

UConnECE

A magazine for the UConn Early College Experience Community

SUMMER 2025 • VOLUME 15

BIG IDEAS

Come out of
the Blue





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THE DIRECTOR'S THOUGHTS



Looking Through the Leaves: UConn ECE's Expanding Reach & Vision

I recently had the opportunity to spend time with colleagues from across the state and our NACEP (National Alliance of Concurrent Enrollment Partnerships) friends at the Connecticut State Department of Education's sponsored NACEP Dual Credit Accreditation Institute hosted by Central Connecticut State University (CCSU). One NACEP team found themselves commenting on the beauty of Connecticut, specifically struck by the volume of trees they observed driving around the region. This comment immediately brought back childhood memories of summer days relaxing under a tree. There's something transfor-

mative about lying under a tree, sunlight breaking through the leaves, and watching the canopy ripple with promise. It mirrors the feeling students and educators experience through the UConn Early College Experience (ECE) program—grounded in opportunity, but always looking upward. With nearly 20,000 students statewide engaged this past academic year, ECE represents more than a head start on college—it's a pathway to academic self-discovery, growth, and inspiration.

Over the past three years, UConn ECE has broadened its course offerings significantly to meet the needs of students and the evolving requests of partner high schools. From computer science and environmental studies to new STEM and humanities electives, the program reflects a commitment to providing rigorous, relevant, and diverse learning experiences. Recent additions, such as ME 3295 (Industrial Design) and UNIV 1820 (First Year Seminar, Intro to Making), have allowed partner schools to integrate university-level coursework directly into their existing Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs—ensuring access for a wider range of students.

Central to this growth is continued support from university leadership, dedicated and inspiring UConn faculty and an ongoing expansion of pathways for certifying new UConn ECE Instructors. By improving access to training, graduate coursework, and credentialing opportunities, the program is empowering more high school educators to bring UConn courses into their classrooms. This approach not only enriches the professional lives of instructors but also ensures students from every corner of Connecticut have access to the same high standards of academic excellence.

As with the theme of this summer's magazine, "Big Ideas Come out of the Blue" and the view from beneath the tree, ECE's vision is one of infinite branches—each representing a unique student journey. With every new course, every new teacher, and every supported learner, the UConn Early College Experience program reaffirms its role as a statewide leader in concurrent enrollment. The light filtering through the canopy isn't just the sun—it's the future, breaking through.

To everyone in the UConn ECE Community—educators, counselors, administrators, partners, students, families and staff—thank you for your tireless commitment to expanding access, upholding excellence, and shaping opportunity for thousands of students across Connecticut. We hope this summer brought you the relaxation you've earned and moments of reflection beneath the trees, where new ideas and fresh inspiration can shine through.

With gratitude,

Christopher M. Todd
Executive Director



ece.uconn.edu

by the numbers



19,886

students

enrolled in UConn courses in their high schools through Early College Experience (ECE)

34,918 enrollments | **114,058** credits attempted

Check out our registration numbers:

1,761



UConn ECE course sections offered throughout the state

1,188



UConn ECE Instructors teaching throughout the state

193



Connecticut High Schools participating



Highest Number of Students Enrolled in UConn Courses:

443 Glastonbury High School
431 Edwin O. Smith High School
366 Conard High School
356 Trumbull High School
355 Ridgefield High School

354 Staples High School
346 Southington High School
342 Manchester High School
339 Norwich Free Academy
309 Hall High School

Highest Number of Students enrolled:
 Glastonbury High School

443

2024 - 2025 ACADEMIC YEAR

2023-2024
to
2024-2025

Highest enrollment increase:
 Classical Magnet School

560%

Highest Percent Enrollment Increase From 2023-2024:

560% ↑ Classical Magnet School
500% ↑ Grove School
268% ↑ Pomperaug Regional High School
214% ↑ Watertown High School
180% ↑ Wilby High School
123% ↑ Shepaug Valley School
122% ↑ Newtown High School
116.95% ↑ Amity Regional High School
116.67% ↑ Wheeler High School
115.79% ↑ Fairfield Ludlowe High School



Largest Percentage of High School taking UConn courses:

54.95% 📖 Academy of Science and Innovation
50.36% 📖 Marine Science Magnet High School
42.67% 📖 Edwin O. Smith High School
34.19% 📖 Xavier High School
32.35% 📖 Waterbury Career Academy
32.10% 📖 Franklin Academy
32.08% 📖 Bi-Cultural Hebrew Academy
30.48% 📖 Achievement First Amistad High School
30.44% 📖 Avon High School
30.30% 📖 University High School of Science and Engineering



Welcome!

Woodhouse Academy, ACES at Chase, Lakeview High School

Welcome Back!

Vinal Technical High School, Wilbur Cross High School, Eli Whitney Technical High School, Weaver High School, Bassick High School, Darien High School

UConn ECE Student Events

Another amazing year!

By Jessica Dunn | Photos by Gordon Daigle and Mike Illuzzi



Exploring the Depths: UConn ECE Marine Science Symposium Showcases Student Research

May 22 & 28, 2025

The 2025 UConn Early College Experience Marine Science Symposium made waves this spring at the UConn Avery Point Campus. With growing interest and over 175 student participants, the event expanded to two dates—May 22 and May 28—to accommodate the impressive turnout of UConn ECE student researchers and marine science enthusiasts from high schools across Connecticut.

Hosted on the scenic shores of Long Island Sound, the symposium provided an inspiring platform for high school students enrolled in UConn's ECE Marine Science courses (MARN1001E: The Sea Around Us and MARN1003E: Introduction to Oceanography with Lab) to showcase the results of their year-long research projects. Six schools participated in this year's event: University High School of Science and Engineering, Marine Science Magnet High School, Waterford High School, Ledyard High School, The Morgan School, and The Sound School.



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Students presented their work through a combination of oral presentations and detailed scientific posters. Research topics ranged from microplastic pollution and marine biodiversity to the impacts of climate change on coastal ecosystems. The diversity of subjects reflected not only the rigor of the student projects but also the enthusiasm and curiosity these young scientists bring to the field of marine science.

By splitting the schools between two dates, the symposium offered a more focused and engaging experience, allowing for deeper discussions, peer-to-peer feedback, and meaningful interactions with UConn faculty and marine science professionals. This format helped bridge classroom learning with the real-world application of scientific research.

Events like the Marine Science Symposium exemplify the power of experiential education. Students walked away with more than just academic credit—they gained confidence, presentation skills, and a genuine sense of belonging in the scientific community. Their work was not only ambitious and well researched but also impressively presented, showcasing a high level of professionalism and dedication. ■

UConn ECE Hosts First Allied Health Days

April 9 & 28, 2025

This past spring, UConn Early College Experience, in collaboration with Dr. Bruce Blanchard, UConn ECE Allied Health Faculty Coordinator, launched its first-ever Allied Health Days—interactive events designed to enrich UConn ECE students' understanding of health-related fields.

Students were welcomed to the UConn Storrs campus on April 9 and April 28, 2025. On April 9, students from E.C. Goodwin Technical High School enrolled in AH1100: Introduction to Allied Health Professions participated in the day's programming, and on April 28, the spotlight turned to AH2001: Medical Terminology students from The Morgan School.

At each of these sessions, ECE students rotated through multiple stations where they were able to perform phlebotomy on manikins, examine blood disorders and pathogens under the microscope, determine blood type, and perform a urine test to determine metabolic or renal disorders. Following the hands-on laboratory portion of the event, students attended an Allied Health



Sciences lecture in a UConn classroom.

These inaugural events mark the beginning of what promises to be an exciting new student enrichment opportunity. A full review of the Spring 2025 Allied Health Days will be featured in our upcoming Winter Magazine. We look forward to continuing these immersive experiences in Fall 2025 and Spring 2026! ■





A Competition of STEM Excellence

CT Science OLYMPIAD State Finals 2025

By Janet Belvel
CT State Director, CT Science
Olympiad
UConn ECE Instructor at
South Windsor High School

March 2025

The University of Connecticut's Storrs campus hosted over 40 high school teams from across the state for the 2025 Connecticut Science Olympiad State Finals. Sponsored by UConn's Early College Experience program, the competition showcased the creativity, problem-solving skills, and scientific expertise of Connecticut's brightest young minds.

This year's event featured a dynamic mix of challenges, from hands-on engineering events like Helicopters and Electric Vehicles to rigorous knowledge-based tests in Anatomy and Chemistry. Each competition pushed students to think critically, collaborate effectively, and apply their scientific knowledge under pressure.

After a day of intense competition, South Windsor High School emerged as the state champion, earning the opportunity to represent Connecticut at the National Science Olympiad Tournament at the University of Nebraska in Lincoln. Hopkins School claimed second place, while Wilton High School secured third, followed closely by Avon High School in fourth. Their achievements reflect months of hard work, dedication and a deep passion for STEM subjects by students and their dedicated coaches.

While trophies and rankings highlight the competition, the heart of Science Olympiad lies in the experiences it creates. Students took on scientific challenges, worked with their partners, and struggled through complex problems as a team. Whether they were fine-tuning an engineering design, solving chemistry puzzles, or testing flight mechanics, every participant walked away with new skills and unforgettable memories.



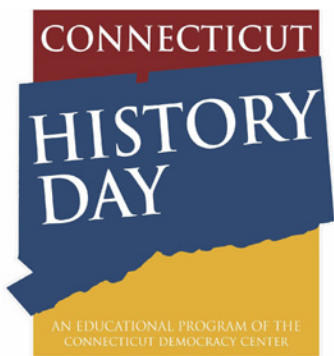
This year's tournament was a testament to the strength of Connecticut's science education community. Thanks to the dedication of coaches, the generosity of sponsors, and the continued support of UConn's ECE program, Science Olympiad remains a transformative experience for students across the state. We look forward to seeing what next year's teams will do in the competition! ■

Introduction by Christopher Todd

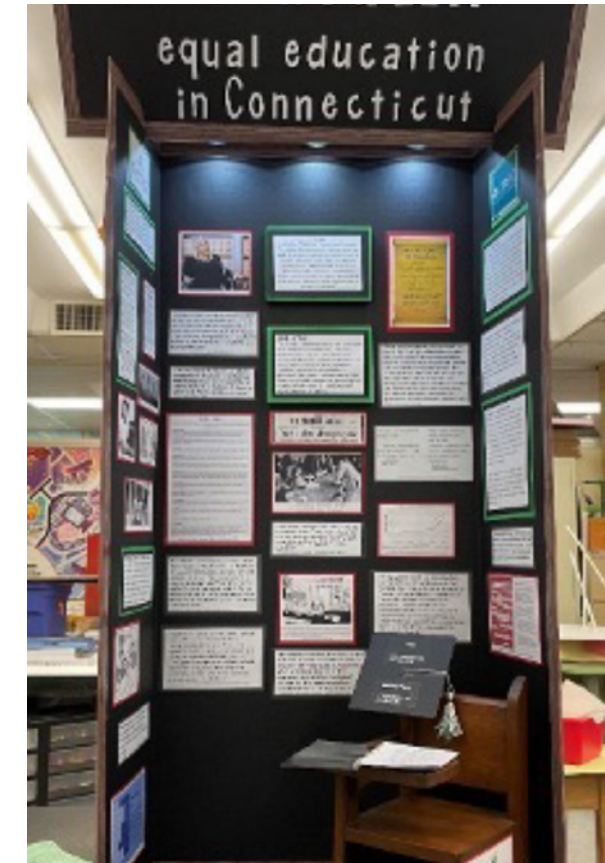
Body and participant data by Cyndee McManaman,
CT History Day Regional Coordinator

— “Rights & Responsibilities in History” —

Connecticut History Day Scholars
Descend on Storrs
March 29, 2025



The University of Connecticut and the Office of Early College Programs is proud to support Connecticut History Day (CHD), an enriching program that empowers students to explore the past through in-depth research and critical thinking. This year’s theme, “Rights & Responsibilities in History”, resonates deeply with UConn’s mission to cultivate an informed, engaged citizenry committed to upholding democratic values. By encouraging students to investigate the historical struggles for rights and the responsibilities that accompany them, UConn and Connecticut History Day together help nurture the next generation of civic-minded leaders ready to contribute meaningfully to their communities and beyond.



