**Standard 5 - Students**

(5.1) As a regional comprehensive public university, Central works to fulfill its mission to attract, enroll, and retain a diverse student body. Undergraduate programs cater to both first-time and transfer students and our graduate programs, offered on campus and online, also attract a diverse student population. University programs and services are designed to support its diverse student body, 95 percent of whom are from Connecticut, 31 percent of the student body are enrolled part-time, 71 percent are 24 years or younger, and roughly 20 percent live on campus. Male and female students are in approximate equal numbers for the University as a whole, however the undergraduate population is 45 percent female while the graduate population is 64 percent female. Central is now 38.1 percent diverse, up more than five percent since Fall 2017 as it continues to make progress toward reflecting the demographics of the surrounding communities.

**ADMISSIONS**

(5.2) In alignment with its Mission, Central works to provide broad access to quality academic programs first-year, [transfer](https://www2.ccsu.edu/admission/transfer/), [veteran](https://web.ccsu.edu/veteransaffairs/?redirected), [adult/returning](https://www2.ccsu.edu/makingitpossible/) students as well as graduate level students. Admissions requirements for the different program levels are clearly presented on the Admissions website; prominent on these pages are application deadlines and requirements for admissions and other resources. The University welcomes applications of [first year](https://www2.ccsu.edu/admission/firstyear/requirements.php) students with a wide range of abilities, emphasizing academic scholarship, community involvement, and extracurricular activities. A summary of services available to all students are published on the [Making it Possible](https://www2.ccsu.edu/makingitpossible/) page; included here are descriptions of and corresponding links to the [Drop-in Childcare Center](https://www.ccsu.edu/childcare/) (new in 2022), Student Accessibility Services, the Learning Center, Financial Aid, Student Wellness Center and more.

5.3) CCSU complies with Federal and State laws and abides by the commitment to advocacy, ethics, and integrity using best practices as outlined by the [National Association of College Admissions Counseling](https://www.nacacnet.org/who-we-are/what-we-do/?_ga=2.154049464.1814153007.1673209922-402894221.1673209922) (NACAC). Consistent with Goal 2 of the SP2030, Central promotes equitable access to higher education as evidenced by its participation in the Common Application, which reaches a broader population of incoming students. Potential and continuing students can view policies regarding eligibility for [admission](https://www.ccsu.edu/gradadmissions/requirements.html) and [continued](https://www.ccsu.edu/registrar/policies.html) enrollment via the [graduate](http://ccsu.smartcatalogiq.com/current/Undergraduate-Graduate-Catalog/Graduate-Academic-Policies-and-Requirements) and [undergraduate](http://ccsu.smartcatalogiq.com/current/Undergraduate-Graduate-Catalog/Undergraduate-Academic-Policies-and-Requirements) catalogs and the [University website](https://www2.ccsu.edu/admission/firstyear/requirements.php). The catalog, website, and [Student Handbook](https://docs.ccsu.edu/Student_Handbook.pdf) also describes the academic, social, and personal qualities that the University expects of its student body.

5.4) The University embraces a holistic admissions approach which takes into account various student attributes. In response to the global pandemic where many students were unable to complete SAT/ACT testing, CCSU evaluated the need for such scores; Central is now test-optional. High school GPA, class rank, and high school achievement are the primary qualifications considered for first-year students. Once a student has been accepted to CCSU, they may need to demonstrate additional success to be accepted into some academic programs. For example, [business](https://www.ccsu.edu/business/admissions.html), [teacher education](https://www.ccsu.edu/seps/teacherPrep/admission.html), and [Nursing](https://www.ccsu.edu/program/Nursing_BSN/admission.html) programs require minimum grades in some courses or a minimum GPA in order to be accepted. [National](https://www.ccsu.edu/program/Nursing_BSN/) and state test passage rates (see Interim Report Data Form Std 8.3 Passage Rates) confirm the appropriateness of the minimum requirements.

Students who are first-generation, low-income, and/or students with disabilities have an opportunity to enroll in our federally funded TRiO Student Support Services (SSS) program to be provided with additional support services to meet the needs of admitted students. Students who don’t meet traditional admissions criteria but do have the potential to successfully perform college-level work are recruited into the [Educational Opportunity Program](https://www.ccsu.edu/pas/) (EOP). EOP students have access to additional services like bilingual staff, mentors, and ongoing support services until they graduate. Students who are recruited for their athletic ability must meet NCAA and CCSU admission standards and are supported by the [Academic Center for Student Athletes](https://www.ccsu.edu/acsa/) (ACSA) to ensure these students have academic experiences comparable to all CCSU students despite their additional obligations as student-athletes; as a result, they have [similar](https://www.ccsu.edu/oira/files/Graduation%20Rate%20Athletes%20on%20Athletic%20Aid.pdf), if not higher graduation rates than the general student population.

