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PERFORMING PROFESSORS ROCK THE STAGE

SEC BAND SENDS SENIOR SCIENCE MAJORS OUT WITH BANG - OR A SONG.

by [Kelli Caplan](#) | October 14, 2024*Read time: about 2 min*

For six Christopher Newport professors, their daytime jams are solidly focused on physics, computers, science and engineering.

But when they are not in the classroom, they can often be found rocking it together to the tunes of past and present. They temporarily shed their professorial titles, grab an instrument and cut loose, an upbeat alternative to the usual focus on theorems, formulas and concepts.

Formerly known as the PCSE Band, they now call themselves the SEC Band, named after the school in which they teach, the [School of Engineering and Computing](#) (built on the foundation of the former Department of Physics, Computer Science and Engineering). The band's name isn't flashy or hip; it's pragmatic, fitting for scientists who spend their time teaching complex scientific and mathematical quandaries. Don't, however, assume that the band's humdrum name defines its energy and intent. It doesn't come close. The band practices throughout the year at the home of Lab Technician Ron Hanchin, honing their skills and learning the tunes they play together. The band performs only once a year, at the Senior Capstone Exhibition and Software Fair, where graduating students showcase their research and projects on the last Friday of classes in April. They take to the stage for students, both to entertain them and to celebrate their successes and the culmination of years of hard work. They set a tone of celebration, knowing how hard the seniors have endeavored to reach this point.

"We like to send them off in style," said Hanchin. "We want them to leave with a great feeling."

In addition to Hanchin (who plays bass), members of the faculty band include Dr. Christopher Kreider (guitar), Professor Daniel Belsky (vocals), Dr. David Gore (guitar), Dr. Roberto Flores (drums), and Dr. Scott McElfresh (sax).

Physics Professor Ed Brash and Hanchin started the band years ago as entertainment for homecoming tailgate parties before the football game. From there, it developed into something more organized and the tradition of playing at the fair took root.

Since 2013, the SEC Band has been a mainstay at the capstone event. Some years, students and a member of the Industry Advisory Board have even played with the band.

Its repertoire is far reaching, with the song selection geared toward the collegiate crowd. Last year, they played “Good Riddance” by Green Day.

“The kids loved it,” Hanchin said.

Flores said performing to such an enthusiastic crowd, “makes us feel like rock stars in the room.”

The band not only entertains, it also exposes a different side of the SEC faculty and CNU as a whole. It drives home that faculty are invested in their students, Flores said.

“I think one of the things that makes CNU special is how we relate to our students, not just in classes,” Flores said. “Overall, I feel our department is a close-knit community. It’s a great environment.”

Not only has the band strengthened bonds within the department, it has exposed a lighter, more fun side of a department that is traditionally focused on complex and serious subjects.

The performances have broken down barriers, showing a side of professors that students don't expect to see.

“I think it shows the importance of having some balance and spice in life. We are more than just experts in our field, which in SEC majors can seem pretty dry and nerdy,” said Kreider, who graduated from CNU in 2006 with a degree in [Information Science](#). “To be able to get out there and rock out for a bit while celebrating our seniors (many of whom I oversaw their capstone projects) is great.”

Kreider says the experience of performing has come full circle for him, as he used to play guitar in front of York River Hall as a Captain. “I graduated, went to grad school, and moved around the country. Moving back to Virginia and teaching at CNU is my literal dream job, and being able to play guitar back at my alma mater is just icing on the cake,” he said.

Kreider is not the only Captain for Life in the band. Belsky earned both his bachelor’s in [Computer Science](#) and [master’s in Applied Physics and Computer Science](#) at CNU.

“I hope students see that you can have both a professional job and a passion, and sometimes get to mix them,” Belsky said. “I think it does add to CNU, as we are here because we value a science education that is supported by liberal arts, and what better way than to practice what we preach?”