On Saturday, March 29th, UConn Storrs hosted 25 schools comprised of 29 educators and 468 students for the Mansfield Regional Connecticut History Day Contest. In total, 4,106 students participated in Connecticut History Day contests this year, with the State Contest held at Central Connecticut State University (CCSU) on Saturday, May 3rd.

Cyndee McManaman, the Mansfield Regional Coordinator, wrote: “While we have quite the growing library of resources on the CHD website, the workshops are a powerful tool to support our educators and students. It’s so exciting for me to travel to different classrooms and work with our History Day participants! Seeing history through the eyes of our students, and understanding their passion for what they’ve learned, is inspiring!”

Several Mansfield Region students received awards or recognition at the National History Day Contest held at the University of Maryland-College Park June 9-13, 2025.

MEDALS

Seniors Amanda Zadnik and Simonne Thibeault (E.O. Smith High School) finished third in Senior Group Exhibit, “Rewarded by Death: How Operation Columba Exemplifies the Rights and Responsibilities of Civilians in Wartime”

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SPECIAL PRIZES

Julianne Pashe and Katie Smith (Ellington Middle School) received the World War II History Prize for their Junior Group Exhibit “Civilian Public Service Camps: The Compromise between Personal Rights and National Responsibility”

Vivaan Pandey and Vyom Kadegaonkar (Timothy Edwards Middle School) received the George Washington Leadership in History Award for their Junior Group Documentary, “Shays’ Rebellion: The Uprising that Shaped a Nation”

AWARDS

Bhaavni Kirshna (South Windsor High School) was awarded the Outstanding CT Award (Senior Division), finishing 7th place overall with her Senior Individual Performance “Noor Inayat Khan: A Responsibility to Resist”

FINALISTS

Lillian Magnoli (Timothy Edwards Middle School) 4th place Junior Paper, “Don’t Call Her a Business Woman; Call Her a Woman in Business; Beatrice Fox Auerbach’s Pioneering View of Rights and Responsibilities in History”

Emma Hennessey, Emma O’Brien and Lily Flynn (Timothy Edwards Middle School) 10th place Junior Group Performance, “The Abolitionist Who Never Stopped Writing: The Liberator’s Fight for Anti-Slavery”

Aarna Jaggi (Timothy Edwards Middle School) 10th place Junior Individual Website, “A Line in the Sand, A River of Blood: The Partition that Stole Millions of Rights”



Salma Hassan and Sohyla Hassan (Madina Academy) 9th Place Junior Group Website, “Luminous Lives, Remarkable Legacy: The Radium Girls’ Fight for Workplace Rights and Employer Responsibilities”

Salma Mahmoud, Sidra Bedir, Tasneem Zoghol and Zainah Khaliq (Madina Academy) 9th place Senior Group Performance “Nellie Bly, Asylum Spy: Exposing the Abuse of Patient Rights and Neglect of Medical Responsibilities”

Faqiha Faheem, Noora Mahmoud and Sarah Elsherbini (Madina Academy) 9th place Senior Group Website “The Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire: From Tragedy to Reform”



HONORABLE MENTION (Top 20)

Kalyani Tihaiya and Mia Chen (E. O. Smith High School) Senior Group Performance “From California’s Campuses to Communities: Asian Student Activists’ Fight for Inclusivity”

Jacob Brown (Rockville High School) Senior Individual Exhibit “Sheff v. O’Neill: Equal Education in Connecticut”

Noor Hassan (Madina Academy) Senior Individual Website “Rights Denied, Responsibilities Betrayed: The Veiled Injustice of the Untreated Syphilis Study”

It is important to remember that the National History Day is not just a day, but an experience. Once students met with judges, they enjoyed a myriad of activities ranging from button trading to an Ice Cream Social and a day spent in Washington D.C. where the group met Senators Blumenthal and Murphy and toured the Capitol. Avner Wilson-Spiro from Wilton High School was one of only ten students invited to participate in the prestigious writers workshop at the White House. Jacob Brown from Rockville High School represented CT with his exhibit on Sheff v. O’Neill at the National Museum of American History as part of a day-long display of 47 History Day projects. ■

The Language of...

The 2025 UConn Italian Multimedia Competition

By Jessica Dunn

May 2025

The 2025 UConn Early College Experience Italian Multimedia Competition brought Italian language learning to life through creativity, culture, and connection. Now in its second year, the contest—led by UConn ECE Italian Faculty Coordinator, Dr. Tina Chiappetta-Miller—invited students to explore the theme “Il linguaggio...della natura” (The Language of... Nature) through original multimedia projects combining images, words, and sound.

More than just a language showcase, the competition encouraged students to think artistically and globally. Nearly 30 diverse and imaginative entries were submitted, ranging from poetic video essays to narrated animations and soundscapes inspired by the natural world.

For the second consecutive year, the judging panel was composed of 9th-grade students from Florence’s Istituto Agrario (Agricultural Institute). With thoughtfulness and care,



they evaluated the submissions and selected the winners. Their final selections were shared in a special video presentation by jury representatives Lapo, Ettore, and Lorenzo, adding a personal and international dimension to the event.

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The competition reflects the mission of UConn Italian and UConn ECE—to make language learning meaningful, immersive, and creative. By blending digital tools with cultural expression, students not only practiced Italian but brought it to life in new and powerful ways.

As this year’s entries show, Italian is more than a subject—it’s a living, expressive language.

Through “Il linguaggio...della natura,” students gave voice to both language and nature, reminding us of the beauty that emerges when the two meet.

Congratulations to all participants and winners! ■



Scan QR code to view winning submissions



Primo posto

Melany Patino-Ortiz & Sueha Chowdury
John F. Kennedy HS

“Il testimone silenzioso di Venezia” (poesia) e “Venezia, città dell’acqua” (dipinto)

Primo posto

Melany Patino-Ortiz & Sueha Chowdury
John F. Kennedy HS

Secondo posto

Tiago Oliveira
Holy Cross High School

“Natura, Parla” (poesia) e “L’armonia della natura” (immagine illustrata)

Terzo posto

Davide Cassetta
Holy Cross High School

“Il Custode della Foresta” (racconto) e “Il sole sull’Impero Romano” (immagine illustrata)

Spring 2025

UConn ECE MELD: High School Students Engage in Hands-On Chemistry at UConn

UC MELD | May 2025

By Dr. Michael Kienzler | Dr. Fatma Selampinar
Assistant Professor | UConn ECE Faculty Coordinator for Chemistry
UConn Chemistry | Associate Professor in-Residence UConn Chemistry

More than 240 students from 12 high schools—Rocky Hill High School, O.H. Platt High School, Enfield High School, Berlin High School, The Woodstock Academy, University High School of Science and Engineering, Jonathan Law High School, Joseph A. Foran High School, Daniel Hand High School, Bristol Eastern High School, Academy of Information Technology & Engineering, and Lewis S. Mills High School—across Connecticut gathered at the University of Connecticut's Chemistry Building for the annual ECE Chemistry Lab Day. Held over two sessions on May 20 and May 22, 2025, the event provided students with immersive, hands-on laboratory experiences that offered exposure to UConn lab environments and research practices.

The MELD (May ECE Lab Day) event was coordinated by the UConn Early College Experience Program Office and Dr. Fatma Selampinar, Professor in Residence and UConn ECE Chemistry Faculty Coordinator. Science activities were hosted by Assistant Professor Dr. Michael Kienzler. Following Dr. Kienzler's presentation, students transitioned to six undergraduate teaching laboratories, where they conducted a series of experiments designed by Dr. Kienzler. These sessions were supervised by graduate students, providing participants with hands-on experience in a collegiate laboratory setting. This collaborative effort offered high school students an immersive introduction to advanced chemical research and methodologies, fostering early engagement with the scientific community at UConn. Students synthesized three different derivatives of the dye azobenzene, a compound known for its photoswitching properties—changing structure when exposed to specific wavelengths of light. The students then investigated the properties of the azobenzene they made using ultraviolet/visible spectroscopy and thin layer chromatography. These experiments mirror ongoing research going on in Dr. Kienzler's lab.

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Beyond the laboratory work, participants engaged with UConn's advanced scientific equipment. Dr. Selampinar coordinated sessions introducing students to Nuclear Magnetic Resonance (NMR) spectroscopy, while graduate students provided insights into mass spectrometry techniques. These experiences aim to familiarize students with tools and methodologies prevalent in modern chemical research.

The UConn ECE Chemistry Lab Day not only enriches students' understanding of chemistry but also fosters connections between high school students and UConn faculty and graduate students. Such initiatives underscore the UConn ECE and Chemistry Department's commitment to bridging secondary education with higher learning, inspiring the next generation of scientists. ■

UConn ECE Chinese Talent Show

By Dr. George Chunsheng Yang | Photos by Gordon Daigle and Mike Illuzzi

March 14, 2025

On March 14, 2025, UConn ECE, in collaboration with UConn’s Language, Cultures, and Literature (LCL) Chinese program, hosted a Chinese Talent Show for both UConn ECE Chinese high school students and UConn Chinese students. Hosted at the UConn Student Union Theater, the event featured more than 20 student-led performances, and drew an audience of more than 150 students, instructors, and community members, all eager to witness the creativity and dedication of high school and college Chinese learners.

The event showcased a wide variety of performances, including solo and group singing, traditional and modern dance, Chinese poem recitations, and engaging sanju ban (a comic dialogue style popular in Chinese storytelling). Between the acts, UConn ECE Chinese instructors hosted interactive mini-games and cultural trivia sessions, keeping the audience entertained and engaged throughout the event.

At the end of the event, three standout performances were honored with special awards. The Best Language Expression Award went to Amity High School for their flawless Mandarin poem recitation. The Best Performance Award went to Norwich Free Academy for their powerful Taiji dance. The most Popular Award went to Amity High School for their popularity among the audience.

