

# WESTERN CAROLINA UNIVERSITY PARENT & FAMILY NEWSLETTER

THE OFFICIAL WCU ADVISING CENTER NEWSLETTER



## STAFF HIGHLIGHT MEET MARY FISCHER

ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR  
ADVISING CENTER

### Where are you originally from?

I moved around quite a bit as a kid, but I primarily grew up in the Los Angeles suburbs. Los Angeles will always feel like home because of my strong family connection there.

I attended college and graduate school in L.A., and worked at the University of Southern California and Mt. St. Mary's College while I completed my master's degree. After graduate school, I was excited to see more of the country and wanted to challenge myself personally and professionally. I worked for two years at the University of Missouri St. Louis, and then spent the next four years at Coastal Carolina University in Conway, South Carolina.

### How long have you been at WCU?

Since September 2020.

### Favorite color? Why?

Green. I find it energizing, but also grounding.

### What brought you to WCU? Why WCU?

So many things! It is important to me that I work for an organization and department that supports me professionally and personally. I have amazing colleagues in the Advising Center who support and challenge me as I continue growing as a professional. Their support is extremely meaningful to me, and it feels great to work for a department that values my contributions. I was also looking for a strong campus community. I love working at an institution where I get to know my students and feel that my work is impactful. Finally, I love living in Western North Carolina. It's a wonderful community here, and I love being able to spend so much time outdoors exploring!



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# STAFF HIGHLIGHT: MEET MARY FISCHER

## Favorite places to visit locally?

I love hiking in the Blue Ridge Parkway!

We also have a great coffee culture and amazing bakeries in the area. White Moon Coffee in Sylva, Dynamite Roasting in Black Mountain, and OWL bakery in West Asheville are just a few favorites.

The Orange Peel in Asheville is a great place to see live music.



## What is the Advising Center office like behind the scenes?

Everyone is invested in their students' successes.

We all work extremely hard, and love supporting our students. But we also like to have fun! There is a lot of joking and pranks behind the scenes. The Advising Center is a fun place to work.

## Major exploring process for yourself?

My major exploration process was a little haphazard. I had spent so much time in high school focused on getting into college, I really had not taken the time to consider what I would want study when it was my decision. I did not know how to begin to approach that, and I was very hesitant to ask for help figuring it out.

I started as an undeclared student, and I was very hesitant to commit to a major because there were so many disciplines I wanted to explore. I had a difficult time choosing one major to fully commit to. I was scared to choose the wrong major, so I just didn't choose. My first year, I spent a lot of time looking at course descriptions, and tried to work backwards to figure out what major would allow me to take the classes that I was most interested in. I used my general education classes as a way to explore majors, and continued to do so as a sophomore even after I had officially declared a major. I particularly enjoyed my literature and politics classes, but I also really loved psychology.

I ended up declaring a major in English literature on my transfer admissions application, of all places. I worried that not selecting a major would hurt my chances of being accepted, so I took the plunge. On the surface, the decision felt very calculated and unemotional. It was a means to an end, but if I was honest with myself, English always felt like the right fit. I got to read and talk about books all day every day, which I loved. I was comfortable speaking up in class. The classes tended to be smaller, seminar-style classes, and I connected easily with my professors and classmates. English was also a major that allowed a lot of flexibility within the degree; it offered different concentration options, which appealed to me. It also allowed me the opportunity to continue taking a lot of other classes outside of my major, so I got to take a lot of fun politics, international relations, and psychology courses on the side. It was important to me that I could continue exploring those areas too, and I wanted to have a balanced academic schedule where I was using my brain in different ways. In the end, I had exactly the college experience that I wanted.



