



# CONNECTIONS

Growing in Strength, Leadership, and Vision



*Unlocking Doors to a Brighter Future*

Volume 4, Issue 1 Spring 2014

## Mission Possible: Reinvesting in Access and Success

By Grantley S. Adams

That was the theme of the Forty-Sixth Annual Breakfast Meeting of the Board of Directors of CONNTAC, Inc., that was held on Friday, October 18, 2013 in Wallingford, CT. Ten Students were awarded scholarships, Dr. Karin Edwards, Chief Student Affairs Officer at Three Rivers Community College was presented with this year's Friend of CONNTAC Award, and Dr. David Levinson, President of Norwalk Community College/Vice President Connecticut Board of Regents for Higher Education, was the guest speaker. Dr. Grace Jones,

President of Three Rivers Community College, Dr. Anna Wasescha, President of Middlesex Community College, Dr. Wilfredo Nieves, President of Capital Community College and President Anita Glieniecki of Housatonic Community College were all in attendance, and so was Gail Coppage, Director of Innovation and Outreach at The Connecticut State Colleges & Universities (ConnSCU).

The capacity-filled room was abuzz with attendees greeting each other as they settled into their seats, brimming with anticipation for the start of the 2013 edition of CONNTAC'S Board of Directors Annual Breakfast Meeting.

2013 edition of CONNTAC'S Board of Directors Annual Breakfast Meeting.

Cecilia Nugent, Executive Director of CONNTAC, Inc. welcomed everyone. After the Invocation was delivered, she presented the organization's Educational Access Update, a report on the accom-

plishments realized and challenges faced during the preceding year.

Dr. Levinson in his remarks, highlighted the importance of TRIO programs and specifically the significant role that CONNTAC plays in advocating support services for individuals from low-income, first generation, and under-represented backgrounds. He commended CONNTAC, which served a total of 3,207 students in the past year with reduced resources, as a very successful program. He then shared some statistics from the program housed at his institution - Norwalk Community College: Of the 243 CONNTAC students at NCC, 92% have persisted, 96% maintained a GPA of 2.0 or better, 35% have graduated in 4 years and 18% transferred to a

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**Guest Speaker: Dr. David L. Levinson, President of Norwalk Community College/VP Connecticut Board of Regents for Higher Education**

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## Photos From CONNTAC's 46th Annual Breakfast Meeting



*Photo above from left to right:: Kenneth Armstong, President of CONNTAC Board; Dr. Wilfredo Nieves, Capital Community College; Dr. Anna M. Wasescha, Middlesex Community College; Dr. Grace S. Jones, Three Rivers Community College; Anita Gliniecki, Housatonic Community College; Dr. David L. Levinson, Norwalk Community College; Cecilia Nugent, Executive Director of CONNTAC*





## Photos From CONNTAC's 46th Annual Breakfast Meeting *(Continued from Page 2)*



*Photo above from left to right: CONNTAC'S 2012-2013 Scholarship Recipients  
From left to right: (back row) Gilbert Christopher-Norwich, CT ; Richard Crockett-New Britain, CT; Joseph Backofen- Danielson, CT;  
(middle row) Kasie Bouchard-Thompson, CT; Diana Chin-Bridgeport, CT; Dilliner Wilson-West Haven, CT; LeeAnn Gauthier- Baltic, CT;  
(front row) Trisana Spence – Hartford, CT; Marquis Bawl- Wethersfield, CT*



*Photo above: Friend of CONNTAC: Dr. Karin Edwards, Chief Student Affairs Officer at Three Rivers Community College*



## Photos From CONNTAC's 46th Annual Breakfast Meeting *(Continued from Page 3)*



*Erica Coleman, Lead Educational Counseling Coordinator with Mashal Ebadi, CONNTAC Board Member*



*Anita B. Schmidt, CONNTAC Board Member with Saige Bryan, Guest Singer*



*From left to right: Kenneth Armstrong, President of CONNTAC Board; Cecilia Nugent, Executive Director of CONNTAC; Saige Bryan, Guest Singer from Norwalk, CT; Laura Blackwell, CONNTAC'S Educational Counselor*





## Photos From CONNTAC's 46th Annual Breakfast Meeting *(Continued from Page 4)*



*Photo to the Right: Widelyne Moise, CONNTAC Counselor (left) with a scholarship recipient's family and friends*



*Photo to the Left: CONNTAC STAFF*



*Photo Above: CONNTAC Board Members*

## Educational Opportunity Center Regional Conference 2013

By Karen Touch

The Educational Opportunity Center (EOC) 2013 Regional Professional Development Conference was held on November 7th and 8th at the Colonial Hotel in Gardner, Massachusetts. The New England Educational Opportunity Association (NEOA) sponsors the essential event yearly as the responsibilities of coordinating and hosting rotates between the six New England regions. For 2013, Connecticut's Talent Assistance Cooperative Incorporated (CONNTAC, Inc.)-EOC had the pleasure of coordinating and hosting the interactive two day experience. The conference was organized by counselor Shontisha Kinchen-Askew and dynamically

hosted by counselors Jay Holley and Widelyne Moise (photo to the right).

