

May 2026

Graduate Monthly

Newsletter



SOUTHERN CONNECTICUT
STATE UNIVERSITY

School of
Graduate &
Professional Studies

Graduate Programs with Purpose.



Welcome to the Graduate School's May Newsletter. Inside, you'll find event highlights, upcoming programs, and resources designed to support your success throughout the semester.

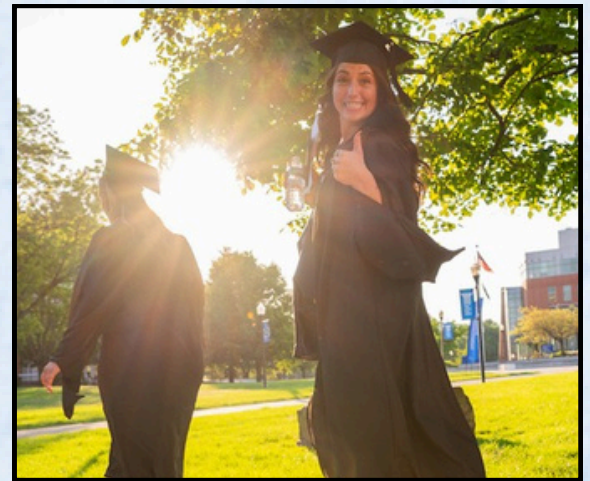
What's Next at SGPS

June 19th	No classes (Juneteenth)
July 14th	Last Day to Add/Drop Summer Session II
Aug 17th	Grad School Orientation
Aug 25th	Fall Semester Begins

Graduate Commencement 2026



A moment that represents countless early mornings, late nights, and unwavering commitment to something greater. The Southern Connecticut State University School of Graduate and Professional Studies is proud to celebrate the Class of 2026.. scholars, leaders, and changemakers who never stopped pushing forward. ✨



There is something quietly powerful about reaching a goal you once only dreamed of. To every graduate of the Class of 2026: your dedication, your resilience, and your passion have brought you here. What comes next is yours to define. Congratulations, and go forth with everything you've earned.

Congratulations Graduates!

FACULTY SPOTLIGHT

MAY 2026



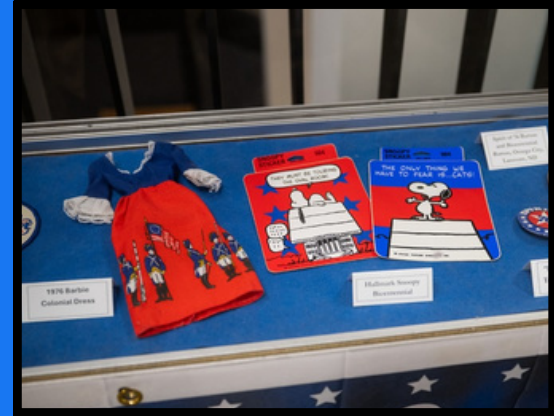
Dr. Jason Smith

Dr. Jason Smith: On Patriotism and Schlock

Professor Jason Smith might normally be surrounded by nautical charts, being an expert on naval power and the sea, but recently, at the Buley Library, he was surrounded by red, white, and blue schlock — M&Ms, cookies, cups, pins, flags, you name it. Even the Kraft Singles cheese food had star-spangled wrappers.

On May 6, 2026 at a reception for the opening of an exhibit that Smith's students of HIS398 curated, he explained the patriotic blitz. To study the 250th anniversary of American independence, the class collected mundane, disposable stuff from both 1976 and 2026. The exhibit is entitled "\$chlock2.50: Buying and Selling 'American'TM Patriotism in 1976 and 2026."

The project was inspired by a student-based exhibit from Professor Jesse Lemisch who taught at SUNY-Buffalo in the Spring of 1976. He and his students collected "Bicentennial Schlock." Essentially, they were trying to see if the cheap red, white, and blue stuff weakened a true bond to the Revolution that Americans had, especially during the anxious 1970s. The era was criticized as the "Buy-centennial." That collection is housed at the Beinecke, at Yale.



"History has the power to save you, to save us."



