

A Central Connecticut State
University Production

THE RECORDER

February 19, 2026

VOLUME 138, ISSUE 3

Central Connecticut State Polytechnic University!?

By Elijah Hernandez
Co-Editor-In-Chief

This July, Central Connecticut State University will submit a proposal to transition to a Research 2 (R2) polytechnic university to expand resources and academic opportunities, according to President Zulma Toro.

Announced at an open forum on Feb. 17, CCSU is not only seeking to strengthen the school's STEM programs and offer more experiential learning, but also to obtain the R2 designation, which would put it on par with institutions such as Southern Connecticut State University.

A polytechnic university differs from a traditional university in that it emphasizes applied learning and immediate



President Toro hears out concerns from the Central student body. Marcus Saunders/The Recorder

employment after graduation. The requirements for an R2 designation include at least \$5 million spent on research and development, as well as at least 20 doctoral research degrees awarded in a single academic year, according to the Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education.

The shift would be felt beyond the Connecticut system. If approved, CCSU would become the only public polytechnic university in New England. During her presentation, Toro cited seven pillars that would serve as the foundation for the change.

With a core focus on the Colleges of Engineering, Science and Technology and the College of Health and Rehabilitation

Sciences, the proposal includes plans to create additional labs to facilitate more opportunities for hands-on learning. Toro repeatedly emphasized during the forum that the College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences will remain central to the university's mission. However, students and faculty alike raised concerns about the potential effects of the change.

Central Workforce, the Innovation Hub, Applied Research, and the Central Talent Development Framework were among the pillars described, reinforcing the idea of workforce readiness after graduation.

One proposal would require a mandatory internship as an additional graduation requirement for every student.

See *POLYTECHNIC* on Page 2

Celebrating the Life Elihu Burritt Led, and How He Can Inspire CCSU Student Today

By Noah Gavin
Staff Writer

The Elihu Burritt Library at Central plans to celebrate the 215th birthday and life of Elihu Burritt on Feb. 25.

Not only will a newly released biography about Burritt debut, but the Elihu Burritt Library will also be designated a Literary Landmark for Burritt's publications and speeches. The library's namesake, Burritt was born in New Britain and was a self-educated linguist, abolitionist, pacifist and international peace advocate.

The symposium aims to explore Burritt's life and legacy and inspire Central students to learn about him and take

lessons from his life. Event organizer Renata Vickrey, head of special collections and university archivist, is excited to welcome New Britain native John Loughery, author of the new biography, "A Radical Vision: The Life and Times of Elihu Burritt, Abolitionist, Pacifist, and Linguist."

"John used a lot of our resources here. We have a lot of primary source documents [from Burritt] at the library," Vickrey said. "He did this new, fresh biography to bring [Burritt] back into the public's conscience."

See *ELIHU* on Page 3

Defending NEC Champions Face New Season with New Faces

By Kyle Zarnoch
Staff Writer

NEW BRITAIN, Conn. — The hardware is framed, the confetti has long since been swept away, and the bus to Auburn, Ala., is a memory. What remains for the Central Connecticut State University baseball program heading into the 2026 season is something more complicated than a championship defense. It is, in many ways, a rebuild in champion's clothing.

Last spring, the Blue Devils went 31-17 overall and 23-7 in Northeast Conference play, claiming the program's ninth NEC tournament championship and punching their ticket to the NCAA Tournament for the ninth time in program history. They faced No. 4 national seed Auburn in front of a crowd of

7,367 at Plainsman Park, which was the largest attendance in stadium's history at the time. The Blue Devils fell 9-5 in the opener and were eliminated by NC State the following day. By any measure, it was a season to remember. By every roster measure, it is a season this year's team will have to work hard to follow.

The departures hit hard and they hit at the top. Aidan Redahan, the NEC Player of the Year and the 2025 NCAA batting average champion at .455, the third player in the NCAA to hit .450 or better since 2011, is gone. So is right-hander Vincent Borghese, who led the staff and ranked first nationally

with six complete games in 2025 according to CCSU Department of Athletics. And so is closer Wyatt Cameron, who earned NEC Tournament MVP honors after pitching in all four tournament games, posting a 1.74 ERA in 10.1 innings with two saves in the championship round, before signing professionally with the Great Falls Voyagers of the Frontier League.

The senior class that carried this program to Auburn included infielders Brady Short, Jackson Haker, Colby Brouillette and Matt Falk, and outfielder Chris Brown, players who formed the spine

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About

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Layout Editor

Ron Marq

Sports Editor

Marcus Saunders

Social Media Editor

Eary Banushi

Copy Editors

Nathalia Blair
Kyle Zarnoch

Assistant Lifestyle Editor

Nicolina Coronis

Staff Writers

Nicholas Dest
Noah Gavin
Ronan Hinckley
Andrew O'Sullivan

Contributors

Mia Lozada
Liam McCusker
Aniya Pouncey

Co-Editors-in-Chief

Marcus Saunders
Elijah Hernandez

Meetings

Mondays at 3:00 P.M.
CCSU Student Center
R107

THE RECORDER OFFICE

CCSU Student Center R107
1615 Stanley Street
New Britain, CT 06050

860 · 832 · 3744
editor@centralrecorder.org
centralrecorder.org

Printed By:
Valley Publishing Company

POLYTECHNIC continued from front

Although the presentation resonated with some attendees, several students from different disciplines spoke in opposition during the open-mic segment.

