

# The Recorder

March 6, 2025

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## CCSU Dance Team Defies the Odds at Nationals with Legendary Performance



Photo by @ccsudanceteam Instagram

By James Studley  
Staff Writer

Central Connecticut State University's Dance Team just wrapped up their season, and although they were unable to compete in their final competition due to injuries, the team exceeded expectations, placing seventh at the 2025 UDA College Nationals.

Ava O'Kelley, a freshman on the dance team, spoke about the challenges and triumphs throughout the season.

Their journey wasn't easy. In early August 2024, they travelled to Temple University in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, where they endured four days of 12-hour practices. On the final day, they performed three dances, including their fight song, and earned blue ribbons, O'Kelley recalled.

Once the Fall 2024 semester began, their practice schedule slowed down, but their focus shifted to social media, fundraising, alumni engagement,

clinics, recruiting and costume committee responsibilities, all while continuing to perform at football games, O'Kelley said.

When November rolled around and the football season ended, the team transitioned to performing at men's and women's basketball games. Over the winter break, after students went home for the holidays, their training regimen ramped back up. They held four- to eight-hour-long practices nearly every day leading up to the Battle of the Northeast. Using feedback from that competition, they began their preparations for the UDA College Nationals.

They flew to Florida, where ESPN hosted the competition. The night before competing, a crucial injury forced them to change their routine at the hotel. To adapt to the last-minute changes, O'Kelley said the team held a "parking lot practice."

"[This] was something that

[Head Coach Tessa Paluzzi] prepared us for," O'Kelley said. "[Paluzzi] prepared us to stay focused and locked in."

Excited to represent CCSU, they performed their pom routine, a choreographed dance with pom-poms, on the first day but came up just short of the finals. They used the setback as motivation to perform their hip-hop routine the following day with even more energy and determination.

By the next day, the team was ready to leave everything on the stage. After meeting with their families, they saw they had placed eighth, beating big-names programs like St. John's University and the University of Delaware in the semifinals.

"We were definitely happy to make finals. Just the slightest bit disappointed we didn't place any higher," Ella Heisler, a sophomore on the dance team said. "As

See Dance on Page 7

## CSCU Chancellor Terrence Cheng Responds to 'No Confidence Vote'

By Lucas Amoros-Whittles  
Social Media Editor

A new purchasing card policy was unanimously voted on during the CSCU Board of Regents meeting on Feb. 27.

This came several months after a controversial audit revealed CSCU Chancellor Terrence Cheng misspent state funds.

The Connecticut State Senate had voted "no confidence" in Cheng's leadership

on Thursday, Feb. 6 while schools were coming forward in support of the vote.

The audit revealed that he spent money on dinner expenses and a chauffeur, made purchases without keeping records and had been residing in New York despite being given an allowance to move to a property in Connecticut.

Elle Van Dermark, the president of the Connecticut State Senate, voted no confidence, stating that years of neglected

See Chancellor on Page 2



AI Corridor in Robert C. Vance Academic Center Photo by Maria Sevilla Sola

## Central Unveils Interactive Hologram 'Selina'

By Maria Sevilla Sola  
News Editor

A new hologram, Selina, was revealed to staff during the Spring Kickoff event on Feb 3., which left members in awe.

In an email, George Claffey, the Chief Information Officer, said he hopes the hologram will help students gain knowledge in AI software.

"Students can experiment with Selina by adjusting safety guardrails, adding new subject matter or refining the underlying algorithms," he said

The hologram was designed after a marketing and communications student worker on campus. Claffey said the design of the hologram used a collaboration between Unreal Engine, a software tool often used in games, and Reality Kraft, a studio that worked on films like Star Wars.

"Currently, Selina speaks 37 languages and has been trained in a foundational knowledge of artificial intelligence," he said.

He said that offices across

See Hologram on Page 2

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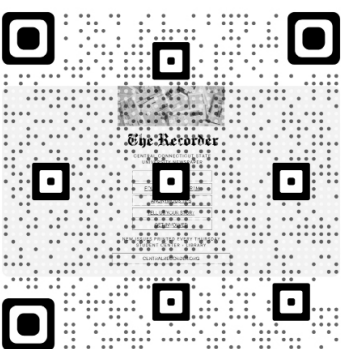
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**SCAN FOR OUR LINKS**

# Chancellor

concerns and a lack of transparency were key factors in the vote, and that it sends a message from the faculty.