Dr. Jason Smith: On Patriotism and Schlock

Smith and the HIS398 students had to update the definition of schlock for 2026 (under \$10). Their exhibit explores “how mass-produced goods and digital culture are branded and sold as American history.” Think about it: Connecticut “soldiers” who were British citizens at the time and mostly farmers, marched from as far away as Canada to Virginia, nearly starved, nearly froze, had limbs blown off, and got smallpox, if they were lucky enough not to die in battle or end up in horrific prison ships. What does that have to do with a Special Edition 1976 Barbie Colonial dress or a 2026 can of Arizona Liberty Lemonade?

A Grad Student Perspective

Lisa C. Brandes is a graduate student and adult learner in the American History Certificate program. She was part of the HIS398 class this spring. She noted that she “really enjoyed the collaborative learning with the team of undergraduate and graduate students (me), and the faculty member.”

She explained that they studied the memory of the American Revolution, the Bicentennial in 1976 and America's 250 in 2026 in terms of public history, meaning, and commerce.

“At first I was a bit concerned, as I was the only person in the class alive during the Bicentennial, including the professor. We all learned together through readings and projects. We each did an oral history project interviewing a family member or friend about memories of 1976, and researched state and national celebrations in 1976 before turning to plans for 2026,” she said.

“We also documented an overwhelming amount of “digital schlock” which did not exist in 1976, much of it AI generated - so Slop Schlock.,” she said. She said that the exhibit is “where commerce and patriotism meet.”

As a grad student, she plans on more writing and presentations in Summer -Fall 2026 to share what she’s learned. “I am thinking about how we might turn this into a digital module for public school teachers to use, as well,” she said.

At the opening reception in the Buley Library, Dr. Michael D. Hattem addressed such issues. He is an American historian who received his Ph.D. from Yale and is author of *The Memory of '76: The Revolution in American History* (Yale University Press, 2024).

Dr. Hattem spoke of a collective emotional connection to the American Revolution story by U.S. citizens that has caused it to operate like a national origin myth. He used the word “myth” in a Joseph Campbell way. (In the 1950s Campbell studied the world’s stories and noted similar stages in what became known as the “hero’s journey.”)

At the reception, he thanked Dr. Marie McDaniel, Chair of the History Department and the Dean’s Office of Arts & Sciences as well as the Buley Library. The exhibit, like so many things on Southern’s campus is the result of collaboration.

The exhibit is open to the public and campus community through mid-August. The curators would love conversation and debate about “\$chlock2.50: Buying and Selling American(tm) Patriotism in 1976 and 2026”; they ask that we use the chance to “evaluate our identity in the context of our shared, but complicated past.”

Lisa C. Brandes



GRADUATE OPEN HOUSE HIGHLIGHTS



Dawn Grimes and Teneka Mills of the School of Graduate and Professional Studies chat with **Rob DeMezzo**, Senior Director for Conferences, Events, and Student Affairs auxiliaries.



Dr. Younjun Kim of Business Analytics engages with a student at the Open House.



Dr. Thanh "Minnie" Hoang of the Master of Public Administration program speaks with a prospective student.



SGPS Dean Rabia Hos and Provost Julia Irwin listen to **Dr. Isabel Logan**, Associate Professor of Social Work and Executive Director of the Social Work and Law Enforcement Project (SWLE)

Thank you so much faculty and volunteer students!!

STUDENT SPOTLIGHT



Renato G. Cayuela

How have your DBA studies impacted your knowledge of organizational behavior? In other words, what are a few main things you have learned?

As I suspected based on my professional experience as a leader in Higher Ed IT, digital transformation and business resilience have less to do with technology itself and more to do with the socio-cultural aspects of an organization. Therefore, open communication, transparency, employee voice, and organizational trust are not simply "nice to have," but are a strategic approach to delivering high performance and positive business outcomes.

And, after all the pomp and circumstance, what will you do with your studies? How will the DBA influence your future?

I'm originally from Brazil and representing a minority in a position of leadership in Higher Ed IT, I must advocate for inclusive leadership where people from all backgrounds feel safe to voice their ideas and opinions as they are. This develops a sense of belonging that increases organizational trust, performance, and business outcomes. In my recent studies, it is clear that minorities like Hispanic and Black employees are more vulnerable in times of AI disruptions and layoffs; they are disproportionately impacted. Therefore, it's important that as a scholar and practitioner, I combine my personal experience, literature reviews, and applied research to raise awareness of these issues and help organizations develop strategies to address the key sociocultural aspects of building high-performance teams to drive business resilience.