A CCSU psychology and sociology major spoke at the town hall to share her disapproval of the change.

"I am deeply troubled by the shift toward prioritizing STEM and vocational programs at the expense of the liberal arts," she said. "CCSU has a long history as a public, accessible and liberal arts institution. It is a place where students learn to think critically, to engage with society and to develop skills that go beyond the job market.

These values are not just academic ideals; they are the foundation of a well-rounded education that prepares students to participate meaningfully in the world."

She went on to echo concerns shared by other students. "Initiatives that have been supported for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) have been reduced and eliminated, despite the fact that peer state universities appear to uphold them," she said. "These moves are not just administrative; they are fundamentally changing the character of CCSU and making it less inclusive, less thoughtful and less of the university it's always been."

In her response, Toro denied any regression of DEI initiatives and cited herself as evidence of the university's commitment to diversity.

CCSU's student body is 43% minority and 47% women, according to the university's "At a Glance" report. In contrast, Worcester Polytechnic Institute has a minority population of about 23%, and women make up about 34% of its student body.

From the STEM perspective, students raised concerns about not having enough professors in their programs, as well as a lack of appropriate course options for their majors. Some students voiced support, while others expressed appreciation for their collegiate experience at CCSU.

Toro said the benefits would extend beyond additional campus resources, arguing that the shift would attract more students from across the country and abroad. She added that the move would help improve public perception of the CSCU system by bringing greater prestige.

The transition would not require a complete overhaul of existing infrastructure. Toro said CCSU may be closer to meeting R2 requirements than initially anticipated.

"I was told this morning by the provost, who is working those numbers, that we have been underestimating for many years the amount of money that we spend in research," she said. "Because all the research

that is done by faculty that is paid by the state has not been considered. And that's a lot of money."

Toro, in conjunction with a carefully selected task force, is overseeing the process. The Faculty Senate has pushed for transparency through online records of the task force's meetings and has requested representation on the task force, according to Faculty Senate President Stephen Adair.

"We are just starting the process ... we have a lot of work ahead of us," Toro said.

If the proposal is approved, CCSU would debut as a polytechnic university in the fall 2027 semester.

SCAN FOR OUR LINKS



ELIHU continued from front page

Vickrey believes Burritt was an ideal figure for whom to name the Central Library, as he embodies the power of education and civic engagement.

"[Burritt] was a self-taught man. His father passed away when he was in his teens, and he had to leave school," Vickrey said. "In between blacksmithing, he still studied languages and mathematics and published an exorbitant amount of his thoughts and speeches."

Burritt used his speeches and publications, including his newspaper, to promote world peace and abolitionist ideas. Vickrey believes the lessons from Burritt's life contained in Loughery's book remain valuable to Central students and other readers today.

"[Burritt] came from a very humble beginning; his parents were not well educated, but they instilled humility in their children," Vickrey said. "He never lost sight of educating himself.

So no matter if you are a first- or second-generation student, you can always study and flourish and champion the causes that are most important to you." Vickrey also believes readers will connect with the message behind Burritt's beliefs.

"[Burritt] was a real peace advocate and spokesperson for marginalized communities of the time. He really knew how to reach different groups of people and share the idea of connection," she said. "He was an abolitionist too, and I think we really need that message, a message of peace, for our times."

A descendant of the Burritt family, Sherrod Skinner III, will also attend the event to discuss the dedication of the library's name to Burritt. Vickrey hopes students will learn from his heritage.

"Skinner is going to talk about how [students] can incorporate Burritt's ideas and his work here at the university and in their personal lives," Vickrey said. "The Skinner family is really supportive of the library and everything we do to promote Elihu Burritt and cultivate the ideas he believed in."

The celebration of Burritt's life and the new book will include a reading and book signing by Loughery, speakers from the Central and New Britain communities, and cake.

Another event organizer, Carl Antonucci, director of library services at Central, said he is excited to welcome guests and students.

"We are going to have some birthday cake, we will play an original song written by Dr. Simone Puleo [of the Italian Resource Center at Central], who was inspired by Burritt, and we are going to try to bring in the community," Antonucci said. "The library is the hub for the community."

Antonucci said Central history professor Dr. Robert Wolff has been conducting independent research on Burritt and plans to speak about Burritt's life, particularly the time he spent in the United Kingdom — a topic Wolff traveled there to study further. Antonucci hopes students will learn about local history and the resources available to them at the Elihu Burritt Library by attending the event.

"We hope they gain the knowledge that such a great man once lived in New Britain, right in this area, and get a deeper understanding of his life and how it applies today; lifelong learning is very important," Antonucci said. "Also, just to get an extra reading in [of Burritt's works], because Elihu was all about that. We want students to know that part of their success here is to engage with the written word, and we have a whole library that's full of that."

