Annual Report, 2016-2017

Connecticut College

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From the President

This has been a dynamic year for Connecticut College. Our strategic plan, Building on Strength, was affirmed by the Board of Trustees. The College officially launched Connections with the Class of 2020. And we completed designs for a wonderful new hub of 21st-century learning: the Otto and Fran Walter Commons for Global Study and Engagement. Construction of this new facility on the ground floor of the Blaustein Humanities Center is scheduled to be complete in spring 2018.

Last spring, I traveled across the country on a 12-city tour to talk about our future plans. The many alumni, parents, and friends I spoke to recognized Building on Strength as a strong path for the future, with goals and priorities that provide for an exceptional academic program; a distinctively different residential experience; a community nourished by tolerance, understanding, and respect; and a stable financial future that will allow Connecticut College to flourish for another 100 years.

The foundation stone of Building on Strength is Connections, the College’s reinvention of the liberal arts. Connections is an audacious curriculum for our new century, daring students to put the world together in new ways. Through Connections, our students will buttress their academic major with interdisciplinary studies, a relevant internship, a world language, and a whole global outlook in order to become creative, adept, and socially responsible leaders of the future. We like to think of it as the new liberal arts for our interconnected world.

Students need such a breadth of perspective in order to find solutions to the increasingly intractable problems of our time. And that, of course, requires them to look across not just disciplines but also national and regional borders. Connecticut College is known for its rich world language offerings and unique programs for study abroad, including the distinctive certificate we offer through our Center for International Studies and the Liberal Arts. With Connections, we want to build on that strength, by guaranteeing that every student will integrate a global perspective into their four-year experience.
The new Otto and Fran Walter Commons for Global Study and Engagement is central to this vision. It brings together under one roof our language and culture center, our education abroad offices, our centers for international studies and the critical study of race and ethnicity, and new technology-rich collaboration spaces, greatly enhancing the opportunities for global learning both close to home and in far-flung locales. The $1.625 million renovation was made possible through the generous support of three foundations—the Otto and Fran Walter Foundation, the George I. Alden Trust, and the William Randolph Hearst Foundation—as well as a substantial gift from Susan Eckert Lynch ’62.

Local and global engagement has long been central to the work of our Holleran Center for Community Action and Public Policy. And the future of that work, too, just got better with a remarkable $2.5 million gift from Trustee Emerita Carolyn Holleran ’60 and Jerry Holleran GP ’07. As the College’s primary incubator for social reform, the Holleran Center provides students with the kind of intentional, interdisciplinary, and immersive education that was the model for Connections. The Hollerans’ generous gift will more than double the Center’s endowment, expanding its impact and ensuring that the College continues to cultivate leaders who are changing the way we understand the world.

This report offers the stories of several faculty and students who are engaged in doing just that. From working to solve India’s sanitation crisis to expanding the context for language learning to easing the transition for local refugee families, our faculty and students exemplify the College’s mission of putting the liberal arts into action.

Our plan is to accelerate this critical work through aggressive fundraising and strategic fiscal management. This year, the Connecticut College Fund raised a record $6 million with gifts from more than 6,200 alumni, parents, faculty, staff, students, and friends. It was the third consecutive year of increased participation, a pattern that is bucking national trends and one that we want to replicate in coming years.

15 first-year seminars centered on global themes (from Inventing World Religions to Virtual Realities in Japan)
Our endowment remains strong at $290 million, and Moody’s Investors Service has reconfirmed our A2 rating with a stable outlook.

Trustees, alumni, and parents are essential to our success. The end of this report concludes with an honor roll of donors, and I, too, want to conclude by thanking all of you for your generosity and your dedication to Connecticut College as we work together to educate our students to make a lasting impact on the world.

Katherine Bergeron
President
Key components of the Walter Commons include:

- Curricular and cocurricular activities to promote deep knowledge of cultures and communities
- Enhanced academic advising to enrich student off-campus learning and engagement
- Pre- and post-departure study away programs
- Events with campus and community partners to foster global understanding
- Projects foregrounding spaces and opportunities in the wider New London and New England communities to develop global perspectives
- Lectures and seminars with international visiting scholars and artists, including scholars-in-residence hosted through the IIE-Scholar Rescue Program
- Globally networked learning opportunities to connect students on campus with partners and places in other parts of the world

A rendering by Centerbrook Architects of the Otto and Fran Walter Commons for Global Study and Engagement
Building on a tradition of innovation and a commitment to international education and engaged scholarship, Connecticut College will launch a new center for global study and engagement this spring.

The Otto and Fran Walter Commons for Global Study and Engagement will advance student learning across disciplines, borders, and cultural boundaries. Developed in concert with Connections, the College’s reinvention of the liberal arts, the Walter Commons will open on the ground floor of Blaustein Humanities Center following a $1.625 million renovation.

