



## A Message from President Toro

Dear Readers,

Just over a year ago, the College of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences (CHRS) enrolled its first cohort of future healthcare workers. After a whirlwind of planning, proposals, approvals, and more planning, we cut the ribbon on the centerpiece of the

college, the Central Community Health Education Clinic (CCHC) on July 1, 2024.

The College of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences represents more than just a structural change; it is a purposeful step forward in how we prepare students to meet the evolving healthcare needs in our state and beyond.

From the outset, university leadership envisioned a college that would unite Central's existing healthcare-related academic programs to create new opportunities for synergy, interdisciplinary learning, and collaboration. We also aimed to be responsive to the rapidly growing demand for skilled healthcare professionals. To that end, the College of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences will not only strengthen existing programs, but it will also develop new ones in high-demand fields that align with workforce needs and community wellness.

At the heart of the college's mission is a focus on experiential learning, cultural competency, and advocacy. These principles are more than academic concepts; they are essential attributes of effective, compassionate healthcare providers. We are determined to ensure that every student in the college graduates not only with the technical skills needed to excel in their profession, but also with the cultural awareness and ethical sensibility to serve diverse populations with empathy and respect.

As we begin a new semester, the Central Community Health Education Clinic (CCHC) has a growing list of local patients and free public health programs on the calendar. In its first year, the clinic received the 2025 National Academy of Health and Physical Literacy Award at the National Academy of Health and Physical Literacy Summit. This is a testament to what can happen when education and service intersect—we enrich our students' classroom experience and we make a real and lasting difference in our communities.

I extend my deepest appreciation to the faculty, staff, students, alumni, and community partners whose vision and dedication made this college possible. Their contributions have laid the foundation for a brighter, healthier future for our students, our region, and the healthcare field as a whole.

Thank you for believing in what we can accomplish together.

Sincerely,  
Zulma R. Toro, *President*

## A Message from Provost Kostelis

Dear Colleagues,

It has been just over a year since we launched the College of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences (CHRS), an exciting milestone that brought together the departments of Counselor Education and Family Therapy, Nursing, Nurse Anesthesia Practice, Physical Education and Human Performance, and Social Work under one college.

In this short time, the College has become a vibrant hub of collaboration, innovation, and service. At its heart is the Central Community Health Education Clinic, where students put classroom learning into practice while making a tangible difference in the lives of those in our community. From weekly nursing-led clinics providing vital preventive screenings, to cross-departmental workshop sessions covering topics such as nutrition, cognitive health, and mindfulness, the clinic embodies experiential learning, an approach that allows students to apply knowledge in real-world settings, develop critical professional skills, and gain the confidence needed to excel in their careers. I invite students, faculty, and staff to visit the Central Community Health Education Clinic, participate in upcoming workshops, and explore ways to collaborate in advancing community health and holistic well-being.

The success of the College and Clinic is made possible by the dedication of our faculty and staff, the enthusiasm and curiosity of our students, and the generous support of our community partners. Together, your commitment continues to turn our shared vision of hands-on learning and community wellness into reality.

As the College and Clinic continue to grow, their impact on New Britain and the surrounding communities will only deepen. I am proud of the work already accomplished and inspired by the promise of what is still to come. Together, we are preparing the next generation of healthcare professionals while serving the needs of our community.

Sincerely,  
Dr. Kimberly Kostelis,  
*Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs*



## Welcome from the Dean

Watch Dr. Jayanthi Kandiah on video [HERE](#).

## CHRS Living Learning Community (LLC)

For this inaugural year, the goal of the Living Learning Community (LLC) program was to house 40 first-year CHRS students on the third floor of Thomas Gallaudet Hall. Currently, 34 first-year students majoring in Nursing, Social Work, and Physical Education and Human Performance reside there.

Within the LLC, students connect with CHRS faculty mentors and practicing professionals who provide experiential learning opportunities. These experiences bridge classroom knowledge with real-world application, helping students begin building their futures in the health professions.

In addition to faculty-led programs and community engagement activities, students form lasting bonds through social events with the Gallaudet residence staff. These experiences extend beyond the classroom, offering students a clear sense of direction in their professional paths while equipping them with leadership and teamwork skills. They also gain confidence by taking on new challenges within a supportive peer community.

The College is proud to support this year's LLC participants from all three programs as they begin their academic journeys.

For more information click [HERE](#).



**From Compassion to Impact: Live and Lead the Future of Health**

**Featured:** LLC students meet & greet with the CHRS academic programming leads at the inaugural LLC Welcome.

## Student Spotlight



**Markita James**

A graduate student in the Clinical Professional Counseling program, Markita was awarded the 2025 Fellowship Scholarship through the NBCC Minority Fellowship Program for Mental Health Counselors, recognizing her commitment to supporting underserved communities.

