

## Greetings from Cullowhee

### Message from the Department Head, Dr. Gibbs Knotts [GKNOTTS@WCU.EDU](mailto:GKNOTTS@WCU.EDU)

The department had another outstanding year of teaching, learning, and talking politics. The Political Science Club once again embarked on a favorite event of past undergraduates, a trip to the nation's capital. Students planned and organized a behind-the-scenes tour of the Pentagon, an inspirational visit to Arlington National Cemetery, and a mouthwatering trip to the famous Ben's Chili Bowl.

I continue to be amazed by the accomplishments of our current students. As just two examples, William Styles (BS 2009) served as a delegate to the Democratic National Convention in Denver, and MPA student Brenda Mills continues to garner statewide recognition for her excellence serving the residents of Asheville. For more student accomplishments see our "Student Spotlight" section below.

We were able to celebrate many of these achievements at our departmental banquet in April. We presented a number of awards and scholarships to some very deserving students (see inside for more details). Dana Harrell-Stansberry (BA 1995, MPA 1998), director of marketing and administration at the Land-of-Sky Regional Council, gave an outstanding keynote address.

The department's faculty members continue to garner considerable recognition for their many accomplishments. The "Faculty Spotlight" section will give you a sense of the great work being done by departmental faculty. I know you will



be particularly impressed with the work done by Dr. Collins's 2008-09 Civic Learning classes.

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## Student Spotlight

[Katy Elders](#) of Sylva was recognized as the department's Outstanding Sophomore.

[Megan Nante](#), of Webster was recognized as the Outstanding Freshman.

The Outstanding Major award went to Cullowhee's [Joshua Fulcher](#).

The Harold Rogers award went to [Katheryn Ballard](#) of Winston-Salem.

The Chan Carpenter Scholarship was awarded to [Katy Elders](#).

The Charles Stevens Scholarship went to [Hayden Smith](#) of Sylva.

[David Young](#) of Waynesville presented a paper at the annual meeting of the Southern Political Science Association in New Orleans, Louisiana.

Four political science students, [Tristan Artman](#) (Sharpsburg, Georgia), [Katy Elders](#), [Matt Neely](#) (Highlands), and [Logan Thomas](#) (New Bern), presented papers at the National Conference for Undergraduate Research in La Crosse, Wisconsin.

MPA student [Sami Disu](#) of Ghana completed an internship with the Buncombe County Board of Elections.



Greg Hirsh (Chapel Hill), Katheryn Ballard (Winston-Salem), and Trevor Robinson (Chapel Hill) atop Arlington Cemetery, April 2009.

### Greetings from Cullowhee (Continued from page 1)

In these courses, students designed and conducted a survey of WCU student opinion about the revitalization of Old Cullowhee. The project received quite a bit of media attention both on and off campus. I also want you to know about one administrative change—Dr. Chris Cooper has been named the second director of the Public Policy Institute. As I mentioned in the last newsletter, Dr. Gordon Mercer has begun phased retirement.

All of us continue to be very proud of the accomplishments of our alums. We have graduates doing great work in the public, private, and nonprofit sectors (see the “Alumni Spotlight” section, page 4). I am particularly excited to report that Todd Herms (BS 2005, MPA 2006) helped bring a \$1 billion (yes, that is billion) dollar Apple iDataCenter to the town of Maiden, North Carolina.

As always, our number one goal is to create meaningful learning experiences for students. These experiences would not be possible without the help of wonderful teachers, dedicated students, and support from our alumni and departmental friends. We are particularly grateful for a generous gift from Ken (MPA 1996) and Sherry (MPA 1996) Melton to help fully endow the C. Don Livingston scholarship fund.

If you have questions about the department, please do not hesitate to contact me or visit our Web site at [politicalscience.wcu.edu](http://politicalscience.wcu.edu).

Please keep us posted on new developments in your life and let us know if we can ever be of any help to you. E-mail us at [PSPA@email.wcu.edu](mailto:PSPA@email.wcu.edu).

## Message from the MPA Director

Chris Cooper

[CCOOPER@WCU.EDU](mailto:CCOOPER@WCU.EDU)

The MPA program at Western Carolina continues to establish itself as the go-to program for people who wish to affect the direction of Western North Carolina. The quality of our students has never been higher, and we have continued to maintain healthy enrollments. There are so many exciting things going on in the program right now, but I’d like to draw your attention to a few in particular.