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THE PITCHFORK!
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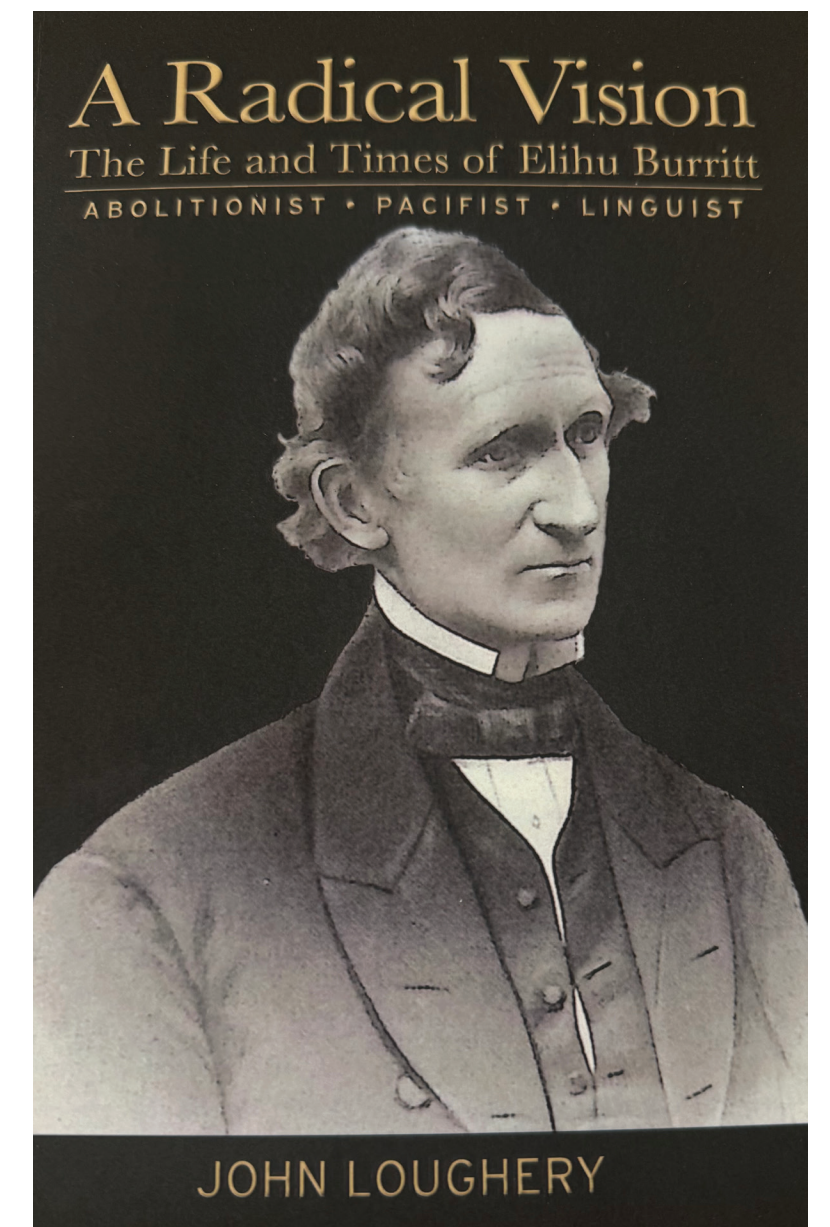
**THIS WEEK'S
CAMPUS EVENTS**

Information Systems Club
Travelers Case Competition Info Session (Virtual/Physical)
THU FEB 19 @ 4:30 PM [EST]
Robert Vance Academic Center (Room 107)

Asian American & Pacific Islander Association
Devil's Den @ 10: Boba and Karaoke
THU FEB 19 at 10:00 PM
Student Center, Semesters Cafe

Hosted by CAN
R&B Paint and Sip
TUE FEB 24 at 6:00 PM
Student Center, CAN Office (Room 203)

Turning Point USA
State of the Union Watch Party
TUE FEB 24 at 8:45 PM
Clocktower Room, Student Center



On Feb. 25, the library will honor Elihu Burritt, a man of many skills / Noah Gavin

Have a story that needs to be told?
Tips or ledes that should be investigated?
Email us at elijahh@my.ccsu.edu
or fill out the contact form on our website: centralrecorder.org

Thriving in Color: Relaxation and Recognizing CCSU's Diverse Community

By Noah Gavin
Staff Writer

Several Central departments, including the Office of Wellness Education, the Center for Africana Studies and Women Involved Now, hosted a wellness awareness event for Black History Month in Alumni Hall at the Student Center on Feb. 17.

The event, named "Thriving in Color," was a celebration of Black History Month and offered wellness activities such as massage chairs, aromatherapy oil-making and lava bead bracelet-making. The event opened its doors and invited all to enjoy the offerings, relax and connect with other students, as well as Black history and culture.

Velma Walters, associate director of student activities and leadership development at Central, took the stage about an hour into the event, sharing inspirational quotes from Black historical figures before introducing panelists to take questions from students in attendance. Walters emphasized that all Central students have the opportunity to find where they fit in the CCSU community. "I hope that students take away from today's event a sense of community," Walters said.

"A sense of belonging and knowing that there are plenty of systems here designed to provide students with support."

The event in Alumni Hall aimed to be inclusive and encourage students to come together and join in the relaxation.

"It's critical to me that everyone [can] come together," Walters said. "It's always important for folks to find their village, and everyone's village looks different. I want everyone to know that there's a place here for everyone on campus."

After playing "Lift Every Voice and Sing," often called the Black national anthem, Walters turned it over to three panelists to answer questions about the event and their departments. The panelists were Kionna Whitehead, a licensed marriage and family therapist; William Fothergill, a licensed professional counselor with Central's Counseling & Student Development; and Alison Burge, coordinator of wellness education. Walters asked the panelists what it means to "thrive, not just survive."

