

The Recorder

May 5, 2022

Volume 132 | Issue 1

CCSU Vaccine Exemptions		
Faculty	Medical	6
	Non-Medical	49
Student	Medical	30
	Non-Medical	858

CCSU vaccine exemption according to a Freedom of Information Act request.

MADELINE WILSON

CCSU Sees Lowest Enrollment Numbers in Recorded History

BY MADELINE WILSON
 PHOTO EDITOR

Historically, Central Connecticut State enrollment has hovered at around 12,000 students, but after the COVID-19 pandemic, that number has dramatically dropped by 25%, according to the university's research.

Since 1975, CCSU's enrollment had never dropped below 11,400 until this semester, when there are only 8,898 students enrolled, according to its Semi-Annual Statistical Report.

Even before the pandemic, enrollment was declining, according to historic enrollment data from the university's Office of Institutional Research and Assessment. Between 2000 and 2018, fall enrollment averaged 12,186 students. Before the pandemic in the fall of 2019, that number was only 11,154 students. All of the figures include graduate students as well as undergraduates.

The 8,898 students enrolled at CCSU now are a fifth less than 2019's students and over a third less than the 2000-2018 average.

CCSU President Zulma Toro addressed the steep drop in enrollment at her open forum on Thursday and discussed what the university is doing to reverse the decline.

"We have established what we like to call the support blanket," she said.

That blanket consists of establishing a new First-Year Program to help restore the retention of first-time, first-year students and bolstering existing programs like financial aid, advising, counseling services, and residence hall living and learning communities.

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Almost 10% of CCSU Students Were Granted Non-Medical Exemptions From COVID-19 Vaccine Mandate

BY MADELINE WILSON
 PHOTO EDITOR

A total of 858 students, almost 10% of Central Connecticut State University's student body, were given non-medical exemptions to the COVID-19 vaccine mandate since it was imposed in 2021, according to a university response to a Freedom of Information Act request.

CCSU also gave 49 non-medical exemptions to faculty members, accounting for about 6% of those currently employed.

Chief Operations Officer Sal Cintonino said that CCSU chose not to reject nearly any medical or non-medical exemption requests.

"Those exemptions we recognized because we didn't have a way to dispute that, right," he said. "And because we could never force somebody...to be vaccinated

anyway."

Cintonino said that the university was sympathetic to students who wanted to make their own decisions and wouldn't force anyone to get the vaccine, especially before it was fully FDA approved.

In January, the Faculty Advisory Committee brought a resolution to the Board of Regents asking the university to require students to provide a written explanation for non-religious exemption requests. Thomas Burkholder, president of the Faculty Union and CCSU's AACP, said that the resolution was "ignored" by the Board of Regents.

The Faculty Senate discussed the same desire for students to provide written reasons for exemption requests in a meeting in December of 2021.

Fred Latour, President of the Faculty Senate, said that he hoped that if students had to provide a reason, it would allow CCSU to step in and educate

students based on their responses.

"The mission of central is to provide an education to students. Part of providing an education is to help people discern what a trustworthy source of information is," he said.

During the Senate's December meeting, Cintonino said the university was planning to fulfill the senate and FAC's request, but they were still working on criteria for the reasoning.

Latour believed that the university was hesitant to require written reasoning because it would indicate that they endorsed the reason behind every exemption they requested.

"They didn't want to be in the business of sorting out which would be a good reason and which would not," he said.

At this time, the university does not require written reasoning for non-medical exemptions.

\$22 Million Worth of CARES Act funds Awarded to CCSU Students

BY LOGAN ZDUN
 CONTRIBUTOR

Harley Jobbagy, a criminology major at Central Connecticut State University, said the \$1,900 in federal CARES Act funds helped her when she was switching jobs.

Otherwise, she said she might have dropped out of college.

"[The funds] helped to pay for my car," Jobbagy, of Terryville, said. "Not being able to have a car to get [to class], and with gas prices so high, it would've been hard."

As of April 1, 2022, \$22 million of CARES Act funds have been awarded to students, CCSU officials said.

CCSU spokeswoman Janice Palmer said that in the fall 2021 semester, 6,486 full-time students received an average of \$1,087.77 in federal funds. Another 2,744 part-time students received an average of \$448.01. During the spring 2022 semester, 5,821 full-time students

received an average of \$778.31, while 2,617 part-time students received an average of \$297.64, Palmer said.

In response to a Freedom of Information request, CCSU officials said \$23.2 million of the CARES Act money was used to make up for lost profit at the university during the pandemic.

CCSU even used \$22,350 of the funds to offer financial incentives for residential students to get vaccinated, CCSU records show. Palmer said the incentive was a way to reach herd immunity from COVID-19. "To ensure the health and safety of students and staff living in a communal setting, reaching herd immunity was a necessity," she said. "The university's CARES funding enabled the university to offer a \$50 housing credit to 447 COVID-immunized resident students."

CCSU allocated more than \$13.5 million to replace lost revenue from

sources including room, board and events, records show. Additionally, \$4.5 million was used as reimbursement for lost tuition, housing, room and board and other fees, the CARES Act breakdown provided by CCSU said.

Sal Cintonino, CCSU's chief operations officer, said CCSU is no longer running at a deficit, thanks to the federal funds. He added that federal funding for COVID testing has run out.

"The testing we're doing right now, we're finding a way to pay for that testing," he said.

Kimberly Kostelis, CCSU's interim provost, said the federal funds were a massive help for CCSU.

"We were thankful for that CARES money because we incurred some expenses that we had to put in place," she said. "[Such as] simulated learning labs that weren't previously needed."

Madison Nelson, a media film and

TV production major at CCSU from Stonington, Conn., said she used the CARES Act funds to help pay for living expenses.

"It was great to have extra money to pay my rent and use for gas," she said. "With inflation, everything is much more expensive, and money is very tight."

Nelson said she would have liked to receive more federal aid.

"As a college student, I am always working to pay my rent and expenses," she said. "[However,] I am grateful for what I was able to receive."

Brianna Norton, a political science major at CCSU from Bristol, Conn, said she has been making car payments with some of the money and saving some.

"I've just been saving it up, so when I do graduate, I don't have to pay as much out of my own pocket," she said.

Norton said the point of the money was to help students pay for college.

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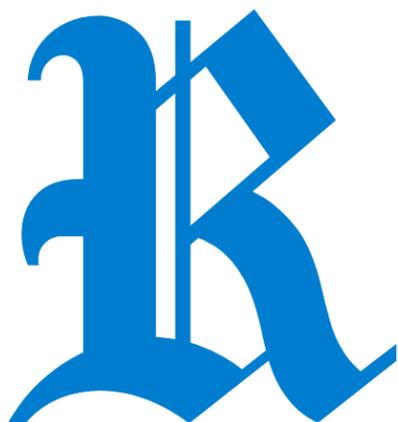
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CCSU Students Question Safety Despite “Conservative” COVID-19 Protocols

BY ALEXIS DASCHER
COPY EDITOR

Two years into the coronavirus pandemic, Maeve Maltese, a senior at Central Connecticut State University, said little effort had been made to disinfect the classrooms.

“This is extremely passive and should have been done when we were in the middle of a spike in numbers,” she said. “I had no choice but to attend class on campus.”

Some CCSU students said the school’s COVID-19 guidelines had protected them, while others said they are not safe on campus.

CCSU spent \$1.2 million to implement safety measures such as adding plexiglass and air purifications in classrooms, according to the university counsel’s office. The funds were reimbursed by the state using federal funds.

Maltese said the classrooms she is in are not socially distanced.

“There is about a two-foot distance between desks in library classrooms, which was the same spacing the school had before COVID,” she said.

On March 13, an informal Instagram poll of 24 students found that 71% of CCSU students who responded said they felt safe on campus and in classrooms while 29% did not.

Sal Cintorino, CCSU’s chief operations officer, said the university’s COVID response was backed up by science from the state Department of Public Health and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Preventions.

Everyone’s safety was paramount, he said.

“We had an in-depth amount of information from our campus community and took the science that was going on at the time to put together our mitigation plan,” he said.

“CCSU has been conservative in its response to COVID protocols, erring on the side of safety and health.”

- James Grupp, Director of Engineering Services

Cintorino said classrooms that did not have air circulation towards the front had plexiglass.

“If teachers wanted to clear their throat or get a sip of water, they would go behind the plexiglass,” he said.

James Grupp, the director of engineering services, said CCSU listened to students’ and faculty members’ requests to ensure classroom safety.

“CCSU has been conservative in its response to

COVID protocols, erring on the side of safety and health,” he said.

Grupp said CCSU had a three-foot social distance plan for the 2021-2022 academic year and tables had plexiglass when students could not be separated due to classroom size.

Senior Emily Kozon said the classrooms are socially distanced in different ways.

“The ones that may not have as much spacing have dividers between seats,” she said.

She said her class in Maria Sanford Hall has a plastic divider for the professor, but students are not distanced.

Interim Provost Kimberly Kostelis said she had received positive feedback on safety in the classrooms.

“All the classrooms were redone and focused on safety,” she said. Julia Conant, a senior, said she would still wear her mask even though the mandate was lifted on April 4.

“Even though I am vaccinated and have received the booster, I don’t trust every student at Central to be as cautious as they should be,” she said.

Conant said the classrooms are not spaced out enough. She said she constantly shifts her body to let students walk through the aisle.

Henry D. Altman, the university architect, said he followed guidelines from the CDC and the state when distancing classrooms.

“We looked at how students move in and out of a classroom,” he said. “We also looked at how the faculty and professors use classroom space.”

Altman said some classrooms on the lower level of the Vance Academic Center have fixed furniture designed for two students per desk, so it could not be moved. In those cases, he said, “We put up plexiglass between students, so they had a physical barrier, giving them the opportunity to distance.”

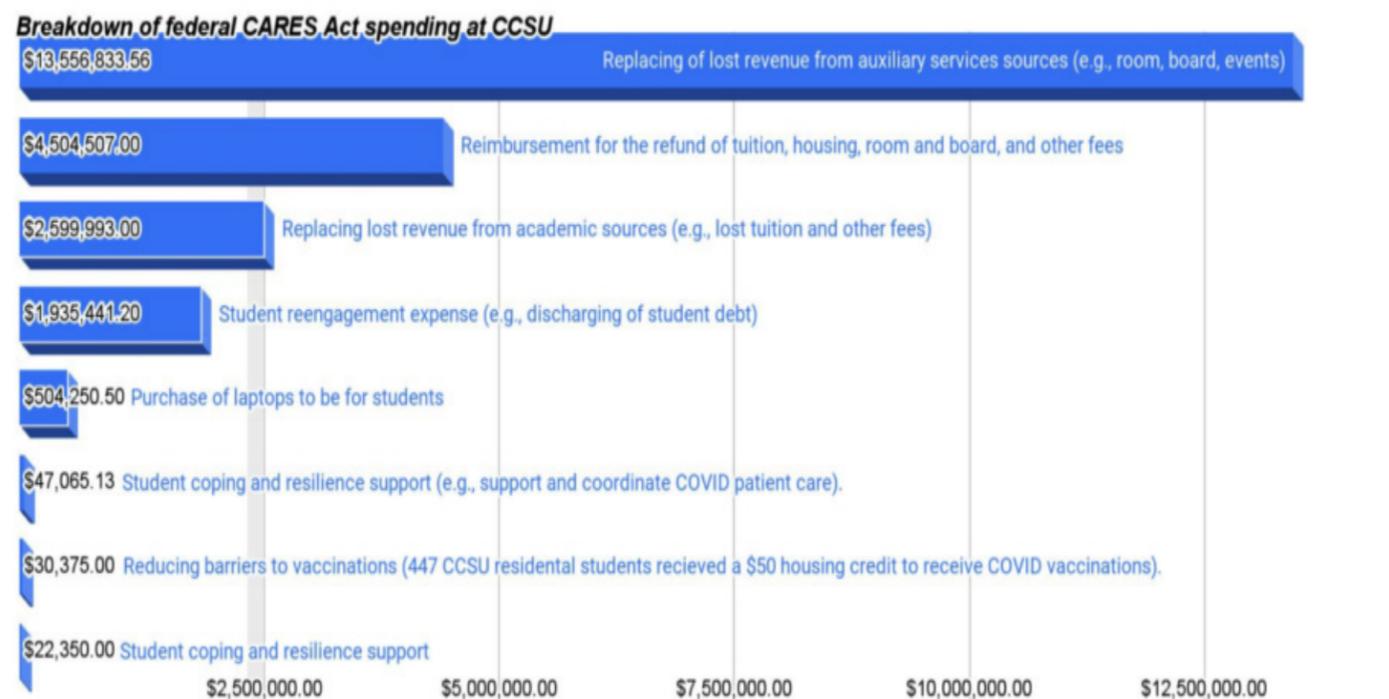
Altman said classrooms in Willard-DiLoreto all initially had spaced-out chairs, but the rooms went back to their typical set-up when CCSU reverted to the three-foot plan. Despite all that was done, some students and faculty are not comfortable in classrooms, Kostelis said.

“Regardless of what we could have done, they still would not have felt safe,” she said.

Madeline Wilson, Logan Zdu, and Kristin Rose contributed to this article.

\$22 Million Worth of CARES Act funds Awarded to CCSU Students

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1



Summary of CARES Act funds spent beyond the amounts awarded to students from the CARES Act Chart. CCSU

“I know not everyone is saving it up towards their loans or putting it towards school,” she said. “If they put it towards the school, I feel like everyone would have seen an improvement and not just select people who did receive the CARES Act funds.”

Jobbagy, a student from Terryville, Conn., said students

need more financial help.

“I feel like we didn’t get enough,” she said. “Tuition is too high, and we could have gotten more.”

Madeline Wilson, Alexis Dascher, and Kristin Rose contributed to this story.

CCSU Sees Lowest Enrollment Numbers in Recorded History

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But Toro acknowledged that the enrollment drop hurts the university.

"The fact is that enrollment decline is costly for us... It's costly," she said. "For every 500 full-time students that we lose, we are losing close to \$7 million [in revenue]."

According to its historical spending plan document, CCSU has already budgeted for higher expenses than revenues in 2022. The university has predicted spending \$5,501,789 more than the \$233,317,904 it expects to bring in. In 2019, CCSU made over \$10 million more in revenue.

According to past actual revenues, the decreased revenue comes entirely from the loss of 10% of the university's income from tuition and fees since 2019.

Toro said the university lost \$30 million in revenue from tuition and fees for 2022. Still, information obtained from CCSU officials through a Freedom of Information request shows that \$21 million in federal CARES Act funds helped offset losses in revenue from tuition, room, board, fees, events and other auxiliary services.

CCSU is predicting a \$16.6 million increase in expenditures this year, and Toro maintained that the university is financially stable.

"This year and next year, we seem to be in good financial footing," she said. "But what is important for me is to have long-term financial sustainability for the university."

The university has set goals for recruiting students back to campus, and Chief Operations Officer Sal Cintorino said that one of the university's top goals is to bring students back to residence halls.

According to CCSU's semi-annual report, since 2019, CCSU has housed 552 fewer students, a loss of over a quarter of the 2,179 residents on campus in the fall of 2019.

"We're trying to get back up to 2,000 in the [residence] halls," he said. "If we only bring in four or 500 students, we'll have financial

problems."

