

THE RECORDER

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CCSU Students Wait Weeks for Dorm Repairs

By Michelle Velez and Dylan Romagnoli
Contributors

Central Connecticut State University students are encountering maintenance issues in residence halls that remain unaddressed weeks into the fall semester, raising questions about the university's summer preparation and work order response system.

Hailey Gomez, an 18-year-old freshman living in Seth North Hall, discovered that only one of three electrical outlets in her room functioned when she moved in at the beginning of the semester. "I told one of the employees, but nobody contacted me back or indicated anything about the outlet being fixed," Gomez said. "So basically, no communication."

Steve VanVoorhis, Director of Facilities Management said that "the communication between the student and RA/RD inside the residence halls is similar to an apartment complex. RA acts as a liaison between the Facilities Management team and tenants."

He advised that if response times appear prolonged, "students should check with their RA/RD to get a status update.

say should have been resolved during summer break, before the start of the academic year. Ryan Catenza, a 19-year-

three weeks later, they're still a no-show."

Steve VanVoorhis, Director of



Photo Credit Elijah Hernandez; Picture of Mid Campus

Despite reporting the issue to housing staff, Gomez said she has received no updates about repair timelines or work order status. Her next plan is to escalate the matter through... The malfunctioning outlets represent just one example of maintenance issues students

old sophomore living in Mid-Campus Residence Hall, moved into a room with a handicap door that wasn't automatic. "Maintenance sent people to fix the door, but they left without fixing it," he said. "They told me they didn't have the necessary equipment to fix it,

Facilities Management, said life safety work orders receive immediate priority, including "arching/sparking electrical issues and lock issues, as well as running water, leaks, damaged goods or supplies, loss of heat or inoperable windows." General requests, including broken furniture and damaged

screens, are "usually taken care of within 24-48 hours," while cosmetic requests take longer to complete because they are not urgent, VanVoorhis said.

According to VanVoorhis, the university's response times vary by category: emergency requests receive immediate attention, while routine requests take 2-7 days to complete. "I would have assumed at the very least they would make sure everything is in working order before students move in as that should be common decency after paying so much for housing," Gomez said. The facilities director said the university uses a prioritization system through LLumin, their work order tracking system, where "Facilities then prioritizes them and starts working on the emergent ones, then urgent ones, and then routine ones."

While Gomez described housing staff as professional, she noted the lack of follow-up communication as problematic. "The most frustrating part

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Central's Artificial Integrity

By Nicholas Dest
Staff Writer

President Zulma Toro has been found to be utilizing artificial intelligence in emails to students, even during solemn announcements.

The most recent instances occurred on Sept. 11, 2025, when President Toro sent two campus-wide emails, one in remembrance of the 9/11 attacks, and the other regarding Charlie Kirk's death.

In the first, a photo of an American flag and a tombstone was attached alongside

the message. Upon closer inspection, the image contained several indicators that it had been generated by artificial intelligence. Text on the tombstone was gibberish, and our nation's flag was distorted, lacking the correct number of stars and stripes.

For the pain that was suffered on that catastrophic day, can AI truly comprehend the importance of this matter?

Concerning the use of AI, President Toro responded.

"The photo was not generated by AI," she said. "But it is part of the library we have available."

While President Toro denied the use of AI, her mention of a "library" was open-ended.

Jodi Latina, Associate Vice President of Communications and Media, said the cause of AI was due to Publicate, a no-code email and newsletter builder.

See AI on Page 3



Photo Credit: Image included in Toro's 9/11 remembrance email. Note the illegible text on the tombstone and incorrect number of stars/stripes on the flag.