The event was proudly sponsored by UConn ECE Office and UConn Chinese Program. The Talent Show reflects a broader community-wide initiative to foster cultural understanding, confidence in Chinese communication, and global competence through language education. ■



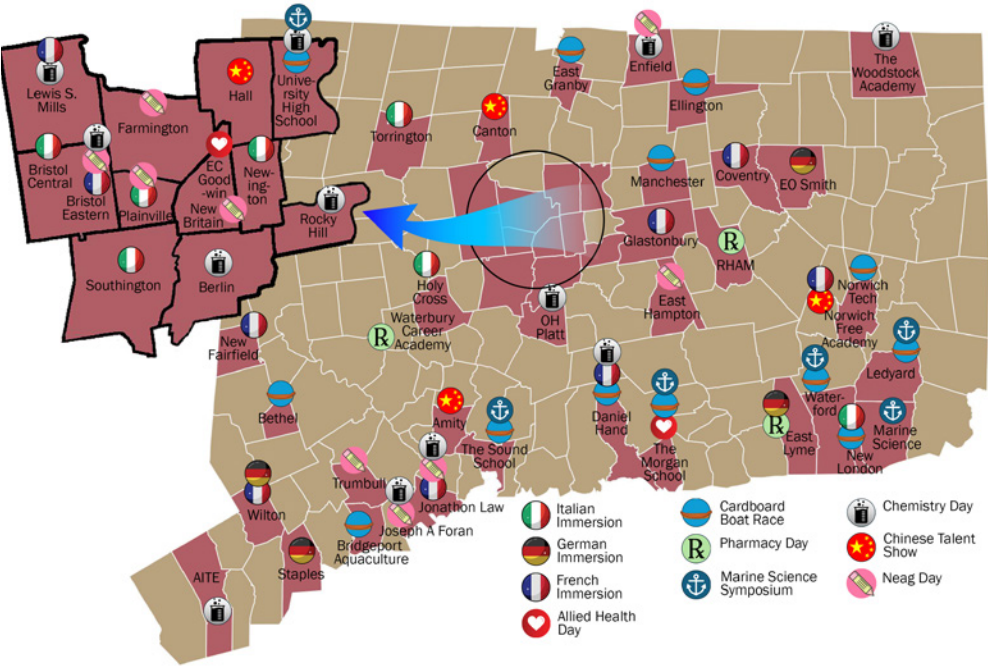
High School Engagement in Student Events Across the State

By Jessica Dunn / Image by Carissa Rutkauskas

In the winter 2024–2025 edition of our magazine, we introduced a map showcasing the Connecticut high schools that participated in UConn ECE student events during the Fall semester. Since then, the map has been expanded to capture the full scope of the 2024–2025 academic year—including all student events held throughout the Spring semester.

This updated version reveals an even broader level of engagement, with many additional high schools now represented. The growth in participation highlights the increasing enthusiasm among schools across the state to connect with UConn ECE student enrichment opportunities with a deep investment and emphasis on access for all students. From large urban districts to small rural communities, the updated map tells a compelling story of how academic curiosity and opportunity continue to spread.

We’re proud to see such strong involvement from our partner schools and applaud the efforts of instructors, students,



and UConn ECE Faculty Coordinators who make these valuable learning opportunities possible. We look forward to continuing this momentum and encourage all high schools to take advantage of the valuable opportunities available to students across various disciplines. ■

UConn ECE Health Sciences Day

By Dr. C. Michael White

This year’s Health Sciences Day at the UConn School of Pharmacy brought together high school students from East Lyme, RHAM, and Waterbury high schools. They engaged with UConn faculty members (Ms. Laura Nolan and Drs. C. Michael White, Robin Bogner, Jennifer Giroto, and Nathaniel Rickles), a CVS pharmacist/UConn Alum ‘93 (Dr. Galushko), and a P4 Pharmacy Student (Ms. White) in three hands-on activities.

First, they navigated a cardiac arrest on our simulation manikin where they had to recognize the rhythm, give chest compressions and mask valve artificial breathing, and then select, draw up and administer the correct doses of drugs in between defibrillator shocks. Next, they moved to the compounding laboratory where they were able to create brand new dosage forms. This is something that pharma-

cists do for patients who cannot tolerate the normal doses of medications, cannot swallow pills, or require a cream that does not exist commercially. Finally, they learned how to draw up medications like vaccines, insulin, and weight loss drugs into syringes, expel the air bubbles, and administer them properly in muscle or the subcutaneous fat of the arms or belly.

This was followed by a luncheon with pizza, a brief presentation on careers in pharmacy ranging from community, hospital, nuclear, pharmaceutical industry, and managed care settings, and then informal discussions about the day’s events. Students loved intermingling with those from other schools, seeing the UConn campus, and applying what they learned in their UConn ECE courses to real world scenarios, but in a simulated environment. ■

REGISTRATION

Registration Open

September 16, 2025 – October 16, 2025

Fall, Full-Year, and Spring Course Adds & Drops

September 16, 2025 – October 16, 2025

Spring Course Adjustment Period

February 2, 2026 – February 6, 2026

WITHDRAWALS

Fall Courses

October 17, 2025 – December 12, 2025

Full-year Courses

October 17, 2025 – May 1, 2026

Spring Courses

February 7, 2026 – May 1, 2026

STUDENT EVENTS

Cardboard Boat Race

September 19

Italian Immersion Day & Quiz Bowl

October 23

UConn ECE Neag Day

October 24

German Immersion Day and Quiz Bowl

November 12

French Immersion Day and Quiz Bowl

November 20

CT History Day

March 7

CT Science Olympiad

April 25

INSTRUCTOR WORKSHOPS

Tentative schedule, subject to change. Check our website for updates. Additional workshops will be added throughout the year. Invitations will be emailed to Instructors.

US History Workshop

September 25

Philosophy Workshop

September 26

Chemistry Workshop

October 9

Business Workshop

October 10

Chinese Workshop

October 10

History 1300 Workshop

October 14

Mechanical Engineering Workshop

October 17

Marine Sciences Workshop

October 17

Economics Workshop

October 22

Physics Workshop

October 22

HRTS Workshop (at Global Affairs Human Rights Summit)

October 23

Library Media Specialist Workshop

November 6

Sociology Workshop

November 7

Music Workshop

November 13

English Workshop

November 21

Plant Science Workshop

January 8, 2026

CE (Engineering) Workshop

January 15, 2026

HIST 1400 Workshop

February 25, 2026

Political Science Workshop

February 27, 2026

English Conference

March 9, 2026

American Sign Language Workshop

March 11, 2026

Allied Health Workshop

March 16, 2026

Biology Workshop

March 24, 2026

Library Media Specialist Workshop

March 26, 2026

HDFS Workshop

May 12, 2026

New Instructor Orientation

May 18, 2026

COURSE EVALUATIONS

Fall 2025 courses

Jan 2 – Jan 31, 2026

Spring 2026 and Full-year

May 1 – May 31, 2026

MISCELLANEOUS

NACEP National Conference

October 26-28

Fall Faculty Coordinator Lunch & Learn

November 10

Spring Faculty Coordinator Brunch & Learn

March 4, 2026

2026 UConn ECE Professional Recognition Awards Celebration

April 23, 2026

New Instructor Orientation

May 18, 2026

Introduction to New Pre-College Summer Director

By Bobbi-Jo Wathen

In February, Dr. Bobbi-Jo Wathen joined UConn full time as the Director of Pre-College Summer. She is no stranger to UConn’s Office of Early College Programs as she has been a Site Representative for the UConn Early College Experience program since 2014. Dr. Wathen has also been teaching in the UConn Counselor Education Master's program since 2018 when she started her doctoral studies at the University. As a doctoral student from 2018 through 2023 her research focused on supporting black males through post-secondary transitions. Her mentors created opportunities to publish several works on this topic, contributing to the academic discourse. Her desire to engage in this research began when she was a high school counselor, and she witnessed the inequities in college access.

In 2011, she earned her master’s degree in Counseling Psychology with a concentration in School Counseling from Cambridge College and started a wonderful career in school counseling. Since then, she has worked in a variety of school settings and supported numerous students as they explored careers and made postsecondary plans. She has been a longtime advocate for high quality rigorous education for all and worked alongside organizations like the Legal Defense Fund, The Sheff Foundation, and NCWIT’s Counselors for Computing to create a real impact for students and families.



In her most recent position, she was the School Counseling Department Head at a large title one school district in CT. In this leadership role, she was able to adjust her service to supporting school counselors and district leaders with the same goal in mind, providing exceptional rigorous education for students that lead to positive postsecondary outcomes. During this time, she worked closely with CT Rise to create functional systems that evaluate school level data to impact student success as students transition into high school and out of high school.

Becoming a full-time Husky has brought much joy. From Johnathan sightings, basketball games, the beautiful sunsets, and a lively quad on a warm day are the things that make UConn special to her. More than that, she has really enjoyed preparing for her first summer welcoming high school students from around the globe to UConn’s Pre-College Summer program. She can’t wait to watch young high school students fall in love with UConn and build the confidence they need to find a sense of belonging in college. She believes every young person should have a champion telling them they CAN and SHOULD pursue higher education if they want to. This program has the opportunity to give that to the young people who find their way to campus. ■

2025 Annual Site Representative Conference

By Todd Blodgett

The annual Site Representative Conference was held this May at the UConn Avery Point campus in Groton, CT. The Early College Experience Program Staff hosted 170 Site Representatives from 135 partner high schools. The morning kicked off at The Branford House where attendees, many of whom were visiting the Avery Point campus for the first time, got to take in the breath-taking views of The Long Island Sound over breakfast with colleagues from across the state. After moving to the Academic Building for the core content of the day, and being officially welcomed by UConn ECE Executive Director, Christopher Todd, representatives from Newington High School, Norwich Free Academy, and Robert E. Fitch High School took the stage. Leading a panel discussion, the Site Representatives

discussed ways they are expanding concurrent enrollment opportunities at their schools. They shared their experiences of implementing new UConn ECE courses into their schools and how they promote the courses to their students, families, and instructors. Participants then received programmatic updates before choosing from six breakout sessions, offered across two time slots. The conference was a great opportunity for our Site Representatives to discuss ways to enhance their concurrent enrollment offerings at their high schools and meet with colleagues and counterparts from across the state. We appreciate all the work that our Site Representatives do to make their UConn ECE programs successful at their schools and are excited to continue offering a diverse selection of course offerings to their students! ■

Farewell with Gratitude: Nella and Melanie's Decade of Dedication

By Christopher Todd

As we bid a heartfelt farewell to several long-time UConn Pre-College Summer (PCS) staff members, we celebrate the profound impact two very special staff have had on the growth and success of the program. Collectively, Nella Quasnitschka and Melanie Banks represented a combined 30+ years of experience for UConn, having served in numerous roles for the Office of Early College Programs (OECF) but also having been instrumental in the rebranding and expansion of the Pre-College Summer Program (PCS), which launched in 2014. When Nella and Melanie joined the program in 2016 with a clear mission to expand and revitalize it, their leadership played a major role in driving the program's significant growth over the past decade. As the Director and Associate Director of Pre-College Summer respectively, their leadership, creativity, and unwavering commitment to student development transformed PCS into a nationally recognized experience for aspiring college students. Whether it was designing engaging residential experiences, mentoring high school participants and UConn graduate students, or building strong campus partnerships, their contributions created a



prepared for college life.

Celebrating the combined impact of Nella and Melanie is easy for members of the Office of Early College Programs team. One doesn't have to look very hard to find their professional and personal imprints on colleagues, stakeholders and programmatic offerings. But what better way to celebrate Nella and Melanie, than to hear from some of their former PCS colleagues who capture the true impact both incredible staff members had during their time at UConn. The voices below come from former UConn Higher Education and Student Affairs (HESA) Graduate Students who worked directly with Nella and Melanie to support the expansion of the PCS program during their two-year Graduate Assistantships:

MEGAN GO

Program Coordinator | Brooklyn College AANAPISI Project (BCAP)
M.A in Higher Education and Student Affairs | University of Connecticut '24
PCS: 2022-2024

Nella: thank you for giving me a wonderful experience with UConn Pre-College Summer. You made it feel like home for all the GAs and student workers, and my grad school experience wouldn't have been the same without it! Thank you for your support throughout my time at PCS and Neag. Sending warm wishes and good vibes your way with your next steps! Also, I still have all the cool socks you gifted me. :)

Melanie: you were the first person to welcome me to Pre-College Summer in-person. Thank you for a great 2 years! You were always so caring and understanding and made the office environment a comforting place to be in, especially in the midst of grad school stress. Wishing the best for you and your family! You took such good care of the GAs at PCS, there's no doubt that you're giving your family the utmost love and support!

