

# The Recorder

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## University Students Sanctioned After Protesting Film



Photo: Madeline Wilson

BY SAVANNA YELLING  
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Several students at Central Connecticut State University have received sanctions from the Office of Student Rights and Responsibilities, for protesting a club's movie screening.

The student chapter of Turning Point USA at CCSU attempted to show "The Great

est Lie Ever Sold: George Floyd and the Rise of BLM" in Devil's Den on March 2.

Minutes into the film, dozens of students gathered on the stage in front of the screen holding signs that read "No safe space for racists," "It was murder," "I can't breathe," and more. Students chanted, blocked the screen and used a megaphone to make a loud blaring noise, preventing the film from being watched.

Pride Club President and Sociology Club Vice President, Nova LaPointe, is one of the students who received a sanction for protesting.

Despite not orchestrating the protest, LaPointe has been wrapped up in the consequences, she said.

"It wasn't something I organized," LaPointe said. "It was something I was asked to participate in. We wanted it to be known that we disagreed

with the movie because the movie is aberrant. It uses the footage of somebody's death to attack the Black Lives Matter movement. Which is just so fucked up."

LaPointe said she knew protesting ran the risk of punishment, but said she was surprised to receive her sanction days later.

"I was asked to leave, and I left," LaPointe said. "I figured if anything would happen it would happen that night. In my mind, if they were going to do something they would arrest people."

Marcelina Halas, the President of Turning Point CCSU, said despite the right to protest, the events that took place on March 2 were unwarranted.

"What transpired was unacceptable," Halas said. "For protesters to be there interrupting an event that had been approved."

According to the club's Instagram page, Turning Point's mission is to promote free markets, free speech and small government.

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## Title IX Trailblazer Katherine Pirog Credits Mentors For Her Success

BY ANDREW DECAPUA  
SPORTS EDITOR

During halftime of a Central Connecticut State University women's basketball game on March 2 at Detrick Gymnasium, the university recognized ten CCSU women as Title IX Trailblazers. One of the women honored was Central's head athletic trainer, Katherine Pirog.

It was through great people and rare opportunities provided by Title IX that helped Pirog succeed in a profession that at the time was primarily known as a "boys' club."

Pirog, a native of New Britain and a true trailblazer in the world of sports, did not blaze a path to success all on her own. She credits those that came before her for guiding and showing her the way.

Her journey began in the 1970s when Title IX was still in its infancy. While a student at New Britain High School, she was given an opportunity to participate in sports thanks to her high school coach Joan Belmore.

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## CCSU Tuition Increase Will Add Hundreds to Your Next Bill

BY KEYSA MATEO  
STAFF WRITER

Some Central Connecticut State University students said they should not pay more for tuition, while other students and staff said they understand why a tuition increase is necessary.

On Oct. 20, the Board of Regents met with Central, Eastern, Western, and Southern Connecticut State University presidents and voted to increase tuition by three percent starting in fall of 2023.

"They felt that was a fair amount that wouldn't be too much of a burden on their students," Joshua Edson, a CCSU junior from Waterbury and Student Advisory Committee representative, said.



Photo: Keysa Mateo

The Student Government Association (SGA) thought it was essential to speak about the tuition increase in their meeting Nov. 2,

he said. "That was something that students in the advisory committee were able to enter," Edson said. "Just so that we

could kind of get an idea of what to do and how to prepare our students for it."

Edson said the reason for this increase is that the Connecticut State Colleges and Universities (CSCU) will no longer be receiving federal funding from the COVID-19 pandemic. He said it is also due to the low total enrollment since the start of the pandemic which left CSCU with a shortfall of \$56 million.

"Enrollment is down effectively, so tuition has to go up because students now need to cover what needs to be covered from previous expenses," Edson said.

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## CSCU President: "The Proposed Budget Would Be Devastating for CSCU"

BY KATHERINE NEILAN  
STAFF WRITER

Students and leaders of Connecticut State Colleges and Universities said Monday that the major cuts proposed by the state legislature would be "devastating" to CSCU if approved.

"We will be forced to lay off 650 full-time faculty and staff," CSCU President Terrence Cheng said in a news conference at the Legislative Office Building. "We will need to eliminate nearly 3,000 part-time positions."

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University Students Sanctioned After Protesting Film

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Halas said while students have the right to protest, the situation needs to be put into context.

"We support the right to free speech and the ability to peacefully protest," Halas said. "Their right to protest was violating our right to show the movie."

Halas said she believes it is the school's responsibility to protect students' rights.

"As a public university, CCSU is bound to the first amendment," Halas said. "It's their duty to protect us"

LaPointe said she has been coherent with all orders given surrounding the sanctions, including a meeting with the Director of the Office of Student Rights and Responsibilities, Stephanie Reis.

"They didn't want to talk to me in that meeting about what the movie was about because they knew me," LaPointe said. "They only wanted to talk to me about me interrupting."

LaPointe said she only spoke out in the meeting to inform Reis of details left out of the complaints.

"I basically just sat in



Photo: Madeline Wilson

that meeting and said nothing," LaPointe said. "Other than that I left when I was asked to. That was apparently information that did not make it to Stephanie at rights and responsibilities before we met."

After the meeting, LaPointe was found responsible for disruption or obstruction of a university function, activity or event, according to an email from the Office of Student Rights and Responsibilities.

Turning Point has hosted other film watch parties that have been met with backlash. Such as the club's showing of "What is a Woman?"

"You could argue that the way we protested was too far," LaPointe said. "But I would argue that we met the situation at hand. There were more civil protests tried and

it was this protest that got the results we wanted."

"What is a Woman?" was shown during Transgender Awareness Week and "The Greatest Lie Ever Sold" was shown two days after Black History Month ended.

The Turning Point President said showing these controversial films during celebratory times should not be an issue.

"These movies are deemed controversial by outside sources," Halas said. "They showcase a viewpoint that is not shown in mainstream media. I don't think it should be off limits for conservatives to voice their opinions during certain times."

The backlash that the "What is a Woman?" showing received did not prevent the movie from being viewed,

however, the protesting of "The Greatest Lie Ever Sold," did. The risk was worth the reward, LaPointe said.

"That movie is trying to be "The Birth of a Nation" for the modern era," LaPointe said. "I think that movie crosses a line — more than. I think one of the ways you can see that is when Turning Point defends it. They have to defend it on free speech. They can't defend it on their ideals."

LaPointe was assigned a learning module and a four-page paper showing her understanding of hate speech, free speech and peaceful protest, she said.

In response, a letter of student support asking that the administration rescind the punishments was written to President Toro. The letter was signed by over 30 faculty and staff members.

"What made a lot of my professors upset about the assignment I was given is it showed a disregard for how we got here," LaPointe said. "We've only gotten to a place where I can be who I am because of a hell of a lot of protesting and a hell of a lot of more violent and less violent protesting."

Meet the Candidates for Chief of CCSU Police

BY DYLAN BRACCIA
STAFF WRITER

The search is on for a new Chief of Police at Central Connecticut State University. The CCSU Police Department has hosted three meet and greet sessions for students to ask each of the final candidates questions.

After each session, a survey was sent to the student body to allow for student input in the hiring decision.

CCSU Police said the position would be filled "as soon as possible."

The final three candidates for the position are Lieutenant Thomas Roncinske Jr. from Norwalk, Captain Sean Grant from Manchester, and Sergeant Robert Catania—who already works with CCSU Police.

Roncinske has been a lieutenant since 2015 at the Norwalk Department of Police Services. He has worked there since 1989, and moved up the ranks from police officer, to detective, to sergeant, and finally lieutenant.

He went to Nazareth College of Rochester for his Bachelor of Science in Studio Art, and to Western Connecticut State University for his Master of Science in Justice and Law Administration.

Roncinske won Officer of the Year in 2003 and 2006.

Roncinski also cites his experience in leadership roles like budgeting and team building, as well as investigative efforts and impressive cases. He points out his knowledge of and experience with domestic violence cases and legislature.