Many of you likely remember sweating over your comprehensive exams. Chances are your memories of this experience aren’t real fond. Although we believe that comps had their value, we have decided to replace the comps with a capstone research experience where students will use their expertise to address a real-world problem in the public affairs arena. Students will present the results of these projects in a conference sponsored by the Public Policy Institute at the end of each semester. We think this experience will better prepare our students for the real world of public affairs. As one of our alumni, we hope you agree. If your organization has a need for such research, please drop me an e-mail and let me know what it is. Perhaps one of our students can help.

Our students once again received important recognitions this year. Brooke Crompton attended the North Carolina City and County Management Association meeting and received the Whicker Scholarship, an award for excellent students who wish to pursue a career in public service. Patti McFarland was the first WCU student in recent memory to receive a competitive scholarship from the North Carolina Association of Zoning Officials. Congratulations, Patti!

We were also pleased to continue our relationship with the city of Asheville this year. Brenda Mills and Bryan Fish received our joint scholarship offered to employees of the city of Asheville to help defray the cost of their MPA education. Brenda was also singled out as one of North Carolina’s



exceptional women by NC Magazine. We would be remiss if we did not note that our longtime contact with Asheville, Lewis Isaac, has retired. We’ll miss his goodwill, passion for government, and encyclopedic knowledge of tennis, but we’re pleased that Erika Germer will be helping us in the future.

One feature of the MPA program that we’re particularly proud of is that our students are taught both by full-time professors and full-time practitioners. For the past several years, we’ve been fortunate to have Jeff Richardson, assistant city manager for the city of Asheville, teach in our program. Jeff’s class is probably the most popular in our program, and students rave about his hands-on approach to teaching personnel administration. In the past few years, we’ve been able to add a very popular grant-writing class, taught by Paul Dezendorf. Paul is a highly successful and eclectic individual. He has a publication record that would make most full-time faculty jealous. He holds a doctorate in social work. He has brought in hundreds of thousands of dollars in grants, and he’s made a real mark on governance in the Carolinas. Finally, Andy Coburn is a nationally recognized expert in environmental policy. Andy brings years of practical experience and a Duke graduate degree to the table. Our program, our students, and our region are lucky that Andy is willing to give back by teaching environmental policy in the MPA program.

As one of our alumni, we hope you’ll share the pride we have in what our students and faculty are accomplishing. Of course we’re also proud of what our alumni accomplish. By using your degree to improve the world, you’re helping increase the quality of the students we recruit, the faculty we can hire, and the quality of the students we graduate.

## Faculty Spotlight

**Dr. Claudia Bryant** continues her good work with the WCU International Services and Programs Office. She coordinates faculty exchanges and spent Summer 2009 in Korea and Japan. Her paper on presidential body language, coauthored with Dr. Don Livingston and Sarah Kehrberg, received the Best Faculty award from the North Carolina Political Science Association.

**Dr. Todd Collins** was recently named the department’s Quality Enhancement Plan coordinator. He continues to advise pre-law students and has recently published articles in *PS: Political Science and Politics* and *White House Studies*. Students in his Civic Learning classes recently completed a survey about the revitalization of Old Cullowhee.

**Dr. Chris Cooper** continues to lead the MPA program and the Public Policy Institute. His prolific research record includes recent publications in *Social Forces*, *Social Science Quarterly*, and *State Politics and Policy Quarterly*. He also writes frequently for newspapers including the *Asheville Citizen-Times*, *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, and *Durham Herald-Sun*.

**Professor Fred Fisher** remains an active and engaged instructor for the department. He teaches American Government and Politics, Global Issues, and the Freshman Seminar: Active Citizenship.

**Dr. Gibbs Knotts** was named a finalist for the Board of Governor’s Teaching Award. He also was named chair of the NCAA Honors Committee and was recently appointed to the North Carolina Internship Council. His recent publications include articles in *Social Forces*, *PS: Political Science and Politics*, and *Popular Government*.

**Dr. Don Livingston** was given the university’s first “Last Lecture Award” for excellence in teaching. Dr. Livingston has also been working on an active research agenda and recently had a paper accepted for publication in the *Journal of Appalachian Studies*. His paper on presidential body language, coauthored with Dr. Claudia Bryant and Sarah Kehrberg, received the best faculty award from the North Carolina Political Science Association.

