

JULY 2023



A MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

Dr. Tadarrayl Starke, Interim Director
Center for Access and Postsecondary Success and McNair Scholars Program

As you will read in the coming pages, it has been an exciting and event-filled year for our students. After years of virtual programs, mask-wearing and social distancing, we have gladly returned to fully in-person classes, travel, summer programs, and events. High school and college students in our programs were engaged throughout the year in activities including STEM explorations, study abroad, and community service. Several of our students were also honored with awards, and we couldn't be more proud.

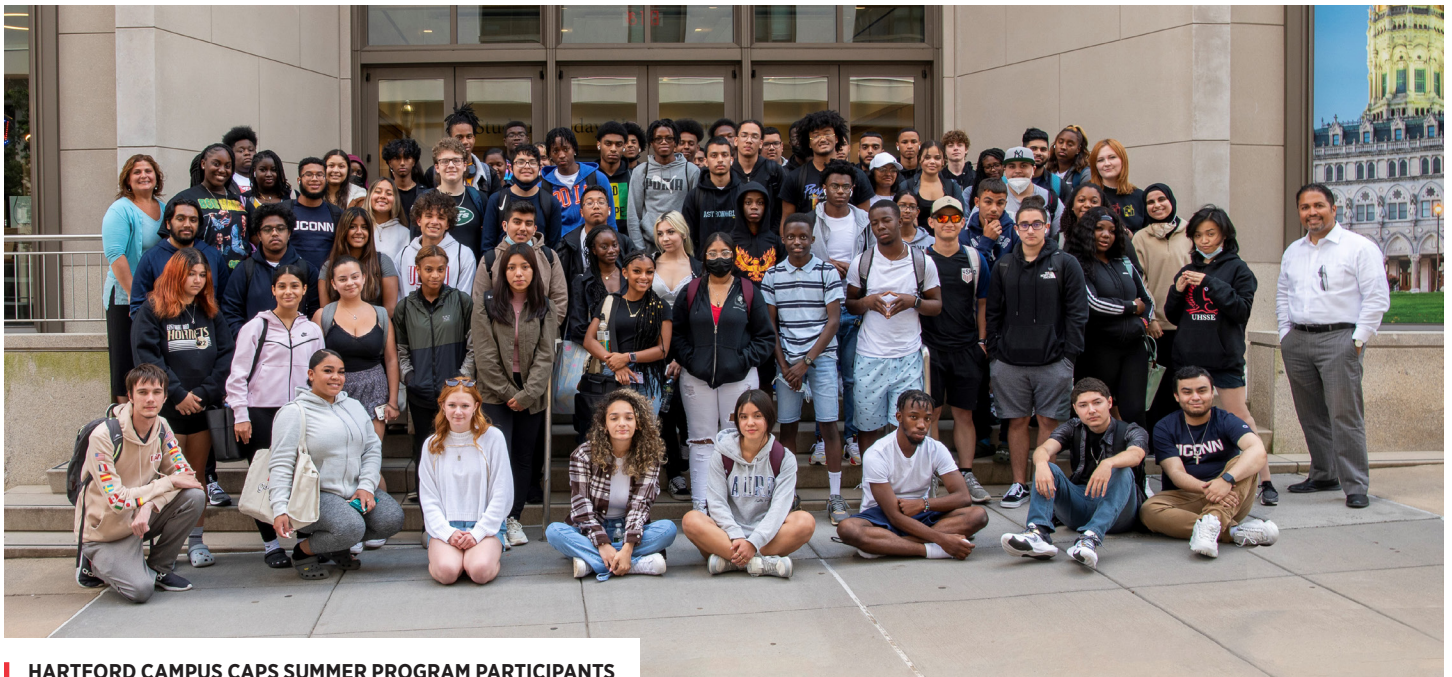
We successfully secured a number of new grants that will enable us to expand our reach to serve more students at both the pre-college and college level at all five UConn campuses. We have added two Upward Bound programs to our suite of TRIO grants and have renewed the McNair Scholars Program grant. The State of Connecticut and other private funders have also made it possible to expand services at all campuses with a special focus on students at the regional campuses of Hartford, Stamford, and Waterbury.

