Part of what receptionist Lisa Wilson enjoys most about coordinating the annual Angel Wings program at WCU is seeing how excited students, faculty and staff get when they drop off bags of new children’s clothing, books and games for families in need.

“It’s touching to see how people care about their community,” said Wilson, who will accept Angel Wings contributions in the Department of Residential Living office on the first floor, west wing of Scott Hall through Friday, Dec. 12. “Western has a great history of working with the Jackson County Christmas Store to help families in need. Whether a person gives one dollar or 50, one gift or several, or volunteers their time at the store, they make a difference.”

Gifts or donations to the Angel Wings program benefit the Jackson County Christmas Store, which for 20 years has invited families in need to come to a store set up at WCU’s Baptist Student Union and select holiday gifts. The store’s wares come from gifts and donations made by programs such as Angel Wings and area merchants, churches and community members.

The families helped are referred to the Jackson County Christmas Store by assistance agencies or schools, and store organizers strive to make sure children served receive an outfit, socks, underwear, candy, stuffed animal and age-appropriate toy, game and book. This year, 375 families have been invited to participate, said Elaine White, co-director of the Jackson County Christmas Store.

“We don’t know what kind of demand we’ll have this year,” said White. “Sometimes it is hard to believe so many people are living on the edge financially. This community effort enables those families to have something special for the holiday while continuing to pay their bills. It’s just a real blessing.”

White said it was the generosity of many, including the students, faculty, staff and athletics department at WCU, that makes the holiday store possible.

WCU’s Department of Residential Living developed the Angel Wings program to carry on and expand the efforts that began nearly two decades ago when students from a residence hall sponsored a few children for the holidays.

“For our residents, this program creates a greater awareness of those less fortunate and our ability to help them, which ties back into our mission,” said Keith Corzine, director of residential living. “We also are extremely proud of the contributions of our student organizations, such as the Resident Student Association, National Residence Hall Honorary, Student Government Association, Greek Life, Last Minute Productions and The Leadership Institute, to name a few, for the continued success of this wonderful program.”

To participate in Angel Wings by buying a new gift, take an ornament or angel from an Angel Wings tree display set up in The Cats Den at Brown, Dodson Dining Hall, A.K. Hinds University Center, H.F. Robinson Administration Building, Ramsey Regional Activity Center or the residential living office. Purchase an item from a list posted online at http://housing.wcu.edu/angelwings.pdf. Deliver the unwrapped gift item with the Angel Wings ornament to the residential living office on the first floor, west wing of Scott Hall.

To participate by making a monetary donation, direct cash or checks payable to the Jackson County Christmas Store to the residential living office with the notation “Angel Wings.”

Campus Invited to Participate in Angel Wings Program

By TERESA KILLIAN

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– By TERESA KILLIAN

Want to participate?

A “tree lighting” ceremony to be held at 5 p.m. Wednesday, Dec. 3, in the atrium of A.K. Hinds University Center will feature an Angel Wings presentation. Donations will be accepted through Friday, Dec. 12, in the residential living office on the first floor, west wing of Scott Hall. To participate, contact Lisa Wilson at 227-7303.
Western Carolina continues to earn high marks on a national survey measuring the quality of undergraduate education based upon student involvement with their studies, professors and campus communities.

Recently released results from the 2008 National Survey of Student Engagement indicate that WCU students are more engaged than their peers at colleges and universities across the United States. The 2008 NSSE (pronounced “Nessie”) report is based on information from about 380,000 randomly selected first-year and senior students at 722 four-year colleges and universities in the United States.

The report shows Western Carolina outperformed a peer group of 21 institutions of similar size and mission (as categorized by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching) in four benchmark categories – active and collaborative learning, student-faculty interaction, level of academic challenge, and enriching educational experiences, said Melissa Wargo, director of assessment at WCU.

“Also, compared to all colleges in the survey regardless of size and mission, we scored better on level of academic challenge, active and collaborative learning, student-faculty interaction, and supportive campus environment,” Wargo said. “Moreover, Western performs as well as, or in some cases better than, those colleges identified by NSSE as highly engaging institutions on two benchmark categories – active and collaborative learning and student-faculty interaction.”

