



2025-2026 Year in Review

This academic year was a time for our leadership team to thoughtfully review our programs, identify our strengths, assess challenges, and determine areas of need. Through this process, we have established both short- and long-term goals that will guide our work moving forward. We are excited about the future of SEST and are committed to working collaboratively to enhance the student experience, strengthen our school community, and build upon our tradition of excellence.

1 Strong Leadership Team

After a transitional year, the Dean's Office is proud to announce that we are fully staffed with an exceptional team of talented and dedicated professionals. This outstanding group brings a wealth of expertise, innovative ideas, and a strong commitment to student success, academic excellence, and service. Together, we are excited to support our students, faculty, and staff while advancing the mission and continued growth of the School.

2 Support of R2 Polytechnic University Initiative

President Toro states that "Central's unique programs and experiences have put us in a position to create a new pathway for students to succeed and for the state to thrive in the future." A polytechnic institution has a focus on applied learning opportunities and technological awareness building, balanced with humanities, arts, literature, and social sciences.

There were **71** [new and re-imagined] academic program proposals submitted by Central faculty; **23** of those proposals were submitted by SEST faculty. See more on [Central's R2 Polytechnic](#) initiative.

Continued

FACULTYSPOTLIGHT



Zhou Named WTS-CT Woman of the Year

The Women's Transportation Seminar - Connecticut Chapter named **Dr. Bin (Brenda) Zhou** its 2025 Woman of the Year at its annual banquet on April 2. The award recognizes leaders who have made outstanding contributions to the transportation industry and advanced opportunities for women in the field. **Zhou**, an expert in transportation planning and engineering, focuses her research on quantitative analysis and modeling and is deeply committed to STEM outreach that expands postsecondary opportunities for historically underrepresented youth.

BIG FIVE *Continued*

3 Successful Accreditation Review

The accreditation [third-party] review process is imperative to ensure educational institutions meet rigorous academic and operational standards – including program quality, federal financial aid eligibility, transferability of credits, and employability.

The Association of Technology, Management, and Applied Engineering (**ATMAE**) reviewed our Computer Electronics & Graphics Technology and Manufacturing & Construction Management programs. **ABET** (formerly the Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology) reviewed our Computer Science program. Both entities had successful findings.

4 Recruitment & Enrollment

Recruitment and enrollment remain top priorities for SEST. The Dean's Office, faculty, and staff have worked collaboratively to expand outreach, strengthen recruitment efforts, and launch new initiatives that broaden the school's reach and attract prospective students. Actions included increased presence of SEST faculty at university events (i.e., Open House, Accepted Students Day), hosted a CT State Counselor/Advisor Workshop, Graduate and Transfer Open Houses, as well as visits to high schools and CT State campuses.

5 Strong Industry Advisory Boards

The SEST Industry Advisory Board (IAB) and departmental IABs continue to strengthen engagement with industry leaders and alumni partners, helping to support successful [CareerLink](#) industry visits and expand career pathways, networking opportunities, and professional connections for our students.

Learn more about the [SEST Industry Advisory Board](#).

FACULTYSPOTLIGHT

Kurkovsky Receives Prestigious Fulbright U.S. Scholar and Faculty Innovation Fellow Appointments

Dr. Stan Kurkovsky, chair of the Computer Science Department, has received a Fulbright U.S. Scholar Award to Poland for the 2026–2027 academic year. During the spring 2027 semester, he will teach and conduct research in human-centered software engineering at Wrocław University of Science and Technology while exploring how artificial intelligence is transforming modern software teams.

In addition, **Kurkovsky** has been selected for the 2026 cohort of the Business-Higher Education Forum (BHEF) Faculty Innovation Fellowship, a national program that supports academic leaders in developing and implementing innovative, high-impact initiatives in higher education. He will focus on expanding AI-enabled experiential learning at Central by integrating industry-sponsored projects, employer-defined AI competencies, and work-integrated learning into software engineering education.





Naumov Engages Engineering Students in Faculty Research Opportunities

Dr. Viatcheslav Naumov is an internationally recognized expert in thermal systems, thermodynamics, and combustion kinetics for propulsion and power generation systems. He has authored more than 140 publications, including peer-reviewed articles, research reports, and four monographs, and has conducted research for organizations such as Roscosmos, ONERA, the U.S. Department of Defense, and SAAB Automobile AB.

