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**Ericka L. Kurt** Small World Initiatives

**Winnie Yu Ng** Southern Connecticut State University

**Hope Utterbeck** Liberty Bank

**Carolyn Alessi** Trinity Health of New England

**Amanda Grover** NuCor

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**Leah Frazee** Central Connecticut State University

**Erika Taylor** Wesleyan University

**Darwin Kovacs** The Hartford

**Dr. Nikitoula Menounos** Connecticut Technical High School Systems



Colleen Bielitz, left and Carolyn Alessi, right

and girls. This year's award was custom designed by students at Vinal Technical High School's school of carpentry and precision machinery.



**Lt. Governors- Computing Challenge**

The Lt. Governor's Computing Challenge is a statewide coding competition for Connecticut students. The "Coding for Good" challenge is open to all students who can enter on their own or as a team through their schools and through informal education partners such as the Girl Scouts, the Y's, Girls Who Code Clubs and other after school programs. This challenge is inspired by the work of the [Governor's Council on Women and Girls: Subcommittee on Education and STEM](#). This Challenge would not be possible without the support of our partners and [sponsors](#).

**STATE HIGHLIGHTS**

**New State Leader Announced for Million Women Mentors CT Chapter**

Colleen Bielitz, PhD Associate Vice President, Strategic Initiatives and Outreach, at Southern Connecticut State University. Many thanks to our outgoing State Leader, Carolyn Alessi, Trinity Health of New England for her great work in establishing and building up this Chapter!

**Annual Stand Up for STEM Awards**

The 2023 Stand Up for STEM Mentorship award reception took place at the state-of-the-art Connecticut Center for Advanced Technology's robotics lab. The event was held in May to honor those who have made an impact in STEM as mentors and

advocates for women and girls. Commissioner, Charlene Russell-Tucker shared remarks along with the Lt. Governor and Executive Director, Tim Laron of the Office of Higher Education. This year we created a new award category, Male Ally Award, to recognize the role men play in mentoring women







## MENTORING HIGHLIGHTS

Daniel Felix was one of our first Mission Moment speakers at our Steering Committee meeting in 2021. She shared about her journey to becoming a mechanical engineer after being inspired by the Marvel movies. As a Black, Haitian engineer, she found it challenging at first to find her footing and almost quit after her first 3 years in the field. Charntell (Panashé) Mgubo, a first year, first generation mechanical engineering major at Central Connecticut State College sent an email request to our National MWM Chapter looking for a mentor. We immediately connected her with Daniel and they have had a very fruitful experience. Here are some of Daniel's reflections.

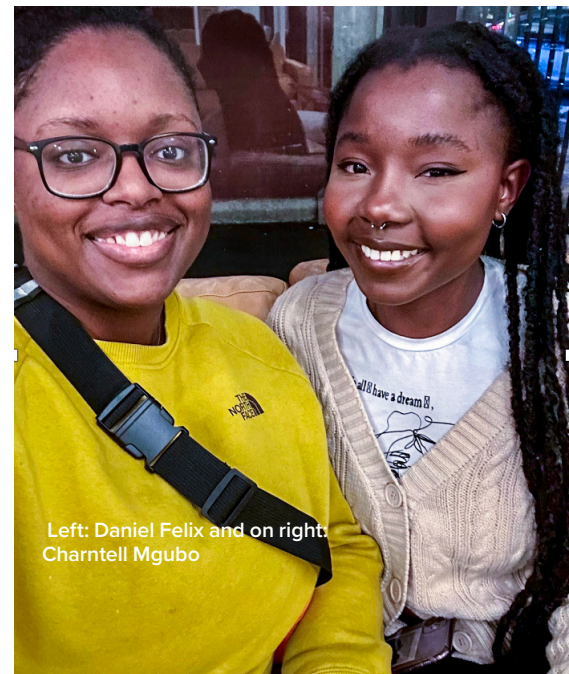
I have been an engineer for 7 years, I currently work at Pratt & Whitney, and am part of a mentorship program with the Million Women Mentoring program. It has been a great honor and pleasure to work with Charntell, a smart, young woman from Botswana. She is studying at CCSU to become a mechanical engineer and has a bright future ahead of her. It has been wonderful working alongside her, discussing dreams, goals and plans for her future as an engineer while navigating some of the hardships that can come as a college student. I have enjoyed getting to know her and can definitely say that we've built a great rapport as we've discussed her journey over lunch or tea at Starbucks, for example. As a mentor, it's very rewarding to see that some of the experiences I've endured (at her stage) and shared has been beneficial to her and I am so excited to see her continue to grow. Needless to say, this has been a great experience.

## 2022-2023 HIGHLIGHTS

The State of Connecticut has been actively promoting and supporting the participation and achievement of young women in STEM fields. Here are some of the things that

have happened in the past year:

- The Connecticut Science Center launched its Women in Science initiative, which encourages girls and young women to pursue studies and career paths in STEM and celebrates the achievements of women in the sciences. The initiative offers various programs and events, including the Women in Science Leadership Awards.
- The Connecticut Women's Hall of Fame hosted a STEMFEM event at BioCT, a bioscience innovation hub, in June 2023.



Left: Daniel Felix and on right: Charntell Mgubo



The event gave middle school girls a chance to participate in hands-on activities led by women in STEM professions, such as biotechnology, marine biology, and engineering. The event also featured a panel discussion with female leaders from BioCT and other bioscience companies. The hands-on STEM activities were delivered by professional women in STEM careers who work at Pfizer, Medtronic and Loureiro Engineering.

- The Connecticut State Board of Education launched its STEAM website, which provides resources and information for young women and girls who are interested in science, technology, engineering, arts, and math. The website features a map of STEAM activities, events, internships, camps, and careers across the state. The website also showcases research and data on the gender gap and the benefits of STEAM education for women and girls.
- The Office of Higher Education led the Education and STEAM subcommittee of the Governor's Council on Women and Girls, which aims to encourage educational advancement for women and girls in STEAM fields. The subcommittee partnered with various organizations and institutions to provide access to STEAM programs and opportunities for young women in CT.
- The Connecticut Department of Education partnered with the



Connecticut Center for Advanced Technology to host the Girls of Innovation Challenge, a one-day event for girls in grades 7 and 8 who have a passion for science and technology. The event featured interactive workshops, a science quiz, and a team challenge to solve a real-world problem using STEM skills.

- The University of Connecticut School of Engineering hosted its annual Women in Engineering Day, a free event for high school girls who are interested in engineering. The event included hands-on activities, lab tours, panel discussions, and networking opportunities with female engineering students and faculty.
- Southern Connecticut State University hosted a virtual reality summer academy for students in the New Haven School district.

With a focus of getting young women into STEM fields, Dr. Colleen Bielitz led this one-day workshop to highlight how new technologies will impact the world and the need to get more young women into the field of XR Technology.

#### UPCOMING EVENTS

Southern Connecticut State University will also be hosting a Women in Bioinformatics two-day workshop, November 2-3, to bring together researchers from computer science, data science, mathematics, statistics, biology, biotechnology, and chemistry to present their research in the interdisciplinary field of Bioinformatics. Encouraging more women researchers to engage in this field and to create career mentoring to support junior researchers and students. [Women in Bioinformatics Workshop - Southern Connecticut State University \(southernct.edu\)](https://www.southernct.edu/women-in-bioinformatics-workshop)