Although NSSE does not publish the names of the high-performing institutions due to its policy against ranking of institutions, it is likely that WCU is in the top 50 percent of all NSSE 2008 schools for first-year students in the categories of active and collaborative learning and student-faculty interaction, Wargo said. And, the average Western first-year student is as engaged as the average student attending NSSE 2008 schools scoring in the top 10 percent on active and collaborative learning and student-faculty interaction, she said.

“The NSSE benchmarks reflect educational practices that have been consistently linked with higher levels of student learning and development,” Wargo said. “We are pleased with what our students are saying about their experiences at Western Carolina.”

Among the 2008 NSSE results:

• Seventy-six percent of WCU first-year students reported they had asked questions or contributed to class discussions, compared with 59 percent at peer institutions and nationally. Similarly, 84 percent of WCU seniors reported they had asked questions or contributed to class discussions, compared with 73 percent at peer institutions and 71 percent nationally.

• Fifty-eight percent of WCU first-year students reported making a class presentation, compared with only 36 percent at peer institutions and 33 percent nationally.

• Fifty-three percent of WCU first-year students reported talking about career plans with a faculty member or adviser, compared with 34 percent at peer institutions and 32 percent nationally; and 60 percent of WCU seniors reported they talked about career plans with a faculty member or adviser, compared with 47 percent at peer institutions and 29 percent nationally.

• Sixty-three percent of WCU first-year students reported they discussed grades or assignments with their instructors, compared with 53 percent at peer institutions and 50 percent nationally.

• Forty-two percent of WCU seniors reported they discussed ideas from class with faculty outside of class, compared with 31 percent at peer institutions and 29 percent nationally.

“One of the things I am most surprised to find is that 53 percent of freshmen are talking with their advisers and professors about future career plans, which is something I did not think about then,” said Hunt Boling, a senior from Cumming, Ga., majoring in sport management. “There are so many social and service outlets on campus that will enhance younger students’ careers here at Western by exposing them to ideas and activities that relate to their majors and future careers.”

Now in its ninth year, NSSE is sponsored by the Carnegie Foundation. The survey is designed to give schools an idea of how well their students are learning, and to provide a measure of what students put into and get out of their undergraduate experience.

For more information about engaged learning at Western Carolina University, visit www.wcu.edu/engagement.

– By BILL STUDENC
WCU Sets Another Record for Generosity

As the holiday season approaches, Western Carolina employees can be very proud of the gifts they already have given through this year’s State Employees Combined Campaign. As of Nov. 19, 244 employees had pledged a total of $46,484. Even though WCU traditionally exceeds its SECC goal, it was harder than ever to ask people to open their checkbooks as the nation’s economy slipped into crisis and the state started planning for budget cuts, said Leila Tvedt, this year’s SECC chair at WCU. “I appreciate the effort of the solicitors who encouraged their co-workers to give, and I am deeply grateful to every employee who made a contribution,” said Tvedt. “With amounts ranging from $5 to thousands of dollars, the contributions took us way over the top of this year’s goal of $40,000. That’s awesome.”

Keith Corzine, next year’s SECC co-chair at WCU, said he thought WCU employees were openhanded because they realized how much their gifts help others. “Whether you support a local, state or national charity, you are making it possible for them to serve people who need help,” said Corzine. “Some of those people are friends and neighbors right here in Cullowhee and Western North Carolina. With all of our gifts together, we are making a difference throughout the region.”

Campus Rec Center Offers Gift Memberships

Nearly 250 faculty and staff members, their spouses and dependents, and retirees joined the Campus Recreation Center after the facility’s official opening Aug. 17.

Gift memberships for the spring 2009 semester are currently being sold. In addition, “Try Before You Buy” free workout visits and other events open to faculty and staff are being planned to kick off the spring. For more information, contact Shauna Sage, assistant fitness director, at 227-7068 or sage@wcu.edu.

Newsfile

- Mary Deck, professor of counseling, received the 2008 Ruth McSwain Distinguished Professional Service Award for Outstanding Contributions to the School Counseling Profession, the highest award given by the North Carolina School Counselor Association.

