



### **COMMITTED TO TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION**

Our progress is driven by constant innovation that creates new markets and growth opportunities.

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Congratulations to the **Medtronic** women recognized as finalists in the Connecticut Technology Council's Women of Innovation.

We're proud of your achievements and the impact you are making in medical technology.

> Medtronic Further, Together



#### **WELCOME!**

On behalf of the Connecticut Technology Council, welcome to the 2024 Women of Innovation® Awards. We are honored to uphold the mission and excited to continue the tradition of this event!

Now in its 19th year, the annual Women of Innovation® program is central to the Council's mission to unite and support CT's tech community, and to its commitment to advocating the value of diversity and equity for sustained growth and impact. Each year, the WOI program recognizes women innovators, role models, and leaders in science and technology professions, including outstanding young women in high school and college pursuing technology and science studies. They excel in their respective fields and occupations, breaking new ground and glass ceilings with their impressive accomplishments.

Our vibrant network of over 800 women expands each year to include the significant contributions of our honorees. The work these extraordinary women pursue, the leadership and mentoring they provide, and the innovation they produce is worthy of recognition and celebration. The class of 2024 is no exception. This year's 45 finalists were selected from nearly 100 wellqualified nominees. They represent scientists, researchers, academics, manufacturers, student leaders, entrepreneurs, and technicians. Our judges - experts from across STEM disciplines and occupations – had a difficult task to discern among the many deserving nominees. Finalists from around the state were selected based on their commitment to innovation and their accomplishments in science and technology, independent research, as well as academic achievement and community service.

At CTC, we recognize the importance and impact of the STEM fields in our daily lives. The finalist bios, included in this program, show hard work, passion, drive and dedication. Tonight we announce our 2024 winners in eight Innovation & Leadership categories: Academic, Community, Corporate-Large, Corporate-Small/Medium, Entrepreneurial, Research, Collegian and Youth. Join us in congratulating them all tonight! Meet and congratulate our finalists during the networking reception. Connect with the young women at the threshold of their careers. Visit the Women of Innovation® website, www.ct.org/ womenofinnovation and learn about our upcoming programs. Reach out to get involved in this important mission.

Carrying on the Women of Innovation tradition is possible because of the support of our sponsors and the dedicated efforts of our committee, staff, judges, and volunteers. We are grateful for each of you. To the CTC Board of Directors and Executive Committee and members, thank you for your commitment to this event. To our nominators, partners and event attendees - thank you for helping us keep the momentum of the event.

The Connecticut Technology Council is committed to upholding the Women of Innovation legacy, and to promoting equity and diversity in technology and science. Enjoy the celebration and see you in 2025 for our 20th Anniversary!

MS (rwin

Milena Stankova Erwin **Executive Director, CTC** 

**Giovanni Tomasi** Board Chair, CTC





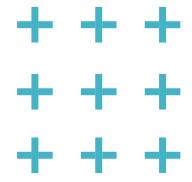
A statewide 30-year-old member-based trade association, The Connecticut Technology Council (CTC) unites the state of Connecticut's technology ecosystem, serving as a dynamic platform for idea exchange and resource sharing. The CTC connects across sectors, firm sizes and business models, to drive innovation and growth in Connecticut's tech sector.

The CTC offers exceptional networking, learning, and promotional opportunities, connecting a diverse network of technology leaders, educational institutions, government agencies, non-profits, and service providers. Members gain access to a dynamic community of influential tech leaders, founders, business owners, and partners. Through exclusive, invitation-only forums and signature events, the CTC addresses key technology issues and trends, providing valuable insights and opportunities for knowledge sharing among industry experts and peers.

### Programs include:

- CEO roundtable
- Professional roundtables
- Seminars on topics of interest (Cybersecurity, AI, HR, Leadership)
- Panel discussions
- Networking events.

Contact us and join our community! For more information, visit <u>www.ct.org</u>.



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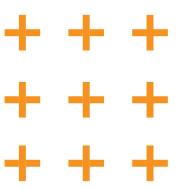
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# We are proud to sponsor the 19th Annual Women of Innovation Awards. axinn Axinn, Veltrop & Harkrider LLP | axinn.com Carillon Technologies is proud to support the Connecticut community and sponsor the 2024 CTC Women of Innovation Awards Congratulations to all the winners and nominees

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### THE COMMITTEE



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CT TECHNOLOGY COUNCIL

Where Connecticut's
Tech Leaders Connect
& Innovate

As a proud host of Women of Innovation, we are pleased to offer you a 10% discount on a new 2025 CTC membership.

Offer is valid for event attendees only until December 31, 2024. Contact us at <a href="mailto:hello@ct.org">hello@ct.org</a> for details!

