



CONNTAC 56th Annual Breakfast Meeting Guest Speaker Dr. O. John Maduko

by Grantley S. Adams

On Friday, October 20, 2023, Connecticut Talent Assistance Cooperative, (CONNTAC) held its Board

of Directors 56th Annual Meeting, at the Courtyard Marriott in Cromwell, CT. This year's meeting theme

– ***Creating College Solutions, for a Shared Future***, seemed fitting, considering that Dr. O. John Maduko, President of newly established CT State Community College, was the Keynote Speaker.

The Annual Meeting Chair, Dian Brown-Albert, warmly welcomed the attendees to open the festivities. Tomeka Wil-



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Williams, CONNTAC Project Director, presented the organization's **Year in Review** report and recognized CONNTAC Educational Counselor, Chelsea DeLucia for her exemplary performance, over the past year. The Scholarship Committee Chair, Lawrence Hall, assisted by Board Member Dr. Ceylon Cicero, did their usual magnificent job of introducing this year's six very deserving Scholarship recipients and presenting them with their awards. Board Vice President, Donna Hardaway, introduced and presented the Friend of CONNTAC Award to Victoria Lee Thomas, Executive Assistant to the Chancellor of Connecticut State Colleges and Universities (CSCU). Board President, Kenneth G. Armstrong, presented the Chairman's

Award to Dr. Ceylon Cicero, Board Member, Erica Coleman, Lead Educational Counselor, and DeShayla Shelley, CONNTAC Assistant Director.

Board Member, Joseph Priester, introduced Keynote Speaker, Dr. John Maduko. Dr. Maduko is the Inaugural President of Connecticut State Community College (CT State), he assumed office in June 2022. Before his appointment at CT State, Dr. Maduko was the Vice President for Academic and Student Affairs at Minnesota State Community and Technical College. Dr. Maduko earned his M.D. in Allopathic Medicine from St. Matthew's University School of Medicine, and a bachelor's degree in biology from California State Polytechnic University, Pomona.

Dr. Maduko began his speech by introducing himself as, "President of CT State, a husband, father, first generation Nigerian American and someone blessed to earn both a B.S. in Biology and a Doctor of Medicine, and amassed \$300,000 in student loan debt, that I have luckily paid most of it off." He went on to explain that he shared that information, not to brag, but to acknowledge his admiration of students' commitment, skill, sacrifice, and strength it takes to complete an educational journey.

Dr. Maduko stated that we are all part of a global community network that is committed to finding and supporting our students where they are, not by changing our values but by updating our col-

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lective vocabulary, so that we are truly connecting with all our students in every part of our region.

Throughout history, he said, there are countless accounts of individuals doing whatever it took to obtain an education. As an example, Dr. Maduko cited Pakistani Nobel Peace Prize Laureate, Malala Yousafzai, who survived a Taliban attack and has advocated for at least 180 million girls around the world, who are kept from education, and for their right to an education. He then quoted the late Congressman, John Robert Lewis, who once declared, "None of us will be free until all of us are equal."

President Maduko said that students often ask him, what lies ahead after

college, and with this current global conflict and economic uncertainty, these questions have intensified. He cited Immanuel Kant's ***Rules for Happiness: something to do, someone to love, and something to hope for.*** Kant said that we should aim to live a "good life" by doing what we love, being active and having a sense of purpose.

President Maduko then suggested utilizing the application of the 3T's:

TIME - Volunteering your service to advocating and educating others about your cause.

TALENT - Using your expertise to benefit a cause.

TREASURE - Donating financial contributions (big or small) to charitable causes.

Addressing the scholarship recipients, President Maduko noted, "As you embark on the next chapter of your journey, career, and life, you will come across people who don't believe they are worthy to pursue their education; 'It's too late,' 'I'm too old,' 'I don't have the finances,' 'I'm not good enough.' You will then be able to share your story and trials and tribulations to enable them to overcome their barriers."

In closing, President Maduko proclaimed that he was honored to be a part of a celebration of student excellence. He also acknowledged CONNTAC's especially significant role as a supportive resource of professionals and advocates, now and continuously.



Photos from the 56th Annual Breakfast



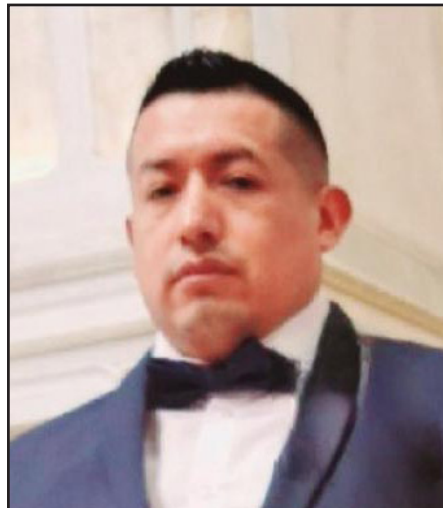




2022-2023 Scholarship Recipients



Hannah Chapman
*Attending CT State Community
 College Three Rivers, CT
 Major: Environmental Engineering*