- Betty Dishman, administrative assistant in the communication department, will receive a graduate certificate in technology and communication in December from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

- The composition “Prelude for Marimba” by Mario Gaetano, professor of music, recently was performed and referenced in a presentation at the Percussive Arts Society International Convention in Austin, Texas. Gaetano’s composition “Fiesta Del Sol” also was performed in November at the North Carolina Music Educators Convention in Winston-Salem.

- Frank Lockwood, assistant professor of entrepreneurship, won a full scholarship from the Consortium for Entrepreneurship Education to attend the 26th Annual Entrepreneurship Education FORUM, which was held in November in Austin, Texas.

- Sarah T. Meltzer, visiting assistant professor of educational leadership and foundations, will present “Providing Effective Professional Development in Technology” at a ticketed session for the annual meeting of the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development to be held in March in Orlando.

- Jack Sholder, professor and director of the motion picture and television production program, judged short and student film categories at the Asheville Film Festival and gave a workshop titled “The Art of Editing.” Terry Curtis Fox, associate professor of stage and screen, and Brenda Lilly, adjunct screenwriting professor, arranged for the participation of the festival’s honoree, Oscar-winning screenwriter Frank Pierson, in the event; participated in panel discussions with Pierson; and served as judges for the screenwriting competition, of which Lilly was chair.

- Jayne Zanglein, assistant professor of business law, co-authored the third edition of the book “ERISA Litigation,” which was published by the Bureau of National Affairs in November. The book is an 1,800-page treatise on pension and medical benefits. Zanglein also recently authored “Attorneys Beware: Dangerous Traps Lurk in ERISA Litigation” for the Texas Tech Law Review and two chapters in “Federal Income Taxation of Retirement Plans.” Zanglein also took students to a recent American Bar Association meeting, where she gave a presentation about employee benefits. She co-authored articles with students for the Lexis-Nexis database including “IRS Tax Notice on Pension Protection Act Changes Relating to IRA Rollovers and Qualified Optional Survivor Annuities” and “MetLife v. Glenn: Will the Supreme Court adopt a Heightened Standard of Review in Conflict of Interest Cases?” Zanglein also presented papers, both published by the Journal of Deferred Compensation, titled “15 Tips for Fiduciary ERISA Litigation in the Eighth Circuit” and “Ready Access to ERISA Neutrals: Are ERISA Neutrals the Solution to ERISA’s Backlog of Claim Appeals?” at the Minnesota Bar Association conference in May.

Greetings

The season of giving is here, and I want to take a moment to thank you for all that you give every day, all year long, to make a difference in our Western Carolina community. Together, we accomplished much in 2008.

With a dozen programs and departments officially piloting our Quality Enhancement Plan, “Synthesis: A Pathway to Intentional Learning,” you brought engaged learning to life. Not every chancellor gets to tell the University of North Carolina Board of Governors, which met on our campus this year for the first time in nearly a decade, about recreational therapy students working hands-on with Alzheimer’s patients or engineering students seeking patents for their research. Thank you for developing innovative activities that meaningfully engage our students and apply your scholarship with the world beyond our campus.

Your commitment to service learning led the Corporation for National and Community Service to name us to the President’s Higher Education Community Service Honor Roll. In addition, WCU was one of 16 institutions nationwide selected to participate in the American Democracy Project’s Civic Agency Initiative, a three-year effort to develop a model for successfully preparing and motivating undergraduates to be leaders in their communities.

Nationally, Western Carolina continues to rank among institutions with the largest number of students selected to present at the country’s most prestigious undergraduate research conference. U.S. News & World Report rated WCU 14th among master’s degree-granting public universities in the South and recognized us for offering a great education at a great price. Our master’s degree program in project management was ranked first in quality and affordability by the distance education information clearinghouse GetEducated.com. The Princeton Review ranked Western Carolina University’s College of Business among the nation’s best schools at which to earn a master’s degree in business administration.

We have climbed a long way in one year. What you do at Western Carolina makes a far greater difference than you or I will ever know. You are what makes Western Carolina University the pride of the mountains, and I am honored to work with you. Deborah and I wish you a safe and happy holiday.