Grant has been the police captain at Manchester Police Department since 2018. Grant started off as an officer there, then became a sergeant, lieutenant, and now captain.

He has worked in the Manchester Police Department since 1996.

He went to UConn to get his Bachelor of Arts in political science and sociology.

Before becoming an officer, he served four years in the Connecticut National Guard.

Grant was the recipient of the 2015 Janet E. Williams Humanitarian Award, and two Manchester Police Department Medals of Valor-Active Shooter, in 2010 and 2011.

Grant cites his attention to detail and his past experience dealing with persons with mental health challenges in his application letter.

Catania has been a police sergeant in the CCSU Police Department since 2018.

Before his time here, Catania worked as a sergeant in Ledyard for three years.

Catania spent most of his career in the Rocky Hill Police Department.

While there, he worked up from officer to sergeant, then lieutenant, to the commander of criminal investigations. He worked there from 1989 to 2017.

He also currently works at Dillon Security and Safety, LLC, in Wethersfield, CT. He has been a public safety consultant at the company since 2017.

Catania graduated from Post University with a Bachelor of Science in Criminal Justice in 2019. He went back and graduated from Post University with a Master of Public Administration in 2021.

In his application letter, Catania went into detail about how his experience would serve him in the role of CCSU Police Chief and says he is "personally and professionally situated" to fit the role.

He said he has dedicated his career to community-based policing, and his experience in campus safety has been the focus of his work.

Thomas Roncinske Jr.



Photo: Norwalk Police Facebook

Sean Grant



Photo: Manchester Police

Robert Catania



Photo: CCSU Police Department

# CCSU Tuition Increase Will Add Hundreds to Your Next Bill

CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE

The 3 percent increase will be \$184 more for undergraduate students per semester and \$284 for graduate students per semester.

Edson said that would cover \$13.4 million of the \$56 million shortfall.

"That will actually only cover about 24% of the budget shortfall," Edson said.

The Board of Regents is trying to find another funding resource for the remaining shortfall, he said.

"The Board of Regents is still hoping to reach out to the state government and get a financial measure passed to the other 76%," Edson said.

Some CCSU students say they are unhappy with this decision.

"My tuition is like 11 grand a year, and normally my out-of-pocket for a semester is like two thousand," CCSU sophomore Katie Curtis from Bristol said. "So that's fun; I pay for the tuition all by myself."

Curtis is unsure how she will come up with the money for this increase when she is already working two jobs.

"I am working two jobs, and I don't have a social life," Curtis said. "I have one



Photo: Keysa Mateo

friend that I see maybe see like once every three weeks. It's maddening; I am tired."

Curtis also said tuition should not have to be a burden for students or parents.

"I'd rather things be free. It's not how life works, and I get that," Curtis said. "It kind of sucks that the students whose parents make just enough money to cover house expenses and stuff like that, but they don't have enough to send their kids to school."

CCSU freshman Tiffanie Jones of Bristol understands why the increase is

happening but says she does not like students having to pay more for tuition.

"Honestly, an increase is not something I like, especially when it comes to money," Jones said. "It's not good news, but I understand why they're doing it."

Jones said she expected the government to help with student debts, not increase tuition.

"Yeah, it's kind of bizarre because we've heard news that the government was supposed to cut student loans, and here we are, like 3%

more," Jones said.

Edson is a voice for CCSU students as the vice-chair of academic affairs in SGA.

"Tuition would actually have to go up 24% to cover the entire \$56 million, so they really did try to minimize it as much as they could," he said. "And I understand the respect, but it still feels like too much."

Although Edson said he would not want a tuition increase from a student's perspective, he understands why it is needed.

"The state needs a

way to recuperate it, so either taxes across the whole state are going to have to go up to account, or tuition is going to have to go up to cover it," Edson said. "And the solution the Board of Regents came up with was to minimize the tuition increase, so it's only 3 percent."

Stephen Podeszwa of Oakdale, CCSU's assistant director of financial aid, is not a fan of tuition increases either. However, he said he understands there are costs to go to college.

Podeszwa said the Financial Aid Office could help students find a way to cover the increase.

"Financial Aid is here for you; we are always here to help," he said. "Come in and see what we can do. The worse we're going to tell you is you might have to take out a loan, but we will help you with that as well. So, make sure to fill out your FAFSA early."

He also said there are ways to cover this tuition increase.

"There are a lot of scholarships available. There are scholarships for everything," Podeszwa said. "As a student, you want to be in a position where you apply early and participate in groups on campus."

## CCSU Student Dies on Campus

BY MADELINE WILSON  
CO-EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

A Central Connecticut State University student died in her dorm, James Hall, on Sunday morning, according to an email sent to the Central community that night.

Saradina Redman was a 21-year-old senior from Burlington, Connecticut, according to a second email sent on Wednesday. Authorities have not released a cause of death.

"This is the kind of news no parent wants to receive," University President Zulma Toro said in her email.

CCSU police first received a call on Sunday about an unresponsive student at 9:52 a.m., according to a press release. Officers attempted to revive Redman until New Britain Emergency services arrived. The paramedics brought

her to the Hospital of Central Connecticut, where she was pronounced dead.

In both emails, officials announce counseling services available for roommates, friends, and the whole community.



Photo: CCSU

"The Residence Life team and Counseling staff will continue to provide support to roommates, friends, and hall mates," Toro said. "In the

meantime, our Counseling and Wellness team is a phone call away."

The university is holding a moment of silence Friday morning at 10 a.m. and honoring Redman's memory by ringing the CCSU bell tower chimes at that time.

Redman's family will also be holding a Muslim funeral service on Friday morning in Farmington. She will be buried afterward at the Gardens of Peace cemetery in Cheshire.

Redman was studying biomolecular science before her death. Kathy Martin, the Chair of the Department of Biomolecular Sciences said Redman was an "honor" to have in the program.

"Sara's presence in our classrooms and laboratories will be missed by all," Martin said.

## State Regulators: Bar Across From CCSU Sold Liquor to Minors

BY SAVANNA YELLING  
CO-EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Elmer's Place, a bar popular among Central Connecticut State University students, has had its liquor license suspended and has been fined \$5,000.

The bar on East Street was imposed for the violation of four statutes or regulations, including sale to minors and minors in barroom, according to a public document from the State of Connecticut Department of Consumer Protection.

The Liquor Control Commission has suspended Elmer's Place's liquor permit from June 30 to July 4, according to the document.

The fine has already been paid, state officials say. The Communications Director of the Department of Consumer Protection, Kaitlyn Krasselt, said the five-day suspension is the result of a compromise.

"The acceptance of the offer constituted a waiver of their right to a hearing before the Liquor Control Commission on the pending charges which alleged violations of various statutes and regulations," Krasselt said.

During the suspension, which includes the Fourth of July, Elmer's cannot be open or serve alcohol, Krasselt said. Gabriella Gondinho,

a CCSU junior, said she is not surprised about the suspension.

"Every time I've gone to Elmer's there's always been a massive line to get in and only about 50% of people are of age," Gondinho said. "It doesn't surprise me because college bars are normally like that. I've gone to other schools and have also encountered the same thing there."

Gondinho said she does not think the suspension will prevent minors from drinking at Elmer's in the future.

"It's just the truth of college honestly," said Gondinho. "No matter how many times they shut down Elmer's or take their liquor license kids will still find a bar to go to."

Although students such as Gondinho said they are not surprised by the news and said they believe minors will drink again, the Department of Consumer Protection said they will continue to crack down on bars serving underaged patrons.

"As with all of our licenses, there is an expectation that anyone given the privilege of holding a liquor permit adhere to the laws and regulations of our state, which are in place to protect public health and safety," Krasselt said.