“The idea behind the Walter Commons was to consolidate a variety of the College’s global study resources under one roof, and to expand the ways in which students and faculty examine world issues through interdisciplinary discussions, experiential and community-based learning, and modern technology,” said Amy Dooling, associate dean of global initiatives, director of the Walter Commons, and professor of Chinese.

“The imperatives of global education in the 21st century require more-deliberate integration of social justice and internationalization agendas. This includes realigning our practices to better meet the needs and leverage the cultural wealth of our ever more diverse domestic and international student body, while ensuring that a Connecticut College education equips students of all backgrounds with the capacity to put knowledge into action.”

The new Walter Commons brings together the College’s Center for the Comparative Study of Race and Ethnicity, Language and Culture Center, Office of Study Away, Toor Cummings Center for International Studies and the Liberal Arts, and...
and Office of Global Initiatives.

With its centralized campus location and visibility, the Walter Commons will function as a dynamic venue for the entire campus to take part in critical dialogues, presentations, and workshops around themes of global significance. The modern, collaborative space unites core elements of the College’s historically strong global education—language study, research abroad, study away, public engagement, globally focused courses, and cocurricular programs—with opportunities for local and global involvement to ensure that every student can integrate a universal perspective into their four-year experience.

Dooling says the Walter Commons will showcase what Connecticut College does best: create innovative approaches to global liberal arts education. It will expand language learning opportunities, harness advances in technology to connect students around the world, and cultivate new partnerships with colleges and universities at home and abroad.

“The goal is a liberal arts education that nurtures in students a deep sense of social and civic responsibility, as well as the ability to understand others and to engage many different cultures and communities both within and beyond the borders of the U.S.,” Dooling said.

EXPANDING THE CONTEXT FOR LANGUAGE LEARNING

Integrating world languages across the curriculum is a major priority of Connections, and the Walter Commons will fully embrace our faculty’s unique strength in this area.

“Beyond our excellent language departments, the College has multilingual faculty across many different disciplines, which is part of what distinguishes us from our peers,” Dooling said. “This allows us to offer an economics course with a discussion section in Chinese, or explore topics in Italian as part of an anthropology course, or debate issues in a genetics course in Spanish. Our Foreign Languages Across the Curriculum initiative has grown into a remarkably robust program, with more than two dozen courses offering embedded language sections each year.”

Connecting world languages to courses like economics, anthropology, and genetics changes the way in which students learn a language.

“By exploring a language within a specific disciplinary context, such as a science or economics course, students find new doorways into developing language skills. The result is a process that is far more organic and conversational than the traditional method of memorizing
vocabulary and conjugations—and it’s far more effective.”

The strength in world languages was developed over the course of several decades. In an effort to diversify the faculty, the College began recruiting more internationally, which naturally drew multilingual professors from a broad spectrum of fields.

“What we’re building here is distinctive. Many other schools have tried to do this, but few have been as successful as we have,” Dooling said.

**HARNESSING THE POTENTIAL OF TECHNOLOGY**

Social media, along with greater access to videoconferencing and emerging technologies, has connected the world in ways most couldn’t have imagined 15 or 20 years ago. Incorporating those advances into the curriculum transforms the way
students and faculty explore the people, cultures, and issues that define the world beyond what is familiar to them.

“Understanding global issues, engaging diverse international perspectives, and being exposed to the world don’t necessarily require sending students abroad. We can do that right here in our classrooms,” Dooling said.

Some professors are already exploring how they can use this technology to give their students a perspective about the world that textbooks and lectures alone can’t.

German studies professor Karolin Machtans is one example. In her course on the Syrian refugee situation in Europe, Machtans has used videoconferencing to give her students the opportunity to interact with teachers, volunteers, and displaced refugee families directly from her classroom.

The Walter Commons will serve as a technological bridge between the campus community and students, faculty, and experts working and studying off-campus and abroad. Faculty can share ideas and test new technologies; students can connect to
classrooms in other countries and conduct research with primary sources from around the world.

“When the Walter Commons opens, we will have a dedicated space for integrating globally networked technology into all aspects of teaching and learning,” Dooling said.

PARTNERSHIPS WITH COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES ABROAD
Building on the College’s historic partnerships with institutions in other countries, the Walter Commons initiative will take the lead in the development of new, mutually beneficial partnerships.

“We’re committed to robust, reciprocal relationships with other institutions,” said Dooling. “We want an ongoing exchange of ideas and people that will spark dialogues, and help our students become more adept at thinking and collaborating across a diversity of contemporary worldviews and perspectives. Faculty involvement in building these relationships will help ensure that we integrate what students learn off campus with their curriculum on campus. We’ll prepare them for experiences abroad, and build on what they learned once they come home.”