Sincerely,

John and Deborah Bardo

Greetings
Relay from Boone to Cullowhee Raises Money for Research

Three WCU faculty members and nine students trained this fall for the inaugural Mountain Jug Run for Research, a continuous 175-mile relay from Boone, the home of WCU rival Appalachian State University, to Cullowhee. The run raised money for the National Athletic Trainers’ Association Research and Education Foundation, which annually awards research grants and academic scholarships in the field of sports medicine.

Each runner planned to complete five, five-mile legs of the course starting on Friday, Nov. 21. Participating faculty members were James Scifers, director of the athletic training program; Ashley Long, assistant professor of athletic training; and Jill Manners, associate professor of athletic training.

“In addition to teaching the students about the value of philanthropy, the event is providing an excellent service learning opportunity in the areas of injury prevention, proper nutrition and hydration, as well as management of environmental conditions in athletics,” said Scifers.

Nutrition Students Take Checkered Flag in Food Drive

A Western Carolina pennant will hang in a classroom at Appalachian State University for the rest of the semester because ASU conceded Saturday, Nov. 15, that WCU won a food drive contest. Of course, the real winners are the families who will benefit from the donations to regional food pantries.

April Tallant, assistant professor of health sciences, extended a food drive challenge on behalf of 44 students in her first-year personal nutrition seminar to students in nutrition and health classes at ASU, Western Carolina’s Southern Conference rival. On behalf of the 159 students in the ASU classes, an ASU professor accepted the challenge to see which school could collect the most food items per student in the participating classes in four weeks.

WCU students partnered with two events – Haunted Moore and an indoor triathlon at the Campus Recreation Center – and gave prizes to participants who brought the most food items to the events. Students helped advertise the events with fliers, recruited participants, volunteered as timers at the indoor triathlon, and supervised food collection tables. Some also went trick-or-treating for nonperishable food or set up collection boxes in residence halls and community businesses.

Erika Holub, a freshman special education major from Concord, found a lot of support for the project among members of a campus leadership organization and neighbors on her residence hall and in her home community.

“It was a lot of fun,” said Holub. “Carrying the cans up to Moore was amusing, since the building is at the top of the mountain. This food drive was different than others I have participated in because I had to go out there and collect the food myself instead of bringing it in for someone else to take. I felt like a big help to my class and to Community Table.”

By Friday, Nov. 14, WCU students had collected 728 food items, including peanut butter, collard greens, macaroni and cheese, canned pineapple, breakfast bars, pasta and more.

By Saturday, Nov. 15, ASU had conceded, which didn’t stop WCU students, who continued to bring in dozens of donated items. The food collected at both universities will be distributed to food pantries in Western North Carolina.

Tallant said service learning is a requirement of the course, and she invites students to select the service activity. After studying food insecurity and hearing from the director of Community Table about hunger in the region, students selected a food drive.

“Students also expressed interest in volunteering, so they are volunteering at Community Table or at agencies in their home community,” Tallant said.
James Arvel Kuykendall

About two years ago, James Arvel Kuykendall joined WCU’s team of drivers for CAT-TRAN, the Catamount On-Campus Transportation System. Driving the loop from A.K. Hinds University Center to Reynolds and Robertson residence halls from 7 a.m. to 1 p.m. each weekday, Kuykendall and his bus have become popular with students during the cold, windy days of November and December. Along with his fellow drivers, he helps transport more than 1,200 riders each day.

Kuykendall, a native of Haywood County, spoke about his life, his family, and his time at Western Carolina as he drove his route on a chilly day in November.

The Reporter: Living in Clyde, you must wake really early to get here for your shift.
Kuykendall: I get up at about 4:45 a.m.

The Reporter: Is that easy for you to do?
Kuykendall: Yeah. I wake up before my alarm even goes off. I don't really have to set an alarm anymore.

The Reporter: With such an early schedule, do you have a favorite breakfast?
Kuykendall: Yes, ma'am. Not every day, but I do like to eat gravy with biscuits and Rathbone's sausage and one egg. And black coffee. And I can say that I make as good a biscuit as anyone in Haywood County. Sometimes I bring a Bojangles' biscuit with me for my daughter, who works in the library. Or she brings me breakfast or lunch. I don't need anything today, though. Dale [another transit driver] brought me some banana pudding.

