

Academic Affairs

News & Reflections

From the Provost's Desk



I love the start of a new academic year. To see students once again crisscrossing campus between classes, to listen to our faculty both inside and outside the classroom sharing their passion for their discipline and for their work with students, and to watch all our wonderful staff working to support our campus in myriad ways, brings me

such joy. I could not be more proud of our Catamount family.

This will be a good and busy year. To help keep Academic Affairs members abreast of what is going on, in addition to the Academic Affairs Newsletter, I will be distributing my regular Faculty Senate report to you via email following Senate meetings. You can also link to the latest report here: https://www.wcu.edu/discover/leadership/faculty-senate/faculty-senate-agendas-and-minutes/2016_2017meetingmaterialsminutes.aspx.

At Opening Assembly, Chancellor Belcher and I spoke about President Spellings' Five Strategic Initiatives for the UNC system. These are: Student Success, Access, Affordability and Efficiency, Economic Impact and Excellent and Diverse Institutions. We are seeking campus-wide input in the development of measurable targets within these areas. The Academic Affairs Council, Faculty Senate, and other campus groups are already working to identify goals and collectively, we want to be able to help guide the process of metric development at General Administration.

I encourage you to share your ideas with your Senate representative and my office, and to be involved in the campus discussion around the effectiveness of our institution.

Continued...

Provost on the Ground

Board of Trustees Meeting	September 1&2
Alumni Association Board Meeting	September 10
LIFE@WCU, Cullowhee	September 13
LIFE@WCU, Biltmore Park	September 15
Provost Faculty and Staff Luncheon	September 13
WCU/SCC Networking Luncheon	September 14
Chancellor's Faculty and Staff Luncheon	September 20
Graduate School Open House	September 22
Foundation Board Meeting	September 23
Mountain Heritage Day	September 24
Chancellor's List Event	September 26
Board of Visitors	September 29&30
College of Business Meeting	September 30

Finally, I want to publicly express our collective appreciation to Dr. Arthur Salido and Ms. Kasia Podosek for their leadership in our ten-year reaffirmation of accreditation by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC). Thank you Arthur and Kasia for your tireless drive to prepare an outstanding compliance certification. Arthur and Kasia will continue to work with Carmen Huffman and a team of faculty, staff, and students on the development of DegreePlus, our Quality Enhancement Plan. Page 5 provides further information.

Their work and that of many others involved in the self-study process over the past two years affirms our belief that we are an outstanding university with multiple steeples of excellence. While we will always possess some key opportunities for growth, I look forward to working with all of you to continue Western Carolina University's traditions of distinction and pride.

Best Wishes for the Fall Semester!

Alison Morrison-Shetlar

Provost

Brown Bag Lunch Series

from the Office of the Chief Diversity Officer

In a recent Saturday morning conversation with nearly one hundred peer tutors, I tried to emphasize the importance of understanding the individual journey of our fellow students. In some prepared remarks I talked about the art of the conversation. The message, while aimed at new and returning students, can be adapted for professionals. In the remarks I shared a story about modesty and how we sometimes don't take advantage of opportunities for which we have prepared most of our lives to do. When we think about diversity we cannot be modest in our thoughts and actions. We must rise to the occasion and share our knowledge and ideas. This is part of the reason behind the creation of the Brown Bag Lunch Series. We have an opportunity to expand on the spring semester's conversations. In doing so, we are launching these conversations this month. One goal for each presentation will be to provide new information that participants can use in their daily work routine.



- September 21 "Trigger Alerts" UC Raleigh Room 12:00 Noon-1:00 P.M.
- October 5 "Disability as Diversity" UC Raleigh Room 12:00 Noon-1:00 P.M.
- October 12 "LatinX" UC Raleigh Room 12:00 Noon-1:00 P.M.

More sessions will be added soon. Look for an updated list on the university calendar.

