



# SCHOOL OF ENGINEERING, SCIENCE, AND TECHNOLOGY

# SESTCONNECT

October 2025



Dr. Xudong Jia, Dean

## Lead with Innovation and Integrity

Welcome to the first edition of SEST Connect, our new newsletter created to showcase the people, programs, and partnerships that make the School of Engineering, Science, and Technology (SEST) such a vibrant part of Central Connecticut State University.

I am honored to join Central as Dean of SEST at a time of great opportunity and momentum. Thank you for your interest in our school—a diverse and dynamic community at the heart of Connecticut, dedicated to STEM and interdisciplinary education. Our mission is to provide a technology-rich learning environment that embraces the spirit of "thinking, learning, and

committed to partnering with professional communities in engineering, science, and technology while fostering strong connections between students' education and professional practice.

SEST is home to eleven departments—Biology, Biomolecular Sciences, Chemistry and Biochemistry, Computer Electronics & Graphics Technology, Computer Science, Earth and Space Sciences, Engineering, Manufacturing & Construction Management, Mathematical Sciences, Physics & Engineering Physics, and Technology & Engineering Education. Together, these departments offer 31 undergraduate and 21 graduate programs, serving more than 2,800 students. This breadth of disciplines reflects SEST's unique strength: uniting science, engineering, and technology to prepare the next generation of leaders and innovators.

As a primary part of Central, SEST is proud to contribute to and extend CCSU's 175 years of academic excellence and culture. We are dedicated to continuing this legacy of access, service, and innovation by equipping our students with the skills, knowledge, and experiences needed to thrive in their careers and to lead with innovation and integrity.

With SEST Connect, we will share achievements, highlight the work of our students and faculty, and strengthen our ties with alumni, partners, and the broader Central community.

I am excited for the journey ahead and grateful to be part of the Central family. I look forward to working with you to make SEST Connect a space for connection, celebration, and collaboration.

# SEST FEATURE

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## New Partnership Launches Apprenticeship Program

In July, SEST welcomed the inaugural cohort of the new Robotics & Mechatronics Technician Apprenticeship Program with TRUMPF, Inc. TRUMPF, a leading specialist in metal fabrication machinery and industrial lasers, has a corporate office in Farmington, among many others worldwide. Apprentices will work full-time during the day and take courses in the evening in an undergraduate certificate program designed by the School of Engineering, Science & Technology faculty. TRUMPF apprentices will be able to use earned credit toward a degree program to further their education.



The coursework aims to prepare apprentices to work with robotic systems, mechatronic devices, and automation technologies used in manufacturing. Required courses include Robotics and Automation; Programmable Controllers; Manufacturing Processes; and Manufacturing Automation.



The university and SEST seek to expand apprenticeship programs to help fulfill the demand for highly skilled professionals.

# SEST SPOTLIGHT

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## SEST...Onward and Upward

A new academic year brings a fresh start offering opportunities for growth, change and transformation. Thank you to SEST faculty and staff who attended the opening meeting on September 5.

Our new dean, Dr. Xudong Jia, offered his opening statements, introducing himself and his vision for bringing SEST to new heights while proposing opportunities to showcase our academic programs and scholarship to a broader audience.

Each department provided programmatic overviews highlighting key information as well as student and alumni profiles. The Dean's Office team provided updates on workflow policies,





advising practices, curriculum and research opportunities, CareerLink and Living Learning Community programs.

The morning also featured a presentation by Dr. Chad Williams on "Building on Our National Recognition to Shape the Next Generation of Cybersecurity Professionals." Only 22 institutions nationwide have dual Center of Academic Excellence designations. Central is the only one in New England with CAE-Cyber Operations and CAE-Cyber Defense.

## SEST Welcomes New Faculty

### Chemistry & Biochemistry

Dr. Peyanhandi (Thilini) De Silva

### Manufacturing & Construction Management

Dr. Susan Archer

Dr. Christine Benz

Dr. Cynthia DeSellier

### Computer Electronics & Graphics Technology

Dr. Mastaneh Mokayef

### Mathematical Sciences

Dr. Jeremy Brightbill

Dr. John Koomson

Dr. Jennifer Zering

### Computer Science

Dr. Chandima Fernando

### Engineering

Dr. Amirhossein Koneshloo

Dr. Mohammad Nazari-Sharabian

### Physics & Engineering Physics

Dr. Derya Cogal



## Central Welcomes Largest Incoming Class

Central welcomed the Class of 2029, the largest cohort in history. President Toro announced a class of 1,736 students, representing a 30.7 percent increase in first-time, full-time undergraduates over last year. Total enrollment rose by 12.7 percent, the highest since 2018.