5.5) First year students must provide evidence of college-level readiness in math and writing. Students may opt to submit SAT/ACT scores or take a placement exam offered by CCSU to place into math and writing courses. Students who need supplemental math or writing instruction have various options for courses, depending on their needs. International students must demonstrate competency in English. Depending on degree level, this may be satisfied in several ways. [Undergraduate](https://www.ccsu.edu/internationaladmissions/first-year.html) students whose native language is not English are required to meet minimum TOEFL, IELTS or Duolingo scores. Similarly, English language proficiency is required for [graduate](https://www.ccsu.edu/internationaladmissions/graduate.html) students, which may also be satisfied by completion of a degree in the U.S. or an English-speaking institution. Students who do not meet these standards may participate in the Intensive English Language Program (IELP) to enhance their communication skills.

5.6) CCSU monitors the progress and success of new, transfer, and continuing students. The OIRA tracks the performance of undergraduate cohorts (e.g., [first-time](https://docs.ccsu.edu/oira/institutionalData/factbook/graduationRetentionRates/FT-FT_Students_Summary.pdf), [transfer](https://docs.ccsu.edu/oira/institutionalData/factbook/graduationRetentionRates/FT_Transfer_Students_Summary.pdf), [PELL eligible](https://www.ccsu.edu/oira/files/GraduationRate.pdf), and STEM majors) with regard to, [academic performance](https://www.ccsu.edu/oira/data/fullTimeMetrics.html), [retention, and graduation rates](https://www.ccsu.edu/oira/data/factbook.html). Most retention and graduation rate reports available on the OIRA website track students for 10 years and are disaggregated by gender, race/ethnicity, and school. To help bring perspective to retention and graduation rate data, CCSU uses benchmark information, for example Central relies on the [Peer](https://www.ccsu.edu/oira/data/peerInstitutions.html) comparison group that was identified when the SP2030 was created. Central’s data show that students routinely meet or exceed the average first-year retention rate and six-year graduation rate of the Peer comparison group. In addition to cohort driven metrics, CCSU also tracks time to degree for both undergraduate and graduate programs. These are just a few examples of reports that are made available on the OIRA website and shared with other groups such as the Enrollment Management Council (EMC), Council of Deans, and the combined Council of Associate and Assistant Deans and directors of various student support services. Collectively, these data inform the processes that Central employs to support student success.

**STUDENT SERVICES AND CO-CURRICLULAR EXPERIENCES**

5.7) CCSU continues to offer students an array of support services designed to promote retention and academic success, as well as achieve post-graduation goals. Consistent with the [University’s mission](https://www.ccsu.edu/about/mission/), these support services prepare students to be thoughtful, responsible, and successful citizens by helping to ensure a successful academic experience, health and well-being, and post-graduation goal attainment. All services are student driven in that intervention is determined based on student needs and goals. The University has put considerable effort into clustering the majority of these services both in proximity at the [Willard-DiLoreto Complex](https://www2.ccsu.edu/connected/?article=395) (finished in 2019, WD Complex), such as the [Writing Center](https://www.ccsu.edu/writingCenter/) and [The Learning Center](https://web.ccsu.edu/tlc/?redirected), which provides many supports to students including tutoring and academic coaching. There are also non-academic supports for students as well; examples include health and wellness services, [career and employment services](https://www.ccsu.edu/csc/careerFairs.html), [Veteran’s Affairs](https://web.ccsu.edu/veteransaffairs/?redirected), [Registrar’s](https://www.ccsu.edu/registrar/), [Bursar’s](https://www.ccsu.edu/bursar/), and [Financial Aid](https://www.ccsu.edu/financialaid/). Clustering of these services in the WD Complex has providing improved access to students and has also resulted in improved communication and collaboration between departments. In addition, services are also promoted through the launch of the [Blanket of Support](https://www.ccsu.edu/blanketofsupport/) initiative on campus in 2021. Over 30 programs and services available to all students comprise the University’s Blanket of Support.

(5.9) Included in the WD Complex is the new [Student Wellness Center](https://web.ccsu.edu/healthservices/index.asp), which brought together [Counseling and Student Development](https://web.ccsu.edu/counselingandwellnesscenter/?redirected), [Health Services](https://web.ccsu.edu/healthservices/default.asp), and [Wellness Education](https://web.ccsu.edu/healthservices/oade/default.asp). This center manages all functions related to student physical health, mental health, and substance use disorders; services also include risk assessment and crisis management. These services are provided free of charge to CCSU students and are completely confidential. This was a much-needed change as students use of these services have resulted in a 76 percent increase in scheduled sessions from AY2017-18 to AY2021-22.