We are now on Instagram. Please follow us at ([diversityatwcu](#)). If you have or know of an event that promotes diversity at WCU, please [#diversityatwcu](#) or let us know about it.

The Academic Success Program and Catamount Gap summer learning communities

from the Division of Student Success



The Academic Success Program (ASP) and Catamount Gap summer learning communities have experienced some administrative and operational transitions over the past year while continuing to provide a quality experience for participating students during the program's five-week duration. ASP continued to function as the conditional admission program at WCU as it has for many years, while this year was Gap's third year of operation as an opportunity for traditionally admitted first-time freshman to begin their college career at WCU early. It truly is a campus-wide effort to provide the best possible experience for students who must brave the heat of summer, sometimes congested campus services in use by visiting external events and conferences, and less-than-normal (though still exceptional) cafeteria and other food service hours and options.

The 2016 cohort was the largest ever as both programs reached record numbers with 202 ASP and 124 Gap students bringing the total to 326 participants. This year's Catamount Gap major-specific track opportunities were in nursing, education, engineering, health and human sciences, and the Honors College. Two additional general cohorts were developed for students whose anticipated major selection didn't fit any of the tracks. Each of the nine ASP cohorts consisted of ENG 190, a liberal studies course, and USI 130, a freshman transition course.

Students and their families arrived on campus June 23 for an informative and interactive orientation and classes were in session June 27-July 29. Academic benefits of the five-week program included: students earned 6-8 credits dependent on their ASP or Gap status, the option of built-in study hall sessions facilitated by peer mentors or supplemental instruction sessions four days a week, access to tutoring, academic skill workshops led by the same peer mentors, and educational field trips. Field trips this year included visits to Kituwah Mound, Road to Nowhere, Museum of the Cherokee Indian, the Oak Ridge National Laboratory, Duke Power Bad Creek Hydroelectric Station, and a community bonding trip on the French Broad river. Students also participated in service learning activities through the Center for Service Learning and were introduced to valuable campus resources such as the Writing and Learning Commons, Math Tutoring Center, Advising Center, Mentoring and Persistence to Success (MAPS), the Office of Accessibility Resources (OAR), and the Office of Student Transitions, and Hunter Library, in many cases experiencing an interactive library tour.

While the program is designed for academic achievement, there were several social, entertainment, and adventure opportunities for students as well. Students had the opportunity to enjoy weekly outdoor concerts and movies, catch a shuttle to Concerts on the Creek in Sylva each Friday evening, attend an Asheville Tourists game, and participate in a horse-back riding trip, all organized by Campus Activities. Base Camp Cullowhee provided eight different adventure trip opportunities for students, Residential living provided evening programming and a handful of social activities, and Campus Recreation organized weekly intramural sport activities as well.

The final student success data for these cohorts is still being finalized. GAP students had an average GPA of 3.69 in the summer, while ASP students achieved an average GPA of 3.23. Based on last year's cohorts, ASP and GAP students are retained at rates often better than our general first-time, full-time freshman students that were retained 92.4% spring-to-fall, and 80.1% fall-to-fall. GAP students were retained 96.8% fall-to-spring, and 87.1% fall-to-fall. ASP students were retained 93.4% fall-to-spring, and 77% fall-to-fall.

Early Voting

from the Office of Undergraduate Studies

Voting Comes to WCU!

The University Center at WCU has been approved as an early-voting polling place by the Jackson County Board of Elections for the November election. This action was organized by WCU students as part of their development in the civic learning process and aims to increase voter engagement by on and off-campus constituents.