Cintorino said that the university is working to provide programs to help students who need extra support due to the pandemic and make coming back to CCSU more accessible.

"We've recognized how important it is," he said. "Right now, we are working diligently with recruitment and retention."

Ariel Wolfe, a former CCSU student who left during the pandemic, said that there wasn't anything CCSU could've done differently to have made her stay.

"Being at home for so long made me think about what I really wanted to do with my future and career path," she said.

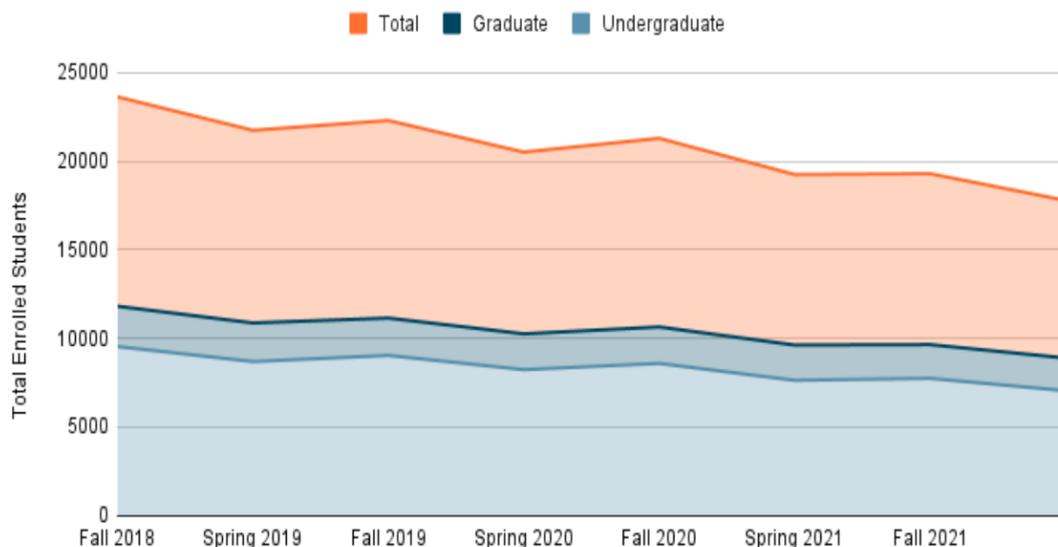
Wolfe left CCSU to pursue a full-time job as a bartender. She said she had fallen in love with the work while attending school online and knew she would be happier after deciding to do it as a career.

"I've been making enough money to sustain myself and more," she said. "It was a hard choice to drop out, but I think it was the best decision."

Public colleges and universities across the state have seen similar enrollment declines. In the last five years, enrollment has dropped by 22% in the Connecticut State Colleges and Universities system, including all four regional state universities and the community colleges.

At CCSU, the enrollment decline varies at each university's schools and colleges. According to OIRA data, from Fall of 2018 to Spring of 2022, the School of Education and Professional Studies' enrollment dropped the least, only by 19%. The School of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences decreased by 26%, and the School of Business decreased by 33%. The School of Engineering, Science and Technology's enrollment fell by 21%. Enrollment of students committed to no school or inter-school programs plummeted by 43%, losing almost half of those students.

CCSU Enrollment Through COVID-19



A chart of CCSU's enrollment through COVID-19.

The number of faculty members at CCSU has also dropped after the pandemic, but not enough to match the drop-in students. According to OIRA, in 2018, there were 977 full and part-time faculty members employed, and in 2022, there are only 828. This makes for a 15% drop in faculty members compared to the 25% drop in students.

This has boosted the student-to-faculty ratio from 15:1 to 14:1, longer functions as smoothly as it could or did in the past.

"This is my fourth year in the Senate," Zukowski said. "I've seen [the SGA] at full membership and full function, and right now, it's not."

Zukowski said that many of the SGA's committees have no chairs or vice-chairs, including the committee assigned to run the elections last week, whose initial chair and vice-chair resigned.

Much like Kuo, the Senator attributed some of the resignations to the new realities brought on by the pandemic.

"There are a lot of [difficulties] in the sense that we used to be able to promote with posters and conversation and be able to walk to the Department of Student Activities for help. Everything is online now,

which makes [communication] that much harder," Zukowski said.

In an effort to gain more members, Kuo, and others, suggested the SGA hold a special election in which there would be a major social media campaign to get students to run for office, which would include reaching out to other clubs, dorm directors and professors.

On a positive note, the club is attempting to move forward with a variety of social justice initiatives. These initiatives include a possible 3-D diversity sculpture mural on campus and sending CCSU students to a diversity inclusion conference to speak.

However, emblematic of the struggles the club has faced this semester, both members of the committee assigned to handle this, have resigned.

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CCSU OFFICE OF INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH AND ASSESSMENT

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Central Announces Support of Free Period Products

BY JESSICA BRAVO
CONTRIBUTOR

Central Connecticut State's Student Government Association (SGA) and the Ruthe Boyea Women's Center announced they are supporting a bill to provide students and staff with free menstrual hygiene products on campus.

The bill introduced by the Public Health Committee during the 2022 Legislative Session, HB 5272, would also provide menstrual hygiene products to others at various other places in Connecticut.

The bill would be funded under the Connecticut State Budget.

Haley Serrano, a CCSU student, said she hopes the bill passes.

"Pads and tampons are a necessary product for those with periods," she said. "It's not optional for us to have them."

SGA voiced their support of the bill in an email on April 27 to CCSU, a week before the final day of the 2022 Legislative Session.

It is expected to be voted on during the last week of the session.

According to the Alliance of Period Products, 1 in 8 women between the ages of 12 and 44 in Connecticut live below the Federal Poverty line.

In the United States, the Alliance of Period Products has estimated that 1 in 4 women struggle to purchase menstrual hygiene products due to lack of income.

In the email sent out by SGA, they said that this bill would help many different students who menstruate on

campus.

"Central Connecticut State University serves approximately 5,600 menstruating persons," the email said. "...this [the statistics] would indicate that more than 1,000 menstruating persons [on campus] are affected by menstrual poverty and lack of access to necessary products."

The Women's Center has also made a Change.org petition calling for free menstrual hygiene products on CCSU's campus if HB 5272 would not pass.

At this time, the petition has garnered 561 signatures.

Duku Nyarko, a Central student, said he wants to see menstrual hygiene products accessible for all students at CCSU.

"If condoms are provided for free [on campus], why aren't menstrual hygiene products free?" he said.

Central's Required College Wellness Course More Harmful Than Helpful

BY NICHOLAS JOHNSON
CONTRIBUTOR

Some Central Connecticut State students are concerned about a required College Wellness course, where they learn about sensitive topics and complete a nutrition analysis assignment that some say, triggers many students.

College Wellness is a required first-year class at CCSU. According to the catalog description, the course is designed to “promote all aspects of wellness as a vital sign of health.”

“This class may as well be called ‘trigger an eating disorder 110,’” Kristy McCartney, a sophomore, said. The 19-year-old thought the course material would instruct her to properly fuel her body while working out and maintaining a happy lifestyle, but she ultimately was “let down.”

McCartney has struggled with anorexia nervosa, bulimia, and body dysmorphia for about five years. She has researched her conditions and worked with dietitians and therapists for her disorders.

Dr. Peter Morano, the department chair of the Physical Education & Human Performance program, has been a faculty member of CCSU for 20 years and the department chair for the last two.

“We have data that show the class is beneficial to a majority of students who have taken it,” Morano said. He said the end-of-year surveys are never 100% but are “typically favorable” for the class.

Senior Sydney Lallier, a 23-year-old psychology major, said she was very interested in learning about the different mental disorders. However, once the course covered eating disorders, “I was able to identify my eating disorder immediately felt uncomfortable, insecure, and extremely aware of my own body and habits,” she said.

Morano made it clear that the eating disorder section “will not be removed.” He said that students should look at the

syllabus, and if students have concerns, they should “talk to their professors ahead of time.”

McCartney was left upset and uncomfortable in the class. “I felt my professor was uneducated when discussing eating disorders, and I didn’t feel she truly had a grasp on what an eating disorder was,” she said.

Morano said “there are no calorie counting assignments in PE 144, and we discourage that practice. Caloric conversions and food logs are not the same as calorie counting.” However, students must track their food for three days. Directly quoting from professor Susan Beckert’s fall 2021 nutritional assignment, students had to collect information like carbohydrate grams and protein grams at the top of the log. There is a category for “total calories.” Students are told to select a goal to either “lose, gain, or maintain weight.”

McCartney and Lallier are not the only students that have an issue with the triggering material the required class covers. Morano said there have been “two concerns previously” regarding the course. A male student also shared that they “purposely took a zero for that assignment,” Morano said.

“I thought that College Wellness was an important thing to learn, especially since I had no health class in high school,” Lallier said. However, as the class continued throughout the semester, “I found myself getting more and more insecure with my own body,” she said.

Lallier was diagnosed with bulimia prior to the food logging assignment and did feel impacted by the assignment.

In regards to the nutrition analysis assignment, Lallier said, “I found myself lying and making up ‘healthier’ meals on the paperwork because I felt insecure about my food intake, or I would avoid eating anything at all because I was now so aware of the calories and nutrition facts on my food.”

Students are instructed to use MyFitnessPal for the food logging assignment. Lallier and McCartney felt uncomfortable using the app. “At one point, I was losing five pounds per week,

and getting physically sick, such as fainting from not eating. It was only after my parents’ intervention that I stopped using the app,” Lallier said. Morano said students should address their concerns about the app with their professor.

Lallier shared a broader perspective on the dangers of food logging. She said she works at a rehabilitation facility for teens that struggle with eating disorders. They have to monitor their patient’s food and water intake every day. “When a client had found the food logs, which they were not supposed to know about, they refused to eat for the remainder of their residential stay,” she shared.

Lallier and McCartney both feel it is vital to have a College Wellness course, but alternate assignments should be available to avoid “triggering” students. Morano said if students feel uncomfortable with an assignment, they should talk to their professor and be offered another assignment.

McCartney asked for a chance to do another assignment instead of the analysis one. “My professor said tracking my food intake should ‘be part of my recovery process,’ showing her ignorance but, allowed me to track my sister’s food intake instead- regardless. This was not a helpful alternative and was rather triggering,” she said.

Because College Wellness is a general education course, Morano said, “professors with wide backgrounds are teaching. Some are stronger in the nutritional aspect than others.”

This did not seem fair to McCartney. “I believe if College Wellness is going to be a required course, the professors should be better educated, particularly in the area of eating disorders.” Being told tracking her food should be part of her recovery process “makes me sick to my stomach,” she said.

The author, Nicholas Johnson, took the class in the fall of 2021 with Susan Beckert. When asked to interview she did not respond back.

Russia-Ukraine War: A Perspective From Ukrainian New Britain Residents



Rev. Andrii Pokotylo has been serving St. Mary's Ukrainian Orthodox Church on 54 Winter St. in New Britain since 2009.

MELODY RIVERA

BY MELODY RIVERA
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Ukrainian New Britain residents said the past few weeks have been very difficult and scary due to Russia's ongoing war against Ukraine.

“I’m feeling useless by not being able to help while being so far away from my country,” said Lyubomyra “Luba” Ivasyuk, the owner of New Britain House of Pizza. “I’m feeling upset that in the 21st century, the world cannot have peace and that world leaders can’t sit down and talk; instead, they choose violence.”

Ivasyuk said she has lived in Connecticut since August 2001 and usually visits her family in Ukraine once a year. This year, she is uncertain if that will happen.

“I feel scared for my family and friends that are in Ukraine. I feel scared that I might not have a country to go back to,” Ivasyuk said.

The majority of Ivasyuk’s family lives in Western Ukraine, but said she has two nephews who “live three hours away from Kyiv,” where the bomb and missile attacks took place on Feb. 24.

The Rev. Andrii Pokotylo of St. Mary’s Ukrainian Orthodox Church said he is unsure if he will see his family in Ukraine again.

“Last time I visited Ukraine was before the pandemic,” Pokotylo said. “I told my mom ‘I’m not sure if I will see you again.’”

Pokotylo said he wanted his mother, along with the rest of his family living in Ukraine, to come live in New Britain with him, his wife, and his son, but they refused.

“Anything can happen, but my parents said they want to be buried in Ukrainian soil,” he said. “We tried to convince them to come here, but they said ‘no, we’re staying.’”

Pokotylo was born in the Lviv region of Ukraine when the Soviet Union ruled it. In 1990, the last year the country was under the Soviet Union’s rule, Pokotylo decided to pursue religious education, but he said it “wasn’t popular at the time.”

According to National World, Ukraine gained independence from the Soviet Union on Aug. 24, 1991. A few years later, Pokotylo moved to the United States in 1996 and has lived in New Britain since 2009.

Ukraine’s independence is a core factor behind Russian President Vladimir Putin’s attack on the country as he said it was illegitimate.

According to Vox, Putin said, “the disintegration of our united country was brought about by the historic, strategic mistakes on part of Bolshevik and Soviet leaders... the collapse of the historical Russia known as the USSR is on their conscience.”

Putin also said that if Ukraine joins the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), this will serve as a basis for a possible American attack on Russia.

Pokotylo said he was against Putin and denounced communist propaganda. He had experienced being told false information in Soviet Ukraine.

“They always had to blame somebody for their failures,” he said. “Putin believes that if Ukraine joins NATO, that NATO will attack Russia, but we wouldn’t need to do that.”

Ivasyuk also said it’s important for people

to get their information regarding Ukraine and Russia from “the right sources because Russia sends out a lot of disinformation.”

Although the war between Ukraine and Russia continues, both Ivasyuk and Pokotylo said there’s hope for a promising future for Ukraine.

“Once Ukraine defeats Russia, and I’m 100 percent sure we will, Ukraine will blossom, rebuild its cities, and many Ukrainian citizens will get to return home,” Ivasyuk said.

Pokotylo said even if the worst-case scenario happens, there’s one thing Putin can’t take away from Ukrainian residents.

“I think their best defense is the will of their people,” Pokotylo said. “I think if Russia ever occupies Ukraine, [Putin] will never have peace because Ukrainians won’t stop fighting; it would be another Afghanistan War.”

St. Mary’s Ukrainian Orthodox Church in New Britain has partnered up with the Ukrainian National Home of Hartford. This non-profit organization has collected medical supplies and other essential donations to help Ukraine citizens.

“I went to help send diapers since many children are in need because them and their mothers ran away from the bombings,” Pokotylo said.

Central Connecticut State President Zulma Toro mentioned the Ukrainian National Home of Hartford in an email she sent to the student body on March 7 as one of the many ways CCSU students and faculty can help support the people of Ukraine.

For more information on how you can support Ukrainian citizens locally, visit <http://ukrainiannationalhome.org/>

Inside Beecher Hall: Isolation Creates Anxiety for CCSU Students

BY SOPHIA MUCE
NEWS EDITOR

Catharine Beecher Hall serves as the isolation hub at Central Connecticut State University for students who test positive for COVID-19. Many college students in isolation experience heightened mental health issues, but CCSU staff have created programs in an attempt to help.

A study by Mental Health America found that 8 in 10 people reported moderate to severe symptoms of depression and anxiety in 2020. Among those people, 70 percent said loneliness/isolation was one of the top three contributors to their mental health. Students in Beecher Hall cannot attend their classes in person or leave until approved by staff, so many end up feeling lonely and isolated.