“There was also a desire to try to register our frustration and our anger at the lack of transparency, the need for new leadership, and do that earlier rather than later,” Van Dermark said. Cheng responded to the vote in an email sent out to faculty on Friday, Feb. 7, acknowledging that his conduct had brought on the decision. He stated that the system, the Board of Regents and himself would be acting to restore trust, such as overhauling the P-Card system to ensure tighter restrictions on its use.

“I am fully committed to rebuilding trust and confidence in our system and in my lead-

ership among all stakeholders,” Cheng said in the email. “Ultimately, our students are the best investment we can make. Moving forward, our collective focus needs to be on strengthening that investment which will further support their success.”

Van Dermark said that Cheng’s response did not feel authentic and avoided addressing the actual problems, many of which are inside the system.

“The problem is at the top. The problem is the culture at CSCU, it’s not with the lab assistants, or the faculty, or the staff who are using state funds for legitimate purposes, so the apology fell short and the promises for additional protocols seem to miss the mark.”

Van Dermark said.

Christina Murphy, a polit-

ical science major and student senator at Northwestern Community College, said that the lack of funding and cutting of resources and programs for the community colleges juxtaposed with Cheng’s misspending increases the frustrations among faculty and students.

Murphy said that this is an important reason for students to pay attention to administration right now.

“It’s 70%, if not 80% of at least Connecticut state students are working, we’re taxpayers. It’s our money that are going into these systems... some of us are on both sides of it, but that should give us all the more reason to be engaged and understand what’s going on.” Murphy said.

# Hologram

campus have been inputting information to help grow its knowledge in various areas such as programs, degrees, financial aid and more.

“Selina is poised to offer students an unprecedented, hands-on experience in working with emerging AI and holographic technologies,” he said.

Claffey said he hopes the hologram can help create future innovations and that synthetic humans can start coming into more jobs like customer service.

The hologram is located in the Robert C. Vance Academic Center in room 010 in the AI corridor.

## LIFESTYLE

# OPINION: Indie Animation

By Jayden Klaus  
*Lifestyle Editor*

**A**nimation is undergoing a revolution when it comes to independent creators. Indie animation, as it is called, is made by small teams and studios, unlike the bigger and more well-known corporations in the entertainment market..... Over the past few years, there has been an uptick in the amount and popularity of indie animation projects and that is worth celebrating.

Bigger studios, like Disney, Sony and Nickelodeon, often have restrictions enforced upon them in order to conform to the standards of what executives want their movies and TV shows to be and what their intended audience expects them to be. And when an animation project doesn’t live up to the desires of corporate,

or it strays beyond them, the production team may find themselves facing a cancellation.

But indie animation is thriving now, as people are turning away from studios cancelling their favorite shows, in favor of supporting the work and dreams of people just want to tell a great story. Indie animation has the potential to do amazing things and deserves to get more attention and support moving forward.

YouTube is the most popular platform to host indie animation because of its easy accessibility for creators and viewers. Several channels have seen massive success on the platform. Glitch Productions is one of the most notable rising stars right now. The Australian-based studio really took off after the premiere of

the series “Murder Drones,” created by Liam Vickers, in 2021.

Glitch has only grown in popularity with the release of their ongoing show “The Amazing Digital Circus,” created by Gooseworx, and their upcoming show “The Gaslight District,” created by Nick Szopko. They have even partnered up with Dana Terrace, Jonathan Bailey Owen and Zach Marcus from “The Owl House” for the studio’s first 2D animated show, the upcoming “The Knights of Guinevere.” Tracy J. Butler’s webcomic “Lackadaisy” received an animated pilot in 2023, and following widespread acclaim, it is being made into a series by the studio Iron Circus Animation.

Aside from the bigger names, there are plenty of

smaller channels and creators making animation projects on their own. DeepBlue-Ink recently came out with the five-episode mini-series “Deep Space Discounts” with plans for a second season. INUbis’s animations based on characters from the video “Poppy Playtime” are fluid and adorable, coming from an amazing collaborative effort with other creators. Joshua Palmer’s “Monkey Wrench,” hosted on his channel Zeurel, is so fun and high-quality, it feels insane that it’s not being aired on TV. All of these videos are contributing to a new golden age of animation that is wonderful to see.

The popularity of indie projects has even garnered attention from bigger companies and given them more attention and opportunities.

