



CSCU President, Terrence Cheng, Is Keynote Speaker At CONNTAC, Inc. Board Of Directors Annual Meeting

By Grantley S. Adams

Connecticut Talent Assistance Cooperative (CONNTAC) held its 55th Annual Breakfast Meeting on Friday, October 28, 2022, at IL Monticello in Meriden, CT. The theme of this year's meeting - **Access Matters: Finding Solutions, Broadening Solutions**, which President of the CONNTAC

Board, Kenneth G. Armstrong articulated, "Speaks directly to the steps CONNTAC continues to take to increase awareness and assistance to place adults into various colleges, universities, and career and technical programs. By providing increased access to job training and other

postsecondary educational opportunities, CONNTAC continues to be part of today's solution to provide our clientele with the support needed to attain equity and inclusion, in their future endeavors."

CONNTAC Board member and Annual Meeting Chair, Dian Brown-Albert welcomed the attendees and promised that a heart-warming and edifying program was in store. Cecilia F. Nugent, Executive Director, presented The Year in Review, and Scholarship Chair, Lawrence Hall, and Board Member Dr. Ceylon Cicero, presented the Scholarship Awards to the Recipients. The Friend of CONNTAC Award



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President Cheng, Keynote Speaker

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was presented to Ms. Jacqueline N. Butler, College and Career Readiness Program Facilitator, Waterbury Adult Education, by Board Member Michael Amouzou.

The President's Award went to Cecilia F. Nugent, Executive Director, CONNTAC, Inc, and Grantley S. Adams, former Director of Marketing and Public Relations, Northwestern Connecticut Community College.

Board Member, Joseph Priester introduced President Cheng, the event's Keynote Speaker, who prefaced his remarks by expressing that it was an honor to speak before this audience and that he appreciated the opportunity. He began by observing that he has now been president of the Connecticut State Colleges and Universities (CSCU) system for 16 months, then shared some details about his family's immigrant story and his educational and professional background. President Cheng's family emigrated from Taiwan, and he grew up on Long Island, NY. Even though his parents were professionals in their native country, they were relegated to working class status in the U.S.

Nonetheless, he became a first-generation college student who earned a bachelor's degree in

English from Binghamton University and an MFA in fiction from the University of Miami, where he was a James Michener Fellow. He has held academic and administrative leadership and faculty roles, which included associate provost/assistant vice president, Academic Programs at Brooklyn College, and associate dean, School of Arts and Humanities, and chair, Department of English at Lehman College. Both institutions are part of the City University of New York. He also was campus director of the University of Connecticut Stamford campus, where he also served as a faculty member in the English department. "My journey has given me an appreciation for public higher education and blessed me with the opportunity to have an impact and make a difference. I was like these students – these students are like me," he said. "I could not ask to be in a more exciting, thrilling and challenging place than CSCU, right now."

President Cheng then shared what he has learned about CSCU, since he has been on the job. He celebrated the dedication of the people: faculty, staff, and administrators, the students, communities, and supporters and the CSCU culture as being

positive elements.

The President then went on to issue a challenge to members of the CSCU community. He began by asking a rhetorical question, "How many of you have felt that Yale and UCONN are the big dogs, and we are just the pups, because of the big shadows these institutions cast in Connecticut?" He said that he has wondered how many may have internalized those feelings.

Cheng then went on to list traits that he has seen in CSCU's culture. (a) We are good, but we are not great – not yet; (b) We work hard, but we don't always work together; (c) A tendency to sit back at times and let the other folks go get it: because maybe, "It isn't in my job description," or because, "I'm afraid to step on toes," or because "I just don't want to put myself out there;" (d) In some cases, in too many places, is a mentality that says, "I'm going to play the game not to lose. I'm going to play the game to defend. I'm going to play the game to survive." The President did caution that this is not the case everywhere in the System, "But if we're honest with ourselves, it's out there, too much."

"How are you going to really



President Cheng, Keynote Speaker (Continued from Page 2)

make the biggest impact you can on people's lives? Because we are in the people business – we got into higher ed to help people, because we believe in people. If it were you, would you not want the person helping you at your college or university to give you 110%?"

Terrence Cheng reminded the audience that the CSCU system with more than 17 campuses, which services over 80,000 individuals, and confers more than 12,000 credentials each year, is in fact the largest system of higher education in our state. He also pointed out some other attributes. CSCU is the primary engine of social mobility and economic impact for Connecticut. CSCU services students that otherwise would not have folks there to serve them. CSCU literally serves students and citizens from every one of our state's 169 municipalities. CSCU has the support of the Governor, and our legislature, and our communities, and neighbors and partners, "Could we use more support? Sure. But let's value and cherish the support we do have."

President Cheng asserted, "I think we forget that WE are the big dogs in Connecticut. And we must remind ourselves that our size, our strength, our formidable

capacity is powerful."

He did acknowledge that big challenges lie ahead -- enrollment, curriculum and program changes, our financial landscape. "We have to evolve into the 21st century in every way. We have to get more state funding. We have to change, or we are going to become obsolete. We become obsolete when we no longer fulfill the needs of the students that seek our help and need it the most."