5.10) The University’s support services recognizes the unique needs and varied socio-economic, familial, employment circumstances of our student population, including the [commuter](https://docs.ccsu.edu/oira/institutionalData/factbook/enrollments/headcount/Fall_Enrollment_By_Place_Of_Residence.pdf) population. Support services are available to all students throughout the workweek. Many support services, such as [counseling](https://web.ccsu.edu/counselingandwellnesscenter/counselingGroups.asp) groups, [Wellness Education](https://web.ccsu.edu/healthservices/oade/wellnessPrograms.asp) events, [tutoring](https://outlook.office365.com/owa/calendar/TheLearningCenterTutoring%40my.ccsu.edu/bookings/) and [coaching](https://web.ccsu.edu/tlc/academicCoaching/default.asp), and peer mentoring, offer in-person and virtual meetings with students. In addition, Central now has a food pantry, [Maria’s Place](https://www.ccsu.edu/mariasplace/) that serves the basic needs of our students, providing food and supplies.

The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in Spring 2020 had a significant impact on the provision of student support services. Traditional in-person services had to pivot to on-line platforms. While challenging, all the University’s support services continued to function, and many expanded their outreach. The University’s [health services department](https://web.ccsu.edu/healthservices/default.asp) significantly expanded its service reach to provide COVID-19 assessments, testing, contact tracing, symptom tracking, as well quarantine and isolation care for students.

5.8) Responding to student needs and promoting academic success involves considerable collaboration and coordination of resources, as well as early identification of students who are struggling. Central continues to work diligently, collecting data to ensure that the right support services are in place and easily accessible to students. As mentioned in Standard Two, OIRA coordinates several university-wide surveys to assess student needs. According to the [Student Satisfaction Inventory](https://www.ccsu.edu/oira/assessment/surveys/SSI.html) (SSI), which is administered every other year to all undergraduate students, one of CCSU’s strengths in 2021, as compared to other public 4-year institutions, is online access to services students need. SSI results also confirm that progress has been made in satisfaction with financial aid, a perennial challenge. In 2018-19, the department moved to Enrollment Management where more oversight could be made; surveys before (Fall 2017) and after (Fall 2021) the move provide evidence that student satisfaction with the timing of financial aid award notification has improved from 5.16 to 5.36 and financial aid counseling has improved from 5.24 to 5.48.

In addition to the SSI, Central has a rotation schedule for administering surveys. The Beginning College Survey of Student Engagement (BCSSE) and the Food and Housing Insecurity surveys are administered annually. The suite of [campus climate surveys](https://www.ccsu.edu/ccc/) for faculty, staff, and students, as well as the alumni survey (three to five years post-graduation) are administered on a three-year rotation. The remaining surveys, the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), the SSI, and two SkyFactor surveys, which are used to learn more about the experiences of students living on campus and using the Student Center, are typically administered on a two-year rotation schedule. Results from the national surveys are particularly informative as not only does CCSU look at the trend data, but the benchmark information helps to put the results into context. The results of most surveys are posted on the [OIRA website](https://www.ccsu.edu/oira/assessment/surveys/). These data become even more informative when coupled with retention and graduation rate data.

5.11) Since the site visit in 2018, Central has created the Office of New Student Programs which has made considerable progress in improving orientation. In 2018, CCSU piloted a two-day, immersive overnight Orientation program, with such success that in 2019, this model became the standard approach for first year student orientation at CCSU. This higher touch approach to onboarding new students, now embeds meetings with advisors where expectations of the major are discussed, and students receive their academic schedule. Students also learn about the different support systems included in CCSU’s Blanket of Support, such as financial literacy, mentoring programs, the Learning Center, Career Development, and Student Clubs and Organizations. This had the added benefit of familiarizing students with the supports and services offered before the semester began. Counselors were also available to provide support to students experiencing anxiety or a mental health challenge while attending the program.