The Reporter: There's nothing better than homemade banana pudding.
Kuykendall: That's true. I'll fight someone over banana pudding. It's my favorite.

The Reporter: Your daughter works in the library. Do you have any other family at Western?
Kuykendall: Yes, my granddaughter, Holly [a freshman at WCU]. I see her about every day, and if I don't see her, I call her. I always want to keep ties with my family. That's important to me.

The Reporter: What other jobs did you work before coming to Western?
Kuykendall: I put 31 years of good, hard labor in at Dayco. Then I worked nine years at Laurel Bank Campground and two years at Pisgah View Ranch. From 1956 to 1958, I was in the Army. I was infantry, more or less. My MOS [military occupational specialty] was as a radio and telephone operator.

The Reporter: What’s your favorite season?
Kuykendall: It depends. I like the spring because I can plant my garden, but I like the winter and fall, too, because I get to hunt.

The Reporter: You like to garden and hunt in your free time. What else do you like to do?
Kuykendall: I like to ride horses, go trail riding. A bunch of us retirees from Dayco go out. It's how we stay in touch and socialize with one another. We all kid each other, always saying our horses are the best. I always say mine is the best.

The Reporter: What are your horses’ names?
Kuykendall: I have three horses. Dolly's my walking horse. My Haflinger, Pearl, is a little workhorse, a carthorse. Pearl recently had a baby, a little mule we named Candy.

The Reporter: Do you have a favorite trail you like to ride on?
Kuykendall: I like Bradley Creek. You can ride so many places. There's a big field and a campground, and you can go fishing too. You can go all the way into Turkey Pen or into Brevard. You could spend a whole week in there.

The Reporter: What’s your favorite television channel?
Kuykendall: CNN and the Western Channel.

The Reporter: How old were you when you first learned how to drive, and in what car?
Kuykendall: Oh, gosh. I learned how to drive at 14 or 16 years old. I had a little pickup truck. I traded a Jersey calf for that truck. It was made by Dodge, but it was a Plymouth pickup, a 1937 model.

The Reporter: What color was it?
Kuykendall: I painted it yellow with a paintbrush and house paint. But I got my first driver's license with Daddy's car. He had a 1939 Chevy.

The Reporter: What's your favorite memory associated with CAT-TRAN?
Kuykendall: Good people. Granville, Dale, Don, Andrew – that's a good memory. I see them in the morning and in the evening. They're memories that will last me for the rest of my life. I've met some good people at Western Carolina University. They're some of the finest people I know. And the young people have always been nice to me. They all respect me, and I respect them. No one's ever said a short word to me.
Provost's Grants Help Students See Supreme Court, Go Digital

Business law students heard arguments at the Supreme Court and interior design students created podcasts and movies this fall as a result of grants two faculty members won to reconstruct their courses.

“The Provost’s Instructional Improvement Grants are designed not only to support but also to encourage faculty innovation in teaching,” said Provost Kyle Carter. “The faculty role is very complex. They are pulled in many directions and have lots of choices for how to spend their time. These grants often provide the extra push for faculty to commit their ideas to action.”

The 2008-09 recipients Candace Roberts, assistant professor of interior design, and Jayne Zanglein, assistant professor of business law, each won grants of more than $2,000, and Carter said their course innovations have truly benefited students.

Roberts applied for the grant to fund the purchase of a MacBook Pro that would enable her to incorporate podcasts and iMovies into the curriculum of a senior-level residential design course as a way to create a more active, hands-on learning environment.

For the fall semester, Roberts created podcasts related to universal design concepts while students became teachers, creating podcasts about different themes from their textbooks. “Doing the project did help us grasp the material, as we had to review, decide what was important and organize it in a way the others in the class would find useful,” said Margo Peck, a senior interior design major from Sylva.

“I am not generally on my computer exploring these types of things, and these projects made me stretch in that area.”

In addition, after students studied homes and family belongings in other countries featured in the book “Material World: A Global Family Portrait,” students created “My Stuff” Animoto movie clips documenting their own belongings.

“Before this semester, I had never used Animoto,” said Valerie Robertson, a senior interior design major from Hendersonville. “The program was super easy to learn, and we could use it to help with our presentations in the future.”