Overall SEST enrollment **increased by 2.03%** from 2024 to 2025. SEST remains committed to program enrollment, student support, and the student experience.



# EVENTS



## Living Learning Community

Central launched Academic Living Learning Communities (LLC) for all schools and colleges. SEST has the largest LLC with 41 students living in the Mid-Campus Residence Hall. A dedicated team of SEST faculty and staff will engage with the Mid-Campus Raptors as they transition to college and continue learning about SEST programs.

The LLC will offer academic support, collaborative hands-on programs and activities that will enhance a sense of community for SEST students.

Programs are open to all SEST students. Invite your students to be part of this learning environment. Stay tuned for program announcements. Faculty and staff are encouraged to attend.



## IgniteHer

As part of the “Cultivating a Culture of Inclusion: Women Thriving in STEM” NextGen project, Drs. Sarah Maurer, Chad Williams, Mahdiah Zabihimayvan, and Bin (Brenda) Zhou hosted a welcome event, **IgniteHer**, on September 12 in the AIH Lobby.

The goal of the program is to welcome women and allies across all STEM majors to campus through ice breaking activities, student competitions, food, and prizes from the Central Bookstore. Programs will provide students with fun and friendly competition in hands-on activity stations, academic and professional panels, and networking events .

The next event, Snowflakes: Crystal Structures, Creation, and Cocoa, will be on **December 1 from 1 pm - 3 pm** in the AIH Lobby.



### Information Sessions

Attendees learn about the company, employment opportunities, and interact with human resource representatives and company employees.



**Location:** Camp 121, SC  
**Date:** Wed., October 15, 2025  
**Time:** 12:00 - 1:30 PM



**Location:** Camp 121, SC  
**Date:** Wed., October 29, 2025  
**Time:** 12:00 - 1:30 PM

# ASML

**Location:** Hilltop Cafe, 101  
**Date:** Wed., November 5, 2025  
**Time:** 12:00 - 2:00 PM

[CCSU.EDU/SEST-CAREERLINK](https://ccsu.edu/sest-careerlink)





## DEEP STEM

The Next Generation grant program supports faculty and staff in developing projects that foster connections with students, business and industry partners, and the communities the university serves. In its fourth year, DEEP (Discover Enjoy Explore and Practice) STEM (Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics) continues to thrive.

The DEEP STEM Program is an extracurricular program designed to excite high school students about careers in STEM. The first meeting for the year was held on Saturday, October 4. It is a year-long program consisting of five events in which students will have the opportunity to connect with CCSU STEM faculty and students by participating in various academic hands-on activities and events.

Programs are led by Drs. Luz Amaya, David Broderick, and Viktoria Savatorova.



## Graduate Open House

SEST departments welcomed prospective graduate students on Saturday, October 4 from 10 am - 12 pm.

Prospective students enjoyed an opening session, individual Dean's Office presentations, and information tables for graduate programs.



## STEM Expo

SEST will participate in a Community STEM Expo at Bloomfield High School on **Saturday, October 18 from 11 am - 3 pm.**

SEST Biology, Chemistry, and Engineering departments will provide hands-on activities to get young learners interested in STEM and studying at Central Connecticut State University.



## Undergraduate Open House

The university will welcome prospective undergraduate students on **Sunday, October 26. There are two sessions, from 9 am - 12 pm. and 1 pm - 4 pm.** All SEST Departments will be represented.

# DID YOU KNOW?

## Dean's Office



### Advising Season is Here!

Professional and faculty advisors play a crucial role in supporting students to achieve their educational and professional goals.

**Registration for spring 2026 opens October 31.**

## NEW CENTRAL PIPELINE INFO SESSIONS

Join **Information Technology** for an info session via Teams to learn about:

- Customizing your Home page
- Accessing student advising resources and information
- Accessing faculty schedules
- Emailing and exporting from a class list
- Viewing course enrollment information

Sessions will be 1 hour; there will be time for questions.

Friday, October 10 at 9 am

Tuesday, October 14 at 2 pm

Monday, October 13 at 11:30 am

**Register for a session!** (see PDF for active link)



**Dr. Xudong Jia**  
Dean



**Dr. Ravindra Thamma**  
Associate Dean



**Dr. Anna-Maria Heredia**  
Assistant Dean



**Dr. Luz Amaya**  
SEST Leadership Fellow



**Dr. Sarah Maurer**  
SEST Leadership Fellow



**DEEP Staff, October 2025**



**SEST Faculty, Graduate Open House, October 2025**

## SESTCONNECT

Submit your stories, programs, events, and questions:  
**SESTDeansOffice@mail.ccsu.edu**