"Thriving is subjective," Whitehead said. "It depends on socioeconomic status,



background and gender, but what it means is that students are not being held back."

Whitehead also encouraged students to use the wellness resources available on campus, especially the importance of coming together as a community at Central.

"We have a lot of groups we run at Student Wellness," Whitehead said. "I think students tend to prefer individual counseling, but these groups help students find like-minded people who may be struggling or are experiencing the same things." Burge believes inclusion is pivotal to success in college, regardless of background. "Students spend four years of their lives here, so it's important for them to feel included, wherever they are

to recognize who is in your corner, because they help you thrive."

Many students attended, citing the aromatherapy oils wafting from Alumni Hall as an enticement, including criminology major DJ Blessings. "I was strolling by after class and it smelled very good here, so I just came in to check it out," Blessings said. "I'm glad they are doing something for Black History Month. Sometimes [students] here just don't show support for different cultures, and it's important that they experience or get a taste of another culture." Marketing major Nargis Meghani is an intern at Central's Center for Africana Studies and represented the department at the event.

"This event is for wellness activities, but also Black History Month and just appreciating Black history," Meghani said. Meghani said she enjoys participating in cultural events like this one with the Center for Africana Studies. "[These events] bring students together and get people to talk to others they might not have ever spoken to," Meghani said. "I think this is really great for just bringing [Central students] together."

Media Board Hosts Author Molly Gaudry to Discuss the Importance of Process

By Nicolina Coronis
Assistant Lifestyle Editor

Award-winning author Molly Gaudry visited CCSU this week to speak with students about the realities of building a writing career, offering candid insight into the writing process that shapes the profession.

Addressing a room of aspiring journalists, English majors and creative writers, Gaudry focused on sharing her personal journey that led her to write books like "Fit Into Me." (pictured on page 5)

The event provided students with a firsthand look at the professional writing world, bridging classroom learning with real-world experience and reinforcing the idea that storytelling, whether in fiction or journalism, requires both creative risk and sustained commitment.

Hosted by The Helix as the kickoff to the Media Board Speaker Series, The Helix, WFCS 107.7 The Edge and The Recorder are collaborating to bring seasoned guests on campus to discuss a range of topics related to the professional landscape.

Gaudry explained the state of her personal life at the time she published each book. Between figuring out who she was as a person and getting the hang of it, she had a book published to mark each phase, which, in a way, provided a physical timeline of her life. Gaudry has a unique writing process that shapes her experience as a writer



"Wind ... writing comes like the wind. I don't write every day. I am not that kind of writer, but I believe that writing comes like the wind, and I think you have to be attentive to yourself and understand when the energy is there, the creativity is there, everything else comes around it," Gaudry said.

Gaudry also offered insight into what helped her land jobs as a writer.

"I was multi-genre, and I have degrees in different genres because I knew that to get a teaching job, I would have to be more competitive than the next person," Gaudry said. "Having publications and having degrees in more genres meant that if it came down to me and a fiction writer for a fiction job, I was more desirable because I could also fill in and teach a poetry class."

The advice shared was personal to Gaudry and her experience but could also serve as lessons for aspiring writers. Sharing and drawing inspiration from other writers' journeys was an important lesson for Gaudry.

"I think with any art form, it's just nice to hear how somebody else does it and how they approach it," she said.