## CENTER FOR CAREER AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SERVICES



**NOW IS THE PERFECT TIME FOR STUDENTS TO CONNECT WITH EMPLOYERS FOR FULL-TIME AND PART-TIME WORK, AS WELL AS INTERNSHIP OPPORTUNITIES – LIKE AT OUR UPCOMING CAREER FAIR – AND THE CENTER FOR CAREER AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT (CCPD) CAN HELP! THE CCPD OFFERS AN ARRAY OF RESOURCES AND EVENTS FOR STUDENTS AND ALUMNI TO HELP WITH THEIR CAREER AND PROFESSIONAL NEEDS**

**Check out a few here:**

### STUDENT RESOURCES

The CCPD also recently announced the Canvas Career Collection, an online resource for students. The Canvas Career Collection, which is located on student Canvas dashboards, consists of “mini” modules designed as optional lessons for students to explore at their own pace. The collection provides a virtual CCPD with 24/7 on-demand access for students and covers much of the same content provided in appointments and presentations. Students will learn key career development topics including major and career exploration; resumes, CVs, and cover letter writing; job searching strategies, with more to come! The collection also includes worksheets, TedTalk videos, and frequently recommended resources and strategies.

# CENTER FOR CAREER AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT



## UPCOMING EVENTS

More than **150** employers will attend this semester's Career Fair Plus event, hosted from **11 a.m. to 2 p.m. Thursday, March 17**, in the Ramsey Center. The largest career fair in WCU's history, this event features opportunities and connections for full-time and part-time employment, as well as internship, job shadowing, and volunteer opportunities. Additionally, the CCPD will host the Education Career Fair from **1:30 to 3:30 p.m. Tuesday, March 29**, in the University Center Grand Room.



# CENTER FOR CAREER AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

**Lastly, the CCPD is also hosting several career-related workshops:**

- **Using Summer to Launch Your Career: 4 p.m. March 21, in the Career Studio, Reid 150.**
- **Career Vision Boarding: 3 p.m. March 24, on the UC Lawn. This event will allow students to plan their future and career in a fun and creative way.**
- **Job Search Strategies for Graduating Students: 4 p.m. March 16 and March 24 via Zoom.**
- **Say What?: The Importance of Communication in the Workplace: 4 p.m. April 6, in the Career Studio, Reid 150.**



## Preparing for next steps

One of the newest services offered by the CCPD includes the Career Studio, a newly added space for students to receive assistance with resume and cover letter writing, job searching strategies, interview preparation, and more! And the best part is –no appointment is necessary! Students can drop-in at the Career Studio anytime between Noon to 4 p.m. Mondays through Fridays, located in Reid 150 (Students can also now GPS the location by typing in Center for Career and Professional Development into their favorite GPS app). Students may also make one-on-one appointments with a career counselor via their MyWCU.



# NAVIGATING THE MATH TUTORING CENTER

BY SIBLEY BRYAN

**DIRECTOR, MATH TUTORING CENTER**

The Mathematics Tutoring Center (MTC), located in 214 Killian Annex, is an associated service of the Writing and Learning Commons Group. We are located on the **second floor of Killian Annex**, and we are closely connected with the Math and Computer Science Department.

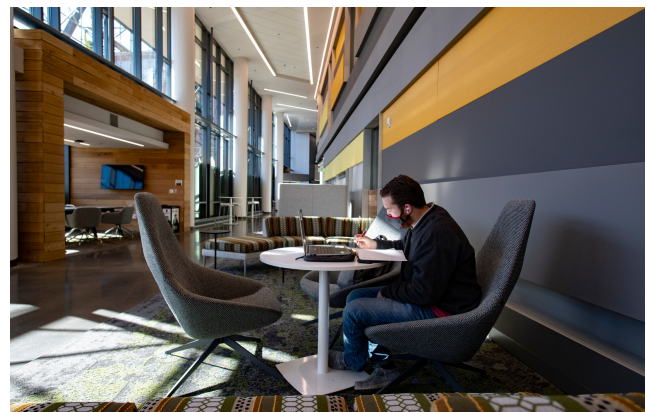
**MTC has a cup system for drop-in service which is pretty simple:**

**Take a seat anywhere in the center and you will see a blue cup on top of a red cup at any table; if you flip your blue cup to red, we know you have a questions and a tutor will come help you as soon as they can. It is important to remember to bring your notes, textbook, etc. so that the tutors can best help you.**

We are mainly a drop-in service, no appointments are necessary, and we are open from 9AM-9PM, Monday through Thursday and 9AM-5PM on Friday. We offer tutoring for all 100- and 200-level math classes, some 300-level math classes, as well as 100- 300-level Computer Science classes.