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CODY OLSON

Academic Advisor
Commonwealth Honors College at UMass Amherst
PCS: 2018-2020

Nella: Nella is one of the most thoughtful and caring supervisors I've ever had. She made work fun. And even when life was complicated and challenging in the Pre-College Summer world, I knew that I would leave work smiling because of Nella's positivity and empathy. During the pandemic, we would have 3+ hour Teams Meetings. On paper, this sounds horrible, but I loved digging into projects with Nella and innovating within our program.

Melanie: Melanie was a joy to work with, and I learned so much from her in our time together. Melanie saw me transition from being an undergrad to a graduate student to a young professional and helped me each step of the way. I will forever be grateful for our friendship and her mentorship.



JOSEPH R. FISHER

Associate Director of Facilities Management
Harvard Radcliffe Institute
PCS: 2017-2019



Nella: Congratulations, Nella, on your successful tenure at UConn! I am so grateful to have been a part of your professional journey during my time as a Graduate Assistant for UConn Pre-College Summer. I remember fondly my interview with you and Melanie, your enthusiasm for the program, and interest in bringing on the first Higher Education and Student Affairs (HESA) graduate assistant. You helped make my 2+ year of graduate study exponentially powerful, exposing me to new projects, asking me to solve complex challenges, and pushing us all to use technology in more useful and efficient ways. I miss our PCS days so much with our dream team — and do know that your professional legacy (and laugh) will be so missed!

Melanie: Congratulations on a wonderful journey at UConn! I am so grateful that our paths crossed to work together and that we were able to collaborate on many aspects of the Pre-College Summer program. I remember our short brainstorming conversations, "oh yes!" moments when we found a new way to do something better, and when those short conversations turned into long sessions where we'd create and build together. I admire your commitment to learning, to your professional career, your education, and of course, your growing family. I always miss our days of sharing our cubicle wall and window — and of course miss the vibrancy and professionalism you always brought to your work. Congratulations again!



As we will miss Nella and Melanie deeply, this moment of transition brings exciting possibilities. As we welcome new team members and fresh leadership into the PCS fold starting with our new Director, Dr. Bobbi-Jo Wathen, we look forward to reimagining the program with renewed energy and perspective. This is an opportunity to innovate, expand, and strengthen our offerings to meet the changing needs of students and families. By honoring the foundation laid by Nella and Melanie while embracing bold, forward-looking ideas, UConn Pre-College Summer is poised to continue shaping transformative experiences that prepare high school students not only for college, but for a lifetime of learning and leadership. ■



PROFESSIONAL Development Workshops

By Caroline Lynch, UConn ECE Graduate Assistant, Master's Student, UConn, Higher Education and Student Affairs

We've had yet another eventful semester for the UConn Early College Experience Program, including 22 unique professional development experiences for our certified ECE Instructors. A mix of on campus and virtual events were held, for our wonderful instructors from Allied Health, American Sign Language, Animal Sciences, Art, Asian & Asian American Studies, Digital Media and Design, Earth Sciences, Education, Educational Psychology, Environmental Science, French, German, History, Human Development & Family Sciences, Italian, Kinesiology, Latino & Latin American Studies, Political Science, Spanish, and Statistics as well as our Library Media Specialists. Please enjoy a brief overview of the professional development highlights from the Spring 2025 semester!

February 26, 2025: Political Science Workshop

For our first professional development event of 2025, we hosted a virtual conversation with our Political Science instructors on the theme *Bringing Politics into the Classroom*. The morning opened with a faculty discussion surrounding the effects of rising authoritarianism in world politics, with the goal of equipping instructors with strategies for teaching their students to understand and recognize harmful trends and their consequences. A major highlight of the day was a guest address by Denise Merrill, UConn alumna and former Connecticut Secretary of State.



March 12, 2025: Animal Sciences Workshop

Animal Science instructors met on the Storrs Campus in early March, where they had the opportunity to observe a class section of ANSC 1602: Behavior and Training of Domestic Animals. The true bonus highlight of the day was a trip to the UConn Dairy Bar, where instructors got to experience our world-famous UConn ice cream!



March 14, 2025: French Workshop

On March 14th, our ECE French Instructors convened on the UConn Storrs Campus for their annual professional development conference. The morning consisted of a lecture



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on the theme of childhood and its manifestations in French cinema, led by Assistant Professor in French Studies, Dr. Raphaël Koenig. Then, in the afternoon our instructors were given the opportunity to visit UConn's Ballard Institute and Museum of Puppetry for a tour and a lecture on puppetry in France and French-speaking countries led by Dr. John Bell, Director of Ballard Institute and Museum of Puppetry and Associate Professor in the Dramatic Arts Department.



April 4, 2025: Italian Workshop

Our Italian instructors took a field trip to the Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art in Hartford, CT for a private tour of the galleries. Following the tour, instructors got to experience an informative lecture courtesy of Stephanie Barnett, School & Teacher Programs Manager for the Atheneum.

April 11, 2025: Spanish Workshop

Marking our largest professional development workshop of the semester, over 85 certified Spanish instructors joined us on the Storrs Campus on April 11th. The group was joined by Professor Oscar Martin, chair for the Department of Languages and Literatures at Lehman College. Professor Martin delivered a lecture entitled "Estudiantes, hay camino y se hace camino al andar" (Translation: "Students, there is a path, and the path is made by walking"). Following the keynote address, instructors had the opportunity to work on a collaborative group project with their peers.



April 25, 2025: EDLR 2001 Workshop

It was a beautiful day in Storrs when we were joined by a group of 15 EDLR 2001: Contemporary Social Issues in Sport instructors. Thanks to the continued efforts of Dr. Danielle DeRosa, our Faculty Coordinator for Educational Leadership, this group has grown to include



teachers from a variety of unique disciplines, including History, English, Health/Physical Education, and Social Studies. Each provides a unique lens through which to teach their students about the industry of sport. Instructors were given the opportunity to meet with Eric Schneider, Associate Director of Athletics and Compliance at UConn, to discuss the ever-evolving landscape of college athletics, including NIL (name, image, and likeness) policies. The afternoon was topped off by a walking tour of several of UConn's athletic facilities, including Gampel Pavilion, the flagship site of the "Basketball Capitol of the World", along with the baseball, softball, volleyball, and ice hockey facilities.



April 24 and 25, 2025: English at the 14th annual Conference on the Teaching of Writing

This semester, our ECE English instructors were invited to attend the 14th annual Conference on the Teaching of Writing, entitled "Joy to You and Me: Making Space for Joy in the Writing Classroom." This conference challenged our instructors to embed joy into their pedagogy, finding it in unexpected places amongst upheaval and dread, and encouraging their students to embrace it. The keynote address, titled "Hell Yes, Joy is a Strategy: Reclaiming Play in Writing Assessment," was delivered by Dr. Stephanie West-Puckett, Associate Professor of Writing & Rhetoric at the University of Rhode Island. Attendees of the conference were treated to a wide variety of sessions and workshops to choose from and had the opportunity to connect with individuals across the UConn First Year Writing community and beyond.



It's been an incredible semester! To find more information and photographs from these and the rest of our professional development events, please feel free to visit the "ECE PD Blog" on our website. As the spring comes to a close, we extend our thanks to our Faculty Coordinators, guest contributors, and instructors for their time and commitment to the ECE program. We'll be back come Fall with plenty more professional development experiences, and we look forward to seeing many of you then! ■



ECE Wallace Stevens Poetry CONTEST

By Sean Frederick Forbes, Ph.D.
Director, Creative Writing Program
UConn English Department

I've been writing narrative poetry and creative nonfiction for over twenty years, and when I am teaching undergraduate introductory level creative writing courses, my students often ask me a variation of two questions: "what inspires you to write?" and "what topics do you write about?" I respond by telling them that the familial and personal narratives my maternal grandmother told me as a child spurred a deep curiosity within me about how to tell a story, even if it may seem mundane to me. While I do prefer to write about my family's ancestral lore acting in conversation with my grandmother's stories, sometimes "big ideas come from out of the blue," as is the theme of this year's ECE magazine, in which I have found myself writing a poem about visiting the Dachau Concentration Camp Memorial Site in Bavaria, Germany in December 2015, or writing an ekphrastic poem (from the Greek, is a poem that describes a work of visual art, such as a painting, sculpture, or other form of visual art), about a painting titled "Misty Morning" by the Connecticut-based artist D. Stone. Memories, images, facts, emotions, questions, longings, yearnings, etc. are what people experience on a daily basis, a major and vital part of the human condition, and expressing one's

self in the written word has the ability to be transformative and meaningful to the listener/reader, as well as the writer.

This year the ECE Wallace Stevens Poetry Contest received forty-five poetry packets. My fellow judges, Kyle Barron and Anh Le—both are PhD candidates in the English department at UConn and are creative writers—and I selected five poetry packets by Hannah Guo, Sapphira Costa, Yimin Wu, Hermione Ildefonso, and Naima Garcia as the first, second, third, and two Honorable Mention winners, respectively. On a Thursday morning in mid-March, Kyle, Anh, and I held a Zoom meeting to discuss and select the winners, and after an hour of deliberating, the three of us were impressed by the subjects and topics expressed in all of the submissions. There were five poets whose writing mesmerized us greatly for the levels of craft, creativity, imagery, depth of language, and range of topics and poetic forms and styles.

In the first two lines of the poem "Listening" by Hannah Guo, the reader is advised to "Stop in your tracks—let the autumn wind / gently caress your face and lift your chin skyward," a gesture that allows one to experience a season

and all that it offers. The speaker employs the use of the directive by addressing the reader as "you," and while this tone may seem demanding, if not commanding to some readers, often times one needs to be reminded about the benefits of embracing an autumnal atmosphere of "distant bonfires, fallen leaves, rain-soaked bark— / a hint of cold earth, and the ghost of sunburnt grass."

The speaker in Sapphira Costa's poem "Bisavó," the Portuguese word for grandmother, employs the literary technique of the braided narrative to highlight how three generations of women in her family approach personal silences. The speaker's great-grandmother was regulated to domestic duties and took on hidden silences about her pains and worries, "her hands learned to hide her heart / to place away her strengths and burdens," and the speaker's grandmother took on the same domestic roles and responsibilities and inherited even deeper silences about her concerns and sorrows, "the quiet steadiness of hands that knew work." The speaker is a young poet, writing about these silences in open forum, and at the end of the poem ponders if hiding these silences is a kin to drowning, in an emotional and psychological sense, as "if the flood isn't

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the water rising, / but the weight of everything that is left unsaid."

In Yimin Wu's poem "Anticipating Ardor," the speaker employs tercets, stanzas of three lines, to create a typographical juggling act of imagery and sound enacted on the page. The scene depicts a speaker sitting on a cold park bench deeply engaged with the architectural landscape of the park juxtaposed with the wild, creature-laden lushness of the forest nearby, and the mysterious wonders of the universe that surrounds, with each stanza offers a range of sonic and visual stimuli: "cicadas still chirping, my eyes snap open. / The trail of a shooting star glimmers above, / Almost akin to a strand of blond hair."