Rachel Davis, a freshman at CCSU, was left with mixed feelings after staying at Beecher Hall this semester. Davis said that she tested positive for COVID-19 on a Sunday evening. She said she was given a “couple minutes” to go back to her dorm and was told to pack the necessities. She stayed in Beecher Hall until that coming Friday - a total of 5 days.

Davis said that the dorms in Beecher Hall were “tiny” compared to her room in Robert Sheridan Hall. She said she could not leave isolation until she tested negative for COVID-19, so she spent most of the time in her assigned dorm. “It’s kind of just the same thing every day.”

Davis said she saw a couple of other students during her stay, but staff tried to keep interaction to a minimum. “They didn’t really want you to talk to other people because if you were getting better and that person was still worse, you could get sick again,” she said.

The Center for Disease Control and Prevention said that those who have recovered after COVID-19 would have “some protection from repeat infections,” but reinfections can still occur.

A study on the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the mental health of first-year college students by Jane Cooley Fruehwirth, a professor at the University of North Carolina, found that social isolation caused an increase in both anxiety and depression symptoms in students. Davis is no different. “It does get kind of depressing,” she said. “The only view I had was like the entrance of James and Barrows Hall, so that’s all you look at, and you see everybody else walking by.”

She said she missed going to classes, Devil’s Den, and seeing her coworkers and friends. Social isolation mixed with intense COVID-19 symptoms led to a loss in motivation for Davis. “I was spending most of the day sleeping, so I felt like ‘I’m still way too tired to do work,’” she said.

While she felt lonely, Davis said the staff at Beecher Hall were kind and helpful. They gave her a list of all the rules for her isolation regulations upon arrival, provided her with a QR code to order food for the following day, and gave her the phone numbers of various campus resources to call if she needed help.

Michael Russo, the Director of Counseling and Student Development at CCSU, reaches out to the students in Beecher Hall for counseling.

“We do check in with students when they’re there just to see how they’re doing, usually within 24 hours of going in,” Russo said. “We’ll reach out and ask them how they’re doing.”



CCSU students who are isolated in Beecher Hall can stay up to 10 days.

SOPHIA MUCE

I ask them specifically if they’re interested in talking with a counselor to address any issues.”

The Counseling Center comprises a team of five full-time clinicians and several part-time counselors, and Russo does all of the clinical supervision. Russo said he had seen a significant increase in students seeking counseling since the pandemic; by the end of the fall 2021 semester, the Counseling Center had served 4% more students than the entire 2020-2021 academic year. “It was very busy, and we’re seeing a very, very busy start to the semester as well,” he said. A survey by Inside Higher Ed and College Pulse found that only 15 percent of students used college-offered counseling in 2021, so the increase in CCSU students seeking help is somewhat uncommon.

Russo has seen an increase in anxiety and depression in students since the start of the pandemic. Those in Beecher Hall are no exception; while he said most students in isolation are “handling it pretty well,” some have difficulties adjusting. “It’s very difficult, I think, for our students not to have interaction with their peers and not to be able to attend class in the way that they’re accustomed to,” Russo said.

Russo said that he understands that additional challenges in isolation take a toll on mental health, which is why the Counseling Center has been reaching out proactively. He said that clinicians could see students through Telehealth, a tool to provide health services from a distance and get connected quickly.

Russo said he was pleased with CCSU’s mental health support during the COVID-19

pandemic. “The university has really been a champion of addressing students’ mental health needs, and I think we’re very fortunate to have that type of support from the university’s administration.”

Dr. John Tully, Interim Vice President of Student Affairs, said that Student Affairs created the isolation hall to ensure that COVID-19 positive students get the care they need and keep the campus community safe and healthy. He said that Beecher Hall saw a rise of students in isolation in the first couple of weeks; according to the CCSU COVID Weekly Dashboard, there were ten students in isolation for the week of Jan. 24, 10 students for the week of Jan. 31, and no students as of Feb. 7.

Tully said that isolated students are physically okay, but some struggle with their mental health. “Our students are doing really well,” he said. “We haven’t had any hospitalizations, but we read about the statistics, and it can cause anxiety.”

He said a combination of testing positive for COVID-19, worrying about missed classes, and a lack of social interaction leaves students in isolation, feeling anxious. “Your normal support of hanging out with your roommate or going out to dinner or hanging out in class - all of that’s kind of gone,” Tully said.

Student Affairs has taken steps to help students through isolation. Tully said they have counselors reach out to those in Beecher, bring them food from Memorial Hall, and are in the process of creating welcome baskets. He said that the wellbeing of students in isolation had been a “major concern,” and Student Affairs is trying to make their experience better.



Female students stay in the dorms on the first floor of Beecher Hall, pictured above. Male students stay on the third floor.

SOPHIA MUCE

Macron Wins Presidential Election in France

BY LUCAS PAULUK
CONTRIBUTOR

French President Emmanuel Macron won the runoff election on Sunday, confirming his re-election to the French presidency against Marine Le Pen.

Macron, the current president of France, was declared the victor of the French presidential elections after the second round of elections on April 24. He won 58.54% of the national vote, cementing his re-election as president of France for the 2022-2027 term.

Macron is a member and the founder of La République En Marche, a central-liberal party in France. Macron himself is known for more centrist views, even when he was a member of the French Socialist Party. Central Connecticut State University professor Trevor Allen said that this stance may have helped him win the election.

“Macron, because he wasn’t affiliated with the

traditional party apparatus, didn’t have a huge amount of baggage,” Allen said. “Macron is much more pro-Europe, pro-NATO. Really important in the context of the ongoing war in Ukraine.”

His main opponent, Marine Le Pen, is a member of Rassemblement National, a growing far-right movement in the European country. Le Pen has been coming under heavy criticism in the weeks leading up to the election, mainly regarding her previous praise of Vladimir Putin before the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

Le Pen has also been criticized for her proposed ban on Muslims wearing hijabs in public, a move which has received criticism from across Europe.

“I do think people should be concerned, or not concerned even, just generally pay attention to events unfolding in Europe,” Allen said. “I think a lot of the sort of social anxieties and unrest that might produce something like Trump were evident in Europe decades before they

were evident here.”

Macron has also received criticism for his stances on immigration and foreign policy, though his voters appreciated his pro-Europe and pro-NATO views. He did not receive an outright majority of votes in the first round of elections on April 10, which led to the second round on April 24 against Le Pen.

Macron also received fewer votes than he did against Le Pen during France’s last presidential election in 2017. He won that year with 66.1% of the vote, which is almost 10% more than what he won this year.

“I think he won as a sort of lesser of two evils candidate rather than because he was widely perceived as being a super effective president,” Allen said.

The legislative elections for France will be held this June, and Le Pen’s voters seem poised to take seats in the Senate to make up for the loss of the presidency.

Wave of CCSU Faculty Retirements to Come as New Contract Takes Effect



Aerial view Memorial Welte Davidson.

CCSU

BY SOPHIA MUCE
NEWS EDITOR

As the State Employees Bargaining Agent Coalition agreement decided in 2017 goes into effect July 1, many faculty members at Central Connecticut State University are planning to retire.

Dr. Thomas Burkholder, president of the faculty union, CCSU-AAUP, and professor of chemistry, said that approximately 36 CCSU faculty members had turned retirement paperwork into HR, on top of retirements in 2020 and 2021 due to the looming changes and COVID-19.

Burkholder said that July will bring changes to cost of living adjustments, retiree health care, and more for faculty who retire until 2027; the minimum cost of living adjustment will be removed, and those who are not eligible for Medicare will have a 5% surcharge on their retiree health care. He said that many faculty members are retiring now to retain the “slightly better” benefits specified in the 2011 SEBAC contract.

He said the changes were made to “make sure that the state doesn’t run out of money with retirement and health insurance benefits in the long run.”

“In the grand scheme of things, it’s probably not going to make much difference to somebody who’s going to work for another ten years,” Burkholder said. “To somebody who is like, ‘I could retire today, or I could retire next year,’ it makes

a difference. So they’re going to choose now rather than later.”

Dr. Kimberly Kostelis, Interim Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs, said she attributes the wave of retirements to the contract change but thinks “our environment of COVID and exhaustion also play a small part.”

According to Kostelis, faculty retirements have risen since 2020 but are increasing significantly this year. She said that Academic Affairs has been working with the deans since the fall semester of 2021 to fill vacancies in the academic departments.

She has tried to make sure all deans are aware of vacancies at other academic schools. “If I say, ‘we can’t fill this position right now because we need to fill over here first,’ we’re all on the same page,” Kostelis said. “As much as the deans are running the individual schools, we’re collectively working together as a university.”

Since the fall semester, Kostelis said Academic Affairs has been going through large rounds of faculty requests and filling them. “I have had a plan, and we’re still kind of putting some things in motion,” she said.

Kostelis said she anticipated another round of faculty requests after priority registration. “Even since the last time we did the faculty requests, there’s been more retirements,” she said.

She said Academic Affairs has been actively searching for new faculty as current staff file their retirement paperwork.

“Even if they were hired today, their contract won’t start until mid to end of August,” she said. “That’s why I wanted to try to

get out in front of this as much as possible in the fall... I didn’t want to end up having to hire a bunch of people in the summer.”

In addition to hiring new staff, she said Academic Affairs is “thinking differently” about positions. For example, they recently approved a new job that would support both the Political Science and Philosophy Departments.

Kostelis said that students shouldn’t be concerned about the wave of retirements as the current staff is helping to hire new faculty.

“Our retiring colleagues are very passionate about CCSU, so I know many are very passionate about wanting to make sure they leave their programs and their students in good hands,” she said.

Dr. Paul Resetaris, a professor of manufacturing and construction management, is retiring this summer after a 38-year career at CCSU but plans to continue teaching a course “here or there.”

“I think it’s a win-win situation for the department, students, and myself,” he said.

Resetaris said that retiring is “bittersweet” as CCSU became a home for him and he enjoys working with students. Still, the changes in benefits are “significant enough” for him to retire.

He said COVID-19 wasn’t a factor in his decision and attributed it solely to the SEBAC contract. “I may have stayed longer if it wasn’t for these changes in benefits, but financially, it was maybe a disincentive,” Resetaris said.

Chronicles from the American Homeless

BY SOPHIA MUCE
NEWS EDITOR

I’d never had a conversation with a homeless person. In all honesty, I was afraid to. They could be dangerous. They may use the money I give them for drugs. They should look for a job instead. In reality, I knew nothing about what being homeless meant and how people got to that place. I wanted to educate myself and find out how I could help the homeless population in New Britain.

“Why don’t homeless people work at low-wage, entry-level jobs, which should help them get over their homelessness?” - anonymous Quora.com user

Brandon Brown is a proud father to his three children, a devoted husband, an apartment maintenance worker, and homeless. For the last three months, the paychecks he picked up at the end of his 50 hour work weeks funded trips to Wendys and hotel rates. His family is now squatting in a vacant apartment owned by his employers.

When Brown signed onto his job building low income housing, his employers were aware that he was homeless. He hoped that the consistent income and a bit of help from the company would secure his spot in one of the apartments he built.

“I’ve specifically said I don’t want to take away from somebody, you know? But at the same time, at this point, something’s got to be done,” Brown sighed.

I should clarify. According to Brown himself, he is not technically homeless; he just doesn’t have a home. Because he makes enough to pay for a hotel room, the Colorado state government does not consider him homeless. He reached out to different governmental organizations and saw money from Temporary Assistance for Needy Families and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, but because he is employed, the benefits ran out.

“I said, ‘well, at this point, I’m literally

squatting in a vacant apartment. So, does that qualify me for homeless?”

“No, unfortunately.”

I said, ‘okay. Well, thank you very much. Going back to work now.’”

He was sick of pouring his paychecks into hotel rooms. He wants a consistent place to shower. He wants a stove to cook dinner. He wants an address so his children can register for library cards. When his work days come to an end, he wants to go home.

Studies by the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness showed that on a single night in 2020, more than 580,000 people across the country experienced homelessness. The amount of homeless people in America has steadily increased for the last 4 years, but for the first time since the data collection began, the number of unsheltered families is up. Brown, his wife, and his children are among the 90% of homeless families who have found shelter.

Brown seemed the happiest talking about his children. His 18-year-old son, 16-year-old daughter, and 11-year-old daughter keep a positive attitude. “They are amazing,” Brown says, smiling into the phone. “I won’t say it’s been, you know, a walk in the park. But there’s been moments where they’ve just really shone through with their resourcefulness. Like wow! Who taught you that?” he laughs.

Most have their own perception of what homelessness looks like, but it is impossible to put it into a single box. It is a spectrum. Some sleep on the streets. Some frequent local

shelters. Some battle addictions. Some work. Some are young. Some are old. I wanted to get the stories of people all across this spectrum to get a better understanding of what homelessness in America looks like, so I posted on Reddit to reach out to others like Brown.

“Why don’t homeless people just go stay with their families?” - anonymous Quora.com user

His freshman year of high school, Ethan Christy, an 18-year-old originally from Michigan, went to his principal and told him about his abusive household: his parents were alcoholics in a rocky relationship, ending in three divorces and multiple evictions. His father had guns in the home, and would walk around pointing them at his family while Christy’s mother sat idly by.

This wasn’t his first time asking for help. He reached out to Child Protective Service numerous times to talk about his parents before turning to his principal. According to Christy, Michigan CPS has a reputation for being unhelpful. “I had been in contact with them like five times,” he says. “Ended up not working out.”

That day, he asked the principal if he could participate in a program that allowed disadvantaged students to graduate early. Christy said his principal thought it “wouldn’t be a good choice.”

“So I was like, ‘okay, I’m just not going to

go to school.”

At the age of 15, Christy dropped out of high school and left home. In the summer, he drove to his two jobs on a moped. When he couldn’t find a friend’s couch to sleep on, he took to park benches. By the age of 16, he saved enough money to buy a car and slept in various parking lots on cold winter nights.

“Sleeping in the car when it’s negative 13 [degrees] outside is not fun,” Christy says. He poured his money into drugs. He was drinking, smoking, taking pills, and ingesting cocaine. It was difficult enough for him to find a place to stay as a minor, but now he was running out of funds.

His cold, drug-filled nights in parking lots came to an end after a phone call from a friend. She had just been released from the ICU after overdosing on the same pills Christy was taking. “That was the only thing that kind of sobered me up,” he says.

He drove down to Tampa, Florida in June where he slept in a Walmart parking lot and showered at the gym across the street. With a sober mindset and two new jobs, he finally saved up enough money to rent an apartment and begin his new life.

CCSU President Dr. Zulma R Toro said if students want to help the community, they should contact Jessica Hernandez at the Office of Community Engagement.

For the full story, visit our website at CentralRecorder.org

SPOTIFY SCANDAL: Bigger Than Joe Rogan

BY DAMIAN MARTIN
CONTRIBUTOR

Over the course of January's final days, Spotify and Joe Rogan became the center of controversy for several weeks to come.

Rogan is the former host of "Fear Factor," a comedian, an actor, and a commentator for UFC. He hosts one of the most popular podcasts, appropriately titled "The Joe Rogan Experience" on Spotify, the world's largest music streaming platform.