We are also a great place to work! If you do well in your math class(es) and want to look into becoming a tutor, email Sibley Bryan, MTC Director at [fsbryan@wcu.edu](mailto:fsbryan@wcu.edu)

We had 1,468 visits this past semester. That is up from when we were online; we had just over 600 visits last year, which hurt badly.



Before that (pre covid), we would get 6,000+ visits in a given year, so we get used a lot when things are “normal.”



# SURE TO RISE: CATAMOUNT HIGHLIGHT

MARCH 2022

Issue II



## MEET: ASHLEY GROSS

by *Carla Espinoza*

Position: **Writing And Learning Commons Tutor**

Major: **First Year Graduate Student in English - Creative Writing**

Hometown: **Rural Hall (Winston-Salem)**

### **Where are you originally from?**

Born in NY, 1993. Moved down to North Carolina, 1999, I believe, around the Winston-Salem area.

### **How has your adjustment been to the mountain region as a student?**

It's been really nice, I like it. I've actually done undergraduate twice, and my first time I got a degree was at App State, so also around the mountains, so coming here felt like a second home because I was used to that kind of environment. I really just like how open it is, or allows you to be.

### **What sparked your interest in become a tutor?**

Well I started studying Japanese here, and I studied abroad for about a year, so when I came back, my instructor, encouraged me and other people to become a tutor. And I thought it would be helpful, because I did a lot of tutoring, like I went to tutoring as a student, and it's hard to learn another language. If I could help people out a little bit and make them feel comfortable in their abilities, then why not give it a shot.

### **What has been your most rewarding experience as a tutor?**

Receiving feedback from students that I get on a regular basis, like they'll tell me 'I crushed that test; or I feel better about this concept, or just hearing what I've done in maybe 30 minutes.

# SURE TO RISE: CATAMOUNT HIGHLIGHT

## **What is your current plan on getting to your career goal?**

I'm excited to explore different avenues that creative writing could offer in the future, and with a background degree in Japanese, I wouldn't mind translating for authors in Japan or doing something similar to that. It's kind of up in the air right now, and that might be kind of silly at 28.



## **How has this experience as being a tutor assisted you with achieving your career goal?**

It's definitely helped me get a level of self-patience that I didn't have before. Especially if there might have been a moment where I was frustrated in my own goal, like going towards a certain career path, or getting into grad school. It was nice to reflect on the ways that I could be patient with myself, the same way I would be with a student I was tutoring, if that makes any sense. Like have some self-empathy for yourself when things get pretty rough.

## **What has helped you get through your time at WCU? Any tips for other students and their families?**

Honestly, I would say, open communication, whether it be with friends or family or even your instructors. Especially now with the ongoing pandemic, it's good to just have an open and honest dialogue if you're struggling, or you just need to vent, or you're having a good time, or just want to let that out, like making sure you're not bogging yourself with so much work that you feel trapped. And giving yourself time to communicate, and be a normal human being, and just live your life.





# Q&A

## With David Scales

**Assistant Professor of Psychology**  
**College of Education and Allied Professions**  
**Research Design and Data Analysis**  
**Independent Study**  
**General Psychology**

BY MATT SAWYER  
**ACADEMIC ADVISOR**

### Q Why is supporting undergraduate students so important to you?

These things are related. These things are all related. There were no programs like this at the University level anywhere in the nation that I'm aware of. Things like ASP support integrative programs to help students coming in who are first generation or have no role models, any number of demographic criteria that would put them at a disadvantage. So after my first three years as an undergraduate, the University of New Mexico threw me out. I took two years off working in a real world and realized, no, I don't like this. I know what I want. I'm not sure what I want to major in but I know doing this is not what I'm going to have to do. I had to figure out for myself how to be a student. Obviously, what I was doing before was failing.