Hermione Ildefonso's poem "Gemini Syndrome" recounts the moment a speaker confronts, and transforms into, the dual persona of the Gemini zodiac sign via their reflection in a foggy mirror. The speaker asks, "what is a twin soul in a singular body?," which is signaled by an inner desire and longing to comprehend their mercurial nature and patterns of behavior. The speaker understands that they're changing as the world changes, and there is deep complexity, but also splendid wonder in who they are: "So, here I am, at the edge of knowing / with trembling hands, I scatter petals of possibility."

The speaker in Naima Garcia's poem "The Dead End at Daybreak" offers the reader a narrative about the Second Battle of Ypres that was fought between April 22 and May 25, 1915 during the First World War. This battle was a means to gain control of land to the east and the south of the Flemish town of Ypres in western Belgium. The use of the historical perspective and the speaker's tone of voice provides the reader with a closer lens into this moment of war, in which the speaker states that "...Ypres / would never be the same glistening, tourist attraction it had been / before;" a startling image of the future juxtaposed with the "fruity scent of the lavenders." ■



Hannah Guo

Hannah Guo is a senior in high school from Woodbridge, CT. She plans to attend Rice University in the fall and is passionate about the interactions of writing, community, and civic engagement.

Watching words move, inspire, and unite people fills me with purpose. Since the very beginning, we have all been feelers. We have been storytellers. Leaning into that gives me strength.

Listening

Stop in your tracks—let the autumn wind
gently caress your face and lift your chin skyward
It wraps around your feet and whispers,
I can take it from here,
so you listen, and let it.

The wind smells like distant bonfires, fallen leaves, rain-soaked bark—
a hint of cold earth, and the ghost of sunburnt grass—
You smell like the wind.

Tell me, have you called the wrong people home?
Have you left your heart on regret's shelf?
Have you cradled your fear
when you should have been grasping at joy?
Have you forgiven yourself?

Speeding up, you feel your heart thumping,
Two feet trying to leave the ground,
The wind is trying, trying! trying!
Hair unfurling, winding into yours the way yarn binds itself to a spool
Only to stop at a foundation of solid wood,
chest rising, breathing precious life in—
The egrets keep soaring, their wings fanned out, spelling goodbye

Breathing hard you ask
the grand Oak
if he loves all his old selves
He says not necessarily—but they have made me so
*I hold them every day and tell them they have done
a good job*

And the Willow and Birch trees chime in, rustling,
You can also live a hundred lives
You can keep each one
And you realize they are right; you have—
And you will.



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ECE Wallace Stevens Poetry Contest

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Sapphira Costa

Sapphira Costa, a senior at Manchester High School, has been writing stories for as long as she can remember, finding a second home between dusty library shelves and thrifted notebooks filled with poems about longing, girlhood and becoming. She dreams of studying neuroscience to better understand the mind, but it is

through poetry that she has always understood the soul. Her work has been recognized with two Gold Keys, two Silver Keys and an honorable mention from the 2022 and 2024 Scholastic Arts & Writing contest.



Bisavó

Born from the shadow of terracotta roofs, where my great-grandmother once danced beneath the orange blossoms, growing among the vineyards and olive groves. Her bare feet kissed the earth, dusting it with centuries of soil. Her hands heavy with the weight of the harvest, the patterns of the season etched into her skin. She learned early to bear the weight of others as her own.

In Portugal, a women's role was carved into the land, she was the earth. Her roots ran deep into the soil, unshaken by the weight of family, traditions and expectations of silence.

Her hands prepared meals, washed clothes, and raised children. They sewed respect into every seam, served faith onto ever plate, all while a man who claimed her loyalty, lingered in the arms of others. Her hands learned to hide her heart, to place away her strength and burdens.

The Church whispered to her, reminded her that god watched the patient, as if her silence was the way to sainthood. Her faith instructed her that to speak of pain was a sin. That her worth lied in her sacrifice, in her ability to carry the burdens without complaint.

My great-grandmother inherited these beliefs like heirlooms, tucked into the folds of a life lived passed down between kitchen walls and church pews, stitched between the pages of prayer books. She never spoke of sorrow, because sorrow was the quiet hum of wind through azulejo courtyards, where the walls held everything she couldn't say.

She hemmed her sorrow into the edges of tablecloth and dresses too long, whispered them into the bread and malassada she baked, but she never let them surface. Emotions were a luxury, an indulgence she could not afford. They belonged to fado songs that carried her pain, its melancholy seeping into the edges of every conversation she never had.

In America, there is no room for this kind of quiet. Here, feelings must be displayed like the fruits at a Saturday market, ripe and open to touch. But my grandmother, she inherited her silence, like the faded yellow on the Barcelos Rooster of her grandmother's apron, the quiet steadiness of hands that knew work and "sim senhor" but not words.

In the kitchen, caldo verde simmers, the steam rising like the breath of something long held back and I feel the weight of generations in every spoonful. There is no fado here, only the chatter of this new land that asks for too much and understands too little. How can I explain the way my grandmother loves in a language with no space for silence?

My great-grandmother never questioned her role. Her days were spent in service to family, to faith, to the land that gave little but asked for much. And my grandmother too, learned to swallow her voice, to wear her silence as armour, to carry the weight of expectation, with silence, with grace.

But I live in a country that demands my voice, where I am expected to be open, to name my hurts, to name my struggles, but my mouth is filled with saudade—the longing for what is lost before I ever knew it.

My great-grandmother taught my grandmother that silence was safety, and that to say too much was to invite the world in too closely, to let the sea flood the village. But in this American land, I wonder if silence is its own kind of drowning, if the flood isn't the water rising, but the weight of everything that is left unsaid.

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Yimin Wu

Yimin Wu is a senior attending Hall High School in West Hartford, where she's the president of her school's Creative Writing Club. Beyond the pen, she also loves learning foreign languages and likes to game in her free time.

I've loved writing since elementary school, and for me, it's a valuable way to express my authenticity and Asian-American experience. I enjoy going to local open-mic nights and share poetry together with friends.

Anticipating Ardor

Streetlights flickering, fireflies flashing, I solemnly sit on the cold park bench, Awaiting the right person to arrive.

From the corner of my eyes, a gleaming Ray dashes through the frosty wind, Flinging my body into a daze.

As we exchange a brief glance, A blunt hammer clashes against The anvil inside my iron lungs.

Stripping away my frigid facade, That beaming smile melts off my steel Skin and captures my heart of gold.

His teal eyes sparkle under the moon, Irradiating my dilated, dark pupils. I reach towards his curly, golden locks,

But the streak of light escapes my grasp, Minimizing and disappearing into the stars, Casting a silver shadow on my palm.

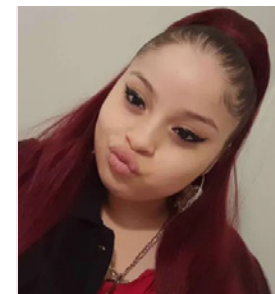
The shadow, emitting a tingling warmth, Lingers in my hand, refusing to dissipate. Clutching it to my chest, I plunge into slumber.

Cicadas still chirping, my eyes snap open. The trail of a shooting star glimmers above, Almost akin to a strand of blond hair.

Upon a yellow birch, a tiger owl blinks at me In mockery. As I depart deep into the woods, A creeping phantom of regret stalks me.

Sun emerging from the blurry horizon, Sparrows ruffle their russet wings. Past the bench, runs a familiar figure.

Making a double-take, he decides To stop and sit down this time, eagerly Awaiting the right person to arrive.



Hermione Idefonso

Hermione Idefonso is 17 years old and in her junior year at New Britain High School. She would describe herself as a lover of all things art and writing, and her poetry is a testament to that connection.

Poetry allows me to explore complex emotions and ideas in a creative and meaningful way. It's how I translate the world around me onto the page.

Gemini Syndrome

In the mirror's dim reflection, two faces peep through the fog, like shadows of thoughts caught in a tornado of yearnings, who am I when the world isn't watching? A whirlwind manakin, twisting to the rhythm of others' expectations, each pulse, every heartbeat adds a tiny fragment to this mosaic of selves. On Monday, I am the rainmaker, dancing barefoot in puddles of spontaneity, lighting up the skies with laughter, but by Tuesday, the clouds gather, and I dissolve into the calm before the storm, a solitary figure, huddling in the corners of my own mind. What is a twin soul in a singular body? One half conspirator, the other—a reluctant participant in the play of life, holding backstage secrets while the spotlight aches for that dazzling performance. But here I stand, the original and a ghost, A dichotomy bound and unbound, the dance of duality. Words swirl, a cyclone of confusion; "Be authentic," they say, Yet every revelation feels like a mask unmasked, and the deeper I dig, the deeper the chasm grows, identity slipping like sand between my fingers, the essence of self caught in a paradox. In a crowded room, my voice shatters into tiny echoes, each thread of laughter, each sigh feels borrowed, as I weave an intricate tapestry of personas—the philosopher, the joker, the lover, the strategist who charts the unseen pathways, and still I linger, a traveler in my own existence. I ponder, is it evolution or confusion?



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ECE Wallace Stevens Poetry Contest

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Gemini Syndrome

Am I the artist painting my own reality
or a canvas upon which
the world scrawls its impressions?
In this Gemini syndrome,
I yearn to scream,
to break free from the expectations,
to dive into the abyss
and learn to swim
in the depths of who I might become.
So here I am, at the edge of knowing,
with trembling hands, I scatter petals of possibility,
letting go of what I thought I should be,
embracing the dance of fluctuations,
not seeking resolution,
but celebrating the beauty
of being beautifully,
confoundingly me.



Naima Garcia

Naima Garcia is 18 years old and from Naugatuck, Connecticut.

I connect to poetry due to my admiration for its potentially eloquent, song-like structure that provides a space for personal introspection and vivid imagery.

The Dead End at Daybreak

I remember it crystal clear, we all do. It was destined that we would never forget, the everlasting trauma would make our skin crawl, they made sure of that.

The swiftness of the flying poison, the gory casualties that followed, my bloody terror, our anxiety-induced hearts nearly slipping out of our chests, the burden of death and gas misting the atmosphere.

I'll never forget the visions of the piles of rotting, lifeless corpses increasing by every second, the velvet-splattered outdoor ground, the thousands of Canadians who's souls had been ripped out at the hands of chlorine gas, the eruption of stinging slipping through my lungs. I tear up and vomit at any topic relative in the slightest to such a memory.

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News To Know

By Carissa Rutkauskas

New England Alliance of Concurrent Enrollment Partnerships (NEACEP) Conference



The 2025 Annual NEACEP Conference, *Something More Than Dual Credit*, was held on May 30 at Middlesex Community College in Bedford, MA, convening over 100 educators, administrators, and stakeholders from across New England and beyond. The conference focused on advancing dual credit programs through improved student advising and pathways, expanded access for underrepresented students, and stronger academic and non-academic supports. Dr. Amanda Sterk opened the event with a compelling keynote on empowering students and families to navigate dual enrollment successfully. Among the 14 breakout sessions, UConn ECE's Chris Todd presented on using concurrent enrollment partnerships as a strategy to attract, recruit, and retain educators, while UConn ECE Instructor Amy Bigelow (Franklin Academy) shared insights on supporting students with learning disabilities in dual enrollment math courses. Amy reflected on her experience, saying, "My first NEACEP conference highlighted the wide variety of ways high school students earn college credit nationwide. It deepened my appreciation for UConn's dual enrollment model, offering college courses in a familiar, small-class setting. I was also honored to present about Franklin Academy's success in providing executive functioning coaching and accommodations for neurodiverse students taking ECE courses." UConn's Office of Early College Programs was well represented by Chris Todd, Carissa Rutkauskas, and Jess Dunn from UConn ECE, along with Dr. Bobbi-Jo Wathen and Yamileth Lopez-Ramos from UConn Pre-College Summer. UConn ECE instructors Catalina Peñafiel Rincón (Kennedy High School) and Dawn Marie Conroy (Wa-

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terbury Arts Magnet School) also attended, with Dawn Marie recently certified to teach ECE courses. Catalina noted, "Thank you, NEACEP, for a well-organized and informative conference. I particularly appreciated the engaging sessions, insightful speakers, and the opportunity to network with other professionals." The conference proved to be a dynamic and collaborative event, reinforcing the value of partnerships in shaping the future of dual credit education.