"...open communication, transparency, employee voice, and organizational trust are not simply "nice to have," but are a strategic approach to delivering high performance outcomes."

Was it fun? Tell us anything about your experiences in the program.

It's been an amazing journey. Getting to interact with very experienced and capable faculty and my peer doctoral candidates, who come from different backgrounds and diverse industries, helps me expand my vision across non-profit and for-profit organizational challenges. Southern Connecticut State University is a world-class institution, and the facilities and resources of the Business School provide us with the perfect environment to thrive and grow in our personal and professional journeys. Thank you again for this opportunity.



Artists Among Us

MAY 2026

Parallel Practices exhibit at Lyman lobby

Four SCSU employee-artists spanning 40 years in Communications & Marketing



Isabel Chenoweth
University Photographer.

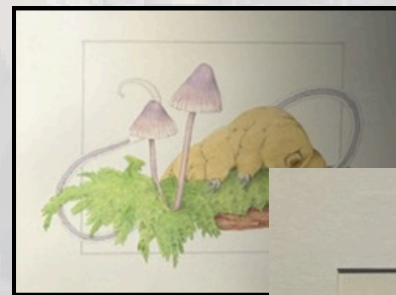
Marylou Conley
University Graphic Coordinator.



Tidal Zones

Isabel is intrigued with underwater life. She says that photographing tide pools is “a slow, precise, and meditative process. It can take hours to find the right confluence of light, activity, and composition during low tides.”

She reveals her studies in natural science illustration. She said the pieces in the exhibition are mainly the result of classwork through the Creative Arts Workshop in New Haven and the Natural Science Illustration Certification Program, Yale Peabody Museum/Connecticut Natural Science Illustrators.



Northern Climes

In this series, she has images from Iceland, Alaska, and northern Sweden.
“These climates, replete with ice fields, glaciers, and geothermal fields, encompass delicately balanced arctic and marine habitats that are increasingly affected by climate change.”

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Home Grown

Chenoweth, in this series, shows the mesmerizing beauty of cotton plants but muses on “a history fraught with brutality and violence, forced child labor, slavery, war, and destruction of natural resources through pesticide use and water depletion.”

Isabel Chenoweth

University Photographer, on her barnacle photo...

“When I first noticed the massive influx of baby barnacles in tide pools along the Long Island Sound, it became a personal challenge to photograph them. I was fascinated. At the cyrid and juvenile stages, barnacles less than 2 mm long appear as light dots on rocks and shells. They’re smaller than sesame seeds. It’s easy to walk past and never even know they’re there. You have to get on your hands and knees and examine the tide pools closely to find them.

To photograph these tiny organisms, I use a macro lens and a small bendable tripod for the camera and a remote trigger for the shutter. I position the lens as close to the water as possible. I then light the pool using one or two video lights also on small bendable tripods. The lights bring out vibrant colors of the bacteria and seaweed in the tide pools that otherwise look dull and dark through the brackish water. ”

Artists Among Us

MAY 2026

4/ 40 Parallel Practices Gallery

Four SCSU employee-artists spanning 40 years in Communications & Marketing



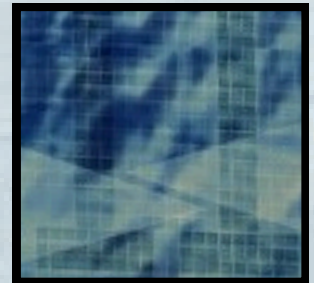
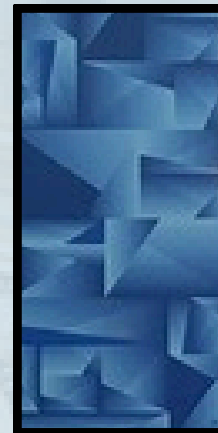
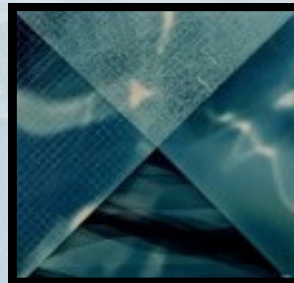
Mary Lou Conley