With our growing number of services and a renewed commitment to educational equity, we renamed the Center for Academic Programs (CAP) to the Center for Access and Postsecondary Success (CAPS). Our new name better reflects our mission, purpose, and goals. Through our access programs, we continue to serve Connecticut's historically under-resourced pre-college populations with existing and new programs designed to prepare students for college enrollment. Through our college services, CAPS helps students navigate their higher education journey and prepares them for life after college. "CAPS" better reflects the full identity of who we are and what we do.

I hope you enjoy reading this newsletter as much as I have enjoyed working with CAPS staff and students throughout the year.

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HARTFORD CAMPUS CAPS SUMMER PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS

\$11.5 MILLION IN GRANT FUNDING TO SUPPORT TRADITIONALLY UNDERREPRESENTED STUDENTS

UConn's Institute for Student Success brings in nearly \$11.5 million in grant funding to support traditionally underrepresented students in their pursuit of higher education.

Since the fall of 2020 and the arrival of the new Associate Vice Provost, Dr. Tadarayl M. Starke, UConn's Institute for Student Success has been very busy writing grants. ISS submitted a total of 42 grant proposals to federal, state, and private sources, 17 of which have been funded, valued at \$11 million. All of the proposals aim to improve the educational outcomes for Connecticut's low-income and first-generation student populations who have been particularly hard hit by the pandemic. While some of the programs expand existing resources to support UConn undergraduates, many are aimed at supporting students earlier in their academic careers.

With the goal of increasing equitable access to a college education, it is critical that students get the support they need long before they apply to an institution of higher education. Studies have shown the importance of quality advising and college readiness activities for youth starting as early as middle school. The college-going process involves more than submitting the application senior year. Students need to build the idea that college is possible for them much sooner so they can make the most of their time in school and be college-ready. This mindset contributes not only to increased college-going rates but also to college graduation rates.

With this in mind, UConn applied for 30 different grants for pre-college programming to support students in middle and high schools across the State of Connecticut. Twelve have already been funded. The State-funded Connecticut College Access and Preparation Program (ConnCAP) grants, which began in the 2021-2022 academic year, expanded on long-standing, existing programs. The UConn program previously served students in just three high schools in Hartford and Windham. The new grants provide funding to continue these programs while also expanding to serve additional students in Norwich, Naugatuck, and Stamford. Staff members are on board and the program is looking forward to a successful third year.

Enhancing the support for students in Naugatuck and Norwich, federal TRIO funds will add an Upward Bound program to each of these schools, providing additional programming, staff, and resources for students. Both ConnCAP and Upward Bound accept students by application and provide in-school educational services, as well as after-school, weekend, and summer engagement to students starting in ninth grade and continuing until graduation. These programs aim to increase the college-going rates of their participants by preparing them for college academically and socially.

CAPS also launched the College Advising Corps, a program targeting under-resourced high schools around Connecticut.

Recent college graduates serve as additional in-school advisors to help develop a college-going culture at the school and assist students with navigating the steps to apply to college, complete financial aid applications, and enroll in a postsecondary institution. The new UConn program, now in its second year, currently serves students in five high schools in Connecticut, in Windham, Bristol, Griswold, East Haven, and Bridgeport.

In addition to the large increase in support for pre-college programming, grants to support college students at UConn will also help narrow the achievement gap between first generation, low-income, and historically underrepresented minorities at the undergraduate and post-graduate levels. Two of these grants specifically target students in STEM. UConn has successfully renewed the Ronald E. McNair Postbaccalaureate Achievement Program grant from the federal department of education and has continued operating the Louis Stokes Alliance for Minority Participation grant from the National Science Foundation. Between the two, they provide over \$3.8 million in funding to support underrepresented students in STEM over the next five years.

CAPS has also renewed its commitment to providing assistance for first-generation and low-income minority students who are on academic probation. The Promoting Academically Successful Students (PASS) grant from

the Connecticut Office of Higher Education provides students with a dedicated staff member and supplemental programming to help those who have fallen into probationary status get back on their academic feet.

Several other private grants will also help CAPS bolster support for students at UConn’s regional campuses. These include funding from the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities (HACU) to help prepare students in high school and the summer bridge programs for college success, as well as the Lloyd G. Balfour grant to increase the number of CAPS participants and direct programming on all regional campuses.

“As the flagship institution in the state, UConn has the potential to expand our impact on educational equity. These grants are only a part of our commitment to expand access, provide support, and promote success for Connecticut’s underrepresented student population,” says Associate Vice Provost Dr. Tadarrayl Starke, “Connecticut has many opportunities for promise and potential in addressing achievement gaps, which is where our programs are hoping to make an impact.”

