



Allied Health Sciences Annual Conference 2026

INNOVATION INTEGRATION IMPACT

April 14, 2026
8:30 AM-3:30 PM
Student Center
Alumni Hall



ABOUT THE CONFERENCE

Shape the future of healthcare alongside leaders, innovators, and practitioners at Central's inaugural conference on Advancing Allied Health Sciences! This event showcases how innovation, integration, and impact can transform healthcare systems to be more sustainable, resilient, and equitable.

INNOVATION

- Emerging technologies and digital transformation in healthcare
- Artificial intelligence and data analytics for improved patient outcomes
- Innovative models of care delivery

INTEGRATION

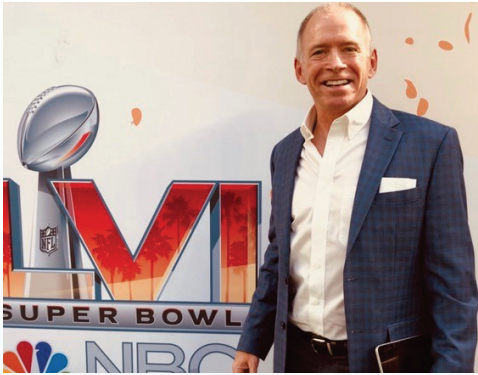
- Interdisciplinary and interprofessional collaboration
- Integrative practice models across the healthcare continuum
- Education and workforce development for future-ready professionals

IMPACT

- Measuring long-term effectiveness of allied health interventions
- Sustainable and ethical healthcare practices
- Policies and leadership driving system-wide improvement

KEYNOTE

MIKE D. RYAN, PT, ATC



Mike Ryan is a sports medicine specialist, physical therapist, and former 26-year National Football League (NFL) Head Athletic Trainer for the Jacksonville Jaguars and New York Giants. In recognition of his impact, he was selected to receive a Pro Football Hall of Fame Award of Excellence.

Following his NFL career, Mike has focused on helping individuals restore pain-free mobility without medication. He currently manages a one-on-one physical therapy clinic in Jacksonville Beach, FL, and serves as a Sports Medicine Analyst for NBC's Sunday Night Football and Amazon Prime's Thursday Night Football. Mike earned his degree in Athletic Training from Central Connecticut State University in 1985 and his Physical Therapy degree from the University of Connecticut in 1988. In September 2025, Mike was inducted into Central's Alumni Circle of Inspiration.

MIKE'S KEYNOTE

Advancing Allied Health by Advancing YOU: Mastering Your 4 M's

Taking care of yourself starts by taking care of yourself. Learn Mike's simple, free, and impactful 'Daily Do's' guaranteed to enhance the health of your body AND your ability to care for your patients.

OPENING HIGHLIGHTS

Alumni Hall
Student Center

8:00 AM-8:45 AM

Registration | Light Breakfast

9:00 AM-9:45 AM

Welcome and Introduction of Keynote Speaker

Jayanthi Kandiah

Dean, College of Health & Rehabilitation Sciences
Central Connecticut State University

KEYNOTE PRESENTATION

***Advancing Allied Health by Advancing YOU:
Mastering Your 4 M's***

Mike D. Ryan

Former NFL Head Athletic Trainer & Physical Therapist
Wellness & Injury Management Specialist

PRE-CONFERENCE ACTIVITIES

8:30 AM - 3:00 PM

POSTER PRESENTATION

8:30 AM - 9:00 AM

***RN-BSN Nursing Students' Reflection on Maternal Health
in the Community - A Qualitative Exploration***

Jacqueline Cantor, Central Connecticut State University
Alumni Hall-Mezzanine

This poster presentation explores how participating in a community baby shower served as a transformational experiential opportunity to enhance RN-to-BSN students' awareness, knowledge, skills, and confidence in community health.

EXHIBIT TABLES

10:00 AM - 3:00 PM

- Registration Tables
- NAHPL
- Enrollment Management
- Central Community Health and Education Clinic
- CESEL

SESSION 1

10:00 AM-10:45 AM

DOCUMENTARY

Break the Silence: Reproductive and Sexual Health Stories

Brad Heck, Central Connecticut State University; Willow O'Feral, Haptic Pictures

Sprague-Carlton Room

Break the Silence explores personal reproductive and sexual health journeys of 17 cisgender and transgender women from diverse racial and ethnic, age, sexual orientation, and class backgrounds, challenging taboos through unfiltered storytelling. The screening concludes with the filmmaker Q&A.

WORKSHOP

Building Resilience in Future Health Care Professionals:

Integrating Student Self-Care into Your Classrooms

Jacqueline Cantor; Laurie Walter; Tamara Holland, Central Connecticut State University

Alumni Hall-Mezzanine

This workshop explores how integrating self-care into health care education builds resilience. Participants will engage in a guided discussion on interdisciplinary strategies for improving patient-practitioner interactions.