About

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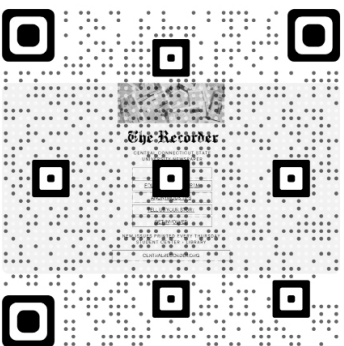
SCAN FOR OUR LINKS

Photo credit Michelle Velez; Picture of broken closet shelf

Repairs

is having only one of three outlets working," she said. She is not concerned about being charged for the pre-existing damage, but remains unaware of how the university determines financial responsibility for room repairs she said. The electrical problems have forced Gomez to reorganize her room layout and limit her use of electronic devices. However, she said the issues will not influence her housing decisions for next year. Gomez's experience reflects broader concerns about maintenance response times and

communication between housing staff and residents. While Cantenza admits the door isn't a major issue to his everyday life, he worries about if there will be a bigger issue in the future. "What if something in my room was really messed up," he said. "How long would it take for them to actually come and fix it?" VanVoorhis acknowledged that summer maintenance faces challenges because "some of the residence halls on campus are not completely empty during the summer

due to summer programming, including orientations, and other academic endeavors, which limits room availability in some circumstances." The facilities director said staffing is lower in-residence halls during summer, "because fully staffing empty residence halls is not necessary until students move back in or if there is a summer program/overnight orientation scheduled." However, VanVoorhis said, "Res Life and Facilities work as a team during the summer (and all year round) to ensure all maintenance issues are still being taken care of in a timely manner, even with lower staffing levels in the summer." Similar delays have affected other students dealing with more serious structural issues. A week after moving in, a closet and shelving unit in this reporter's room began separating from the wall, creating a safety hazard. Despite initial reports to housing staff, repairs were not scheduled until a resident assistant intervened, and work was completed one week after the damage was first reported. The incident highlights po-

tential gaps in the university's maintenance prioritization system and the role resident assistants play in expediting repairs when standard channels prove insufficient. VanVoorhis said certain repairs require specialized scheduling that can't be done while students are present, including "mechanical shutdowns, replacement of locking systems, expansive testing of alarm systems, preventative maintenance, washer/dryer ductwork maintenance, and HVAC system repairs." The facilities management team coordinates with Housing through room assessments, where "Res Life will do room assessments of each room within their assigned building. They will then present dorm reports and work orders are placed through LLumin for Facilities," he said. There haven't been significant recent changes to maintenance protocols, although the department switched to the LLumin work order system several years ago to track requests submitted by residence hall directors, according to the facilities director.

Freshman Class Soars at CCSUBy Sabiha Dodd-Brown
Staff Writer

Central Connecticut State University welcomed one of its largest freshman classes in recent history, with admissions climbing between 20 and 26 percent over last year, according to university officials. The increase, they say, reflects a combination of recruitment strategies, affordability initiatives, and the popularity of certain programs. Lawrence Hall, Director of Admissions, said, "We're over 1,700 students enrolled right now, where last year we were a little shy of 1,400. So, we're 400 plus in the freshman class compared to last year. It's a good group."

The growth is not limited to incoming first

years. Campus housing has also exceeded expectations, with more than 2,500 students living on campus this fall, which passed the university's original goal of 2,400. To meet the demand, CCSU expanded housing in Carroll Hall after briefly implementing a wait-list.

University leaders credit a combination of outreach and broader visibility for the surge. CCSU has been casting a wider net of prospective students earlier in their high school careers.

"I think what we've done is just try to make sure we can cast a wider net of more junior search pieces, senior search pieces, sophomore pieces, where we're trying to

attract students sooner and earlier in the process, where they're not just finding out about us as a senior," said Hall.

That outreach includes travel beyond Connecticut, particularly into New York, Massachusetts, and New Jersey, as well as additional recruitment at regional community colleges. University staff also attended national conferences and expanded international recruitment.

Affordability remains a foundation of CCSU's strategy. The university has introduced measures to make education more accessible, including reducing the out-of-state tuition rate and strengthening support for Pell-eligible students.

"We've been committed to Pell and Pell-eligible stu-

dents," Hall said. "We have a Pell Promise program. We were able to promote that, you know, tuition and fees are covered if you fall within certain economic bands."

Financial aid packages have been simplified, with scholarships offered at the time of admission based on academic performance. By providing early information on aid and communicating directly with both students and parents, CCSU has aimed to reduce financial uncertainty during the enrollment process.

While overall applications are up, certain programs stand out as there has been an increase in enrollment within those majors. Nursing, criminology, and psychology continue to attract some of the largest applicant pools.