"Being awarded the 2025 Fellowship Scholarship through the NBCC Minority Fellowship Program for Mental Health Counselors has helped me find my professional identity. This opportunity affirms my commitment to advancing culturally competent, holistic care

for underserved communities, particularly those impacted by systemic inequities in mental health and addiction services.

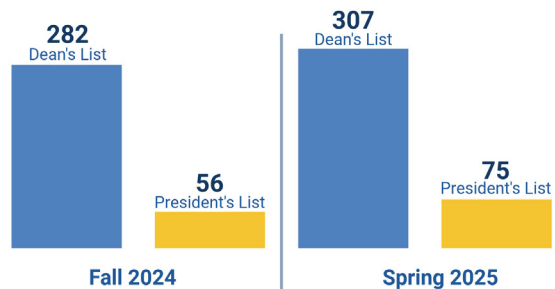
As a graduate student in Counseling and a passionate advocate for equity-driven change, I'm dedicated to creating healing-centered spaces across schools, recovery centers, correctional institutions, and beyond. This fellowship will support my continued work in developing inclusive, evidence-based programs that empower marginalized voices and foster generational healing."

-Markita James

### Building a Culture of Academic Excellence!

Thirty-three percent of CHRS students make President's and/or Dean's List in 2024-2025 academic year.

### STUDENT RECOGNITION



# Faculty & CHRS Spotlights

Teamwork Makes the Dream Work: Celebrating Inspiring Achievements



**Dr. Sarah Evans Zalewski** received the American Counseling Association's 2025 Emerging Professional Leader Award.



**Dr. Jacqueline Cantor** received the Connecticut's 23rd Nightingale Award for Excellence in Nursing from Hartford Healthcare in May 2025.



**Dr. Rachael Pelletti**

2024-2025 CCSU Excellence in Teaching Finalist  
Part-Time Faculty  
Counselor Education & Family Therapy



**Dr. Chee-Hoi Leong**

2024-2025 CCSU Excellence in Teaching Semi-Finalist  
Full-Time Faculty  
Physical Education & Human Performance



Kudos to the Central Community Health Education Clinic (CCHEC) for receiving the 2023 Community Health and Physical Literacy Award at the National Academy of Health and Physical Literacy Summit.

To learn more click [HERE](#).

## Share a Spotlight!

The Pulse is kept alive through the voices, accomplishments, and accolades of CHRS students, faculty, alumni, and our greater community. We highlight research awards, national recognitions and placements, campus engagement, and more. Each issue reflects the College's ongoing efforts and growth; if you have a story, success, or initiative worth celebrating, send it to The Pulse. Your contributions help showcase the excellence that defines the CHRS.



HealthandRehabSci@ccsu.edu



## News in Brief

### Major Donation from General Electric & North Star Medical Boosts DNAP Program

GE Health Care and North Star Medical donated \$35,000 worth of anesthesia equipment to the Doctor of Nurse Anesthesia Program. This sophisticated technology significantly enhances simulation education for Central's Nurses Anesthesia Residents, providing them realistic clinical experiences in preparation for anesthesia practice.

#### A Commitment to Quality

As of 2025 CHRS has 12 Accredited Undergrad and Graduate Programs!

#### Recently Recognized and Ranked Programs

- Online RN to BSN Program ranked #1 in Connecticut (RN.org)
- Traditional BSN Program ranked #3 in Connecticut (RN.org)
- DNAP and Clinical Rehabilitation Counseling programs nationally ranked (U.S. News, 2025)

### Invest in the Health of Our Communities

Your support helps prepare the next generation of nurses, counselors, social workers, physical educators, and health-care professionals—dedicated to improving the health and well-being of our communities. Through our interprofessional Community Health Education Clinic, students receive hands-on training while delivering free health screenings, educational resources, and support services to individuals and marginalized populations.

Click [HERE](#) to Donate.

## New Roles, New Faces: Elevating the CHRS Dean's Office Services

### Ms. Elizabeth Wright



Assistant Dean Elizabeth Wright is an alumnus of Central and received her BA in Psychology and her MA in Counseling. Ms. Wright provides administrative support to the Dean, oversees various aspects of the college's operations including student academic progress, complaints, grading issues, orientation, and advising.

### Ms. Joyce Lin

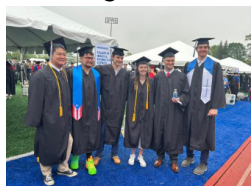


Administrative Operations Assistant Joyce Lin graduated from University of Connecticut with a BA in Political Science, and a minor in Communications. Ms. Lin provides comprehensive administrative and organizational support to the Dean and the rest of the CHRS executive leadership team.

To learn more about programs, admissions, or opportunities within the College of Health & Rehabilitation Sciences, please contact:

[CHRSDeanOffice@ccsu.edu](mailto:CHRSDeanOffice@ccsu.edu)

**Degrees of Success:** Celebrating the hard work, dedication, and bright futures of our 2024-2025 graduates!



From orientation to graduation, 293 graduates are heading into the world ready to make their mark!