One such institution is Ashesi University College in Berekuso, Ghana. The College is in the process of formalizing a partnership with Ashesi that will allow students and faculty from both institutions to explore opportunities for increased learning and understanding.

The partnership promotes collaboration between the two institutions in international education and in academic research. Together, the colleges will consider the development of cooperative programs, including: an exchange of undergraduate students, faculty exchanges, development of joint research and teaching projects, and other mutually beneficial collaborative activities.

“The Ashesi partnership will be an important model as we continue to enhance our students’ global perspectives and help them develop into creative, adaptive, and resourceful thinkers,” said Dooling.

80 books donated
Newly established Committee on Refugee Relief and Education donated 80 Arabic-language books to the New London public library
Pune, India, is a city of stark contradictions. Sometimes referred to as the “Oxford of the East,” it’s an educational nerve center with prestigious universities that attract students and scholars from around the world. But Pune, like much of India, also faces devastating poverty. More than 40 percent of the population lives in slums with no access to clean water or adequate sanitation.

Growing up in Pune, Sunil Bhatia was struck by the neglect and indignity many of his less-fortunate neighbors were forced to endure, and that awareness has largely guided his activism and research at Connecticut College on the global stage.

Bhatia, a professor of human development, has been central to advancing the College’s commitment to global-local community engagement. From 2008 to 2011, he served as director of the Holleran Center for Community Action and Public Policy (one of the College’s five centers for interdisciplinary scholarship), and worked closely with departments campuswide to establish community partnerships and create service-learning opportunities for students.

Bhatia believes that modern technology like social media has ignited a wave of curiosity among students by exposing them to a diverse world beyond their backyards. This glimpse into the lives and challenges of people from vastly different backgrounds has motivated them to explore new cultures and become more engaged global citizens.

“When I first came to the College, the focus on service learning mostly revolved around the local community in New London, which continues to be very important,” said Bhatia. “What’s changing now, though, is that students have broadened their interests and are also excited by the promise of global involvement. They want to travel to Europe, and Africa, and elsewhere, because their imagination has been captured by this international community they’re connected to through social media.”
While Bhatia helps guide students toward immersive opportunities, he also leads by example.

In 2015, he was recognized by the American Psychological Association with their Humanitarian of the Year award for his work helping underserved populations in India develop sanitation projects.

The health effects of India’s sanitation crisis are well known, but Bhatia is also concerned with the deep psychological and cultural impacts the lack of sanitation has on millions of people. Women and children are particularly vulnerable to the humiliation and sexual violence those conditions can facilitate.

So in 2006, Bhatia took action and founded Friends of Shelter Associates, a local chapter of the Pune-based nonprofit organization Shelter Associates. With the help of the Holleran Center and the local community, FSA began raising money for the construction of community and individual toilets in one of the poorest slum settlements in Maharashtra.

The organization has built more than 700 toilets and directly contributed to the building of 1,000 more, improving the lives of thousands of people in Pune while also raising awareness of global poverty.

“My main goal is advocacy of sanitation as a human right,” Bhatia said. “I’ve met many young women who told me about how the lack of sanitation exposes them to shame and violence, and how it impacts their education and how they view their bodies, and the day-to-day suffering it brings to their lives,” he said.

Bhatia is also a prolific researcher; earlier this year, he was awarded the Theodore Sarbin Award by the American Psychological Association for his contributions to the field of narrative psychology.

Much of Bhatia’s research uses a global-local lens to examine how barriers such as class, social biases, and language often lead to cultural alienation of migrant populations. For his first book, *American Karma: Race, Culture, and Identity and the Indian Diaspora*, he spent two years conducting in-depth interviews with middle-class Indian immigrants in southern Connecticut. Those conversations revealed that members of that community juggle conflicting identities as both educated professionals and people who, for the first time in their lives, have been labeled as people of color.

Bhatia’s second book, *Decolonizing Psychology: Globalization, Social Justice, and Indian Youth Identities*, was published by Oxford University Press in September. In
the book, Bhatia examines the psychological impact globalization has had on India’s under-30 population, and how Western culture has crept into their daily lives, from movies and television to the consumption of Western commodities. Bhatia also points out that this generation of Indian youth has a greater ability to travel abroad, which has shaped perceptions of their social status in the world.

Bhatia’s students are involved in and benefit from both his research and his social justice work. One former student, Susan Taylor ’09, won a grant from the Davis Projects for Peace Foundation to work with Shelter Associates to promote health and hygiene awareness.

“Sunil is deeply committed to the organization and finding the best and most effective ways to support their needs,” Taylor said. “I was blown away—but not the least bit surprised—by the extraordinary high regard in which each member of the organization holds Sunil. I was instantly welcomed into this community and workplace, and I know I have Sunil’s committed efforts to thank for that.”