Students also used a wiki to participate in class discussions online. As a result of incorporating digital media features into the course, more class time has been devoted to small group work and work on student residential design projects, said Roberts.

“This has been a great experience,” said Roberts. “The learning curve is getting smaller the more I use the software programs, and we are spending more class time on group work.”

Students also used a wiki to participate in class discussions online.

Meanwhile, in Zanglein’s Law 475 course, students become associates in a virtual law firm – keeping time sheets, tracking billable hours, negotiating contracts, writing judicial opinions, networking and completing continuing legal education credits and pro bono work.

Last year, a student in the class, Rachel Newbold, took the lead in preparing a winning application for an instructional improvement grant from the provost that would enable Zanglein to design new activities, revise materials, conduct student surveys, fund creation of a student-made video, and aid fundraising for trips, bonuses, supplies and books.

This semester, students in the class are creating a new organization for student mediators called Western Lifelines, applying for (and winning) grant money for expanding a student mediation program, researching mediation in land trust cases, restructuring and marketing a Sylva art studio, and working with members of the American Federation of Musicians Local 802 in New York City to revise its collective bargaining agreement with the American Ballet Theatre into plain English.

The grant also helped Zanglein take seven students to Washington to hear oral arguments in the Supreme Court case Kennedy v. Plan Administrator for DuPont Savings and Investment Plan. WCU senior John Hubler and Zanglein had co-written an article about the case for the October edition of Supreme Court Preview. In the case, the court is asked to clarify a process questioned after the daughter of a divorced couple opposed $400,000 paid in savings and investment plan benefits to her mother, the named beneficiary of the plan, despite a divorce decree in which her mother gave up rights to such benefits.

“Hearing the argument was definitely more than I expected,” said Ashley Brabenec, a senior business law major from Cashiers. “It was so intense. I was sitting on the edge of my seat the entire time. I actually was sitting next to one of the lawyer’s parents, so I got a little extra insight on the case.”

In addition, the students visited the Library of Congress, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum and the Smithsonian Institution. They attended the AIG bailout hearings before the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform of the U.S. House of Representatives. They also dined out to practice skills learned at WCU’s Etiquette Dinner, which also was funded in part by the grant. “It’s been a busy semester,” said Zanglein.

— By TERESA KILLIAN
Kefyn M. Catley is on a mission to improve the quality of secondary science education in the United States.

Catley, associate professor of biology and head of WCU’s secondary science education program, and Laura R. Novick, a professor of cognitive psychology and former colleague at Vanderbilt University, recently secured a $665,247 grant from the U.S. Department of Education to research ways of improving high school and college biology curricula.

The three-year study will begin this spring, with parts of it taking place at institutions across the United States, including WCU, Vanderbilt University and Tuscola High School in Haywood County.

“It’s a collaborative effort across institutions,” Catley said. The initial phase includes diagnostics to determine how students think in evolutionary terms. Ultimately, based on the study’s findings, Catley and Novick will create a biology curriculum that they hope will produce better and stronger students.

Catley’s specialty is education in evolutionary biology, and he has narrowed his focus to helping high school and university students better understand the processes and principles of that topic. Catley contends that many students — and their teachers — have a poor understanding of macroevolution, the study of change that occurs at or above the level of species over a long duration. Microevolution, in contrast, is the study of smaller evolutionary changes within a species or population across a shorter span of time.

For example, a microevolutionary theory would explain how the beaks of a small population of birds changed over a decade. A macroevolutionary theory would explain how birds evolved as a group. Without a firm grip on macroevolution, Catley said, students lack an understanding of the comprehensive history of life on the planet.

Catley and Novick’s research focuses in large part on the role of diagrams in helping students comprehend evolution. Called cladograms, these diagrams can illustrate with branching lines “the origin and fate of species and natural groups of species: the persistence through time of some and the extinction of others,” according to a 2006 article by Catley. A cladogram might provide evidence, for example, of how birds are indeed modern dinosaurs.