With this additional funding, hundreds of additional students will be served and have the chance to achieve their dream of earning a college degree.

AVERY POINT CAPS STUDENT LEADS HUSKYTHON



UConn Avery Point senior Nicole Cabusao successfully led the initiative to raise over \$4,000 for Connecticut Children’s Medical Center as team captain during UConn’s annual HuskyTHON year-round fundraising event. Nicole was also awarded the Creative Captain

Award and the Regional Campus Ambassador Award for her efforts. Nicole, who is passionate about helping others and giving back to her community, led several fundraising events off campus throughout the academic year.

I CAPS STUDENT NICOLE CABUSAO AT HUSKYTHON

CAC SENIORS AWARDED SCHOLARSHIPS



Two university-bound seniors participating in UConn’s College Advising Corps were the recipients of generous scholarships to help them offset the cost of tuition in fall 2023. Gabe Nugra received \$24,000 in scholarships to attend the University of New Haven, where he

plans to study Health Science. Gabe attends Bristol Eastern High School, served by CAC Adviser Jameson Corey. Gabrielle Stanford won the prestigious Day of Pride Scholarship, awarded to outstanding students from Connecticut, and will be attending UConn in the fall as a nursing major. Gabrielle attends Warren Harding High School in Bridgeport, served by CAC Adviser Brian Fox. Congratulations to Gabe and Gabrielle!

I SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENT GABE NUGRA



■ CAPS SSS ALUMNI KRISTAL LEWIS, LEOPOLDO MOORE, PIERRE FILS, AND AMANDA PASTORE

CAPS CELEBRATES NATIONAL FIRST-GENERATION COLLEGE STUDENT DAY

In recognition of National First-Generation College Student Day on November 8, 2022, CAPS spent the entire week celebrating the accomplishments and sharing the stories of its current and former students.

On the evening of FirstGen Day, students gathered to hear from a panel made up of CAPS and Student Support Services (SSS) alumni from a variety of backgrounds, experiences, and careers. The alumni shared their struggles as first-generation college students, gave advice to and networked with current students, and shared internship opportunities.

In addition to the panel, the @UConnCAPS/SSS Instagram featured current students and alumni throughout the week,

sharing their experiences, successes, and challenges accessing and completing higher education as first-generation students. Followers were challenged to repost a graphic sharing the #ImFirst tag on their account.

Alumni panelists included Amanda Pastore, a graduate student; Kristal Lewis, a licensed clinical social worker; Leopoldo Moore, a mechanical engineer; and Pierre Fils, a Ph.D. candidate in structural engineering. Students featured on Instagram were Michael Benalcazar, UConn Hartford; Nafeiza Gregory, UConn Storrs; Genesis Rosario, UConn Storrs; and Samuel Nerette, UConn Stamford. Featured alumnus was Julian Torres.

CAPS PARTICIPANT STARTS LATINO STUDENT ASSOCIATION IN HARTFORD

Hartford Campus CAPS participant Johana Mateo founded the Latino Student Organization in fall 2022 with support from CAPS advisor Ramon Espinoza, who serves as the LSO staff advisor. The mission of the organization is to increase a sense of belonging and provide resources and social opportunities for the UConn Hartford Latinx community

“When students feel that sense of belonging, that sense of being a part of the community, they are able to do better not only in school, but also personally,” Johana said.

Events hosted by the organization this year included a celebration of Mexican Independence Day on September 16, 2022. In addition to a Mexican ceremonial flag raising at the Connecticut State Capitol building, attendees enjoyed live music by a mariachi band and watched dancers dressed in vibrant traditional wear give performances. The organization has also organized a lesson on bachata, a dance popular in Latin American countries, and a cultural immersion event hosted in collaboration with the Muslim Student Association.

“I like to see people united as one and show that we are not too different from each other,” said Johana.



CAPS STUDENT JOHANA MATEO AND CAPS COUNSELOR RAMON ESPINOZA AT MEXICAN INDEPENDENCE DAY CELEBRATION

CAPS/SSS VISIONARIES

Storrs Campus CAPS/SSS student workers hosted a vision board event for program participants on March 2, 2023 in the Rowe Center. The event was an opportunity for students to create a visual representation of their dreams with the goal of manifesting them. Student workers Yoanetsi and Gabriela kicked off the event by discussing the purpose behind creating a vision board, explaining that they are powerful tools used to strengthen the connection between our current situations and our most precious dreams. They prepared a presentation and showed a video about setting intentions while creating a vision board. CAPS/SSS students enjoyed an evening cutting pictures from magazines, connecting with peers, and listening to music while enjoying snacks. Participants reported feeling motivated, inspired, and empowered to make their dreams a reality.



