the opportunity to experience life-transformative education abroad in San Joaquín de Flores, Costa Rica, and Prague, Czech Republic.



JUNIOR SSS PSYCHOLOGY MAJOR ARIANNA MULLINGS VISITING YAKCHEONSA BUDDIST TEMPLE, JEJU ISLAND, SOUTH KOREA DURING HER FALL 2021 SEMESTER ABROAD.



SSSS STUDENTS ENJOY A LUAU ON OAHU, HAWAII DURING THEIR WINTER 2022 STUDY AWAY EXPERIENCE.

STUDENT HIGHLIGHTS

DACIA WALCOTT: SSS HARTFORD ALUMNA PASSES CT BAR EXAM

UConn SSS Hartford alumna, Dacia Walcott '17 (Political Science major, History minor) has officially become Dacia Walcott Esq.! During her time at UConn, Walcott was a member of the Honors Program, the Board of Academic Misconduct, the National Society of Collegiate Scholars, and Alpha Lambda Delta. After graduating from UConn in 2017, Dacia began studying international human rights, immigration, and family law at Quinnipiac University Law School where she graduated in spring 2021 with a Juris Doctorate. In December of 2021, Walcott passed the Connecticut Bar exam, officially making her a licensed attorney. Walcott currently plans to serve as a family lawyer with Connecticut Legal Services. Congratulations to Dacia!



PRECIOUS EDWARDS: INCREASES HEALTH CARE EQUITY IN MANCHESTER, CT

SSS senior and Sociology major Precious Edwards is making an impact as the Community Outreach Worker for Health and Human Services Department in the Town of Manchester, CT. In this role, she forges strong connections between community partners (nonprofits, community leaders, religious organizations etc.) and the local government while providing access to resources for BIPOC and homeless populations. Edwards plays a special part in COVID Community Outreach, providing education about the virus and vaccine to ensure that individuals who are part of vulnerable populations receive adequate care.



OMOSEDE (SEDE) OSAHON: VOLUNTEERS ABROAD DURING WINTER BREAK

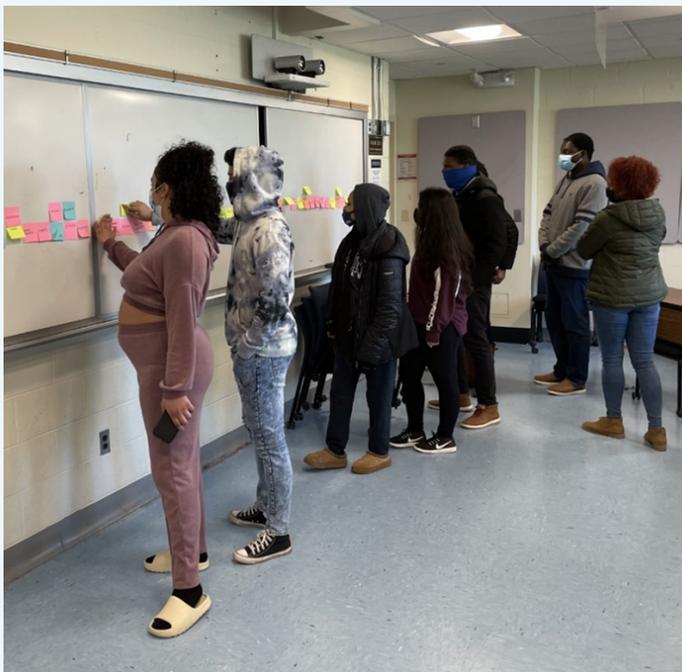
Most students take the time for some well-deserved relaxation over winter intercession, but not SSS junior Sede Osahon! Osahon, a Speech, Language, and Hearing Sciences major, spent her break in Costa Rica, helping to secure clean water for a community that had been lacking it for over 40 years. Along with other members of the mission, she helped install water filters in 45 homes and taught members of the Costa Rican community how to perform the installation for the future. Though this trip was not related to her academic work, it was personally fulfilling for Osahon and allowed her to positively impact the health and well-being of a large community for years to come.

MARIA KELLEY: RECEIVES PROVOST’S AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE IN COMMUNITY ENGAGED SCHOLARSHIP

Maria Kelley, a junior SSS student, BOLD Scholar, and major in Law, Social Justice, and the Family, has received the Provost’s Award for Excellence in Community Engaged Scholarship. This award is granted to UConn members who create conditions for the public good that culminate in sustainable change. Kelley was recognized for her breadth of dedicated service. She has served the UConn community as Service Committee Chair of the Human Rights and Action Learning Community, President of Creating Caring Communities, Program Assistant for the UConn Rising Scholars program, Mentor for the METAS program, and member of the Student Leadership Challenge and the Leadership Legacy Experience. In the broader community, Kelley serves on the Connecticut Department of Children and Families Youth Advisory Board. She was a branch lead for the Be A(Part) initiative and was an intern for the Youth Catalyst Experience.



SSS LAUNCHES SENIOR YEAR EXPERIENCE COURSE



SSS launched a one-credit Senior Year Experience (SYE) course in spring 2021, designed specifically to meet the needs of SSS students as they prepare for life after UConn. Most SSS students are not only the first in their families to earn a bachelor’s degree, but also are the first to pursue professional careers or graduate school. They may also be the first to pursue home ownership, contribute to retirement plans, invest in stocks, seek careers that align with their values and passions, and become entrepreneurs. These topics and more are addressed in SSS SYE, with the aim of empowering students to achieve their post-graduation career, academic, and personal goals. The class is also an opportunity for seniors to reconnect for a final time with their SSS peers, counselors, and alumni presenters before graduating.

SYE was developed by UConn’s Center for Career Development and is available to all seniors, with some subsections available for special groups, such as students in specific majors or programs like SSS. The course addresses topics related to transition planning, career management, financial literacy, professional communication, and health and wellness, and allows seniors to reflect on their UConn experience. SSS plans to offer SYE each spring semester.

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MISSION

The Center for Academic Programs (CAP) advances educational equity by increasing access to higher education and transformative experiences that support retention and graduation for students who are first-generation to college, from low-income households, and from other underserved populations.

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