### 19<sup>™</sup> ANNUAL WOMEN OF INNOVATION AWARDS EMCEE

### SARAH CODY | NEWS 8

For more than 20 years, Sarah Cody has been sharing stories about interesting places and inspiring people throughout Connecticut.

At WTNH News 8, Sarah serves as weekend morning anchor. She also produces and reports two weekly segments, 8 Things To Do This Weekend and Connecticut Families. She loves meeting folks around the state who advocate for their kids while raising awareness about important topics.

Before coming to News 8, Sarah worked at Fox 61 for 18 years, producing and hosting the popular Mommy Minute and DayTrippers segments. She also covered breaking news events, such as 9/11. For a time, she spearheaded an Arts and Entertainment series, interviewing celebrities such as Jon Bon Jovi, Kid Rock, Jewel, Jessica Simpson, Julie Andrews and Martin Short.

Often tapping into her own experiences, Sarah wrote a parenting column for the Hartford Courant.
Additionally, she contributed home and travel features to Hartford Magazine.

After graduating from Trinity College in Hartford, Sarah began her media career at 7 News in Boston, where she was an assignment editor, satellite producer, and field producer.

Sarah is the proud recipient of three Emmy Awards, and has received a Food Allergy Hero Award, a Mental Health Media Award, and a Local Leader-Local Legend Unsung Hero Award. She enjoys contributing to local events with organizations such as March of Dimes, Hartford Hospital and the YMCA of Greater Hartford.

She lives on Connecticut's gorgeous shoreline and enjoys combing the beaches with her husband,



Paul, sons Sam and Ben, and rescue dogs, Lucy and Jack. You can also find Sarah snapping a picture or reading a book. But her favorite hobbies will always be swimming, skiing, or playing ping pong with the kids!

### **AWARDS AGENDA**

### 4:30 - 5:30 pm

**Networking Reception** 

#### 5:30 - 6:30 pm

### **Awards Ceremony**

- Opening remarks and CTC Welcome
- Keynote: Daniel O'Keefe DECD Commissioner
- Medtronic (Platinum Sponsor) Welcome
- Finalist Recognition & Winner Announcements
- Closing Remarks

#### 6:30 - 7:00 pm

**Networking and Finalist Photos** 





### COMMISSIONER, DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT CHIEF INNOVATION OFFICER, STATE OF CT

#### DANIEL H. O'KEEFE

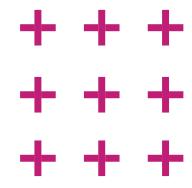
Dan O'Keefe was nominated by Governor Ned Lamont as Commissioner of the Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD) in November 2023. He previously served as the State's first Chief Innovation Officer since July 2023, and has continued in this additional role. He serves as a passionate advocate for the economy and communities throughout Connecticut, focusing on economic growth, workforce development, vibrant communities and job creation

Prior to entering public service, Dan was a technology investor for 25 years, investing in high growth, innovative companies in the software, consumer and fintech markets, companies that went on to create tens of thousands of jobs.

In announcing his appointment, Gov. Lamont said: "Dan's background helping innovative companies grow will be a huge asset to our administration and the state as a whole. He has a deep understanding of how to foster an environment that supports economic growth. His insights and expertise will ensure we are making the right strategic decisions when it comes to strengthening our competitive position – both now and in the future."

O'Keefe also serves as a Board Member and Chairperson Emeritus of The Opportunity Network (www.OppNet.org), an education and career-skills focused non-profit reaching over 40,000 high-potential students from historically marginalized communities. He holds an MBA with High Distinction (Baker Scholar) from Harvard Business School, where he served as President of its Alumni Board, and an AB from Brown University, where he serves on its President's Leadership Council.







### **CATEGORY:** Large Corporate Innovation & Leadership

**EMILY DAVIS** Engineering Director, Released Product Engineering, Medtronic

Emily leads Medtronic's Released Product Engineering team within the Robotic Surgical Technology Business Unit. She has been with the company for 15 years, starting as a development engineer for Covidien's Surgical Innovations business. Emily received her Bachelor's degree in Biomedical Engineering from the University of Connecticut in 2006 and her Master's degree in Material's Science and Engineering from the University of Connecticut in 2013.



**ANNA MERCALDI** Senior Engineer/Process Chemistry & Surface Engineering, Pratt & Whitney, An RTX Business

Anna is a senior engineer in the Process Chemistry & Surface Engineering group who specializes in material compatibility, platings, and cleaning of various aerospace alloys. She serves as an engineering adjunct and Alumni Board of Directors member at the University of New Haven. Anna is a CT native and resides in Wethersfield with her fiancé, Michael, and dog Rambo.



