CCCI Director: Christopher L. Kukk, Ph.D.

CCCI’s Governing Board: Susan Altabet (community member), Helen Bechard (SOAF rep), Dr. Stephen Dydo (community member), Karina Escobar (student rep), Dr. Kit Hinga (Prof. Studies rep), Dr. Casey Jordan (Ancell rep), Dr. Julio Matos (VPA rep) & recently elected Dr. Wynn Wilcox (A&S rep).

The 2014-2015 academic year was a year of connecting for Western Connecticut State University’s (WCSU) Center for Compassion, Creativity and Innovation (CCCI); we have been actively establishing connections to organizations within and outside the academic walls of WCSU. From assisting other academic institutions (ranging from Central Connecticut State University and the College of William & Mary to The Wooster School) in becoming universities and schools of compassion to collaborating with various government, law enforcement, education, and social services organizations as well as WCSU departments on projects that build compassion in the greater Danbury, CT area, CCCI has been partnering with other groups to foster discussion and promote activities that seek to improve the quality of life on and off campus.

Western Connecticut State University’s Center for Compassion, Creativity and Innovation, founded in mid-2013 with seed money donated by His Holiness, the XIV Dalai Lama, is dedicated to the mission of expanding opportunities and supporting teaching, research, and intellectual discourse, exploring the values of compassion, creativity, and innovation for undergraduate and graduate students, faculty, and staff across all academic disciplines, working whenever possible with people of all communities.

CCCI has been involved in many opportunities to widen its circle of academic, civic and socio-economic involvement. Those opportunities include the following:

On the WCSU Campus:

- CCCI hosted its annual conference titled “Compassionate Strategies for Mental Wellness” on October 11, 2014 in coordination with WCSU’s Counseling Center.
CCCI has its own website with links to research and global educational initiatives on compassion. http://www.wcsu.edu/compassioncreativity/

CCCI also has a Facebook page and a Twitter account: @cccicompassion.

**Student Involvement:**

- To help alleviate the suffering of the area’s homeless population, CCCI collaborated with WCSU’s Creativity and Compassion Club, WCSU’s Honors students, Wooster School’s Compassion Club, Unger Industrial and local hotels and dentists to fill 50 backpacks with hygiene, first aid supplies, and snacks.

- Dr. Kukk and students from WCSU have worked with students at the Wooster School, the University of Hartford, Central Connecticut State University, the College of William and Mary, and other schools to create Compassion Clubs and to help them to become schools/universities of compassion.

- CCCI is working with WCSU students, the City of Danbury and the Danbury Garden Club to create a Compassion Garden at City Hall to represent the diverse communities of this city.

- Dr. Kukk delivered the closing speech on 17 September 2014 for WCSU’s Social Work Professional Development Day on “Social Workers Raising Mental Awareness.” Kukk’s speech was titled “The Difference between Compassion and Empathy.”

- Dr. Kukk led a discussion over the winter break (2014-2015) on compassion during the Resident Director and Resident Assistant training for WCSU’s Housing Department. Dr. Kukk also provided talks and workshops on compassion at Pinney, Grasso and Litchfield Halls during the year.

- CCCI sponsored a student led social work event in April 2015 called “RACE” with guest speakers from around the state discussing race relations.

**Faculty Involvement:**

- CCCI co-sponsored with the Department of Justice and Law Administration an April 2015 event on “Forgiveness.” CCCI and JLA hosted Rev. Walter Everett and Michael Carlucci for the evening discussion—Mr. Carlucci had murdered Rev. Everett’s son.
• CCCI co-sponsored with The Ancell School of Business a day’s worth of talks and activities with Dr. Ron Nahser in the fall 2014 semester. The day was part of Ancell’s Sustainability, CSR and Ethics Forum titled “Ethics in Business: Challenges for a Changing World.”

• Dr. Kukk was a guest lecturer for an HPX course on wellness. The 26 March 2015 lecture was about compassion’s effect on overall health and success.

In the greater Danbury community:

• Several area business leaders have been active in helping CCCI focus on fund raising and networking to bring awareness about the Center’s mission to our region.

• Each year the CCCI hosts a conference on Creating Compassionate Communities. The conferences have had a broad focus to encourage participation from all constituents from the local, national and international communities. The speakers and workshops have had a broad appeal and encompassed diverse areas such as art, education, government and the sciences.

• CCCI assisted the City of Milford, CT in becoming the second city of compassion in our state. CCCI worked with Milford throughout the summer of 2014 to help them become a city of compassion in September 2014.

• CCCI has been working with the Department of Children and Families (DCF), Danbury Hospital and several police departments (Danbury, Brookfield and Redding) in preparation for applying for a Department of Justice grant that would measure the effect of compassion training on first responders.

• CCCI hosted an art reception in May 2014 at Gallery@287 in Danbury that wove compassion with creativity through the art of Bryn Gillette. The event was called “Haiti, Beyond the Ruins.”

• We have been asked by DCF to help them create a compassion module in their state-wide training academy curriculum.

• Dr. Kukk was a speaker for Gilead Community Services and Wesleyan University’s “Meeting Mental Health Needs: A Compassionate Community Response” conference on 15 May 2014.
• Dr. Kukk delivered the keynote speech at the 2014 Annual Meeting of the Middlesex County Substance Abuse Council (10 October 2014). The speech was titled “The Compassionate Achiever.”

• CCCI’s Director gave the keynote speech at the 2014 Annual Meeting of the Danbury Garden Club on 17 October 2014 titled “The Compassion Garden.”

• Dr. Kukk facilitated a community discussion for the PBS documentary “Slavery By Another Name” at the Brookfield Public Library on 16 April 2015.

Nationally:

• Dr. Kukk assisted in creating the Jesse Lewis Empowering Educators Act introduced by Senator Blumenthal on 13 April 2015. Dr. Kukk delivered a speech with Senator Blumenthal about the important role that social and emotional learning plays in education at the ceremony announcing the Act.

• Dr. Kukk was part of a three-person panel at Southern Connecticut State University on 15 April 2015 to discuss the newly released documentary titled Kindness is Contagious.

• Dr. Kukk was the luncheon speaker for Sage College’s Mental Health and School Safety May 2014 Summit called “Concerned and Active.” The title of the talk was “Compassion: The North Star of Education.” He also provided a workshop after lunch titled “Creating Compassion in our Homes, Schools & Communities.”

• Stanford University School of Medicine republished on their website in April 2015 Dr. Kukk’s recent essay titled “The Compassionate vs. Empathetic Brain.”

• CCCI’s Director was the keynote speaker for the 12 August 2014 conference in Seattle, WA called: “From Sandy Hook to Seattle: Building the Compassionate Schools Movement.”

• Dr. Kukk led a 1.5 hours Charter for Compassion International conference call on creating compassionate based curriculum and schools. There were over 150 participants from several countries for the 21 May 2014 call.