BIDYA RANJEET EXPERIENTIAL GLOBAL LEARNING FUND

Provide support, without limitations, to participants in various programs within CAPS for expenses related to international and domestic educational and cultural programming, including study abroad and study away.

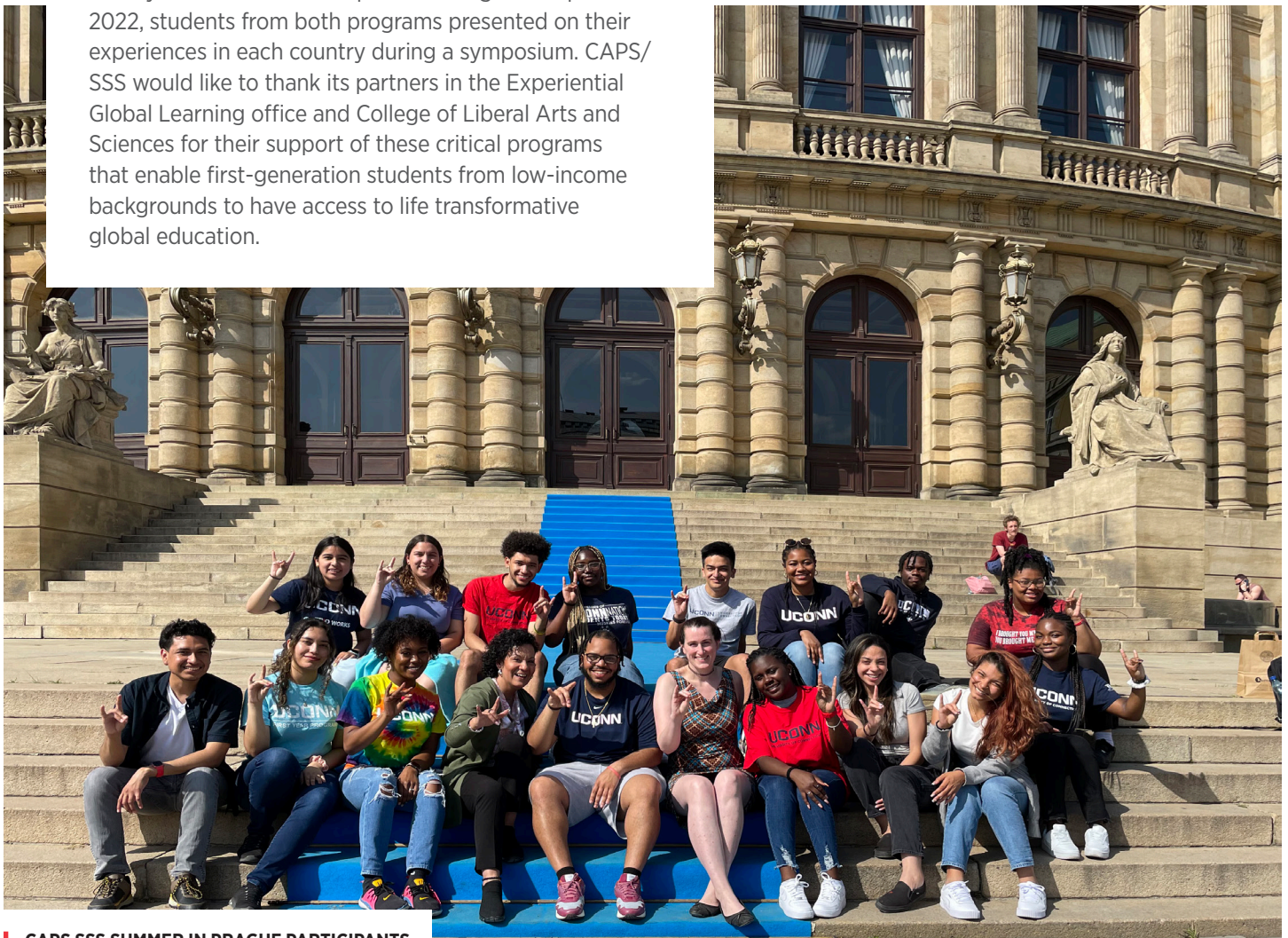
DONATE NOW: S.UCONN.EDU/CAPS-RANJEET-FUND

