CENTRAL CONNECTICUT STATE UNIVERSITY

Celebrating Student Success
The Campaign For CCSUCCESS
At CCSU, our aim is to make our students' success possible. And as you'll see our students achieve some amazing successes.

Their stories demonstrate the vital role donor support plays. Without the contributions of our alumni and friends, some of these students wouldn't even be at the university, others would not have been able to do the extra work that earned awards, and still others wouldn't have been able to pursue ideas that could change lives—theirs and ours.

The Campaign for CCSUCCESS aims to provide the resources our students need to succeed—financial aid, library materials, study abroad opportunities, state-of-the-art labs, and other programs that enrich the CCSU educational experience.

For more information about the Campaign for CCSUCCESS and the program initiatives of the Carol Ammon School of Arts & Sciences and the Schools of Business; Education & Professional Studies; and Engineering & Technology, as well as Blue Devil Athletics, please see: www.ccsu.edu/ccsuccess.

To support the Campaign for CCSUCCESS and make a difference in students' lives, you can make a secure online gift at www.ccsu.edu/giving, call 860-832-1740 or use the attached envelope.
Fairfield, Quinnipiac, Georgetown—these were the universities that interested Ian Mangione when he was in high school.

But when he learned that he would receive a full-tuition scholarship through the Honors Program at Central, he could not turn it down. And four years later, he couldn’t be happier with his choice.

“CCSU has made me who I am today.”

Ian graduated in May with a 3.83 GPA, a degree in English, and a minor in history. But he leaves with more than an impressive transcript; he’s had a host of leadership experiences and made connections with multiple departments on campus.

Ian served as president of the Inter Residence Council (IRC), an organization that oversees resident policy and plans student programming. Before becoming involved with IRC, he served as president of his residence hall.

In addition to his work with IRC, Ian was a full-time student, employed as a student writer in the Department of Marketing and Communications and as a soccer referee throughout the northeast on weekends.

In the past, Ian volunteered his time as an orientation leader and a peer leader, helping freshmen adjust to campus life throughout their first semester. He was also involved with “Mr. CCSU,” a student-run male pageant, and with the Cambridge Debate. And, on top of all of this, Ian was a Division I Blue Devils soccer player for three seasons.

When asked about where he would be without the Honors scholarship, Ian did not have a definitive answer. He is sure, however, that the program kept him at Central and made him a successful member and leader of the campus community.

“The Honors Program is certainly what kept me here and made me happy and successful. It offered me full tuition, a group of friends, and accelerated classes. And the courses are team-taught by professors so it’s a different dynamic in the classroom,” Ian said.

“The honors classes are great; I took a course about zombies, a course about pseudoscience, an Asian politics course, and a Greek and Roman literature course. There is prestige about the program that makes you feel good about yourself—you’re excited to be part of it.”

After graduating this spring, Ian plans to enter the workforce and explore different career options before returning to school to pursue a postgraduate degree. It seems that he will excel in whatever he decides to do.
CCSU student Anna Szmolda said she took some big risks with the $1 million she was investing in the stock market. But in just three months, her careful thinking, good choices, and a little luck paid off with 10 percent earnings.

Although the money wasn’t real and the “investment” was part of the CCSU School of Business Stock Trading Competition, Anna did win a great deal of financial knowledge and a scholarship.

“When I saw the competition on the website I thought, ‘Why not give it a shot?’ Win or lose, it would be a good experience,” said Anna, a sophomore majoring in business management.

“Even though it didn’t involve real money, there was so much stress because I wanted to win,” she said, recalling frequently checking her investments online and consulting with her stock trading father. The final days of the competition were the most intense, with no room for error, she said.

SEI, the CCSU Foundation’s investment manager and competition sponsor, awarded her $1,250 toward her tuition. That’s a help for Anna and her family, who have two students in college.

“My parents work really hard for their money,” Anna said. “With my sister and me both in college, tuition is expensive for them, but they want the best for me and my sister.”

Anna is a hard working student. On days when she doesn’t have class, it isn’t unusual for her to arrive at her job with a Wethersfield pharmaceutical company by 5:30 a.m. She works 20 hours a week, labeling medical products, while maintaining a 3.4 GPA at CCSU.

She has also received a $1,000 scholarship from the 44 Club, which presents scholarships to people who celebrate their Polish heritage. Anna, who proudly proclaims she is “100 percent Polish,” has traveled to the country several times and speaks Polish fluently. At CCSU, she is a member of the Polish Club.

Anna is grateful for the support she has received and recognizes its importance. “For me to receive these scholarships is wonderful because it means more time to study,” she said.
While pursuing her degree in Elementary Education, Ashley Brandt experienced one of her most important educational moments during a community engagement project. Working with New Britain elementary school students—many with an incarcerated parent—on a project called “Echoes from a Child’s Soul,” Ashley discovered that the arts and literacy can help young students convey emotions that may otherwise have been suppressed.