Cesar Franco Herrera
*Attending CT State Community
 College Capitol, CT
 Major: Architectural Engineering
 Technology*



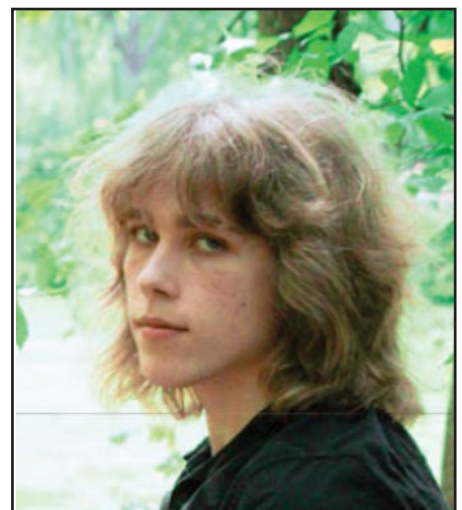
Carol Moore
*Attending CT State Community
 College Three Rivers, CT
 Major: Drug & Alcohol Recovery
 Counseling (DARC)*



Terez Murphy
*Attending Southern Connecticut
 State University, CT
 Major: Anthropology with a concen-
 tration in Archaeology*



Emily Ruiz
*Attending CT State Community
 College Naugatuck Valley, CT
 Major: Early Childhood Education*



Thomas Wysocki
*Attending University of
 Connecticut, CT
 Major: Biomedical Engineering*



Friend of CONNTAC

Victoria Lee Thomas is a seasoned education professional, who is committed to advocating for the challenges, needs, and aspirations of the communities she serves. Victoria is a 25-year veteran of the Connecticut State Colleges and Universities, with experience in the IT and Academic Affairs department. For the past 7 years, she has been the executive assistant to the Chancellor. Victoria is also the co-chairperson of the Winston E. Thompson Global Majority Retreat, which is a conference for higher education professionals in Connecticut and a signature event of the CSCU.

Victoria plays a vital role in empowering communities, fostering social change, and promoting a more equitable society. She is the founder and CEO of Horizons Youth Enrichment Program, Inc., (H.Y.E.P.) a nonprofit organization established in 2004, formed to serve the youth, young adult, and the home-

less communities in Hartford. Victoria is a member of the NAACP. She serves on the executive board of the Greater Hartford chapter and chairs their education committee. Victoria is also a member of the Urban League of Greater Hartford and is the vice-president for programs and operations for Helping Your People Evolve (H.Y.P.E.), a community-based organization in Hartford, CT.

A native of Hartford, CT and proud alumna of Hartford Public Schools, Victoria earned a Bachelor of Arts degree with a concentration in Organizational Management and is currently a candidate for a Master of Science degree in Organizational Effectiveness and Leadership with a concentration in Nonprofit Management both at Charter Oak State College.

A Friend of CONNTAC Award was established by

the Connecticut Talent Assistance Cooperative Board of Directors (CONNTAC, Inc.) to honor and recognize leaders in the community who have demonstrated commitment to educational access. Candidates are selected by the Board and provided an award of recognition on an annual basis.



Above: **Victoria Lee Thomas**
*Executive Assistant to the
Chancellor*
Connecticut State Colleges &
Universities



Introducing CONNTAC's New President

Larry Hall serves as Director of Admissions at Central Connecticut State University and has 30 years in varied roles in Admissions and Enrollment Management. He began his higher education career at Sacred Heart University and progressed to leadership roles at Western Connecticut State University, returning to lead the team at CCSU in 2008. He holds a Master's Degree in Educational Leadership and a Bachelor's in Business Administration from Central Connecticut State University.



Kenneth G. Armstrong Resigns as President of CONNTAC, Inc. Board of Directors

by Grantley S. Adams

Mr. Kenneth G. Armstrong announced his resignation from the Presidency of the Board of Directors of the Connecticut Talent Assistance Cooperative (CONNTAC) effective December 31, 2023. The esteemed 2023 Global Majority Retreat ICON AWARD recipient had served as CONNTAC's President for 18 years, starting in 2005.

Although he will continue to serve as a Board member for the foreseeable future, his resignation as President of CONNTAC, Inc, in a way, ends a journey that began in 1979, when he was hired as an Educational Counselor with CONNTAC-Wesleyan University, where he provided academic counseling, referred students to colleges and universities for placement, assisted students in the completion of financial aid forms and coordinated marketing strategies that would identify low-income, first generation and minority students who were interested in matriculating in placement in higher education. Mr. Armstrong joined CONNTAC-Wesleyan after being employed for four years

as a Social Worker at Barnard Group Home in Hartford, CT, where he worked with the courts to identify youth in need of a group home placement as an alternative to incarceration. He also worked with families in preparation for the youths' return to their homes, communities, and schools.