## Wellness Center Director: 'The Mental Health of the Majority of Our Students is Good'



Photo: Kelly Langevin

BY NATHALIA BLAIR  
NEWS EDITOR

The director of Counseling and Student Development Michael Russo, said that the majority of Central Connecticut State University students' mental health is good at the Faculty Senate meeting on April 3.

Russo went on to qualify that statement.

"Many more students are struggling with mental health challenges than we had seen in the past," he said. "So, even though the majority of our students are doing well, we are seeing that the group of students that are struggling are increasing."

Russo said this increase started in 2020.

"Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic," he said. "The number of students who are struggling with mental health challenges and seeking help on campus is increasing year over year."

Since the fall of 2020, there has been an 82% increase in the number of students receiving counseling and a 48% increase in students scheduling counseling appointments, according to Russo's presentation.

Russo also presented data on students experiencing mental health emergencies.

"Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the mental health challenges are increasingly complex," he said. "The number of students transported to the emergency health department for mental health reasons has increased 130% since fall of 2021 compared to fall of 2022. The number of students reporting suicidal ideation at their first appointment is up 86%"

Jason Larose, a junior and a business analytics major at CCSU, said based on his experience at the school, there are a lot of different options for students struggling with their mental health.

"Obviously, COVID-19 affected a lot of people," he said. "I would say they [CCSU] took an extra step into giving that opportunity to people to make sure they are doing okay while in school, especially. I know how stressful school and outside of school can be."

Russo said students are using substances to cope with stress more than ever before, too.

"Students are struggling to cope in effective ways," he said. "They're struggling to cope in healthy ways, they're really using substances in a way they have never used before."

Crystal Salazar, a sophomore and a criminal justice major at CCSU, said mental health should be more publicized by the school.

"I find out [counseling sources] from my friends mainly, I think they should definitely post posters and stuff, and who you can contact for therapy," she said. "When I first wanted to go to therapy, it was a little difficult because I didn't know who to contact, I didn't know what to say or anything."

Faculty is encouraged to mention counseling services provided at the start of the semester, before midterms and before finals, as well as included in their syllabus, Russo said. He said faculty can help by assisting students in healthy self-care activities during stressful times.

You [Faculty] can help our prevention initiatives

on campus by encouraging students to attend [wellness activities] and for those of you who can," he said. "Give extra credit for proof of participation. We know a number of faculty have been doing that and we appreciate it when you do."

Marieliz Vazquez, a freshman and business management major at CCSU, said the transition was a shock since she had not been in a physical classroom since her junior year of high school when she chose to stay at home because of her physical health.

"That transition from high school to college was very drastic and I wasn't prepared for that mentally, so I think that had a part in me failing," she said. "Now I'm getting better and my grades are improving and learning new techniques."

Valazquez said CCSU has a lot of good resources that are not being talked about, such as free tutoring and writing workshops.

Faculty are advised to be more considerate, Russo said.

"I strongly encourage you to take the first step instead of waiting for them to come to you," Russo said. "If you suspect something may be wrong, reach out to the student, talk to them, ask them if everything is ok. There's hurt behind the struggle."

The 'Student Wellness Center' is open Mondays to Fridays from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. at Willard DiLoreto Hall.

## President's Column: SGA Will Change for the Better

BY HANEEN ALKABASI  
SGA PRESIDENT

For those who don't know, I have been elected as Student Government Association President for 2023-2024.

I was discouraged to get involved in politics from a young age because people like me don't go into politics. As an immigrant, politics is deemed as dangerous and corruption follows soon after. That being said, I had a strong interest in politics growing up because it impacts all of us in one way or another. I came to realize this is exactly why I should run for student government.

When you hear SGA, what comes to mind? Hopefully, it's student advocacy and club funding, rather than allegations and corruption. SGA is composed of the executive board and 30 senators who are meant to be voices for students. You elect us every year to represent you, so we should do our part. Not only do we make connections with the student body, but we work alongside administration to achieve a common goal of making students happy. We pay thousands of dollars into tuition, we should be happy to be here. Plus, happier students means better enrollment, which increases SGA's budget to create change for the student body.

My biggest concern is conflict of interest. SGA members should not be voting on motions for clubs that they lead. The abstain option is there for a reason. At the end of the day, everyone has biases, but senators should see it from the lens of what the students want and not what they want. Equity should be a priority, and the standards we hold for one club should be held for the remaining clubs.

Equity plays a big role in allocating funds for clubs and organizations. I think that we should disclose all the base budgets when we send out the decisions for the following year. All of this information is on the Club Central website, but I don't think students should have to go digging for it. I understand why SGA members may be hesitant to do this, people might have something to say. However, we should be able to justify the decisions we make. SGA's budgeting process needs to be transparent.

Another concern I noticed is leadership. We all lead in different ways, but inclusivity should be at the forefront. I want to listen to the people around me and make informed decisions. I think leaders should never act alone in what they do. Disagreement is bound to happen and it's not a bad thing, as long as you truly listen, especially to those you disagree with. It's important to share ideas and differences to come up with a productive solution.

The best leaders are willing to compromise because your way isn't the only way, and I will keep that in mind throughout my term.

## CSCU President: 'The Proposed Budget Would Be Devastating for CSCU'

CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE

CSCU requested \$650 million for the budget, however, both Gov. Ned Lamont and the appropriations committee budgets fell short of what they said was needed. Both budget plans are decreasing for all 17 state colleges and are calling for over \$335 million in cuts over a span of two years.

If approved, colleges like Central Connecticut State University will be prompted to cut major programs on campus, including mental health services and academic advising, in addition to laying off hundreds of faculty employees.

"Shutting down high-cost programs will be unavoidable," Cheng said. "But those high-cost programs; the manufacturing and healthcare, they're the ones producing the critical talent that Connecticut needs."

The college system has \$150 million as one-time funding in the current year, but the federal COVID-19 relief money is expiring in various groups across the state. Legislative leaders are expected to follow the state-mandated spending cap, which restricts the amount Lamont and the legislature can spend.

The cost of tuition is

also projected to increase if the budget is passed, which causes concern for students' success in the CSCU system, Cheng said.

"We do everything we can to try and keep tuition down, but we would be forced to increase tuition," Cheng said. "Students will get far less, and they will pay much more."

CCSU president Zulma Toro said that many of their students are from Connecticut, and are working multiple jobs to pay for their current tuition.

Without state funding, Central will not be able to deliver and facilitate the social mobility of the working class and educate future Connecticut leaders, Toro said.

The majority of students in the CSCU system are minorities, accounting for 52% of all students, Cheng said. Without adequate state funding, supporting students who do not come from the "power zip codes" will be at risk.

Ana Sofia Rodriguez, first-generation CCSU freshman, moved to the U.S. seven years ago from Puerto Rico knowing no English. She said the reason why she chose Central was because of the education program offered here, in addition to the special

services that are offered to help first-generation students stay on track.

Rodriguez also spoke at the news conference Monday and said that higher tuition will negatively affect students like her who have to fund college for themselves.

"It's very important for us students to have such a low tuition," Rodriguez said. "For me, I have to work two jobs to be able to pay for my school because my mom cannot help me."

Those who are seeking to divest from public higher education said enrollment rates are declining, Cheng said this is not true.

"Our enrollment is stabilizing," Cheng said. "After a sharp COVID decline, we have seen positive growth trends, and as we evolve we anticipate greater demand."

To bring enrollment rates up, Cheng said CSCU has plans to create and launch new programs with better attention. However, he said this cannot be done without proper state support.

President Toro also said that total enrollment at Central has remained constant and the size of the fall 2022 full-time, first-time and transfer classes showed an upward trend. The university has also

been financially prudent.

President Toro also said that total enrollment at Central has remained constant and the size of the fall 2022 full-time, first-time and transfer classes showed an upward trend. The university has also been financially prudent, Toro said.

"Budget management strategies used at CCSU have contributed to a permanent reduction in our budget of \$13.1 million," Toro said.