'Boston Blue': Preserving a Legacy of Family And Public Service

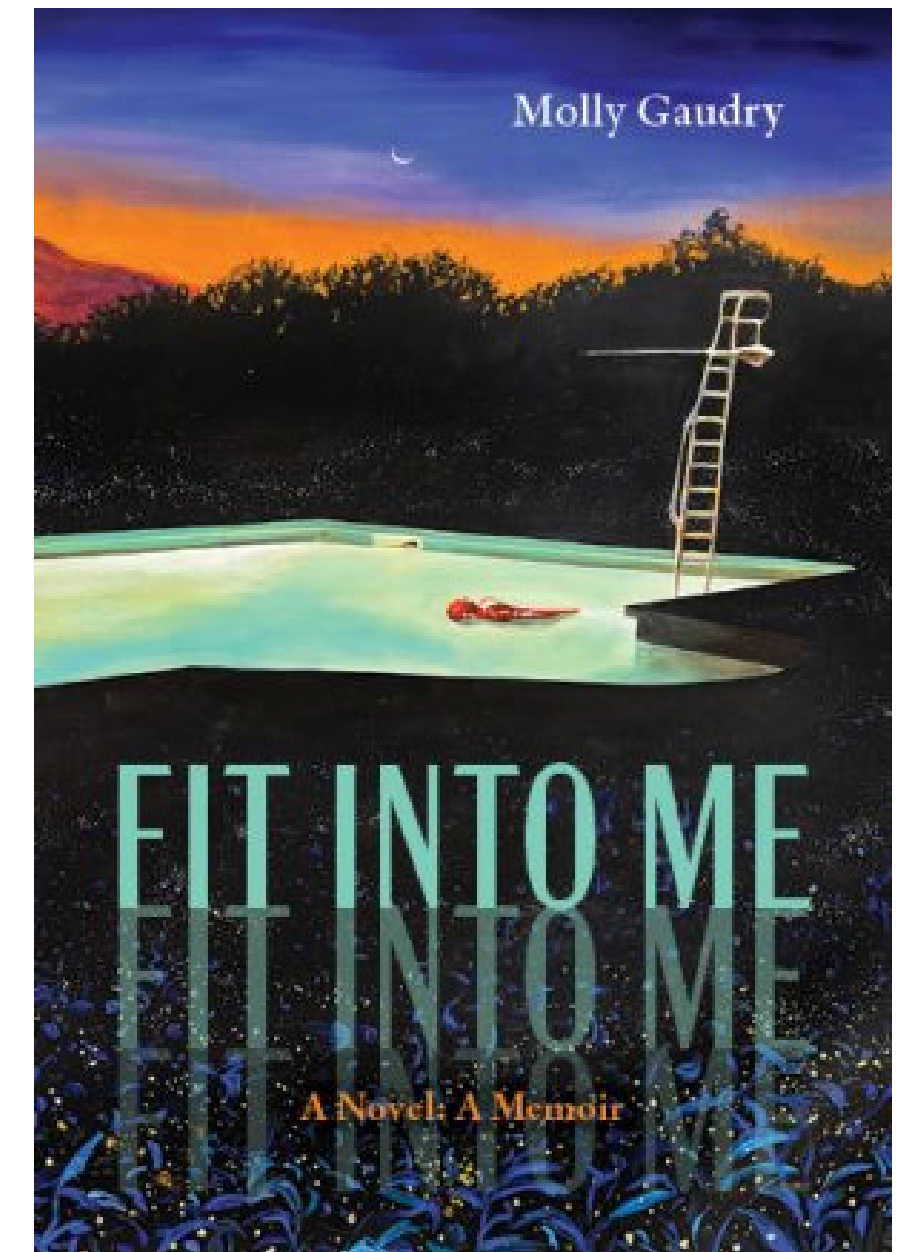
By Liam McCusker
Contributor

BOSTON BLUE

When Blue Bloods came to a conclusion after 14 seasons, many viewers felt a sense of sorrow.

The Reagans, a multi-generational family working in public service, were what kept fans engaged for so long. That's why the new spin-off, Boston Blue, feels like a continuation of Blue Bloods rather than a replacement. Leading the series is Donnie Wahlberg reprising his role as Detective Danny Reagan, who transitions from the New York Police Department to the Boston Police Department.

One of the most significant developments is the long-anticipated relationship between Danny and his former partner, Maria Baez. After years of unspoken feelings while working to solve cases in Blue Bloods, longtime fans feel relieved to see them in a romantic relationship. Though Baez has appeared as a recurring character rather than a series regular, she likely fills the emptiness in Danny's life since the death of his wife, Linda Reagan.



Boston Blue also introduces a new family working in law enforcement. The Silver family, Boston's law enforcement family, works alongside Danny. This includes his new partner, Detective Lena Silver; the Boston district attorney, Mae Silver; Sarah Silver, superintendent of the Boston Police Department; Jonah Silver, on patrol; and the Rev. Edwin Peters.

This strong connection to family, as well as the variety of positions in public service, dedication to justice and personal beliefs, all contribute to the family's routine, which is remarkably similar to Blue Bloods.

Not all transitions, however, have received positive feedback. Sean Reagan, Danny's youngest son, is now portrayed by Mika Amonsén, replacing Andrew Terracino, who played Sean for all 14 seasons of Blue Bloods. While this change has sparked debate, fans are now able to see Sean as a police officer working alongside his father. Connections to Blue Bloods continue. Characters such as Erin Reagan have already appeared, and Henry Reagan, Danny's grandfather, is reportedly set to return in April 2026, reminding fans that the Reagan legacy is a significant part of the series.

Like many longtime fans, I hope to see more characters from Blue Bloods appear on Boston Blue, including Jamie Reagan, Frank Reagan and Jack Reagan, as well as characters such as Sid Gormley and Abigail Baker, who have been part of the Reagans' lives since Season 1 of Blue Bloods. Ultimately, Boston Blue succeeds because it preserves a legacy of family and public service. While it may no longer center on the entire Reagan family in New York, they are represented by the Silvers, who work to make Boston a safer place.

A Captain's Mindset: Fuel, Not Failure

By Aniya Pouncey
Contributor

Abbey Cannon, Lacrosse Captain



Abbey Cannon (2) 'rips the duck' after getting away from two Saint Francis Defenders

NEW BRITAIN, Conn. — Abbey Cannon did not always picture herself leading a Division I lacrosse program. Now, the senior attack serves as a second-year captain for Central Connecticut State University's women's lacrosse team, a role she embraces with confidence and perspective.

A native of New Hampshire, Cannon began playing lacrosse in first grade, initially joining because of the sports-heavy influence throughout her upbringing. What started as a childhood activity quickly became something more structured and meaningful, she said.

"I just stuck with it," Cannon said. "I love the sport. I love having a regimented schedule, and it's brought so many people into my life that I wouldn't have met otherwise."

By eighth grade, she decided she wanted to pursue lacrosse at the collegiate level. She enrolled in a private high school known for its competitive program to increase her recruiting opportunities. Although she did not make varsity until her senior year, Cannon viewed the experience as fuel rather than failure.

Her former junior varsity coach, Mike Coutu, helped shape that mindset. After a disappointing season, he encouraged her to channel frustration into growth.

"You can still use it as fuel," Cannon recalled. "He's the reason I stuck with it."

