

# QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

Issue No. 6, Fall 2023



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CONNECTICUT  
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INITIATIVE



## Fall Edition

**This Issue's Focus:**

Higher Education

Supports for Student Parents

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## Message from Our Network

**Chief Executive Officer (CEO), G. Duncan Harris, Ed.D.**

*CT State Community College, Capital Campus*

“The motto of the Connecticut Fatherhood initiative is “Teach, Love and Inspire”. In Higher Education, we teach and try to inspire a love of self and continuous learning. I am pleased to partner in work being done in education and across other systems in this State to help men who have struggled to achieve academic goals, to face down predictable stressors that get in their way. As a father of three, that juggled post-secondary graduate education and fatherhood at the same time, I can relate to our students and do all I can to support their unique needs.”

CT State Community College, Capital Campus,  
G. Duncan Harris, E.D., Chief Executive Officer (CEO)

## Higher Education

*It is September, and BACK TO SCHOOL!*

This Fall Edition focuses on CFI partners in Higher Education. Completing a post-secondary degree, whether an Associate, Bachelor's, Master's, or Ph.D., is the most common route to finding careers with specialized skill requirements and increased earning potential.

Helping men in fathering roles move up the education ladder improves outcomes for the whole family. Even so, it is a challenging climb for vulnerable adult learners with children in tow. There are good reasons for parents to pursue post-secondary education and multiple challenges to face. This Issue highlights people and programs in Connecticut's Higher Education system working to help families survive— so parents can concentrate on making the grade. And it is worth every effort!!

*"Students with a two-year degree are more likely to find a job and earn more than their peers with just a high school education. However, many find balancing work, studies, and family responsibilities impossible. This barrier is compounded when one has a low income, doesn't have a family history of secondary education, and lacks social capital and a network of financial and experiential knowledge and resources. Most students who start at a community college do not complete a degree. The reasons are many, but a lack of academic skills is often not the primary reason. Lack of childcare, transportation, or finances often prevent students from reaching their goal. Some students lack even basic needs such as housing and food."*

**Carl Guerriere, Director of the Equity Center at Connecticut State Community College, Capital Campus**

Community colleges and two-year degree programs are critical points of access to the bachelor's degree for people on the margins. Economic and social service organizations have promoted the value of a 2-year college degree to move people out of poverty into life-sustaining employment for decades. In recent years, especially post-COVID, there has been increased emphasis on strengthening responsiveness to students' basic needs and streamlining their path to a certificate, associate, or bachelor's degree.

Successful educational systems recognize that many adult learners are parents facing challenges that necessitate specialized support.

In 2020, The Hope Center for College, Community, and Justice conducted a national study of student/parents— about one-fifth of the total undergraduate student population. The study confirms Mr. Guerriere's experience. Students supporting families require the same flexible options that other adult learners need, yet they face unique stress that negatively impacts their achievement outcomes. In the Hope study:

- 63% of respondents missed one or more classes due to a lack of childcare,
- 59% were unaware of institutional policies regarding children in the class.
- 52% of student-parents leave school after Six years without a degree, compared to 32% of non-parenting students.

## Did You Know...

- People with bachelor's degrees earn about 65% more per week than those with just a high school diploma.
- Unemployment among high school graduates is almost twice as high as that of college graduates.
- College education can help students improve job security by developing a more comprehensive range of skills, enabling access to varied career opportunities and job prospects.
- College graduates are more likely to work in jobs with employer-sponsored health insurance, retirement and investment plans, travel opportunities, and other compensation beyond wages and salary.

- The benefits of earning a degree extend to the next generation. A college education is an investment in the learner's whole family. Families of college graduates are better off economically and socially. The children of college graduates are more likely to pursue higher education.
- There is undeniable value in completing a four-year degree in terms of prospects for sustained employment. Individuals with only some college or even an associate's degree still had nearly twice the unemployment rates as those with bachelor's degrees.

*[Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, April 2020; US Census Bureau 2019]*

The Hope study found that shortages of food and safe housing disproportionately affected single parents of young children and Asian, Black, and Latino parenting students. The study noted separately the problems faced by Black fathers working toward their degrees. Parenting students' success or suffering has immediate and long-lasting impacts on families and our country's social and economic health. This is increasingly important to student affairs officers and senior campus leaders nationwide.

Connecticut has been on the cutting edge of such progress, developing solutions and strategies to support parenting students throughout their educational journey.

## Highlighted Programs

[CT State Community College, Capital Campus](#) was cited among the top five percent of community colleges in the nation, which are moving people out of poverty and into life-sustaining wages. Recognition for student's "upward mobility" is especially impressive since CCC students are from some of the country's most disadvantaged backgrounds. (Harvard Opportunity Insights (2019).

Capital's "[Equity Center](#)," "[Brother 2 Brother Program](#)," and "[Bridge to Morehouse](#)" programs exemplify the progress that earns such proud recognition. Carl Guerriere, Director of the Center for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, credits the students for sparking the development of their Equity Center, a space providing comprehensive student support services.

"Through the leadership of Dr. G. Duncan Harris, CEO, and support from a three-year, \$300,000 grant from the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving, Capital has continually been developing more comprehensive support services for its students."