And so I go back to the University of New Mexico. We got this documentation. It was verified there at the University, and we'll let you back in. I turned a 1.7GPA into a 3.6 GPA. By the time I graduated, I kind of had to start from scratch, but I was okay with that. I could have saved five years had there been a program like ASP for me. So when I finished my Bachelor's in 1997, I worked in the field for six years as a clinician inpatient psych facilities, going to graduate school at UNC-Greensboro, who had limited programs like this, none for graduate students by this point. Fortunately, I am mature enough to go for it. But as I was thinking about going to my graduate school, my lovely bride and I come up here to work. This is twelve years ago, almost 13 years ago now, and realizing I really wish something like that had been in place for me. If I'm going to teach, how am I going to support these students in a way that really not just makes the information meaningful to them, but lets them see that what they believe about universities and professors to be untrue? My heart just went right out of my chest and I was like, oh, you have my full attention here. I teach ASP because that's the population in a program I really want to work with.

### Q What do you hope your students carry with them when they leave your class?

- There is no such thing as a shy psychologist. That animal does not exist. You can have social interaction anxiety. No problem.
- Some of us do. I know I have an odd sounding voice, let's put it that way. I make the jokes about it up front. I have a speech impediment. I make jokes. Yes, a speech impediment makes me uncomfortable sometimes. But I also learn, if I make a little joke about it now, I can be a more effective psychologist. In my humble opinion, it makes me a better human. Second thing, my students will hear me say this a thousand times. Never be so arrogant as to assume that you're right. That's a bad way to look at the world. Never be so arrogant to assume that you're right. If you are 99% correct in something, what does that automatically mean? You're wrong. It's not correct because it's only 99% the scientific methodology across curiosity, skepticism, and most importantly, humility. There is where right and wrong comes back into it.

- Another thing, I want my students to walk away with: geek big or go home. Wear it where everybody can see it right here (pats his shoulder). Love what you do. Do what you love. Let a passion, because otherwise, it's a job. And who cares about a job? I mean, you can walk away from a job and never even notice. But there's a difference between a job and a career and a calling. A career is something you can do for 20 years, 30 years, get the gold watch, and still walk away. On the other hand, well, I'm a psychometrician. I'm a measurement expert. If I were employed in North Carolina State Research one Institute, I would be making almost four times as much as I make. Because we are a small regional teaching institution, I choose to be here. Because I found not just my niche but a series of niches, a series of places where I fit, and a series of things that I can do so I can do this. Feel good. And now I can move this thing over here. Oh, yeah, that's really good. And now I can walk in my classroom, drop mad science over some really fat beats. Feel really good about that. They give me money to do this, dude. They give me money to do this. I can't believe it.

# Q&A With David Scales

If I were teaching them life lessons, I like to think that all of us instructors of record, no matter what we do, we're giving them some kind of life lesson.



## Q Why do you love our University community?

First off, the size of the campus and the student body. Now, I've watched it grow a lot in twelve years, but it's still nice and small. It makes it a lot easier to develop personal relationships with other faculty and certainly with my students. I can't be faceless to them. If I'm faceless to them, I'm useless to them. They can't be faceless to me either, that's crucially important. They cannot be. I'll recognize the face even from here up in the age of the plague. And hey, how are you doing? Even if the name is gone. Hi, how are you doing? All right. There's going to be something that makes it very easy. It certainly helps that at least in our department we have very collaborative faculty here. I've been here for twelve years. We all get along really well. I love the cross-disciplinary and cross-collaboration.

There are so many possibilities here. And it's very easy to maintain relationships between faculty members and for the four years between faculty and students. And I love watching those relationships grow over time, certainly with the students. That's really nice. And I think it also sort of sells that investment, too. So think about where you were just two years ago. Do you remember when "fill in the blank," and you can actually remember that? Yeah. And I can remember.