To give even more students meaningful experiences abroad, Bhatia is developing partnerships with universities in India to establish an innovative new semester-long student exchange program.

“We want to approach this in a novel way, not simply parachute students into one city,” Bhatia said.

“The plan is to have them take classes with local students and professors at a university that will serve as a home base, but they’ll also branch out to other parts of the country to take classes at other schools for two- or three-week periods at a time. That way students will get a fuller picture of the country, the people, and the culture.”

Sunil Bhatia, Professor of Human Development
Eileen Kane is doing something most professors never get a chance to do: she’s returning to her alma mater to become a student once again.

Kane, an associate professor of modern European and Russian history, as well as the director of the global Islamic studies program, is spending this year at Brown University studying the Middle East. Kane returns to Brown, where she completed her undergraduate degree, with the support of a coveted New Directions Fellowship from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.

“The fellowship is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to go back to school and train seriously in a new field,” Kane said. “I’ll be studying modern Middle Eastern history, learning Hebrew and Yiddish, and improving my Arabic, which I took for three years in grad school.”

After the fall of communism in Eastern Europe during the 1990s, Kane began studying the relationship between Russia and the Middle East. When the Soviet Union dissolved into 15 separate nation-states, half a dozen of them were majority Muslim. This prompted a fresh look at these populations, which had been largely ignored by both Islamic and Russian historians.

Kane received a Fulbright Scholarship and spent two years after college studying in Istanbul, where she also learned to speak Turkish.

“When I was living in Istanbul from 1995 to 1997, the city was a bustling center of trade and revived contacts between post-Soviet lands and the Middle East,” Kane said. “That’s when I became interested in the longer history of connections between those two regions.”

This past summer, Kane spent five weeks in Germany, where she was invited to lead a workshop and to deliver a lecture at the Free University of Berlin about the Hajj, the mandatory pilgrimage to Mecca all Muslims are expected to make at least once in their lifetime. She also took intensive German lessons to enhance her language skills, and got to know the scholarly community in the
city by attending a variety of lectures and visiting several research institutes.

“Berlin is a center for work on Muslim and Jewish communities in Europe and the Middle East, and it’s the place to be right now if you work on these issues,” Kane explained. Being multilingual is essential to Kane’s work. She’s quick to highlight the importance of Connecticut College integrating world languages across Connections, because this emphasis enables students, even those unable to travel abroad, to receive a truly global education here on campus, better preparing all students for the challenges of today’s complex world.

“I always tell students that they will never regret studying a world language,” she said. “It adds a dimension to you as a person, and you get this peek into a culture that is not your own. That’s why it’s crucial—and potentially promising in all kinds of unanticipated ways—that students think of the language they study as a tool that can allow them access to new areas and discoveries far beyond the language itself.”

In the post-9/11 world, misconceptions about Islam and Muslims have led to widespread fear and discrimination throughout Europe and the United States. Kane and her interdisciplinary colleagues in the global Islamic studies
program see an opportunity to present students with a far more comprehensive picture of the Islamic religion and of Muslim cultures around the world.

“All of our faculty in the program favor comparative and global perspectives,” said Kane. “Our courses are cross-listed with many other departments and a diverse range of programs, including German studies, history, art and architectural history, and Jewish studies.”

The key, Kane believes, is to teach students to avoid the common mistake of conflating Islam with terrorism that often infects the politics and policies of the West. While many Americans believe that “Arab” and “Muslim” are interchangeable terms, and that the Middle East is the main region to examine Islam, the global Islamic studies program provides students with a more accurate world context.

“There are more than 1.8 billion Muslims in the world, and the majority live outside the Arab world, with more than 60 percent living in South and Southeast Asia alone,” Kane pointed out.

“In Europe overall, Muslims are the fastest-growing religious community. So we explore with our students how Islam and Muslims are not exceptional in world history, but are part of broader narratives of global imperialism, imperialist racism, ethnic cleansing, racialized violence, and race-based inequality.”

Kane will continue to work with the College’s Committee on Refugee Relief and Education, translating for, and assisting, refugees in the New London area as they try to rebuild their lives after being forced from their war-torn homes in Syria. Kane believes the Walter Commons can help the College expand its role in supporting these families.

“This is a very positive way for the entire College community to connect with these new members of the New London community and provide the support and protection they need,” she said.

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75 elementary students at RMMS participated in the World Languages programs in 2016, bringing the total close to 1,000 students since the program launched in 2009.
When Connecticut College formed its Committee on Refugee Relief and Education last fall, Jamila Ezbidi ’19 was a natural fit to serve as one of two student representatives.