For the past 14 years, his research has focused on the combustion of environmentally friendly rocket fuels, including paraffin, beeswax, and stearin, while investigating the use of metallic powders to enhance fuel performance. This work has provided exceptional undergraduate research opportunities through the ME 498 High Performance Rocket Engine (HPRE) senior capstone project.

Since 2012, approximately 200 engineering students have participated in the HPRE program, presenting research at 15 international conferences hosted by AIAA and ASEE. These collaborations have produced 16 conference publications, including 61 undergraduate co-authors, with the latest published in 2026. Research from the project was also featured in **Naumov's** 2019 Cambridge University Press monograph.

To sustain this long-term research program, Dr. Naumov has developed a structured mentoring model that emphasizes peer leadership, knowledge transfer, and comprehensive documentation, ensuring continuity and ongoing student success across successive project teams.



STUDENTSPOTLIGHT



Manufacturing & Mechanical Engineering Technology Students Compete in Virginia

Three Central seniors, **Dephtany Ayala**, **Dinh Doan**, and **Skylre Hine**, participated in the 2026 PEP Workforce Development Competition sponsored by the American Society of Naval Engineers held in Portsmouth City Park, VA.

Their project successfully demonstrated the design, fabrication, and testing of an electric propulsion system integrated into a lightweight planing boat.

Overall, the vessel demonstrated the practical usage of electric propulsion in small marine crafts and highlights the advantages of electric propulsion when compared to combustion motor systems. The team was supported by advisors **Dr. David Sianez** (Technology & Engineering Education), who traveled with students to the competition, and **Dr. Reza Ghodsi** (Engineering).

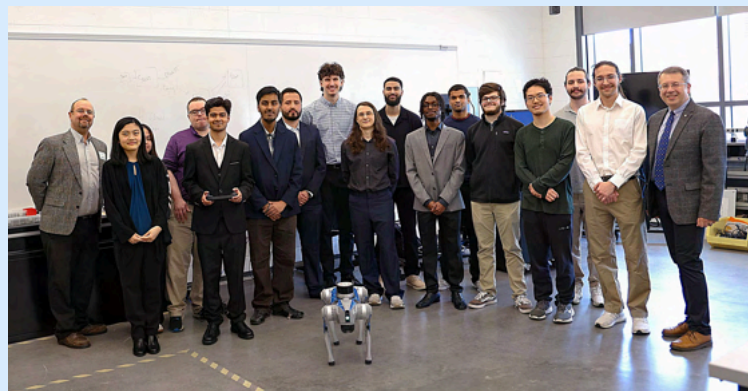
CEGT Students Conduct Study for Connecticut Commission



Computer Electronics & Graphics Technology (CEGT) students, **Dylan Karpel**, **Logan Konopka**, **Fiona Lau**, **Warren Pitcher**, and **Connor Vassar** – supported by CEGT faculty, **Tony DeLuca** –, conducted a feasibility study for a digital equity pipeline on behalf of the Connecticut Commission for Educational Technology. The feasibility study concluded that a university run digital equity program centered on collecting donated devices, refurbishing them, and distributing them through student led build days is both practical and sustainable, provided that workspace, staffing, transportation, and security requirements are met. The report outlines a structured pipeline for intake, assessment, repair, re-imaging, and distribution, supported by detailed cost tracking and a tiered evaluation system.

It emphasized strong environmental benefits through e-waste diversion, significant educational value for both university mentors and K-12 participants, and solid operational throughput. With manageable risks, such as data security, liability, and hardware variability – the study concludes that the model is feasible and scalable, offering a framework to replicate for expanding digital access across Connecticut. The twenty-two page report outlines an ideal process for implementation at any university, including simulated build days for proper cost management, and is designed to be taken "off-the-shelf" for use at any institution.

Computer Science Students Present Senior Projects



Computer Science seniors presenting capstone projects during URCAD with **Dr. Stan Kurkovsky** and **Timothy Davoll** (Pratt & Whitney).

Photo: B. Reddington (Central InfoTechServ)

MathXperience: Innovate, Compete, Connect



An Applied Math event designed to inspire and connect students with the world of mathematics beyond the classroom. The event featured a keynote address by SIAM member Derek Kane, an engaging trivia competition, team challenges, and a panel discussion with Travelers professionals and alumni representing actuarial science, data science, engineering, product management, and business insights & analytics. Students enjoyed networking opportunities with industry leaders and peers.

MathXperience is organized and sponsored by the **Department of Mathematical Sciences** and **Travelers EDGE**.



