Welcome

Welcome to the Provost’s Office at Western Carolina University. Once a month, excluding summer months, the Office of the Provost will compose a newsletter that will be distributed to all departments in Academic Affairs. The purpose of this newsletter is to share with others, the myriad of projects we have going on in Academic Affairs.

Meet The Provost

Alison Morrison-Shetlar is provost and vice chancellor for academic affairs. She has more than 34 years of experience working in higher education at eight institutions in three countries in both public and private universities. Morrison-Shetlar, a professor of biology, served as dean of the college of Arts and Sciences at Elon University, as vice provost and dean of undergraduate studies and director of the Faculty Center for Teaching and Learning at the University of Central Florida and as director of the Center for Excellence in Teaching at Georgia Southern University. She recently founded North Carolina’s Project Kaleidoscope Network, which brings together educators from science, technology, engineering and mathematics disciplines to focus on educational strategies, student success and developing strong educational environments.

Alison has been awarded over $4 million in external grant funding for research on topics ranging from laboratory-based examinations of the molecular, biochemical and physiological aspects of cell membrane transport systems to pedagogical investigation of teaching in large classrooms, effective use of technology, and student engagement, retention and graduation.

A native of Scotland, Alison also has served as founding chair of the molecular biology unit at the Max Planck Institute in Dortmund, Germany, and has taught at Ruhr University in Bochum, Germany; Trinity College in Hartford, Conn.; Wesleyan University in Middletown, Conn.; and the Kennedy Institute for Rheumatology in London.

Alison holds a doctorate in biomedical science from Dundee College of Technology, where she also earned her bachelor’s degree in biology and chemistry. She earned a management and leadership in higher education certificate from the Graduate School of Education at Harvard University.
James Zhang, dean of Western Carolina University’s Kimmel School of Construction Management and Technology since October 2012, will be stepping down from the post in May to become provost and senior vice president for academic affairs at Kettering University in Flint, Mich.

Zhang will be joining another former Kimmel School dean, Robert McMahan, who is serving as Kettering’s president. After McMahan’s departure in summer 2011, Zhang served as interim dean of the Kimmel School until his appointment as permanent dean in fall 2012.

A national search for a Kimmel School dean is underway. Dr. Darrell Parker, dean of the College of Business, is chairing the committee.
Faculty Spotlight

Dr. Jerry Miller
Distinguished Professor, Whitmire Professor of Environmental Science

A significant goal of the Blanton J. Whitmire Distinguished Professorship is to promote environmental research and education at WCU by conducting investigations that provide hands-on experiences for both undergraduate and graduate students as well as other faculty within the University. During the past several years much of my research has focused on the use of geochemical fingerprinting techniques to determine the source and movement of contaminants within rivers and lakes. The idea is that contaminated sediments from a particular site or industry will exhibit chemical properties that allow for their identification, much like a fingerprint, that can then be used to identify them when mixed with other sediments. Once the fingerprint has been identified various statistical modeling techniques can be used to assess how much of the toxic material came from a particular site, and how widely the pollutant has been spread through the water body. Such techniques are needed because the source of the contaminants must be known if the influx of pollutants to the river or lake is to be remediated. It is also an important component of the rapidly developing field of environmental forensics in which detailed information on contaminant source is required to address a number of legal issues. My colleagues and I have been using these geochemical fingerprinting techniques to address a wide range of problems, both in Western North Carolina and in such areas as Bolivia, South Africa and, more recently, the Atacama Desert of Chile. Other topics of research include the assessment of stream restoration projects in North Carolina (particularly in collaboration with the North Carolina Ecosystem Enhancement Program), and the analysis of the potential impacts of exurban development on water quality in the Southern Appalachians. Over the past several years, more than 20 undergraduate and graduate students were able to participate in the collection, manipulation, and interpretation of the data for these projects, many of whom were able to present the results of their work at professional meetings.
Staff Spotlight

Judy Dillard
Executive Assistant, College of Health & Human Sciences

Judy Dillard is the Executive Assistant to the Dean of the College of Health & Human Science (CHHS). She joined Western Carolina University in January of 2004 in the Offices of Law, Equity & Auditing where she worked for two years before moving to her current position in CHHS in 2006. Judy has seen many changes occur within CHHS during the past 8 years but remains faithful to her college and states, “it’s the best and the right place for me to be.” She previously worked 6 years at The University of Alabama and 15 years at UNC-Asheville so she is no stranger to the UNC System or higher education.