Comprehending these diagrams is called “tree thinking,” or the habit of calling on knowledge of the history of life on Earth as evidence to one constructs a hierarchical model of the natural world. The diagrams are the backbone of understanding macroevolution, without which “an understanding of the full spectrum of evolution is simply not possible,” states the article, called “Darwin’s Missing Link — A Novel Paradigm for Evolution Education.”

“Cladograms are extremely powerful predictive tools in modern biology,” the article reads. But while professionals in the field have used cladograms for a long time, the diagrams, which biologists consider testable hypotheses, not fact, “have yet to be utilized to any degree in life science education.”

Catley and Novick recently led a study documenting the type, frequency and distribution of evolutionary diagrams in 31 contemporary textbooks aimed at a wide array of readers from middle school to the undergraduate level. Results of the study appeared under the title “Seeing the Wood for the Trees: An Analysis of Evolutionary Diagrams in Biology Textbooks” in the November issue of BioScience, the journal of the American Institute of Biological Sciences. The study found that while evolutionary diagrams appeared frequently in textbooks, many of them were “confusing and open to multiple interpretations.”

Randi Neff is a biology teacher at Tuscola, where beginning in the spring approximately 80 sophomore science students, including Neff’s, will participate in the diagnostic portion of Catley and Novick’s grant-funded study. She and Catley met when they were both working toward their master’s degrees in biology at WCU. At a conference of Western North Carolina science teachers hosted at WCU in October, she suggested increasing the number of substantive science courses for teachers — an approach she has long been advocating.

Her undergraduate teaching degree left her feeling “incredibly unprepared to teach biology,” she said.

Calling evolutionary biology the “rock of biology,” Neff said that teachers often don’t know how to tie the concept to their course of study because their own understanding of it is limited.

She will help develop the new curriculum and then implement and test it in her classroom. The curriculum will likely exceed state requirements, she said.

James Costa, a professor in WCU’s biology department and director of the Highlands Biological Station, said Catley is performing important work.

“In school these days, students get very little information about macroevolution. Kefyn is addressing a significant oversight,” he said. “Tree thinking is such a critical aspect of evolutionary biology, it’s ironic that it’s an area that students are exposed to the least.”

It is Costa’s hope that once Catley’s work incorporating a better understanding of macroevolution into secondary education is complete, it will become influential in the field.

While some segments of society might resist broadening evolutionary education because of its sometimes controversial nature, biologists argue it’s critical to both filling the ranks of U.S. scientists and keeping the United States competitive worldwide.

As Catley sees it, improving science literacy is important because understanding both the content and workings of science is key to a healthy economy and functioning democracy in the United States.

“If you want to work in a well-paid job these days, you really need to be literate in science,” said Catley. “A good understanding of science underpins democracy.”

According to Costa, the nature of worldwide competition makes strengthening science education a logical goal. “There are many countries, both industrialized and nonindustrialized, that provide their populations with rigorous scientific training, and these people are hungry for progress,” he said. “There is a danger with science education in this country that it’s not of the same rigor in the college preparatory level that you see with our main competitor countries.”

— By JILL INGRAM
Monday, Dec. 1
EPA faculty and nonfaculty holiday open house — 6:30-8:30 p.m. Chancellor’s residence. (227-7100)

Tuesday, Dec. 2
Catamount Concert Series — Piano duo of Bradley Martin and Andrew Adams. 8 p.m. RH. (227-7242)

Wednesday, Dec. 3
Meeting — WCU board of trustees. 9:30 a.m. Room 510, HFR. (227-7100)
Musical theater — Campus lunchtime performance. 12:20 p.m. UC lawn. (227-7242)

Concert — Inspirational Choir. 6 p.m. Grandroom, UC. (227-7242)

Thursday, Dec. 4
The ElectriNetSM — “Creating the Electricity Network of the Future,” presented by Pevis W. James, director of EPRI’s Energy Technology Assessment Center. 11 a.m.-noon. UC theater. (227-2159)
Old-time music and bluegrass — Ian Moore and Hal Herzog. Open jam to follow. 7-9 p.m. MHC auditorium. (227-7129)
Concert — Wind Ensemble. 8 p.m. FAPAC. (227-7242)

Friday, Dec. 5
Last day of regular class meetings — (227-7495)
University Club TGIF — For members and their guests. 5 p.m. UClubhouse, Central Drive. $ (227-3933)