See *Indie* on Page 3

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Tips or ledes that should be investigated?  
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# Students Showcase Their Singing at ‘CANs Got Talent’



MJ#1

Photo by Jayden Klaus



Malachi Sor

Photo by Jayden Klaus

**By Jayden Klaus**  
*Lifestyle Editor*

Central Connecticut State University held a talent show, CANs Got Talent, on Feb. 21 to showcase students' musical abilities.

Hosted by the Central Activities Network, auditions for the talent show were held on Feb. 7. The selected competitors then had two weeks to hone their craft for a chance at winning prizes, with first-place having the chance to do the opening performance at the 2025 Spring Concert on April 25.

CANs Got Talent was held in Welte Hall with free admission. Attendees were entered into a raffle that took place after the show and concessions were available during the intermission.

The show consisted of nine acts, starting with Erik Jenson, a guitarist and singer. He performed "If Only" by Queens of the Stone Age on bass guitar, then switched to electric guitar to play "Say It Ain't So" by Weezer. Jenson's perfor-

mance was engaging and very well received by the audience, eliciting lots of cheers.

Next was Mary Stefano, another guitarist and singer. Her first song was "Once Upon a December" from the animated movie "Anastasia." She then performed Daniel Caesar's "Best Part" to an uproarious applause from the audience.

The next performers, rap duo Raj and TJ, were highly anticipated by the audience, with many people cheering as they took the stage. They performed "Understand" by BoyWithUke and "Little Rockstar" by V8.

The last act in the first half of the show was guitarist John Ahlquist. On electric guitar, he played a medley of Metallica songs back-to-back including "For Whom The Bell Tolls," "Ride The Lightning" and "Master of Puppets."

After intermission, the next performer was Jaedin Latham. He did freestyle rap, rapping about the show, Central and his pink Kirby bag. He was very popular with the audience

for his engaging and upbeat singing.

Malachi Sor was next, on acoustic guitar. He played a soft, sweet rendition of "How Deep is Your Love" by the Bee Gees and then "Can You Feel the Love Tonight?" from "The Lion King." Many people began waving their phone flashlights to show their support.

The next person was Maurice Joyner, with the stage name of, MJ #1. He performed rap songs that he himself had made including "Summertime" and "Damn." MJ #1 engaged heavily with the audience, thanking them for coming to see CANs Got Talent, doing a call and response song and shouting out his SoundCloud to encourage people to listen to his music.

Aaron Scott was the penultimate performer of the night. He sang "Shallow" by Bradley Cooper and Lady Gaga and "I've Got Nothing" by Whitney Houston. Scott performed with a rich falsetto that sent the audience into an excit-

ed frenzy of whooping and swooning. At the prompting of the show organizers, he did one last song, singing "Before I Let Go" by Maze a cappella with the audience clapping along to the beat.

The final performance of the evening was student band, Third Story Window, comprised of singer Alexa Tamburrino, drummer Elliot Lewis and Ted Murphy, Colby Commune and Jackson Sloan all on guitar. They performed "Just a Girl" by No Doubt.

After the attendee raffle, the CAN e-board announced their decision on the top three winning acts. Third-place went to Latham, Third Story Window came in second-place and the first-place winner was Scott, to the immense excitement of the audience and to his shock, he said.

"I had a Beyoncé at the Grammys moment," Scott said to the audience. Nevertheless, he extended his congratulations and thanks to all of the other people who performed.

At the end of the show,

the CAN e-board announced that the artist selected for the spring concert would be Cash Cobain. The news was officially announced the next day on CAN's Instagram, with more details to come.

Attendee Alex Dubois said the show was very fun to watch and she liked hearing everyone's displays of their talents. She said one of her favorite performers was Stefano.

"Her voice was pretty," Dubois said. "Especially in the second song. It was really beautiful."

Taylor Doyle, a student at Central, said it was great to see a wide variety of talents and the vibes of the show were high. She said she was impressed with the range of genres people performed in and there should be more opportunities like this in the future.

"It's always exciting to celebrate the talent we have on campus," Doyle said.

## Indie

"The Amazing Digital Circus" has been made available for viewing on Netflix as a result of how widespread it has gotten. Vivienne Medrano, who created "Hazbin Hotel," had initially planned for

her series to be on YouTube before it was picked up by A24 and streamed on Amazon Prime. This has allowed for more attention on Medrano's work, including her other indie show, "Helluva Boss."