UConn ECE Instructors Honored with Nation's Highest Award in STEM Teaching

UConn Early College Experience is proud to announce that two of our outstanding certified instructors, Joseph Mancino of Glastonbury



High School and Susan Palmberg of Edwin O. Smith High School, have been named recipients of the Presidential Award for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching (PAEMST). The awards were officially announced on January 13, when President Biden honored seven exemplary educators from Connecticut with this prestigious national recognition. The PAEMST is the highest award in the United States for K-12 STEM teaching. It recognizes teachers who have demonstrated both outstanding subject mastery and a deep commitment to fostering student achievement in science and mathematics. Each year, up to 110 educators nationwide are selected to receive this honor.

Awardees receive a certificate signed by the President of the United States, a \$10,000 award from the National

Science Foundation, and an invitation to Washington, D.C. for a series of recognition ceremonies and professional development opportunities. Mr. Mancino is certified to teach UConn ECE courses PHYS1201Q: General Physics I, PHYS1202Q: General Physics II, and PHYS1401Q: General Physics with Calculus I. Ms. Palmberg is certified in MATH1131Q: Calculus I, MATH1132Q: Calculus II, and MATH2110Q: Multivariable Calculus. Their dedication to academic excellence and student success exemplifies the mission and impact of the UConn ECE program.

We congratulate Joseph Mancino and Susan Palmberg on this well-deserved honor and thank them for their continued contributions to STEM education and the UConn ECE community.

UConn ECE Instructor Jessica Chapman Receives 2024-25 Milken Educator Award

UConn Early College Experience proudly celebrates Jessica Chapman of Norwich Free Academy, a certified instructor for SOCI 1001: Introduction to Sociology, who was honored with the 2024-25



Connecticut Milken Educator Award on November 12, 2024. Chapman, a passionate and innovative social studies teacher, received the surprise of a lifetime during a schoolwide assembly filled with students, colleagues, dignitaries, and media. The award, presented by Dr. Jane Foley, Senior Vice President of the Milken Educator Awards, and Connecticut Commissioner of Education Charlene M. Russell-Tucker, includes a \$25,000 unrestricted prize and recognizes Chapman's ex-

cellence in teaching and potential for even greater impact. As Connecticut's only recipient this year—and one of just 45 educators nationwide—Chapman joins a distinguished network of education leaders celebrated for their dedication, creativity, and influence. Often called the "Oscars of Teaching," the Milken Educator Awards shine a spotlight on outstanding educators who are shaping the future of education. We are proud to recognize Jessica Chapman among UConn ECE's remarkable instructors.

Aaron Hull: Advancing Civic Education Through UConn ECE and the Spirit of the James Madison Fellowship

UConn ECE Instructor Aaron Hull of Greenwich High School has been inspiring young minds through the UConn Early College Experience program since 2010. Certified to teach UConn POLS 1202: Introduction to Comparative Politics, POLS 1402: Introduction to International Relations, POLS 1602: Introduction to American Politics, and SOCI 1001: Introduction to Sociology, Hull consistently brings depth, rigor, and civic engagement into his classroom. In recognition of his outstanding commitment to civic education, Hull was named the 2025 James Madison Fellow for Connecticut by the James Madison Memorial Fellowship Foundation—a national honor given to educators dedicated to improving the teaching of the U.S. Constitution. Hull's work exemplifies the mission of both UConn ECE and the Foundation, as he continues to empower stu-



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dents with the knowledge and critical thinking skills needed for engaged citizenship.

Michelle Henry: Championing AAPI Education and Empowerment in Greater Hartford

As part of the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving’s “100 Influencers of Greater Hartford” centennial campaign, Michelle Henry is being recognized for her groundbreaking contributions to education and equity. A high school English teacher at Simsbury High School and certified UConn Early College Experience Instructor in UConn AAAS 2201:



Introduction to Asian American Studies, Michelle created Connecticut’s first concurrent enrollment Asian American and Pacific Islander history course through the UConn Early College Experience program, in collaboration with UConn’s Asian and Asian American Studies Institute. Her course not only allows students to earn college credit while still in high school, but also equips them with tools to confront racism and xenophobia through deeper cultural understanding. With Connecticut’s K-12 AAPI curriculum mandate beginning in 2025–26, Michelle’s course has become a blueprint, now adopted by schools across the state. Her work reflects a commitment to creating inclusive, transformative learning experiences that amplify underrepresented voices and empower the next generation to lead with empathy, awareness, and action.



Arri Weeks: NCTE Annual Conference

Arri Weeks, UConn ECE Instructor of ENGL1007: Seminar and Studio in Academic Writing and Multimodal Composition, from New Cannan High School was awarded Conference Funding through UConn ECE and had this to say about her experience:

Thanks to a grant from the Office of Early College Programs I was fortunate enough to attend the National Council of Teachers of English annual conference in Boston in November. What an incredible four days! It was inspiring to hear from people like Bryan Stevenson from the Equal Justice Institute and United States Poet Laureate Ada Limón and attend sessions by fellow English teachers. The topics in these sessions ranged from the teaching of poetry to approaches to Generative AI in the English classroom. I came away with tons of notes, presentations, and ideas for my classroom and practice.

Additionally, Emily Genser, Ramona Puchalski-Piretti, and I led a session, “Multimodal at the Heart of the Essay,” featuring the work we do with our ECE students. For my part, I shared one of my assignments that asks students to curate a visual gallery of images that has informed their ways of seeing. Through the process of creating this show, students critically engage with images from their world and reflect

on the impact these images have had in forming how they see. Our panel session was well-attended and receiving feedback from high school-level and First Year Writing educators was wonderful. However, one of the most affirming experiences was collaborating with Emily and Ramona; I learned so much from them as they shared their assignments and practices with their own students. Thank you to OECP for providing the grant!

More information on UConn ECE Conference Funding can be found here: <https://ece.uconn.edu/instructors/funding/>

Celebrating Achievement with UConn ECE Honor Cords

UConn Early College Experience (ECE) proudly celebrates the academic accomplishments of high school seniors through the UConn ECE Honor Cords program. Following a successful pilot with several partner schools last year, the program expanded significantly. This spring, 76 of our 193 partner high schools distributed UConn Honor Cords to their eligible seniors. These cords, in UConn’s signature blue and white, symbolize the achievement of successfully completing a rigorous UConn course while still in high school. Graduating seniors who have taken at least one UConn course through ECE

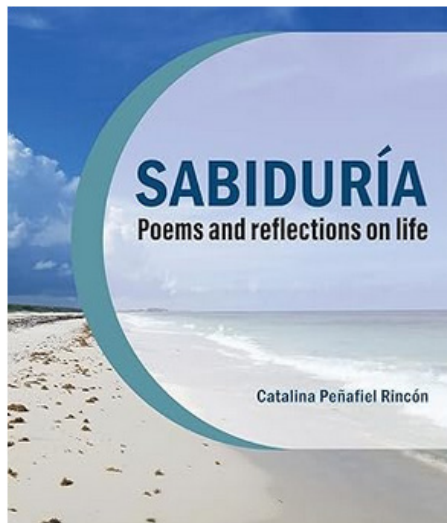


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News To Know

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and are in good standing with the program are invited to wear the cords at graduation. The colors themselves are steeped in university history: “National Flag Blue” (Pantone 289), a tradition dating back to the 1950s under President Albert N. Jorgensen, with further refinement by Athletics Director Tim Tolokan, who helped standardize uniforms and institutional branding. Congratulations to the high school Class of 2025—wear your UConn ECE Honor Cords with pride!



Celebrating Catalina Peñafiel Rincón: A Voice of Bilingual Wisdom

UConn Early College Experience proudly celebrates Catalina Peñafiel Rincón of John F. Kennedy High School, who has recently added “published author” to her many accomplishments. Certified to teach UConn SPAN 3177: Composition & Reading for Spanish Speakers, SPAN 3178: Intermediate Spanish Composition, and SPAN 3179: Spanish Conversation: Cultural Topics, Catalina released her first book in 2024, *Sabiduría: Poems and Reflections on Life* (Wisdom: Poemas y Reflexiones sobre la Vida). A winner of the 2025

International Impact Book Awards: Poetry- Contemporary Poetry and The Regal Summit Book Award, this bilingual collection blends poetry, self-reflection, and instant writing inspired by everyday life, aiming to connect readers through shared struggles, dreams, and aspirations. Drawing inspiration from her family, students, colleagues, and friends, Catalina encourages readers to pause, reflect, and find hope and serenity in their own journeys. Her work is a beautiful testament to the power of language, culture, and connection in an ever-evolving world.

Laurie Wolfley’s Legacy

After over a decade and a half of dedicated service as a UConn Early College Experience Faculty Coordinator, Laurie Wolfley is retiring, leaving behind a legacy of mentorship, academic rigor, and unwavering support for high school educators and students. As the coordinator for Maritime Studies and American Studies, Laurie has played a vital role in certifying teachers, observing classes, and maintaining strong connections between UConn and its partner high schools. Her leadership has helped ensure that students across Connecticut experience college learning that is both challenging and relevant. In 2017, she was honored as ECE Faculty Coordinator of the Year—a testament to her impact and commitment.