CAPS/SSS EDUCATION ABROAD RESUMES

After a two-year hiatus due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the CAPS/SSS Education Abroad programs resumed in summer 2022, to the delight of students and staff. Twelve students studied human rights in Latin America while 16 studied sociology in Prague through the lens of urban symbiotics, art, and music. Students in Costa Rica engaged in service-learning activities related to the elderly, pre-school, and homeless populations, as well as took part in a community recycling project as part of environmental studies. Both programs included experiential learning and weekend excursions, with the Prague group spending a day each in Dresden, Germany and Kutna Hora, Czech Republic, where they visited the Sedlec Ossuary, known as the Church of Bones, in the nearby suburb of Sedlec. Upon returning to campus in fall 2022, students from both programs presented on their experiences in each country during a symposium. CAPS/SSS would like to thank its partners in the Experiential Global Learning office and College of Liberal Arts and Sciences for their support of these critical programs that enable first-generation students from low-income backgrounds to have access to life transformative global education.



■ CAPS SSS SUMMER IN COSTA RICA PARTICIPANTS



■ CAPS SSS SUMMER IN PRAGUE PARTICIPANTS



HARTFORD CAMPUS CAPS STUDENTS VISITING THE VAN GOGH IMMERSIVE EXPERIENCE

HARTFORD CAPS STUDENTS **IMMERSED IN WORLD OF VAN GOGH**

On October 5th, 2022, 23 Hartford CAPS students had the unique opportunity to experience art through the Van Gogh Immersive Experience at the Hartford Convention Center. “It was a nice break from reality,” said first-year student Mohammad Sohaib.

Students were first introduced to Van Gogh through a series of quotes displayed in chronological order and cast

against his art pieces. Following the initial screening, they experienced the artist’s work through projection mapping. Pieces such as “Starry Night” and “Almond Blossom” became moving visuals, creating a fully immersive multimedia experience for students to engage in.

“It was a fun experience to enjoy with friends and I liked the visuals of what Van Gogh made,” said Jayden Colon.

STEM IS AMAZING ANNUAL CONFERENCE

CAPS ConnCAP program once again partnered with the McNair and LSAMP programs for the 5th annual STEM is Amazing Conference on Saturday, November 5th, 2022, created to give high school students hands-on opportunities to explore various STEM majors and careers. ConnCAP participants from across the state traveled to the Storrs campus to learn about oobleck, DNA extraction, and the importance of weight and momentum from McNair and LSAMP Scholars majoring in STEM fields. The Scholars helped lead the activities and shared their experiences, both the challenges and successes, of being STEM majors at the university, providing the high school students with valuable insights and information as they consider their own options for college majors.

CAPS WOMEN MAKE **BOLD DIFFERENCE**

Storrs Campus CAPS alumna Brianna Chance and current student Kimberly Rosado were selected to participate in the BOLD Women's Leadership Network in 2021-2022 and 2022-2023, respectively. Chance, who graduated from UConn in December 2022, completed her BOLD leadership project in summer '22 through a docuseries outlining the experiences of college students in Connecticut navigating homelessness. Her project was shared with UConn's community through a screening, which she hopes will inspire others to take action toward supporting students experiencing housing insecurity.

"The response after the showing was overwhelmingly positive. A lot of people left feeling very charged and inspired," Chance said.

Junior Kimberly Rosado has been enrolled in various TRIO programs since middle school, including UConn's Student Support Services program. With the BOLD grant, Rosado hopes to explore her passion for women's health in Guatemala through the creation of a documentary depicting the struggles of Guatemalan women in learning, understanding, and accessing health resources. The Mexican-Guatemalan student hopes that this experience will help her become a better nurse for her future patients.

The BOLD Women's Leadership Network is a national initiative created to cultivate leadership among young women. UConn BOLD Scholars receive scholarship funding, engage in programming, and complete a service or leadership project. Chance's docuseries may be viewed online.



