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SOUTHERN NEWS

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Students write letters to senators at event

**By Sarah Shelton
Photo Editor**

Students started discussing their university experiences with senators on Feb. 14 in an effort to save higher-education funding.

"I am worried about the lack of funding and lack of resources in the university," psychology major Tobe Nwajagu, a senior, said.

The "Pizza and Pens" event designed to "get that funding" had the slogan "Dear Senator, We need to talk about our relationship" on the flyer.

Students who attended were helped by faculty and volunteers to find their town senator, and write an email or letter to

the senators about their university experience.

Students wrote how the university has impacted them, both positively and negatively, and why taking away Connecticut State University funding will affect them. After, students got the opportunity to grab a slice of pizza and talk.

"I've paid my own tuition and I'm trying not to pay as much money as possible," psychology major Taylor Patire, a sophomore, said. "I'm 19, I work and I pay for my entire living situation, so it's already an ongoing struggle."

Patire is a student of Professor Cindy Stretch who helped host.

Stretch is an English

professor and also the chair of the organizing committee of the Connecticut State University American Association of University Professors.

"We've done these in the past, but the reason that we're doing this today is because Governor Lamont's proposed budget actually proposes a pretty significant cut for the budgets of the CSU system," Stretch said. "So that's a real problem for us. As inflation has gone up, as costs have gone up, as a student's needs have gone up."

"We have an opportunity to push back because in the budget process, he proposes and then the state legislature comes up with their own plan,

and then they negotiate," Stretch says. "So what we're doing is we're asking professors, we're asking students, faculty and staff to come in and contact their own state legislators. The people who represent them in their own towns, and tell them what budget cuts would mean to them personally, why they're here in the first place, right? Like what difference a university education makes in their lives and their families lives and their communities lives."

Some of the problems that can occur due to a budget cut are lower enrollment, class cuts and tuition increases.

"In the recent past, as the budgets have got-

ten tighter and tighter and as enrollment has declined, we've already seen pushes to make the classes a little bit bigger, right? Because they're canceling sections that are low," Stretch said. "The question is what's going to happen to my shifts at work if that class is only offered on a Tuesday, Thursday, but I have my schedule set up for Monday, Wednesday, Friday? Or like, I have to take another class at that exact same time. So what does it mean? If I take a summer class I have to pay extra for that. So there are all these things. These impacts are real you know."

Stretch was able to get Patricia Dillion, a member

of the Connecticut House of Representatives from the 92nd district, to come to the event and say a few words to the students.

"Things are changing. You need a solid education," Representative Dillion said. "We don't want you to move away because we're not doing what you need. We need to talk and I did sit on some of the hearings. Some of the briefings, I was a little bit alarmed that the senators weren't thinking through what they were doing. I don't know if we can do everything you need but we're going to give it our best. You have a lot of support, but keep it up and find out who your legislators are."

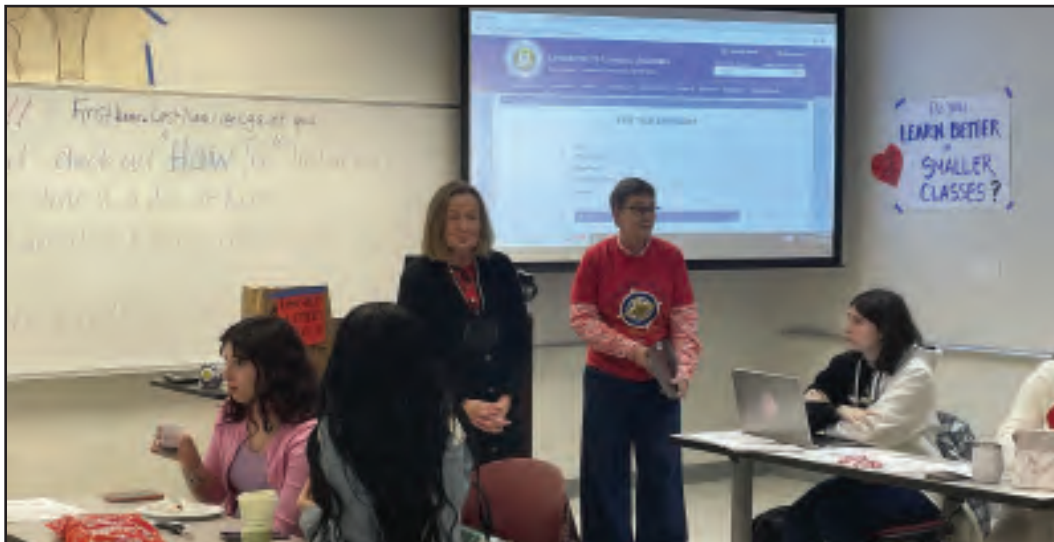


PHOTO | SARAH SHELTON

State Representative Patricia Dillion (left) and English professor Cindy Stretch (right).