Laurie’s contributions have shaped countless student journeys, and her presence will be greatly missed in the ECE community

Congratulations to the following UConn ECE Faculty Coordinators on their promotions:

Chunsheng (George) Yang (Chinese) Promotion to Professor

Ingrid Semaan (Sociology) Promotion to Professor In-Residence

Concetta (Tina) Chiappetta-Miller (Italian Literature and Cultural Studies) Promotion to Associate Professor In-Residence

OECP Team Honored with 2025 UConn Spirit Team Award

We are thrilled to announce that the Office of Early College Programs (OECP) Team—encompassing both UConn Early College Experience and UConn Pre-College Summer—has been awarded one of the 2025 UConn Spirit Team Awards! This prestigious recognition celebrates teams that exemplify collaboration, civility, and community across UConn’s campuses. The OECP team was recognized for its dedication to fostering mean-



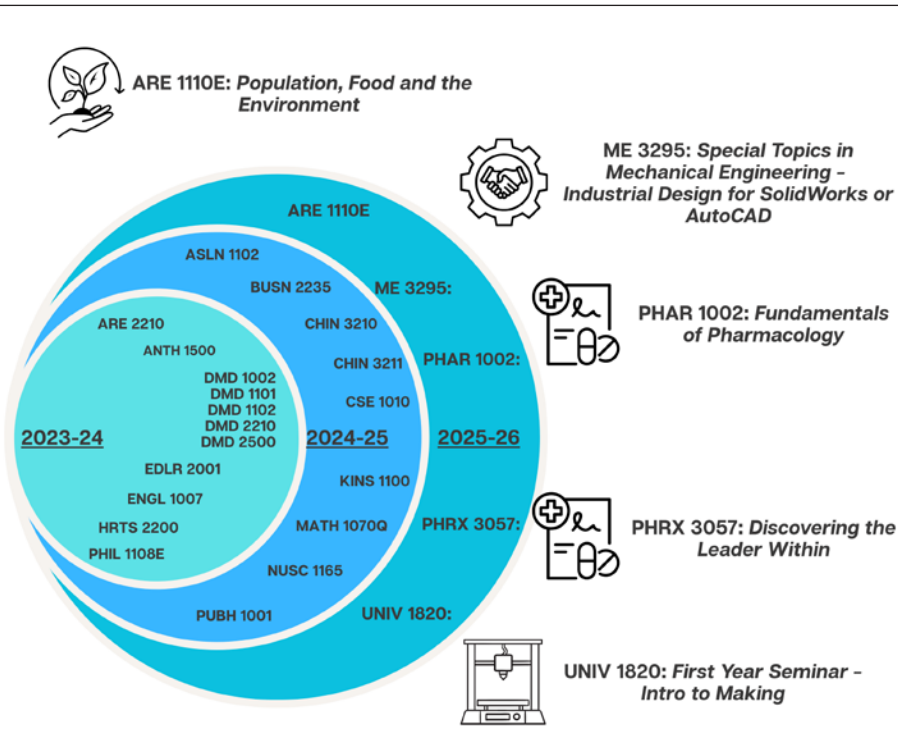
ingful connections, supporting student access to college-level learning, and maintaining a positive workplace culture. This award is a reflection of the incredible efforts of our Faculty Coordinators, Site Representatives, Instructors, and staff who make our work possible. We proudly share this honor with fellow recipients, including the Greenhouse Studios Team, Karima Jackson from First Year Programs and Learning Communities, and Unsung Heroes Sharon Daggett and Josue Zapata from Facilities Operations. Thank you to everyone who helps advance our mission—your contributions matter! ■

Growing Together: Course Innovation, Access, and Alignment

By Christopher Todd

Over the past three academic years, UConn Early College Experience has demonstrated intentional and strategic growth in its course offerings, grounded in a commitment to meet the evolving needs of students and to respond directly to the requests of partner high schools for more diverse and robust academic options. In 2023–2024, UConn ECE offered a solid foundation of interdisciplinary courses, including Anthropology, American Sign Language, Digital Media & Design, English, and Philosophy. These offerings

and advanced Chinese (CHIN 3210 & CHIN 3211). This expansion directly addressed high school partners' desire for coursework that aligns with student interests and future workforce needs. At the same time, UConn ECE prioritized accessibility by enhancing support for teacher certification, allowing more high schools to offer these rigorous college courses by empowering educators to become certified instructors through clearer and more flexible qualification pathways.



reinforced UConn's dedication to preparing students as informed, engaged citizens ready for academic and professional success.

In 2024–2025, the program expanded into more specialized fields such as Computer Science (CSE 1010), Mathematics (MATH 1070Q), Nutrition (NUSC 1165),

The 2025–2026 academic year brings new, high-impact offerings that continue to elevate the ECE program's relevance and reach. Notably, **PHAR 1002: Fundamentals of Pharmacology** and **PHRX 3057: Discovering the Leader Within** introduces students to the world of pharmacy and health care leadership. Additionally, **ME 3295: Industrial Design for SolidWorks or AutoCAD** and **UNIV 1820: First Year Seminar – Intro to Making** are designed with flexibility in mind, making it possible for schools to integrate these courses directly within existing Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs. This approach allows schools to leverage their current resources, labs, and instructor expertise to offer high-quality, college coursework that seamlessly fits into established CTE pathways.

UConn ECE's continued growth reflects a strong commitment to equity, innovation, and responsiveness. By aligning offerings with partner school feedback, expanding instructor access, and designing courses that integrate with existing high school programs, UConn is ensuring that more students across Connecticut can access meaningful, future-focused academic opportunities—setting them on a path toward college and career readiness. ■

UConn ECE Welcomes 290 Newly Certified Instructors: Celebrating Continued Growth

By Stefanie Malinoski

This spring, UConn Early College Experience marked a significant milestone by certifying 290 new instructors. Many existing instructors with UConn ECE chose to expand their certification to include new courses. Of those, 224 were brand new partners to UConn ECE and participated in New Instructor Orientation. These 224 teachers represented new certification in 242 courses. Orientation served as an energizing introduction to their roles as Instructors with UConn ECE.

The day-long orientation offered a comprehensive overview of the ECE program, led by Executive Director, Chris Todd and staff. Key sessions covered instructor responsibilities, student registration processes, engagement strategies, and the importance of aligning with NACEP (National Alliance of Concurrent Enrollment Partnerships) standards.

Mid-morning, instructors chose from three focused breakout sessions:

- **UConn Instructional Resources:** Ery Caswell, Student Success and Engagement Librarian, showcased the breadth of UConn's library offerings, while Educational Technologies expert Jordan Vinikoor provided a hands-on introduction to Blackboard Ultra, the university's learning management platform.



- **ECE Program Operations:** Carissa Rutkauskas and Todd Blodgett provided essential information on data reporting, syllabus submission, credit transferability, and grading procedures.
- **Student Enrichment Opportunities:** Jessica Dunn and Bobbi-Jo Wathen highlighted the wide range of enrichment opportunities available through UConn ECE and Pre-College Summer; both programs designed to provide high school students with college-level experiences while still a high school student.

In the afternoon, discipline-specific breakout sessions gave instructors the opportunity to meet with their Faculty Coordinators and network with fellow newcomers, fostering collaboration and community. Over 40 of our UConn ECE Faculty Coordinators participated in this event. Supporting these connections is key to ensuring Instructors feel supported and ready to deliver UConn courses in their high schools this fall.

As the academic year draws to a close, the UConn ECE program is celebrating the success of its growing instructor network while staying focused on creating enriching opportunities for teachers and students across Connecticut. ■

2025

Celebrating Excellence: UConn ECE Professional Recognition Awards

By Jessica Dunn



On April 24, 2025, the UConn Early College Experience community gathered at the UConn Alumni Center in Storrs to celebrate the exceptional educators and administrators who have gone above and beyond in their roles as UConn ECE partners. The 2025 Professional Recognition Awards Ceremony honored individuals whose dedication and leadership have made a lasting impact on students and the broader ECE community.

The event opened with remarks from Christopher Todd, Executive Director of the Office of Early College Programs (OECPP), and Dr. Tadarrayl Starke, Vice Provost for Undergraduate Student Success. Representing UConn's senior administration, Dr. Starke delivered a warm welcome and expressed deep appreciation for the critical role UConn ECE instructors and administrators play in promoting student success at the high school level, while laying a strong foundation for future academic achievement.

The evening featured heartfelt speeches, meaningful reflections, and joyful celebration as twelve professionals were

recognized with the 2024–2025 Professional Recognition Awards. In addition, four long-standing partners received the prestigious Silver Jubilee Award, commemorating 25 years of service and partnership with UConn ECE.

Each award recipient was nominated by colleagues, students, administrators, or UConn faculty, and selected for their exemplary instruction, leadership, and unwavering commitment to academic excellence. Their efforts consistently surpass program expectations, empowering students to thrive and preparing them for success in college and beyond.

Congratulations to all recipients of this year's awards. Your dedication, leadership, and commitment continue to set the standard for excellence within the UConn ECE community. The UConn Early College Experience program is stronger and more impactful because of your contributions, and we are sincerely grateful for all you do. ■

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Thomas E. Recchio Faculty Coordinator Award for Academic Leadership
Fatma Selampinar, Chemistry— University of Connecticut

Principal Award for Program Support & Advocacy
John Harris, Naugatuck High School

Site Representative Award for Excellence in Program Administration
Stephani Jones, Norwich Free Academy

Instructor Award for Excellence in Course Instruction
David Brewer, Physics— Bristol Central High School
Paul Courtois, American Studies — Rockville High School
Lisa Gardner, English— East Haven High School
Alexa Rea Kydd, English — East Lyme High School



Concetta Scarfone, Italian Literature & Cultural Studies — Holy Cross High School
Thomas Young, Statistics — The Woodstock Academy

"Rookie of the Year" Award for Excellence in First-Year Course Instruction
Mathew Apgar, Physics — Fairfield Warde High School
Brendan Giolitto, English — Staples High School

Library Media Specialist Awards for Excellence in Enrichment & Collaboration
Kristie Kriss — Norwich Free Academy

Silver Jubilee Award
Barbara Dougan, Spanish — Glastonbury High School
James Doyle, Mathematics — Hall High School
Douglas Hutton, Physics — Glastonbury High School
Albert Wallace, Physics — St. Paul Catholic High School



New Faculty Coordinators

By Carissa Rutkauskas

Faculty Coordinators are the essential academic bridge between UConn and our high school partner sites, upholding the standards and integrity of UConn Early College Experience. As UConn professors, they bring their disciplinary expertise and departmental values directly to UConn ECE Instructors by reviewing certification applications, leading professional development, visiting classrooms, and ensuring that each course mirrors its on-campus equivalent. Their work helps maintain academic comparability while cultivating strong collegial relationships with instructors across Connecticut. While some Faculty Coordinators serve for

just a few years, others have dedicated decades to this role, shaping the quality and consistency of UConn ECE. With ongoing growth in program offerings and departmental shifts, we are proud to welcome our newest Faculty Coordinators and thank all who serve for their commitment to academic excellence. We also extend our heartfelt thanks to Gustavo Nanclares (Spanish), Laurie Wolfley (American Studies and Maritime Studies), and Matthew McKenzie (American Studies) for their years of dedicated service in the role of Faculty Coordinator, as they leave their position as Faculty Coordinator with UConn ECE. ■

AGRICULTURAL AND RESOURCE ECONOMICS



Emma Bojinova, Ph.D.

BUSINESS



Vishal Baloria, Ph.D.

MATHEMATICS



Andrew Jaramillo, Ph.D.
(Assistant to the Faculty Coordinator)

INTRODUCTION TO ACADEMIC WRITING (ENGL 1004)



Tom Doran, Ph.D.
(Assistant Faculty Coordinator)

WRITING CENTER (ENGL 3082)



Tom Deans, Ph.D.

PHARMACY



Charles White, Pharm.D.

PUBLIC HEALTH



David Gregorio, Ph.D.

SPANISH



Eduardo Urios-Aparisi, Ph.D.

UNIVERSITY – INTRO TO MAKING



Cody Ryan

CIVIL ENGINEERING



Sarira Motaref, P.E.

MECHANICAL ENGINEERING



Jorge Paricio Garcia, Ph.D.
(SolidWorks)

KINESIOLOGY



Allison MacKenzie

NUTRITIONAL SCIENCES

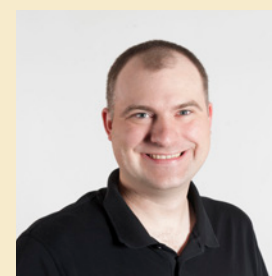


Molika Chea, Ph.D.

MARITIME STUDIES



Matthew Cieslowski



Edward Weingart
(AutoCAD)

AMERICAN SIGN LANGUAGE



Linda Pelletier, Ph.D.

