

ASIAN AMERICAN, ASIAN, AND PACIFIC ISLANDER (AAAPI) CENTER ANNUAL REPORT

SEPTEMBER 2025

AAAPI CENTER OPENS IN BURRITT LIBRARY

The AAPI Center officially opened in September 2024 on the second floor of Burritt Library. The Center, staffed by a graduate assistant, student worker, and volunteers, served as a hub for students, student organizations, classes, and events. Under the leadership of Co-Directors Dr. Julie Kim and Dr. Nghi Thai, the center provided academic and cultural programming and fostered collaborations with Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) community organizations.



STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS

The success of the AAPI Center's events and programs was made possible through the collaboration and contributions of the following AAPI student organizations:

- Asian American and Pacific Islander Association, President Neemit Thammaraacksa & Vice President Karena Kulakowski
- Japanese Language Learning Club, President Liam Bishop
- South Asian Student Association, Vice President Alita Ambookkan
- Filipino Student Association



NEEMIT THAMMARACKSA, a student liaison and volunteer for the AAPI Center, stated:

"This center really means a lot to me. Finding out about what you were trying to create, really inspired me to build student support for creating a physical space. With our now established space, I feel supported and represented as a student. I also feel that students of non-AAPI descent have a better opportunity to learn about the community's history and diverse range of cultures within our community (through clubs, events or in classes)"

EXECUTIVE BOARD

In the Spring of 2025, the following Executive Board Members were elected: Kathleen Bantley, Matthew Chudnow, Dharshani Lakmali Jayasinghe, Susan Koski, Zongxiang Mei, Ryan Raven Ong, Aimee Pozorski, Alfredo Rosete, Natsuko Takemae, and Robert Wolff.

HIGHLIGHTS FOR FALL 2024

JEONBUK NATIONAL UNIVERSITY (JBNU) VISIT, NOVEMBER 19, 2024

With Provost Kostelis, Dr. Zongxiang Mei (International Education Coordinator), Professor Wonil Lee (Manufacturing and Construction Management Department), exchange students from Kyung Hee University, and the delegation from JBNU including Moon Yeonsil (Department Head, Administrative Officer (College of Education and Human Ecology), Lee Mihee (Team Leader, Environmental Health Inspector (Safety and Health Management Department), Kim Yeseul (Safety and Health Management Department), Oh Kisuk (Global Frontier College), Hwang Minju (Finance Department), Seo Yunjae (Medical School), and Lee Minyoung (Health Service Center).



ORIGAMI & TEA TIME, NOVEMBER 21, 2024

With Dr. Natsuko Takemae (Special Education and Interventions) and students.



HIGHLIGHTS FOR SPRING 2025

LUNAR NEW YEAR CELEBRATION, FEBRUARY 12, 2025

The AAPI Center hosted a Lunar New Year event in Alumni Hall featuring cultural performances and activities to celebrate the Year of the Snake.



Lunar New Year Proclamation presented by Jenny Heikkila Diaz (Asian Pacific American Coalition), Megan Baker (CT Commission on Women, Children, Seniors, Equity & Opportunity), and Candyce Scott (New Britain Council). L to R: Dr. Nghi Thai (Co-Director, AAPI Center), Jenny Heikkila Diaz, Megan Baker, Candyce Scott, and Dr. Yeojin Julie Kim (Co-Director, AAPI Center).



L to R: Emma Snowden (Graduate Assistant, AAPI Center), Dr. Nghi Thai (Co-Director, AAPI Center), Fei Fei Yang, Karena Kulakowski (AAPI Association Vice President), and Neemit Thammaracksa (AAPI Association President).



Lion Dance by Montessori School of Greater Hartford Upper Elementary Students led by Adjunct Professor Colleen Casey-Nelson (Music).



Closing Remarks by Deputy Consul General Suguru Minoya, Consulate General of Japan in Boston, Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA).



Traditional Erhu Performance by Fei Fei Yang.



K-Pop Dance Committee group dance performed by Alena Inthisane, Sean Millare, Michelle Silarack, Karena Kulakowski, and Alanis Raya.

OPEN HOUSE, FEBRUARY 27, 2025

CSCU Chancellor Terrence Cheng, Provost Kostelis, Dr. Carmen Veloria (Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs), Dr. Beth Merenstein (the Associate Vice President for Community Engagement and Experiential Learning, as well the Executive Director of the Center for Community Engagement and Social Research (CCESR)), Dr. Zongxiang Mei (International Education Coordinator), Spencer Raccio (Media center), Undergraduate Recruitment & Admissions, Elihu Burritt Library, Francis Estrada (New Britain Museum of Art), members from Japan Society of Greater Hartford, Asian Pacific American Coalition, Asian American & Pacific Islander Association, CCSU professors, staff, and students.



Dr. Takemae and representatives of the Japan Society of Greater Hartford

CONTEMPORARY ASIAN POPULAR CULTURE, APRIL 9, 2025

With Dr. Gil Gigliotti (English) of Central Authors, Dr. Yeojin Julie Kim (Communication), Dr. Dharshani Lakmali Jayasinghe (English), Dr. Karen Ritzenhoff (Communication), and Dr. Hiba Aleem (Emmanuel College) presented on *Contemporary Asian Popular Culture, Vol. 1 and 2*.



Dr. Hiba Aleem (Emmanuel College), Dr. Karen Ritzenhoff (Communication), Dr. Yeojin Julie Kim (Communication), and Dr. Dharshani Lakmali Jayasinghe (English)



AAPI 110 students enjoying a Squid Game session at the AAAP Center.

AAPI FESTIVAL, APRIL 30, 2025

The AAPI Center hosted the AAPI Festival in celebration of AAPI Heritage Month, featuring martial arts demonstrations, cultural performances, and community activities on the Student Center Circle.



AAPI Choir led by Dr. Yuanqian Chen (Emeritus Professor of Mathematical Sciences)



Kendo performance by The New England Kendo Club.



Traditional Japanese Music for flute performed by Noriyo Fukui.



Dr. Matthew Chudnow and the Japanese Language Learning Program.

THANK YOU!

The AAPI Center sincerely thanks President Toro, Provost Kostelis, and the entire Central community for their incredible support. We also extend our gratitude to our staff—Emma Snowden, Jihoon Davis, and Neemit Thammaracksa—as well as Dr. Matthew Chudnow and Dr. Natsuko Takemae for their invaluable contributions.

CONTACT US!

Come see us in Room 205 of the Burritt Library!

You can also reach us at 860-832-0036 or AAAPICenter@ccsu.edu.

Website: <https://www.ccsu.edu/asian-american-asian-and-pacific-islander-center>

Instagram: [aaapicenter_ccsu](https://www.instagram.com/aaapicenter_ccsu)