Over the coming months, CSCU is preparing a full-court advocacy press that is starting on April 27 at the state capitol, Cheng wrote in an email to the CSCU community. Students, faculty and others will be able to speak to legislators about the importance of the CSCU system and the harmful repercussions of the proposed budget.

Budget negotiations between Lamont and top legislative leaders are underway, with just six weeks until the legislature adjourns on June 7. Prior to this, they plan on a two-year, \$50.5 billion state budget.

"We understand and respect the need for fiscal restraint," Cheng said. "But it should never come at the expense of our most vulnerable students."

## OPINION: Students Left in the Dark, CCSU Lacks Transparency



Photo: CCSU

BY SAVANNA YELLING  
CO-EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

On March 7, I received a call from my mom asking if I felt safe on campus. Why would I not? Despite living 20 minutes away, she was made aware, before I was, that a man who lives in the same building as me was arrested for criminal trespassing.

A CCSU student, Matthew Nieves, 25, was arrested and charged with voyeurism and trespassing for watching women in the swim locker room showers, according to the arrest warrant. The story was broken by major news outlets such as the Hartford Courant, NBC, WFSB and CT

Insider. Yet, the University has yet to make a statement to the student body.

The incident has been reported to have occurred on Jan. 17 and was broken by local news outlets on March 7. For a month and a half, students were unaware that their peers were victims of such harassment. It is likely that students are still unaware if they are not in tune with local news outlets.

While it is understandable for the university not to put out statements while the incident is under investigation, the incident took place on campus and the suspect and victims are all members of the CCSU

community. Students deserve to know at the very least that an investigation is taking place.

Once the story is broken by major news outlets, a floodgate of questions from students and their families is bound to open. There was no direct communication to students ensuring that they could feel safe on campus and that the situation was under control.

If information concerning student safety can be made public by police reports, court records and has been reported on by multiple sources, why are students left in the dark by administration?

## OPINION: Is Sports Betting Ruining Sports?

BY MARQUIS ADAMS  
STAFF WRITER

In all my years as an NBA fan, I have never—and I mean never—thought I would partake in the life-sucking activity of sports betting.

So, for a little context, I'm about two years into this, and I haven't exactly had the best of luck when it's come to landing any of the bets I've placed so far.

Now that's not to say I haven't hit any of them, but I've missed more times than I've hit, but then again... who hasn't, right?

I keep it simple and play the safe route when it comes to sports betting. I do Same-Game Parlays which—in my humble opinion—is the safest kind of bet to make, especially if you know the player's game.

So you'd think I'd hit a lot more right? Wrong.

At this point, I've come to terms with the mathematical concept that I'm more likely to not hit my bets than I am to hit them, but for some reason that hasn't stopped me from continuing to place them.

Now, as we move into year three of my sports betting "habit," I started thinking to myself: Do I even watch the games for the sake of the games? Or now do I simply

watch just to see if any of my bets hit?

And that's where the problem lies. Has this mindset ruined sports? Am I the only one who thinks this way? I'm willing to bet I'm not (pun fully intended).

I've seen countless social media posts and rants about how a player ruined someone's bet. People have openly admitted to not even watching the games until the closing minutes to see how close they are.

It's hard to believe that the number of true fans of sports is potentially diminishing. From an NBA, NFL or MLB standpoint, they couldn't care less as to why people view the games, just as long they do.

Though from a player's perspective, some-

times players are heckled or threatened because they cost someone their bet. So it places somewhat of a responsibility—I say that loosely—on the players to not cost people their bets in hopes of not being heckled.

But no matter which way you view it, the player is going to cost someone their money. If someone bets on a player to score over 25 points and they do, then they just cost the person who bet on them to score under, and vice versa.

It's a lose-lose situation every time for the player, a win-win for the organizations and a win-lose for the fans that are betting.

So the question still remains, has sports betting ruined sports?



Photo: Madeline Wilson

## OPINION: What I've Learned Observing Ramadan as a Christian

BY CHRISTIAN MALDONADO  
LIFESTYLE EDITOR

This year, I have decided to test myself and try something new. For years, I have admired the tradition of Ramadan. This year, for the first time in my life, I am participating in it. At the time of writing, we are exactly halfway through the ninth month of the Islamic calendar, and I have had the opportunity to learn many new things about myself and my environment.

Before embarking on this journey, I felt like my habits with food were not healthy. I found myself eating out of pure boredom sometimes, and the Ramadan fast makes it so that I cannot do that anymore. For those who don't know, fasting during Ramadan lasts from dawn until sunset. During this period, I have to wake up before 5 a.m. every morning to eat my breakfast, which is supposed to last me until around 7:15 a.m.-7:30 p.m. When I finally get to eat dinner, my brain thinks that I can still eat the same foods and the same portions that I did before Ramadan started. I realized a couple of days into fasting that this wouldn't be possible for me. I started to feel sick after eating a regular portion of food, and it frustrated me.

During the fast, you also are not permitted to drink water. This was the one fact that made me not want to participate in the fast. I know how important it is to drink water, and the fact that I couldn't felt weird and surreal to me. I have found myself absent-mindedly walking up to water fountains, and having to stop myself just before I was going to drink from one. I make sure to drink plenty of water during non-fasting hours in order to keep myself hydrated, but it has made me less inclined to participate in some physical activity. Last year my friends and I played intramural slow-pitch softball, but this year, I did not participate. I was nervous that I wouldn't be able to play well and that I would tire myself out very quickly.

When I researched the guidelines for Ramadan, one of the ones that I paid little attention to stated that the consumption of drugs or

alcohol at any point during the month was prohibited. I didn't pay much attention because I have never had a dependence on either substance. When Ramadan began, I found myself in situations where I would be around my friends who would be enjoying a drink, while I had to refrain from participating. While I don't have a dependence on alcohol, it still was difficult to be around people who were drinking, as it made me feel like I wasn't having as good a time as those who were.

Every time that I have been around people who have been eating food or drinking, I have always felt proud of myself afterward. I realized that, unlike most people, participating in Ramadan was a choice for me, and I could have easily broken my fast and no one would have batted an eye. I have the integrity to stay true to what I started, and I know that it will and has already yielded positive results physically and emotionally for me.

While there have been plenty of negatives that have come from fasting, I cannot deny the positives that have come from this period. I have grown closer with a friend of mine who has participated in the fast since he was a child. He was one of my biggest supporters in deciding to do this, and he and his family have let me into their home for iftar (the meal eaten after sunset). This has meant a lot for me, because iftar is normally shared with family, and the fact that they let me eat with them really made me feel like I was a part of the family. This fast has done a lot to teach me self-control and discipline. As I mentioned earlier, there have been many times when I have wanted to quit and break my fast, but I have stayed with it. A younger me would not have had the discipline to say no and finish what I started, which is why I believe I chose to participate in Ramadan at the right age. I hope that for me and everyone else participating, these next two weeks are prosperous and bring many blessings. This is one of the hardest things I have ever done, and I am thankful for it.

## Audience Raves About 9th Annual ASO Fashion Show



Photo: Nathalia Blair

BY NATHALIA BLAIR  
NEWS EDITOR

The African Student Organization hosted its ninth annual fashion show Friday night. Around 1,000 students attended this event. The theme for this year was a wedding, and the couple that was celebrated was wife and husband, Dionna Dorsey and Ikechi Dike.

The fashion show consisted of seven scenes and four featured performances including rappers Enzzo and Stormaxxi, singer Nubia G, the Southern Connecticut State University dance team “Encore”, SCSU “African Student Association” dance team, and Alpha Phi Alphas. Audience interaction was encouraged with a “Best Dressed” competition and dancing segments where audience members were picked at random to go on stage with the host, Clifford Owusu.

Deejkwane, the D.J. of the night, set the mood playing Afrobeats and dancehall, as well as other genres.

Enzzo explained why he chose his song “Impossible” to perform.

“The song is called Impossible and it’s a song about motivation,” Enzzo said. “Nothing that you’re doing is impossible.”