PHOTO | SARAH SHELTON

Students and faculty writing letters to the senator about funding at CSU.

Anuli Njoku addresses racial disparities

**By Destene Savariau
News Writer**

At the inaugural interdisciplinary conversation conference series, Anuli Njoku addressed racial disparities in public health worldwide.

The event was hosted by the Interdisciplinary Department, collaborating with Africana Studies, Global Advisory Committee, Latin American and Caribbean studies, and the Latino/a/x and Native American Advancement Committee. Njoku discussed what public health meant and how it correlates worldwide.

"I went to Brazil last year, and it was actually to present at a conference. But I came back with so much more in terms of the things I learned and the people I met. My experience showed me that public health is global, it's interdisciplinary," said Njoku.

Njoku compared the racial disparities in healthcare in America and Brazil as it pertains to sickle cell disease. From the intersection between institutional racism and the neglect of of sickle cell disease to

how colorism plays a part in both countries.

"I think this information is not something that maybe people hear about every day, particularly, I think, the afro Brazilian experience or just the influence of Africa, and within the African diaspora," said Njoku.

Director of Interdisciplinary Studies Ann Lurkin, felt Njoku talked about everything from public health and how it relates to intercultural competence, language learning, food culture, anthropology, and ethnography and musicology.

"It was just such a great example of the kinds of interdisciplinary research that our faculty are doing, but also how it relates to student learning and their own reflections on their different disciplinary interests," said Lurkin.

This event was the first of its kind, Lurkin also reports wanting to expand into a reoccurring event. She explains how she thought that her faculty's excellent interdisciplinary research was connected to Student Excellence, both in their coursework and their academic journey.

"It's not just about their

majors. It's how they think that relates to their future goals, their personal interests, and their disciplinary interests," said Lurkin.

Communication Disorders major Elif Ibis, a sophomore, highlighted how she felt personally connected to Njoku's findings on disparities and discrimination in public health. As a Turkish, Muslim student she understood

Njoku's message.

"My mom wears the hijab. When people see her, I notice that people look at her differently. I noticed that in the American healthcare system there is discrimination against Muslim people as well," said Ibis.

Lurkin also states how she was glad this event allow students to hear the kinds of research that

faculty are doing and how it relates to the courses that they're taking and as well as their professional aspirations and trajectories.

"It was just such a great example of the kinds of interdisciplinary research that our faculty are doing, but also how it relates to student learning," said Lurkin.

Njoku encouraged the audience, especially

students, to participate in more study abroad programs as traveling is a form of education.

"The world is meant to be seen. My traveling experiences showed me that public health is global and it's interdisciplinary. It really I think reaffirmed my interest in the discipline and showed me why public health is important," said Njoku.