“It helped me to understand that what happens inside the home greatly impacts what happens inside of school,” Ashley said. “True and authentic success is a combination of the relationships, trust, compassion, respect, social and academic progress, and triumphs that you and your students achieve together.”

Ashley also learned important lessons when she visited students in classrooms while traveling to Ireland, the Czech Republic, England, China, and Jamaica.

“These trips were very humbling experiences,” she said, noting how well Chinese second graders speak English and how Jamaican teachers handle a class of 40, using only a chalkboard as an instructional tool. “In my classroom I do my best to teach my students to be thankful for what they have.”

Recently graduating with a 3.86 GPA, Ashley is now a long-term substitute teacher at Antolini Elementary School in New Hartford.

Ronnie Casella, chair of the Department of Teacher Education, described Ashley as one of the best students he has known: “She was extremely professional, modest, and engaged in her coursework. She is a keen observer of policy and contemporary educational issues. She exhibits leadership traits and is uniquely compassionate.”

“Being in the classroom early in my college career helped me realize that I wanted to be a teacher. With financial aid and scholarship awards, I’ve had amazing experiences—like working with students in China and Jamaica. I hope other students will have the same opportunities.”
Without a well-worn passport, one might not guess that in the tropical climate of Nigeria, winter descends on the land cold and gray. Elvis Chidozie, an international student from Nigeria, says, “Winter is cloudy, windy, and depressing” in his homeland.

Elvis cups his hand over a broadening grin and laughs, recalling the shock of his first winter at Central. “It was very cold, snowy, and sunny! I would look at the sky and wonder how could the sun be shining at full strength yet we cannot feel one atom of warmth?”

Diverse weather patterns aside, Elvis, who is majoring in Computer Engineering Technology, feels that he has come to the right place. He left Nigeria to study in a nation where advances in technology would put him at the leading edge. “I always wanted to be a computer engineer. It’s a beautiful career; it’s so diverse. You can work as a networking assistant or an IT specialist. Hardware companies need you, and you can certainly be self-employed,” he notes.

Elvis’ ambition and intellect are abetted by a strong work ethic, which has enabled him to excel academically. He holds a 3.86 GPA and works in CCSU’s Office of Recruitment and Admissions, where he is a lead student in the department’s transition to a paperless review process. Additionally, he’s one of several students helping to establish the CCSU chapter of International Electrical and Electronics Engineers, and he participates in the Christian Students at Central (CSAC) club.

Last fall, Elvis and his classmates participated in a web-application competition sponsored by The Hartford. Although the team didn’t win the top award, Chidozie’s work so impressed The Hartford staff that they offered him a paid summer internship for 2013. Despite all his hard work, Elvis is proud to attribute much of his success to Blue Devil generosity. “Without the three scholarships I have received I wouldn’t have been able to stay at CCSU as a full-time student,” he said. “I’m very grateful for the funding. It is great to focus on your books and not have financial worries weighing on you.”

Reflecting on his time at the University, Elvis notes “CCSU is a beautiful campus. Not only because of its physical beauty but for the people who are warm and receptive. I expected to find a society where I would really be a foreigner, but it wasn’t that way at all. I met a lot of people who took an interest in me and where I’m from. I didn’t feel excluded. I came to CCSU at the beginning of my adulthood; it’s really shaped me as a person.”

Gifts to the School of Engineering & Technology support the resources that make success possible for students like Elvis Chidozie: scholarships, student and student-faculty research projects, international study in engineering, and such community-oriented programs as robotics for school children and STEM programs for girls and underrepresented minorities that lay the foundation for future success.
CCSU junior Mary Denehy was able to fulfill a lifelong dream this March – she traveled to Ireland where she learned about that country’s troubled past and its vibrant present.

After spending her freshman year at Berklee College of Music, Mary transferred to CCSU to pursue her passion for history. Now a member of the history honors society, Phi Alpha Theta, Mary was intrigued when CCSU Professor of History Louise Williams announced that she would take a group of students to study in Ireland and Northern Ireland over spring break.

Mary knew that she wanted to go but was not sure that it would be financially possible. With the help of Williams, Mary applied for and received a partial scholarship from the Center for International Education (CIE).

Looking back on her trip, Mary is very grateful for the CIE funding. Not only did she learn about her Irish ancestry, she discovered the transformative power of an international education. “This trip has changed my perspective on learning about history. I’d never traveled to another country before, so I didn’t realize the importance of experiencing the people and the culture firsthand.” Her trip inspired a desire for more travel, to return to Ireland and to expand her learning in Greece, Scotland, Brazil, and Prague.