• If I were at a Research I institution, for example -  
 • here's what you're going to do, here is what you're  
 • going to teach, and somebody else is going to be  
 • there. I have total control for my research agenda,  
 • how I teach my classes, who I choose to work with  
 • doing undergraduate research. I could do graduate  
 • research if I want, but they already got it. I want to get  
 • the undergrad and get them where they want to go. I  
 • have total control over it and it's brilliant. Absolutely  
 • brilliant. And then once they're gone, I get to follow  
 • them. (Points to picture on the wall) That's my very  
 • first graduate student in 2010 and to see where she is  
 • in her career now. She's finished her Ph.D. in Chapel  
 • Hill and is now working in Alaska. It's down in the  
 • southeastern archipelago, working with the Native  
 • American population because she is half Native  
 • American. She's been working there, helping them with  
 • an educational intervention there.

• It's all about what we are trying to achieve together. I  
 • want to take you somewhere. All I'm asking you to do  
 • is come along with me. You will like it if you're willing  
 • to walk. All it is -- we show you how to walk. Let's get  
 • there.



# LEADERS ON CAMPUS

**MEET**

**LANE  
PERRY**



**EXECUTIVE  
DIRECTOR**

**THE CENTER  
OF  
COMMUNITY  
ENGAGEMENT  
AND  
LEARNING**

**BY CARLA ESPINOZA**

**WHERE ARE YOU  
ORIGINALLY  
FROM?**

**TULSA,  
OKLAHOMA**

Specifically a small  
town called:

Oologah, Oklahoma

**IF NOT FROM WESTERN NORTH CAROLINA  
REGION, HOW HAVE YOU ACCLIMATED/ADJUSTED  
TO THE MOUNTAIN REGION/WCU?**

I've been at Western coming onto 10 years, and I made my way here by way of Oklahoma, but we took the long way home, I'd like to say. And so we went from Oklahoma to New Zealand, and my wife and I, Dr. April Perry, lived in New Zealand for a few years before moving here. And I found the transition to Western being, like I said, taking the long way home. The people are wonderful, the environment is so inviting, not only the built environment humans are responsible for, but also the natural environment of Western North Carolina. And so, it's just been a fantastic place, and a great decision for my family to move here, and to continue growing deep roots into this soil.

**WHAT ARE YOUR VALUES AS A LEADER? HOW DO YOU ENSURE THESE VALUES ARE UPHELD BY YOUR CURRENT ORGANIZATION, AND/OR EMPLOYEES?**

I study Spanish specifically, and there's a particular verb in Spanish that is *facilitar*, and *facilitar* means "to ease" as a verb, and so when you take a step back from that, I don't view leaders, as leaders by title, or even necessarily by actions sometimes. I like to think of leadership as facilitation, and if you think about what facilitation actually is, it literally means "to ease," so leaders exist to ease whatever it is that they're a part of. So you might then say, cool that make sense, but what do leaders ease? Well, first... people, they ease their relationships that exist across their teams, they ease the relationships they have with other people, who they are following and who they are leading, right, through a certain leadership approach, where a leader is a servant first. The concept of people, that something leaders facilitate with ease the dynamics that exist there. Leaders also ease policy, a lot of leaders craft policies, but they also interpret them, policies that are being used to guide the work we do every day. So leaders need to ease the crafting and policy which dictates our lives more than gravity does.



What's another one? Well, processes. Right? Well leaders are responsible for developing processes, and a lot of time, as processes either stymie or inspire creativity and ease of an experience. Like just applying to Western is a process, getting a service-learning course designed is a process, getting a student to engage is a process. These are all processes, and what do leaders do? They exist to facilitate or ease the dynamics of a process. This can be carried forth with programs, as a cornerstone, to help engage people, right, so they design programs, and finally leaders focus on perspective, that is the vision. And so what leaders, have to do, is they have to find a way to frame a vision of the future to make it easy for the person who is on that team, or in that community to see the potential in that same vision. So leaders ease perspective, programs, processes, policies, and people. And that's what leaders fundamentally exist to do. So my values are hinged on managing that and making it as easy as possible, for everyone involved.