“Jamila studies the work of Arab women writers, and her research on Arab feminism is impressive. She’s a brilliant young woman. I knew she’d add so much to our committee,” said Waed Athamneh, assistant professor of Arabic studies, who is also a member of the committee.

The committee, which partnered with Start Fresh, a local refugee resettlement group in New London, lends support to newly resettled refugees. In February, the two groups co-sponsored a screening of the award-winning documentary Salam Neighbor, which raised nearly $1,800 for local Syrian refugee families.

“For me, it was important to support the local refugee families who settled in New London,” said Ezbidi, who also tutors refugee children who attend New London’s Regional Multicultural Magnet School.

Since the start of the Syrian civil war in 2011, more than five million people have been forced to flee their homes and resettle around the world. Hundreds of Syrian refugees have landed in Connecticut, and much of the support they receive, from employment assistance, to legal help, comes from volunteer groups in local communities. But these efforts are about more than simply helping refugees get back on their feet. They’re also about ensuring these families feel welcomed into their new communities.

Having discovered that local refugee families didn’t have access to Arabic-language books, Ezbidi worked with committee members to acquire dozens of children’s books that were then donated to the Public Library of New London. The effort helped keep children connected to the Arabic language and allowed them to enjoy the simple pleasure of reading stories from home.
“International experiences and issues should not be limited to one semester abroad, like at some schools,” Ezbidi said. “At Connecticut College, we are exposed to global issues on campus and in the local community all the time.”

Growing up in Palestine, Ezbidi developed an interest in politics and foreign affairs thanks to her father, a political science professor. Her enthusiasm for architecture began to bloom when she traveled with her mother, who is German, to Berlin to explore its rich history.

“I was interested in subjects that are normally considered completely unrelated: international relations and political science, as well as architecture, but I wanted the experience of a liberal arts education, and to be able to draw connections across disciplines without restrictions,” Ezbidi explained.

Ezbidi found precisely what she was looking for at Connecticut College, where
she has had the flexibility to double-major in international relations and architectural studies, as well as pursue a passion for ceramics and expand her leadership skills.

Fluent in Arabic, German, and English, Ezbidi became involved with the College’s international student community upon arriving at the College. Within a few weeks, she ran for vice president of the International Student Association, and won. She was so effective that she was elected president her sophomore year.

“My first year, the ISA provided me with a sense of community, which was something I valued,” Ezbidi said. “That’s why I knew I would enjoy being president and providing that same sense of community for [incoming] international students.”

The College’s emphasis on shared governance also appealed to Ezbidi. She joined the Student Government Association and was elected chair of Equity and Inclusion. As an Arab-Muslim-Palestinian woman, Ezbidi says she understands the need to create an even more inclusive atmosphere on campus. She saw the position as an opportunity to help initiate critical structural changes.

One of her favorite initiatives was launching weekly halal dinners that meet the dietary needs of Muslim students.

“Feeling welcome and respected is important for all religious and ethnic groups at the College, and projects like the halal dinners help provide a basis for mutual understanding and communication,” she said. “The dinners took a lot of dedication, perseverance, and effort, especially from our dining staff, which is dedicated to providing our Muslim community with food prepared to halal standards.”

During her final two years at the College, Ezbidi plans to continue her work with the refugee committee and continue tutoring children at the RMMS. But when it comes to supporting victims of the largest humanitarian crisis since World War II, Ezbidi says she’s just getting started.

“After graduation, my goal is to improve housing solutions for refugees and displaced populations around the world,” Ezbidi said. “I can’t think of a better way to combine my passion for architecture with my interest in international relations.”

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Total number of students who studied away, 57 of whom went on the SATA program in 2016.
Brandy Darling ’19 wants to be the U.S. ambassador to China. Growing up in Chicago might not be the natural starting point for a would-be ambassador, but Darling’s academic strength and natural curiosity were apparent from an early age. By the ninth grade, she was admitted into the city’s highly selective Lindblom Math and Science Academy, where she was able to study Mandarin, and her fascination with Asia began to flourish.

While at the academy, Darling was admitted into Posse, a program which partners with a select group of private colleges and universities, including Connecticut College, to provide full tuition support for students who have demonstrated exceptional academic and leadership skills, but who might otherwise slip through the cracks of the traditional admissions process.

“Connecticut College was the only school on the list that had everything I wanted—a small environment, study abroad programs, and the chance to study Mandarin,” Darling said. “The international presence of the school was especially important to me.”

Once she arrived at the College, Darling wasted no time mapping out an ambitious path that includes majoring in both economics and East Asian studies. As a first-year student, she joined the East Asian Studies Student Advisory Board, and worked as a tutor for a local Chinese-speaking elementary school student. She also presented in Mandarin at the annual World Languages Conference at New London’s Regional Multicultural Magnet School, where college students regularly work with young students on world language skills.