The College has been able to weave together a blanket of support comprised of separate college and community services through the Equity Center. In the Spring 2023 semester, students could access no-cost childcare, food from the food pantry, housing support (through a grant from the

Department of Housing), book scholarships, emergency microgrants, comprehensive federal, state, and local benefit screening, and mental health counseling.

Partnerships with community agencies, such as the YWCA and SUN Scholars, have provided additional support for women in specific career fields and adults formerly in foster care or adopted. This fall, in partnership with Trinity College, Capital plans to expand services for those who are or were justice-involved at the Hartford Correction Center. Students can also access an online financial education program to help them make better financial decisions.

We are conducting research that will further clarify the effects of the Equity Center's work as essential. We have managed so far with additional support from grants and donations. We are working to attain permanent funding to assist our students better." [For more information](#).

*Brother 2 Brother Program* works with Black and Latino men at Capital to develop a strong sense of self, create a brotherhood, and become lifelong leaders in their community. This leadership and mentorship program provides personal and academic support at Capital to maintain a 2.7 GPA ([Continue](#))

*Bridge to Morehouse Program* (an initiative within the Brother 2 Brother Program): Capital Community College recently established a groundbreaking articulation agreement with Morehouse College, one of our nation's top Historically Black Colleges ([Continue](#))

[Central Connecticut State University \(CCSU\)](#) presents another excellent example of the creative development of support systems for men in Connecticut who want to improve their ability to be effective students, citizens, and parents. At Central, "The Healthy Fellows/Brotherhood Initiative" goes a long way to help enrolled men succeed.

The HF Brotherhood Initiative is a student-led Wellness Retention program created to improve the health, retention, and graduation of CCSU male students. Formerly known as the Man Enough Support Initiative, The Brotherhood Initiative was founded in 2008 as a response to male student mental health concerns and declining male student retention rates. Student volunteers, faculty, and administrators are committed to helping men successfully navigate the complexities of the college experience.

# CFI Partners

## CT Departments of:

- Social Services
  - Children and Families
  - Correction
  - Developmental Services
  - Education
  - Housing
  - Labor
  - Mental Health and Addiction Services
  - Public Health
  - Veterans Affairs
- and**
- Office of Early Childhood
  - Judicial Branch Court Support Services Division, Support Enforcement Services, and Family Support Magistrate Division
  - Board of Pardons and Parole
  - Commission on Women, Children, Seniors, Equity and Opportunity
  - CT Coalition Against Domestic Violence
  - CT State Colleges and Universities
  - United Way of CT
  - Legal services, researchers, and numerous community-based, family, and youth-serving providers.

Understanding the importance of a community-based approach to supporting and engaging male students, the initiative provides a wide range of campus supports (e.g., outings and gatherings, academic and emotional supports, leadership opportunities, mentoring and navigational supports, internships and employment, awards and scholarships, and invitations to participate in conferences and personal/professional development activities). Although the vast majority of the initiative's participants are not fathers, the effort provides resources to those who are fathers and those who might one day assume this parental responsibility.

The HF Brotherhood Initiative is a brainchild of William Fothergill, whose research in Men & Masculinities studies ignited the initiative's creation and collaborative partnerships. Mr. Fothergill, a counseling faculty member in the Counseling & Wellness Services department at Central Connecticut State University, serves as the Faculty Initiative Administrator and co-manages several operation functions with Mr. Larry Hall, Director of Recruitment and Admissions, according to Mr. Fothergill.

"College men face many unique challenges along their journey towards college degree completion, and the Brotherhood hopes to expand conversations about health equity for all. The leadership of the Brotherhood is proud of the positive impact our resources and services have on the retention and graduation rate of male students at CCSU. Over the years, the Brotherhood Initiative has established many community engagement opportunities that have allowed our students to forge collaborative partnerships with the State agencies, various schools, local and national colleges and universities, and men's health initiatives."

Mr. Fothergill notes with particular pride the partnerships established with DCF and DSS. Since 2015, the Brotherhood has worked with them to co-sponsor the "Dads Matter Too Conference," a highly successful annual event held on the Central Connecticut State University campus. This conference has brought together men and speakers nationwide to highlight the importance of fatherhood and men's health equity.

*For additional program details, contact William Fothergill, Faculty Initiative Administrator, Healthy Fellows/Brotherhood Initiative, fothergillW@ccsu.edu*

## We Want to Hear From You!!!

Let us know what you would like to see in upcoming newsletters!

Email us at: [diana.ditunno@ct.gov](mailto:diana.ditunno@ct.gov)

The Department of Social Services (DSS) programs are available to all applicants and recipients without regard to race, color, religious creed, age, sex (including pregnancy and sexual harassment), marital status (including civil union status), national origin, ancestry, intellectual disability, physical disability, (including blindness), past or present history of mental disability, learning disability, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, genetic information, workplace hazards to reproductive systems, veteran status, prior conviction of a crime or other factors which cannot lawfully be the basis for employment actions or licensing, retaliation for previously opposed discrimination or coercion or unless the provisions of sec. 46a-80(b) or 46a-81 (b) of the Connecticut General Statutes are controlling or there are bona fide occupational qualifications excluding persons in one of the above protected groups and status as a victim of domestic violence. DSS has a TDD/TTY line for persons who are deaf or hearing impaired and have a TDD/TTY: 1-800-842-4524, or dial 7-1-1. Auxiliary aids are also available for blind or visually impaired persons. The DSS is an equal opportunity, affirmative action employer.