INVITED TALK

Strengthening the Allied Health Talent Pipeline: Workforce Enhancement Innovation Through the Capital Workforce Partners (CWP) and the Capital Area Healthcare Partnership (CAHP)

Maureen Jenks, Capital Workforce Partners

Clock Tower

This presentation explores the collaboration between Capital Workforce Partners and the Capital Area Healthcare Partnership to strengthen the region's allied health talent pipeline. The session will focus on how coordinated efforts identify emerging skill needs, expand training access, and improve recruitment and retention for both jobseekers and employers.

SESSION 1

10:00 AM-10:45 AM

PAPER PRESENTATION

From Remediation to Community Presentation: A Holistic Approach to MFT Trainee Development

Mary Nedela; Arpita Lal; Tatiana Melendez-Rhodes, Central Connecticut State University
Philbrick Camp Room

This two-part presentation explores how the Marriage and Family Therapy (MFT) program at Central Community Health Education Clinic fosters clinical development through both experiential learning and individualized support. We first examine the faculty's role as gatekeepers of the MFT profession and detailing the program's remediation process when necessary. Complementing this support-oriented model, we will discuss a community-based health education assignment, where trainees deliver health education presentations, demonstrating how community engagement strengthens professional growth. This session illustrates how a dual approach—integrating experiential learning with tailored remediation—ensures clinical trainees meet the developmental and professional expectations of the field.

SPECIAL TOPIC

Beyond Building Machines: How AGR Enables Reliable Medical Device Supply for Allied Health

Brian Romano, Central Connecticut State University; Arthur G. Russell Co. (AGR)
Bellin Gallery

This session explores the critical link between manufacturing reliability and the consistent supply of medical devices for the allied health sector. At its core, the session argues that healthcare outcomes are fundamentally dependent on the reliability of the manufacturing systems that produce medical equipment and diagnostics.

SESSION 2

11:00 AM-11:45 AM

WORKSHOP

Foam Rolling

Mike Ryan, PT

Barnard Community Room

Learn to master foam rolling on your terms. Understand what your muscles, fascia, and joints need to do their job pain-free, with the help of a foam roller and a roller ball, in just minutes per day!

ROUND TABLE

Perioperative Care of the Transgender Patient

Filomena Ruggiero, Yale New Haven Hospital School of Nurse Anesthesia

Clock Tower

This session explores airway management and perioperative challenges in the growing population of gender-affirming facial surgery patients. Specifically, the session focuses on how prior facial feminization or tracheal procedures impact airway assessment and clinical outcomes.

PAPER PRESENTATION

Adoption and Impact of Mobile Health Services: Experimental Evidence & State Medicaid HCBS Spending and Disability-Related Disparities in Aging-in-Place Outcomes Among Older Adults

Ferdous Sardar, Central Connecticut State University

Sprague-Carlton Room

This presentation examines the link between state HCBS spending and improved outcomes for older adults with independent living difficulties. The session highlights the role of HCBS investment in reducing disparities, promoting residential stability, and supporting aging in place, with important implications for allied health practice and policy.

SESSION 2

11:00 AM-11:45 AM

WORKSHOP

From Initiative to Implementation: How Do Secondary Schools Move SEL From a Stand-alone Initiative to a Lived Part of School Culture?

Darona Hersh, Central Connecticut State University

Alumni Hall-Mezzanine

This session examines how leadership practices drive the implementation of culturally responsive social-emotional learning (SEL) in secondary schools. Drawing on qualitative research within a CASEL aligned district, the session illustrates how aligning vision, structures, and shared expectations fosters sustainable SEL integration across diverse school roles.

INVITED TALK

Connecticut Water Treatment for Drinking and Distribution

James Papadimitrou, PE, Wright-Pierce

Philbrick-Camp Room

Participants will gain insight into the methodology of iron and manganese removal, filtering, chemical dosing and treatment, recycling, sludge and particulate removal, and water distribution and its associated equipment, instruments, control system, and SCADA systems used in the treatment process used general for the continued health, safety, and general welfare of the public.

LUNCH BREAK

12:00 PM-12:45 PM

Alumni Hall

Remarks

PRESIDENT ZULMA TORO

Central Connecticut State University

SESSION 3

1:00 PM-1:45 PM

SHOWCASE

Demonstration & Tour of XR Lab

Tony DeLuca, Central XR Lab

Applied Innovation Hub

The XR Lab will showcase immersive virtual, augmented, and mixed reality technologies used across disciplines. Through interactive simulations and applications, the lab demonstrates how extended reality enhances learning, collaboration, and real-world problem solving.