Cannon eventually earned her varsity spot and continued chasing her goal of playing Division I lacrosse. After spending two years at a school in Florida, she chose to transfer back to New England. Central immediately felt like the right fit.

Years earlier, she had toured the university as a prospective

student and did not believe she was at the level to compete there.

"I didn't think I was at the skill level to play Division I at the time," Cannon said. "So it's cool to look back at that now."

On the field, Cannon plays the "X" position behind the net, a role that allows her to control the offense and create opportunities for teammates. She compares it to being a quarterback, reading the defense and distributing the ball.

"I love to feed," she said. "I like setting plays up. I want to help my teammates score. That's more important to me

than having the goals."

Her leadership style reflects that same team-first mentality. As a captain, Cannon prioritizes being approachable and vocal, whether helping younger players adjust to college lacrosse or offering support off the field.

"I think it's important to be that person people can come to," Cannon said. "Whether it's lacrosse, school or something else."

Balancing athletics and academics requires discipline. Cannon structures her schedule with several online courses to accommodate practices, lifts and travel. She credits CCSU's

Student Athlete Academic Center for helping student-athletes stay organized and accountable.

"The time commitment is huge," Cannon said. "It feels like a full-time job and going to school. But I chose it, and I love it."

It's not just practice and games, Cannon said. Sacrificing early mornings, school breaks, and even holidays is all a part of the commitment.

Even still, looking ahead, Cannon hopes to remain involved in the sport after graduation, potentially as a graduate assistant or collegiate coach.

"Lacrosse has given me so much," she said. "I definitely want to stay in it."

As the Blue Devils continue building momentum this season, Cannon is focused on growth — both individually and as a team.

"I love Central," she said. "I'm really, really excited for what this season holds."

Succumbing to the pressure of what she can't control in her show, she comes to the realization of its ruin while rehearsing in a sanitized farce of it all. The carelessness of her crew and 'handlers' don't aid the situation as they, and in turn, she causes a worldwide socio-economic issue from one of her brand deals. All this having happened, she turns inward for uninterrupted rest before returning, ready to tour. Before then, she delivers an emotional monologuing voice note to her former creative director. Charli didn't want this all to end since she finally felt validated by the rest of the world regardless of her feelings, even if it meant continuing the brat phenomenon at any cost.

However, in finding herself, she knows that she made her mark on the world, made brat her own, and can now give 'brat' a 'coup de grâce' before giving it up completely in this ridiculously tacky version of the brat arena tour. This sums up the very ethos of 'brat': independent, brash, nonchalant, but underneath it all, still caring and insecure. This film was a harsh look at the underlying pitfalls of being a female pop star in today's culture of personality. One must be perfect, infallible, and unproblematic while at the whim of everyone but them.

It even made me reconsider my own field of work, if graphic design and advertising may result in me working on something I'd never want to in my life. Thankfully, the brat tour — and the SWEAT tour — were the opposite of what the film's final scene portrays and showcases what happens when folks leave you alone to your creative decisions: you can take over the world.

12/10, Charli.



NEC continued from front

of a lineup that ranked fourth nationally with a .329 team batting average and averaged 8.7 runs per game.

Head coach Charlie Hickey, who earned his 800th career victory during the NEC tournament run and is in his 26th season as the winningest coach in CCSU history, does not pretend the math is simple. "We have a lot of inexperience that has yet to go out there and play," Hickey said. "A lot of things to work on."

None of that stops the Northeast Conference from recognizing what this program has built. CCSU enters 2026 atop the NEC preseason poll, a nod to a consistency that has produced Conference Championships in five of the last eight years and 20 seasons of 20-plus wins under Hickey's watch. The coach takes that recognition for what he believes it is worth.

"They're meaningless," Hickey said of the preseason rankings. "It wasn't too long ago that we were ranked first and didn't make the conference playoffs. They're gone usually the first week of the season once you play and start to produce. It's a recognition of the consistency that the program's had... along with the Long Island universities and the Wagners and the FDUs, that's where you see the results are usually from, last year's."

Those are the sentiments of a coach who has been here before. What is new in 2026 is the depth of the roster's inexperience and the size of the shoes that need filling. However, not everything has

NEC Coaches are very confident in Central's squad heading into the season / NEC Sports

been stripped bare. Among the players returning is outfielder Gianni Merlonghi, a senior who was part of both the 2023 and 2025 NEC championship teams and who appeared in the Auburn Regional, going 2-for-5 with two runs scored against one of the nation's elite programs. Merlonghi, who batted .378 in 2024 and contributed across a lineup that drove the Blue Devils to back-to-back tournament appearances, spoke this week about what the team is carrying into the new year.

"The team is not content with last year's championship," Merlonghi said. "We have a new team who is looking to repeat as NEC champions." He described the mood inside the program heading into the season's final weeks of preparation as one of urgency mixed with optimism. "Guys have been coming to practice with high energy and ready to work," he said. "As veterans, we have been trying to keep guys motivated with a long season ahead of us. Continuing the winning culture here at

CCSU is a priority for us." Merlonghi also offered a scouting report on what may surprise people about this group. "Our biggest strength is our raw talent," he said. "Although we do not have much all-around experience, the younger guys on our team are projectable." He summed the team up in three words: young, hungry, gritty.

Individually, Merlonghi arrives in 2026 with a specific offensive focus.