**CATHERINE PRATT** *Program Manager, HyAxiom, Inc.* 

Catherine has 17 years of experience in engineering complex systems from thermal controls for NASA's Orion and reactor design for the International Space Station to green energy designs utilizing fuel cell power. In her current role as a Program Manager, she leads an interdisciplinary team through product development and manufacturing of a zero-emission fuel cell power plant. Catherine holds a B.S. in Chemical Engineering and an M.S. in Systems Engineering.



**LAURA RACKLEY** Senior Manager, Electrical Engineering and Continuous Improvement, Fuel Cell Energy, Inc.

Laura is a senior manager of electrical engineering and continuous improvement at Danbury-based FuelCell Energy. Born and raised in Alaska, Laura earned dual chemical and electrical engineering degrees. She's known for championing a culture of continuous improvement across FuelCell Energy's engineering team. Her graduate work on Alaska-based power systems at the University of Washington fueled her passion for clean energy innovation.

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### THE FINALISTS





**MELISSA SAMUEL** GTF-Advantage Deputy Validation Manager, RTX - Pratt & Whitney

Melissa is a 17-year professional at Raytheon Technologies with a B.S. in Mechanical Engineering, an MS in Engineering Management, and an MS in Business Administration. Melissa is the GTF-Advantage Deputy Validation Manager, providing strategic leadership to validation stakeholders in executing the successful operation of this latest aero-engine program for higher thrust, improved efficiency and lower carbon emissions for the Airbus A320neo and industry's goal of net zero carbon emissions by 2050. She enjoys kickboxing, karate and reading books.



**MARIA SMEREKANICZ** Advanced Programs Program Manager, Sikorsky, A Lockheed Martin Company

Maria is a Program Manager leading an innovations team dedicated to developing advanced materials and manufacturing technologies for next-generation aircraft. Her work aims to reduce cost and maintenance and enhance sustainability. As a leading expert in composite technology, Maria holds a B.S. in Materials Science and Engineering from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, an M.S. in Technology Management from Fairfield University, and has received the Defense Manufacturing Technology Achievement Award.





CATEGORY: Small/Medium Size Business Innovation & Leadership

SHERYL GOUGH Associate Director, Oncology/Biology, Arvinas, Inc.

Sheryl is a program and team leader in PROTAC drug development for the treatment of cancer. Prior to Arvinas, Sheryl was a Fellow at the NCI/NIH, Bethesda, MD, with Dr. Peter Aplan studying hematological malignancies. Sheryl received her PhD in Cancer Genetics from the University of Otago, New Zealand, under the mentorship of Dr Christine Morris.



**SARA HARARI** Associate Director of Innovation and Senior Advisor to the President & CEO, Connecticut Green Bank

Sara develops and supports new programs to deploy green infrastructure across Connecticut. She co-chairs the Connecticut Innovations Advisory Council and is a founding board member of ClimateHaven. Previously, Sara worked to accelerate the adoption of clean energy, with a focus on ensuring equitable access. She holds an MBA from the Yale School of Management, an MEM from the Yale School of the Environment, and a B.S. in Civil Engineering from Tufts University.



**CHRISTINE KURTZ** Senior Project Manager, Wright-Pierce

Christine is an environmental engineer in the water and wastewater industry with a passion for people. Experienced and creative, she offers an unique perspective while providing professional consulting services to municipal clients. She helps her clients meet regulations to protect and improve our environment while managing cost impacts to their water and sewer customers. Christine co-chairs an Employee Engagement Committee and mentors younger engineers for growing personally and within the industry.



**ANNA MUMFORD** Cybersecurity Consultant

Anna applies her cybersecurity and technology expertise to safeguard small and midsize Connecticut manufacturers and guide business leaders in critical cybersecurity regulatory compliance implementation. She oversees cybersecurity practice at CONNSTEP, the NIST Manufacturing Extension Partnership (MEP) center, providing education and support to the CT ecosystem. Anna holds a master's degree in cybersecurity management from Purdue University and a bachelor's degree in computer science from Eastern Connecticut State University.

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### **Propelling the Future with Targeted Protein Degradation**

Are you driven by innovative science? We're hiring! We are Arvinas, a New Haven-based clinical-stage biotechnology company leading the way in the development of targeted protein

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### P DAY PITNEY LLP

Day Pitney proudly supports the 2024 Women of Innovation® Awards and congratulates all winners. We are inspired by their leadership and innovative achievements.

Learn more about how **Day Pitney supports** women's professional growth.



Boston | Connecticut | Florida | New Jersey | New York | Providence | Washington, DC



FuelCell Energy applauds the 2024 Women of Technology honorees!