"I think nursing, criminology, and psychology

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Email us at editor@centralrecorder.org
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centralrecorder.org

Freshman

certainly continue to lead our applicant pool,” said Hall. “We certainly have enrolled more pre-nursing students this fall.”

For some students, affordability and location were key deciding factors. One new student, Samuel Dounn, who commutes from Waterbury, said the university’s financial support made the choice clear.

“My fiancée graduated here last semester. She found a grant that would basically cover my first year and potentially more,” he said. “So, I was like, yeah—free school. And it’s a great way to start the career change.”

He added that CCSU’s proximity and affordability sealed the deal. “Location was a big one. I live in Waterbury, so it’s only about thirty minutes away from here. So, it was a good, easy drive. And with it being affordable too, like, a nice campus, great classes so far. It was a good reason to come and pick this

place.”

Samuel, who is pursuing a career change, said he is confident the university will help him achieve his goals. “I’m hoping to really just make my way towards this new career change that I’ve begun on, and I think just looking at all the classes they offered and all the areas that you could really look into, it seems like they have the best opportunities for all that,” he said.

The surge at CCSU comes at a time when many universities nationwide are dealing with enrollment declines due to demographic shifts and lingering effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. Within the Connecticut State Colleges and Universities system, CCSU’s growth stands out as a hopeful spot, reflecting the school’s efforts to adapt to changing student needs.

Because CCSU used outreach tactics, balanced affordability, and invested in high-demand academic programs, CCSU has managed

to stay away from national trends. The university’s ability to expand its applicant pool by roughly 20 percent highlights the impact of its recruitment and financial aid strategies.

While university leaders celebrate the increase, they acknowledge the importance of sustaining growth while maintaining quality.

“My advice is always, come and take a look and visit us,” Hall said. “Fit matters. A place where you belong and feel like you belong, and people care about you. And I think as we attract people to campus, they get to experience that for themselves.”

As CCSU begins the academic year with a larger, diverse student body, both students and administrators’ express optimism. For new students like Samuel, the admissions growth is not just a random statistic—it’s an opportunity.

“It was a good reason to come and pick this place,” he said. “Now I’m just excited to see what comes next.”



Photo credit First Year Organization; Freshmen during Orientation

AI

“Publicate was the source of the photo. It was generated from a search feature within the platform. It’s my understanding that Publicate now has an artificial intelligence feature that is turned on unless you switch the tab in the search bar,” she said.

Publicate currently has no AI feature built into its platform, according to a spokesperson for the company.

Due to the contradiction between CCSU’s explanation and Publicate’s statement, The Recorder conducted a further review of the emails. After inputting the email text into four AI detectors, ZeroGPT, GPTZero, QuillBot, and Copyleaks, each labeled it “AI-generated” (97-100%).

Furthermore, President Toro’s email addressing Charlie Kirk’s death produced similar results, with mixed AI probabilities across the various detectors.

The Recorder’s findings shed light on the administration’s use of AI, and how it spans from images to text,

indicating that some sort of chatbot is being used.

Under CCSU’s policy, students face misconduct charges for using AI without disclosure, while the president’s emails contained no such acknowledgment.

It’s unclear whether CCSU’s administration will adhere to the same AI policies they bestow upon students. Either way, integrity in times of remorse, sorrow, and reflection can only be maintained through a human’s voice, not a robot.

We will never forget. Communications and Media, responded by saying “Publicate was the source of the photo. It was generated from a search feature within the platform. It’s my understanding that Publicate now has an artificial intelligence feature that is turned on unless you switch the tab in the search bar.”

In the eyes of the administration, Publicate, a no-code email and newsletter builder, is deemed at fault for generating this artificial photo.

But that explanation quickly fell apart. As it turns out, Publicate has no such feature built

into its platform. A spokesperson for the company said, “AI image generation should be available later this year.”

This leads us to ask, why is Central lying to us about which platform they use to create artificial images? Perhaps they are too embarrassed to say AI generation was the culprit.

The contradiction between CCSU’s explanation and Publicate’s statement is alarming, and a further review of the emails was warranted. After inputting the email text into four AI detectors, ZeroGPT, GPTZero, QuillBot, and Copyleaks, each labeled it “AI-generated” (97–100%).