Rogan joined Spotify in 2020 on a multi-year deal to diversify the platform, which is mainly used for streaming music. Although the podcast has been thriving since the mid-2000s, it was the first time operating under an exclusive license. The deal was first estimated to be approximately \$100 million, but now the New York Times is reporting its value has doubled.

On average, Rogan sees around 11 million views per episode, appealing to a primarily conservative white male audience. The episodes feature interview-like discussions ranging from combat sports, wellness, and narcotics to odd conspiracy theories and questionable politics. Some noteworthy guests are Gavin McInnes, the founder of Proud Boys, and Alex Jones, a far-right conspiracy theorist. Needless to say, Rogan has a past of controversial remarks, so it shouldn't be a shocker that his name is back in the headlines, this time alongside the equally controversial Spotify.

On Jan. 12, Rolling Stone magazine reported that 270 medical experts signed an open letter directed at Spotify after Rogan brought up COVID-19 misconceptions during an episode with Dr. Robert Malone, who is notorious for making false claims about COVID-19.

In support of that open letter, legendary folk-rock musician, protest songwriter, and polio survivor Neil Young penned a letter of his own which has been archived, demanding his music be taken off Spotify. Young made his frustrations clear about the company's decision to broadcast dangerous misinformation during a pandemic. "You can have Rogan or Young. Not both," he said. As a result, Young's appeal rippled across the industry as contemporaries like Joni Mitchell and Crosby, Stills & Nash withdrew their catalogs. Eventually, Spotify responded by implementing content advisories for COVID-19-related episodes. A hub of fact-checked information would be provided in the advisory.

It was hoped that the controversy would be resolved there, but a video surfaced days later showing the many times Rogan used racial slurs on his podcast, causing other artists, including India Arie, to speak up against Spotify. On "The Daily Show," hosted by Trevor Noah, the Grammy-winner voiced her opinion on the matter. She believes that the issue is more significant than Rogan; to her, and many other artists, the focus should be on the mistreatment and underpayment of artists enabled through systemic oppression. In addition to that, Trevor Noah said Rogan was "using racism to be entertaining."

Rogan is an adult. The man knows what he says is racist, misogynistic, misinformative, etc., but he still gets away with it because he's a "comedian" who knows how to get a reaction from his audience. All this aside, Spotify CEO Daniel Ek said he will not change their platform "based on one creator," despite admitting that Rogan's podcast contains "very offensive" material. So as Rogan sits on a comfortable \$200 million to spew out misinformation and racial obscenities, artists make less than a cent per stream. Their protests are entirely justifiable, but how significant will they be? Young and Mitchell are already well-established musicians, so they can live without Spotify, but many of these younger artists need those streams. More people are streaming music rather than buying it in this day and age. It is becoming harder to survive solely off stream in the long run. So the question is, who is going to step up and advocate for not only themselves but the mistreatment of artists in the music industry? This story is still writing itself, so only time will tell.

Editor's Column: We're Back...in Print



BY MELODY RIVERA
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

As you pick up this issue of The Recorder, there are probably many thoughts running through your mind. Maybe you're saying, "it's about time!" Or "wow, I didn't know The Recorder was active." Perhaps you have some questions like "where has The Recorder been?" Or "what took so long?"

Allow me to explain everything the best I possibly can. Like other organizations at CCSU or anywhere else globally, COVID-19 has been a menace and caused many issues for us. We've been meeting virtually on Microsoft Teams for two years and lost the majority of our staff. In the past couple of months, The Recorder has barely been able to survive and publish articles online under a constantly changing Editor-in-Chief; there were three Editors-in-Chief in the fall 2021 semester alone. Just when The Recorder was getting more student writers and staff, the former Editor-in-Chief resigned in Feb. 2022. This caused the delay of one of our online issues, and everyone involved was confused about when their work would be published and who would be the next Editor-in-Chief, mainly because there was a high reluctance for anyone to step up. This is where I come into this story.

For those who may not know who I am, I'm a senior journalism student who's graduating in May, 2022. I've been writing on and off for The Recorder since my first semester at CCSU, Fall 2018. I attempted to run for leadership positions early on in my college experience, but I was unsuccessful. So it wasn't until last semester that I secured the position as The Recorder's Social Media Manager for Instagram (something that I've continued to help with).

When the previous Editor-in-Chief resigned, I was shocked and contemplated if I should step up to be the next one to receive the torch. But, like everyone else on The Recorder staff, I was hesitant because this was a huge responsibility. As someone who was also in charge of two other clubs, the Autism Connection Club and Best Buddies, and many other obligations along with wrapping up my

studies, I thought I couldn't handle leading the paper. This was until I realized and was motivated by something very important.

I noticed in my senior year, especially, that I've gained so much support from my journalism professors and colleagues. I was repeatedly complimented on my assignments and my work ethic, as I get things done on time with good quality. It's because of this that many encouraged me to be Editor-in-Chief.

"Melody, you're literally the best journalist out of all of us," Samuel Pappas, a senior journalism student said.

Even Dr. Vivian Martin, the chair of the Journalism Department, recommended I step up and told me to "not sell yourself short." With all this support in mind, I made the decision to be Editor-in-Chief for the rest of spring 2022. I've learned so many skills in a short amount of time, including how to upload and publish articles on The Recorder's website and categorize stories. I've also recruited more writers and got a few new staff to help the paper be more active, even if we were exclusively online for most of the semester.

Editing all these articles and working on more stories than I've ever done before has been a lot of work, and I'd be dishonest if I said this was easy; we're still finding our way and are still in need of a Layout Editor along with other staff positions to ensure The Recorder will consistently have print issues in the future.

However, once again, with all the support I've received from The Recorder staff, writers, faculty, and other journalism students, I've been able to accomplish many things that seemed nearly impossible back in February. This, of course, includes The Recorder's first print issue in two years.

"You should be so proud of all you're accomplishing," Alexis Dascher, a rising junior journalism student, said.

To the future Editor-in-Chief and anyone who aspires to be a leader in any career field: always put your best efforts into whatever it is you're doing. If you ever feel lost or don't know how to progress, please reach out to others so they can assist you, no matter how nervous and uncomfortable you may be. I've struggled with advocating for myself throughout my life, but you'd be surprised how many kind people are out there willing to help you.

I can't say enough how much I couldn't have done all this without the majority of the CCSU community, especially those within the journalism department. If there's something I've learned in my entire experience pursuing my education at this university, it's that hard work is rewarding, but it feels even better when you have a robust support system. As an autistic woman who's struggled with my social life and sometimes my confidence, I'm humbled to receive recognition for something passionate about. Although my time as Editor-in-Chief was short and a part of me wishes I can continue this role, this experience has been enjoyable and rewarding for me. Thank you to everyone who believed in me.

"Instagram Face:" The Unrealistic Beauty Standards of Social Media Filters

BY GRACE WOZNICKI
OPINION EDITOR

Filters on Snapchat and Instagram photos and videos have created a new set of mental health threats for social media users.

Filters began as an innocent source of entertainment for users when they were first released. From the iconic dog filter on Snapchat to a flower crown filter on Instagram, many social media apps offer users the opportunity to make themselves look vastly different from what they look like in real life.

Recently, the online community has become hypercritical of the physical appearance of themselves and others.

Instagram and Snapchat filters have contributed significantly to this obsession and the self-esteem issues that come with it.

According to a study conducted by the American Academy of Facial and Reconstructive Surgery, surgeons have observed a 30% increase in patients that have expressed a

desire to "improve their image on social media."

Better known as "Snapchat dysmorphia," users seek out professional surgery to achieve the exact version of themselves that appears in a filter.

Unlike before, filter users can become a version of themselves that is unrealistic and can lead to them being incredibly self-conscious of their physical appearances.

With some of the most popular filters named "Natural Beauty," "Pretty Face," and "Clear Skin," users are forced to compare what they "could be" to their genuine and authentic "Natural Beauty." The issue has recently shifted from users longing to look like their favorite celebrities to users constantly trying to measure up to the "idealistic" version of themselves.

A simple retouching of a blemish on one's skin or teeth whitening may sound harmless. Still, the beauty standard that these filters have created has become exceedingly narrow and provides unnecessary and excessive changes.

According to an interview conducted by Forbes, psychiatrist Helen Egger said that the overall beauty standard has become known as "Instagram Face," which is "characterized by high cheekbones, poreless skin, cat-like eyes, and plump lips."

"It doesn't support individuality; it supports conformity with the standard of beauty," Egger said.

Even when I felt my most confident, I would log onto Snapchat and flip to my favorite filter. What's a bit enhanced beauty, anyways? Such minor enhancements led to massive insecurities and doubts. The satisfaction with myself was

never enough.

I started to pick apart my facial features one by one. With makeup, I began trying to change the shape of my lips or reduce the size of my nose. Before using filters on social media, I had never even considered changing those traits about myself.

If we all looked the way Snapchat and Instagram filters made us look, there would be no way for us to stand out from others and truly express ourselves with our natural appearances.

Now more than ever, we must remind each other of the beauty of individuality and continue working towards accepting an unfiltered version of ourselves.



Filters have proven to alter facial features on an individual based on the "idealized beauty standard." MAMMAMIA

Court is in Session: Johnny Depp v. Amber Heard

BY GRACE WOZNICKI
OPINION EDITOR

In recent weeks, Johnny Depp, 58, and Amber Heard, 36, have taken hold of the public and become the top story for news outlets around the world. With each day bringing to light new details and fresh evidence, it is virtually impossible to stay up to date on the trial.

Depp and Heard's decade-long relationship ended in 2018, but the battle between the two is nowhere near over.

An op-ed article written by Heard and published by The Washington Post in 2018 has created extreme tension between the two and resulted in Depp suing Heard for \$50 million in damages for defamation.

According to NBC News, Heard claimed, "During the entirety of our relationship, Johnny Depp has been verbally and physically abusive to me," Heard said in a sworn declaration. "He has a short fuse. He is often paranoid and his temper is exceptionally scary for me."

NBC News outlined that Heard went on to write how she lived "in fear that Johnny will return to [our house] unannounced to terrorize me, physically and emotionally."

Heard's 2018 article for The Washington Post claimed that she was a "public figure representing domestic abuse." Without ever mentioning Depp's name, Heard went on to mention how she had been forced to deal with abuse which began in her childhood and followed her up to adulthood. Depp's name was not needed to line up the details described in the article to the exact timeline of their divorce.

As a result of the op-ed publication, Depp claims that he was released from his "Pirates of the Caribbean" franchise and faced

a downfall in his career.

"I would be a real simpleton to not think that there was an effect on my career based on Ms. Heard's words, whether they mentioned my name or not," Depp said in a TIME publication.

In 2019, he sues Heard for \$50 million as a result of her story's defamation to his status.

Then, in 2021, according to TIME, Heard attempts to countersue Depp for \$100 million, "Claiming that he defamed her when his legal team referred to her claims as "fake" and a "sexual violence hoax."

The ongoing trials, which began on April 11, 2022, uncovered details that have effectively given insight into what the couple was experiencing behind closed doors.

With Heard and Depp accusing the other of violence, and both denying the claims made by the other, the nation has become divided in half: some supporting the claims of Heard and others supporting those of Depp.

Monday, May 2, five more witnesses stood at the stand and told their accounts of Depp and Heard's perplexing relationship.

Of these witnesses was Travis McGivern, one of Depp's security guards, who, according to WJLA News, claimed that he saw Heard throw a Red Bull can at Depp, punch him and spit at him.

"I let him get hit by a red bull can, I let him get punched and my job is to protect him and I felt like I wasn't doing that so I needed to get him out of there," McGivern said.

Depp's testimony concluded with a dismissal of any violent accusations made by Heard, describing them as "heinous" and "disturbing."

"Never did I, myself, reach the point of striking Ms. Heard in any way, nor have I ever struck any woman in my life," Depp said.

Heard's lawyers continue to point fingers



Left: Depp in the courtroom at Fairfax County Circuit Courthouse on April 25. Right: Heard converses with the legal team at the courthouse on April 21.

BOSTON GLOBE

at Depp's abuse of alcohol and drugs as the sole contributor to the ruination of his career.

According to The Washington Post, Depp compared himself one day to Cinderella and the next to Quasimodo after the publication of Heard's op-ed.

"I didn't deserve that, nor did my children, or the people who had believed in me all these years. . . . I pride myself on honesty. I pride myself on truth," he said. "Truth is the only thing I'm interested in. Lies build upon lies build upon lies. It's too much to cover. I'm obsessed with the truth," he said.

Appearing clear to me, is Depp's innocence. With an extensive list of individuals defending Depp's case, some of which include Winona Ryder, Sia, J.K. Rowling and others, the evidence backing up Depp is indefinitely stronger than that of Heard.

With Depp's open admittance of his struggle with substance abuse, his intentions of telling the truth have been made even clearer.

Heard has had few individuals step

forward in support of her, while she has had allegations of abuse from former partners and Depp has had none.

If all other evidence simply did not seem adequate to defend Depp, according to Daily Mail, Heard was exposed admitting to hitting Depp in an audio from 2015, "I f**king was hitting you... I don't know what the motion of my hand was, but you're fine, I did not hurt you, I did not punch you, I was hitting you."

With Heard's admittance to physically striking Depp, the chances of her abusive tendencies continuing throughout their relationship is even more likely.

Depp's simple statement that keeping up with lying after lying becomes too much to keep track of points all arrows to further the argument for his innocence.

Without a doubt, both Depp and Heard have made mistakes in the past and neither have been of perfect disposition, but one thing remains evident: the Depp and Heard case has taken over the nation and divided us once again.

Accountability is Not Oppression

BY SAVANNA YELLING
CONTRIBUTOR

Accountability, traditionally considered an American core value, is often received as oppression when it comes to taking responsibility for the racist structures our country was built on and continues to uphold.

Judge Ketanji Brown Jackson, the first Black woman on the supreme court, was interrogated by U.S Senator Ted Cruz about Critical Race Theory (CRT) at her confirmation hearings for the Supreme Court.

"It doesn't come up in my work as a judge. It's never something that I've studied or relied on, and it wouldn't be something I relied on if I was on the Supreme Court," said Jackson

Despite being unrelated to Judge Jackson's role in the Supreme Court, Cruz continued hammering on the topic. He specifically focused on the book "Anti-Racist Baby" by Ibram X. Kendi.

"One portion of the book says babies are taught to be racist or anti-racist. There is no neutrality. . . ." "Do you agree that this book taught my kids that the babies are racist?" Cruz asked.

In an attempt to discredit Judge Jackson, Cruz's theatrical performance with out-of-context quotes that addressed culture wars rather than political policy merely exposed the white fragility surrounding racial issues in our country.

CRT, an academic theory that describes racism as a social construct upheld throughout legal institutions in the U.S, is not to drop a heavy burden on children, not make white kids feel guilty, or for children of color to feel afraid. However, it is for them to remain aware.

Despite being formulated to combat discrimination, the academic theory is seen as racist in and of itself. Many see the idea of stereotyping an entire group of people and categorizing them as "oppressors" based on race as inherently racist.

"Critical race theory is bigoted, it is a lie, and it is every bit as racist as the Klansman in white sheets," said Cruz at a conservative Faith and Freedom Forum.

Claiming that an academic theory is "every bit as racist" as a white supremacist hate group is outlandish.