Proudly CT-based for >50 years

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### **Congratulations 2024 Women of Innovation Honorees**

Thank you for your important contributions and impact in Connecticut and beyond.

Continue to lead & inspire!



The Green Bank's mission is to confront climate change by increasing and accelerating investment into Connecticut's green economy to create more resilient, healthier, and equitable communities.

Learn more at ctgreenbank.com.

### THE FINALISTS

### **CATEGORY:** Small/Medium Size Business Innovation & Leadership (continued)



### **VAISHALI SHAH** CEO & Owner, The Coder School Connecticut

Vaishali opened the first Coding for Kids after-school program in Connecticut in October 2018, for ages 7 to 18. Since then, her company has expanded to two other locations in Glastonbury and Cheshire, now looking to open their fourth location. Vaishali started her entrepreneurial journey by helping spread STEM awareness to youth and girls and creating internship opportunities for college students. Since then, Coding for Kids has taught over one thousand students.

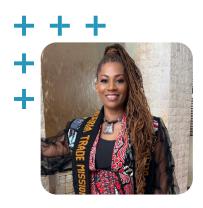


**SUSAN WINKLER** Executive Director and Vice President, CT Insurance and Financial Services

Susan represents the workforce and business interests of 25 major insurance and financial services [IFS] companies in Connecticut, including P&C, life/retirement, and health insurers, financial services companies and service providers. Susan provides strategic direction to a Board of Directors including public-private, high-priority projects of workforce development and business recruitment to bring net new jobs to the Insurance Capital of the U.S. Her work recently led to an international partnership between Connecticut and the U.K.to build Insurtech solutions for the insurance industry.



### THE FINALISTS



### **CATEGORY:** Entrepreneurial Innovation & Leadership

**CHERIE GRIFFITH-DUNN** Founder and CEO, Cyproteck Inc.

Cherie is the founder of Cyproteck Technologies Inc. and CGD LLC. She is known for her ambitious vision to revolutionize cybersecurity and digital security solutions. Cherie has led her companies to the forefront of technological advancements, driving growth and fostering a culture of innovation. Her ventures aim to enhance digital security, making her a pivotal figure in modern technology.



RIGU GUPTA CEO and President, PiroGon, Inc.

Rigu is a serious entrepreneur with decades-long experience in the MedTech industry. Prior training at Johns Hopkins has endowed her with critical leveraging of skills and knowledge to create innovative strategies, improve operational efficiency, and drive revenue. Licensing groundbreaking technology and research from Yale University, she has built an impressive team leveraging Al and ML technologies to reimagine business models. Her current venture aims at stopping deaths from pneumonia.



**KHAMANI HARRISON** Founder, The Key Bookstore

Khamani is a California native, book lover, and founder of The Key Bookstore, an interactive platform for Book Lovers to buy books, build community, and stay immersed in Reading Culture. Khamani attended her dream school at the University of Connecticut School of Environmental Engineering, later discovering her ancestry as a Malaga Island, ME descendant. Her vision is a world of book lovers leveraging technology to expand their connections to books and each other. She's currently raising \$350,000.



**JACQUELINE HEARD** CEO and Co-founder, ENKO Chem, Inc.

Jacqueline leads Enko in its Al-informed work to revolutionize the crop protection industry by developing novel chemistries that increase farm productivity sustainably. Prior to Enko, Jacqueline was a venture investor at Anterra Capital, Monsanto Growth Ventures, and Flagship Pioneering. She has also held executive roles at Two Blades Foundation, CiBO Technologies, and Mendel Biotechnology. An AgTech leader, Jacqueline has forged new open innovation structures for agriculture by creating new companies using capital efficient models.



### **CATEGORY:** Research Innovation & Leadership

**IULIANA CERNATESCU** Senior Technical Fellow, Materials Characterization and Applications, Pratt & Whitney, An RTX Business

As the Sr. Technical Fellow for Materials, Iuliana is responsible for technical and strategic leadership of Materials Characterization. Iuliana has 20+ years of industrial experience in Materials Characterization. She holds a B.S. and an MSc in Physics and a Ph.D. in Materials and Solid-State Physics from Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest, Hungary. She is the author of numerous patents and peer reviewed technical publications, and is a former WOI Finalist.



**LIZA COMITA** Co-Director, Yale Center for Natural Carbon Capture, Professor of Tropical Forest Ecology, Yale School of the Environment, Yale University

Liza is a Professor of Tropical Forest Ecology in the Yale School of the Environment and a Research Associate at the Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute in Panama. She currently serves as the inaugural co-director of the Yale Center for Natural Carbon Capture, helping establish research and training programs to foster innovative natural climate solutions. She is also active in the Women in Science at Yale postdoctoral mentoring program.



