CCSU Extends Links to the Community
Carl R. Lovitt, Provost

Last week, CCSU gave 100 New Britain high school freshmen their first taste of college life. As the inaugural cohort of the “Ninth-Grade Academy,” the students spent a half day learning about the importance of attending college and the values and behaviors that will help them get there. The visit culminated with a planetarium show presented by a faculty member in astronomy. This fall, five more groups of 100 NBHS ninth-graders will travel to CCSU for a similar experience, after which all six cohorts will return to CCSU four more times throughout the school year to take courses on sustainability taught by NBHS teachers with the support of CCSU faculty and students. This exciting new venture is the product of a partnership formed last year between CCSU and NBHS to extend the links between the two institutions, with the aim of increasing the number of students who graduate from high school and enroll in college.

This new program is one of several initiatives that CCSU has recently undertaken with partners in New Britain to involve students in making a positive contribution to our community by applying what they are learning in their courses to real situations. Starting this fall, CCSU students and faculty will organize programs in a store-front property in downtown New Britain leased by NBHS. From this new “Community Central” venue, CCSU will schedule after-school tutoring and homework help sessions for NBHS students and arrange for NBHS and CCSU students to work together on entrepreneurial and artistic projects.

This fall, students and faculty in several CCSU departments will contribute to the New Britain Mayor’s Workplan to End Homelessness through initiatives to raise awareness about the problem of homelessness in our community. We envision students in marketing and public relations courses planning a community education campaign that will involve posters, websites, artistic works, news items, stories, and performances. We are also planning to focus our next collaboration with the New Britain Museum of American Art on the theme of homelessness.

In October, CCSU will host a forum entitled “Central Connecticut 2020” that will bring together leaders from business, education, government, and the non-profit sector to set priorities for our region in the areas of education, human services, and the economy. Sponsored by CCSU’s William O’Neill Chair, the forum will develop plans to meet pressing needs in our region and clarify how the university can support those plans.

To sustain the university’s engagement with the community, CCSU has established the Office of Continuing Education and Community Engagement for which we have just hired a new permanent director. One of the goals for this new office in the coming year will be to establish a Community Advisory Committee that provides guidance in developing collaborative projects in the community, as well as feedback about the effectiveness of our community-based initiatives. With this infrastructure, CCSU is well-positioned to enter a new era of meaningful collaboration with our local community.