To kick start the conference a warm and encouraging welcome was given by NEOA President, Karen Hadley Keim. Individuals then participated in an ice breaker that filled the room with laughter as details of favorite hobbies and interesting experiences were



shared. Throughout the cordial two day conference, presentations and discussions were facilitated







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on noteworthy topics such as Financial Aid Updates (Jayne McGinn-Director of Financial Aid, Worcester State), Inmates/Ex-offenders: Educational Counseling for the Incarcerated and the Released (Marty Kelly-Education Adviser, Massachusetts -EOC), and Veterans: Transitions Made Easier (Ammad Sheikh-Director of Expanding Horizons Program, Fitchburg State University).

In addition, through the sharing of common challenges and obstacles experienced within the field, of working with a diverse popula-

tion, EOC colleagues were given a chance to undergo relaxation in an engaging Health and Wellness: Yoga Workshop (Anita Perry-Instructor, Yoga Anita).

This conference brings together people who do similar work serving the same population. Thus, the annual event never fails at building a strong sense of camaraderie for individuals across the New England regions to continue their efforts in strengthening the Educational Opportunity Centers' Mission. As NEOA President, Karen

Hadley Keim powerfully asserted during the welcome, "We are in the fight of our lives; we need to fight as a team!"



## New Year, New Students, New FAFSA!



**W**ith the advent of a New Year comes the most hectic time of the year for CONNTAC's Educational Counselors. With spring 2014 semester starting in January and a new Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) available for the next academic term, CONNTAC Counselors throughout Connecticut, are kept busy assisting eager students with the financial aid process.



Educational Counselor Widelyne Moise (photos above) had conducted a Financial Aid Presentation for a highly interactive and engaging group of prospective students from the "Intensive College Transition Program (ICTP). ICTP is collaboration between Middlesex Community College, Meriden Center and Meriden Adult Education. Students from the program would officially

matriculate into Middlesex Community College's Spring 2014 semester. Consequently, Widelyne's objective was to ensure that the students understood the importance and purpose of FAFSA along with the financial aid process.

*"I wanted to remind them I was there to help them complete the FAFSA, and help them target their career interests."*

-Widelyne Moise,  
Educational Counselor-



## Connecticut's College Goal Sunday

**C**ollege Goal Sunday (CGS) is a national event held annually for students and their families who seek assistance in completing the nerve-wrecking "Free Application for Federal Student Aid" (FAFSA). In addition, individuals are able to receive in depth explanations and advice on the financial aid process, scholarships, state, and federal financial aid programs. This year Connecticut hosted 15 sites throughout the state with student and professional volunteers from educational programs within the communities on Sunday, January 26th, 2014. Thus, CONNTAC – Educational Opportunity Center has the pleasure of being a part of the CGS event every year as staff and counselors volunteer their time to ensure a well-organized and resourceful experience is offered for students and families.



*Photos: Volunteers at Middlesex Community College, Meriden Campus and New Britain High School for College Goal Sunday*





## CONNTAC Board Members, Staff, and Family Celebrate During its Annual Seasonal Gathering



*From left to right: James L. Williams, Lawrence Hall, Dian Brown-Albert, Anita B. Schmidt, Grantley S. Adams, Cecilia Nugent*



*From left to right: Ahsia Cogdell, Taisha Ayala, Jacqueline Perez, Michelle Nanephilavong*





*Photo Above From left to right: Laura Blackwell, Cecilia Nugent, Arlette Taylor*



*Photo Above From left to right: Widelyne Moise-Dorelus & Josue Dorelus*



*Photo Above CONNTAC STAFF & FAMILY*

## Mission Possible *(Continued from Page 1)*

four-year institution. These numbers, Dr. Levinson said, point to the importance and success of CONNTAC. "CONNTAC has the secret sauce, and the Board of Regents is taking note of what CONNTAC is doing," he proclaimed. Dr. Levinson observed that Connecticut has the largest achievement gap among US states and that inequality will persist if changes are not imple-

mented. "We should invest in programs like CONNTAC."

Dr. Karin Edwards, in her remarks, recalled that her roots in Higher Education began in an Equal Opportunity Program (EOP) like CONNTAC. "Please do not devalue the work that CONNTAC does, don't sell us short." She went on to recount that at a reunion she attended of people who have been in similar programs, many

are now commissioners, legislators, people who are now accomplished.

After the audience was wowed by the singing of Saige Bryan, a Norwalk Community College student and the closing remarks were proffered, the time had come for concluding another successful CONNTAC, Inc. Board of Directors Annual Breakfast Meeting.



## CAEOP'S Annual Conference

The Connecticut Association of Educational Opportunity Programs (CAEOP) held its 27th Annual Conference on November 15th 2013 at the University of Connecticut Greater Hartford Campus. CAEOP's mission is to promote postsecondary educational opportunities for populations traditionally under-represented in higher education. Thus, the conference held a number of workshops focused on hot topics ranging from educational changes, steps in paying for college, and new policies such as Connecticut's Dream Act.



*CAEOP 2013-2014 Executive Board from left to right: Erica Coleman, Treasurer; Jose Luis Ramos, Secretary; Erica Granoff, Vice President*

## What's New In CONNTAC?

- Board Members** .....Welcome Mashal Ebadi!
- Educational Counselors** .....Welcome Jay Holley!
- CONNTAC Support Staff**.....Welcome Ahsia Cogdell & Jacqueline Perez!
- Congratulations** .....Thank you to Educational Counselor Laura Blackwell for 25 years of dedicated services to students through CONNTAC-EOC!

Thank you to support staff Taisha Ayala for 2 years of commitment with CONNTAC and continued assistance in central office operations!

***Visit our homepage!***  
***www.conntacinc.org***

