President’s Leadership Awards

Above, President Elsa M. Núñez poses for a picture with honorees at the President’s Jubilee Luncheon: Albert Wojtcuk ’54 (Distinguished Alumni Award), Hans Weiss (Hermann Beckert Friends of the University Award), Frank Perrotti ’51 (Distinguished Service Award), Barbara Candales ’74 (Distinguished Alumni Award) and luncheon speaker William Hargreaves, ’59 class president.

Vice President Biden Meets Eastern Fulbright Scholar Eric Martin

When Vice President Joseph Biden visited southeastern Europe the week of May 18 to meet with heads of state and U.S. military personnel, he also met with Eric Martin, associate professor of management in the Department of Business Administration. In a speech to the political leadership of Kosovo, Serbia, and Bosnia-Herzegovina, Biden spoke on the strategic significance of the Balkan region and the need for the United States to continue to build on its successes there. According to Martin, “Biden is a very cool guy. He gave a nice speech and invited our kids on stage, then stood for photos until everyone who wanted one had one taken.”

Martin, who recently completed serving a year as a Fulbright Scholar in the Political Science Department at the University of Belgrade in Belgrade, Serbia, took his students to hear Biden.

Eastern Student Honored as Top Collegiate Journalist

Adam Hemphill ’09 has been named recipient of the second annual UWIRE 100, a free membership organization for college student media that honors the nation’s top collegiate journalists. UWIRE 100 winners were selected from more than 825 nominations and represent students from more than 135 schools. A UWIRE panel evaluated each candidate based on demonstrated excellence in the field of collegiate journalism.

“This is a remarkable group of journalists,” said Joe Weasel, CEO of UWIRE. “Each has made a significant impact on the field already – they are talented, hard workers and gifted storytellers. Each was nominated by their peers and advisers, who recognized their potential to shape the ever-changing media industry in the coming years.”

“Adam will always be on the cutting-edge of technology because he has a cutting-edge intellect,” said Eastern Communication Professor Edmond Chibeau, who recommended Hemphill for the award. “He understands more about how online journalism will be positioned in the next 20 years than most of the managing editors of print journals in the United States.”
Ellen Lang ’81 and Jason Budahazy ’09 Address
ECSU Foundation Scholarship Recipients

When more than 150 students who had won competitive scholarships turned out at the Student Center Café for the annual ECSU Foundation scholarship reception on April 15, they were greeted with congratulations from President Elsa Núñez and a rousing call to action from scholarship donor Ellen Lang ’81 and the gratitude of recent graduate Jason Budahazy ’09.

“I was a non-traditional student with two small children who had to utilize Pell grants and student loans,” said Lang, who is secretary of the Alumni Association Board of Directors and an endowed scholarship donor. “I know firsthand how tough it is to work, care for children and family and keep up with coursework.” Lang emphasized that her degree from Eastern, which led to a master’s degree in public health, was the best investment she ever made, and noted that graduates will substantially increase their earning power.

“The scholarship assistance you receive carries with it a responsibility to give back to Eastern,” she said. “I established a scholarship so that others in similar situations may have the same assistance that I received.” Lang and her husband, Dr. James Watson, established the Ellen L. Lang Endowed Scholarship in 1998 to recognize non-traditional students returning to Eastern to obtain undergraduate degrees.

Budahazy, who graduated in May, was the mastermind behind Eastern’s annual Thanksgiving “Day of Giving” dinner for community residents who are patrons of local soup kitchens and other social service agencies. He first organized the holiday meal in 2007. “I think you would agree that a scholarship award of as little as $500 or $1,000 can literally make or break the decision of having to drop out or attend part-time instead of full-time.”

Budahazy thanked Lang for her generosity as a donor. “Although I did not receive your scholarship, I did receive one from a donor of your same generosity. If not for alums like yourself, not only would I not be up here speaking today, none of these students would be in this room today. So I’d like to thank you and all of the donors from this year, last year and all the prior years, for investing in the education and futures of Eastern students. Your generosity is making a difference for so many students.”