PHOTO | DESTENE SAVARIAU

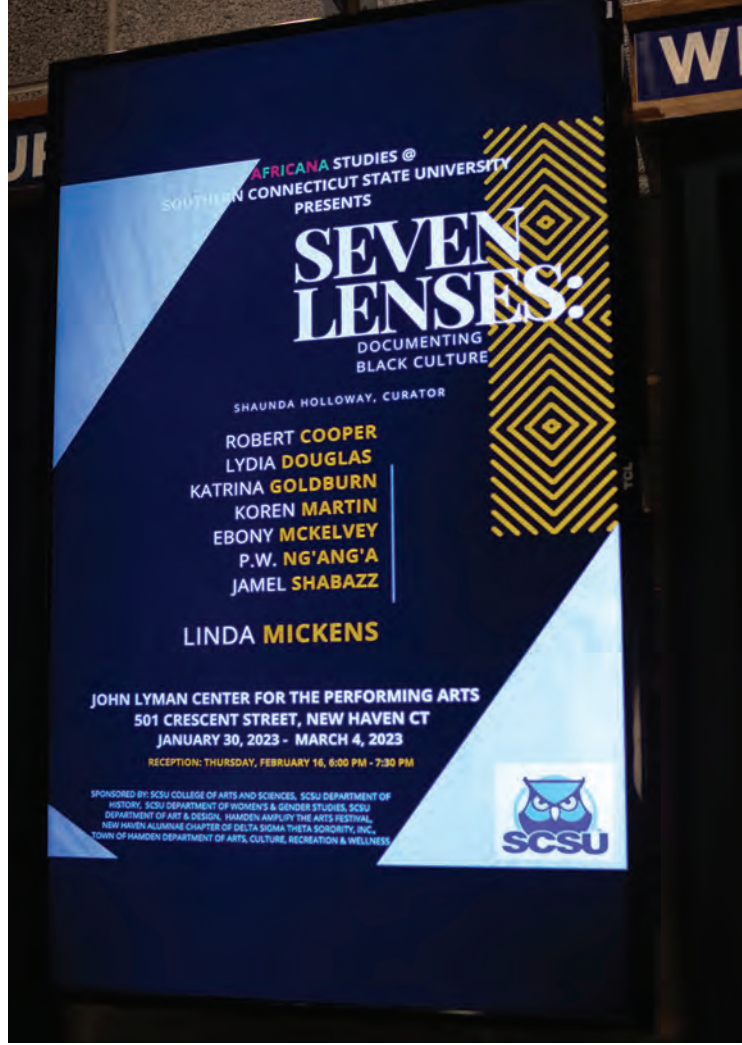
Anuli Njoku speaking about racial disparities and public health in the Adanti Student Center theater.

'Seven Lenses' event and artwork in Lyman

**Photos By Luke Molwitz
Photographer**

Seven Lenses is a reception "sponsored by the Africana Studies minor program and curated by Shaunda Holloway, that showcases the works of seven Black artists," according to the Southern Connecticut State University website. Located in the Lyman

Center, the exhibit will run until March 4. Artwork is by: Robert Cooper, Lydia Douglas, Katrina Goldburn, Koren Martin, Ebony McKelvey, P.W. Ng'Ang'a, Jamel Shabazz and Linda Mickens.



Seven Lenses digital flyer inside of the Lyman Center.



Robert Cooper, photographer.



Siobhan Carter-David, event co-director and associate professor of history.



Ebony McKelvey's "Alone" photographed in 2021.



Linda Mickens' "Sisters" sculpture from 1995.



Ebony McKelvey, photographer with her daughter.



"Seven lenses" photograph display.



Katrina Goldburn's "Lucretia was here" photograph.



From left to right: Lydia Douglas, photographer; Babz Rawls Ivy, reception host; Linda Mickens, sculptor; Katrina Goldburn, photographer.

Queer spirituality has a place at ‘Monthly Magic’

By Ali Fernand
Features Editor

Representation of different religious practices has grown to cover an array of faiths on campus. However, Monthly Magic seeks to add a unique perspective for those who still may not feel included.

“We gather together once a month to discuss topics of queer spirituality as well as that of folk wisdom and magic from around the world,” Monthly Magic’s mission statement says.

This group is dedicated to shining a light on the queerness that can be found in spirituality. There is no religious affiliation, making this an open space for conversation.

“Monthly Magic helps to educate students on the history of religion and spirituality in all faiths,” SAGE Center graduate intern Brandon Iovene said. “It demonstrates how queerness has been interwoven in these faiths.”

These topics explore spiritual beliefs such as angels, crystals, God, deities, tarot cards and many other practices. Each week, Nagri will prepare a lecture to educate those who attend. This includes topics within his beliefs and outside of them.

Nagri himself is a devout Episcopalian, a progressive form of Christianity. As someone who practices religion, he wanted to create an inclusive interfaith group on campus. The idea initially was to begin a rosary group. Though after thinking through facilitating the



Students participating in a Monthly Magic activity on Nov 29, 2022.

PHOTO | KYLE NAGRI

rosary group, he then began to create different plans.

“I decided a discussion group would be more prudent and interesting for college students,” Nagri said.