President Terrence Cheng concluded his remarks by recognizing that CONNTAC is not just a partner with CSCU -- but family. "Our mission, vision, are aligned. Your students are our students, they come to us for the same

reasons. When we center our work every day on that, and that alone, that should be more than enough fire to drive us forward. It's the students like the ones we're here to celebrate today that make all the difference as we move ahead. Remind yourselves that we are second-class to no one. Remind yourselves that we are doing the work that would not happen without us. Remind yourselves that these students would have one less partner and supporter without you and that would impact their lives. Let's focus on that and be inspired each day to serve our students the way they deserve to be served. That is how we change the game."



2021-2022 Scholarship Recipients



Paige Cadogan

Attending Eastern Connecticut State University - CT

Field of Interest: Social Work

CONNTAC Representative: Gloria Dover

Paige is a single-mother who attends Eastern Connecticut State University with dreams of becoming a Social Worker. She would like to start her career with the Department of Children and Families and practice Family Therapy in the future. Her interest in the field of Social Work stems from her passion to help people. Paige says she migrated from Jamaica four years ago to access an affordable education and contribute something meaningful in society. The transition has helped her to accomplish her dream of attending college to secure her family's future.

It has also given her access to resources to help her to make an impact and influence change in the United States for immigrants like herself. She expresses gratitude for CONNTAC Counselor, Gloria Dover, for encouraging her to apply for the scholarship. "Ms. Gloria advised and assisted me with everything that I needed for school. She helped me transfer to Eastern Connecticut State University and with financial aid. She is very supportive." Paige explains the scholarship will ease financial burdens and assist with college costs.



Alicja Houle

Attending Tunxis Community College - CT

Field of Interest: Nursing

CONNTAC Representative: Erica Coleman

Alicja attends Tunxis Community College with the goal of becoming a Registered Nurse. She has been a Medical Assistant for years. Unfortunately, she recently lost her job. In addition to this loss, her mother was diagnosed with stage 4 cancer. As a single mother whose daughter is also a college student, having sufficient funds to live and support school is becoming more and more difficult. Despite life's challenges, Alicja is committed to working hard in school and making her dreams a reality. She expresses gratitude for CONNTAC Counselor, Erica Coleman,

for helping her through the college process. "Erica helps me with everything step by step. She is always so warm, patient, friendly, and very supportive in every situation." Alicja explains that the scholarship will assist with transportation and with books needed to succeed in her classes.

2021-2022 Scholarship Recipients



Camila Miranda

Attending Fordham University - NY

Field of Interest: Political Science

CONNTAC Representative: DeShayla Shelley

Camila is a Political Science major at Fordham University with dreams to become a Lawyer. Camila describes her journey as being a first generation American, as her family originates from Guatemala. She is the first in her family to attend college and has had little guidance throughout the college application process. Loving moral support from her family, hard work and determination, and the CONNTAC-EOC program has aided her in overcoming these hurdles. Camila has been an active force in her community as she volunteered at Building One Community as an English Language Learning (ELL) tutor for immigrant adults. She

participated as an immigration legal services intern with the Connecticut Institute for Refugees and Immigrants. She thanks CONNTAC Counselor, DeShayla Shelley, for helping her complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). "DeShayla was really nice and I appreciate her help." The scholarship will help with tuition and books.

Jennifer Paul

Attending University of Connecticut - CT

Field of Interest: Natural Resources

CONNTAC Representative: Gloria Dover

Jennifer transferred from Three Rivers Community College (TRCC) and is enrolled at the University of Connecticut pursuing a Bachelor's degree in Natural Resources. She has held several part-time jobs while attending college as a full-time student. Staying employed at a full-time level is imperative for her to finance her education as she supports herself entirely on her own. She gives praise and gratitude to her father for pushing and motivating her to continue with her college education. At TRCC, Jennifer was president of Trailblazers, was a member of the Three Rivers United Environmentalists (T.R.U.E.), and volunteered as a water monitor for the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection. At UCONN, she has volunteered in the Fall Campus Clean-up and the CT Special Olympics-Husky Classic Soccer Tournament as an Evaluator. She appreciates CONNTAC Counselor, Gloria Dover, for helping her finance her college education. "Gloria assisted me with fee waivers, my financial aid application, and scholarships." Jennifer was also the recipient of the 2022 NEOCA (National Educational Opportunity Centers Association) scholarship with Gloria's help and being a participant of CONNTAC-EOC. "Ms. Gloria is very knowledgeable, helpful and caring." Jennifer shares the scholarship will help with paying for books and other school supplies.



2021-2022 Scholarship Recipients



Jaden Walker

Attending Central Connecticut State University - CT

Field of Interest: Computer Sciences

CONNTAC Representative: Tomeka Williams

Jaden received his Associate's degree from Capital Community College and is enrolled in the Computer Science Honors program at Central Connecticut State University. His career goal is to become a college professor teaching Computer Science courses. Jaden describes one of the most difficult obstacles that he had to overcome in pursuit of post-secondary education as being the first in his family to go to college. Most of his relatives did not graduate high school, let alone attend college. After graduating high school Jaden did not want to have a limited skill set or work a low-wage job. Instead he aspired to expand his education and thanks CONNTAC Counselor, Tomeka Williams, for helping him transfer from the community college to a state university by issuing him a fee waiver and giving him scholarship information.

