

Celebrating the moonshot

Eastern honors Apollo 11

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WILLIMANTIC — Across the nation, Americans are now remembering the accomplishments of astronauts from decades ago.

This year celebrates the 50th anniversary since the Apollo 11 lunar landing, the first space flight that successfully landed humans on the moon.

Eastern Connecticut State University has many connections to the NASA space program, which is why it is celebrating the landmark anniversary in a few different ways.

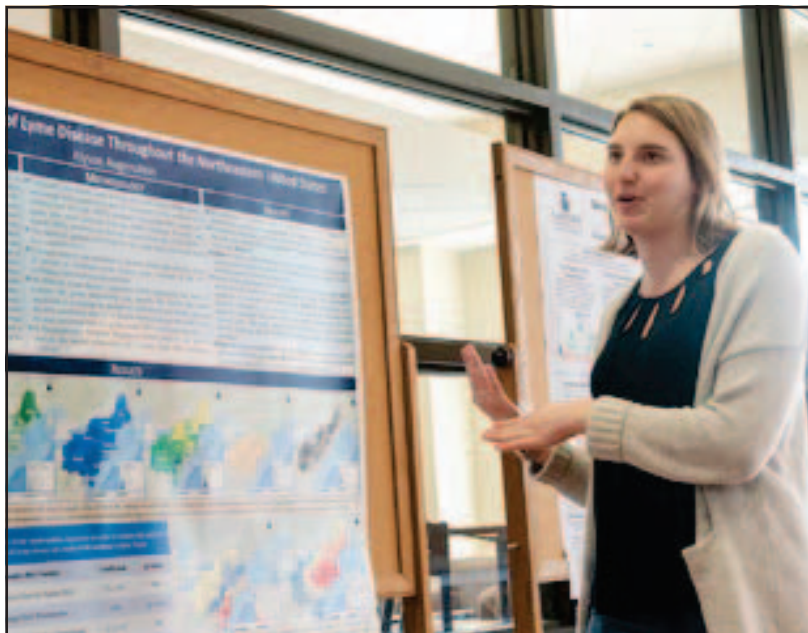
On Tuesday, students and faculty had the opportunity to show off their recent research, many involving space-related topics.

To commemorate the anniversary, one professor displayed a few original copies of moon maps.

The maps show the Sea of Tranquility, a portion of the moon where Apollo 11 landed.

Physical sciences professor Russell Sampson said the maps were given to him when

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Eastern Connecticut State University senior Jimmy Tonfa of Norwich, above, looks at some of the original maps used to plan the Apollo moon landings with physical science professor Russell Sampson on Tuesday afternoon at the student center. ECSU senior Alyson Augenstein of East Hampton, left, explains her project.
Roxanne Pandolfi | Staff

Eastern events celebrate Apollo 11

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he was a graduate student from a retiring cartography professor.

The map-maker had helped determine where the Apollo missions were to land and he still had those original maps in his possession.

"These are the pieces of Apollo history," Sampson said. "Fifty years later, even with today's best amateur telescope, you'd probably never see the moon as detailed as in these maps."

Other presentations covered the impact of microgravity on brain function, antibiotics research and the economics of satellite communications.