WORKSHOP

Dismantling Stigma: Integrative Practice to Destigmatize Substance Use Disorders Across the Healthcare Continuum

Rachael Pelletti, Central Connecticut State University;

Scott Marcoe, Farrell Treatment Center, Gilead Community Services

Philbrick-Camp Room

This session examines substance use stigma across individual, interpersonal, institutional, and structural levels. Using real-world examples, the presentation illustrates how stigma persists within healthcare systems and the risks of fragmented, non-inclusive education and policy. Integrated professional practices are emphasized as a primary strategy for reducing stigma and improving patient care.

PANEL DISCUSSION

Social Mobility and Better Life Outcomes Using Mobile Technology

Kenneth (Ken) House, TryCycle Data Systems; Ariana (Ari) Edgar, The Hartford

Sprague-Carlton Room

This session explores an innovative approach to social services piloted in New Britain, CT. The session discusses how local practitioners developed a social mobility app that integrated various community resources to benefit the community.

PANEL DISCUSSION

Integrating Language and Culture in Health Care: A Spanish

Certificate Program to Promote Equity for Latino Patients

Lourdes Casas; Rocío Fuentes, Central Connecticut State University

Alumni Hall

This session explores the design and implementation of the Spanish Certificate for Health Professionals and demonstrates how the Certificate prepares health professionals to communicate effectively with Latino patients—improving patient care, professional readiness, and healthcare inclusivity.

SESSION 4

2:00 PM-2:45 PM

WORKSHOP

Communication Strategies for Understanding Patients

Christopher Pudlinski, Central Connecticut State University

Philbrick-Camp Room

This workshop examines how practitioners use active listening to craft effective summaries of patient concerns. Using an interdisciplinary approach, participants explore strategies—including paraphrasing, highlighting, and rephrasing—to better respond to initial patient narratives.

PAPER PRESENTATION

The Significance of Alternatives: Reflections on Therapeutic Touch and Applied Kinesiology

Eleanor Godway, Central Connecticut State University

Bellin Gallery

This presentation explores how mind-body dualism, phenomenology, and applied kinesiology shape alternative perspectives on healing. Drawing on personal experience, the session examines the physical, emotional, and spiritual dimension of therapeutic touch.

PANEL DISCUSSION

Preparing the Next Generation of Mental Health and Higher Education Professionals to Address Prevention and Intervention for Youth, Families, and Communities

Peg Donohue; Sarah Evans Zalewski; Ken Shell; Mary Nedela; Jelane Kennedy;

Rachael Pelletti, Central Connecticut State University

Sprague-Carlton Room

This panel features educators who prepare mental health, school, and family therapy professionals to build and maintain community-wide support systems. The session emphasizes cross-disciplinary collaboration to expand services, particularly in traditionally underserved communities.

WORKSHOP

Moving Toward Longevity: Dance as a Tool for Healthy Aging

Pascal Rekoert, Central Connecticut State University

Barnard Community Room

This workshop introduces dance as an evidence-informed approach to supporting the physical, cognitive, and emotional well-being of older adults. Through creative movement exercises, participants will explore how dance promotes balance, memory, and social engagement as a preventive health strategy in community and healthcare settings.

MAKE AN IMPACT DONATE TODAY

We would like to extend a heartfelt appreciation to those of you who have already made a tax-deductible donation to the College of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences. Your generosity provides valuable resources and programming to enrich our students' educational experiences, and we are truly grateful. For others interested in contributing, you can scan the QR code to make a gift. Please know that every contribution—no matter the size—makes a meaningful difference!



Allied Health Sciences
Annual Conference 2026

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The inaugural 2026 Advancing Allied Health Sciences Conference was made possible through the generous support of several key departments and offices across Central. We gratefully acknowledge the Division of Institutional Advancement, Institutional Marketing & Communications, the Budget Office, the Office of Career & Professional Development, the Central Reservations Office, the Division of Information Technology, and the Department of Graphic Design/Information, for their vital contributions. Special recognition to Sodexo for catering our breakfast and lunch today. Thank you to all those involved for your dedication and efforts.

SPECIAL THANKS TO OUR CENTRAL CHAMPIONS!