With this type of group, the experience is much more diverse. Faiths of all kinds are talked about. The rosary group would have entailed time praying, which Nagri felt was not intriguing to others. Instead, Monthly Magic was created to offer a different type of spiritual experience.

“I think your average student doesn’t feel

included in that because most aren’t religious, they practice spirituality,” Nagri said.

Talking to his other queer friends, he came to notice that their spiritual practices did not revolve around a specific religious institution. He describes much of what they were doing as folk magic, such as candle magic, crystals and tarot cards.

Historically, queer people have felt excluded from various religious practices. Queer activists have criticized different forms of religions for

anti-homosexuality, anti-transgender people and against female leadership within religion.

“Religious institutions can be exclusionary to queer individuals and such bigotry can cause many people to feel disconnected from their spiritual selves,” Iovene said.

Iovene grew up Catholic but left because of the bigotry against his sexual orientation. He now practices Paganism, which has helped him recover from some of the religious trauma he endured from the church.

Nagri said that most meetings had drawn 20 attendees looking to practice and learn. He even said that some of the attendees are atheist students, looking just to educate themselves on the history of different religions and spiritual practices.

“We are filling a void for those people who feel like they don’t fit in at your average interfaith gathering,” Nagri said.

Monthly Magic is sponsored by PRISM and hosted by SAGE, both queer

focused organizations on campus. This collaboration allows for queer students to further explore different experiences they might have. SAGE takes its home on the third floor of the student center, where it has other events and resources for students.

“It’s a supportive space to discuss the historical context and queer themes in religion and spiritual practices,” Iovene said.

With this help, Monthly Magic facilitates more than just education and an open space. They can also help students in their practices.

“We have a free resource table where we offer free crystals, rosary beads, spiritual tools, tarot cards, statues and icons,” Nagri said.

This gives students easy access to some of the practices they are learning about. They even have an hour after each talk to partake in an activity. This even includes a tarot card reader who gives free readings.

“I read tarot as a means of connecting to folks with art and symbolism,” tarot reader Ellis Critter, a junior said.

Monthly Magic continues to explore different ideas within queerness, spirituality and magic. They do this monthly and are continuing to collaborate with other organizations to spread education.

“We do these queer intersections about thinking about God, the divine, angels, deities, that you typically wouldn’t think are queer and we investigate how they are queer,” Nagri said.

Review: Romcom ‘Your Place or Mine’ is a hot mess

By Ali Fernand
Features Editor

Your Place or Mine is a romantic comedy that came out this month. It stars Reese Witherspoon of “Legally Blonde” fame as Debbie and Ashton Kutcher from “That ‘70s Show” as Peter. Going into this movie, I am a big fan of Reese Witherspoon and her movies. Legally Blonde is an iconic female empowerment movie. To be completely honest, I have never watched any movie or show starring Ashton Kutcher before.

My opinion on romcoms is usually negative. I find a lot of them not romantic or funny despite the name. I also feel like a lot of them get into a creepy territory involving obsessiveness or stalking. Though this movie is quite corny, I felt that it fulfilled everything a romcom should be. I’m thinking this movie was made for middle aged people considering the casting, I watched with my dad and my stepmom. Watching this movie with them gave me a better experience than I would have had by myself.

The plot is about two best friends Debbie and Peter. They have been friends for 20 years after having a rather spicy encounter

one night when they were younger. Nothing ever progressed after that, but they became very close. They got each other through difficult times such as death, divorce, addiction and being a single parent.

During the beginning of the movie, Debbie is living in Los Angeles where both are from, and Peter is living in New York City. The movie made it difficult to figure out what their occupations were, but it was irrelevant to the plot, so I let it slide. Peter lives in this beautiful penthouse with a perfect view of what I assume is the Brooklyn Bridge. He lives very lavishly with younger girlfriends and works for a big company.

Debbie is living a modest life as a single mother. She has a cottage-like house and works for a school that her son attends. I honestly don’t know what she does, the movie makes it not clear.

Spoiler alert, this is a love story between these two. Debbie plans to visit him for his birthday and to finish up her degree. I don’t know what degree you can get by attending classes for a week, but I guess that’s not my problem. So, to help Debbie get her degree, Peter flies over to Los Angeles to take care of Debbie’s son Jack while Debbie stays in

his place.