"I am personally working on bringing in a lot of runs at the plate," he said. "Taking advantage of runners in scoring position, extra base hits and runs batted in."

Returning outfielder Antonio Ducatelli, who earned All-NEC Second Team honors in 2025 and played a central role in both the NEC tournament and the Auburn Regional, also figures to anchor the veteran presence alongside Merlonghi. Hickey spoke at length about the nature of leadership within

2025 NEC PRESEASON COACHES POLL											
BASEBALL											
1	OSU	7	MERIDYBURST								
2	LIU	8	NEW HAVEN								
3	WAGNER	9	COPPIN STATE								
4	LE MOYNE	10	NORFOLK STATE								
5	FDU	11	DELAWARE STATE								
6	STONEHILL	12	MARYLAND EASTERN SHORE								

the program, specifically, the fact that there are no formal captains, and never have been under his watch.

"In the high school world, just because you're a senior you're elected captain," Hickey said. "In the college game, you see guys that are more ready for that role and accept it. The leaders will take care of themselves, guys who come out and play hard and set an example every day in how to conduct themselves. Those are the people that I want to lead this program."

The same philosophy extends to the mound, where the losses of Cameron and Borghese leave the most significant voids heading into 2026. Hickey said a group of arms will get their opportunity when the Blue Devils open the season in Florida, with the rotation taking shape through competition rather than coronation.

"They're going to get a chance to go out and start the first weekend," Hickey said. "And then it's going to be read and play on, see where they can be successful." We've done it before. We'll do it again." CCSU opens the 2026 campaign with a trip to Florida, where the Blue Devils will play four games in three days before returning north for their home opener against Fairfield. It is a deliberate scheduling choice, one Hickey makes with both weather and program budget in mind.

"We try to manage our budget in a way that's best for our program," he said. "It's something that kids get a little itchy for. But we try to find a place where you can get the weather, and you're also playing a team that's comparable to where I think we are at this time of season."

With only five games before conference play begins, the margin for error is thin. But Hickey pointed out that the 12-team NEC schedule, which spans 11 weekends, provides room for a young team to grow into itself.

His target after the first four conference weekends is to be at or around .500 and building momentum. The goal Merlonghi stated on behalf of his team is more direct: win the NEC tournament and reach another NCAA Regional.

the moment and it's a film review but it's more than brat

By Ron Marq
Layout Editor

On a blustery late January Thursday, my besties and I decided to take the train down to NYC to catch the premiere of yet another hotly anticipated film involving Charli XCX, 'The Moment'. We're used to these pilgrimages since I've seen her live three times. I had to see this film twice to properly digest it. The full title according to a theatrical advert poster reads much like a Fiona Apple album title or one of Charli's various brat variants:

'the moment and it's a movie about brat and charli and a tour but none of it happened but maybe some of it did' The Moment is a

mockumentary style film based on an original idea by Charli XCX making the directorial debut of Aidan Zamiri. This film is a satirical take on the 'brat summer' phenomenon that took place in 2024 and the subsequent arena tour. English pop star Charli XCX stars as a fictitious version of herself grasping at straws attempting to gain creative control over her tour's direction. This film inverts the trope of hating on a bratty rich celebrity who wants their way to having sympathy for her.

Charli excels at playing dumb, she's most likely done it in real life to rid herself of barriers to her goals. Being on top of the world is a newfound feeling for Charli as she's been relatively under the pop radar for quite

some time despite having over a decade of musical industry experience. The aesthetic of the album 'brat' launched her worldwide takeover.

This 'moment' turns into brand deals, influencer promotion, and media appearances that were all shot within the same span of their respective appearances, like her "What's in My Bag?" video with Vogue, or her appearance on The Late Show with Stephen Colbert. This shows an incredible attention to detail and intentionality in making sure Charli captures the reality of her life and the toll that it takes on her body and mental health.

In the film she's vulnerably noted her thinning hair and her lack of skin — and bodily

— elasticity thanks to a cameo from Hartford's own French actress, Arielle Dombasle. This was discovered upon Charli's decision to take a short Ibiza vacation before her tour. More harm than good occurs as she attempts to have some form of control over herself amid the chaos and no one concerned about her opinion let alone her well-being, even with a boost of shallow confidence from Kylie Jenner of Kardashian fame.

The high-profile cast features the likes of actresses like Rosanna Arquette and Julia Fox, or fashion icons like Mel Ottenberg and Hailey Benton Gates.

The interconnected challenges of Hollywood life are also apparent through their

appearances and interactions throughout the film Charli sang in her song '360': "I'm your favorite reference, baby" and this is shown through a scene with a chauffeur who inquiring who Charli is and viewing her music video for her popular song 'Boom Clap' featured in another film, 'The Fault In Our Stars'.

Given her obligations, Charli and her original creative director had a falling out based on their inability to commit to her vision, since she literally never stops working and corporate overreach from her own label conveniently trashes her creative vision and puts it in the hands of a skeezy creative director played by actor Alexander Skarsgård.

Silver Solves the NBA All-Star Game Problem

By Marcus Saunders
Co-Editor-In-Chief

“You obviously don’t want to dig yourself a hole,” Hickey said. “But you want to sort of get out there after the first four weekends where you’re around .500, and then sort of hope that by that time you start to play better and know your team better, and be in a position to make a run later in the year.”