Amy Dooling, director of the Walter Commons, said that Darling has made
an impact from her first semester at the College, on campus and in the local community, something she credits to Darling’s seemingly endless level of energy and natural diplomatic skills.

“The breathtaking number of clubs and programs Brandy participates in is too long to list,” Dooling said. “But the experience and knowledge she brings enrich the College’s cultural awareness and efforts relating to social justice and economic equality. From tutoring public school students in New London, to working at the Coast Guard Academy, she’s always a positive force with an amazing knack for finding common ground with others.”

Following this local engagement, Darling received a prestigious Critical Language Scholarship, which the U.S. Department of State awards to outstanding students who are pursuing fluency in an essential world language by studying abroad. The scholarship allowed Darling to spend the summer in Dalian, China, immersing herself in Mandarin at the Dalian University of Technology.

“It was incredibly rigorous,” she said of the experience. “I lived with a host family, so I was constantly speaking Mandarin, learning the rhythm of the language.”

While in China, Darling made an observation that got her thinking deeply about the intersection of education, economics, and culture.

“The majority of international students at DUT were from Africa,” Darling explained. “Right away I asked, ‘Why is China investing in students from Africa?’ My
CISLA research project is on Sino-African economic relations, so I’m examining questions such as, ‘How is Chinese investment in Ghana affecting the Ghanian middle class? Is it allowing it to flourish? Is it not allowing it to grow, or does it not have any effect at all?’”

Darling points out that Africa, overall, has the fastest-growing middle class in the world, with Ghana, in particular, witnessing a significant transformation over the past decade. In 2011 alone, Ghana had the fastest-growing economy in the world, resulting from accelerated natural resource extraction and new foreign investment, led by China. But the full social impact of this growth in the middle class and Chinese investment throughout the country has not been fully digested yet, from the environmental effects of increased consumption, to shifts in the political landscape and new dynamics in inequality as some groups are left out of the economic boom. Those are the rapidly evolving dynamics Darling is researching. She argues that economics is a cultural indicator and can be a vehicle for driving social change.

“Economics is important to understanding how people interact with one another—how people make decisions, how they approach different cultures and societies, and how economies shape our institutions,” she added.

This semester, Darling is conducting research for a project in Harbin, China, where she is studying through an organization called China Education Tours.

For all of her global ambitions, Darling says her ultimate goal is to be a role model for students just like herself.

“No one who looks like me has ever been the U.S. ambassador to China. I could be the first African-American and woman to hold that position, and my success could open doors for others who look like me.”

300 internships
In the summer of 2017, over 300 Connecticut College students completed internships in 24 countries and 23 states
NADAV ASSOR, ASSISTANT PROFESSOR OF ART, BELIEVES TECHNOLOGY IS AN EXPRESSION OF HUMAN IDEAS AND DESIRES.

Nadav Assor says that students don’t need to be art majors to reap the benefits of art education. Assor, an assistant professor of art, argues that exposure to the arts is essential to learning the practical skills necessary to thrive in the modern world.

“The study of art is about expanding not only the lenses through which you can see the world, but also about developing a whole range of mental and emotional skills that play along with that,” Assor said. “Art education helps develop limber, flexible thinking, and the capacity to come at subject matter from many angles, drawing from disparate sources to synthesize something new.”

Assor has exhibited his work all over the world, including China, India, Israel, and throughout Europe and the United States, and he’s collaborated with a variety of artists and musicians on a wide range of projects. But if there’s one common theme woven throughout his work, it’s an exploration of how people relate to each other and to their environment through technology—technology that Assor argues should be recognized as inherently human.

“There’s this strange habit of treating technology as if it’s something that space aliens dropped onto the planet,” Assor said. “But in reality, technology is an expression of human ideas and desires, and I’m fascinated by how it influences how we communicate with each other and see each other.”

Assor grew up in southern Israel, and came to the United States in 2008 to attend the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, where he earned a Master of Fine Arts in Art & Technology Studies, and was awarded the first-ever Edes Foundation Prize for emerging artists. In 2012, he joined Connecticut College as an assistant professor of art, and led the development of a new area in the studio art department dedicated to expanded media.

According to Assor, technology is an essential piece of the Walter Commons because it can provide a means for students and faculty to interact with international scholars and researchers around the world.
Although he stresses that videoconferencing can never replace the experience of collaborating in person, Assor is hopeful that technology will trigger avenues for our art students to collaborate with students overseas from inside their art studios in Cummings. The central goal is to use technology to help broaden students’ perspectives and their ability to relate to people from vastly different backgrounds through the shared language of creativity.