The main plot of the movie depicts what happens as they switch places. Debbie hangs out with Peter’s weird younger ex-girlfriend and develops an odd friendship with her. Peter hangs out with Jack and discovers that Debbie has been a complete overprotective parent. This turns into a week where Peter tries to break Jack out of his bubble so he can be happier with his life. He has a ton of allergies and

physical issues, but he has been isolated from even trying to do things that he enjoys. This leads to a pretty wholesome connection between the two.

Debbie lives her best life in New York City. She goes out to bars with the younger ex-girlfriend. They flirt with people she met in classes, and one of the men happens to be an author she is a fan of. This leads to them hooking up and seeing each other. The movie rises into conflict with Debbie

discovering a novel that Peter had written and hid in his oven. She shows the novel to the publisher, but I don’t really know what ends up happening with the book. It acted more as an avenue to discover more about Peter’s true love for Debbie. His ex-girlfriend then encourages her to talk to Peter about how she truly feels. It ends with them getting into a fight about Peter’s lapse in judgment about Jack’s safety. She tells him off but then they see

each other in the airport and predictably forgive each other and kiss.

This movie is a bit of a mess, but it’s honestly very entertaining. It made me laugh and root for them to get together. There were a ton of plot holes and characters that were irrelevant to the story. I think this is everything romcoms have been, cheesy, goofy and bizarre. This was not a good movie, but it was definitely entertaining.

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**Column:
On the NBA**

**By Jaylen Carr
Sports Editor**



Lebron James broke the NBA all-time leading scoring record that stood for almost 40 years by former Los Angeles Lakers and Milwaukee Buck, Kareem Abdul-Jabbar.

According to ESPN's Dave McMenamin, "The scoring record was never, ever even thought of in my head because I've always been a pass-first guy." James may not have the same number of rings as Michael Jordan or Adul-Jabbar, but he has superior stats after age 35.

Usually, we see a decline in great players when they get past 35, but 38 year old James has defeated father time by averaging 30 points per game.

At age 38 and in his second to last season with the Washington Wizards, Jordan averaged 22 points per game, while Abdul-Jabbar averaged 23 points per game with the Lakers.

I thought Abdul-Jabbar's scoring record of 38,387 points would never to be broken because it seemed out of the realm but, if anyone could beat the record, it would be James.

According to CBS news, Abdul Jabbar said, "It takes unbelievable drive, dedication, and talent to survive in the NBA long enough to rack up that number of points when the average NBA career lasts only 4.5 years."

We are seeing something unprecedented in the NBA: a player at age 38 is playing like he is 28.

Despite James breaking the scoring record, Jordan's scoring artistry is unmatched. Jordan can close out a game like no other player can and has the best career average in the history of the NBA with 30.1 points per game.

James's longevity is one of the many reasons he is a top-five player to play the game. James is the greatest all-rounded basketball player because he can not only score but rebound like a center and pass like a point guard. Along with his 30 points per game, he is averaging eight rebounds per game and seven assists this season.

Despite his incredible effort in the box score, the Lakers are the 13th seed in the Western Conference and two games back from the play-in spot. They are 4-6 in their last 10 games and have a losing record at home.

For more of this column visit our website at the-southernnews.org

Women's Swim three-peat at NE10s

**By Avery Martin
Contributor**

On Feb. 12, the Southern Connecticut State University Women's swimming and diving team took home their third Northeast 10 (NE10) Conference Championship win in a row.

Psychology major Paola Castillo, a freshman won one gold and two silver medals.

"It was a really energetic meet and a really fun experience. I was glad to be a part of it for my first season. I scored and got podiums in events I needed to get podiums in," Castillo said.

Nursing major Gracie Marsh, a junior, says her second NE10 championships were different than past years.

"Definitely a very different experience from the past because we were able to have a crowd and have people actually watching us this time," Marsh said.

"Last year there were no spectators and so there was nobody cheering last year. That is a big part of swimming so having it this year really made the environment better".

Castillo's family, who are from California came to watch.

"My family surprised me and they did come to watch. It was another level of excitement for me. I was really happy to see them and have them there to support me and cheer me on," Castillo said.

Marsh, like Castillo, is also from out of state. She hails from Indiana and



PHOTO | SCSU.OWLS.COM

Women's swim team takes a team photo after their NE10 championship win.

says, "My family was able to come watch this year which was really different from last year. It was

great", Marsh said. Head coach Tim Quill was thrilled with the team's results.