**Dr. Gordon Mercer** is staying busy in his second year of phased retirement. He continues as president of Pi Gamma Mu international honor society and was given the PPI’s Tour De Force Award for organizing six American Youth Congresses. Dr. Mercer hosts a radio show, “*Citizens Making a Difference*” on WFSC, which covers six counties, and along with his wife, Marcia, writes a column for *the Franklin Press*.



Dr. Livingston with Danna Harrell-Stansberry at the 2009 Student Awards Banquet.

**Dr. Niall Michelsen** continues to serve the College of Arts and Sciences as associate Dean. He spearheads a number of college initiatives including enrollment and curriculum. He recently presented a paper, “Democratic Electoral Politics and International Cooperation,” at the Midwest Political Science Association in Chicago, Illinois.

**Dr. Jason Sides** just completed his first year in the department. He has taught a wide range of undergraduate and graduate courses including two courses in the MPA core. Dr. Sides had a busy year presenting papers at the Southern and Midwest Political Science Association annual meetings.

## Where Has My Professor Gone?

We often get asked about faculty who are no longer at WCU. The following is a short list regarding some of those individuals.

**Dr. Bruce Carroll** is associate professor at Eastern Michigan University.

**Professor Mickey Duvall** is economic development director for the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians.

**Professor Bill Latimer** is retired and active in community theater in Washington, Georgia.



**Dr. Zihua “David” Liu** is assistant professor of political science at Presbyterian College.

**Dr. Alexa Royden** is assistant professor of political science at Queens University in Charlotte.

**Dr. Ken Wink** is chair and associate professor of public administration at the University of Texas at Tyler.

Dr. Ken Wink, former WCU political science professor

## New Faculty Profile



We would also like to welcome **Kristen Flanagan** to the department of political science and

public affairs. Professor Flanagan joins us from the University of Pittsburgh, where she is completing her dissertation, entitled “*The Supply and Demand of Mediation*.” Her areas of specialization include international relations and comparative politics, with a focus on Europe. She completed her bachelor’s and master’s degrees at Ohio University.



Fire Chief Greg Grayson, WCU Alumni '06

## Alumni Spotlight

**Greg Grayson** (MPA 2006) was recently named fire chief for the City of Greensboro.

**Todd Herms** (BS 2005, MPA 2006) town manager in Maiden, North Carolina, was actively involved in recruiting the \$1 billion Apple iDataCenter to North Carolina.

**Don Kostelec** (BS 1999) has returned to the Western North Carolina region as an associate for The Louis Berger Group, Inc.

**Alison Melnikova** (MPA 2006) is assistant city manager in Waynesville, North Carolina.

**Sherry Melton** (MPA 1996) is Vice President of Communications for the North Carolina Chamber of Commerce.

**Trena Parker** (MPA 1993) is the director of the Buncombe County Board of Elections.

**Ben "B.J." Pendry** (BS 2007) is director of fraternity advancement for the North-American Interfraternity Conference.

**Clyde Ray** (BS 2007) has been accepted to the PhD program in political science at the University of Wisconsin. He recently graduated with an MA degree from Villanova University.

**Sam Hyde** (BS 2006) and **Carrie Vickery** (BA 2006) recently graduated from Elon University School of Law.

**Tommye Saunooke** (BS 1996, MPA 2006) was recently named to the WCU Board of Trustees.

## Giving Opportunities

### Political Science/Public Affairs Development Fund

We use the money from this fund to support initiatives we cannot afford with our state budget funds. Our primary goal is to enhance the educational experiences of our students and prepare them for life after WCU. We also support faculty participation in academic research, conferences, and workshops.

### C. Don Livingston Scholarship

Thanks to the continued generosity of many individuals, the Livingston Scholarship is now fully endowed, and we can begin awarding the scholarship annually. Additional contributions can be given to honor Dr. Livingston and increase the support we can provide to our students.

### Chan Carpenter Scholarship

An endowed scholarship awarded to pre-law political science students. Contributions can be given to honor the memory of Professor Carpenter and will help provide additional resources to students interested in a legal career.

### Charles Stevens Scholarship

An endowed scholarship awarded to a political science student interested in international relations. Contributions can be given to honor the memory of Dr. Stevens and help students pursue international relations and opportunities to study abroad.

If you have questions about making a gift, contact Gibbs Knotts, department head, at [gknotts@wcu.edu](mailto:gknotts@wcu.edu).

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