“I hope we can find some experimental and creative ways to make these global connections, and challenge the limits of videoconferencing technology and other methods of communicating,” he said.

Other methods of communicating can be conducted using such technology as street mapping, drones, and even security screenings, all of which Assor has incorporated into his own work, producing an eclectic mix of projects.

Assor’s 2016 video piece *Ground Effect*, for example, is a surface investigation of the constantly shifting 80 km-long line defining the desert’s edge in Israel that connects the mountains of the West Bank in the east with the Gaza seashore in the west. This is an area divided by conflicting narratives and layered histories. There are artificial pine forests planted on demolished villages, dry fields and synthetic water reservoirs, military monuments and community graveyards. The process used to create the work involved walking and scanning the ground via waist-high aerial video, while being surveilled from the sky by a drone flown by a former fighter pilot.

This creative use of technology in his art is reflected in the courses he teaches, from experimental 3D art, to video installation and sound art, and allows Assor to engage with his students on issues relating to social justice, race, and inequality.

“These issues have always been important to me, and are built into my work,” Assor said. “But my students have added a depth to my understanding through our discussions, and by the ways they present their perspectives. Much of what I’ve learned over the past few years has come from them.”

Assor rejects the notions that art needs to project a superficial beauty or that the audience should never be challenged. He
likes to compare art to a strenuous hiking trail, with twists and turns and varied terrain that can, at times, be challenging, but that ultimately results in a satisfying experience. He distinguishes between art that provokes thinking, and art that has a singular, overt message, which he says veers too aggressively into the realm of propaganda.

“Good art doesn’t need to have a message, or tell you what to think or feel,” he said. “Good art doesn’t tell you something, it makes you ... have your own, unique experience.”

Nadav Assor, Assistant Professor of Art
A New Way to Teach Genetics

JULIA KUSHIGIAN SAYS THAT LANGUAGE AND CULTURE CAN INFLUENCE HOW SCIENTIFIC DATA IS INTERPRETED.

Despite taking numerous Spanish courses, Sethu Babu ’17 had not yet learned how to speak in Spanish about Babu’s true passion: science. The biological sciences major wanted the Spanish vocabulary to discuss cell division, genetic coding and find the words to explain basic medical conditions in a language other than English.

“Traditional Spanish courses don’t delve into medical vocabulary,” said Babu, who is currently pursuing a master’s degree in medical laboratory sciences at Quinnipiac University.

“Genetics is such an important part of medicine, especially the emerging field of personalized medicine. I needed to broaden my Spanish vocabulary to better serve potential patients.”

At Connecticut College, Babu was able to find a genetics class taught exclusively in Spanish.

“I learned Spanish terminology for scientific concepts that I became quite familiar with in the many English-language genetics classes I took. I learned to talk fluently about the science behind medicine,” Babu said.

Genetics classes conducted in Spanish are part of the College’s innovative way of teaching world languages.

“We offer courses on education, business, politics, history, film, environmental justice, and science, taught entirely in Spanish and presented through a cultural lens,” explained Julia Kushigian, the Hanna Hafkesbrink Professor of Hispanic Studies. “At many other colleges and universities, the focus is only on language and literature.”

Kushigian, who joined Connecticut College in 1985, blends language, science, and culture in order to dive into genetic issues that involve race, and the ways in which language and culture can influence how scientific data is interpreted. Her course also examines how scientists from developing countries can compete in the global science community.
“We grasp the language barriers that are present in genetics and in the sciences,” Kushigian said.

“Because many students from around the world use genetics textbooks that are published in English, these students are exposed to certain biases of language. Misinterpretations or inadequate translations can cause confusion amongst the international scientific community. This course integrates Spanish into genetics, which is one step to remedy this problem.”

This integration of languages across a variety of disciplines is a key feature of Connections, and marks a significant departure from how world languages have traditionally been taught. Instead of a repetitive focus on conjugations and vocabulary, students are exposed to a far more conversational and communicative class environment.

To reach even more students, Kushigian has added a business course that touches on the fundamentals of marketing, microeconomics, and macroeconomics, and she has her students build a business plan, and craft and present their own budgets in Spanish.

“The students gain a view of how science or business is approached in other cultures and languages, but the approach also motivates students to learn vocabulary and grasp sentence structure, as they build language skills within the context of subjects with which they already have some familiarity. This advances their understanding of the topic,” Kushigian said.

One of Kushigian’s former students,
Sarah Schoellkopf ’97, used her advanced understanding of Spanish to complete an internship in Buenos Aires, Argentina, and write an honors thesis that led to a Fulbright research award and a Rotary International Scholarship, through which she analyzed the cultural manifestations of the public and governmental policies around the "disappeared." Schoellkopf has since earned a Ph.D. in Spanish from the University of California, Berkeley. Now she’s funding an annual Hispanic studies award at the College, as well as a scholarship for the department, to give back to the program that has had such a profound impact on her life.