Eastern Students at College Academic Day

Two Eastern students have been honored by the Connecticut General Assembly for their outstanding academic achievement and extra-curricular involvement. Christina Amato ’09 of Marlborough and Adrian Miller ’09 of Bloomfield, along with six students from the other three Connecticut State Universities, were recognized on May 6 during Connecticut’s College Academic Day.

As part of the recognition, students received an official citation from the Connecticut General Assembly, were formally introduced during session to the State Senate and House of Representatives, and were honored at a State Capitol reception. Sponsors of the event include Majority Leader of the House of Representatives Denise Merrill (D-54th District); State Representative Richard Roy (D-119th District); and State Representative Pamela Sawyer (R-55th District).

Amato is a sport and leisure management major with a concentration on health and fitness studies. She has been on the Dean’s List each semester and graduated Magna Cum Laude. She is a member of the International
Honor Society of Health, Physical Education, Recreation, Sport and Dance and was selected as “Connecticut’s Outstanding Future Professional” by the Connecticut Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance. She also was named an “Outstanding Major” by the National Association for Sport and Physical Education, and was selected for “Who’s Who Among Students in American Colleges and Universities.”

Miller is a double major in communication and business economics, participated in the 2005 Yale Physics Olympics and was a member of the Connecticut Pre-Engineering Program. He is a member of the Economics Club and the American Advertising Federation. Last year, Miller was inducted into the Omicron Delta Epsilon Economics Honor Society and the Lambda Pi Eta Communication Honor Society. Throughout his career at Eastern, Miller has made the Dean’s List each semester and has completed countless hours of community service for various organizations in Willimantic. In addition, he works at Eastern’s Campus Police as the student worker supervisor. Upon graduating, Miller hopes to pursue a career in marketing.

CSUS Day at the Capitol

Students Nate Oldham and Rebecca Scott helped staff Eastern’s exhibit booth during “Connecticut State University System (CSUS) Day at the Capitol,” held May 13 in Hartford. Nate and Rebecca answered questions about Eastern’s Center for Community Engagement and the service-learning opportunities available on campus.

Eastern Department of Performing Arts Presents “Short Stuff 2009”

From May 7–10, the Department of Performing Arts presented the set of original one-act plays, “Short Stuff 2009,” in the Harry Hope Theatre. The plays were written by Eastern scriptwriting students and directed by advanced directing students. Above left, Calvin Gee and Luke Reinwald present “Five Out of Nine” by Shane William Kegler and above right, Kerry Panciera and Dan Romero perform in “Dinner and a Break-Up,” by Matt Sirpenski. Additional performances of “Short Stuff 2009” were held at the Sergeant Theatre in New York City on May 29 and 30.

OLAS Celebrates Anniversary

The Organization of Latin American Students celebrated its 11th annual banquet on May 2, 2009 in the Betty R. Tipton Room of the Student Center. Professor Eliana Rojas of the University of Connecticut’s Neag School of Education gave the keynote address, encouraging students to “Lead with optimism. Discover and bring forth the best in yourselves and in those around you. Challenge yourselves to reach new heights of achievement, and be of service to others.”
As part of the annual Dean’s Cup competition, 12 residence halls held a variety of fundraising events this spring to see which hall could raise the most funds for the Windham Textile and History Museum. On May 13, a check for $1,786 was presented by students, administrators and President Elsa Núñez (third from right) to Brooke Shannon, executive director of the Windham Textile and History Museum (second from right).

Eastern Students Win Visual Arts Awards

On May 14 in Shafer Auditorium, 16 students were named the recipients of awards presented by the University’s Department of Visual Arts.
Institute for Sustainable Energy Helps With Low Income Utility Challenge

From 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. on May 9 in the Student Center, more than 500 area residents participated in “Utility Day,” an event co-sponsored by Eastern’s Institute for Sustainable Energy and Statewide Legal Services of Connecticut. Utility Day was designed to help Northeast Utilities and Yankee Gas customers facing a utility shutoff or a payment arrangement they cannot afford. Customers were counseled on a variety of issues including how to budget money and conserving energy as well as the importance of paying their utility bills on time and the importance of establishing a creditable relationship with the utility companies.

