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Features

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Persistence paid off well in FM quest

By Bob Kerzner '74

Ever wondered how WFCS FM came to be? Well, here's a bit of the story. Like many other students, I walked into what was then WCCS AM and was hooked on radio! At the time there were small transmitters in each of the buildings but we were not broadcasting out into the community. UConn, Trinity College, University of Hartford, and University of Bridgeport all broadcasted into the community with their FM stations, so why not us?

I spoke to Radio Club alumni to see if others had tried to establish an FM station. I heard a consistent message: We tried that before; it will never happen. That's just what I needed to hear. There it was -- a challenge.



The morning of Oct. 2, 1972 was an historic date for the Radio Club: the day WFCS went on the air. Celebrating the event from left: Robert Kerzner, program director; Joe Zareski, chief engineer; Dr. Richard Judd, dean of student affairs; and Dr. Cletus Clow, dean of administrative affairs. Dean Judd later became president of CCSU in 1996.

I visited University of Bridgeport's WPKN and learned a lot. Their engineer explained everything needed to start a new station and offered to help.

Next, a trip to Boston to visit the FCC office. They provided the mounds of paperwork and requirements needed to request a license and acquire a frequency. Looking at it was daunting to say the least. I was definitely out of my depth.

Being a business major, it seemed to me a business plan was needed. What were the things we would need to create an FM station, and what would it cost? We would need new studio equipment, a transmitter and so much more.

We would need an antenna. How tall would it have to be? How would it be secured? Where could we put it? Who would have to approve it within the college? This turned out to be a complicated part of the exercise.

An itemized list of requirements was developed following the expert recommendations I received.

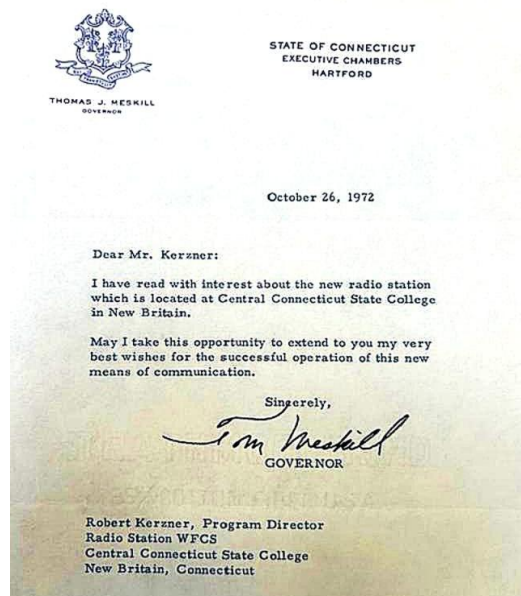
Subsequently, a budget was prepared to determine the necessary funding. Who would pay: The college or the student senate that funded the radio station's normal activities?

Now that the research was done, the naysayers' comments were ringing in my ears. What was the best way to move this forward when all other attempts had failed?

I decided to write out all I had learned in a business plan proposal and sent it directly to F. Don James, the president of the college. I will always remember the excitement of getting a phone call at the radio station from his assistant, Mrs. Padula, asking to set up an appointment with the president. I couldn't believe it!

Walking into his impressive office was a bit intimidating. He put me immediately at ease by saying "I wanted to meet the student who wrote this business plan." I viewed his greeting as a good omen.

He and others in the administration approved of the concept and the business plan which addressed most of the steps required to establish an FM station. The student senate authorized the funding. With assistance from the engineer at WPKN and several WCCS staff, all necessary paperwork was completed and submitted to the FCC.



The debut of WFCS even caught the eye of Gov. Thomas Meskill.



Everyone got involved during this early FM broadcast. From left: Joe Zareski '74; John Eberhard '76; Steve Pisk '75; and Robert Kerzner '74.

How did it become WFCS and what do the letters stand for? We submitted around 20 choices, WFCS was low on the list, but the preferred options were already taken. Bear in mind we were still at the time Central Connecticut State College. So, the station letters stand for From Central State. Though in the press, it was reported as Free Central State.

One last piece of history. When the project began to get momentum some college officials wanted the college to take over the station and not have it be student run. They were concerned that we students couldn't be trusted on the public airwaves. There was a bit of a squabble and lots of drama, but the students prevailed.