It is undeniable that our society privileges white people; therefore, it is not racist to acknowledge that white Americans benefit from the color of their skin in areas where Black people suffer due to their color of theirs.



Sen. Ted Cruz critiques the anti-racist novels used in Georgetown Day School, where Justice Jackson serves on the board of trustees. AP / CAROLYN KASTER

When we as a country are unable to acknowledge that our country is built upon racist structures, it is impossible to reach equality. To deny systemic and structural racism is to deny the truth. Every form of racial discrimination of the past remains prevalent today.

While the Jim Crow era has ended, people of color are still more likely to live in disadvantaged neighborhoods. You are receiving inadequate schooling options and employment opportunities and having limited access to food and healthcare due to your location. The color of your skin is modern-day segregation.

The Voting Rights Act of 1965 reads, "No voting qualification or prerequisite to voting, or standard, practice, or procedure shall be imposed or applied by any State or political subdivision to

deny or abridge the right of any citizen of the United States to vote on account of race or color."

However, this act did not seize racial discrimination in voting. Even in the most recent elections, black voters were suppressed. States can still legally manipulate voting boundaries, restricting Black voters at a higher rate than white voters.

In the 2019 Supreme Court case *Rucho v. Common Cause*, the Court ruled that federal courts cannot review allegations of gerrymandering. Julia Kirschenbaum, research and program associate of the Brennan Center for Justice, finds that this ruling allows racial discrimination.

"The Voting Rights Act and the Constitution prohibit racial discrimination in redistricting. But because there often is correlation between party preference and race, *Rucho* opens the door for Republican-controlled states to defend racially discriminatory maps because they were permissibly discriminating against Democrats rather than impermissibly discriminating against Black, Latino, or Asian voters," said Kirschenbaum

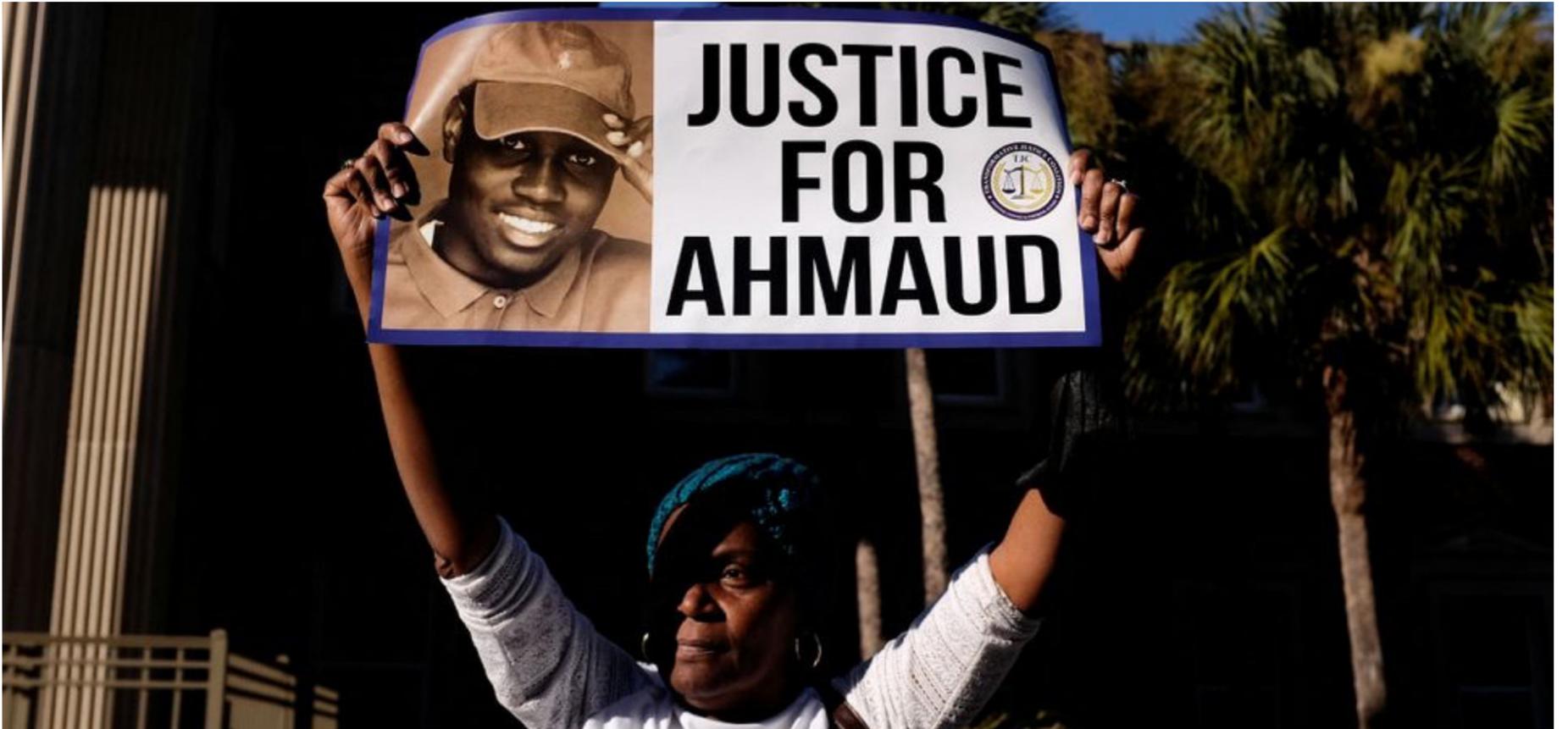
The 13th Amendment was accredited with ending slavery. The 13th put an end to slavery except as a punishment for a crime.

"Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for the crime of which the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction." Reads the 13th Amendment

This fact alone would not be considered racial discrimination or slavery. However, Black Americans are incarcerated at a disproportionate rate. According to The Sentencing Project, an organization dedicated to "research and advocacy for reform," Black Americans are incarcerated nearly five times as often as white Americans. The same amendment that is widely known to have ended slavery leaves a loophole that allows Black people to remain enslaved in prisons at an alarming rate.

Rejecting an academic theory that acknowledges such systemic racism and, in turn, claiming that it is racist towards white people is one of many hindrances in this nation's pursuit of equality.

Justice for Ahmaud Arbery: Three Men Guilty of Federal Hate Crimes



Protesters gathered by the thousands in front of courthouses to demand 'Justice for Ahmaud' before, during, and after the trial.

REUTERS

BY SAVANNA YELLING
CONTRIBUTOR

In a federal hate crimes trial on Feb. 21, the three white men who murdered Ahmaud Arbery whilst he was jogging were found guilty on all charges.

Nearly two years after Arbery's murder, the federal jury unanimously decided that Travis McMichael, his father Gregory McMichael, and neighbor William Bryan targeted, shot, and killed Arbery, an innocent Black man, solely due to his race.

They were charged with interference of rights as they used their cars to trap him, prohibiting him from running on a public street. All three defendants were charged with kidnapping Arbery and Travis and Gregory McMichael were charged with using a firearm during a violent crime.

Preceding the federal case, the three men were facing life in prison for their state-level convictions in January 2022. The federal trial focused on the fact that this murder was far from a random attack as the perpetrators were hyper fixated and

motivated by race. This was exposed by the prosecution in text messages and social media posts from all three men using racial slurs.

Travis and Gregory McMichael aimed to justify their actions by claiming their anger stemmed from Arbery trespassing on private property. However, this was disproved when the prosecution showed a video of the father-son duo laughing as they trespassed on private property while out hunting, further proof that their anger and hatred was racially motivated.

Another video presented in the trial that was shared by Travis McMichael on social media resembled a minstrel show. The racist evidence brought jurors, such as Marcus Ransom, to tears as it was so cruel. Ransom said it showed "so much hatred."

Although the three men were proven guilty of murder on the state level, being proven guilty of federal level hate crimes serves a greater level of justice to Arbery, his family, and the Black community. This conviction is exceptional considering

the slow start to the case and the tendency for the criminal justice system to mishandle cases involving minorities.

Arbery was murdered on Feb. 20, 2020. Three prosecutors recused themselves from the case concluding that there was no reason to charge. Travis and Gregory McMichael were not arrested until 10 weeks after the murder.

The arrests were made after an extremely graphic video of the incident circulated online and sparked a rally for change. At the height of the Black Lives Matter movement, Ahmaud Arbery was one of the names protestors shouted in the streets along with George Floyd and Breonna Taylor.

In a New York Times interview on April 26, 2020, Arbery's friends and family members admitted to the fear that this case may slip through the cracks. The shift from fearing the case would disappear, to seeing all three defendants convicted at the highest level is indicative of the power of protest and petition. In the words of Arbery's mother, Wanda Cooper-Jones: "they didn't make the arrests because they saw the tape; they made arrests because we saw the tape."

The Oscars Doesn't Respect Animation

BY MELODY RIVERA
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Disney's "Encanto" won the Academy Award for Best Animated Feature Film at the 2022 Oscars, but at what cost? A few moments before the film earned its trophy, Halle Bailey, Lily James, and Naomi Scott gave a speech about a category that they said disrespected the animation industry.

"Animated films make up some of our most formative movie experiences as kids," Bailey said.

"So many kids watch these movies over, and over, and over, and over, and over, and over, and over," James and Bailey said.

Scott added, "I see some parents out there that know exactly what we're talking about."

I don't know how many times other animation enthusiasts and I have to say this, but that animation is not just for kids. My brain hurts thinking about how the film industry still feels this

way, especially considering that the animated film "Flee" was not aimed toward kids but became nominated for the Academy Award for Best Animated Feature Film. Many adults, myself included, aren't forced to watch animated films but instead choose to watch them for personal entertainment.

The Oscars' and Hollywood's ignorance about animation is an issue that's not new but, unfortunately, is ongoing and upsetting to many adults. Besides Will Smith slapping Chris Rock and that awful "We Don't Talk About Bruno" live performance, many Twitter users posted their outrage regarding how animation was dismissed.

"It really is disheartening how nothing has really changed the public's preconception of Animation," Chris DeRose, a character designer for "SpongeBob SquarePants" and "The Patrick Star Show," wrote. "Even after all years, everyone always views animation as just a 'Kids Genre.'"

Animation isn't a kid's genre; as a matter of fact, it's not a genre at all. Instead, the animation is an artistic medium of entertainment.

Beyond the argument of who the target audience is, workers from the animation industry also expressed how unappreciated they felt after their hard work on animated films had been delayed and later released during the COVID-19 pandemic.

"We kept the studios afloat through one of the worst times for entertainment in modern history. Yet, we still don't get the respect we deserve," David DePasquale, the lead character designer at Gaumont Animation, wrote on Twitter.

Even the official Twitter account for the animated movie "The Mitchells VS. The Machines," which was nominated for the Academy Award for Best Animated Feature Film, posted a picture of one of their characters, Linda, holding up a sign that said, "Animation is Cinema."

Animation's official Twitter account retweeted the original post with the caption, "Repeat after Linda."

Since the Oscars debuted in 1929, only three animated movies, "Beauty and the Beast," "Toy Story 3," and "Up," have been nominated for the "Academy Award for Best Picture," and none of them won. As an adult who's watched many animated movies of

different genres, many from other countries, I assure you that many deserve recognition at the Oscars.

I find it hard to believe that Bailey, James, and Scott can make fun of animation during their presentation of the Academy Award for Best Animated Feature Film when they wouldn't have been cast in the live-action adaptations of Disney's films if the original animated films never existed.



"Flee" is an animated documentary created by Jonas Poher Rasmussen that was nominated for The Academy Award for Best Animated Feature in the 2022 Oscars.

NEON

Vitamin D(esign) Showcases Students' Work

BY MADELINE WILSON
PHOTO EDITOR

On Thursday, the Art and Design club's Vitamin D(esign) Spring Art Event brought a lively crowd of artists and other students alike for their art show on the Vance Green at Central Connecticut State.

Club president Christy Jackson said that the biggest priority for the event was creating a space where students felt comfortable sharing and creating art.

"We wanted to bring everyone together and really encourage them to see art, do art, and realize they have a place here," she said. "There's a lot of people who feel like they don't belong in the art scene, especially young people and people of color."

The show featured 13 student artists, three guest artists, and musical guests, Don Minott and the High Voltage Reggae Band.

The Art and Design club set the event up so that attendees could walk through the space and see each artist's work as they make their way through the venue. This path led straight to the free ice cream stand from Frisbee's Dairy Barn and ended with tables set up to allow attendees to create their art and enjoy live music.

The club also set up a voting system, where attendees could drop a raffle ticket at the table of whichever artist they liked the best. At the end of the event, the club announced "Best in Show" to be Raya Pons, the first runner up to be Kenzie Costello, and the second runner up to be Anyssa Lopez.

Marlon Blackwood, the club's secretary, said this voting system was meant to add some intrigue but mostly to bring spirit to the event.

"We wanted to make it fun," he said.

Blackwood said he wanted to help pull this event together to create a safe space for any student with artistic ability to explore their work and gain confidence in showing it.

"It's for all of us, for all younger artists to get the experience of showing their work," he said. "Because now, when they get out here, all of that nervousness and fear and the anxiety, all of its gone because you're on your campus,

with your friends listening to good music."

Neyja Altamarino, a student artist, featured at the event, said that she loved the opportunity to show her work on campus.

"It helps you figure out what kind of artist you are," she said.

Altamarino said she was happy to be surrounded by her peers.

"I think it's really fun, especially since you get to see what other students are doing and you get kind of inspired," she said.

Jenesis Miranda, the Student Activities/Leadership Development Program Advisor for the club, said that she

was impressed by the club's tenacity in planning the event. She had never seen an art show of this kind at CCSU.

"This is the first time it's being tackled, especially on such a wide level," she said.

Miranda said bringing in artists and performers from the local New Britain community made the event into a wide-reaching, impactful event in and outside of the campus community.

She said the focus on students and learning made the event unique, though.

"They took it a step further by making it about students and everyone learning about art and how to be an artist, and doing it in a way they feel comfortable," she said.

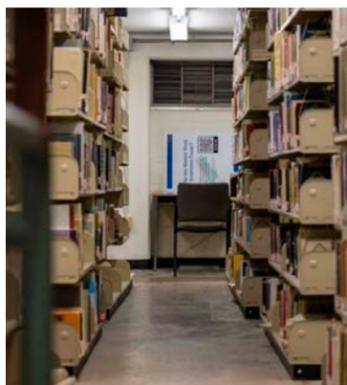


Students talk to each artist at their booths as they make their way through the art show. MADELINE WILSON

Top 5 Study Spots on Campus

STORY AND PHOTOS BY MADELINE WILSON
PHOTO EDITOR

Central Connecticut State has study spots in almost every building and scattered across campus, but some are better than others. Here are a few that might be some of the best places at Central to cram for final exams or finish up the rest of your projects.

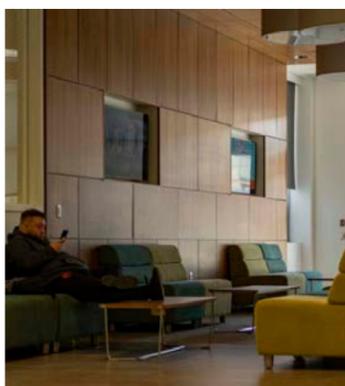


1. LIBRARY BOOKSTACKS

If you're looking for a true hidden, perfectly quiet spot, the book stacks in the Elihu Burritt Library are the perfect option. Tucked in between the rows of novels are a few single tables or desks for students to set up at. So you won't ever be disturbed and you depending on the season, there's almost always an open table to find as long as you keep looking.