**XIULING LU** Professor of Pharmaceutical Sciences, Associate Director of Center, Pharmaceutical Processing Research, University of Connecticut School of Pharmacy

Xiuling is an acknowledged leader in nanoparticle-based therapeutics and their product development. She has developed novel image-guided therapeutic nanoparticle systems to overcome significant challenges in cancer therapy. She has also made tremendous contributions to enhancing the fundamental understanding of delivery/treatment barriers of therapeutic agents, as well as translating and commercializing potential nanotherapeutics. Her contributions to science and service to the community have won her multiple local and national awards.



**KIMBERLY SAVIERS** Senior Manager & Team Lead, RTX Technology Research Center

Kimberly is a Team Lead who specializes in advanced technology for cooling electronics in the aerospace industry. She has leading roles in projects to improve energy efficiency of data centers, to advance heat exchangers for habitats in space, and to develop a motor for electric aviation. She holds a Ph.D. in Mechanical Engineering from Purdue University and has 10 issued patents along with 15 technical publications.

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### **CATEGORY:** Research Innovation & Leadership (continued)



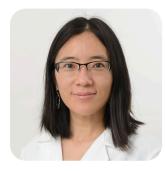
**TAMILLA TRIANTORO** Associate Professor of Business Analytics and Information Systems, Co-Director of the M&T Center for Women & Business, Quinnipiac University School of Business

Tamilla has directed programs in Business Analytics at Quinnipiac University and the University of Connecticut. Tamilla's expertise is in Artificial Intelligence, Human-Al Collaboration, and the Future of Work. She holds a Ph.D. from the City University of New York, is a council member of the Human-Machine Interaction Research Center, and is co-author of Converging Minds: The Creative Potential of Collaborative Al, published together with Aleksandra Przegalinska.



**ZONGJIE WANG** Associate Director, Eversource Energy Center, Assistant Professor, Dept. of Electrical and Computer Engineering, University of Connecticut

Zongjie joined UConn in 2021 after completing a post-doc at Cornell. As an Assistant Professor and Associate Director of the Eversource Energy Center, she specializes in advanced optimization algorithms for grid resilience. Since joining UConn, she has secured \$7.5 million in funding from DOE, NSF, Eversource, National Labs, and Grid Operators, including two competitive multi-million-dollar DOE projects in 2024. She has developed practical grid tools demoed by Eversource, ABB, and HydroQuebec.



YANJIAO ZHOU Associate Professor, Department of Medicine, UConn Health

Yanjiao is an associate professor at UConn Health. She received training in Medicine in China, Microbiology at Rockefeller University, and Bioinformatics at Washington University in St Louis. She was a lead data analyst for the Human Microbiome Project (HMP) and integrative HMP project. Her research has focused on the development of novel microbiome-based diagnostics and therapeutics for asthma, diabetes, multiple sclerosis, and aging.



Congratulations to the 2024

and life sciences industries, McCarter lawyers eliver innovative solutions for enterprises at

A History of Innovation

Women of Innovation Finalists



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# We're better together

NBT Bank is proud to support the organizations that make our communities thrive. We know that when we put our efforts together, everyone benefits — and that's what matters most.





### THE FINALISTS



### **CATEGORY:** Community Innovation & Leadership

**ELLIANNA BOOTHE** R&D Engineer II, Medtronic

Ellianna works on a team developing a next-generation surgical stapler, with responsibilities including building and testing complex prototypes and, more recently, supporting design tasks. Her interest in design has driven her to return to school for an M.S. in Mechanical Engineering while working full-time. Ellianna led local K-12 Outreach at Medtronic for two years providing meaningful STEM outreach to hundreds of students across the state.



MARCIA LAFEMINA President, Penn Globe

Marcia is a manufacturing professional and advocate who serves as the President and CEO of family-owned Penn Globe, the oldest outdoor lighting company in the U.S. She has led the company in developing innovative, environmentally and socially responsible lighting products for the municipal and college markets. Marcia serves the Board of Directors of the Workforce Alliance, ManufactureCT and the Shoreline Chamber of Commerce. She also serves as Chairman of the ManufactureCT Workforce Committee. She is a former WOI Finalist.



**MARALIS MARTINEZ** Data Analytics and Quality Assurance Manager, The CT Alliance to End Sexual Violence

Maralis began her career as a Medical Laboratory Scientist and worked in various hospitals in CT. Learning of the amount of data produced, she quickly became curious about health analytics and public health. She completed her MS in Business Analytics and Project Management at the University of Connecticut. Her work involves leading the data analysis plan, oversight of data governance, and surveillance of metrics for survivors of sexual violence programs.