Building Networks: Construction Management Hosts Alumni & Friends Awards Dinner

The Construction Management Awards Dinner, established in 2007 and later named in honor of emeritus faculty member **Dr. Stuart Bennett**, celebrates distinguished alumni whose achievements continue to inspire students and faculty.

This year's event welcomed 180 alumni, industry partners, faculty, students, and friends to recognize the vital contributions of Connecticut's construction industry and its impact beyond the state.

Proceeds from the event support the **Stuart Bennett Construction Fund**, which enhances the Construction Management program through investments in technology, equipment, industry visits, guest speakers, student organizations, and other program initiatives.

Congratulations to the nominees and award recipients:

Alumni Awards

Christopher Michael Malerba '96,
Director of Construction, Babbidge Construction

Thomas E. Romagnoli '97,
Executive Vice President, Downes Construction

Industry Award

Ed Weber, Principal Engineer, General Dynamics Electric Boat

Thank you to the sponsors:

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Babbidge Construction



Photos: Institutional Marketing & Communications

Inspiring Next Generation Innovators

Students from the **CREC Academy of Computer Science and Engineering Middle School** (East Hartford) had the opportunity to be Central students for a day. The sixth-graders explored several SEST labs, from the robotic dog – a *student favorite* – building motors, exploring acceleration in a car simulation, and working with mechanical levers, to walking the campus and enjoying a dining hall experience.

CREC Theme Coach Diana Beardsley said **Dr. Luz Amaya** (Engineering) goes "above and beyond to create experiences that are both educational and inspiring." Their young minds made big discoveries at Central.



WE ARE CENTRAL

In Our Community

Graduate Open House



University Research and Creative Achievement Day (URCAD)



SEST Awards



2026

SEST *Awards*

SEST concluded the academic year by celebrating the outstanding achievements of its faculty, staff, and students during the annual SEST Awards celebration. The event recognized excellence in teaching, research, service, leadership, and student success, while also honoring retirees for their years of dedicated service and lasting contributions to Central. These accomplishments reflect the talent, commitment, and spirit that define the SEST community.

A Year of Achievements: Award Recipients

Deans Citation Award (Students)

Adam Gunn • **Alicia Lowry** • **Samantha Zagorski** • **Logan Moore** • **Rumman Shahzad**



Outstanding Faculty Teaching Award
Michelle Krackowski



Outstanding Faculty Research Award
Kristine Larsen



Outstanding Faculty Service Award
Daniel Kirby



Outstanding Staff Award
Ayse Adams



Outstanding Alumnus Award
Harrison Levy

A Legacy of Service: Honored Retirees

Mark Evans • Biology
22 years of Service

Chun Jin • Mathematical Sciences
32 years of Service

Steven Kirstukas • Engineering
16 years of Service

Daniel Larose • Mathematical Sciences
30 years of Service

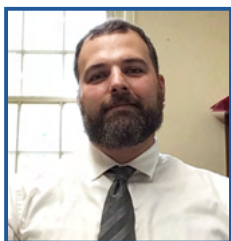
Thomas Mione • Biology
34 years of Service

Michael Wizevich • Earth & Space Sciences
20 years of Service

Joseph Zeoli • Career Development/Advising
38 years of Service

DID YOU KNOW

Exciting Changes Ahead for the SEST Advising Center



SEST is welcoming a new advising team dedicated to supporting student success. Following the departures of Joseph Zeoli and Allison Audet, **Lucais Wallen**, **Sarah Hughes**, and **Brian Michaud** join the SEST Advising Center, bringing extensive experience in academic advising, student success, retention, admissions, and first-year programs.

Lucais Wallen brings ten years of advising experience, joining us from Penn State University where he served as a Pre-Medicine and Academic Recovery Advisor. He was also a Retention Advisor at Eastern Kentucky University.



Sarah Hughes joins us from Boston University where she served as an Academic Advisor for health-related programs. She was also an Advisor and Academic Success Coordinator abroad at Northeastern University-London and Verto Education-London after transitioning from a corporate career.



Brian Michaud will transition to SEST from Central's School of Business Advising. Brian has a background in business, university Admissions at Central, Western, and Western New England University. and Marketing in the private sector. He also teaches a popular CCSU 102 First-Year Experience course.

They are committed to helping students successfully transition to college, achieve their academic goals, and become active members of the Central community.

See [Advising Center Contact](#)

Congratulations to the Class of 2026

Start with a Dream; Finish with a Future.



Photos: Institutional Marketing & Communications



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