Despite the popularity of these indie animation shows, it can be difficult for them to

be produced, as they do not have the support big studios do. Most of them have to rely on monetary support from fan donations, merchandise sales and any YouTube ad venue. It can also take a long time for episodes to come out, leading to frustrating hiatuses.

All of these works are worth

supporting, though. They show that great animation persists, in spite of interference from big studios, and there are passionate people with stories to tell through an often-underappreciated medium. Even if you can't offer financial support, watch these indie shows, and share them with others.

Give them the attention they deserve. Indie animation is the future and I can't wait to see what it has in store.

# Find Focus at this Cozy Local Coffee Shop



Photo by Yvonna Rodriguez

By Yvonna Rodriguez  
Staff Writer

After a long, daunting day of classes, the last thing some students want to do is stay on campus and do more homework, but with little time to sacrifice, this often seems like the only option.

Provision State Coffee, located about ten minutes from Central's campus in Berlin, offers the perfect spot to not only do homework, but also to connect with friends while getting a change of scenery from typical study spots.

The cafe offers a cozy and quiet environment, even during peak hours, allowing one to be able to focus on whatever task they have at hand with minimal distractions. There is a spacious layout featuring plenty of comfortable spots for studying and productivity.

A variety of drinks and food are offered at an af-

fordable price for students. With a seasonal and signature menu, customers can try something new or reorder a favorite item.

Their honey oat latte, featured on their signature drinks menu, is a perfect choice for someone who wants a simple coffee with a different flavor, while still maintaining that signature coffee taste. The latte, which comes hot or iced, is a combination of two shots of espresso, local honey and oat milk.

A variety of other lattes, americanos and teas can also be ordered. Their menu also includes comfort breakfast items such as bagels and sandwiches.

Provision State Coffee is open Monday through Wednesday 7 a.m. to 2 p.m., Thursday through Friday 7 a.m. to 5 p.m., Saturday 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. and Sunday 8 a.m. to 1 p.m.

## OPINION: Experiencing the 2024 Presidential Election from England

By Maria Sevilla Sola  
News Editor

I studied in Hatfield, England during the fall 2024 semester and witnessed the presidential election from afar. While I was away, I learned a lot from the people and their views of the United States.

The experience of being away was hard because I had never been on a trip without familiar faces for that long. This showed me how different life is in another country and that many people there felt negatively toward American politics.

While I was away, I took a Global News class which focused on politics and held discussions in the beginning of the class. I listened to students talk about their opinions of the presidential candidates, mainly comparing President Donald Trump to their former Prime Minister, Boris Johnson.

They talked about how they felt the U.S. is regressing in women's rights and that they felt Trump should not have been allowed to run after the Jan. 6 riot. Classmates also said that a lot of people might vote for Kamala Har-

ris to disallow Trump from being president rather than wanting her in office for her views.

Many students explained the news in Hatfield didn't always capture American politics until Trump ran again. They said his controversial views and statements were typically reported in the news while Harris wasn't really reported at all, unless she said something unusual.

While I was on my exchange, I learned that some people felt American politics were letting down society and compared it to some of their own

governments and past prime ministers.

In some instances, I even faced bullying and passive aggressive comments after the elections. While working on projects with some classmates I was outcast for being American and, when presentations were made about the U.S., students would stare at me if they said something derogatory.

Overall, my experience in my exchange went well until the elections came, and the decisions made were blamed on me.

## MARCH Campus Events

Coffee House w/ Live Music, Mar. 7,  
7:00 pm  
Constitution Room, Memorial Hall

BSU Annual Gala, Mar. 7  
Alumni Hall

Bridges Art Exhibition, Mar. 3 - Apr.  
11  
Gallery 66 & CCSU



Fei Fei Young with her traditional erhu instrument Photo by Elijah Hernandez



Cultural table display at the celebration Photo by Elijah Hernandez

## Central Hosts American Singer-Songwriter Craig Finn

By Elijah Hernandez  
Staff Writer

The sound of guitar strings reverberated through Torp Theatre at Central as American singer-songwriter Craig Finn performed on Feb. 19.

The concert melded with a question-and-answer session, which allowed those who weren't familiar with Finn to get to know the human behind the art, while those who knew him got to dig deeper and ask how he became the artist he is today.

A full house got to indulge in an evening of musical storytelling that detailed the American experience.

Finn said at the event that music is an outlet that lets him transform his emotions into something that transcends spoken words.

Josh Grden, a resident of Springfield, Massachusetts, said he traveled down to Central because Finn's music speaks to him in a very personal way.