BOLD SCHOLAR KIMBERLY ROSADO

WATCH THE DOCUSERIES NOW:
housinginjusticepr.wixsite.com/housing--in-justice



MCAIR SCHOLARS POSTER DAY JULY 2022

SUMMER RESEARCH IN STORRS

Eighteen McNair Scholars spent eight weeks in summer 2022 conducting undergraduate research projects full-time in various labs across the Storrs campus. The Scholars worked closely with faculty mentors, participated in professional development and graduate school workshops, and partook in community building events. In addition to showcasing their research posters at the July 22 McNair Poster Day, they created and shared videos using the theme of "A day in the Life of a Researcher," in which they outlined their research questions and described what it is like to work on their projects. Kudos to all the Scholars!

MCNAIR SCHOLAR BUILDS ENGINEERING SKILLS IN SPAIN

McNair Scholar Nolan Murphy-Genao is a double major in chemical and biomolecular engineering and Spanish who took his studies to Valencia, Spain, for the 2022-2023 academic year. Through UConn's Engineering Spanish Program offered by Experiential Global Learning, Nolan gained hands-on international engineering experience, completing his Spanish BA requirements during the fall semester and participating in research with the Polytechnic University of Valencia in the spring. This experience greatly contributed to Nolan's research abilities, and he was recently accepted to an internship at MIT studying the extrinsic properties of crystals generated for use in nanocomposite technology. Way to go, Nolan!



MCNAIR SCHOLAR NOLAN MURPHY-GENAO AT PLAZA DE ESPAÑA IN PARQUE DE MARÍA LUISA, SEVILLA, SPAIN

HARTFORD CAPS STUDENTS STEP INTO THEIR POWER



FIRST-GEN DAY STEPPING INTO YOUR POWER PARTICIPANTS

On November 1, 2022, Hartford Campus CAPS students kicked off First-Generation College Student Day through Stepping into Your Personal Power, an uplifting event that engaged students through hands-on exercises designed to reenergize and inspire them. Over 65 students were in attendance as Karla Medina, a UConn alumna and current owner of Sudor Taino Group Fitness Studio, led them through the exercises, shared her personal story, and spoke on the importance of maintaining good mental and physical health, staying motivated, and being surrounded by a supportive environment. Participants left feeling inspired and motivated to improve academically, mentally, and physically.

PRIDE WITHIN CONNCAP COMMUNITY

While many high school seniors were beginning their college applications, Katherine Gutierrez of Windham High School had already submitted hers to the University of Connecticut, hoping to be a recipient of one of their most prestigious scholarships, the Day of Pride. Specific to UConn, this scholarship recognizes exceptional Connecticut students who demonstrate commitment to multiculturalism and are leaders within their community.

As a distinguished student leader in her school and community, Katherine's commitment to serve is due in part to her passion for helping others and aspiring to become an immigration lawyer. Katherine has advocated for the rights of undocumented immigrants since she was young and continues to do so by providing assistance during state-of-affairs meetings at the Sagrado Corazon de Jesus church in Windham. Never shy to lend a hand, Katherine also volunteers her time to the Willimantic Library during their annual children's book fair. As Windham High School National Honor Society's President, she assists in carrying out "Reading Buddies," a program aimed at engaging student reading amongst children at Sweeny Elementary School. In addition, Katherine is the current student body secretary, captain of the Windham High School girls soccer team, and a UConn ConnCAP Scholar.

On Christmas Day, Katherine learned she is now a UConn Day of Pride Scholarship recipient and soon-to-be Husky. Congratulations, Katherine!



CONNCAP DAY OF PRIDE SCHOLARSHIP
RECIPIENT KATHERINE GUTIERREZ



MARIA D. MARTINEZ SCHOLARSHIP

Provide scholarship support for professional development, education abroad, research opportunities, alternative spring break and other services-based trips, as well as books and UConn fee bill expenses.

DONATE NOW: [S.UCONN.EDU/CAPS-MARTINEZ-SCHOLARSHIP](https://s.uconn.edu/caps-martinez-scholarship)

SECOND MCNAIR SCHOLAR EARNs PH.D.

McNair Scholar Alexa Friedman '18 (CLAS) earned her Ph.D. in Environmental Health from Boston University School of Public Health in January 2023. Alexa's area of concentration was environmental epidemiology, and her dissertation was titled: "Early life exposure to metals and adolescent neurodevelopment." During her graduate study, Alexa was awarded a predoctoral training grant from the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences (NIEHS) and published six articles in peer-reviewed journals. Currently, Alexa is a postdoctoral fellow at the NIEHS in Durham, North Carolina, where she seeks to provide opportunities for local McNair Scholars by recruiting them for the Institute's summer internship program. Congratulations, Dr. Alexa!