Twenty years later, I introduced myself to the general

manager at the station. He said, "You're Bob Kerzner?" I assured him I was, and asked him why he seemed to know my name. He said that certain individuals at the university had once again attempted to assume control of the station and remove student management. After graduation, I stored all the original documents in the library, where he by some miracle found them. They used all the original documents to demonstrate that the station's intent had always been to be student-led, which helped preserve the station maintaining its student leadership a second time.

As I look back and read some of the newsletter articles written by so many people involved with the station for over 50 years it really warms my heart. The Radio Club has been such a special part of so many people's lives at CCSU. I am glad to have had a hand in doing my part to have made it a reality.

Many thanks to President F. Don James and Dean Judd who had the vision and courage to trust the students. Special thanks to my fellow WFCS alumni who helped launch the FM station. It was truly a team effort...then and now. Rock on!

Robert Kerzner spent a 30-year career with The Hartford, ending his career as executive vice president in charge of the Life Insurance Division and president of the broker dealer, Woodbury Financial. He went on to become CEO of LL Global, an international trade association owned by insurance companies throughout the world. He continues to consult with life insurance companies and lives in Boca Raton, Florida, and Clinton, Connecticut, with his soulmate, Celia.

Flashback to 1984



Huey Lewis of Huey Lewis and the News performed at Central and the rocker took some time to drop by WFCS and was interviewed by DJ Evan Kramer. Evan, who was also working for CBS records at the time, helped market Huey's "Sports" album, released in 1983. From left: Susan Gifford-DeLeon '85 (Sue Hamilton); Huey Lewis; Evan Kramer '85 (Evan in the Evening); and someone unidentified. Do you know him?



Evan Kramer's "Evan in the Evening" show ruled the Tuesday 8 p.m. to midnight timeslot from 1980 to 1983.

Homecoming 2025: radio reunions, alumni shows

Sept. 26 & 27

CCSU's homecoming is the venue for Radio Club alumni and all events take place on campus. Here's what's planned.

Friday evening Sept. 26: From 6 p.m. grab a drink and some food and join our Radio Club alumni group by the fire pits outside the Devil's Den. This traditional reunion event is a great way for WFCS alumni to meet and catch up on things but, better yet, a good opportunity to meet other Radio Club members from other eras.

Saturday morning Sept. 27: Radio Club alumni and current WFCS staff are welcomed to the station starting at 8:30 a.m. Stop by, pour a cup of coffee and reconnect with the WFCS community. And bring an appetite because a full breakfast brunch awaits from 8:30 a.m. – 11 a.m. at the C.J. Huang Recreation Center. It's just a short walk away so you can be back at WFCS and rejoin the fun. A group photo is planned for 11 a.m. at the station.



The **alumni shows** continue, thanks to the generous support of WFCS's management. You're invited to schedule any half hour between 8:30 a.m. and 12 noon by contacting Paul Koscak at (571) 278-0984 or at raydiopk@aim.com No need to worry about working the equipment. Just have fun. There's technical assistance available.

Visit [Homecoming 2025](#) (ctrl + click) to be part of these events. Recent alumni, those who graduated between 2015 and 2025 as well as veterans, are being offered a discount.



Doing their 2023 alumni show are Samantha Duncan '20 and Nick Brazil '19 joined (from left) by community volunteer Peter Varhol; Shannon Kelly '15; and Kyle Miller '18



For those who graduated in 1974 and 1975: Congratulations, it's your 50th anniversary and there are special activities planned for you on Friday between 12 noon and 5:45 p.m. (ctrl + click) on [Register Yourself](#) to participate.

Hate to see homecoming end? Then stop by the Back Nine, Stanley Golf Course (245 Hartford Rd. New Britain) at 4 p.m., Saturday, to meet up for a friendly finale.

Voice of the Blue Devils brought sports to WFCS listeners

By Dave Mott '77

I transferred to Central from community college and joined the radio station in my junior year. I'm a huge sports fan and played baseball during high school. I noticed WFCS wasn't broadcasting any of the games and I wanted a position at the station. At the time, the only coverage for Blue Devil fans was the next day's article in the newspaper, so here was my opportunity.

The station had the capability of covering the games so we began with the 1975 fall football season. Because the job required a lot of travel throughout New England -- from St. Michael's College in Vermont to Western New England University in Springfield to Towson University in Maryland -- few radio staff were willing to do it. Being on the road was almost like being on the team.



Setting up for the away games involved rigging a telephone in the press box. We would use alligator clips to connect the phone's receiver to our audio mixer where our mics were plugged. We then called WFCS where the DJ would patch our call into the studio board and our signal would then be broadcasted. Coverage of the game was just the cost of a collect call to the station. Interestingly, the sports writer for the New Britain Herald would now listen to our broadcast and write the sports story the next day based on our coverage.