The designer for the female scene was “EzClothin.” The designer for the male scene was the “Drew Coffie Collection,” and the designer for the swimsuit scene was “Aude.”

“Aklebular Prints” designed the outfits for the Modern Wedding scene, and “No.Kyne” was the designer for the flag scene.

Andrew Coffie, the

designer for “Drew Coffie Collection” said that when he knew the theme was a wedding he had to bring his best foot forward.

“For this show the theme was a wedding... With suits, there’s elegance to it, there’s class. I am bringing my A-game into this,” Coffie said.

One audience member said that she wants the show to happen more often.

“Make this every semester. Not every other semester. Every single one,” Laila Cotton said.

David Nduati said that he goes to support his friends and appreciate his culture.

“All the models are all my friends and I like going out to support them,” Nduati said. “Since I can’t make the ASO meetings during the week, this is the one time I get to go show my support, and appreciate my culture.”

Wadline Emmanuel, a model for the fashion show, said she had fun creating content for ASO’s Instagram account, “@ccsu\_aso.”

“Creating Tiktoks and content for ASO was really fun,” Wadline Emmanuel said.

Benjamin Koranteng, a model for the fashion show, said he learned to open up more.

“From this experience, I learned to open up more,” Koranteng said. “When I first came I was closed off and quiet.”

Koranteng said his advice to potential models is to have fun with this experience.

“Go out there, have fun, you only live once, and the show is only once a year,” Koranteng said.

Shani Jackson, the ASO President, said she was happy about the turnout this

year. She said Donesha Noble did a great job promoting the show on their media platform and reaching out to sister schools such as the University of Connecticut, Southern Connecticut State University, and the University of New Haven.

“The turnout was amazing and from my experience from going to these shows, I think that was one of the best turnouts we’ve ever had for the show,” she said. “That is solely because of our public relations officer, Donesha.”

Jackson said her most important takeaway is collaboration.

“My most important takeaway is working together as a team. You have so many people, with so many different ideas, and coming together to solidify one thought was a little difficult,” she said. “Leading the team on my part was one of the most challenging things. I think I executed it very well, but at the end of the day, I think I had great people behind me. With my E-Board to help with managing our models, our designers, and going through those motions.”

Albert Guwoe said next year’s models should walk the stage with confidence.

“Walk the stage with confidence. While you’re up there, you don’t get much time on the scene,” he said. “It’s important to make sure that the time that you’re up there, whoever’s in the audience remembers your face.”

At the end of the event, ASO’s E-Board walked the runway, and Jackson was given a gift as appreciation for her efforts and commitment to ASO.

## Tyler, the Creator Releases His Mona Lisa in “Sorry Not Sorry”

BY CHRISTIAN MALDONADO  
LIFESTYLE EDITOR

California music and fashion icon Tyler, the Creator has released 37 music videos in his illustrious music career, and his latest may be the most emotional and impactful yet.

The song is titled, “Sorry Not Sorry.” It dives into numerous apologies Tyler feels like he needs to make. Whether it’s apologies to his mother for not being around for her enough, or to his friends who feel like he left them behind, Tyler uses the characters he created during each of his album cycles to express his remorse.

He says sorry to his friends, likely referring to the members of his former rap and fashion group Odd Future. During the late 2000s and early 2010s, Tyler and the group revolutionized underground rap and hip-hop. As well as fashion with many people still wearing clothing and merchandise with the OF initials of the group. After a disconnect and difference in creative path, the group unofficially split, with no plans for any other releases in music or fashion. He says he’s sorry that his ego got in the way and he wishes they could have done more together.

Starting with the song “Garden Shed” from his 2017 album “Flower Boy,” there have been times when Tyler has hinted at himself being gay or bi-sexual.

“Truth is, since a youth kid, thought it was a phase. Thought it’d be like the Frank; poof, gone. But, it’s still goin’ on.”

His fifth studio album “Igor,” is about a love triangle, where Tyler is attempting to woo a man in a relationship with a woman, and the trials and tribulations he goes through while trying to hold on to this guy.

With all of this being said, one of the most discussed and interpreted lines in the song is when he says,

“Sorry to the guys I had to hide. Sorry to the girls I had to lie to.”

Tyler talks about the part of himself he had to hide in order to feel safe and feel normal. His old music is littered with homophobic lines, trying to mask his own identity. This shows that he is now comfortable in his own skin, and is attempting to reconcile with the people he had to lie to.

The first part of the song deals with apologies, while in the second half of this music video and song, Tyler says that he isn’t sorry for the success he has had or the obstacles he had to overcome to get to where he is. He ridicules critics who say he’s changed and doesn’t know about civilian struggles. He notes that he was raised by a single mother and knows the struggles of Section 8 firsthand.

Throughout the entire video, Tyler is dressed as each of the characters he has created among his six albums, rapping at some point as each character. These characters are meant to show his transition into becoming the person he is today. From the beginning, he kills and drags off each of his characters one-by-one, until the last one remaining is the character from his most recent album, “Call Me If You Get Lost.” The music video shows Tyler getting rid of the character, signifying that he is starting a new era.

He is known for releasing an album every two years since 2011, and after his 2021 release, fans are excited to see what he has in store for this year. Now that he is 32, it will be interesting to see what kind of concept Tyler will take on.



Photo: Youtube

# Love Grows on CCSU's Campus

BY ALEXIS DASCHER  
STAFF WRITER

It was love at first sight for Jaqueline Jimenez, a junior at Central Connecticut State University when a mysterious man opened the door for her in Ebenezer D. Bassett Hall.

"I thought he was really cute because I have, like, school crushes," Jimenez said. "I was obsessed with him, and every time I would go to class, he'd be there at the same time."

Jimenez said she would constantly talk about him to her roommates. She also said her roommate had a friend who transferred and wanted to introduce him.

Little did Jimenez know the transfer student was her crush.

"We had a little hang out, and the guy from Bassett came over," she said. "It was a little awkward at first, but we talked for a while, and he got my number."

Ryan Tyimok, a CCSU junior, described the night he met Jimenez and his automatic interest.

"I went to her suite in Mid-Campus Hall, and The Grateful Dead shirt she wore caught my attention immediately, as well as the verbal smackdown she was giving the TV due to some Nintendo game," Tyimok said. "Going throughout the night, I noticed the way she carried herself, and I don't know how to describe it, but down to her laugh, I was hooked."

Tyimok said he talked to Jimenez's roommates to learn more about her. He also said her roommate invited him to hang out with the group more often.

According to an informal Instagram poll, 36% of students met their partners on campus, and 64% did not.

The Healthy Journal



Photo: Instagram

reported that it is common to date in college and that 15% of people met their spouses in college.

Tara Andrews, a CCSU senior, said she met her boyfriend, Tyler Heidgerd, a junior, through mutual friends on campus. According to Andrews, the small campus made it easier to converse with people.

"One night, he came to my dorm with some of our friends, and that's how we met," Andrews said. "We hit it off and started talking and hanging out with each other."

Andrews said she

was romantically interested in Heidgerd after their first encounter, but Heidgerd was more hesitant. Andrews also said Heidgerd initially wanted to explore the single life.

"He was a freshman and had never been in a relationship before," she said. "He was not really into it at first."

Andrews said Heidgerd and herself grew a connection after having the coronavirus simultaneously.

"Our whole friend group tested positive for COVID-19, and we were all really close together," she said. "We would be sitting in

the hallway together talking and started dating shortly after that."

Andrews said Heidgerd and herself go to the CCSU gym, dining hall, and Resident Advisor events together.

"It was really easy to have a conversation," Heidgerd said. "We got to know each other pretty quickly because we lived in the same building and spent a lot of time together."

Heidgerd said he is grateful to have met Andrews and for CCSU connecting them.

Grace Darrell, a CCSU freshman, and Joseph Feliciano, a freshman, met at orientation.

"Our friends brought us together," Feliciano said. "At dinnertime, they sat us together, and we officially met and started talking."