2. BASSETT HALL

The lobby of Basset Hall is the perfect indoor spot for someone who wants somewhere that won't ever be too quiet, but isn't usually too busy, either. The lobby has natural light and comfortable couches to sit in and get work done any time of the day.

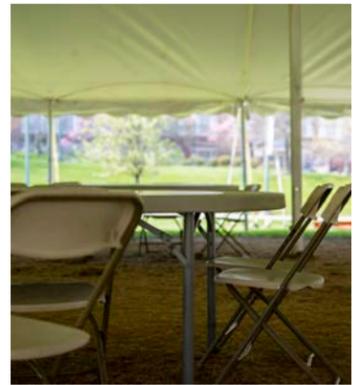


3. MEMORIAL HALL

The study rooms underneath the Memorial Hall Dining Hall offer peace and quiet in a hidden gem location. The rooms are usually pretty empty, but some have sectioned-off tables, so you can always find privacy.

4. BARNARD TABLES

The few tables outside of Barnard Hall are perfect if you prefer an outdoor environment that's sometimes busy, but not too loud or distracting. The tables offer full sunshine and a look over campus that's hard to beat.



5. VANCE LAWN TENT

The Vance Lawn Tent is the perfect place to set up and study on a warm day when it's not being used. There's plenty of open tables, space, and shade to go around. Most of the time, the lawn is pretty quiet, but you still get to enjoy the fresh air.

We need writers!

Interested in being featured in the newspaper?
Stay tuned to find out when our first meeting of the Fall is.

HBO MAX & RELAX

“Smiling Friends:” A Refreshing Comedy

BY SAM PAPPAS
LIFESTYLE EDITOR

In the decades since *The Simpsons* took over television, the status quo of adult animation slowly became more and more cynical. *Family Guy*'s popularity exploded, *South Park* made every offensive joke possible and weathered the storm of cancel culture, and *Rick and Morty* took things to the most logical conclusion, in a cartoon universe where nothing matters and versions of the main characters from alternate dimensions regularly die in gruesome and downright cruel ways.

Nothing matters. Everyone dies, and characters who attempt to change this, for better or worse, become the butt of the joke in every episode.

Is it funny? Yeah, I think so. I still get a laugh out of *Rick and Morty*.

But has not caring become the norm? Has indifference become the default response to every good and bad thing?

Smiling Friends is the remedy to this problem. Eight episodes, eleven minutes each, are produced by Adult Swim and watchable on HBO MAX, which all CCSU students get to watch for free.

The series follows the misadventures of the *Smiling Friends* Charlie and Pim, whose mission is to make people smile. The general vibe of the series reminds me of the *Regular Show* or *Adventure Time*, where things are so unpredictable you never know how an episode will end.

Much of the comedy contrasts the colorful and bizarre characters and the unique conversational dialog, reminiscent of older, more obscure Adult Swim shows like *Home Movies*.

“These crazy colorful weird, looking characters... They’re real: that’s the joke,” said Zach Hadel, co-creator of *Smiling Friends* on *The Create Unknown* podcast. “They blink, and they have heart problems and ADD... These characters don’t hit a wall and flatten out.”

While Pim may be enthusiastic and Charlie can be a bit of a pessimist, sometimes, both characters slide between exaggerated and relatable moments without feeling like they’re breaking character. There are moments of crudeness and violence and good-natured jokes that make the edgier moments feel earned. *Smiling Friends*' absence of malice or cynicism in any of its episodes makes it refreshing.



“The Renaissance Men are coming to town really soon,” said Charlie (Center Left) from Episode 7 of *Smiling Friends*.

HBO MAX

“The show’s point was just not to make anybody even think... The show doesn’t think it’s making a statement...the show isn’t trying to change the world. It’s just trying to be funny.” Hadel said.

Zach Hadel, better known by his internet alias “Psychicpebbles,” worked with friend and fellow Newgrounds animator Micheal Cusack to create *Smiling Friends*. Cusack and Hadel’s creative energy and chemistry flow endlessly in their vocal performances as main characters Pim and Charlie, respectively. The two revealed much of their dialog was improvised as they worked through each scene and figured out what direction they wanted to take each episode as it was produced.

The show also delves into some surprisingly poignant moments that rock back-and-forth from comedy, horror, uplifting slice-of-life, and back to comedy in ten minutes.

Smiling Friends isn’t a genius series that will make you reevaluate animated media or change your views, but at less than 90 minutes to watch the entire show, something is sure to make you smile.

“RuPaul’s Drag Race” Makes ‘Herstory’ by Featuring Five Transgender Contestants

STORY BY NICHOLAS JOHNSON
CONTRIBUTOR

“RuPaul’s Drag Race” made history by including five transgender contestants in its latest season, which went on to have its highest-rated episode throughout the 14 seasons the show has aired.

Back in 2010, on the season two reunion episode of “RuPaul’s Drag Race,” Kylie Sonique Love became the first contestant to come out as transgender on the show with her famous line, “I’ve always been a girl, I’ve always been a girl trapped in a boys body.” Love also made history by becoming the first transgender contestant to win an American season in 2021. Season 13 also featured the franchise’s first transgender male contestant, Gottmik.

The “Drag Race” franchise has featured transgender contestants throughout the years, many of whom have come out on the show, after, or while the season was airing on television.

Season 14, however, featured the most trans contestants the series has ever had, including Kerri Colby, Kornbread “The Snack” Jeté, Bosco, Jasmine Kennedie, and Willow Pill.



Bosco, Kerri Colby, Kornbread Jeté, Willow Pill, and Jasmine Kennedie are the five trans contestants featured in season 14 of “RuPaul’s Drag Race.”

VH1

Elyse Alessandra Anderson (Colby) has been open about her transition before the show aired, posting to her Instagram, “When all is said and done, you’ll believe God is a WOMAN” in Dec. 2021. Colby has also switched her Twitter name to her fan-given moniker “The Tranitarian” after her fellow contestants came out during the show’s airing.

Colby spoke with judge Michelle Visage about her journey of being displaced from her home at 15-years-old. Colby gave Visage insight into her younger and more naive self by saying that she got into “very abusive” relationships when she was couch-surfing for two years. Colby found a haven for a year from sleeping in train stations from a supporter of hers.

“I never really fit in with that crowd,” Colby said about her family regarding their Christian-Pentecostal practices. She spoke about how she knew she was different from a very young age and “loved it.” Colby started her transition at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic and has documented her story in her Instagram highlight.

Demoria E. Williams (Jeté) joined Colby being the second transgender queen of color to compete on the season, coming out before the show had aired. Jeté posted to her Instagram in November of 2021 announcing her transition.

“I’m proudly letting the world know I’m a Transgender Woman. Pronouns are SHE/HER at all times :) My name is Demoria E. Williams,” she wrote.

Jeté said how she started her transition in

Jan. 2021 and how talking with her two older brothers made her realize “that I should live for me and no one else. I’m a proud African American Trans Woman.” She and Colby stuck close together on the show as they were friends before it, dubbing themselves the “aunties” of the season alongside contestant Angeria Paris VanMicheals.

Bosco is the first queen to come out after the show. On Feb. 10, 2022, Bosco posted to her Instagram, “I’m straight too,” referencing the season’s first heterosexual contestant, Maddy Morphosis. In her post, she said how she started hormone replacement therapy (HRT) after the season was filmed and said she was always scared of the finances associated with the transition process. She thanked her boyfriend, her friends, and those she deemed as “stunning peers” and

concluded her post by saying, “I’m trans, my pronouns out of drag are she/they, I’m the happiest I’ve ever been.”

Kennedie is the season’s first queen to come out as transgender while filming. In episode seven of “Untucked,” a tearful Kennedie said behind the scenes that “before coming here, I was about to start hormones.” She said that seeing Colby and how confident she is inspired her to come out and said she related to how Colby felt her whole life.

“I am trans, and I’ve been so scared to say it,” Kennedie said. In fear of hurting her dad, she held back from it for so long. After filming, Kennedie said she plans on going to therapy, starting hormones, and getting to where she wants to be.

How CCSU Students Manage College and Relationships



Julia Conant and Charles Hosek, both seniors at CCSU, at Stanley Quarter Park in November 2021. Conant said they meet in between classes to spend time together since college takes up the majority of her time.

MELODY RIVERA

BY MELODY RIVERA
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Being a college student can be very stressful at times, and managing that work-life balance can be very challenging, especially for those who are in romantic relationships. However, some Central Connecticut State University students have proved it's not impossible to seek an education and be in a committed relationship at the same time.

Marissa Martin, a junior at CCSU, has been in a relationship with her girlfriend, Taylor Yankowski, a sophomore at CCSU, for two years.

"We both understand how it feels to be a student and can share the experience," Martin said.

Yankowski and Martin have both agreed to prioritize their college education, but said they plan multiple ways to still spend time together whether it's studying together,

going out to get a cup of coffee, or other fun activities during the holidays. Martin said having something fun to look forward to in a relationship is a great motivator when getting through college work.

"School can be very stressful, so it's important your relationship is the opposite," she said.

Julia Conant, a senior at CCSU, also said college students should prioritize their education over their relationships.

"You should still try to make time for the relationship, but if you know you need to do schoolwork, tell your partner you'll see them later," she said.

Conant and her boyfriend, Charles Hosek, also a senior at CCSU, have been together since November 2018, when they were both in their first semester. Conant said she feels college takes up the majority of her time.

"I'm a full-time student with two part-time jobs, so at times I feel overwhelmed," she said.

To continue pursuing her college education while also

making time for Hosek, Conant said her best strategies are for her and Hosek to meet up with each other during gaps they have between classes and for them to participate in the same extracurricular activities. She said this has been very rewarding for both her and Hosek.

"The best part of being a CCSU student in a relationship has been having someone to do activities with, whether that be Devil's Den events, school dances, or even grabbing a meal off-campus," Conant said.

Based on the experiences of these CCSU students, here are the top three ways students manage their relationships in college:

1. Time Management

Planning out your schedule in advance can be very helpful with achieving that balance between work and social life. Have a break between classes? Go get a cup of coffee with your partner like Martin and Yankowski or participate in clubs on campus like Conant and Hosek. Just make sure your relationship isn't a distraction from your education.

2. Comfort

College is a factor of stress in these relationships, and there's a chance that it is for you and your partner as well. If you notice your partner has been showing signs of stress, reassure them that you will be there for them. If you're the one who's in a state of being stressed, talk to your partner about how they can assist you best.

3. Communication

The partners in these relationships didn't decide how to manage their college and personal life on their own, they worked it out together. Discuss what works best for both of you and make sure you stay on the same page with your partner.

Why "Capcom Fighting Collection" is Important for "Darkstalkers" Fans

BY MELODY RIVERA
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Capcom, a video game company founded in 1983, announced its fighting game collection on Feb. 21, 2022, along with the highly anticipated "Street Fighter 6." As June 24 gets closer, many fans of Capcom are excited to replay their favorite fighting games, including the "Street Fighter" series and "Red Earth," a game that will be playable for the first time on consoles. The fandom for the game "Darkstalkers" is incredibly hyped for "Capcom Fighting Collection" because it could lead to a possible new installment for the franchise.

For those unaware, "Darkstalkers" is a fighting game where many mythological creatures and monsters fight to protect their lands from aliens and demons who threaten to conquer them. Some of the game's most popular characters include a vampire named Demitri Maximoff, a Catwoman named Felicia, and the widely-used mascot, Morrigan Aensland the succubus.

The franchise has three main games, with the last one having been released in 1997. Since then, "Darkstalkers" has been stuck with re-releases of the original games and its characters who've been featured in several crossover

games, including "Marvel vs. Capcom" and "Pocket Fighters" (known as "Super Gem Fighter Mini Mix in Japan), a game that will be remastered and featured in "Capcom Fighting Collection."

It wasn't until July 21, 2011, when hope for a fourth game was revitalized when a teaser for a potential new "Darkstalkers" game was released at San Diego Comic-Con, showing Demitri and a zombie named Lord Raptor in new graphics similar to those used in "Street Fighter 4" which was popular at that time. Although the future seemed promising for this franchise, there was a catch. In order for there to be a fourth game, fans needed to support the HD remastered versions of the first and third game that were released in a bundle in 2013 called "Darkstalkers Resurrection." Although the fandom showed their support for the game series, it wasn't enough for Capcom. Yoshinori Ono, a former game producer at Capcom, said in an interview that can be found on EventHubs that "Darkstalkers Resurrection" didn't sell over two million copies, the target amount needed for the game to be officially made.

"We won't be releasing a new installment in the Darkstalkers series anytime soon," Ono said. "As we didn't manage to hit our sales targets for Darkstalkers

Resurrection...."

This news was very disappointing for fans. Once again, the franchise couldn't progress past Capcom using their characters for more crossover games and references like the "Darkstalkers" costumes that can be used for characters in "Street Fighter 5."

"Darkstalkers. One of the best fighting games I've ever played, and I'm sad there isn't a new game being made in this series," The Mad Belmont wrote on Twitter.

Before this year, all hope was lost for the franchise until "Capcom Fighting Collection" was announced. The trailer had revealed that all "Darkstalkers" games

would be included, along with a few crossover games where some of their characters are playable.

Many fans believe this is a second chance for "Darkstalkers" to get a new installment finally.

"Man, I want a new darkstalkers. Best believe I'm getting that new collection.....," wrote Taurence Bell on Twitter.

If Capcom has the same goal of how many copies they want to sell for "Capcom Fighting Collection" as they did years ago for "Darkstalkers Resurrection," at least two million copies would be needed for a new "Darkstalkers" game, along with possible new additions for some of the other

games in the collection as well.

Overall, "Capcom Fighting Collection" can provide great opportunities to spotlight other fighting games made by the company, mainly because the "Street Fighter" franchise has been the main focus for decades now. If just enough copies of the game can sell, maybe the fandom can finally convince Capcom that the "Darkstalkers are not dead," just like the teaser from 2011 said at the end.

"Capcom Fighting Collection" will be available to play on June 24, 2022, on the PlayStation 4, Xbox One, Nintendo Switch, and Microsoft Windows.



Capcom announced their fighting game collection, including all releases from the "Darkstalkers" series (known as Vampire Hunter and Vampire Savior: Lord of Vampire in Japan).

CAPCOM

ALBUM REVIEW

Pusha T Innovates in "It's Almost Dry"

"It's Almost Dry" album cover.

PUSHA T

BY CHRISTIAN MALDONADO
CONTRIBUTOR

The President of the G.O.O.D. Music record label and four-time Grammy Nominee, Pusha T, is back with his 4th studio album, "It's Almost Dry." Pusha T has been rapping about the highs and lows of the drug industry for years, and he still finds new and innovative ways to include clever double entendres and one liners that entice even those in his audience who have no experience at all in the drug industry.

Before this album came out, he had released two singles that made their way onto the tracklist. "Diet Coke," features a sample from rapper Fat Joe's 2005 song, "Get It Poppin." This was used as an homage to Joe, since both artists hail from the Bronx, and is found rapping about the drug game in his songs as well. While lyrically the topic of this song may not be anything new to people who have heard Pusha T's music before, the simplistic Ye production and repetitive sample make this a song to bob your head to.