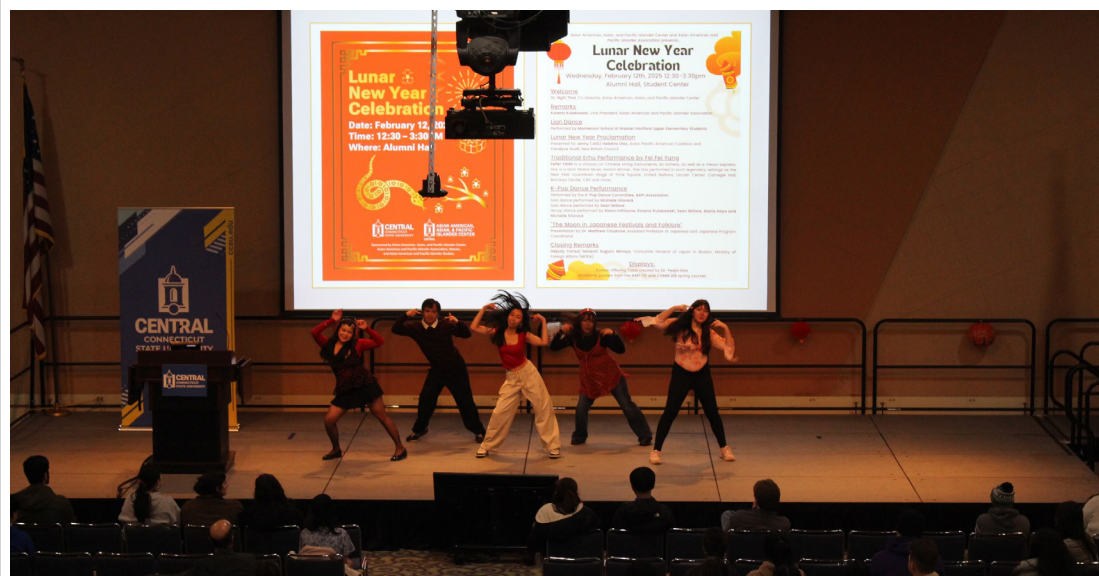
"I've been a fan of his for well over 20 years now and the reason being because Craig takes a deep and interesting look at the trauma and struggle of an American," Grden said. "The real, authentic passion is comforting because I know it's coming from his heart. For him to share his struggles going through life makes it feel as if he understands me."

While some in the crowd have been fans of Finn for decades, others were discovering him for the first time. Central student Nathaniel Ruiz, 18, said he has great admiration for the amount of vulnerability Finn showcased.

"I had no clue who he was before I found out about him showing up to CCSU, but to hear him live changes my perspective of him because it takes a lot to tell people what you've been through," Ruiz said. "He explained his path when he writes his songs, and he takes pride in that creative experience. He had some bad things happen in his life, but he found a way to turn his negatives into something positive."

Central student Emmanuel Carter, 20, said he resonates with Finn's appreciation for the art.

"Music is a part of life; the type of music you listen to is not only a reflection, but a representation of the person you want to be," Carter said. "When I'm driving, I'm listening to music, when I'm walking to class I'm listening to music. Whenever I get the chance, I have an AirPods in. For him to show that the music he is creating means something more to him than just a job, makes me acknowledge his excellence."



Students perform on stage in Alumni Hall Photo by Elijah Hernandez

## AAAPI Event Welcomes the Year of the Snake

By Elijah Hernandez, Staff Writer

Central's Asian American and Pacific Islander Studies Program hosted a whimsical celebration in the Student Center on Feb. 12 to usher in the 2025 Lunar New Year, the Year of the Snake.

The Lunar New Year is celebrated on the first new moon of the year and is based on the traditional Chinese calendar. The celebrations are a time of bringing good fortune for the year ahead and special moments are to be made with family and loved ones.

Dr. Nghi Thai, Co-Director of the Asian American, Asian, and Pacific Islander Center, said this holiday holds a great deal of importance for her.

"As a Vietnamese American, the Lunar New Year, or Tet, is the most significant holiday for me. I received red envelopes while growing up and other traditions that I follow include cleaning the home, preparing different fruits and flowers as an offering, and wearing red and/or new clothes for the Lunar New Year," Thai said. "Representation beyond the home shows that we matter in a community, whether at the university or the greater community. We all become further enriched by these experiences and opportunities for education and cultural exchange."