Feliciano said he spoke with Darrell through the summer and when school started.

"We would just text each other about random things," he said.

Feliciano said they would flirt but did not reveal romantic feelings for one another.

"I think both of us were in denial of the other ones," he said. "We read the signals, but we were both scared."

According to Darrell, the two got closer at the beginning of the school year and went to events together.

"When school started, we got a lot closer, and we hung out, just the two of us," she said.

Darrell said Feliciano and herself admitted their feelings when lying on the hammocks.

"We just laid back and cuddled for a bit and realized... 'Oh, we like each other,'" Darrell said.

Feliciano said he asked Darrell on a date, though he felt slightly hesitant.

"There was no risk at all, but it was a risky decision," he said. "But she said yes, and we made it official after the first date."

Tyimok has become more than Jimenez's school crush.

"We would study on the hammocks or have picnics next to Nicolaus Copernicus Hall," he said. "This gave me the opportunity to get to know Jacqueline."

Tyimok said she is the 'greatest girl in the world.'



: @centralrecorder

# The Owl House Ends with Poignant, Spectacular Finale

BY JAYDEN KLAUS  
STAFF WRITER

It was close to midnight on March 8, when I heard news on “The Owl House” finale. It was the news I had been dreading.

I was on YouTube when I saw that one of my favorite channels, The Roundtable, had posted a new video. They make videos on cartoon shows, and have been covering “The Owl House” lately, so I was curious as to what this one would be about.

The video was titled “The Owl House Ends In ONE MONTH,” and instantly got my attention. Upon watching it, the host said that The Owl House’s final episode, “Watching and Dreaming,” would be airing in exactly one month on April 8.

I was dreading this, one of my favorite shows was finally ending. It hurt to think about because the show was so good and was ending too soon by Disney. The news hurt even more when I read a comment on a different video, talking about the end of “The Owl House,” and making a connection between the titles of season three’s episodes. In the previous two seasons, the first letter of each episode would spell out a secret message. But for season three, when you put the episode titles together, it gives you, “thanks for watching.” One final sign of gratitude from Dana Terrance and the rest of “The Owl House” crew. It was almost enough to make me cry.

A final trailer for the episode was released on March 21, and it made me even more anxious for what we would be in store for. What did The Collector have planned? Was Belos finally going to be defeated and utterly destroyed for his crimes? Would everyone get the

happy ending they deserved? I couldn’t wait to find out.

The premiere began with a montage of scenes from previous episodes with a message of thanks for watching the show. It was a bittersweet feeling to know that this was

along with how he likes, Belos sneaks away to his castle.

Raine manages to eject Belos from himself, and Belos moves to try and possess the heart of the Titan, the deceased being that makes up the setting of the Boiling

Meanwhile, The Collector rushes back to his palace to rescue the puppet citizens in the archives. He works to keep the entire structure from falling as Luz’s friends and mother, who all had already been

a dazzling display of shooting stars across the night sky. The episode ends with everyone saying The Owl House’s iconic “byyyyyyeee!” to The Collector and by extension, us the viewers.

This finale was amazing. It was so cathartic to see Belos finally get his just deserts for all the horrors he had inflicted upon everyone. There was no better end for him than to simply melt away completely helpless. I was so happy to see the ending with everyone doing well and happy. It leaves so much potential for what everyone could do with their lives and I’m excited to see all the amazing content that I know will be coming from The Owl House fandom. Even now, with the show over, we can keep it going in our own ways and hearts.

The Owl House has been a truly special show to me. It’s been a way for me to connect with other people online and have something for us to talk about, laugh at, theorize about, and cry over. It’s also been a big help in getting me through the challenges that the pandemic and school have brought on me.

This is the end of another great show, and it feels like the end of an era in Disney shows as the company moves on to other, newer shows. I believe that it’ll be a while before we see another show like The Owl House. I do mourn the fact that The Owl House has ended, and prematurely at that. But I would never want to take away from the incredible effort the show’s team put in to give us such a brilliant work. I will always love The Owl House no matter what comes next. Thank you, Owl House, for everything. Byyyyyyeee!

The first two seasons and the first two episodes of season three are currently



Photo: Disney+

it for The Owl House, and the crew still wanted to let us, the viewers, know that they appreciated us for sticking with them through everything to the end. I wish more shows did that with their finales.

The episode opened with all of Luz’s friends and mom being ensnared in The Collector’s magic before Luz awakens to find herself in the Emperor’s Castle, dressed as main villain, Belos. As she wanders around, Luz is accosted by her friends, who all blame her for ruining their lives and attack her. Luz soon realizes that this is all a dream and wakes herself up with a light glyph. She finds Eda and King nearby also trapped in dreams, and after waking them up, they all share a tearful reunion.

The Collector is upset by this, but is persuaded by Belos, and is still possessing Raine Whispers to go play some other games with the three. While The Collector is busy playing games and getting frustrated that Luz, Eda, and King aren’t playing

Islands, with Raine trying to stop them.

Luz connects with a frustrated Collector, who expresses that they’ve always been tricked and betrayed by everyone they’ve tried to befriend. Luz, Eda, and King take The Collector to some of their favorite places to show how they became friends but as they do, Belos manages to take over the Titan’s heart and begins spreading his goopy essence everywhere to take fully control and kill everyone.

The Collector tries to make peace with Belos after learning about the benefits of treating others with kindness from Luz, but Belos immediately goes on the attack and Luz takes the hit for The Collector and actually dies. She finds herself in the in between realm where she meets the spirit of the Titan, King’s father. He gives her the power she will need to defeat Belos and resurrects her. Luz reappears with an awesome new Titan-witch design, and together with Eda and King, they engage Belos in battle.

there, save everyone inside.

Luz, Eda, and King make their way to the Titan’s heart, as the only way for them to defeat Belos will be to detach him from it. They meet up with Raine and attack Belos. Luz grabs Belos and musters all of her borrowed power to rip out Belos in a fantastic shot. Every bit of the Belos goo across the Boiling Islands disintegrates, leaving only a dissolving Belos that gets melting by the boiling rain and trampled on by Eda, King, and Raine.

The Collector frees everyone he turned into puppets and Luz is reunited with all of her loved ones. There’s a time skip a few years into the future with a now 18-year-old Luz preparing to go to college in the Demon Realm. Over the credits, we see how the Boiling Islands have been restored and how all our beloved characters are doing now.

Everyone Luz loves throws a surprise party for her to make up for her missing her Quinceañera and The Collector even shows up with



## CCSU's Esports Center is About More Than Just Gaming



Photo: Kristina Vakhman

BY ANDREW DECAPUA  
SPORTS EDITOR

After you walk through the glass door leading to Central Connecticut State University's Esports Center, you are greeted with the sounds of gaming controllers clicking, and the sights of four massive 80-inch flat-screen televisions accompanied by rows of high-end gaming computers.

The Esports Center is not just a hub for some impressive tech, but is also a place where CCSU students can come together to socialize and meet friends. Other than the unmistakable sound of buttons being mashed and computer mice being furiously clicked, you could hear the banter and conversations. Some are a little more intense than others, but one thing that is evident in all the banter is a sense of community and togetherness. A staple of what gaming is truly meant to be.

As I sat and observed everything that was happening in the Esports Center, the one thing that stood out was the sense of inclusion and togetherness. Friends battled and engaged in friendly trash talk as they played Dragon Ball Xenoverse together, and people worked together as they played Super Smash Bros., with one student helping others learn how to play the game.

As soon as you enter the Esports Center, there is a welcome sign that says, "CCSU views esports as a way for students to build peer groups, meet new friends, and collaborate in a competitive and respectful environment while working together."

On any given day, dozens of CCSU students come together to enjoy each other's company and partici-

pate in cooperative and competitive gaming. With 20 Dell Alienware Computers, four PlayStation 5 consoles, four Xbox Series X consoles, four Nintendo Switch consoles, and a library of over 100 games across all platforms, there is something for every gamer imaginable.