Ken Armstrong earned both his M.S. in Vocational Rehabilitation Counseling in 1974 and his B.S. in Social Work (1972) from Minnesota State University, Mankato, Minnesota.

In 1983, after leaving CONNTAC-Wesleyan, Ken served as Assistant Director of Admissions at Manchester Community College, he then moved, in 1987, to Tunxis Community College as Assistant Director of Admissions/Affirmative Action Officer. From 1993-2013, he worked in the Connecticut Community Colleges Board of Trustees as the System Officer for Diversity and Equity, reporting to the Chancellor. During his

tenure, he developed system-wide required elements for the Board of Trustees and Colleges' Affirmative Action plans. He also conducted and coordinated Diversity Training for staff and faculty and directed a Minority/Diversity Fellowship Program designed to train graduate students interested in teaching in the System's community colleges. Additionally, he conducted grievance investigations, monitored the search and selection procedures, developed liaisons with state and local organizations and recruited and maintained



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contact with protected group members seeking employment in the Community-Technical Colleges. and maintained contact with protected group members seeking employment in the Community-Technical Colleges.

In 2013, Mr. Armstrong retired from the Connecticut Colleges and Universities (CSCU) – Board of Regents, as the Director for Diversity and Equity – Southern Connecticut State University.

As President of the Board of Directors of CONNTAC Inc., a federally funded college placement program that services 3,000 students in Connecticut, Armstrong is very proud of the organization’s achievements over its 56 years in existence. He has declared, “It is important that we prepare citizens to gain the skills and education necessary to meet the needs of today’s workplace.” Armstrong has also proclaimed, “By providing increased access to job training and other postsecondary educational opportunities, CONNTAC Inc, continues to be part of today’s solution to

provide our clientele with the support needed to gain equity and inclusion in their future endeavors. Our TRIO Educational Opportunity Center has placed over 15,000 students in colleges, universities, and vocational technical programs over the past five years alone.”

In addition to his work with CONNTAC, Inc., Ken has also served in several community organizations over the years. He was a member of the National Opportunity in Education Association. He is a Past President of the African Americans in Higher Education Association, he was also a Big Brother in Hartford, Connecticut’s Big Brother Program. He was also once a Democratic Nominee for the City Council of Meriden, Connecticut and is currently a Parishioner of Saint Rose of Lima in Meriden Connecticut. And while he was employed by the Connecticut Community Colleges Board of Trustees, Kenneth G. Armstrong was a member of accreditation teams under the auspices of the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC).

We would like to express our

immense gratitude and thanks to former President Kenneth G. Armstrong for his extraordinary service to CONNTAC, Inc. and offer him our warmest regards and every good wish in all his future endeavors.





Introducing the Project Director of CONNTAC, Inc.

Tomeka Williams, serving as the Project Director of CONNTAC, INC. (Connecticut Talent Assistance Cooperative), brings a wealth of experience and dedication to her role. Assuming office in June 2023, she transitioned from her position as an Educational Counselor where she served the Hartford, CT, and surrounding areas for four years.

Williams strongly believes in CONNTAC's mission of promoting and expanding equal educational access opportunities for Connecticut residents. She is passionate about advocating for support services that specifically target individuals from low-income and first-generation educational backgrounds. For Williams, these efforts are not just professional obligations but deeply

rooted in her core values, driving her commitment to providing reasonable and realistic opportunities for individuals to succeed and be empowered both socially and economically.

Her background as an Educational Counselor has equipped her with firsthand knowledge of the challenges faced by individuals seeking educational opportunities, especially those from underserved communities. With her leadership, CONNTAC, INC. continues to play a vital role in addressing these challenges and working towards a more equitable educational landscape in Connecticut.

Tomeka Williams' educational background underscores her commitment to serving others and making a positive impact in her

community. Her Bachelor's and Master's in Science degrees in Human Service, from Springfield College demonstrate her dedication to understanding and addressing social issues, while her Associate in Science degree in Criminal Justice from Manchester Community College reflects her interest in justice and equity.

Beyond her academic achievements, Williams finds fulfillment in her role as a mother and grandmother. Her emphasis on family and community highlights her values of compassion, support, and unity. These personal values deeply inform her professional endeavors, driving her passion for empowering individuals and creating opportunities for social and economic advancement.



Introducing the Project Director of CONNTAC, Inc.

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Williams' multifaceted background, combining education, social services, and a strong sense of community, positions her as a leader who is not only

capable but also deeply invested in effecting positive change. Through her work at CONNTAC, INC. and her broader community involvement, she will continue to make

a meaningful difference in the lives of others, embodying the values she holds dear.