The Early Voting Polling Place (exact location in the UC will be announced later this year) will be open during the following days/times:

- o Thursday, October 27, 9 am – 7 pm
- o Friday, October 28, 9 am – 6 pm
- o Saturday, October 29, 9 am – 1 pm
- o Sunday, October 30, CLOSED ALL DAY
- o Monday, October 31, 9 am – 7 pm
- o Tuesday, November 1, 9 am – 7 pm
- o Wednesday, November 2, 9 am – 7 pm
- o Thursday, November 3, 9 am – 7 pm
- o Friday, November 4, 9 am – 6 pm
- o Saturday, November 5, 9 am – 1 pm



Jackson County Board of Elections will provide poll workers to facilitate the voting process at the site, however, WCU students, staff, and others can receive training to be eligible to work the polls. This could be a great use of staff community service leave.

Happy Census Day!

from the Office of Institutional Planning and Effectiveness

The Office of Institutional Planning and Effectiveness (OIPE) considers Census Day as the most important day of the year. Census Day, which falls on September 2nd this semester, is the day when the University takes the official snapshot of the data for internal, State, and federal reporting. Whatever the data in the Banner Student Information System look like at 5pm on Census Day is the official record of who is here, what is being taught, who is teaching, how many student credit hours are being generated, and how many fundable hours we will use in our enrollment projections process for the year (which is used by the state to determine our funding). For months leading to Census day, the OIPE works with functional areas, especially the Registrar's Office, the Office of Admissions, the Graduate School, and Information Technology, to clean and prepare the data. On the night of Census, starting at 5pm, the OIPE runs the code to take the official snapshot and submit the data to the State. In addition to freezing the data, the OIPE also provides a variety of reports for the campus and the senior administration, who are closely monitoring the data at the beginning of the term, particularly for a semester when records are anticipated (such as record total enrollment, or highest quality of an incoming freshman class). Two reports that you can currently see are Meet Your Incoming Freshman and Meet Your Incoming Graduate Students, which were produced of the first day of class, and are now published on <http://www.oipe.wcu.edu/>. The Student Body Profile, with a broader range of statistics will be available in the same location on September 9th.

- Fall 2016 Census captured total enrollment at 10,806
- 1913 new FTFT freshman and 80.17% first-to-second year retention rate

Updates on Compliance and the Quality Enhancement Plan

from the Director of SACSCOC Reaffirmation

The logo for DegreePlus features the word "DEGREE" in white, bold, sans-serif capital letters on a purple background. To its right is a large, gold-colored cross shape. The word "PLUS" is written in white, bold, sans-serif capital letters across the center of the cross.

WCU's next QEP: DegreePlus

Institutional accreditation by the SACS COC : Almost one year ago, the campus voted on the theme “Courses to Careers.” Since that time, a committee of more than 30 campus members, including faculty, staff, students, administrators and alumni, have worked diligently to develop the initial theme into a reality. With feedback from a wide variety of stakeholders (in the form of classroom visits, surveys, updates, informal meetings and forums), the theme has come to focus on improving students’ academic success through involvement in co-curricular activities.

Another component of the QEP is to incentivize student participation in co-curricular activities and to provide a pathway for students to reflect on their curricular and co-curricular learning. Students will make progress toward the completion of 4 different skills by participating in activities that are linked to those skills. Competency will be assessed using modified AAC&U value rubrics. The committee is currently discussing both intrinsic and extrinsic motivators for students.

These activities will provide learning opportunities that will complement curricular learning. The committee feels that new title, “DegreePlus”, is a more fitting name that more accurately captures the nature of the QEP. The DegreePlus proposal will be submitted to our QEP Evaluator and the on-site committee in February 2017.

Compliance:

The compliance certification which consists of over 90 narratives plus evidence has been submitted to Campus Labs for archival. We should receive the archived compliance certification early next week. The files will be reviewed one more time before we send them to the 10-member off-site committee. We will learn of the committee’s recommendations by early November. We will have the opportunity to answer any issues in a ‘focused report’ which will help prepare a smoother on-site visit that will occur April 3-6.