MCNAIR SCHOLAR ALUMNA DR. ALEXA FRIEDMAN

SELF-CARE O'CLOCK

On October 27, 2022, the Promoting Academically Successful Students (PASS) program hosted Self-Care O'Clock, an event centered around student well-being, in partnership with Student Health and Wellness (SHaW). The event was part of an on-going mission of the program to provide support, guidance, and motivation to students who are struggling academically. Tracy Gruber, clinical case management director, discussed the importance of self-care in college to promote mental well-being, and guided students through relaxation and mindfulness techniques, such as meditation and breath work. Students also put together a self-care package and shared dinner. The timing of the event, right after midterms, provided a much-needed opportunity for participants to relieve stress and connect with community.



SELF-CARE THROUGH GAMES, MOVEMENT

Waterbury Upward Bound and ConnCAP students celebrated the end of the fall semester at Naugatuck High School by engaging in self-care. Claudia Pina, the mental health counselor at the UConn Waterbury campus, led a discussion on the importance of self-care, coping skills, and mental health resources. Students played "Self-Care Bingo," which served as an outlet for them to discuss positive coping strategies. In addition to Pina's presentation, students Tahani Hamed and Michael Jenkins shared ways they utilize different self-care techniques in their households, including through cultural dance and a traditional martial art. To close out the event, students worked together in small groups with random materials to create a toy that could be beneficial for self-care.

**SELF-CARE O'CLOCK PARTICIPANTS
ASSEMBLE SELF-CARE PACKAGES**



ALMA E. MALDONADO-CORDNER FUND

Provide programmatic support for students including, without limitation, student support, travel, conferences, recognition and expenses related to CAPS and Student Support Services.

DONATE NOW: [S.UCONN.EDU/CAPS-MALDONADO-CORDNER-FUND](https://s.uconn.edu/caps-maldonado-cordner-fund)



WATERBURY UPWARD BOUND CONNCAP STUDENT VOLUNTEERS

UPWARD BOUND/CONNCAP STUDENTS PRACTICE GIVING

On November 23, 2022, Waterbury-Naugatuck Upward Bound and ConnCAP students volunteered at the Greater Waterbury Interfaith Ministries Soup Kitchen, where their help during the busy Thanksgiving holiday week was much needed and greatly appreciated. The students sorted through various goods, safely stored donations, and assembled emergency food bags for distribution to patrons in need of additional assistance. Not only was this an opportunity for the students to support the local organization, it gave them a better perspective on the ongoing food insecurity issues facing their community. Thank you, students!



UPWARD BOUND AND CONNCAP PARTICIPANTS AT EASTERN CONNECTICUT STATE UNIVERSITY



TEAM CAPS' FIRST PLACE GINGERBREAD HOUSE



TEAM CAPS AT THE AVERY POINT CULINARY COMPETITION

SWEET VICTORY AT AVERY POINT

A team of Avery Point CAPS students put on their culinary caps to take part in the campus' Annual Gingerbread House Competition. The friendly competitive event is designed to help students de-stress before final exams as they design, build, and configure their gumdrop-gingerbread masterpiece. CAPS is pleased to announce its team came in first this year. Kudos to Team CAPS!

WHEW – REGIONAL CAMPUS CAPS SUMMER PROGRAMS BACK IN-PERSON

After two years of running the entire five-week summer bridge program virtually due to COVID-19, CAPS regional coordinators were thankful and relieved to be back in person for summer 2022 at the Avery Point, Hartford, Stamford, and Waterbury campuses. Coordinators and students alike were thrilled to be on campus together, learning, bonding, and building community. The switch back to in-person came just in time, as Avery Point coordinator Aaron Collins had vowed to bring his summer program participants to live and learn at the Storrs campus in 2022 if his program could not be in person. Storrs would have welcomed them, but those views of Long Island Sound and the smell of sea air at Avery Point cannot be beat.



■ AVERY POINT CAMPUS CAPS SUMMER PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS



■ AVERY POINT SUMMER PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS KAYAKING

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MCNAIR SCHOLARS PROGRAM

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MISSION

The Center for Access & Postsecondary Success (CAPS) 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.

UConn

CENTER FOR
ACADEMIC PROGRAMS