The serene, mystic snake symbol was at the forefront of the festivities, among other traditions known within the Sinosphere region. It is said that the snake will bestow qualities of wisdom and versatility to those born during any Year of the Snake, according to Chinese folklore.

Deputy Consul General Suguru Minoya from the Consulate General of Japan in Boston and New Britain Alderwoman Candyce Scott came to show their support alongside attendees.

Julie Kim, Co-Director of AAAPI, said that events such as the campus Lunar New Year celebration emphasize the weight and rarity behind sharing a larger part of

oneself.

"Members of minority groups often share their unique cultural practices and heritage within their own communities but are frequently pressured to assimilate into the dominant culture, rather than holding on to their traditions and customs," Kim said. "I think cultural events that blend celebration and education are important not only to highlight the uniqueness of each culture, but also to break down misunderstandings of minority groups and, ultimately, to build a more diverse and inclusive community for all."

Kim said that there is a nuanced appreciation for cultures outside of one's own that can only be gained if they are willing to challenge stereotypes and prejudice, and to appreciate the diversity that shapes the world.

Students from Montessori School of Greater Hartford performed a ferocious lion dance, and Fei Fei Yang, dual Global Music award winner, played alluring traditional Chinese ballads on the erhu, a two-stringed bowed musical instrument.

AAAPI's very own K-Pop group also had a number during the event and Central student Sean Millare said their performance was a special way to reach the community.

"The creation of the group was kind of spontaneous as three of us just decided to do a dance at the end of the semester but it's something that we can bond over," Millare said. "It was a little nerve-wracking to be up on the stage, but when I got up there, I toned out the nerves and we rocked out."

# Women's Basketball Defeats Wagner on Senior Day, Clinches Postseason Home Game



Photo by Dan Heary

By Eary Banushi  
Sports Editor

Saturday was Senior Day for the Central Connecticut State women's basketball team, and the team's three seniors—guards Belle Lanpher and Amaya Williams, and forward Meghan Kenefick—all showed out in their last-ever regular season home game against the Wagner Seahawks. The trio combined for 39 points, helping the Blue Devils earn a 76-65 win that clinched a Northeast Conference Tournament home game—the team's first since 2015.

Interim Head Coach Kristin Caruso spoke on the importance of the win on the team's chances going into the conference tournament.

"[I'm] super proud of my

whole team," Caruso said. "We came together and got it done today, and that's what we needed to do. We're going to have a home game now [in the NEC Tournament] ... We could possibly have two home games. We just got to get our job done and then we can look forward to the tournament."

Lanpher, who has been with the program for the past five years, was honored prior to the start of the game alongside Williams and Kenefick. She said she was happy to be recognized, but that her focus was solely on securing home court advantage in the upcoming tournament.

"It's nice to be celebrated after being here for so long," Lanpher said, "but we were just locked in on wanting to

win, to get the home game in the playoffs because we don't want to go somewhere else. We want to play on our home floor. This is where we have the energy. This is where we have the fans, so it was just really important for us to do that."

Kenefick, who has been with the Blue Devils for the last four years, agreed with Lanpher, adding that winning on Senior Day was "bittersweet."

"[We're a] more competitive group, the entire team, but the seniors especially," Kenefick said. "It's Senior Day. That's great, but we just wanted to go out there and get a win, and we knew how important this game was for the standings."

Caruso spoke on her senior players, praising their leader-

ship and contributions to the team.

"I couldn't ask for better seniors," Caruso said. "They've stepped up and they've led us the whole way, and I couldn't be more happy for them. All three stepped up tonight."

Central had five players score in double figures during the game. Lanpher led the way, scoring 17 points and dishing out six assists, followed by freshman guard Dagny Slomack with 16 points on 4-of-6 shooting from 3-point range. Kenefick had 12 points and nine rebounds, while junior forward Lucia Noin had a double-double with 11 points and a game-high 10 rebounds. Closing it out was Williams with 10 points and four assists.

The first half of the game was closely contested with both sides trading the lead five times and neither able to build a lead larger than seven. A 3-point shot by Noin gave the Blue Devils a 24-17 lead early in the second quarter before the Seahawks embarked on a 13-0 run that put them up 30-24 with 4:24 left in the half. Over the final four minutes, Central went on a 3-point barrage, going 4 of 4 from deep, the last of which was a buzzer-beating shot by Kenefick that gave the Blue Devils a 40-39 lead going into halftime.