Friday, Dec. 5-Saturday, Dec. 6
Madrigal Christmas dinners — Pageantry, music and food. 6:30 p.m. Grandroom, UC. (227-7206)

Saturday, Dec. 6-Friday, Dec. 12
Final exams for all classes. — (227-7495)

Sunday, Dec. 7
Concert — “Sounds of the Season.” 3 p.m. FAPAC. $ (227-7242)

Lady Catamount basketball — vs. Middle Tennessee State. 4 p.m. RRAC. $ (227-7338)

Thursday, Dec. 11
Staff Forum — 8:30 a.m. Cardinal Room, UC. (227-3107)
SPA holiday open house — 9-11 a.m. Chancellor’s residence. (227-7100)

Friday, Dec. 12
University Club TGIF — For members and their guests. 5 p.m. UClubhouse, Central Drive. $ (227-3933)

Galaxy of Stars Series — “A Red, Hot . . . & Blue! White Christmas” 7:30 p.m. FAPAC. $ (227-2479)

Saturday, Dec. 13
Fall commencement — 2 p.m. RRAC. (227-7495)

Monday, Dec. 15
Catamount basketball — vs. Tennessee Wesleyan. 7 p.m. RRAC. $ (227-7338)

Wednesday, Dec. 17
Catamount basketball — vs. Gardner-Webb. 7 p.m. RRAC. $ (227-7338)

Friday, Dec. 19
Lady Catamount basketball — vs. College of Charleston. 7 p.m. RRAC. $ (227-7338)

Sunday, Dec. 21
Lady Catamount basketball — vs. Georgia Southern. 4 p.m. RRAC. $ (227-7338)

Tuesday, Dec. 20
Lady Catamount basketball — vs. UNC-Wilmington. 7 p.m. RRAC. $ (227-7338)

JANUARY 2009

Thursday, Jan. 8
Catamount basketball — vs. UNC Greensboro. 7 p.m. RRAC. $ (227-7338)

Thursday, Jan. 8-Sunday, Jan. 11

Friday, Jan. 9
Residence halls open for all students — (227-7338)

Saturday, Jan. 10
Lady Catamount basketball — vs. Samford. 4 p.m. RRAC. $ (227-7338)
Catamount basketball — vs. Elon. 7 p.m. RRAC. $ (227-7338)

Monday, Jan. 12
All classes begin — (227-7317)
Lady Catamount basketball — vs. Chattanooga. 7 p.m. RRAC. $ (227-7338)

EXHIBITS

Fine Art Museum

“Inspired Design: Jacquard and Entrepreneurial Textiles” — Innovative textile design. Jan. 22-March 8. Hours: 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday; 10 a.m.-6 p.m. Thursday; 1-4 p.m. Saturday. (http://fapac.wcu.edu or 227-3591)

Mountain Heritage Center
“Mountain Trout” — Slideshow spotlight, December.
“Corn: Milling, Tilling and Stilling” — Slideshow spotlight, January.

Hunter Library
“Bartram’s Journey” — The 18th century botanist’s life and observations. Ground floor, through December.

“Phases of Currency” — Original artwork by Erin Tapley. 8 a.m.-5 p.m. Monday-Friday. Second Floor Gallery, through December.

Book sculptures — Student works of sculpture. Main floor, through December. (http://library.wcu.edu or 227-3398)

KEY: $—Admission fee; BB—Belk Building; CAC—Catamount Softball Complex; FAPAC—Fine and Performing Arts Center; HA—Hay Auditorium; HFR—H.F. Robinson Administration Building; HL—Hunter Library; HSF—Henson Stadium/Childress Field; HMC—Mountain Heritage Center; NCA—Natural Sciences Auditorium; RH—Recital Hall; STA—State Auditorium; UClub—UClubhouse; UA—UNC Asheville; UC—A.K. Hinds University Center; WCU—Western Carolina University; WS/BW—Whitmire Stadium/Bob Waters Field.

Submissions:
Send news items, calendar notices and address changes to Reporter@email.wcu.edu or WCU Calendar, 420 H.F. Robinson Building. Submit items for The Reporter calendar at least four weeks prior to the event.