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knowledgment.

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We Will Never Forget

Picture: QuillBot was used to check the emails sent by President Toro for AI

CCSU Gears Up for Homecoming and Family Day Weekend

By Kyle Zarnoch
Staff Writer

NEW BRITIAN - Anticipation is building as Central Connecticut State University prepares for one of its most spirited traditions.

Homecoming and Family Weekend returns to campus on Sept. 25–28, uniting students, families, and alumni for four days of jam-packed events from pep rallies and milestone class reunions to football, volleyball and soccer matchups.

Organizers like Emily Weiner, co-organizer for Family Day with Student Activities and Leadership Development, say the weekend is designed to showcase Blue Devil pride and strengthen connections across generations.

“My hope is that students and families are able to reconnect during our Family Day celebration,” said Weiner. “For some students, this will be the first time seeing their families for an extended period of time since the beginning of the semester, so being able to capitalize on that time while also spreading the Central spirit is what matters most.”

The festivities begin Thursday evening with the annual Alumni Athletic Hall of Fame induction dinner from 6 to 9 p.m., honoring individuals who have made a lasting

mark in Blue Devil history.

Later that night, a pep rally hosted by student organizations including the Student Government Association, Central Activities Network, Inter-Residence Council and the Brazen Blue Devils will bring students together in the Student Center Circle with food and giveaways.

Friday features a packed lineup.

The day starts with a welcome luncheon with CCSU President Zulma R. Toro at Hilltop Café, followed by guided campus tours, a planetarium show and faculty-led presentations. Alumni can reconnect with classmates during milestone reunions or explore campus with family.

The evening centerpiece is the Eras Celebration, an outdoor festival with decade-themed tents, live music, food, and drinks designed to bring graduates from the 1950s through the 2020s together. Fire pits, photo stations and a mix of nostalgic and modern offerings aim to make the event a highlight for returning alumni.

“Homecoming is important for Central alumni because it provides a dedicated time to return to campus, reconnect with classmates, celebrate traditions, and see how the university has grown,” said

Kristen Gordon, director of Alumni Relations. “It fosters pride, strengthens lifelong bonds, and reminds alumni that they remain a vital part of the Central community.”

Gordon added that events like milestone reunions and the Eras Celebration “offer a unique opportunity to connect with Blue Devils across generations... The event will feature decade-themed tents to nostalgic treats, it’s designed so there’s something for everyone.”

Saturday marks the heart of the weekend.

Families can take part in the Family Fun Fest from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. in the Student Center, which includes games, crafts, breakfast and giveaways. Tailgating opens nearby before the football team takes the field against Dartmouth at noon on Arute Field.

“I’m most excited for our Kizer’s Coffee Bar for the students and adults, and the Stuff-A-Pal table for our younger visitors,” Weiner said. “Family Day is a great way to get members outside of the CCSU community fired up and involved with school spirit. This is a great way to show off all of the perks of community at CCSU.”

Michael Castiello, a senior at CCSU, has attended multiple Homecoming events, said

the culture makes the weekend special.

“It’s always a fun way to connect with friends and celebrate CCSU,” Castiello said. “The traditions and events make you really understand and feel a part of the university.”

Alumni will also gather for a buffet brunch at 8:30 a.m. in the C.J. Huang Recreation Center, complete with mimosas and Bloody Marys, before attending a banner dedication ceremony honoring distinguished graduates.

“Honoring our alumni at such events is an opportunity for the university to share how proud we are of our Blue Devils,” Gordon said. “It creates connection by celebrating shared history and recognizing individual achievements. That combination strengthens alumni identity and inspires current students to envision their own potential.”

On the field, student-athletes say the Homecoming atmosphere is unmatched.

“Playing in the Homecoming game is one of the highlights of the year,” said junior football player Randy De la Cruz. “The energy from fans and the campus makes those games unforgettable.”

At 4 p.m., women’s volleyball faces Saint Francis University at Detrick Gymnasium.

For alumni, returning to campus offers more than just a chance to watch games. Recent graduate Nolan Devivo said he’s eager to experience the weekend for the first time as an alum.