**JENNIFER PASCAL** Associate President in Residence and Associate Department Head, Dept.of Chemical and Biomolecular Engineering, University of Connecticut

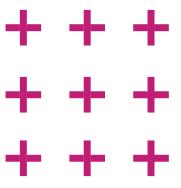
Jennifer Pascal earned a B.S. and a Ph.D. in Chemical Engineering from Tennessee Technological University. She was a National Institutes of Health Academic Science Education Research Training Postdoctoral Fellow at the University of New Mexico where she focused on cancer research and taught at a tribal college. She has been a faculty member at the University of Connecticut since 2016, where she teaches in the Chemical and Biomolecular Engineering department.



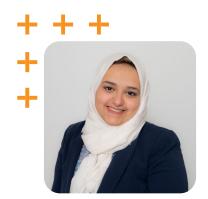
### **CATEGORY:** Community Innovation & Leadership (continued)

**BETH WELLER** Director of Operations, The Children's Museum & Preschool and Roaring Brook Nature Center

Beth received her B.S. in Wildlife Management and has worked in horticulture and informal STEM education. Currently, Beth leads a team whose mission is to inspire life-long learning among children and their caregivers through experiential STEAM opportunities and focuses on delivery within at-need communities. She chairs the New England Museum Association Children's Museum Professional Group and serves on the Executive Committee for an Agricultural Education supporting organization working with high school students.



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### **CATEGORY:** Academic Innovation & Leadership

SAMA ABDULMALIK Postdoctoral Fellow, Dept. of Orthopedic Surgery, UConn Health

Sama is a post-doctoral fellow in the orthopedic surgery department at the University of Connecticut Health Center, with experience in biomaterials research focused on tissue engineering, regenerative medicine, and drug delivery. Her long-term goal is to be a faculty member who conducts cutting-edge research in biomedical science and engineering while contributing to the teaching and mentoring missions of the university.



LYNN BYERS Professor of Mechanical Engineering and Mechanical Engineering Program Director, Quinnipiac University

Lynn led the development and accreditation of the new mechanical engineering program at the School of Computing and Engineering at Quinnipiac University and served as the department chair and interim dean. She holds a Ph.D. and serves on the ElevateHER advisory council and the Connecticut Invention Convention board. She is a licensed Professional Engineer and a helicopter and airplane pilot.



**CAROLINE DEALY** Associate Professor, Orthodontics, Dept. of Biomedical Engineering, Department of Orthopedic Surgery, Department of Cell Biology, School of Medicine, **University of Connecticut** 

Caroline is a University of Connecticut alum and 30-year UConn Health faculty member. She is a serial startup founder working on cures for osteoarthritis. She holds a Ph.D. and has created educational programs engaging hundreds of Connecticut students in R&D internships. Caroline is the workforce lead for QuantumCT, the state's quantum technology initiative, a member of CASE and a founding member and peer mentor chair of CT-Women in Bio. She has received UConn's 2024 Provost's Outstanding Service Award and is a former WOI Finalist.



**FUMIKO HOEFT** Campus Dean and Chief Administrative Officer, UConn Waterbury

Fumiko is Professor, Campus Dean, and CAO of UConn Waterbury and the former Director of UConn's Brain Imaging Research Center. She holds a Ph.D, and is a renowned neuroscientist specializing in learning and dyslexia who has transformed UConn into a global research hub for neurodiversity. With numerous federally funded projects, she fosters STEM innovation and inclusivity through programs like the NSF PhD in Educational Neuroscience and USDA NextGen. Fumiko is celebrated for her leadership and community engagement.



Women who are building now are building the future.

Congratulations to the 2024 Women of **Innovation finalists** and winners.



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# WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP

The University of Connecticut College of Engineering is proud to launch its Jeanine Armstrong Gouin Initiative for Women in Leadership. Gouin is a UConn Engineering alumna, UConn Trustee, and president of an environmental engineering firm. Gouin's endowment will provide financial support for leadership programs and activities that are available to all engineering students.

s.uconn.edu/gouin-initiative



### CT Tech Council 19th Annual: **Women of Innovation Awards Finalists:**





Snigtha Mohanraj

Congratulations to all the finalists for their remarkable dedication and groundbreaking innovation!





### THE FINALISTS





JASNA JANKOVIC Associate Professor, Materials Science and Engineering Dept., University of Connecticut

Jasna's research focuses on clean energy, and her teaching on STEM education. She has more than 25 years of experience in clean energy, more than 50 publications, two patents, and two provisional patents. Jasna is a recipient of a number of awards in Canada and the U.S. for research and teaching.