With 2:37 left to play in the half, Central was down seven,

forcing Caruso to call a timeout and regroup her troops. Following the break, the Blue Devils went on an 11-3 run, retaking the lead and irrevocably shifting the momentum of the game. She said she told her players to "Relax" during the timeout.

"I think [Wagner] were big, and a lot of teams are bigger than us, which hurts us a little bit defending them," Caruso said. "But they couldn't guard us, and we knew they couldn't guard us. We just had to relax and take better shots and make better cuts ... They know this is March Madness. It's time to play."

The third quarter began with five lead changes in just the first three minutes. The Seahawks managed to take a five-point lead over the Blue Devils at the 6:20 mark before Central went on a 15-2 run to close out the period, taking a 59-51 lead into the final 10 minutes.

From there, the match was never close again. The Seahawks collapsed in the fourth quarter, and the Blue Devils took the largest lead of the game, going up 18 at 76-58 with 2:38 left. With the game settled, Lanpher, Williams and Kenefick headed to the bench for the last time at home in the regular season of their college careers. The contest ended with a final score of 76-65.

With the victory, the Blue Devils improved their record

See *Basketball* on Page 8



Interim Head Coach Kristin Caruso during Saturday's 76-65 win over Wagner

Photo by Dan Heary



Photo by Dan Heary

# Darin Smith Jr. wins Rookie of the Week, Devin Haid named Prime Performer



Darin Smith Jr. dunking against Stonehill on Saturday, Feb. 22

Photo by Dan Heary

By Marcus Saunders  
Staff Writer

Central Connecticut State University forward Darin Smith Jr. was named the Northeast Conference/Atlantic Tomorrow's Office Rookie of the Week on Monday. He is now tied for the most times receiving the honor this season with four.

Last week, Smith Jr. averaged 9.5 points and 5.5 rebounds while shooting 40% from beyond the arc in two wins against the Le Moyne Dolphins and the Wagner Seahawks. He helped the Blue Devils improve their winning streak to 12, which is now the longest active winning streak in Division I men's basketball.

Smith Jr. scored seven points and grabbed four rebounds in 22 minutes against Le Moyne on Thursday at Detrick Gymnasium. In the last game of the regular season at Wagner on Saturday, he led all bench scorers with 12 points, grabbed seven rebounds, shot 60% from the field and made his only three-point attempt.

Smith Jr. has been a key contributor off the bench in his first year, leading the NEC in three-point field goal percentage, shooting 45.2%. He also averaged 7.1 points, three rebounds and shot 51.4% from the field.

Also recognized on Monday was junior guard Devin Haid, who was included in the NEC's Prime Performers list. Last week, he averaged 16.5 points, 6.5 rebounds and three assists per game. He also shot 54.2% from the field and 44.4% from beyond the arc.

CCSU will begin its road to an NEC Championship with a first-round matchup against Le Moyne on Wednesday, March 5 at Detrick Gymnasium. The Blue Devils swept the season series against the Dolphins, going 2-0 and winning by an average margin of 16 points. As the top seed in the conference, the Blue Devils will have homecourt advantage throughout the tournament, provided they advance.

## Dance

the announcements went on, we noticed that two teams, both with championships in their recent histories, weren't called, meaning we had beat them. This was an absolute shock and dissipated any underlying disappointment we did have."

The team was thrilled for the chance to perform again on an even bigger stage on the final day of Nationals.

On competition day, the team woke up ready to give it their all. After reviewing their reasons for being there, O'Kelley said, they ran out onto a stage nearly twice the size of the previous night's. Nothing was going to stop them from delivering

their best performance.

When the results were announced that night, O'Kelley said the team was ecstatic to learn that they had not only placed, but had jumped from eighth to seventh place.

Paluzzi said that the team saw tremendous improvement throughout the season.

"It hasn't been about the placement for us," Paluzzi said. "The amount of work to compass everything we've done and the amount of progress has been insane and almost unheard of."



Photo by @ccsudanceteam Instagram

## Basketball

in conference play to 9-6 and 10-18 overall. Caruso, who took over as interim head coach of the women's basketball team three games into conference play, replacing Way Veney, has led the team to an 8-5 record, with Central winning four of its last five games. With the team's recent success, some have speculated that Caruso could be named the permanent head coach, despite the university not making an official announcement regarding Veney's departure.

When asked about the possibility, Caruso downplayed the speculation.