“Coming back to campus for the first time since graduation gives me a special feeling,” Devivo said. “It’s going to be both nostalgic but awesome to see students, families, and alumni all around campus together celebrating.”

Sunday closes out the weekend with men’s and women’s soccer games at the Central Soccer Field, including a women’s matchup against the University of New Haven led by CCSU alum and class of 2020 Hall of Famer Laura Duncan ’05.

“As this is my first Homecoming celebration as both a student and staff member, I’m excited to see how all the families and students interact with one another throughout the duration of our Family Day events, tailgate, and football game,” Weiner said.

With athletics, alumni traditions, and family activities, Homecoming and Family Day remain one of Central’s largest and most cherished events and a reminder that being a Blue Devil lasts long after graduation.



Photo credit Ian Yale; CCSU homecoming 2024

New Year, Same iPhone

By Noah Gavin
Contributor

Apple has released a new model of their smartphone annually, even though some are saying for the last few years that technology in smartphones has hit a plateau.

The new iPhone 17 lineup releases on Sept. 19, and with prices continuing to go up, it has raised concerns among some.

Jaiden Winborne, a computer science major at Central Connecticut State University and Apple user, explained Apple’s yearly iPhone

releases often feel disingenuous to the benefit of the consumer. “Money wise, it feels more like a money-making scheme rather than it being beneficial for Apple users,” he said. Since Apple’s recent price changes, with last year’s iPhone 16 Pro Max increasing by \$100 and the iPhone 17 now matching that price, a jump Apple attributes to raising the minimum storage from 128GB to 256GB on both Pro models.

Another new addition to Apple's lineup is the iPhone Air, which is in place of their usual iPhone Plus models, and it costs \$100 more.

Apple said that the new iPhone 17 is more durable than previous models, meaning more benefits for long-term expenses.

According to Apple they have put an updated version of their Ceramic Shield not just on the front of their phone, but on the back for the first time. This, coupled with a unibody design, makes the phone more structurally secure and makes scratches and cracks less likely.

The phone has a high upfront cost, but these could save you money on those smartphone repairs when having an accident with your phone.

The iPhone 17 Pro has a 48-megapixel fusion and ultra-wide camera, something that CCSU students in film or photography-based majors could get a lot of use out of with something that fits in their pocket.

However, the 48MP main camera is not new to this year's pro model, but was new to last year's 16 Pro.

The new iPhone Pro boasts a "new" chipset, but beneath the branding, it mirrors last year's iPhone 16 Pro. It also still runs on the same 6-core central processing unit, the smartphone's brain, raising questions about how much innovation Apple is really delivering.

The iPhone 15 and 14 lineups had the same 6-core CPU.

So, even if your major uses intensive applications, if you are utilizing them on the last three generations of iPhone Pro models, it's the same.

According to Apple, the iPhone 17 Pro has up to 33 hours of continuous video playback battery life, and the Pro Max has up to 39 hours.

This could be useful to the CCSU students who start early and spend all day in classes and extracurricular activities that keep them out into the late hours.

Upgrading to a new battery alone could be a factor for students who find their phone dying before a full day

on campus ends.

The similarities between the new iPhone Air to the iPhone 16 Plus are hard to ignore. They both share 27 hours of battery life, 6-core CPU, and a 48-megapixel main camera with the Air only differing in its smaller screen size. For some users, that lack of distinction shows why their recent updates have lost its innovative commitment as a company. "I only upgraded because my 12 started to feel like an older generation, and I upgraded to feel more current with my phone, not the features," Winborne said, proving that some users aren't upgrading for the new technology but more so out of pressure to keep up with the pace with Apple's release cycle. This was a four-year wait for an upgrade, but he said he could see himself waiting even longer next time.

"It really depends on the features that have been implemented. If there are new features that are actually worth going for, then yeah," Winborne said.

Winborne believes tech companies should be using a longer time frame for an upgrade cycle, rather than annually.

"I would say companies should wait probably around two or three years (to release a new smartphone). I feel like they already have planned out new features inside the phone, and they can wait to update while considering how the outside can be further worked on," he said.