Judy is a Tuscaloosa, Alabama native but considers the mountains of Western North Carolina home since she and her husband have lived in the area for almost 30 years. She has one four-legged fur baby, a cat named Macy, who is queen-bee and completely spoiled! In her spare time she likes to cook/bake and garden. Judy loves college football and if you’re thinking her favorite team is Alabama – Home of the Crimson Tide, you are correct! Roll Tide Roll!!
Student Spotlight

Aaron Marshall
Senior, Sociology & International Studies, Gastonia, NC

Western Carolina University student Aaron Marshall will participate in the Clinton Global Initiative University annual meeting to be held Friday, March 21, through Sunday, March 23, at Arizona State University. A senior from Gastonia majoring in sociology and international studies with a minor in emergency and disaster management, Marshall was selected to be one of about 1,200 student leaders from around the world to take part.

Marshall's Commitment to Action involves exploring development of a program in which military veteran combat engineers would use a new technology to assist with assessment of damages and coordinating repairs of buildings in rural Southern Appalachian areas affected by poverty. The technology would allow for comprehensively mapping areas of distress and identifying, prioritizing and tracking responses that would be carried out in partnership with local organizations.

Marshall, a winner of the 2013 Community Impact Student Award from North Carolina Campus Compact, has been involved as an active community volunteer and student mentor, a participant and leader of service-focused alternative break programs at WCU. In addition, he assists and has served in leadership roles for Team Rubicon, which unites the skills and experiences of military veterans with first responders to rapidly deploy emergency response teams.
Department Highlights

Philosophy and Religion
Kevin Schilbrack’s new book, *Philosophy and the Study of Religions*, was recently published.

Psychology
WCU Psychology Students and Faculty will present their research at the Southeastern Psychological Association.

Five WCU faculty members, along with 13 undergraduate students and 10 graduate students, were on the program at the 60th annual meeting of the Southeastern Psychological Association in Nashville, March 5-8, 2014.

Anthropology and Sociology
Anthropology major, Paige Tester, is featured in the upcoming issue of WCU Magazine for her NCUR submission.

Four of Dr. Jane Eastman’s students are soon to be published in *Bulletin of the Society for Primitive Technology* based on presentations they gave as part of her recent class at the Reconstructive and Experimental Archaeology Conference.
Department Highlights (continued)

Communication

Department Head, Dr. Don Connelly, and the collaborative team have performed five shows that have received six national awards. Connelly has written and produced three of the shows.

Communication student, Brandon Allen, has been named one of the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences Outstanding Scholars. He will receive the award on April 1, 2014, at 5:30 P.M. in the Blue Ridge Conference Room.

English

The winner of the 2014 Rawlings Writing Award is Sara Green, who graduated in December. She will be awarded $500, plus some extra money for expenses in Gainesville, FL, where she will deliver her essay “Marjorie Kinnan Rawling’s Unspoken Commentary on War in The Yearling.”

Mae Claxton, advisor for Sigma Tau Delta (the English Honor Society), took several of our students to the Sigma Tau Delta Conference in Savannah in February. Jill West was awarded $2000 as the P.C. Somerville Award for Future Teachers. This money will go toward outfitting her classroom next year. Chelsea Lantz-Cashman was awarded first place prize for best critical essay in the category of literary theory, education, and young adolescent literature. Chelsea received a check for $600.
Department Highlights (continued)

School of Teaching and Learning

The school has been awarded two grants: the first one Kelly Kelley (SPED) is lead PI. It is for $225,000. The second is the UP grant that David Westling (SPED) is lead PI. That grant is now in its fourth year ($421,000).

Grant 1: North Carolina Council on Developmental Disabilities. Transitioning to Success: A Model to Facilitate Achievement by Young Adults with Intellectual Disabilities. ‘Learning and Earning After High School: The Role of Transition Services in Raising Expectations and Attitudes for Students with Intellectual Disabilities.’ PI: Kelly Kelley, $225,000.

Grant 2: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Post-Secondary Education. ‘Western Carolina University’s University Participant Program: An Inclusive Model Post-Secondary Education Program for Individuals with Intellectual Disabilities.’ PI: David Westling $2,500,000.

Want to include news in next month’s issue?
Please send information to vcacademicaffairs@email.wcu.edu