The non-conference slate features dates against Northeastern University and Fairfield University, programs Hickey acknowledged are likely stronger than the typical weekend NEC opponent. Those mid-week contests are planned development opportunities, a chance to expose younger pitchers to high-level competition while protecting the weekend rotation for conference games that carry championship implications.

When asked which conference matchups stand out most, Merlonghi was direct.

“LIU and Wagner are our most anticipated matchups this season,” he said. “We tend to play our best baseball against those competitive teams.”

Long Island University finished first in the NEC in 2025 with a 24-6 conference record and pushed CCSU to a winner-take-all game in the championship final. Wagner has been a perennial contender. Those are the measuring sticks this program knows well.

For the CCSU community, Hickey has a simple message. He knows the cold of February makes the game feel distant, and he knows the bleachers on campus are exposed to the elements. He also knows what happens when the calendar turns.

“The weather’s gonna break at some point,” Hickey said. “Mid-March and April, when we’re going to be out there, come out and see some young kids that hopefully have developed and continue to be successful and carry on the tradition of leading us to another conference championship.”

That tradition, built across nine NEC titles and 26 seasons under Hickey, is the only standard this program operates against. Last year’s Blue Devils left a high bar. This year’s group: young, hungry and gritty, by Merlonghi’s own account, will spend the next four months trying to prove just that.



CCSU's ATHLETIC SCHEDULE

Men's Basketball

FEB 19 vs. Le Moyne at 7 PM
FEB 21 @ Chicago State at 2 PM

Women's Basketball

FEB 19 vs. Le Moyne at 6 PM
FEB 21 @ Chicago State at 1 PM

Women's Swimming & Diving

FEB 19-20 @ NEC Championship

Women's Lacrosse

FEB 21 @ La Salle at 2 PM
FEB 25 vs. Quinnipiac at 3 PM

Softball

FEB 22 vs. Saint Peter's at Noon
FEB 22 vs. Saint Peter's at 2 PM

Since Adam Silver took over as the NBA commissioner in 2014, he hasn't been afraid to try new ideas or break tradition to improve the NBA product, and the 2026 All-Star Game is just another example of that.

Going into the game on Feb. 15, there was no expectation. But for those who decided to watch for the love of the game, they struck gold in what was the best All-Star Sunday since 2020, when everyone played heavy-hearted due to the passing of the legendary Kobe Bryant.

Silver introduced a new format in which three teams played each other once and the top two teams with the best record and point differential played in a final championship game. Two of the teams were made up of solely Americans (USA Stars and USA Stripes), and the third team was made up of players representing countries outside the U.S. (Team World). I think what separated this All-Star Game from others was the sense of pride. Not only were they playing for themselves and their families, but they were also playing for their country's flags on the back of their jerseys.

It also was coincidentally going on during the Winter Olympics, so it was the perfect time to add it.

While fans knew about the format, they still questioned if the players would actually try, but after a couple minutes it became evident that the vibes were different. Three of the four games were high-intensity, down-to-the-wire match-ups



Anthony Edwards earns the 2026 All-Star Game MVP / nba.com

Defense was played, players were frustrated after a loss, fouls were called, free throws were taken, players complained to the referees and we even got some overtime basketball.

Along with representing your country, I think what made the event great was the change to make each game only one 12-minute quarter instead of a full game. While this may sound wacky, it actually ended up being a great idea. Instead of the game dragging for the first three quarters, every game was essentially a fourth quarter, so the players had to play with intensity from the jump.

While every player deserves credit for finally giving the fans what they have been asking for, the majority of it has to go to Victor Wembanyama. After their epic overtime battle in the first game, Anthony Edwards shouted him out for bringing the competitive spirit early. “Wemby [Victor Wembanyama] set the tone,” he said. “He came out playing hard, so it’s hard not to match that.”

Competing in the All-Star Game isn't anything new for Wembanyama. He has expressed many times that he will give it his all in every one he plays in. Just last year in the 2025 All-Star Game, he looked like one of the few players going 100% the entire time. What made it even crazier was that he was diagnosed with blood clots shortly after and did not play for the rest of the season.

The next two games were just as entertaining as, if not more entertaining than, the first one. The second game was highlighted by De'Aaron Fox's

game-winning buzzer-beater for the USA Stripes, and in the third game Kawhi Leonard went full robot mode, dropping 31 points against Team World to send the USA Stripes to the championship game.

The only negative was that the championship was a snooze-fest. Team Stars got their revenge against Team Stripes in a 47-21 beatdown. Team Stripes had to play three games in a row, and it didn't help that it was by far the oldest team of the three, with players like LeBron James (41), Kevin Durant (37) and Leonard (34).

Just like any idea, it did receive some criticism, even from some of the players. Many of them expressed how they wanted the East vs. West format to return but after Sunday, I expect to see the same rules in 2027.

Silver did not find success immediately when he first moved away from the East vs. West format. Since his time as commissioner, there have been three different formats of the All-Star Game (he also brought back East vs. West in 2024), with a lot of trial and error, and it looks like 2026 was the big win the NBA was looking for at a time when it seemed like people cared less and less about All-Star Weekend as the years went by.

NBC announced on Feb. 16 that it was the largest audience for an all-star game since 2011. They averaged 8.8 million viewers between NBC, Peacock and Telemundo (all part of NBCUniversal), and they peaked at nearly 10 million viewers. It was the first time the game was broadcast on NBC since 2002