Sales data released by Apple and CNBC supports that the regular iPhone user is beginning to upgrade more years apart.

iPhone sales peaked at 231.2 million units in 2015, dipped to under 200 million by 2019 to 2020, and peaked again at 242 million in 2021. Since then, sales have leveled off at around 230 million units a year through 2024. These numbers show that Apple only really sees a large increase in their number of iPhone units sold every few years, and for the last three years running the figure has not changed all that drastical-

ly.

This suggests that people are holding onto their phones longer, as Apple reported at the end of the 2024 fiscal year that they have a projected 1.4 billion active iPhone users.

With only 230 million new units being sold every year, this would not even be 18% of their active userbase in 2024 buying a new iPhone model each of the last three years.

Users are waiting longer to see more features and innovative changes before deciding to upgrade.



Photo credit Apple; the new iPhone 17 Pro Max

Attack on Higher Education

By Elijah Hernandez
News Editor

"I strongly counsel against anticipatory compliance, which is a fancy way of saying bowing down and bending the knee," Connecticut Attorney General William Tong said.

In a seminar hosted by the university's chapter of the Central State Universities-American Association of University Professors, the topic of discussion was the battles higher education is currently facing against President Donald Trump and his administration, on Sept. 15 in Alumni Hall.

Central Connecticut State University's CSU-AAUP chapter works as a union to advocate on behalf of faculty and staff and serves as an intermediary between academic freedom and federal legislation. Attorney General Tong, a Democrat, is a native of Hartford and received his Doctor of Laws at the University of Chicago Law School. He is the 25th attorney general to serve Connecticut and has been serving the state since 2019.

Tong not only spoke about the preventative measures campuses should use to stunt losing certain freedoms but also about the use of President Trump's powers.

"They [the current administration] are trying to intimidate and bully us into submission, into a world view that frankly, before eight months ago wasn't even conservative, wasn't even marginal, it's fringe," he said.

Tong went into detail about just how far he can reach. "The states delegated limited powers to the federal government and retained every other power; that's the tenth Amendment. The Constitution does not give the President the authority to tell a public

university that is part of the sovereign state of Connecticut how to teach, what to teach, how to conduct its affairs, period. Which is why they try to get us in other ways."

While the Constitution has large implications on what is in the realm of possibility, social movements are now changing the trajectory of what it means to go to college in the future.

Michael Bartone, an education professor and Executive Committee member of the CSU-AAUP, said he is worried that Central is heading in the wrong direction.

"It's not just until it happens to me," he said. "They are currently scrubbing the word 'diversity' from our [CCSU] history. Thinking about the professor in Texas who is facing backlash for what he was teaching, he was being filmed by a student in the middle of class, and he was saying things like, 'That's against the President's law.' There's no such thing."

Bartone isn't the only professor on campus who is concerned about the compromise of values.

Fiona Pearson, a sociology professor at CCSU and Council Representative of CSU-AAUP, said preventative measures start with action.

"Awareness is so important to stay prepared," she said. "Things like paying attention to what's going on around you and being involved are how you start enacting change."

Letter to the Reader

Dear Reader,

I struggle to find the words to describe what a privilege it is to say that we here at The Recorder are not only able, but willing, to carry the burden of keeping our community at Central Connecticut State University informed and protecting the rights that allow us the platform to do just that.

Today, I am not just writing to you as a Co-Editor-in-Chief, not just as a CCSU student, not just as a byproduct of centuries of multicultural history, not just a number or name on a paper, but as someone who is trying to preserve a legacy many generations have fought for.

The Recorder stands apart from larger mainstream media because it lacks the established pillars to rely on during difficult times. When challenges arise for The

Recorder, we focus on reporting them. We

dive right into uncovering the truth, speaking with the people directly affected and provide the context that national outlets may overlook.

Our strength comes from transparency, persistence and a deep connection to the community we serve, right here on campus.

As an organization, it's our mission to protect and enforce the rights protected by the Constitution. As one of, if not the only, occupations protected by those same rights, we don't intend to relinquish them anytime soon.

This semester and for the foreseeable future, our goal is to garner more of a connection with the community that we are writing about. We encourage you to send a letter to the editors as a way of voicing your opinions directly to us so that we can shed light.