5.12) The overarching goal for the vast array of services provided to students is to help them succeed. With the student body becoming increasingly diverse, Central must do everything possible to create a safe and welcoming environment. As previously mentioned, Central’s student body is increasing in diversity, but perhaps more noteworthy is that the first-time and transfer incoming classes are even more diverse, at 42.3 and 43.8 percent, respectively. The Hispanic/Latino population is the [fastest growing](https://www.ctdata.org/census-2020-explorer-page) race/ethnicity in Connecticut; with this in mind, Central would like to become a Hispanic Serving Institution. This accomplishment would bring Central closer to mirroring the communities it serves. Goal 3 of the SP2030 renews the University’s commitment to ensuring that all members of the community, regardless of how they identify or the group they associate with, feels safe and secure. Central has already accomplished some of the SP2030’s action items, including broadening the scope of the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion beyond compliance, strengthening the academic cultural centers, and administering campus climate surveys to name a few. To make greater use of information, OIRA has become more intentional about disaggregating data by gender and by race/ethnicity when they assess program effectiveness. This will be needed to evaluate the effectiveness of programs and initiatives more fully in support of students.

(5.13) In Fall 2021, 42 percent of CCSU’s incoming class were first generation and 96 percent received financial aid; the proportion of first generation students in the Fall 2022 cohort increased to 49 percent. The role of the [Office of Financial Aid](https://www.ccsu.edu/financialaid/) (FinAid) is to help students identify and reduce financial barriers to their success, using aid from federal, state, institutional, and external sources. To establish eligibility for grants, scholarships, loans, and employment opportunities, CCSU students are required to complete and submit the FAFSA. Effective Fall 2020, the University revised its criteria, to create a fair and equitable awarding philosophy based on a student’s academic achievement and financial need. This strategy follows both state and federal regulations and includes the new implementation of a merit-based offer for both incoming undergraduate and graduate students and are renewable based on varying factors.

(5.14) FinAid and Admissions work collectively to ensure that students are aware of the costs associated with earning a college degree or certificate. From the Admissions webpage, new and continuing students can easily find links to the [Bursar’s Office](https://www.ccsu.edu/bursar/), the [Net Price Calculator](https://tcc.ruffalonl.com/Central%20Connecticut%20State%20University/Freshman-Students), [tuition and fees](https://www2.ccsu.edu/bursar/fullTimeFees.html), options for [living on campus](https://www2.ccsu.edu/reslife/resHalls.html), [dining options](https://ccsudining.sodexomyway.com/my-meal-plan/), [scholarships](https://www.ccsu.edu/scholarships), and FinAid. Once on the FinAid website, many of these same links are also available. Students interested in attending the University for the first time, or who wish to review their costs and estimated financial aid offer may do so using our Net Price Calculator which uses information from the student, data from the prior year, and CCSU’s awarding strategies to provide the student an estimate of their net cost. From the FinAid website, undergraduate, graduate, and undocumented students can learn about the different types of available [aid](https://www.ccsu.edu/financialaid/typesofaid.html), an overview of [forms](https://www.ccsu.edu/financialaid/forms.html), and access the FAFSA. Once admitted, students can set up an account in Banner Self-Service; here they have access to cost of attendance, loan debt as well as Pell lifetime eligibility.

To further support our students the University hired a bilingual Financial Literacy Coordinator who is charged with providing guidance in understanding cost, debt and repayment, FAFSA completion, creating a budget and understanding credit scores and reports. The Office of Financial Aid physically mails the financial aid offer letter and includes a Financial Aid guidebook that breaks down a student’s actual cost with their Financial Aid offer. As mentioned previously, SSI survey results indicate that Central has made progress in improving the timing of financial aid award notification and availability of counseling.

(5.15) CCSU offers over 145 [clubs and organizations](https://ccsu.campuslabs.com/engage/organizations) that provide opportunities for co-curricular activities, [student leadership, and campus governance](https://www.ccsu.edu/sald/). Students share in governance through the undergraduate Student Government Association (SGA), Student Union Board of Governors, and the Inter-Residence Council (IRC). SGA’s counterpart at the graduate level is the Graduate Student Association (GSA) that articulates the interests of graduate students. Students are voting members on many campus and CSCU-BOR committees, and they also serve in advisory capacities to academic departments. The administration consults with student leadership groups regarding expenditures of and changes in student fees.