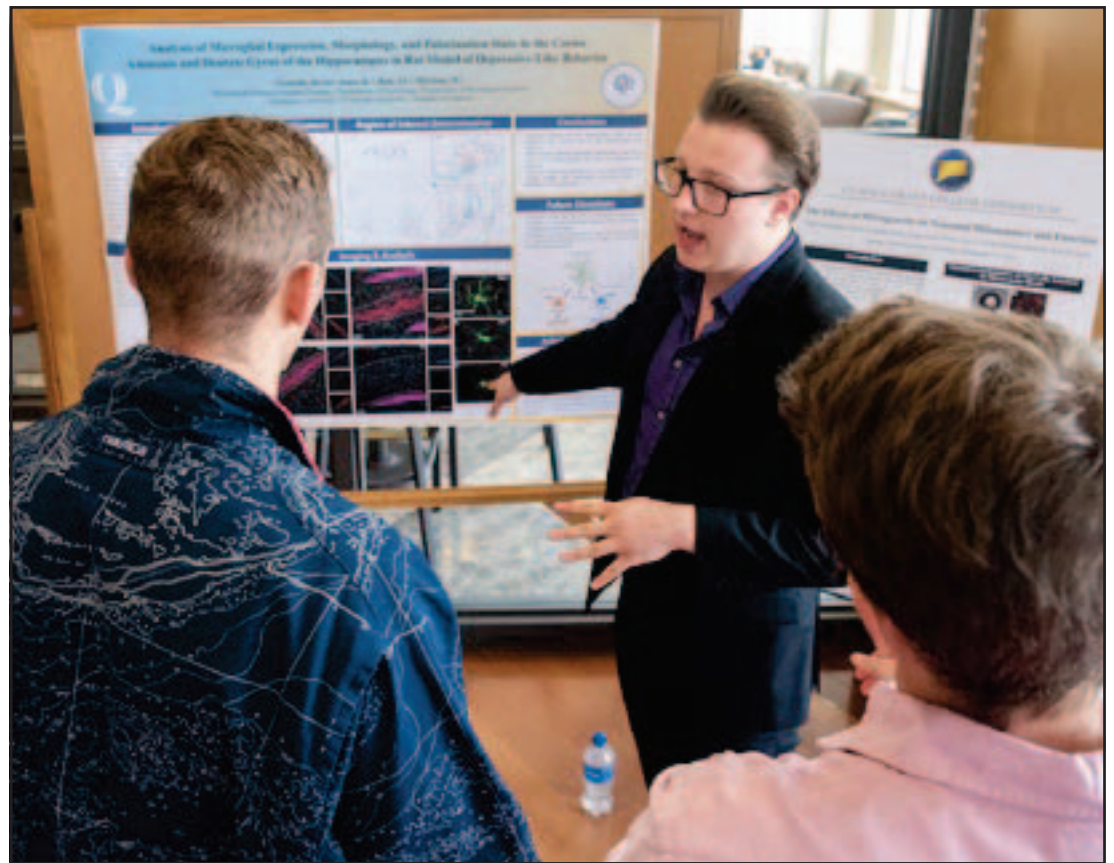
The students' projects were funded through the NASA Connecticut Space Grant Consortium.

Students can receive funding for their projects if they relate to space science.

"NASA funded a lot of these projects," said Elizabeth Cowles, who serves as the campus liaison for the consortium and is the biology department chairperson. "It's not just about space exploration."

Some research projects displayed Tuesday also focused on other topics, although their connection to NASA was just as important.

Bryce Mase, a senior earth sciences and math major from Northford (North Branford),



Eastern Connecticut State University graduate Kevin Connolly talks about his research to ECSU juniors Chris Shimwel of Wethersfield and Max Parent of Yarmouth, Mass., Tuesday at the ECSU Student Center. Roxanne Pandolfi | Staff

analyzed the drought in California using a NASA-funded geographic information system.

Mase was able to see how the water tables improved following the most severe drought in 2014.

"It's amazing how you can do this with the power of satellite imagery and get a quantified map without even going there and seeing anything," Mase said.

Later on Tuesday, the uni-

versity played a new PBS documentary called "Chasing the Moon."

The documentary about the Apollo 11 lunar landing won't be aired on PBS until July, but Eastern was given permission to show the advance screening.

On Friday evening, members of the public have another opportunity to enjoy a free event.

Space fans can watch "2001: A Space Odyssey"

at 7:30 p.m. on the Student Center patio and then look at the moon and the stars through a telescope.

Astronomers will be available to explain the movie.

If it is raining, the event will be moved to the Student Center Theater and the Wickware Planetarium.

The movie will start around sunset. Bring a blanket or a lawn chair.

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