Our team of writers are always busy going to events on campus or conducting

interviews with professors, but that doesn't mean we are limited to the writers you see in this edition.

If you have a topic you are passionate about and want to find your voice, The Recorder is a great way to get involved and help facilitate the change you want to see on campus.

Even just you picking up this copy is a tremendous act of involvement as we write these stories and conduct these interviews for you. As readers, you are our number one priority, and we hope to continue supplying you with a CCSU newspaper that you can be proud of.

We have a lot to discuss and much work ahead of us.

Wonderful wishes,
Elijah Hernandez
Co-Editor-In-Cheif



Photo credit Elijah Hernandez; Recorder staff that graduated in the spring

SPORTS

CCSU Hangs on to Tie at Home Against VMI

By Lorenzo Gagliotta
Contributor

The Central Connecticut State Blue Devils not only had to fight torrential rain, but also the Virginia Military Institute Keydets to maintain a 2-2 draw on Saturday, Sept. 20, at CCSU's Soccer Field.

The Blue Devils bounced back following their loss at home on Tuesday, Sept. 9 against the Merrimack Warriors.

CCSU started the game strong, with captain Trevor Rau being a threat on the transition in the attacking third.

A free-flowing passage of play saw midfielder Joey Tata play a ball across the box for forward Santiago Marin Gutierrez to slot it home past the keeper.

With the Blue Devils pushing to grab a second, they were stunned by a set-piece goal, with a header scored by VMI defender Connor Reid.

It took a matter of minutes for Central to respond.

With a free kick in a dangerous position, Marin Gutierrez stepped up to strike it home top corner to take the lead and secure a brace.

CCSU grew and created more chances as the game went on with the Keydets struggling to create opportunities in front of goal.

Early in the second half, the away side made some changes which impacted the game, with goalkeeper Cristian Torres stopping the attacking threat of forward Thimson Duolo.

VMI were pushing for an equaliser and they got their reward, with a lovely delivery by Jesse Lee met with a Duolo header past the keeper to tie the game.

A frantic final few minutes saw two shots hit the crossbar on both ends, with

both sides having to settle for the tie.

Post-match, CCSU head coach David Kelly said that the team showed a lot of heart and character.

"They fought till the very end," he said. "The game opened up a little bit towards the end but an absolutely gutsy performance from us."

He looked at the positives ahead of the next fixture.

"We scored two goals [and] created a lot of chances," he said. "We need to learn how to use our experience to get out of situations.... overall, it was a tremendous effort from our guys."

Marin Gutierrez was announced as the Northeast Conference Rookie of the Week on Monday, Sept. 15, following his stellar performance with two goals scored in the match.



Photo credit Andrew Johnson; Captin Trevor Rau in transition

CCSU Routs Saint Francis in NEC Opener

By Marcus Saunders
Sports Editor



Photo credit Ian Yale; CCSU football team

The Central Connecticut State University Blue Devils had a dominant 31-7 performance against the Saint Francis Red Flash on Sept. 13 at Arute Field. The Red Flash was Central's first Northeast Conference matchup of the season.

CCSU quarterback Brady Olson had a solid game, throwing for 193 yards and tossing two touchdowns. The running back duo of Elijah Howard and Donny Marcus were responsible for all four of Central's touchdowns. Howard scored two receiving touchdowns, and Marcus ran for two on the ground.

Defensive back Christopher Jean was the star on the other side of the ball, securing five tackles, hauling in an interception, forcing a fumble, recovering a fumble on special teams and breaking up two passes.

On CCSU's first drive of the game, they were stopped after four plays and were forced to punt on fourth

down. Saint Francis mishandled the punt, and Jean was able to recover the ball for Central on SFU's 17-yard line. Four plays later, Olson hit Howard on a pass for a 1-yard touchdown to take a 7-0 lead.

After four consecutive punts, Saint Francis quarterback Nick Whitfield Jr. connected on a 71-yard pass that took them all the way to Central's 27-yard line. Running back Jahmil Perryman would eventually rush to the end zone for an 8-yard touchdown simultaneously as the first quarter ended, and SFU would tie the game at seven.