Joy Bush

“Parallel Practices is a testament to what happens when creative disciplines intersect and when artists are genuinely part of the community they serve. These are colleagues who show up for our graduate students, collaborate with our school, and now invite all of us into their artistic vision. This exhibit exemplifies the kind of cross-disciplinary exchange that elevates not just the work on the walls, but the intellectual culture of our entire university,”

Dean Hoş



Barbara Kagan

At present, **Isabel Chenoweth** and **Marylou Conley** work in the Integrated Communications and Marketing Department, known as ICM. **Barbara Kagan** and **Joy Bush** spent many years working at SCSU.

That’s their professional life, their work. This showcase is about them as artists, letting us see what they were doing or are doing “on the side.”



Phi Kappa Phi Induction Ceremony



On Friday, May 1, 2026 SCSU's Chapter 365 of the Honor Society of Phi Kappa Phi held its inaugural Initiation Ceremony. Phi Kappa Phi is the nation's oldest and most selective all-discipline honor society. The society's mission is to cultivate a community that celebrates and advances a love of learning.



Student initiates for 2026 are: Risana Ahmed, Christina Bates, David Lee Bowbeer, Lisa C.O. Brandes, Nicholas Brenckle, Tahnee Cookson Muhammad, Ludmila de Paula, Joshua Dublin, Fabiola Elias, Susan Garlington, Ian Henderson, Taimara-Sydnei Hoffler, Ian Hugo, Chrystal Long, Jesuca Maurice, Russhell McDuffie-Vines, Neesha Melendez, Kristin Mendoza, Kaelyn Elizabeth Moses, Marina Pappas, Latrice Peterson, Joann Lorena Quinde, Kaitlyn Elisabeth Rose, Katarzyna Shamshad, Samuel Trumbley, and Emmanuel Xonu.

Faculty and Staff initiates for 2026 are: Dr. Mary K. Boudreaux, Dr. Sandra Bulmer, Dr. Cheryl C. Durwin, Dr. Marian A. Evans, Dr. Rabia Hos (Communication Officer), Dr. Jessica Garcés Jensen (Secretary), Dr. Heather Kuhaneck, Dr. Venezia Michalsen (Vice-President), Dr. Frances Penny, Dr. Sergio Perez, Dr. Michael Rogers (Treasurer), Dr. Kelvin E. Rutledge, Dr. Saira Hanif Soroya (President), and Dr. Tracy M. Tyree. (Chapter Officers noted.)

In Case You Missed It

*May 1st
First Friday Meeting



Our final First Friday Meeting of the semester brought together graduate students for a meaningful wrap- up to a successful series.

Our GSGA First Friday Meetings continue to support graduate students across all programs by fostering community building, leadership development, advocacy, and stronger connections to campus resources.

We recognized our dedicated GSGA representatives by presenting Fulfillment Certificates to students with strong participation throughout the semester. The final meeting concluded with a group photo of Dean Hos and our GSGA students, capturing the spirit of collaboration that defined this year.



Visit our Grad Events Page!
grad.southernct.edu/event

Graduate Research and Creativity Conference May 4th, 2026

On May 4th, graduate students from across disciplines gathered at the Hilton C. Buley Library to share original research, creative projects, and scholarly work. The annual Graduate Research and Creativity Conference once again proved to be a highlight of the academic year! Full of curiosity and collaboration.



Opening remarks set the tone for a day of inquiry and exchange.

Thank you to the School of Graduate and Professional Studies, the Hilton C. Buley Library, and the Writing Center for making this event possible.



Turkish Airlines raffle winners; Erin O'Brien and Sage Maier



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*Interested in presenting next year? Watch your inbox for the Call for Proposals this fall.

Resource Spotlight: Buley Library

Are you looking for a quiet place to study for finals?
Do you have research questions that need answering?
Would you like an extra set of eyes on your paper?

Buley has it all!

Hilton C. Buley Library
377 Fitch St, New Haven, CT
libguides.southernct.edu



View the Buley Library Webpage for
resources and more information
[Buley Library](#).

Thank you for reading!

Have a great summer! See you back in August!



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