"Neck & Wrist," a track featuring icons of the music industry in Jay-Z and Pharell, has Pusha T flexing his success in the rap and drug game. The line "the money counter ding is so exciting," emphasizes how he feels about the success he's had in his endeavors whether they be legal or not, and the fact that he has the same ideology as the drug lords we see on TV, which is to make as much money and build your empire. Whether it's referencing actor Faizon Love, who came after his credibility, or calling out rappers for the lies they tell in their verses about their wealth and success, or even calling out people who to this day claim that he would not be where he is if his longtime friend and

mentor The Notorious B.I.G. had not died, instead saying that Allah is the reason for his success. It's no surprise that Jay-Z's verse comes off as both braggadocious and mature at the same time. Pharell is mostly credited with the production on the song, but his high-pitched post-chorus features a double entendre about lines, using it as a reference to a line outside a dope house, and a line of cocaine.

The rest of the album consists of incredible Ye and Pharell production, as it almost seems like the two were in competition to see who could come away with the best beats on the album. His standout beat seems to be on the song "Dreamin of the Past," which uses a pitched soul sample, something that he made famous early in his career and still uses to this day. Whether it has been the Chaka Khan "Through the Fire" sample used on his hit song "Through the Wire," to the Smokey Robinson "Will You Still Love Me Tomorrow" sample used on his universally celebrated, "Devil in a New Dress" song. For "Dreamin of the Past," he uses a John Lennon sample from his song, "Jealous Guy." The sample on top of a beat similar to that of the cover Donny Hathaway did of Lennon's song, is sped up and has enhanced bass drum and piano to make it sound more suitable for a rap song. While this kind of beat is one that we haven't heard much of in this genre, Pusha T and Ye's bars about having the things they never thought they would have, and now being in a state of reflection on how their lives used to be, makes this song such a worthwhile listen.

Pharell is not to be outdone on the production side. The intro track, "Brambleton," has the signature Pharell four count at the beginning of the song that he has made famous on songs like "Happy" and "Drop It Like It's Hot" by Snoop Dogg. The bass, snare, and hi-hat all work brilliantly with the synthesizer repetition in the background. The song title is a reference to a street Pusha T lived on as a kid, and talks about the death of Ernest "Shampoo" Waller, an associate he had in the early part of his rap career. He describes the effect Waller's death had on him, and what life was like as a kid in Norfolk, Virginia. The song is the most personal of the tracklist, but still features the same lyrical topics, as Pusha T talks about how he wanted to build an empire like Michael Corleone in "The Godfather" trilogy.

While some people may label this album as formulaic, with Pusha T addressing the same topics he usually does in his music, he brings some of his best bars, flows, production, and wordplay to this album. Hopefully we don't have to wait another almost four years for his next record, as at the age of 44, Pusha T seems to still be in his prime years on the mic.

NETFLIX IT

*"Worst Roommate Ever"*BY SAVANNA YELLING
CONTRIBUTOR

This docu-series features three roommate horror stories. Not the typical roommate complaints you may hear on campus about dishes in the sink, loud music, or messy bathroom counters, this series deep dives into the criminals who con and kill their roommates.

Between the chilling music, victim and expert testimony, eerie animations, and photos from the crime scenes, each episode of this four-part docu-series keeps viewers at the edge of their seats.

Netflix features the victims of these crimes to speak on their traumatic experiences. However, some of these "worst roommates" leave no victims to tell their stories.

The first episode of this series is "Call Me Grandma," the story of Dorthea Puente is perhaps the most shocking of them all. Puente portrayed herself as a woman 20 years older than her true age. Her chiffon dresses, bags and daily makeup were a part of her act to be perceived as innocent to best take advantage of others.

Puente operated a home for the impoverished. She was seemingly a sweet old lady who aimed to help those in need in her community. What was portrayed as a group home turned out to be a slaughterhouse.

Puente's life of crime began when she posed as a medical doctor to take advantage of elderly women, even administering drugs to them to rob them of money and their belongings. Puente was arrested in 1982, when articles were written on her crimes, other victims began to speak out.

Bill Monroe, son of victim Ruth Monroe, contacted a reporter after seeing an article on Puente in the local paper. He speaks in the episode about his mother and her experiences with Puente.

Monroe said his mother was Puente's roommate and she drained her bank account whilst slowly poisoning her. He spoke in the first episode about Puente's deceptive ways and how it led to the death of his mother.

"Dorthea had talked about being a nurse at one time so we felt she knew what she was doing and that she would take care of her," said Monroe. Due to the lack of forensic

technology, Monroe's death was ruled a suicide. However, many, including Monroe's son, believe that she was murdered by Puente.

"Mom did not commit suicide. Dorthea murdered my mother," said Monroe.

Monroe was one of many relatives of victims that grew suspicious of Puente's work. The local police departments took all of these complaints into account and began to dig up Puente's garden, in which they found the remains of several of Puente's victims.

Puente was responsible for an estimated 25 deaths. She was sentenced to life in prison for first-degree murder.

Other episodes include the stories of murderer K.C Joy, con artist Youssef Khater and serial squatter Jamison Bachman.

Although they are not serial killers such as Puente, Netflix hones in on the trauma they caused their former roommates.

This docu-series and animation mash up is a unique portrayal of true crime. The animations were far more captivating than still images of the crime scene of the perpetrators, and the muted color palette used added an eeriness that typical true crime dramatization tends to lack.

"The animation made everything scary #WorstRoommateEver" wrote @callmeaysiab on Twitter.

"I just closed my eyes during the animation. The darkness in the eyes, the personality changes, and jump scares. TEEEEEWWWW MUUUUCH #WorstRoommateEver" responded @kjsmithofficial



"The animation made everything scary #WorstRoommateEver" wrote @callmeaysiab on Twitter.

CHRIS
CALLISON

HULU & YOU

*Miss Us? It's the Kardashians!*BY JESSICA BRAVO
CONTRIBUTOR

The Kardashians are back, again!

After the hit reality TV show "Keeping Up With the Kardashians" on E! Network ended in June 2021, the show is revived in a new home.

The new show, called "The Kardashians," premiered on April 14 on Hulu.

According to Express, the Kardashians were paid around \$100 million to star in the new series.

"The Kardashians" will be different from KUWTK because it will be focused on the individual sister's lives and more of a "documentary."

The first episode opens with all the famous Kardashian-Jenner sisters and "momager," Kris, updating the viewers on what has been happening in their lives.

Kim is going through a highly publicized divorce with Kanye West. Some days, their relationship is rocky. However, she says they try to stay friendly and co-parent their four children: North, Saint, Chicago, and Psalm.

Kris has worked hard to manage the family's empire and different career ventures. She is also still with her boyfriend, Corey Gamble.

Kylie is pregnant with her second baby. This pregnancy, unlike the first, has been very public. She knows the gender but keeps it between her and her boyfriend, Travis Scott.

Khloe and her former husband, Tristan Thompson, are "best friends." They are focused on their daughter, True, and going to therapy together to mend past issues raised in their previous romantic relationship.

Kourtney is spending a lot of time with her boyfriend, Travis Barker. She is also focused on herself and her children.

Lastly, Kendall tells the camera she has COVID but promises the viewers will be seeing her more throughout the season.

The family meets up at Kim's house for a family barbecue. There, a situation unfolds.

Saint, Kim's six-year-old son, comes over to her laughing about a crying picture of Kim that came up as an ad on his Roblox game.

Luckily for Saint, he can't read yet. Kim is mortified to find out that the ad suggests that you can see unreleased footage from her infamous "tape" with Ray J if you click it.

Along with that, the family realizes they forgot to invite Scott Disick, Kourtney's ex. So Khloe tells Reign, Scott and Kourtney's youngest son, not to tell Scott about the get-together, hoping he won't find out and get jealous for not being invited.

Later in the show, Scott finds out about the get-together, and Khloe visits him at his place to talk about it.

He says he feels sad and left out but understands why he wasn't invited. Khloe assures him that she will talk about it with Kourtney.

In the meantime, Kourtney is at Barker's studio enjoying his company. She brings her daughter, Penelope, and Penelope's friend along. They play ping-pong, ride bikes, and have a "drum-off."

Kim has a wardrobe fitting for her Saturday Night Live gig coming up. She says she is nervous and wants to pull out. Everyone around her encourages her to do it. Kim also wonders if Kanye should be the musical guest for that week but eventually decides against it.

Khloe and Thompson have a conversation about their relationship. Thompson expresses he would like to get back together with her someday and have another child. Khloe is adamant about trust taking time, especially after he cheated on her when she was pregnant in 2018.

Later on, Kim, Kourtney, and Khloe meet for dinner. Khloe brings up how she went over to Disick's house to talk about the family barbecue. Kourtney says she doesn't mind inviting Scott but has concerns. She advises he might be uncomfortable around their public displays of affection and doesn't know if he can handle seeing that at an "intimate" get-together.

In the final scene, Kim is on the phone with her attorney about the Roblox ad she saw on her son's iPad. She tells her lawyer she wants to take legal action and have the ad taken down. She calls Kanye to talk about it, and he comforts her while she cries. She then gets back on the phone with her lawyer and says she will use her power to take control of the situation because money is no object.

SPORTS BEGINS ON BACK PAGE

Taking Home Tenth Trophy Highlights Women's Soccer Season

BY ANDREW DECAPUA
SPORTS EDITOR

Led by head coach Mick D'Arcy the 2021 Central Connecticut State women's soccer team won their tenth Northeast Conference Championship this past fall.

The 2021 season was coach D'Arcy's 22nd with the university. After finishing the season with a 13-6 (.684) overall record, D'Arcy holds a 225-161-38 record and has the most wins in CCSU women's soccer history.

The Blue Devils dominated the NEC with an 8-2 (.800) record, with the two losses coming from Bryant University and Fairleigh Dickinson University. However, the Blue Devils could avenge both of those losses in the NEC tournament when they defeated Bryant, 1-0, in the first round and then defeated Fairleigh Dickinson, 3-0, in the championship game.

For winning the NEC Championship, the Blue Devils were awarded a trip to the NCAA Women's Soccer Tournament, the tenth such trip during D'Arcy's tenure as head coach. The Blue Devils took on the University of Georgetown Hoyas in the first round of the 2021 NCAA Women's Soccer Tournament. The Blue Devils lost that game 6-0. After the loss to Georgetown, the Blue Devils now hold a 2-8 record in the NCAA tournament under coach D'Arcy, with the two wins in 2003 and 2019.

The Blue Devils were led by junior Roma McLaughlin, who had a team-leading 21 points and nine goals scored, with six game-winning goals. Senior Erica Bardes and redshirt freshman Kelly Brady tied for the team lead in assists with five each. Junior goalkeeper Amanda McQuillan started 17 games and made 64 saves while only allowing 19 goals against.

The Blue Devils were also the recipient of the United Soccer Coaches Team Ethics and Sportsmanship Award for the 2021 season. They were honored at the bronze level. The levels are calculated by adding the total number of penalty cards the team's players and coaches received divided by the

total number of games the team played. Only 84 teams across all men's and women's NCAA soccer divisions were honored.

Individual Blue Devils were also honored for their contributions to the 2021 season. Bardes was honored with the Northeast Conference Fall Scholar-Athlete award for the third time. She also took home the Northeast Conference Defensive Player of the Year award in 2021. Bardes was joined by McLaughlin, McQuillan, Brady, and senior Tess Atkinson in being voted to the New England Women's Intercollegiate Soccer Association All-New England Team.

The coaches also brought home some awards. Assistant coach Jen Prozzo was named Division I Assistant Coach of the Year by the New England Women's Intercollegiate Soccer Association while coach D'Arcy has recently been inducted into the Connecticut Soccer Hall of Fame for his contributions to the game of soccer at CCSU and around the state.

With many of the critical contributors expected to return next season, the Blue Devils will look to repeat as Northeast Conference Champions. The two seniors, Bardes and Atkinson, will be graduating this spring and will not be with the team next season.



CCSU women's soccer celebrates winning their fourth straight NEC Championship on Sunday, Nov. 7, 2021.

CCSU ATHLETICS

OPINION

Why Devin Booker's Evolution Will Lead Suns to NBA Title

BY DEREK MCLEOD
CONTRIBUTOR

Fresh off their 2021 NBA Finals loss against the Milwaukee Bucks, TV cameras captured Suns star Devin Booker tucking his jersey as green and white confetti dropped from the ceiling to celebrate the Bucks' first NBA Championship in 50 years. Booker was only able to mutter "damn" to himself while consoling his teammates, who also had to grasp that their Cinderella season had fallen just short of the ultimate goal.

Booker's reaction to losing the Finals last year was more than dismay, the end of a strong run that fell short of the ultimate prize. Fans may look back at that moment as the genesis of a new Booker, a version of the super scorer that contributes defensively and rallies the troops as a pivotal voice in Phoenix's organization. A brutal loss in the post-season has historically marked the beginning of some legendary runs, especially in the NBA.

Look no further than the late, great Kobe Bryant, a loser in the 2008 Finals against the longtime rival Boston Celtics. The loss fueled Bryant in the next phase of his evolution, propelling both him and the Lakers to capture the NBA Championship in back-to-back seasons following the defeat, which included avenging the 2008 Finals by taking down the same Celtics team two years later in the iconic 2010 Finals.

Michael Jordan, who took a year and a half hiatus from the NBA, returned to the Bulls in 1995, losing to the Orlando Magic

in the Eastern Conference semifinals. That loss fueled the Bulls team to three-peat in the following years, solidifying Jordan's legacy as the "greatest ever." Given Booker's similarities to Jordan and Kobe, can Book become the catalyst for this next NBA era?

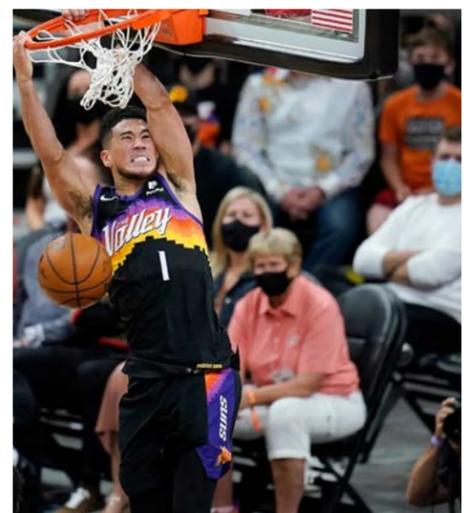
It may be far-fetched to place that burden on the 25-year-old Booker, but his approach to the game reflects that of Bryant and Jordan. A methodical threat on the offensive end, his play, at times, draws comparisons to the two legends as they engulfed themselves in the art of the sport. Booker's incredible attention to detail and his well-known admiration for Bryant indicate that his time at the top is coming sooner rather than later. To be up there next to the all-time greats, an NBA championship does plenty to keep Booker on his inevitable trajectory to the top. Thankfully, Booker has arguably the best core of talent and synergy on any roster to match his fiery intensity.