**THANK YOU FOR EXPLAINING IT THAT WAY! I DON'T THINK I'VE EVER HEARD ANYONE DESCRIBE LEADERSHIP THAT DETAILED, SO THANK YOU!**

*Well if you're not making stuff easier, then you're making it harder, right, then what role do you have? And I've found myself in moments like that when I'm pushing really hard on a project, or an idea and I ask myself, are you making this easier or harder right now? And sometimes I make it harder, I'm not perfect, right, you set a standard of values, and you try to fulfill that and live that, but sometimes you realize, I think I'm making this harder right now, and you take a step back and you listen to what your team is saying, and you're like "Okay. Let's go in that direction." That's a lot easier. You know. And so I think it's a lot of balancing that. And it's not always easy, sometimes making things easier is actually quite difficult. But you find a way to manage.*





### WOULD YOU DESCRIBE YOURSELF AS A RISK-TAKER? DESCRIBE SOME OF THE RISKS YOU HAVE TAKEN AS A DIRECTOR AND THE RESULTS?

I teach entrepreneurship in the College of Business, and one of the cornerstones of being a successful entrepreneur like the first ways of departing from what you currently have, and from what you want, is your comfortability with risk. And I personally am not remarkably comfortable with risk, right, financially, with investments, personally, not remarkably comfortable with risk. Putting it all on red, or black on the roulette table, definitely not comfortable with that.

But where I found some comfortability for risk is when I listen to the students, and trying to figure out a way to do what they want to do. So for example to make that concrete, we brought a polling place to campus. That could have been a potentially risky thing to do, right, because it was perceived falsely that the Board of Elections did not want a polling place and falsely that the university did not want a polling place. Both entities were comfortable with a polling place, but the case had never been clearly built or articulated. At first glance, this seems like a sticky situation to get in the middle of.

Well, the students wanted a polling place, and they had a very strong argument for why to have it. So they developed a petition, and we got thousands of signatures, and went and presented our case to the Board of Elections, support letters from the university stating we want this and next thing you know, we got this approved, and we've had a polling place on campus for every election since 2016, right, and that's potentially a bit of a risky move, moving into that space, that wasn't predictable.

*Risk directly correlates to a persons comfortability with taking on a new order of things. And that's just a fancy way of saying, taking on change, and for me I'm not one who is overly risk inspired, I'm not paralyzed by risk and I try to take it in a calculative way, and usually, the thing that tips me over the edge, and let's go for it, is usually when the students are saying yes. Or if the students will benefit from that risky move, potentially, I'm all in.*





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# SAVE THE DATE

*The official WCU Advising Center newsletter*



## Pre-Registration

### Welcome New Catamounts!

Pre-registration for courses and Orientation registration will open on February 23rd. You must complete Preregistration to sign up for Orientation. You will see Preregistration under the to-do-list in your myWCU Portal.

New Student Orientation is a requirement for all incoming students at WCU. Whether you are joining us from a traditional high school, early college, community college, or other 4-year college or university, it is important to make sure attending Orientation is a top priority. During your Orientation session, you will get your class schedule, learn basic rules and resources, and have an opportunity to meet with a number of campus faculty and staff members.

Please let us know if you have any questions or concerns about the orientation process, our team is ready to help and happy to connect you across campus. Keep an eye on [orientation.wcu.edu](http://orientation.wcu.edu) for the latest information on upcoming orientation sessions. We look forward to welcoming you to the Catamount family in person soon!



## UPCOMING EVENTS

**March 18, 2022**

**Last day to drop with a "W"**

**March 2022**

**Summer + Fall 2022 Registration Opens**

**April 1, 2022**

**Financial Aid Office begins mailing award notifications**

**April 13-15, 2022**

**No Classes**

**April 29, 2022**

**Last Day of Classes**

**May 7, 2022**

**Commencement Ceremonies**