**WENDY KU** Career & Technical Education Dept. Supervisor & Technology & Engineering Education Teacher, Simsbury Public Schools

As an educator, Wendy has spearheaded various STEM initiatives, including the 8th Grade Girls in Engineering program, Freedom Pen-a-thon, and the CT HBRA Architecture Student Design Competition. Wendy holds a Ph.D. Her efforts have earned her accolades such as the Special Congressional Recognition from Johana Hayes and the FOX61 Student News Feature Award (2021); she is the 2022 Challenge to Educational Citizenship Award statewide winner.



**JORDAN WISSINGER** Instructional Coach - Technology, Hartford Public Schools

When the pandemic hit, Jordan transitioned from her 13-year role as an ELA teacher to become Hartford Public Schools' Instructional Technology Coach. She has been innovative for the district: She single-handedly introduced Scholastic Esports and developed a Networking, Al, and Cybersecurity pathway. A Distinguished NASEF Fellow for 2023-24, Jordan integrates advanced tech into K-12 curricula. Working closely with staff and students, she ensures engaging, relevant courses, passionately preparing Hartford students for bright futures in STEM and related fields.



**CATEGORY:** Collegian Innovation & Leadership

**EMILY BALBONI** Recent Graduate Student, Quinnipiac University

Emily is a recent graduate with a B.S. in Software Engineering and a minor in Math. Her passion for building a supportive community for young girls learning about STEM led her to join the campus Girls Who Code (GWC) chapter and later serve as president. Emily currently works for The Hartford as a software engineer in their Leadership Development Program and continues inspiring girls through working with the GWC nonprofit organization.



PATRICIA HARE DMD/PhD Candidate, UConn School of Dental Medicine, UConn Health

Patricia is a dentist-scientist in training interested in translational research and scientific outreach. She studies antibiotic treatment failure in Dr. Wendy Mok's lab and has published four first-author manuscripts, has spoken at national and international conferences, and received multiple awards for her work, including an NIH fellowship and the Lepow Award. In and outside the lab, Patricia enthusiastically mentors young scientists and volunteers with educational programs like the Connecticut International Society for Horticultural Science.



TVESHA PARIKH PhD Graduate Student, Biomedical Sciences, UConn Health

Tvesha is currently a Ph.D candidate in Biomedical Sciences program at UConn Health. She is a curious and passionate individual who uses a multidisciplinary approach to understand how clinically identified point mutations in the crucial protein phosphatase, Calcineurin, cause a rare neurological disorder in children. She uses her expertise in structural biology and biochemistry to define the specific molecular interactions between Calcineurin and its substrates that enable its critical role in neuronal cell signaling. Her research ultimately aims to help find a treatment for affected families and patients. In addition to her dedication to research, Tvesha is committed to training and mentoring aspiring women in science.



**LILLY PUBILLONES** Undergraduate Student, Trinity College

Lilly is majoring in Biochemistry and Mathematics and is working towards her undergraduate thesis, designing beta-sheet mimetics to interfere with disease-causing protein-protein interactions, in Dr. Timothy Curran's lab, since freshman year. Lilly is also coordinator of Quantum Society, an online science communication magazine, and is president of both the Trinity Chemical Society and the Trinity Ballroom Dance Team.

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### **CATEGORY:** Collegian Innovation & Leadership (continued)



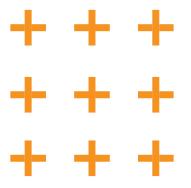
**PAULA-MARIE SIMPSON** *Undergraduate Research Student, Southern* Connecticut State University

Paula-Marie's research is "The Analysis of the Inhibitory Effects of Cannabinoids on Acetylcholine Esterase via Computational Docking, Kinetic Assay and Virtual Reality." The study encompasses analyzing various cannabinoids in their potentially therapeutic application for symptoms correlated with age-induced neurodegenerative diseases.



**LAXMI VOBBINENI** Undergraduate Student, UConn Health

Laxmi is a junior studying Biomedical Engineering. She is a student researcher in the Kumbar Lab at UConn Health, pursuing her interest in regenerative medicine. Laxmi also pursues her passion for engineering by serving on the board of directors of the non-profit "Tolland County Robotics Foundation", contributing to the start of 48 K-12 robotics teams. Laxmi hopes to continue to explore the intersection of engineering and medicine in her future endeavors.