Fast forward nearly nine months later, and you'll find a new edge to this Phoenix Suns squad. Hungry, determined, intelligent, quick-witted, physical. These traits carried Phoenix to a Western Conference crown just last year, but there is a different kind of swagger to the 2021-22 Suns. With the legendary Chris Paul out for two months during a crucial stretch of the season, it became apparent that any other outcome besides an NBA Championship is not acceptable for this year's juggernauts. Going 11-4 in games without the "Point God," the Suns rallied behind the budding leadership of Devin

Booker, a young superstar poised to etch his name in immortality. During the stretch without Paul, Booker placed the team on his shoulders, averaging 28.2 PPG, 7.0 ASG, and 52.1% from the field to go along with 40.3% from 3, all rising numbers compared to his season totals with CP3 on the court.

Booker's influence can be spotted on Phoenix's roster, including several young, athletic players who buy-in on the defensive end and veterans who guide the young stars mentally throughout the season. Already the Suns' number 1 option offensively, Booker shouldered the burden of keeping the ball moving offensively, something Chris Paul has made look easy during his almost 20-year NBA career. The Suns easily could have faltered, but Booker's step-up in play resulted in a significant morale boost for the rest of the squad who stepped up to fill Paul's shoes. Booker will be the first to ensure that his teammates are credited for that resilient mid-season run, as Mikal Bridges, DeAndre Ayton, and role players like Cam Payne, Landry Shamet, and Cameron Johnson have all been critical elements to Phoenix's 60+ win regular season. But without Booker, Monty Williams' Suns lack the offensive firepower and leadership that he provides the team, regardless of how great the Sun's core has been throughout the season.

The Phoenix Suns enter the 2022 NBA Playoffs as the #1 seed in the West and the favorite to win it all. Suppose the Suns are as good as they've been all season long. In that case, the potential challenges posed by Steph Curry's Golden State Warriors



Phoenix Suns guard Devin Booker hopes to lead his team to a title.

AP / ROSS D. FRANKLIN

and Ja Morant's Memphis Grizzlies in the western conference will be minimal, as nobody can match the unrelenting efficiency of this Suns team. Although they've dominated all season, none of that will matter until they return to the big stage and capture the franchise's first NBA championship. Booker, CP3, and Williams lead a hungry and motivated squad back into the fire. They have the talent and pivotal experience to break through and win it all, and the Suns will go as far as D-Book takes them.

I'm not a betting man, but if I were, I'd suggest you look for Devin Booker to immortalize himself this postseason and begin his ascent towards the Jordan's and the Kobe of the basketball universe.

New Head Coach Sellers Takes Basketball to the NEC Tournament in First Season

BY ANDREW DECAPUA
SPORTS EDITOR

With a new head coach at the helm, the Central Connecticut basketball team won eight games during the 2021-2022 season and ended with a trip to the Northeast Conference Tournament. The Blue Devils' eight wins are the most they have had in a year since the 2018-2019 season.

In his first year leading the Blue Devils, head coach Patrick Sellers brought some excitement back to CCSU basketball. In what was a rebuilding year for the Blue Devils, Sellers improved on the win totals of the previous two seasons under former head coach Donyell Marshall. The Blue Devils finished the 2021-2022 season with an 8-24 (.250) overall record and a 4-13 (.235) conference record.

The Blue Devils struggled to start the season with a young group of players by dropping their first five games. They picked up their first win in an out-of-conference game against the University of Maine.

The Blue Devils defeated the Black Bears 64-56 in that one. They would win three more games outside of the NEC and just four inside the conference.

Despite ending the regular season in last place in the NEC standings, the Blue Devils were still invited to participate in the NEC Tournament.

season, the NEC announced both the men's and women's tournaments would be temporarily expanded for one year to include all teams. The Devils would defeat



Fairleigh Dickinson University, 67-66, in the play-in round of the NEC Tournament but fell to the eventual NEC Champions, Bryant University, in the next round.

Junior Nigel Scantlebury led the Blue Devils in averaging 13.4 points per game during the 2021-2022 season. He shot 42% from the field and 41.4% behind the three-point line. Freshman Andre Snoodly led the Blue Devils in rebounding

with 7.1 boards per game.

As a team, the Blue Devils averaged 61.8 points per game while allowing 72.1 points per game to oppose teams. CCSU averaged only 10.6 assists per game and turned the ball over 13.8 times per game during the 2021-2022 season.

With only one senior, Stephane Ayangma, on the team, the Blue Devils will return a young core of players and look to build on their eight-win season and get back to the NEC Tournament for real this time. So far this off-season, the Blue Devils have signed letters of commitment from just one player, TJ Holloway. Holloway is a 6-foot-4 guard from Orange, CT. He is a versatile player that can play multiple positions and should help the Blue Devils right away.

"It is exciting to add a player of TJ's caliber to the Central Connecticut basketball family," said Sellers. "He is a versatile and athletic individual who can help us at multiple positions offensively and defensively. We are excited to have TJ join our program and help us continue building a successful program."



Patrick Sellers, Head Coach for Men's Basketball, entered his first season in 2021.

STEVE
MCLAUGHLIN

Football Wrapped Up 2021 Season After a Year Hiatus



Tyshaun James was recently signed to the Atlanta Falcons April 30, 2022.

CCSU ATHLETICS

BY ANDREW DECAPUA
SPORTS EDITOR

After being crowned the Northeast Conference Champions in 2019 and then missing the entire 2020 season due to the COVID-19 pandemic, it was a disappointing 2021 season for the Central Connecticut State football program.

The Blue Devils finished the 2021 season in fifth place in the Northeast Conference standings with a mediocre 4-7 (.364) overall record and a 4-3 (.571) conference record.

Out-of-conference games for the Blue Devils included matchups against Southern Connecticut State University, Southeastern Louisiana University, University of Miami (Fla.), and Columbia University. All were losses, including a record-breaking 69-0 loss at Miami.

CCSU's four wins came within the conference, including wins over Wagner University, Merrimack University, Bryant University, and Saint Francis University.

The Blue Devils averaged 21.1 points per game while

averaging 329.5 yards per game. The CCSU defense compiled 684 tackles, with 23 being quarterback sacks. They also intercepted passes nine times and had two defensive touchdowns.

Both sophomore Romelo Williams and graduate student Shon Mitchell saw snaps at quarterback. Williams completed 130 of his 230 (56.5%) passes, while Mitchell completed 61 of his 126 (48.4%) passes. Williams threw for ten touchdowns with five interceptions, while Mitchell threw for six touchdowns with two interceptions.

The Blue Devils were led in rushing by senior Nasir Smith, who ran for 607-yards on 125 carries with just two rushing touchdowns. Junior Aaron Dawson was right behind Smith with 400-yards on 98 carries and two touchdowns.

Senior Tyshaun James led the team in receiving with 674 receiving yards on 45 receptions with five touchdowns.

Freshman Isaiah Williams was second in receiving for the Blue Devils. He compiled 243-yards on 23 receptions.

The Blue Devils had seven players receive All-Northeast Conference honors after the 2021 season. Seniors Kelvin Apari, JJ Colimon, and James were selected to the All-NEC First

Team, while senior Tre Jones, junior Jahlil Brown, junior Chizi Umunakwe, and sophomore Tyler Boatwright were all named to the All-NEC Second Team. Apari and fellow senior Niam Coward were recognized by the National Football Foundation and College Football Hall of Fame as members of the 2022 NFF Hampshire Honor Society, an honor awarded to college football players for maintaining a 3.2 GPA throughout their careers.

With some players such as Tyshaun James graduating and others like Dexter Lawson Jr. entering the transfer pool, the Blue Devils have brought in some new talent to hopefully fill the holes left by the great players moving on after the 2021 season. The Blue Devils currently expect to have 22 new players join the team next fall. Of those 22 players, six are from Connecticut, while the others come from either New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, or Maryland.

The NEC has released the schedule for the upcoming 2022 season. Some notable games for the Blue Devils include the season opener against the University of Connecticut on Saturday, Sept. 3, and the NEC opener against defending Northeast Conference Champions at Sacred Heart University on Saturday, Sept. 10. The schedule consists of seven conference games and four out-of-conference games.



CCSU football did not participate in the 2020 season due to the pandemic.

STEVE
MCLAUGHLIN

SPOTLIGHT

Who is Thomas Pincince?



Tom Pincince (right) and new men's basketball head coach Patrick Sellers (left). **HARTFORD COURANT**



Tom Pincince became the Director of Athletics on Jan. 14, 2022. **TWITTER / TOM PINCINCE**

BY ANDREW DECAPUA
SPORTS EDITOR

Thomas Pincince's dedication to providing Central Connecticut State University's student-athletes with quality Division I experience on and off the field of play makes him the right person to lead CCSU's athletic department.

Pincince hopes that every student-athlete that goes through CCSU leaves knowing that they had the best experience possible and are proud to call themselves Blue Devils.

"Our number one goal is to provide a quality Division I experience for every one of our student-athletes, and that comes on the field, in the classroom, and socially within the community," Pincince said. "To impact their lives in a way that they leave here knowing they had the best experience they could. Some of that may come with wins, not every team is going to win every single year but provide them the opportunity to be part of a team and a university they could be proud of when they leave here."

Pincince's passion and dedication to the well-being of CCSU's student-athletes have rubbed off on his coaching staff. CCSU's men's soccer Interim Head Coach, David Kelly, said that Pincince understands the importance of preparing the student-athletes for life after

CCSU.

"Tom understands that it is our job to make sure that we do our utmost to prepare them for the journey after college. He gets that the mission of athletics, in our own small way, is trying to affect change in the world by making a difference in the lives of our student-athletes," Kelly said. "I think the reason Tom has entrusted me with the men's soccer program is because we both understand that our overarching responsibility is to safeguard the quality of the experience of the student-athlete."

CCSU's women's soccer Head Coach Mick D'Arcy, who has been at the school for twenty-two seasons, said that he is not surprised that Pincince invests so much in the academic success of CCSU's student-athletes.

"People define success in college athletics in many ways. Tom's message has always been clear," he said. "He wants us to recruit future Blue Devils who are not only great student-athletes but great people too."

D'Arcy said Pincince is an educator at heart, so it is no surprise that he expects our student-athletes to get the job done in the classroom.

Pincince's other defining characteristics are his leadership and communication skills, both of which are especially important when leading an athletic department.

He leads by example and constantly

communicates with the school's various coaching staff.

"Tom leads by example. We all know how important CCSU is to him. He is a Blue Devil. He wants to win, and he wants to win in the right way," D'Arcy said. "We see Tom every day. He is in the trenches with us. He knows what is going on, and he is there to help us in any way he can."

Pincince, a native of Woonsocket, R.I., began his journey at CCSU in 2002 when he joined the university as Assistant Director of Athletics and Sports Information Director. He also held the position of Assistant Director of Athletics for Communications and Media Services.

Before being named CCSU's official Director of Athletics on Jan. 14, 2022, Pincince served as Interim Director of Athletics for two years. During that time, nine out of sixteen teams had a perfect Academic Progress Rate, eleven of those sixteen teams had a collective team GPA of 3.0 or higher, and five individual student-athletes achieved Northeast Conference Scholar-Athlete honors. The Blue Devils also saw success on the field by winning six-team conference championships and producing nineteen individual conference champions during Pincince's time as interim athletic director.

He accomplished all that despite taking over

as interim athletic director just as the COVID-19 pandemic began. According to Pincince, it was a difficult time for sports on all levels, and that was no different for CCSU.

"It has limited schedules and rosters because sometimes there are teams playing without some of their players. Whether that is a positive case or contact with a positive case. We lost an entire spring season back in 2020," Pincince said. "I think it has taken its toll, and there has been a lot of testing for our student-athletes. I think that has taken a toll on some teams, and there is some stress that comes with testing the day before a game. They do not know if they are going to be able to play or not, have that opportunity to travel or not."

Pincince's vision for the future of CCSU athletics is to put together a leadership group that can sustain a plan that allows student-athletes to have the best experience they can while doing it in a budget-friendly way.

"We are going to put a group together and look at what the future looks like for Central Athletics. How do we stay sustainable and put together a plan to make sure that our student-athletes have the best Division I experience that they can while we are doing it in a budget-conscious way to make sure that we are meeting the needs of our student-athletes and our teams," Pincince said.

How the COVID-19 Shutdown Impacted CCSU Athletes' Mental Health



Dexter Lawson Jr. had a hard time dealing with the loss of CCSU football during the COVID-19 shutdown.

STEVE
MCLAUGHLIN

BY ADAM PROUD
CONTRIBUTOR

Sitting in the student center at Central Connecticut State, football player Dexter Lawson Jr. recalled the impact the COVID-19 shutdown had on his mental health when he could not play the sport he loved for almost a year.

"It definitely had an effect on my mental health because I use football as my scapegoat to get away from whatever I'm going through mentally," Lawson said. "So not being able to get away just go play football was frustrating and forced me to kind of figure out other outlets and things like that."

When the pandemic began in March 2020, the NCAA canceled all sports games indefinitely. Some sports returned at the end of Fall 2020, but all CCSU sports did not fully return until the Fall 2021 semester.

At Central, the football team and the indoor track team did not compete during the fall of the 2020 season.

A survey of 25,000 athletes conducted by the NCAA at the end of Fall 2020 showed that 94% of Division I athletes reported being tested for COVID. Of those, 14% tested positive for the virus.

Aaron Dawson, a running back who was on the Blue Devils football team when the pandemic began, said it was tough to adapt to the health and safety protocols in place when he returned.

"It was very difficult to get used to," Dawson said. "When we had to test, it was during the free time before practices where I'd like to eat or just relax and sometimes I couldn't do that."

Tom Pincince, the director of athletics at CCSU, said the lack of vaccines when college sports returned meant teams were facing continuous problems with having to quarantine.

"I remember when we first came back to campus, and if I got sick, I was going into isolation for 10 days and I was staying there for 10 days," Pincince said. "Well, if you were considered a contact with me, you were going to quarantine for 14 days. There were no questions asked. There was no vaccine. There was no boosters."

Sal Cintonino, the chief operations officer at CCSU, said the university worked with a number of groups to allow sports to return to the campus safely.

"It was a combination of working with our athletic director, working with the NCAA and the Northeast Conference, who we're a member of," Cintonino said. "And then we crossed over

the recommendations that we got nationally from them with what we were doing with the Department of Public Health in Connecticut. So, we had a mitigation plan for them."

Pincince said the strict testing protocols the athletics department and the university had in place allowed them to identify close contacts of athletes testing positive. This led to some sports teams on campus going into quarantine at least twice.

"When we first started playing, if a team had travelled on the bus somewhere and then somebody got sick and they tested positive, that whole team was going into quarantine," Pincince said. "We had a couple teams that went into quarantine at least twice during the season. And we were asking the athletes to stay here just so that they didn't go home and then have contact with somebody who could potentially be infected."

The national NCAA survey conducted in Fall 2020 found that athletes whose classes were only online had higher mental health concerns. Of them, 43% said academic worries were a significant contribution to this, and 33% said the lack of access to sports was a factor in a decline in mental health.

Lawson was one of these athletes who had no escape from schoolwork or classes because he couldn't play football. The CCSU cornerback said he couldn't even play by himself during the shutdown.

"I wasn't even able to really leave home. I couldn't just go to the field because a lot of the fields around where I'm from were closed off and nobody could go on there," Lawson said. "So, I couldn't even just go by myself and zone out things like that. It is that thing that kind of keeps you going, and all of a sudden, it just gets snatched away from you abruptly."