Eastern Cuts Beautiful Hair for Cancer Patients

On April 28, the Department of Housing and Residential Life and Willimantic-based Brio Academy sponsored the Beautiful Lengths Hair Cutting Campaign. Throughout the day, Eastern students, faculty and staff, as well as members of the Willimantic community, donated their hair to make wigs for cancer patients. Brio Academy staff and students provided haircuts and styles free of charge to anyone who donated their hair. Eastern students Darcy Muller and Delia Bardesly organized the event along with Occum Hall Director Joanna Auriantal. All three women, along with 25 others, donated their own hair. At the end of the day, 301 inches of hair had been donated, enough to make approximately 10 wigs. Left, Vicar Centeno ’10 and right, Anna Sauve ’10 participate in the hair-cutting campaign.

Eastern Police Observe National Police Officers Week

From May 10 to 16, Eastern’s Campus Police Department celebrated National Police Officers Week in tribute to the federal, state and municipal officers who have been killed or disabled in the line of duty. On May 10, the Police Department placed a black banner on the sign in front of police headquarters, and at 7:30 a.m. on May 15, National Peace Officer’s Memorial Day, police officers placed a wreath in front of the sign. Right, Lieutenant McBride speaks during the ceremony.

Eastern’s Police Department Sponsor “Tip-A-Cop” for Special Olympics

From 8 a.m. to noon on May 16, members of Eastern’s Campus Police raised $2,000 by participating in a “Tip-A-Cop” fundraiser, working behind the scenes at the Dunkin’ Donuts on Main Street in Willimantic to solicit donations for Special Olympics Connecticut. All tips were matched by Dunkin’ Donuts franchisee Manny Jose. Above left, Officer David DeNunzio with Dunkin’ Donuts Manager Manny Jose, and at right with a young Willimantic resident who supported the fund-raising effort.
Eastern’s Akus Gallery Presents “People You May Know”

From May 14 to May 24, the Julian Akus Gallery at Eastern presented “People You May Know: Senior Art Exhibition 2009,” a group exhibition featuring more than 70 pieces by 35 students majoring in Visual Arts. The show opened with a reception on May 14 and ran through May 24.

“Senior Visual Arts students produced an impressive body of work this spring,” said Akus Gallery Director Elizabeth Peterson. “This includes bold, incisive public service posters, engaging product designs, lushly painted oils, encaustics, acrylics, polished and contemplative sculptures, and fantastic children’s book illustration among other media. It is clear this graduating class is well prepared to face a tough, competitive art market.”

Windham No Freeze Appreciates Eastern’s Warmth

Every Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday from November through April, Eastern students and staff volunteer to help out at Windham No Freeze in Willimantic, a program to address problems facing area homeless people. Students and staff help with checking in guests; keep records that are needed to receive funding for the No Freeze; keep the facility organized and clean; and bring positive energy by making friends with guests. On May 7, Windham No Freeze held a Volunteer Appreciation Dinner at St. Paul’s in Windham Center to thank all of the volunteers who helped keep the No Freeze running this year. Stuffed shells, salad, bread and blueberry pie for dessert made up the delicious dinner, as well as warm thanks from the No Freeze staff. Pictured in the back row, left to right, is Alexa Cascio, Steven Bagley, Grey Clark, Jess Dybdahl, Kate Harner, Amanda Trothier, Luke Boyd and Nolan Titcomb. In the front row, left to right are Elizabeth Gaffey, Erica Mischke, and Eastern Community Service Coordinators Julie Cappa and Martin Sagendorf. Volunteers not pictured include Amy Gorman, Sam Dillon, Liz Hesterberg and Victoria Ashley. Eastern Judicial Officer Kim Silcox and Campus Ministry’s Father Larry LaPointe are both on the No Freeze board.

Teetering Tottering for Social Justice in Education

On May 12, the Social Justice in Education Club, a new student club on campus, raised more than $1,000 during a teeter-tot-a-thon on Webb Lawn. The club contributed the entire amount to the playground fund of Sweeney Elementary School in Willimantic. Theresa Bouley and Darren Robert, associate professors in Eastern’s Center for Early Childhood Education, serve as faculty advisors for the new club.
Eastern Percussion Exposition

On May 9, the Eastern Percussion Exposition presented a concert in Shafer Hall Auditorium that showcased individual and ensemble performances of percussion instruments. The concert was a culmination of efforts by the students enrolled in Music Professor Jeffrey Calissi’s individual music instruction, percussion ensemble and class percussion classes. The concert showcased a variety of percussion settings from classical percussion ensemble selections to West African hand drumming to individual percussion solos. Above left, playing the African hand drums welcoming the audience to the Percussion Exposition Spring Concert are left to right Professor Jeff Calissi, Spencer LeTour, Meghan Hendrickson, Brandon Dobransky, Nate Belk, Sheldon Haag, Katie Pecor and Javier Rey.