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### CONGRATULATIONS

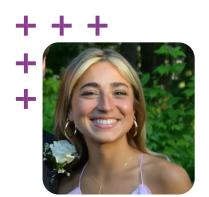
Congratulations Connecticut Technology Council Women of Innovation Awards finalists including

### Liza Comita, PhD

Professor of Tropical Forest Ecology, Yale School of the Environment and Co-Director, Yale Center for Natural Carbon Capture

### Yale YALE VENTURES





### **CATEGORY:** Youth Innovation & Leadership

**GRACE GUGLIELMO** High School Student, Wilton High School

Grace is a dedicated learner in and out of the classroom. She pursues her passion in biochemistry by taking rigorous classes and conducting private research with Sacred Heart University professor Emily Barth on her school water fountain system. Inspired by her love of STEM, Grace also betters her community with the Little Miss Einsteins program, bridging the gender gap by igniting a passion for STEM in young girls.



**ANGELA HUMPHREY** High School Student, Joel Barlow High School

Angela, a rising senior in high school, is Head of Programming and Electronics for the FIRST Robotics team. She helps to organize and run STEM events for the Redding-Easton community, and is also a mentor for Random Hacks of Kindness Jr. Outside of STEM, she is also Head of Lighting and Publicity Director for her school's theater, and president of her school's Habitat for Humanity chapter.



**SNIGTHA MOHANRAJ** *High School Student, Engineering and Science University* Magnet School

Growing up in New Haven, Snigtha noticed educational disparities and the lack of diversity in research competitions. This led her to make STEM education accessible for underrepresented students by providing resources, mentorship, and opportunities. Snigtha conducts independent research developing water contaminant removal methods. Her work has earned recognition as a Rise Global Winner, Top 50 Finalist in the Chegg.org Global Student Prize, International Science and Engineering Fair finalist, and US Senate Youth Program Delegate.



PRESTHIKA VIJAYKUMAR High School Student, Glastonbury High School

Presthika is a senior in High School. She is active in community service and school clubs. She serves as the President of the Medical Club and Helping Hands of Glastonbury Club, and volunteers at Hartford Hospital. She is conducting research on autism at UConn Health. She competed in Connecticut science fairs and presented at a neuroscience conference. Notably, she is planning to pursue a career in neuroscience research.



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### Congratulations to the 2024 Women of Innovation Finalists!







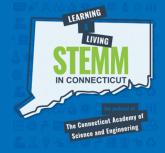






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### **CONGRATULATIONS**

to all the finalists and winners celebrated tonight at the CT Tech Council's 19th Annual Women of Innovation

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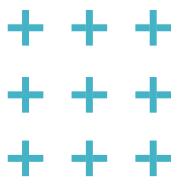
#### **WOMEN IN STEM**

- Women make up only 35% of the workforce in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) - the greatest disparities occurring in engineering and computer sciences (NSF, 2021)
- Globally, women comprise only 29.2 % of the STEM workforce in 146 nations evaluated. compared to nearly 50 % of non-STEM occupations (Global Gender Gap Report, 2023)
- Women in STEM earn annual salaries nearly \$15,000 lower than men: Latina and Black women in STEM earn around \$33,000 less. (Pew Research Center, 2018)

### **TECH AND INNOVATION** IN CONNECTICUT

- Home to 6,800+ technology establishments, ranging from health IT to quantum computing. These create 61,000+ tech jobs across the state. Tech state GDP - \$9.2B (Lightcast, 2022)
- #4 in the U.S for having the most innovative economy. (Bloomberg State Innovation Index, 2020)
- #4 in the U.S. for Knowledge Jobs. (Information Technology Innovation Foundation, 2020)





## Congratulations 2024 Women of Innovation®

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You represent the best and brightest in UConn's academic health care, research, and education.

Thank you for your leadership keeping our institution on the forefront of innovation and excellence.

We applaud each of you for your outstanding achievements improving the nation's health and paving the way for future women and breakthroughs across academic health care and science.

A special thanks to the Group on Women in Medicine and Science (GWIMS) at UConn Health.

### Yaniiao Zhou MD. Ph.D..

Associate Professor, Medicine. School of Medicine

### Sama Abdulmalik Ph.D.,

Postdoctoral Fellow, Orthopedic Surgery, School of Medicine

### Caroline Dealy Ph.D.,

Professor, Orthodontics and Biomedical Engineering, School of Dental Medicine and Orthopedic Surgery and Cell Biology, School of Medicine

### **Patricia Hare**

DMD/Ph.D. Candidate, School of Dental Medicine

### **Tvesha Parikh**

Graduate Student, Ph.D. in Biomedical Sciences Program, Graduate School

### Laxmi Vobbineni

UConn Undergraduate, Kumbar Laboratory, School of Medicine



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### The Children's Museum Group

Which finds innovative ways to deliver experiential STEAM education to children across Connecticut.



For their nominations

Women of Innovation Awards

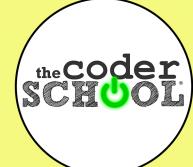




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