For more of this story, visit our website at the-southernnews.org

Women's basketball improves to 16-9

**By Matt Cain
Contributor**

The Owls won against Franklin Pierce University in a conference matchup.

With the win, the Owls tied the University of New Haven's 11-7 record in the Northeast 10 standings heading into playoff competition.

A 24-point outing led them by guard Isabella Santoro, a graduate student. The Owls are now winners of six of their last seven games. This would be her season-high, averaging 11.5 points.

With this win, the Owls' record now stands at 16-9 this season. The Owls finished the game scoring 62 points.

The Owls grabbed 42 rebounds and got their hands on balls resulting in six steals on the night. The shooting was

a significant factor in the game, and the Owls outscored Franklin Pierce in all four quarters, shooting a team average of 63% from the floor.

A big help was from Santoro when she went four for five from the three-point range and nine for 10 from the field. She also grabbed eight rebounds of her own.

"I just brought high energy and played good defense to get the win," Santoro said.

Santoro did not do it alone; it was a team-win effort from the starters and bench. Forward Katie Williamson, a junior, would be the second leading scorer of the game, with 13 points, which is over her season average of 11.2 points per game. Williamson grabbed nine rebounds and owned the low post.

"Taking it day by day, focusing on the

moment. We got to take it one game at a time to go as far as we can," Williamson said.

In the second quarter, the Owls were dominant and came out with a 16-6 run, extending the lead.

However, the third quarter was one to forget as both teams went scoreless for four minutes.

Then, Franklin Pierce cut down the lead to just 13 points. This would cause the Owls to pick up their pace and finish strong. The Owls played a clean game which helped them to get the win.

Head coach Kate Lynch wanted everybody to rebounds, especially on the offensive side of the ball.

"We need to rebound the ball well and have everybody crash the offensive boards," Coach Lynch said.

In the second half, the Owls grabbed twice as many rebounds as for the first half. Santoro, four of her eight rebounds came in the second half, and they were on the defensive end. Guard Delaney Connors, a graduate student, grabbed six defensive boards as well.

They pulled out a team win with the Owls in the rebounding category. This game will be the season's second to last game, and then it will be time for the conference tournament.

For more of this story visit our website at the-southernnews.org



PHOTO | LUKE MOLWITZ

Foward Katie Williamson looks to pass the ball to an open teammate.

Men's Swim wins 15th NE10 title

**By Jaylen Carr
Sports Editor**

During the NE10, championship weekend, the university's Men's Swimming and Diving team won their second straight championship.

The Owls secured their 15th NE10 Championship, totaling 710 points to secure the victory outlasting Bentley University who scored 576 points through the weekend.

"Our team really stepped up to the plate and performed beautifully this past weekend," Head Coach Tim Quill said. "I'm very excited for all of it, especially the captains. They did an incredible job this year just keeping the team going and keeping them motivated."

McAllister Milne, a sophomore, was named the NE10 Male Swimmer

of the Meet after winning seven medals. The NE10 Male Swimmer of the Meet is given out to the top individual swimmer throughout the championship weekend.

"It feels great, just doing it twice," said Milne. "Last year obviously felt great because we haven't done it in a while."

Before the 2021-22 season, the Owls have not won an NE10 championship since 2018.

Milne won a gold medal in the 800 Freestyle Relay and 400-yard Medley Relay. Franklin Kuhn, a junior, tied Milne with seven medals after winning the 100 Yard Freestyle, placing first with a time of 45.72.

He was most proud of his 400-yard Medley Relay performance.

"It was the best-executed race for me," Milne said.

The Owls won 16 gold medals, three silvers and six bronzes during the championship weekend.

"It feels really good, especially this year because I was a captain," Kuhn said.

Quill credits the team's success the past two years, to how the program recruits talented swimmers and students.

"Without quality student-athletes that are willing to work to their truest potential," Quill said. "Maybe our program isn't what we see it to be now."

Quill credits assistant coach C.J. Morgan as a catalyst for the team's success because of his skills in recruiting and scouting talented swimmers.

For more of this story visit our website at the-southernnews.org



PHOTO | SCSUOWLS.COM

Men's swim team takes a group photo with the NE10 trophy after the win.