“Julia has essentially been my career and life guru,” Schoellkopf said. “She served as an adviser throughout my graduate study, and I’m indebted to her for helping me achieve academic and professional success, which I built on while engaging with the New London community when I was a student at Connecticut College.”

Kushigian’s current students use their practical language skills to regularly interact with New London’s community, working with the Immigration Advocacy and Support Center as translators, or volunteering in hospitals and health clinics. And once the Walter Commons opens, there will be countless more opportunities for her students to collaborate with peers across disciplines, and to explore new ways to develop the language skills and cultural knowledge that Kushigian says are essential in an increasingly globalized economy.

“The Walter Commons will be very exciting, because we want to give our students as much of an international experience as possible while they’re on campus, and having all of these resources in one spot will allow us to do that exceptionally well,” Kushigian said.

$10,000
Together with Community Partnerships, the newly established Committee on Refugee Relief and Education helped raise more than $10,000 for resettlement efforts for families in the region.
Financial Summary  |  Fiscal Year 2016-17

Connecticut College continues to maintain a balanced operating budget thanks to prudent financial planning. The College continues to see strong support from alumni, parents, friends, and foundations thanks to the excitement of the new curriculum.

**Revenue Overview**  (Fiscal year ending June 30, 2017)

- **76.3%** Student Fees
- **12.5%** Endowment
- **1.9%** Grants & Contracts
- **6.8%** Contributions
- **2.5%** Other

- **63%** Alumni
- **20%** Corporations, Foundations, Organizations
- **17%** Parents, Friends, Community
Budget: $111.9 million
Comprehensive Fee: $65,000
Endowment Distribution: $13.3 million
Annual Fund: $6 million
Financial Aid: $37.0 million

Enrollment: 1,800 Full-time Undergraduates
Student/Faculty Ratio: 9:1
Debt (6/30/17): $93.6 million
Net Assets (6/30/17): $357 million

EXPENSE ALLOCATION (as of June 30, 2017)

Expense Budget

- 49% Compensation
- 27% Financial Aid
- 21% Operations
- 2% Debt Service
- 1% Contingency

Preliminary Expense by Function

- 34% Institutional
- 22% Instruction
- 16% Auxiliary
- 14% Student Services
- 12% Academic
- 2% Research and Public Service
## Preliminary Balance Sheet

### Assets
- Cash: $19,514,000
- Contributions Receivable: $20,836,000
- Investments: $299,116,000
- Land, Buildings & Equipment: $108,440,000
- Other: $28,425,000
- **Total Assets**: $476,331,000

### Liabilities & Net Assets
- Accounts Payable: $6,789,000
- Other Liabilities: $18,161,000
- Bonds & Notes Payable: $93,673,000
- Total Liabilities: $118,623,000
- Net Assets: $357,708,000
- **Total Liabilities & Net Assets**: $476,331,000

### Net Assets by Year

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<th>Year</th>
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<td>$340,000,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>$350,000,000</td>
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</tbody>
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ENDOWMENT PORTFOLIO MARKET VALUE AND INVESTMENT RETURN

Total Assets Over Time

![Graph showing total assets over time with asset allocation percentages]

- **25%** TOTAL U.S. EQUITY
- **22%** TOTAL GLOBAL EX-U.S. EQUITY
- **19%** TOTAL HEDGE FUNDS
- **9%** TOTAL REAL ASSETS
- **12%** PRIVATE EQUITY/VENTURE CAPITAL
- **9%** TOTAL FIXED INCOME
- **5%** TOTAL CASH AND EQUIVALENTS
Honor Roll of Giving

Connecticut College is moving forward with fresh ideas and a new curriculum, Connections, a reinvention of liberal arts education that builds on our historic strengths. Because of the loyalty and generosity of the entire Connecticut College community, the 2016-2017 Connecticut College Fund reached a record $6.0 million with total cash gifts of $14.9 million. To all those listed in the following pages, please accept our sincerest thanks. Because of you, Connecticut College is preparing courageous, thoughtful citizens who will put the world together in new ways.

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Melanie Hughes Alavi ’93
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Paula A. Alex ’66
Hadiya Alexander
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William Alford and
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Matthew Aljian ’94
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Cynthia Abell Allyn ’63
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Mary Riddell MacMullen '43
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Margaret Macri '85
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Arms* ’39 P’67
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Miriam Taylor Beadle* ’22
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Margot Wickham Body* ’39
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Jacqueline Chadourne*
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Christensen* ’51 P’87
Katherine Wenk
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Mary Harrington Congdon ’50
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John K. Dennis* P’66 GP’91
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