After a quick CCSU three-and-out, the Red Flash started their drive at their 27-yard line and drove the ball down to Central's 40-yard line with the help of a roughing the passer call going their way, and with a brand new first down from the penalty, they were able to get the ball down to the Blue Devils' 18-yard line, but their drive

stalled, and SFU's kicker missed a 32-yard field goal on fourth down with 8:32 remaining in the second quarter.

Late into the second quarter, Central called a timeout with 1:49 remaining. After Saint Francis' punt, the Blue Devils received the ball with 1:40 remaining but decided to be conservative and run out the rest of the time in the first half and go into the locker room with a tie ball game.

On the second drive of the third quarter, the Blue Devils recovered another muffed punt, this time recovered by defensive lineman Shin Tanaka at SFU's 13-yard line. Due to an offensive holding by Howard and a pass that was completed for negative yards, CCSU saw themselves backing up to the Red Flashes' 23-yard line on fourth down and had to attempt a 40-yard field goal, which was missed.

With 10:07 remaining in the third quarter, Jean intercepted Whitfield Jr. on SFU's 35-yard line. Olson was able to complete a 23-yard pass to Howard that ended on the 1-yard line, and Marcus sealed the drive with a 1-yard rushing touchdown to take a 14-7 lead.

Later in the quarter, Olson was once again able to find Howard in the zone and expanded the lead to 21-7 following four stout plays by the defense that included two tackles for loss.

Central kicker Jack Hennessey converted on a 35-yard field goal to make it a 24-7 lead with 12:13 remaining in the game.

Marcus scored his second touchdown of the game with 9:55 remaining, and the last four drives ended with two punts, a turnover on downs by Saint Francis and a kneel to end the game by CCSU.

At the end of the game, Central head coach Adam Lechtenberg expressed how important it was to start the

season 1-0 in conference play.

"We have four or five goals on the team for the year," he said. "One of them is to win our first conference game at home."

Lechtenberg also praised Jean for his performance.

"He's a playmaker," he said. "He's a great kid, he plays hard and he's fast. So we're proud of him."

Jean said that he knows that other teams in the NEC are watching them and hoping that they lose, and they just use it as fuel because they know they have a target on their back and want to turn it into a championship.

Jean explained why being versatile and able to make plays on special teams and defense is important.

"If you show that you can be that guy in different fields, a lot of people are going to understand and have to respect you," he said. "They're going to be like, 'He's that guy we can't



Photo credit Ian Yale; CCSU football team running out of the locker room

NEC Opener

go at.””

Howard described why he and his running back group try to maximize their potential by being effective in the running game and in the passing game.

“[So] they can’t just load the box up,” he said. “We got really good hands, and we’re always going to be open.”

Howard missed the previous game against American International College on Sept. 6 with an injury but said he is now fully healthy and was able to get mental reps while he was sitting out.

After Saint Francis’ only touchdown of the game, CCSU scored 24 points in a row in the second half to seal the win comfortably. They are now on a seven-game home winning streak.

This game marked the last time that they will face each other as NEC and Division I opponents, with SFU making their transition to Division III in 2026. Lechtenberg is 2-1 against the Red Flash as head coach of the Blue Devils.

Jean was named NEC Co-Defensive Player of the Week. Defensive back

Brayden Hall was also recognized as the NEC Special Teams Player of the Week, totaling 77 punt return yards and an average of 15.4 yards per punt return. Howard and Jean were also named NEC Prime Performers. The players were recognized on Monday, Sept. 15.

CCSU is now 2-1 and will try to take down the Merrimack Warriors in their first game of the season outside of Connecticut on Sept. 20 at Duane Stadium.

CCSU SCHEDULE

Women’s Soccer

September 18 – vs. Wagner at 6 PM

September 21 – vs. Howard at 2 PM

Women’s Volleyball

September 19 – vs. Fairfield at 6 PM

September 20 – @ Fordham at 3 PM

Men’s Soccer

September 20 – vs. Binghamton at 4 PM

September 23 – vs. UMass Lowell at 6 PM

Men’s/Women’s Cross Country

September 20 – Ted Owen Invitational at Stanley Quarter Park in New Britain