Update from International Programs and Services

from the Office of the Associate Provost, Academic Affairs

The office of International Programs and Services (IPS) provides leadership and advocacy for international programs and activities across campus by:

- a) recruiting and enrolling international students to study at WCU
- b) providing an array of study abroad options to fit a variety of academic programs, time constraints and budgets
- c) encouraging faculty involvement in internationally-focused activities, whether via teaching/research abroad or the incorporation of global perspectives into their classrooms

During 2015-2016 academic year:

- 225 international students enrolled at Western
- 228 WCU students studied abroad (+36% from the previous year)
 - 58 students participated in individual summer, semester and full year programs
 - 170 students participated in one of 21 WCU faculty-led travel courses
- 33 faculty engaged in international activities such as the WCU Global Learning Academy. This initiative, led by Dr. Jen Schiff helps faculty incorporate globally-focused perspectives into their curriculum.
- 14 international partnerships were established, nine of them are WCU's first partner institution in the specific country.
- 3 new bilateral agreements were completed for student and faculty exchange, providing cost-effective study abroad opportunities to students and collaborative research and teaching opportunities for faculty and staff.
- 54 students enrolled in the Intensive English Program (IEP) which provides academic English language and cross-cultural training for international students at WCU for 1-4 semesters prior to matriculation to the university.

This fall, 61 new international students (a 74% increase from last year) joined 77 continuing students at WCU, representing 31 countries and 17 of our bilateral partnerships. We also welcomed three new IEP students to the program.

New Staff:

Three new staff have joined IPS since January 2016. Kaitlin Ritchie is the Assistant Director of International Student Services. Kaitlin oversees all incoming international students, ensuring proper visa paperwork and a healthy transition to life at Western. She comes from UNC-Greensboro where she worked with international exchange students for five years. As a student, Kaitlin studied abroad in Australia and Guatemala. She holds a M.A. in Counseling from UNCG.

Jim Gieser is responsible for promoting and managing all non-faculty-led study abroad programs. Jim has traveled to over 40 countries, including living and working in Germany and South Africa, volunteering summers in Ethiopia and the Netherlands, and conducting research in Thailand and Australia. Jim earned a M.A. in Theology from Wheaton College, a M.Phil. in Higher Education Studies from the University of Cape Town (South Africa), and an Ed.D. from Indiana University.

Scarlette Briones joined IPS this summer as the International Admissions Counselor. Scarlette works with Kaitlin to help manage the admissions processing and programming for international students. After earning her Bachelor's degree, Scarlette served in the Peace Corps in the Dominican Republic. She also worked with international students in various capacities while completing a M.A. in Education/Student Affairs at Western Kentucky University.



Student Spotlight

Alexandra Stromberg

Graduate Student



Alexandra Stromberg is a Communication Sciences and Disorders MS student that will graduate in December 2017.

Alexandra received her bachelor's degree in Sociology, and a minor in German from Clemson University in December 2014. Knowing she wanted to go into speech-language pathology, Alexandra shadowed in multiple clinics and locations throughout her summers as an undergrad. She then applied to the CSD graduate program here at WCU.

Alexandra loves the field of speech-language pathology, and is excited to continue her journey earning her MS degree at WCU!

Alexandra is beginning her second clinical rotation working with special needs children at Cullowhee Valley School.

She loves to cook, which is by far her biggest hobby! She enjoys going to the Jackson County Farmer's Market and being inspired by what the local bounty has to offer. Though she doesn't watch much TV, she does love the food network--another source of her inspiration.

Alexandra is fluent in German and enjoys all things related to German culture. She is hoping to make it over to Germany this fall to visit with family and friends. Alexandra is the Vice President of the WCU chapter of NSSLHA (National Student

Speech Language Hearing Association) and looks forward to finding new ways for their department to give back to our wonderful community!

"Even now, all possible feelings do not yet exist, there are still those that lie beyond our capacity and our imagination. From time to time, when a piece of music no one has ever written or a painting no one has ever painted, or something else impossible to predict, fathom or yet describe takes place, a new feeling enters the world. And then, for the millionth time in the history of feeling, the heart surges and absorbs the impact." -Nicole Krauss, from *The History of Love* --

Alexandra loves this quote because she thinks it beautifully expresses human emotion and contentedness.