President Zulma R. Toro

Kimberly T. Kostelis, Provost & Vice President for Academic Affairs

Salvatore Cintorino, Vice President of Operations

George F. Claffey, Vice President for Technology and Strategic Initiatives

CONFERENCE ORGANIZING COMMITTEE

Helen R. Abadiano

Melos Beluli

Cristina Conte

Ann Contrata

Jayanthi (Jay) Kandiah

Joyce Lin

Lisa McMahon

Mary Beth Papallo

Antoinette (Toni) Ryan

Paul J. (PJ) Rossitto

Christa Sterling

Ravindra Thamma

Chad Valk

Eco Webb

Anna Young

BUILDING & RESIDENCE HALL LOCATIONS



BUILDINGS

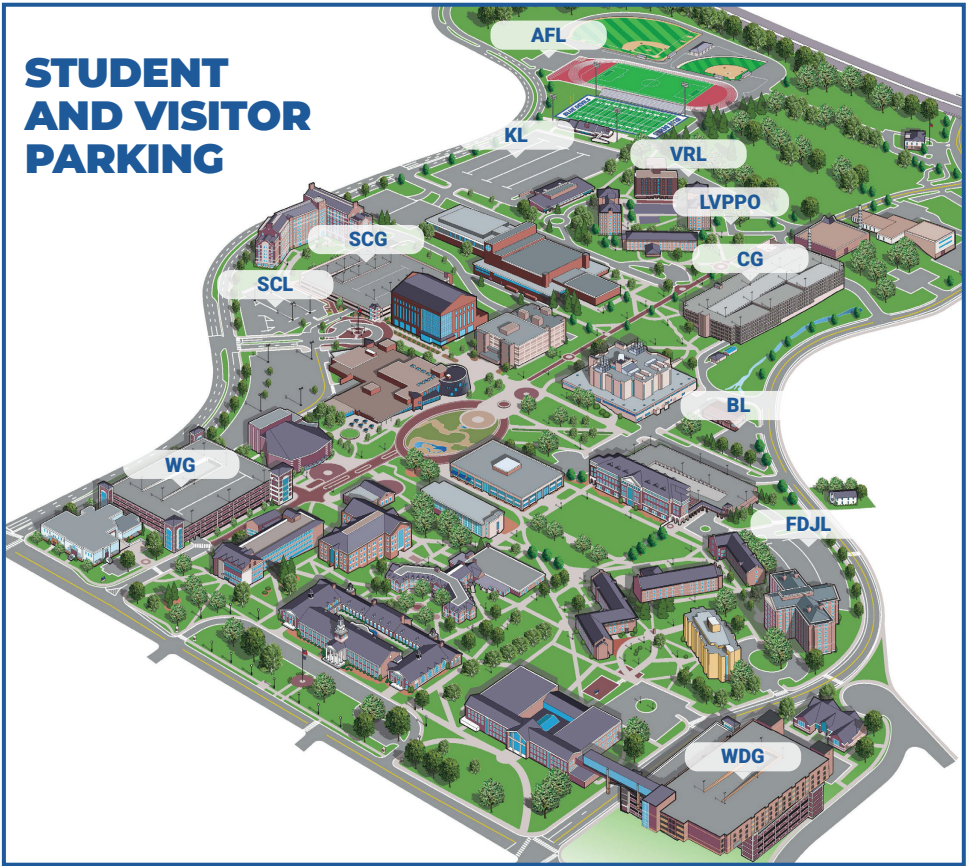
- AIH** Applied Innovation Hub
- CWC** Central Welcome Center
- LIB** Elihu Burritt Library
- FA** James J. Maloney Hall
- HB** Henry Barnard Hall
- HK** Harrison J. Kaiser Hall
- HW** Herbert D. Welte Hall
- LD** Lawrence J. Davidson Hall
- MS** Maria Sanford Hall
- MW** Marcus White Hall
- NC** Nicolaus Copernicus Hall
- RVAC** Robert C. Vance Academic Center
- EDB** Ebenezer D. Bassett Hall
- WD** Willard-DiLoreto Hall
- HC** Hilltop Cafe
- SC** Student Center
- MEM** Memorial Hall
- REC** C.J. Huang Recreation Center

RESIDENCE HALLS

- CB** Catharine Beecher Hall
- FDJ** F. Don James Hall
- MB** Mildred Barrows Hall
- MC** Mid-Campus Hall
- SM** Sam May Hall
- SN** Seth North Hall
- CC** Clarence Carroll Hall
- TG** Thomas Gallaudet Hall
- RS** Robert Sheridan Hall
- RV** Robert Vance Hall



STUDENT AND VISITOR PARKING



Commuter Student and Visitor Parking

- WG** Welte Garage
- SCL** Student Center Lot
- SCG** Student Center Garage
- KL** Kaiser Lot
- WDG** Willard-DiLoreto Garage
1st, 3rd, & Roof Level
- BL** Bichum Lot
- CG** Copernicus Garage
Level O - (accessible from Wells St.)
Level F - (accessible from
Paul Manafort Sr. Drive)
- AFL** Athletics Field Lot

Resident Student Parking

- SCG** Student Center Garage
(Upper level in green striped spaces)
- CG** (Levels F, O and roof are reserved, resident students may park on other floors)
- FDJL** F. Don James Lot
- VRL** Vance Reserve Lot
- LVPO** Large Vehicle Parking by Permit Only

**For More Parking Information
Scan Here**