AMERICAN STUDIES



Karon McGovern

70 Years, 70 Faces, One UConn ECE Legacy

In 2025–26, UConn Early College Experience celebrates 70 years of offering UConn credits to high school students. Now, we want to celebrate you.

Were you part of UConn ECE or the High School Co-op Program as a student?

We're collecting stories for a special anniversary campaign—and we'd love to hear yours!

We're especially looking for:

- Multi-generational ECE families
- “Full-circle” journeys (former students who became instructors or administrators)
- Notable alumni doing amazing things
- First generation college students
- Students who were greatly impacted taking UConn courses in high school

Selected contributors will be featured on UConn ECE social media and in the UConn ECE Magazine as part of our 70 Years, 70 Faces campaign.

Be one of the 70 Faces who help us honor this legacy.



Share your story and submit here: ece.uconn.edu/about/history/

Recognizing the 2024-2025 UConn ECE Student Scholarship Winners

By Jessica Dunn

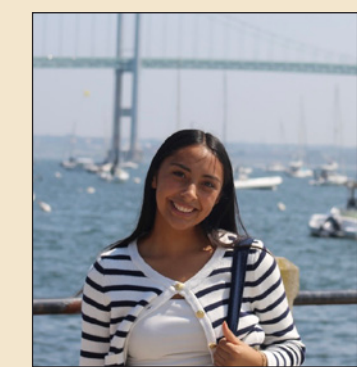
The UConn Early College Experience (ECE) Office is proud to announce the seven exceptional recipients of the 2024-2025 UConn ECE Student Scholarships. Following a highly competitive and rigorous review process, these outstanding high school seniors were selected for their academic excellence, thoughtful project submissions, and future aspirations.

Each recipient has been awarded a \$1,000 scholarship, applicable to any institution of higher education. To be eligible, students must have successfully completed at least one UConn ECE course and demonstrated a strong commitment to academic growth.

We congratulate the 2024-2025 scholarship winners and commend them for their achievements and dedication to learning. Their accomplishments reflect the values and academic standards of the UConn ECE program, and we look forward to seeing their continued success in the future. ■

Excellence in the Arts, Humanities, or Social Sciences

Winners demonstrate academic achievement and a potential for future academic and professional accomplishments in a field focusing on the Arts, Humanities, and/or Social Sciences.



MACIE BRAZAL,
East Hampton High School



JASMIN GARCIA-CORONAD
Crosby High School

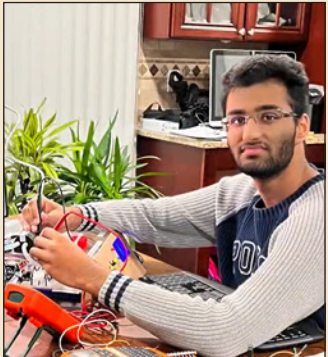
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Excellence in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics

Winners demonstrate academic achievement and a potential for future academic and professional accomplishments in the fields of Science, Technology, Engineering, and/or Mathematics.



MADELYN SYME
South Windsor High School



SUJAY CHAVA
Academy of Aerospace and Engineering



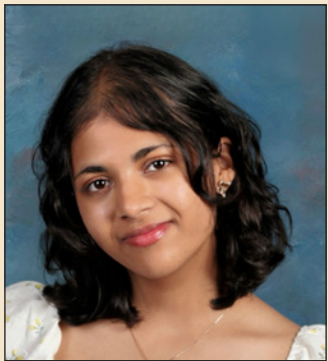
RANIAH IMRAN
Academy of Information Technology & Engineering



[See Scholarship Video](#)

Excellence in Civic and Community Engagement

Winners demonstrate academic achievement and already making a positive difference in their town or neighborhood and are inspiring others to do the same. The students chosen for this award are UConn ECE Students who demonstrate ambition and self-drive evidenced by outstanding achievement in both school and their community.



MEERA KANNAN
South Windsor High School



OLIVIA NOWAK
Farmington High School

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stakeholder APPRECIATION 2025

By Carissa Rutkauskas

As part of our annual stakeholder appreciation efforts, the UConn Early College Experience program proudly recognized the invaluable contributions of school counselors, teachers, and principals who support and champion UConn ECE at their high schools. In celebration of National School Counseling Week (February), Teacher Appreciation Week (May), and Principal Appreciation Week (May), we honored those who go above and beyond to ensure student success within the program. For the first time, we launched School Counselor Appreciation Week to spotlight both our Site Representatives and the broader counseling staff who guide students through course selection and enrollment in UConn ECE. During Teacher Appreciation Week—now in its second year—we celebrated instructors who bring UConn courses to life in high school classrooms with passion and dedication. Principal Appreciation Week, also newly introduced this year, acknowledged school leaders who create a supportive environment that allows the program to thrive. This year, we received an overwhelming 300+ nominations for instructors, 132 for school counselors, and 16 for principals—each submission filled with gratitude and admiration for these outstanding educators and leaders. Selected recipients—defined by receiving two or more nominations in the counselor and teacher categories—were awarded UConn ECE merchandise of their choice, a printed poster featuring heartfelt quotes from nominators, and recognition on our social media platforms. These recognitions underscore the collaborative spirit and dedication of educators and administrators who help shape meaningful academic opportunities for students through UConn ECE. Below are some of the more powerful quotes from nominators:

Principal Appreciation (Mr. Kuckel, Cromwell High School)

- Principal Kuckel's consistent message to students, families, and staff is that dual enrollment courses help students prepare for college and their future careers. He has increased our ECE student enrollment and course offerings during his administration by adding five new courses.
 - *Principal Kuckel is always promoting awareness about the value and accessibility of these courses in a variety of ways. He thinks about all of our students and understands the value for every student to have college exposure in addition to earning credits. His availability, flexibility and unconditional support is appreciated by our instructors, our students, and myself!*
– Alicia Melillo, UConn ECE Site Representative, Cromwell High School

School Counselor Appreciation

- **Danielle Jurkiewicz, Fairfield Warde High School**
 - *Mrs. J, my school counselor, played a pivotal role in my success by helping me stay focused on my path toward my early childhood education major at UConn. She worked with me to plan my senior schedule, supported my decision to take the ECE course, and reassured me when I doubted myself—and now I'm excelling in the class, grateful for her encouragement to follow my passion.*
– Saylor, UConn ECE Student
- **Janine Murdy, Woodland Regional High School**
 - *Mrs. Murdy is a UConn alum who continually promotes ECE programs to our students. She starts promoting these programs when we register students in 8th grade and continues to challenge students to enroll in challenging courses throughout their high school years.*
– Principal Mulligan, Woodland Regional High School

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- **Kate Kopylec, UConn ECE Site Representative; Lyman Hall High School**

- *Throughout the UConn ECE experience, Mrs. Kopylec has provided clear information on what ECE classes are, deadlines and requirements for registering (also visiting all ECE classes to assist in the registration process), and scholarship information. Her support has made my (and others) ECE experience less stressful/overwhelming.*
– Anonymous UConn ECE Student

Instructor Appreciation

- **Monika Fryc-Gabrys, Woodland Regional High School, MATH 1131Q: Calculus I**
 - *"Monika inspires her students daily. She advises the Math Team and has generated huge participation in the Team... Recently she led a 14-hour math challenge at school and took students to a Jumanji math challenge... Her students have given such positive feedback on the UConn ECE exit survey. She has high standards and her students meet with great success. She continues to get letters from her former students thanking her! She is a true gem!"*
– Andrea Gaetano, Math Department Chairperson
- **Mr. Dalidowitz, Crosby High School, SOCI 1001: Introduction to Sociology; HRTS 1007: Introduction to Human Rights; & HRTS 2200: Introduction to Genocide Studies**
 - *"My UConn ECE Instructor is awesome because they challenge us to think critically, push us beyond high school expectations, and genuinely care about our success. Their passion for teaching and real-world insights make learning both engaging and impactful!"*
– Jasmine, UConn ECE Student
- **Dr. Rabinsky-Ankrom, Robert E. Fitch High School, ASLN 1102: Elementary American Sign Language II**
 - *"Dr. RA is a teacher every student wishes they had. She truly connects with each and every one of her students and pushes us to be ourselves while also learning a language that brings people together... I can confidently say that she has made a big impact on my life."*
– Anonymous UConn ECE Student
- **Mrs. Norige, Torrington High School, SPSS 3230: Biotechnology- Science, Application, Impact, Perception; BIOL 1107: Principles of Biology I; & BIOL 1108: Principles of Biology II**
 - *"Mrs. Norige always promotes classes to students who are interested and has pushed to make UConn courses available for all incoming interested students."*
– Anonymous UConn ECE Student
- **Mr. Brewer, Bristol Central High School, PHYS 1201Q: General Physics I & PHYS 1202Q: General Physics II**
 - *"Mr. Brewer pours his heart out into teaching us physics and makes it extremely fun to learn about. He spends countless hours making sure each and every student understands what they are doing and enjoys their time in physics and is all around a fantastic teacher."*
– Amber, UConn ECE Student



Early College Experience

ECE the UConn Way

- ▶ Take UConn courses at your high school for a fraction of the cost
- ▶ Be assessed as a college student not by a 3-hour exam
- ▶ Build your collegiate resume with a UConn transcript
- ▶ Credits transfer 87% of the time
- ▶ Remember to complete the UConn ECE registration process in the late summer/ early fall

UConn

EST. 1955

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ECE Wallace Stevens Poetry Contest

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Naima Garcia

April 1915, it's 5 PM, gas overtaking the air pays my nostrils a bitter visit as the clouds of toxicity begin to knot up within my lungs. It's them, the Germans. Their troops are full and prepared to shred nations apart, their sights set high on Ypres. Heavy weight pours into my chest. It's no secret that within just a couple minutes, I'll be seeing the light soon, the sweet afterlife, wherever that shall lead me to cross.

They demand control over their desired high grounds, so a poisonous bomb would make the perfect vicious strike. Whatever it takes to grant them access to both the east and south areas of Ypres in western Belgium, they have no problem going ballistic with. Not a single dust of mercy resided within their veins.

My soul ascends from my body with every rapid wave of bombs pouring their way through the roof, outside the window, throughout the neighborhood.

Ypres had been through plenty, we'd been through more than enough. The Germans and their allied forces had attempted to savagely possess our city a year prior.

They were filled with fiery desire; to take over our most prized, advantageous spots we had on the North Coast. Little did I know, that that incident would seem nearly as minor as spilt milk compared to the gruesome, earth-shaking hell that was to make its way to Ypres. I knew since the past year or two, that Ypres would never be the same glistening, tourist attraction it had been before, but would instead become a breeding ground for death, blood, gas and despair-induced civilians.

The fruity scent of the lavenders would be replaced by the putrid odor of decaying bodies. But most importantly, the sun, the mark of widespread joy and laughter, would be long gone. It'll never rise again if the light of tomorrow never appears.

Join the Group



To facilitate learning, knowledge, and opportunities by connecting UConn ECE Students with UConn ECE Alumni.



Join the UConn ECE Alumni Group on LinkedIn at bit.ly/UConnECEAlumni

UConn

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UConn ECE

69 YEARS STRONG



**ECE we will be celebrating 70 years in the
2025-2026 academic year!**

UConn Early College Experience was founded in 1955 and is proud to have offered hundreds of thousands of Connecticut high school students the opportunity to take college courses in high school over the past 69 years. UConn ECE is the nation's longest running concurrent enrollment program.

ECE.UCONN.EDU