(5.16) As a NCAA Division I athletics program with 16 sponsored sports, CCSU’s 380 student athletes (AY2022) are required to follow both NCAA and University policies; and athletes are provided with insurance, safety training, and supervision. The [Student Athlete Handbook](https://nam10.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fccsu.prestosports.com%2Fathletics%2Fcompliance%2FFINAL_HANDBOOK_SUBMISSION_2022_-002-.pdf&data=05%7C01%7CPincinceT%40ccsu.edu%7C59c9d62fc36049020e6408dafa4cb03f%7C2329c570b5804223803b427d800e81b6%7C0%7C0%7C638097504574840853%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=QrYrEQ3WpN0gTE0ZEQ8Scq4%2BpgRoM%2Fe8rPryXEpxhTs%3D&reserved=0) is distributed each a fall and is also posted on the Athletics website. All recreational and athletic programs adhere to sound educational policy and integrity standards. Recreation, intramurals and club sports ([RECentral](https://www.ccsu.edu/campusRecreation/)) staff members verify participation eligibility, health clearance, and accident and health insurance. Student athletes receive academic and wellness support services from the [ACSA](https://www.ccsu.edu/acsa/). The ACSA aims to help athletes abide by NCAA mandates and meet academic goals, in fact student athletes have exceeded the traditional cohort’s six-year graduation rate by an average of 3.4 percent over the last five years. All teams are expected to meet or exceed the NCAA minimum score of 930 on the Academic Progress Rate (APR). CCSU also measures student athletes’ graduation rates. A Faculty Athletic Representative works closely with the Center to ensure the academic integrity of the athletic program and welfare of student athletes. RECentral reports to the Division of Student Affairs while Athletics is in the Division of Administrative Affairs; each manages its own separate budget.

5.17 The University ensures that providers of support services maintain appropriate credentials specific to their scope of responsibility and practice as part of this process, position descriptions are evaluated. Prior to onboarding, the Department of Human Resources verifies [credentials](https://www.ccsu.edu/hr/files/hiring_process/Pre-Employment%20Verification%20Policy%20012116.pdf) and transcripts. For example, counselors and health service providers must maintain licensure in the State of Connecticut. [Faculty](https://www.ct.edu/files/pdfs/2021-2025%20AAUP%20Contract.pdf) and [administrative faculty](https://www.ct.edu/files/pdfs/SUOAF-2021-2025.pdf) have access to professional development funds for ongoing training to ensure they are up to date with current practices, trends, best practices, and ethical standards in their fields. The Police Department is accredited by the [Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies](https://www.calea.org/calea-client-database) (CALEA) and remains the only accredited department of the four Connecticut State Universities. The Division of Information Technology ensures all have access to current technology and works closely with Facilities to ensure spaces are continually upgraded to meet current and future needs.

As discussed in Standard Seven, CCSU had a number of personnel retire in advance of significant changes to the rules for retirement as outlined in a [State Employees Bargaining Agent Coalition](https://www.ccsu.edu/suoaf/files/RSDMEMO2021-03-2022Changes.pdf) (SEBAC) memo to state agencies, effective July 1, 2022. With these retirements Central used the opportunity to review and reimagine the now open positions and perhaps move positions to areas in the greatest need.

5.18 The University publishes a set of ethical standards, polices, and resources that are available on the website and summarized in the [Student Handbook](https://docs.ccsu.edu/Student_Handbook.pdf). Key information found in the handbooks is also shared with students during advising days, orientation workshops and from outreach programs during the year in residence halls, classrooms, and student club events. Graduate students also have access to a similar handbook found on the [Graduate Studies Resources](https://www.ccsu.edu/grad/resources/) page.

5.19 The Office of the Registrar has compiled a list of [policies and procedures](https://www.ccsu.edu/registrar/policies.html) and made them readily available to all students and the public. For example, the Good Standing Policy outlines the GPA requirements that must be met to continue enrollment and what happens when an undergraduate student has a GPA below 2.00. The list also includes information on FERPA and what constitutes [directory information](http://ccsu.smartcatalogiq.com/current/Undergraduate-Graduate-Catalog/Undergraduate-Academic-Policies-and-Requirements/Student-Records/Directory-Information-Policy). The State has a well-established [policy on records retention](https://www.ccsu.edu/fiscalaffairs/S5_Higher_Education.pdf) for higher education. Student transcripts are permanent records; other records may be destroyed, following a retention period and approval from the Connecticut State Library.

5.20) Prior to the start of the fall semester, first generation and minority students learn about opportunities to participate in peer mentoring programs. First Year Connected (FYC) focuses on connecting first generation students to a staff or faculty mentor during their first fall semester while the well-established Success Central (SC) program focuses on peer mentoring for freshmen and sophomore students. Both programs are evaluated annually, and the results have been positive. Students who participate in these programs earn more credits, have higher GPAs, retain at higher rates. The SC program has been in place long enough to confirm that participants graduate at higher rates.

Undergraduate students who are on academic probation are strongly encouraged to participate in an academic intervention offered by the Learning Center. Of the 267 students in Fall 2022 who were on academic probation, 87 percent (n=233) agreed to participate in an intervention and 90 percent (210) of those students completed either small-group meetings or one-on-one academic coaching. Thirty Seven percent of the students improved their cumulative GPA enough to be removed from probation (2.00 or higher) and 70 percent were able to increase their GPA and granted an extended probation semester.