Some students even bring in their own gaming devices to the Esports Center. Brian Rivera, a CCSU student and employee at the Esports Center, said he often utilizes the equipment provided but sometimes brings his own.

"I use the consoles we have here, but also bring my own devices like my Steam Deck," Rivera said.

A "Steam Deck" is a new portable handheld gaming device that allows gamers to access and play their library of computer games on the go. Rivera also said that some students opt to ditch the newer, next-generation lineup of devices for the retro ones like the Nintendo Wii, which was released in November 2006 and discontinued in October 2013.

"Someone, before, on a Saturday, even brought in a Nintendo Wii," Rivera said.

Every Saturday from 3 p.m. to 6 p.m., the Esports Center hosts several events that teach students how to do various things involving gaming and esports. The next event will take place on Saturday, April 1, and will teach students how to livestream while playing video games.

The Esports Center also hosts the monthly Super Smash Bros. Tournaments that the CCSU Esports and Gaming Club conducts.

The university has an intercollegiate Esports team that competes against other universities and colleges in games such as Super Smash Bros., Overwatch, and Valorant.

Mason Babbitt, a student and employee of the Esports Center, said that the busiest time during the weekdays is 2 p.m.

"Around 2 p.m. is the most popular time, I would say," Babbitt said. "Like when people are going between classes."

According to Babbitt, most CCSU students come to use the Dell Alienware Computers, but the gaming consoles also get plenty of use.

"Typically, people come and use the PCs, but some people come to use the console to play with their friends," Babbitt said.

Boasting an Intel Core i7 processor and an AMD graphics card, the Dell Alienware Computers are capable of faster loading times and higher frame rates than the gaming consoles, so it's no wonder why the computers are more popular.

Other than gaming, the 20 computers also offer learning opportunities outside the world of gaming. The potential of the Dell Alienware computers opens possibilities for research in the fields of interactive media design and game development, according to CCSU's official Esports webpage.

Besides the computers and consoles, the Esports Center has a shout-casting room equipped with green screens, microphones, and cameras for Esports events. The shoutcaster is the color commentator for Esports tournaments, like color commentators in athletic sporting events.

The Esports Center, established in 2019, is located in Memorial Hall and is open every day of the week as early as 10 a.m. on some days, and closes as late as 11 p.m.

## CCSU's Nasir Smith Represents Blue Devils at Pro Day

BY MICHAEL KILLEEN  
STAFF WRITER

The Central Connecticut State University Blue Devils had three players from their football team invited to attend a joint Pro Day with students from Sacred Heart University and the University of Connecticut.

Nasir Smith, senior running back, was among the players from CCSU called up. He attended the Pro Day with his fellow Blue Devils at Shenkman Training Center in Storrs. Smith said being invited to participate in a Pro Day was a blessing.

"It definitely was a dream come true," Smith said. "This is something I wanted to do, and I've been preparing for that for two months."

Despite all Smith has achieved during the Pro Day, he said he still thinks there could have been some stuff he could have done better.

"But overall, it was a pretty good day," Smith said.

When attending the Pro Day, Smith said he noticed scouts from the New York Giants, Green Bay Packers, San Francisco 49ers, and other teams. He said there were about thirteen teams in total. But along with those teams, he also said there might have been one team from the Cana-

dian Football League attending the Pro Day, but Smith was not sure.

Smith said that the drills that he performed felt routine.

"I was working on that, like I said, for two months straight," Smith said. "So, everything was just normal. I actually wasn't nervous, which I was surprised about."

Smith said he thought that overall every player did good, but didn't watch their performances as much since he was the only offensive player called up out of the three.

"I was so locked in," Smith said. "I wasn't trying to, you know, worry about other things."

Smith said it was a blessing to be selected from everyone on the offensive roster since not everybody gets a chance to showcase their skills, especially since NFL scouts can overlook CCSU in favor of more prominent schools such as Alabama, Michigan, or Texas.

"You got to go out there and represent," Smith said. "We come from a small school. So, you know, like you said, we get overlooked. You got to show them that small schoolboys can play with the best of them too."



Photo: CCSU

## CCSU Track Team Crosses Finish Line of Regular Season



Photo: CCSU

BY EGYPT BELL-CLAYTON  
STAFF WRITER

Central Connecticut State University's Outdoor Track and Field regular season has come to an end. However, the competition is still up and running as the team prepares to compete in the NEC Conference meets.

Women's Track and Field jumper, Aaliyah Walker, said that the regular season was good and that the team has much to bring to the NEC Conference Meet this weekend.

"I feel like the season so far is going pretty good," Walker said. "We are being very consistent, which is nice, playing it safe going into NEC. I feel like we definitely have a lot to bring into NEC, so I'm just looking forward to it."

Head Coach Eric Blake said that the regular season went well but that the Men and Women's teams use their regular season to prepare for the conference meets. Throughout this regular season, many records have been

marked down in history by our own Blue Devils.

"We had Logan Ratcliff in the javelin," Blake said. "It was the first meet of the year, down at the Raleigh Relays. He threw 67 meters, so that was excellent. We had a couple of school records on the women's side with Ashley Dana. Ashley set a school record in the 1500 meter at Pen Relays this past weekend. That's just a few, I mean, we've had some good performances."

With Track and Field being an individual sport where athletes focus on their own events, Coach Blake said that the conference meets are when the athletes come together and perform their best for the team.

"Some of our athletes will compete in two, three, or four events, which is a lot. It's a big ask," Blake said. "It's a two-day competition, they give their best in, again, multiple events, and they are willing to do that, really, for the

goal of the team title. We've had a lot of good performances, but it's about getting ourselves ready, physically and mentally, for that weekend, which is at Merrimack."

Walker said that the team needs to focus on patience going into the NEC Conference Meet.

"We know we have a lot of things in store, a lot of big jumps or big runs to make, and we kind of just have to be patient and just wait for those huge moments at NEC, where it counts," Walker said.

Coach Blake mentions that this year's team is well-rounded, and they are willing to give it their all at the NEC Conference Meet.

"We have definitely had some good freshmen that are contributing a ton, but we have a lot of seniors, and I know that they've put the work in to really have a good weekend, and we just really want to carry through of what we have done this whole year," Blake said.

The NEC Championship will be held on May 6 and 7 at Merrimack College.

## Students Battle for Cash Prize in 3-on-3 Basketball Tournament

BY SAVANNA YELLING  
CO-EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Central Connecticut State University's school spirit club teamed up with the Student Government Association to allow students to compete for a \$400 prize at the annual Brazen Blue Devil's Day.

The Brazen Blue Devils club hosted the 3-on-3 basketball tournament on April 29 with a total jackpot of \$1,200 on the line.

Ryan Jones, a senior, hit the game-winning 2-pointer to put his team up 15-7 in the championship game.

"It was competitive and fiery," Jones said. "It was money on the line, so it was a real battle. We weren't walking out empty-handed."

Each game went up to 11 points, and the championship game went up to 15 points, using an

couldn't be stopped. Once my teammate Brian went down on an ankle sprain, I said, "I got us," and the rest is history."

Jones played point guard in the Amateur Athletic Union, and his skills translated into the competition, he said.

"My basketball experience is extensive," Jones said. "From the streets to high school, to college, I'm gonna put the ball through the hoop."

Each member of the winning team was awarded \$400 Amazon gift cards.

Students gathered by the dozen to watch the tournament.

Bri McFarlane watched the entire tournament and enjoyed it, she said.

"It was great energy, and everyone was hyped," McFarlane said. "It was



Photo: Carlos Rodriguez

ones-and-twos-point system. The tournament was single-elimination style.

The winning team struggled more in the first round than they did in the final game, Jones said.

"Our first game was the toughest," Jones said. "The chip was hard too, but once I flipped that switch and my teammate Devyn hit three 2-pointers, we

actually entertaining to see the boys play and to see who would win the money at the end."