Eastern has 7 All Americas in 2008–09

Four Eastern Connecticut State University student-athletes attained All-America status this past spring, bringing to seven the number of such honorees during the 2008–09 academic year. The All-America total of seven is the highest in one year for Eastern athletics since 1989-90, when eight student-athletes in three sports received the honor, seven of them playing on the national championship baseball and softball teams that spring.

Headlining this year’s All-America crop is senior baseball player Tristan Hobbes (Utica, NY), who was recognized as Eastern’s first-ever ESPN The Magazine/College Division Academic All-America. He was a first-team choice to the team. Hobbes was one of only two selections from New England, having been joined by MIT senior infielder Thomas Phillips, a second-team selection from Durham, N.C.

“This is a very deserving honor and is a fitting end to Tristan’s career at Eastern,” noted head baseball coach Bill Holowaty. “His accomplishments in the classroom and on the baseball field speak for themselves. He’s just a good, all-around kid — everyone likes and respects him. He’s earned respect by his actions on and off the field and has been a great example for future ballplayers here.”

The University’s six other All-America selections include senior utility player Shawn Gilblair (Windham) and junior third baseman Melvin Castillo (Danbury) in baseball; freshman right-handed softball pitcher Molly Rathbun (Hebron); senior defenseman Steve Lane (Groton) and senior midfielder DJ Simmons (Mystic) in men’s lacrosse; senior center Ashley McFetridge (Canton) in women’s basketball; and senior defender Kyle Bedini (Manchester) in men’s soccer.

Eastern in the News

• The May 17 edition of The (New London) Day ran a feature story on investigative journalist and author Jeff Benedict ’91 whose books have focused on NBA scandals, criminals in the NFL, eminent-domain disputes in New London, and Native American gaming. Some of his nine published books have led to stories on news-magazine shows such as 60 Minutes and Dateline, and on the Discovery Channel and HBO.

• The May 12 edition of the national publication Indian Country Today reported on the Extraordinary Woman Award Program presented to Eastern Connecticut State University anthropology professor Julianne Jennings, one of nine women to receive the award.

• On May 11, Graphic Design Professor June Bisantz was interviewed by Faith Middleton for her show, “Exploring the Richness of Life.” Bisantz discussed her “Standing Ovations Applause Button” project on display at a major street crossing in Boston.


• The May 7 edition of the Norwich Bulletin ran a feature story on Jennifer Nadeau as Killingly’s 2009 Teacher of the Year.

• The May 6 edition of the Norwich Bulletin reported on Dawn Darche ’87 for the way she relates to her students.

• The May 3 edition of the Norwich Bulletin reported on Eastern alumna and broadcast journalist Faith Middleton as Commencement speaker at Eastern’s graduation on May 24 at the Hartford XL Center.

• The May 2 edition of The (Willimantic) Chronicle featured the achievements of Anthropology Professor and Julianne Jennings.

• On May 1, Anthropology Professor Julianne Jennings, along with students Donna Finnmore and Brendan Broadbin, discussed Native American culture and changing stereotypes of Native Americans on WILI-AM’s “Wayne Norman Show.”

• On April 21, International Communications Professor Cesair Beltran and journalist Neil Barnett discussed the Holocaust on Holocaust Remembrance Day on “The Wayne Norman show” on WILI-AM radio.

• On April 20, Fred Loxsom, chair of Eastern’s Center for Sustainable Energy Studies, along with students Andrew Macon, Veronica Hooker and Amberlee Nicoulin, discussed Earth Day activities at Eastern on WILI’s “Wayne Norman Show.”

• The April 9 edition of the Manchester Journal Inquirer featured the modeling and acting career of Erin McFarland ’05.