

### Press Release

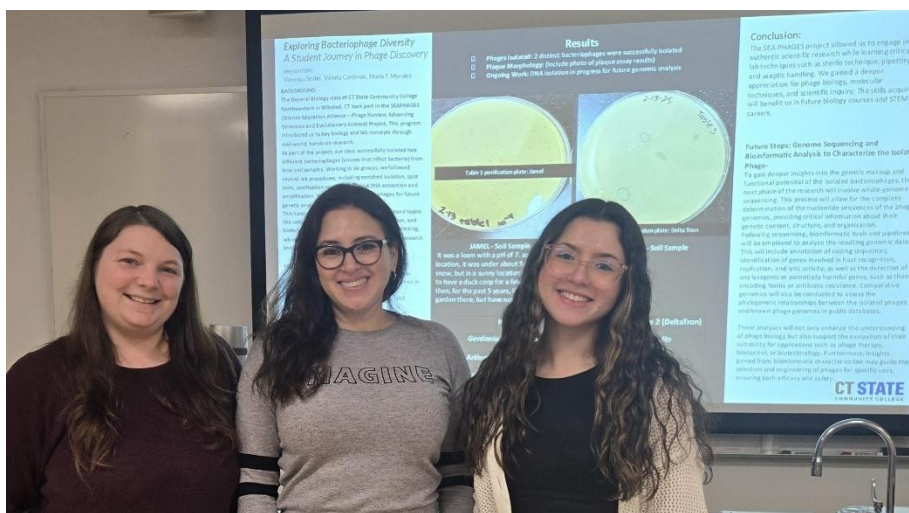
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For Immediate Release  
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## CT State Northwestern Students Present at the National SEAPHAGES Symposium

Winsted, CT – CT State Northwestern students Vanessa Szabo, Maria Morales, and Valeria Cardenas presented a poster about the work they did to discover new bacteriophages and the impact it had on their learning during the SEAPHAGES Symposium in April. SEAPHAGES stands for Science Education Alliance - Phage Hunters Advancing Genomics and Evolutionary Science. Bacteriophages, also known as phages, are viruses that infect and replicate only in bacterial cells and are being studied as a way to combat antibiotic resistance.

The poster the students presented described how their class successfully isolated two different bacteriophages from soil samples collected from the local environment. The bacteriophages that the students found will be sent to project director, Dr. Hatfull's, lab at the University of Pittsburgh where he and his team will determine the DNA sequence and add them to their growing arsenal of phage to be used as potential lifesaving therapy.



Left to right: Renee Dunbar, Marie Morales, and Valeria Cardenas. Vanessa Szabo not present.

Szabo and Morales are pre-nursing students and Cardenas is studying psychology. All are students in Renee Dunbar's General Biology laboratory class, where they participated in the SEAPHAGES project throughout the semester. Dunbar is a graduate of Northwestern and participated in the SEAPHAGES project as a community college student as well. She knows first-hand the positive impact that participating in course-embedded research projects has on student learning.

"This project provides an experiential learning opportunity that reinforces the biological concepts that students are learning in the lecture course," said Dunbar. "Students gain a deeper understanding of cellular mechanisms, biotechnology, evolution, structure and function of biological macromolecules, and the role of DNA in heredity and evolution as they learn how to isolate, purify, and culture bacteriophages. They also develop their critical thinking skills and their ability to apply their knowledge to real word scenarios," she said.

The course-embedded research projects at CT State Northwestern are supported by the National Science Foundation Advanced Technology Education grant #1801062. This grant supports the *Engaging Students from Classrooms and Camps to College and Technical Careers* program run by Professor Sharon Gusky. Contact Professor Gusky at [sharon.gusky@ctstate.edu](mailto:sharon.gusky@ctstate.edu) for more information on STEM Research at Northwestern.