McFarlane said although she enjoyed watching basketball, the club should consider expanding to other sports.

"I think they should do a football tournament next year," McFarlane said.

# CCSU Track Star Angie Rafter Goes Pro

BY KATHERINE NEILAN  
STAFF WRITER

Central Connecticut State University cross country and track and field star performer Angie Rafter signed to run professionally for Hansons-Brooks Original Distance Project on April 6.

“It was always a dream of mine as a runner to make it to the next level, but it wasn’t a realistic goal,” Rafter said. “Once I entered graduate school, I really started to shift my focus towards believing in myself that I could compete at that next level.”

During her six years running for CCSU, Rafter captured 19 Northeast Conference titles and earned five NEC Most Outstanding Performer accolades. Last spring, Rafter completed her college career by earning the NEC Indoor Most Valuable Performer and Most Outstanding Track Performer awards.

Rafter was also a standout on the cross country team. She led CCSU to four NEC Championships and became the second runner in NEC history to win three individual cross country crowns.

“CCSU is a very high-volume program that makes us compete at that next level,” Rafter said. “I think our team benefits from that strength. I’ve done well in the program, but we also have a lot of other athletes who have really succeeded at CCSU because of this.”

When Rafter came to Central in 2018, she was recruited as a middle-distance runner and only focused on training for events such as the 800-meter, 1,500-meter, and mile.

It wasn’t until the COVID-19 pandemic that Rafter started to train at higher

volumes for longer distances and switched to running the 5K and 10K events, she said.

“I entered college as a mediocre middle-distance runner. I was never finishing in the top spots,” Rafter said. “Then, obviously, COVID hit, and that’s when things shifted for me. I really focused on getting training and miles in during those COVID years, and the results made me start seeing myself running after CCSU.”

Taking her running career to the next level could not have been possible without the support from the CCSU athletics administration and coaching staff, Rafter said.

“I had the best coaching staff being my biggest support system and giving me the advice that I needed,” she said.

Cross country and track and field head coach Eric Blake says Rafter’s collegiate career changed the intensity and leadership of the program.

“It’s been a fun six years, and I’m really glad that Angie, of course, chose Central,” Blake said. “It’s like she redefined what’s fast for our team, which is awesome. Having her on the team, you could really see her have a bunch of teammates follow her example.”

Blake said that when Rafter was still on the team, he would meet with her weekly to talk about how she was feeling and her workout schedule to improve her running times.

According to Blake, Rafter’s drive to continuously improve herself and the team is one of the reasons why her athletic career is being taken to the professional level.

“She’s a very coachable athlete,” Blake said. “She was always shooting to do better in the next race. Even with a very



Photo: Twitter

successful result, she always wanted to race a little faster, and that’s what got her to such good heights at CCSU and now beyond.”

Hansons-Brooks ODP is stationed in Michigan, where post-collegiate long-distance runners train to compete nationally and internationally. Their resume includes multiple world championship qualifiers, four Olympic qualifiers, and an athlete who won the 2018 Boston Marathon.

According to the Hansons-Brooks website, their goal for runners is to make it to the Olympics and see how fast they become as individuals.

Rafter chose to sign with Hansons-Brooks ODP because their coaching staff and the women on the team were very welcoming during

her visit, which brought Rafter back to her time at Central, she said.

“It’s the team atmosphere that reminds me so much of home at CCSU,” Rafter said. “The team aspect is extremely important because I’m someone who thrives off of my teammates. When I did my visit, this felt like home and right to make this transition here.”

Once Rafter moves in and starts training with the team, she said she hopes to achieve faster running times and attempt to make her debut in the Olympics.

“The biggest goal right now is trying to get my 5K and 10K personal records down,” Rafter said. “The Olympics are coming, and my plan would be to try an Olympic trial qualifier in the marathon.”



## CCSU SPORTS SCHEDULE

### BASEBALL

May 5 @ Bryant  
May 6 vs. Bryant  
May 12 @ LIU  
May 13 @ LIU  
May 14 @ LIU

### SOFTBALL

May 11 NEC Tournament first round vs. LIU

### TRACK AND FIELD

May 6  
NEC Championships @ Merrimack

# Title IX Trailblazer Katherine Pirog Credits Mentors For Her Success

BY ANDREW DECAPUA  
Sports Editor

CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE

"I went to New Britain High School, and our then coach Joan Belmore, she actually was coaching three different sports to give us all an opportunity to play sports," Pirog said. "My journey into being an athletic trainer really comes from what Joan Belmore did by allowing us girls at the time to have the ability to play sports at New Britain High."

Another early influence on Pirog was legendary New Britain High track and field coach Irv Black who opened the weight room doors for female athletes at New Britain High.

"There was also a coach Irv Black at New Britain High who allowed the female athletes to go into a weight room in a time you weren't allowed in the weight room," she said. "My journey is possible because of the people who made the trail for us, and when I look at this award as a trailblazer, I have to give acknowledgment to the people who said there's the trail."

With all the influential leaders that showed her the way, she was able to pick up some leadership skills of her own.

Pirog is the heart and soul of Kaiser Hall's Carl F. Krein Athletic Training Facility, and she leads the athletic training educational program with poise and grace. She is



Photo: Andrew DeCapua

an integral part of the athletics department and a dedicated educator that inspires her staff and students.

Brandon Austin, a graduate assistant completing his master's in physical education, is one of Pirog's students and has been inspired by Pirog's devotion to her work and students.

"Kathy has inspired me as an athletic trainer in many ways. She is a great leader and has a great ton of experience," Austin said. "She is one of a kind in the sense that she teaches classes while being an active practitioner."

Austin said that Pirog's leadership style is fair and passionate. These are the exact qualities that the people who led Pirog on her path possessed.

"Kathy leads our

Sports Medicine department with passion and fairness. She cares about every one of us and is always available for help and to chat," Austin said. "She makes sure that we get the best opportunities to learn and enhance our skills."

Opportunities are surely something that Pirog is familiar with because she was able to accomplish great things by being a true pioneer for women in athletic training because of the opportunities that were provided to her by Title IX and her mentors, such as Belmore and Black.

Another influential figure that Pirog encountered on her trail was former CCSU head athletic trainer Carl Krein, for whom the athletic training facility is named.

Krein is responsible for sparking Pirog's interest

in athletic training as a career path while she was pursuing a physical education degree at CCSU in the early 1980s. He would continue to be a great mentor for Pirog throughout her career.

After graduating from Central in 1981, Pirog became Krein's first assistant athletic trainer in 1985. Immediately after being hired by then-athletic director Charles "C.J." Jones, she was assigned to work with the men's basketball team when women athletic trainers weren't typically working with men's athletics. Jones saw something in Pirog and was the one who opened the door for her.

"It is amazing how it all just transpires because of the people who allowed us into these venues and welcomed us to let us use our skills working

with athletes," Pirog said.

Pirog, who was mentored by so many during her journey, has become a mentor herself and has had several people who studied under her go on to become athletic trainers at colleges and high schools all across Connecticut.

"She has become a mentor for so many young men and young women to lead them into their profession," current athletic director Tom Pincince said. "They're everywhere; they're in local high schools throughout Connecticut, they're in local colleges throughout Connecticut."

Title IX is not only about giving opportunities to women in sports and athletics, but it is also much more far-reaching than that. It protects all students of any gender and provides equal educational opportunities for every student, regardless of gender or sexual orientation.

In a modern world where many people have lived their entire lives with the benefits of Title IX, it can go unnoticed. But behind the scenes, people like CCSU's Title IX coordinator Dr. Jill Bassett-Cameron work tirelessly to educate students and employees about Title IX.

"Title IX is only 50 years old and only applies to the United States, so it is not fair to say that people are aware of Title IX," Bassett-Cameron said. "That is why our goal is to educate all employees and students on their rights under Title IX. Continuous training and awareness programs are key."