Mary and her classmates studied the historical context of past and present problems in Northern Ireland, including conflict between Northern Irish Nationalists and Loyalists with a focus on reconciliation. Students traveled to historically important sites and listened to daily lectures from a variety of speakers, each with a personal insight and perspective about past and ongoing conflicts.

Given the fervor with which she speaks about these lectures, it is clear that her travel has deepened her passion for learning.

An ardent advocate of international study, Mary firmly believes that everyone should go abroad to learn. “My experience at CCSU has taught me that there really are no limits to what you can do. Trying new things exposes you. You’re raw for a moment when you’re doing something new, and it’s scary. But I’ve had enough support at CCSU to put myself out there, try new things without being too afraid.”

After she graduates next May, Mary plans to enroll in a masters program to study the Reformation as well as modern England and Ireland, and she plans to use her course abroad paper for her graduate school writing sample. She hopes to go on to get her PhD.
Most people wouldn’t be able to keep up with Krisztina Dearborn’s busy schedule of honors classes, track and cross-country training and meets, and extracurricular activities. And even fewer could do it while maintaining a 3.88 GPA.

Born in Hungary and raised in New Hampshire, Dearborn knew what she wanted in a college. So when CCSU contacted her, she realized that Central met all of her standards. Once here, she quickly fell in love with her teammates, classmates, and courses.

In addition to being an accomplished athlete and an honors student, Dearborn has a double major in physics and mathematics, takes an average of 18 credits per semester, works, volunteers, leads a club, and represents other student athletes on the Student-Athlete Advisory Committee.

As co-president of the Physics Club, Dearborn volunteers as a tutor in the Physics Department, working with science and engineering majors who are having difficulty with their general education requirements in physics. In her free time, she works as an SAT prep tutor in local high schools.

Her tutoring positions led her to realize her passion for teaching: “It’s really rewarding to work with other students. I want to eventually teach in a high school because I feel like I can make the most difference there.”

Professor of Physics/Earth Sciences Nimmi Sharma speaks highly of Dearborn’s intellectual ability. “Krisztina is a very talented young woman, with a keen mind for physics. She always gives her best.”

Dearborn’s successes on Blue Devil cross country and track teams are as impressive as her academic achievements. As a sophomore, Dearborn broke the University’s 10K outdoor record and has since re-broken it. She has also broken the 5K outdoor record and the 3K and 5K indoor records.

Head Cross Country and Track Coach Eric Blake ’03 is very optimistic about Dearborn’s future: “Krisztina has made tremendous strides as a runner—a direct result of her competiveness and work ethic. She has a very bright future.”

Because Dearborn is paying for school on her own, her academic and athletic successes have been vital to her college career. She considered withdrawing from the University during her freshman year, but knew that she couldn’t—completing college in four consecutive years was always part of her life plan. Extremely grateful to the donors who have made possible her numerous scholarships—in athletics, the Honors Program, and in Computers, Math, and Physics Honors—she can more readily focus on her studies. She plans on entering graduate studies after graduating.
Even in the digital age, the library is vital to students’ success. Designated a national Literary Landmark, the BURRITT LIBRARY offers a world of learning through more than 730,000 books, special archival collections, new information technologies, and a congenial space for serious scholarship.

Donor support of the Burritt Library provides an expanding array of resources—print, digital, and archival—to prepare students for a rapidly changing workplace where they can be relevant, informed, and innovative.
“Being a student-athlete has had a profound impact on all facets of my life. So many of those positive experiences are the result of the generous gifts of Central alumni and friends. Your generosity will support the scholarships, equipment purchases, and team travel that enable future Blue Devils to have the same great educational and athletic experiences that inspire Blue Devil Pride!”
Chris Williams ’13
BA Communication (Public Relations)
Football

“CCSU athletic teams are competitive at the Division I level because of the talent and hard work of our student-athletes. Gifts from alumni and friends keep Blue Devil Athletics successful by funding scholarships that attract talented student-athletes to CCSU. Your support also creates a team spirit that fills generations of CCSU students and student-athletes with Blue Devil Pride!”
Katie Lang ’13
BS Exercise Science
Swimming & Diving

Blue Devil Athletics has a proud tradition of success and is committed to developing our young men and women into champions; in the classroom, in competition, on campus, in the community and ultimately in life. Show your commitment by making a gift to the BLUE DEVIL PRIDE FUND. Your generosity will make a significant impact in the educational and athletic development of our student-athletes.
Elevator Pitch Competition

The eleventh annual Elevator Pitch Competition, organized by Professor of Management and Organization Drew Harris, gave 35 students the opportunity to pitch their entrepreneurial business ideas in 60 seconds or less to a panel of judges that included lawyers, business professionals, and alumni.