Because we were a state college, David Judd (our other WFCS sportscaster) and I were able to reserve a state car when traveling to the away games. There's a funny story about that. On our way to St. Michaels College in Vermont, somebody from Connecticut apparently passed by us -- two college-age kids with long hair driving a state car on a weekend. Monday morning we get a call at the station from the New Britain police inquiring if the car was stolen. We had to explain the car was properly requisitioned and already returned to the state motor pool.

I enjoyed doing sports so much that I auditioned for a sportscasting job at WFSB Channel 3. Here I was, right out of college. There must have been 50 people in this room, each waiting to be called to sit before the camera. You had to write about five minutes of your own copy. While I didn't get the job, I made it to the final three so I was happy about that. But I also learned through that process that broadcasting is a dog-eat-dog business, so I decided to use my accounting degree and go into the business world. Still, I wouldn't have had the confidence to audition without the experience I had at WFCS.



Now hosting smooth jazz at WOMR 92.1 FM "Outermost Radio"

I don't have any complaints about my career in the corporate world, but it's nice to be back in radio. It's fun and you never know who's listening to your show. Recently, I was at a jazz and blues club in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, and had a conversation with a couple about where you could hear smooth jazz and they said, "We stream it from a radio station on Cape Cod." Then I said, "That's me!" On another occasion, former WFCS General Manager Phil Meisner was listening and gave me a call. What a surprise.

Dave Mott is a retired reinsurance broker and Cape Cod resident. He hosts a smooth jazz show on WOMR 92.1 FM in Provincetown, Massachusetts, from 9 p.m. to midnight on the 2nd and 5th Sunday of the month. The show also streams at WOMR.org

Meet the team that runs the station

Positions at WFCS come and go over the years. Remember the news director, advertising director, business director or music director? More recent alumni might recall the Urban and RPM/Electronic music departments. However, general manager and program director will likely always stay. Today, Radio Club management is set up as follows:

The executive board or E-board.
The group is made up of:

- general manager
- director of development
- program director
- public relations director
- training director

The executive council or E-council. The group is made up of:

- hip-hop director
- metal director
- rock director
- radio 200s director
- radio 201 director
- talk director
- social media director

Radio 200 and 201 consists of music that doesn't fall under the other E-council music categories, focusing on variety and the current top 200 songs.

Radio 201 is essentially the same department but it allows for a second director to oversee charting and adding music to the wall that DJs can draw from. It's the largest Radio Club department. The hip-hop, metal and rock directors also populate their walls with the most recent selections including local artists. The wall is an electronic folder.



Standing from left: Gialena Cruz, rock director; Jacob Thomas, director of development; Miles Bishop, radio 200s director; Hilberto Depena, general manager; Matthew Sliwka, hip-hop director; James Clark, social media director. **Seated from left:** India Donald, radio 201 director; Nicole Mistracchio, program director; Mari Vazquez, training director; Taylor Doyle, public relations director. **Reclining and relaxing:** Patrick Bellamy, talk director.

Information provided by Hilberto Depena, '27, WFCS general manager

Of note



Radio Club alumni Robb Warner (at left), '77, in April was elected commander of the Disabled American Veterans, Chapter 17, based in Manchester. An Air Force veteran who served in Thailand during the Viet Nam War, Robb was exposed to Agent Orange, a toxic defoliant widely used throughout the conflict to clear forests and vegetation that provided cover for enemy forces and supply lines. Robb is a 45-year member of the American Legion and former commander of Hebron's Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) and American Veterans (AMVETS). He also served the town as first selectman, tax collector and secretary on the conservation/wetlands commission. Also pictured are two other DAV Connecticut chapter commanders: Edward Monroe and Ronnie Mayberry. *Photo courtesy of Rivereast News Bulletin*

Final note



Radio Club alumni and pro musician Keith Hall '78 (at left) plays keyboard in the Jon-E Trio Band. The group performs covers of The Police, David Gray, Zach Brown, the Doobie Brothers and other rock artists along with some of Keith's own songs and has a regular house gig at Florida's Hidden Anchor lounge in Tarpon Springs. "We're never going to be Crosby, Stills and Nash...but we aren't trying to be." Keith is also an accomplished guitarist and blues harmonica player and has performed in several professional bands throughout his musical career.