"Tomeka has been very helpful in my education and career goals." Jaden shares the scholarship will ease the financial strain of attending a university and allow him to focus on his schoolwork.

Photos from Annual Breakfast Meeting



Photos from Annual Breakfast Meeting



Photos from Annual Breakfast Meeting



Meet the New Educational Counselors



Chelsea – My name is Chelsea DeLucia from the New Haven area serving the Bridgeport and surrounding communities. I am a wife and mom of 4 beautiful girls. I have a Bachelor's Degree in Human Service. Having experienced so many things in life I am passionate about working and supporting students and individuals with reaching their higher goals.



Shanon – As a low-income, first-generation student, I was eligible for CONNTAC, Inc.'s admission application fee waiver. After receiving my Associate's degree in Human Services at Tunxis Community College, I transferred to Central Connecticut State University. My passion for education began during my undergraduate internship, facilitating social and emotional groups for students. Throughout my experience as an Educational Counselor for CONNTAC, Inc., I have assisted hundreds of adults obtain higher education. I am dedicated to making the career decision making, financial aid and admissions processes as smooth as possible for Connecticut students.



Jacob – Jacob came to Harvard with seven years of professional experience as the Director of Business Development at World Scholars. With the receipt of two degrees from Yale University, Jacob was a venture creation intern at Yale Tsai Center for Innovative Thinking (formerly, "Yale Entrepreneurial Institute"), and organized one of the nation's first blockchain executive education programs partnering with Harvard and Yale law and management faculty members in early 2016. He also served as an instructional technologist at Yale College, a core member of Yale Law School Non-profit Organization Clinic, a technical assistant for Professor Akhil Amar in 2014, and a 2012 John Templeton visiting scholar.

Meet the New Educational Counselors



Roland – Hi, my name is Roland C. A. Dunham, II, I am from the New London Community and the new Educational Counselor for CONNTAC serving the Danielson and Willimantic Community. As a student who benefitted from CONNTAC services during my years at Three Rivers Community College, I was able to obtain my Associate Degree in Criminal Justice Enforcement. I also earned a Bachelor of General Studies from Eastern Connecticut State University in Business Administration with a concentration in International Marketing and a minor in Sociology. I am a second-generation alumnus of both institutions! I love volunteering on the committee of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion at the New London Community Meal Center. I am also looking forward to furthering my education to improve the community in which I live. Please stop by and make sure you CONNTAC, Mr. Ro



Bryce – Bryce has been around the non-profit world for many years. He loves assisting people and will be going for his master's in higher education, with a Bachelor's in psychology previously attained. Prior to CONNTAC he worked for a non-profit that assisted people who are homeless, transient, and/or have HIV. He learned a lot there and was even a published author for a research study. He created an employment and income resource for people, which is where he found out about CONNTAC Inc. During his off time, he volunteers for various charities and loves traveling, singing, and watching tv shows or playing video games. as well as long walks on the beach...



Victoria – Hi, my name is Victoria Vasquez, and I am a recent graduate of the University of Connecticut. I got my bachelor's degree in Psychology, and I am going to be working on my PhD in Developmental Psychology and Family Therapy. I am excited to be working with CONNTAC and I think that this will help me gain more experience. I think this was the best fit for me because I love helping people and motivating people to succeed and it really makes me happy that I get to help anyone who is wanting to pursue their education and work in a career that they love and enjoy.

CONNTAC Representatives Attend 2022 NEOCA Conference

By Shanon Taunton

Thank you for the opportunity to attend the 2022 National Educational Opportunity Centers Association conference in San Diego. I learned how to incorporate the Appreciative Advising to help students achieve educational dreams. Round table discussions included recruiting, social media, Annual Performance Reviews, technology use, and Financial Aid tips.

Council for Opportunity in Education presentations included an update on the student loan forgiveness and changes in house and senate leadership, U.S. Department of Education updates, challenges and how we can respond to these challenges. There are 840,000 TRiO participants and 83% get into college, we need to help them graduate by lobbying for more funding.



The Fostering Resiliency Among Veterans session discussed resiliency and innovative practices in healing through storytelling for veterans. 25% of the 3300 participants CONNTAC, Inc. serves are veterans. By increasing opportunities for meaningful participation, prosocial bonding, and setting and communicating realistic expectations, professionals can navigate risk factors in the environment for veterans.



The Methods to Recruit and Support Adult Students session discussed characteristics of adult learners and how to increase retention using the adult learning theory. As a CONNTAC, Inc. alumni, I can personally relate to the discussion of resiliency and transformation. The hot topic session I attended focused on leading with energy to avoid burnout. As educational counselors, we must avoid burnout by resting, connecting, and reflecting. Rest is not just sleep! HAVE FUN!

CONNTAC Representatives Attend 2022 NEOCA Conference