"No. I'm taking it one day at a time, one game at a time, one quarter at a time," Caruso said. "All I'm concentrated on is our kids and finishing out as best as we can."

The Blue Devils will hit the road for their final game before the NEC Championship, traveling south to take on the Long Island University Sharks on Thursday, March 6, at 7 p.m. Central's seed for the tournament is yet to be determined, and the Blue Devils can still finish in second, third or fourth place based on the final results around the league.

## Blue Devils Subdue Le Moyne to Clinch NEC Regular Season Title



Photo by Tyus Phengkaen

By Ari Kinder  
Staff Writer

"It's on us as a staff," Head Coach Patrick Sellers said. "We chose to guard their ball screens differently, and they got a lot of open threes and into a rhythm."

The team wasn't willing to give up. According to Sellers, before the coaches walked into the locker room, the players were already discussing adjustments on both ends of the floor, determined to find a way back into the game.

"Jayden Brown said, 'Coach, we have to switch our calls,' and he was right," Sellers said. "They were in the locker room for two or three minutes before us, discussing what to do offensively and defensively. That's the beauty of having older guys."

Despite the Dolphins' offensive surge, the Blue Devils fought to stay within striking distance, closing the gap to 43-37 by halftime. Junior

guard Devin Haid, who finished with 18 points, and Ostrowsky, who added nine points and five steals, brought relentless energy. Their defensive presence—jumping passing lanes, grabbing long rebounds and forcing turnovers—kept Central in the contest.

Being battle-tested is something the Blue Devils embrace. Even when things looked bad, Haid said they put their heads down, locked in and played hard.

"Just working hard and never giving up," Haid said. "We were down a lot this game, so the biggest thing was never giving up—just fighting through it."

Ostrowsky emphasized the team's defensive effort.

"Team defense—everyone in the gap," Ostrowsky said. "When everyone's in the gap, it's hard to drive and hard to get a flow on offense."

The Blue Devils came out of the locker room with a

renewed intensity, crashing the boards and playing suffocating defense that forced the Dolphins to commit multiple shot-clock violations. The second half turned into a physical battle, especially in the paint. With senior forward Abdul Momoh down low and senior forward Jayden Brown stretching the floor and hitting shots, the physicality aspect of the second half became an advantage for the Blue Devils who started dominating the game.

Momoh, who contributed 13 points, five rebounds and three blocks, embraced the physicality.

"My coaches and teammates keep me levelheaded," Momoh said. "It's not going to go my way every night. It's my job to just play through it and not let it get to my head."

Fueled by their second-half surge, the Blue Devils completed the comeback and won 84-75, earning them their 11th victory in a row and



## CCSU SCHEDULE

### Softball

March 7 – @ Sacred Heart  
March 7 – @ Yale  
March 8 – @ Sacred Heart  
March 8 – @ Yale  
March 9 – @ Maine  
March 11 – vs. Fairfield

### Baseball

March 7 – @ LIU  
March 8 – @ LIU  
March 9 – @ LIU  
March 11 – @ Quinnipiac  
March 14 – vs. FDU

### Men's Basketball

March 8 – NEC Tournament Semifinal (pending quarterfinal result)  
March 11 – NEC Tournament Final (pending semifinal result)

### Women's Basketball

March 6 – @ LIU  
March 10 – NEC Tournament Quarterfinal  
March 13 – NEC Tournament Semifinal

### Women's Lacrosse

March 9 – vs. Iona

### Men's Track and Field

March 8 – @ IC4A/ECAC Championships  
March 9 – @ IC4A/ECAC Championships  
March 14 – @ NCAA Championship  
March 15 – @ NCAA Championship

### Women's Track and Field

March 8 – @ IC4A/ECAC Championships  
March 9 – @ IC4A/ECAC Championships  
March 14 – @ NCAA Championship  
March 15 – @ NCAA Championship

### Women's Swimming and Diving

March 11 – @ NCAA Diving Zone A  
March 12 – @ NCAA Diving Zone A  
March 13 – @ NCAA Diving Zone A  
March 13 – @ CSCAA National Championship  
March 14 – @ NCAA Diving Zone A  
March 14 – @ CSCAA National Championship

improving Central's record in conference play to 13-2, 22-6 overall. The result also clinched the regular season league title for the Blue Devils, meaning the team will play all of its conference tournament games at home.

Men's hoops will head to

Staten Island for their final regular-season game on Saturday, March 1, when they take on the Wagner Seahawks at Spiro Sports Center.