The judges selected three winners. Amanda Pizzoferrato, a dual marketing and management/entrepreneurship major, won the Personal Venture Award for her concept—a techno-gym for kids that combines tech-entertainment tools with a gym designed to encourage exercise and a healthier lifestyle for children and their parents.

Kevin Devery, a dual history and English major, won the Scalable Venture Prize for his pitch of a Piezo energy-capture system that would recharge smart phones and other portable electronic devices using the natural movement of the device holder. Rob McGrath, a management/entrepreneurship major, won the Judges' Discretionary Prize for his pitch of a smart phone app that would allow moviegoers to play competitive games against one another while waiting for the movie to begin. The winners took home cash prizes from event sponsor Shipman & Goodwin, LLP.

In a related competition, the Connecticut Collegiate Business Plan Competition, three CCSU teams competed with teams from UCONN, Yale, and others, and one, the CineGames team with Rob McGrath, Jackie Benjamin, and Jonathan Humphrey, won the Personal Venture Division, earning a $1,000 check plus professional services.

CCSU Jazz Ensemble Wins Villanova Jazz Festival!

Associate Professor of Music Carl Knox knew this year’s CCSU Jazz Ensemble was among the best he has directed. “I told them, ‘Those are the best sounds I’ve heard in this band room in my 15 years here,’” he said. Yet in the final seconds before the judges at the 52nd annual Villanova Collegiate Jazz Festival announced the first-place winner, the anticipation was agonizing. Regular competitors at the prestigious competition, CCSU had often been second. So when the band captured first place this March, the room erupted in a standing ovation from the other college musicians.

“It just felt great to win,” said saxophonist William O’Keefe. “All our hard work paid off, especially for Dr. Knox. He puts everything he has into the band. After this, we can never lose again.”

The Ensemble also won the best trumpet and best saxophone sections at the event, the only collegiate jazz competition on the East Coast. They beat, among others, Carnegie Mellon and the University of Maryland, which took second and third place.

“We felt really good,” bassist Greg Perault said. “We were excited to play, and it showed.”

Senior Joe Proud, a saxophonist, said the first-place award is a nice legacy to leave. “Our goal is to play good music, and have a good time doing it.”

Most music students attend CCSU for five years in order to complete their teaching work, develop their musical expertise, and complete core requirements.

In addition to their academics, most of Knox’s students participate in multiple ensembles and are always juggling practice times, student teaching, and other commitments.

“Music is our whole life,” O’Keefe said, and students frequently practice late into the wee hours.

Trombonist Eric Vargas said, “The excitement and the focus we put in made it one of our best concerts ever. It was an honor to represent our school the way we did.”
Whether conducting biomedical research, or working to persuade Latino teens to go to college, six CCSU seniors earned the President’s Citation for their outstanding leadership service.

Eric J. Bergenn, Elizabeth Braun (seated), Ryan Baldassario, Eric Vargas, Legaire Radden II, and Christopher Marcelli (l-r, standing; accompanied by President Jack Miller and Vice President of Student Affairs Laura Tordenti) held leadership roles on campus, participated in community activities bettering the lives of our New Britain neighbors, all while excelling in their rigorous academic programs. They have all significantly enriched the University and the community during their years as CCSU students, said President Jack Miller.

CCSU graduate Jennifer Stanger and undergrads Ashley Arbo and Sandy Jolon were nationally recognized with the coveted Psi Chi Poster Award for their research on alcohol use in college students at the prestigious Eastern Psychological Association Conference in New York City in early March. The annual conference draws hundreds of students—many from the nation’s top universities—as well as some of the most distinguished professional researchers.

Stanger’s presentation, “Age of Drinking Onset and Family History as Predictors of Alcohol Use,” co-authored by Arbo, Jolon, and Assistant Professor of Psychological Science Jason Sikorski, was selected for the award out of hundreds of other researchers.

Using data collected through CORE drug and alcohol survey, Jennifer ran statistical analyses, developed a report, and created and presented the poster at the conference. Jennifer notes that she, Ashley, and Sandy worked as a team editing and exchanging papers. As the only graduate student in the group, she mentored them as they created their own posters for the conference.

Jennifer said she is truly honored to have won this award: “I went to the conference simply honored that the Eastern Psychological Association accepted my research to be presented, so to win an award from Psi Chi on top of that was so much more than I was expecting!”

Sikorski speaks of his students with pride: “Both Ashley and Sandy got into prestigious school psychology graduate programs as a direct result of their work. Jennifer is applying to PhD level graduate programs in psychology next fall. Further, a person at the conference approached her about submitting her work for a peer reviewed publication in the future.”
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