Faculty Spotlight

Lily Balloffet

Assistant Professor, History Department



Lily Balloffet is an Assistant Professor in the History Department at WCU, teaching classes in Latin American History. She earned her PhD in Latin American History from the University of California Davis and she earned her BA from Wellesley College.

Lily's current area of study is Global Migration and she is currently authoring a book about Syrian migration to Argentina in the 20th century.

While doing the field research for her current book project, she had the chance to travel to thirteen different provinces in Argentina. Lily was able to visit the length and breadth of the country: from the arid Jujuy Province at the Bolivian border, to the Patagonian glaciers. Lily's research on Middle Eastern immigrants in Argentina even took her to the city of Ushuaia – the southernmost city in the world! Experiencing these diverse landscapes of South America was one of her favorite parts of field research. Having recently moved to the Western NC region, she is using most of her spare time to explore the rich mountain environment that surrounds us. If Lily is not at work or on a hike, you can probably find her playing music on her front porch!

One of Lily's favorite quotes is by folk singer and storyteller Bruce “Utah” Phillips, who was speaking some sage words of advice to an audience of students many years ago. He said: "You are about to be told one more time that you are America's most valuable natural

resource. Have you seen what they do to valuable natural resources?! ... They're going to clear cut your best thoughts for the sake of profit unless you learn to resist, because the profit system follows the path of least resistance and following the path of least resistance is what makes the river crooked!" The way that Phillips states this point always makes Lily smile – and always reminds her of one of the most important tasks at hand for scholars and educators: inciting independent thought.



Staff Spotlight

Steve Wallace

Director of Assessment, Institutional Planning and Effectiveness

Steve Wallace joined the Office of Institutional Planning and Effectiveness as Director of Assessment on August 1st of this year.

He previously worked for Northern Illinois University (NIU, DeKalb, IL) for a total of 20+ years, first as a graduate assistant, then as an instructor, a faculty member, and finally as the associate director of the office of assessment services. In the early 2000's Steve did a five-year stint as a faculty member at Aurora University (Aurora, IL) before being asked to rejoin NIU as a faculty member to lead efforts in the assessment of student learning. His academic passions lie in K-12 and higher education—specifically teaching, learning, assessment, and research methodologies.

Steve's role at WCU is to help lead and support strategic planning efforts across the university.

Steve's undergraduate degree is in dairy farming; yes, milking cows. His doctorate is in Educational Psychology, learning theory.

Steve has had a wide range of jobs in his early years, including a year as unit secretary in labor delivery at Evanston Hospital, as a researcher investigating learning and synaptic plasticity at Northwestern University, and as a researcher working for the Extension Service at the University of Vermont.

Steve is recently married to his wonderful wife, Chris. They have a total of six children between the two of them: Jakob (22), Erik (21), Maggie (21), Nikolas (19), Paige (18), and Rachel (16).

His hobbies include gardening, hiking, historic building restoration and preservation. Cooking is Steve's recreational therapy.

His favorite inspirational quote is from Benjamin Franklin (1749), when he proposed a system of higher education: “As to their STUDIES, it would be well if they could be taught every Thing that is useful, and every Thing that is ornamental: But Art is long, and their Time is short. It is therefore propos'd that they learn those Things that are likely to be most useful and most ornamental. Regard being had to the several Professions for which they are intended.” That is as true then as it is today. As someone who has a passion for nearly every discipline and domain, and one who once milked cows, Steve finds Franklin's idea of education to be profound—focus on what is most useful and most beautiful.

"Coming to Western Carolina University is the fulfillment of a dream—to pursue my vocation in service to others using the gifts God has given me."



Want to include news in next month's issue?

Please send information to sctobin@email.wcu.edu