

Academic Affairs

News & Reflections

From the Provost's Desk

Greetings and Happy 2017!

For those of you just joining us at Western, Welcome! For those that are returning after the holidays, I hope you had a peaceful and rejuvenating break. For me, it was a nice time to relax, reflect on 2016, and give thanks for this wonderful place we call home. I am also so glad to be back on campus and am looking forward to all the good things to come in the New Year.

This will be a busy semester with a lot happening. Not the least of which is our ongoing 10-year SACSCOC review. As I write, many people are hard at work on the finalization of our SACSCOC focused report and DegreePlus QEP proposal that will be submitted next month. This will be followed shortly thereafter by our on-campus visit from the SACSCOC review committee in April. There is much to do between now and then and our reaffirmation of SACSCOC accreditation truly is a campus-wide endeavor. I appreciate everyone's continued support in these efforts. More details follow in this newsletter and in multiple other venues in the coming weeks.

Best wishes for your spring semester and thank you for all you do for WCU.

Happy New Year!

Alison Morrison-Shetlar

Black History Month

from the Office of the Chief Diversity Officer

What is the value in celebrating Black History Month?

Black History Month is the brainchild of Dr. Carter G. Woodson and began as Negro History Week in 1926 as an initiative proposed and supported by a few state departments of education, including North Carolina's. Since 1976, BHM has been recognized nationally and has been duplicated in other countries as well, most notably in the United Kingdom and Canada. An interactive presentation will be held on February 1, 2017 from 6:30-9:30 pm in the Blue Ridge Conference Room. The presentation will include background on the history of BHM, will take a look at some of the common misconceptions about BHM, and will suggest reasons why emphasis months like BHM are of value locally, nationally and internationally.

Provost on the Ground

Winter Welcome Reception for New Catamounts	January 5
WCU Chili's Ribbon Cutting	January 9
School of Entrepreneurship, Hospitality and Tourism, Marketing and Sport Management	January 17
Graduate School Open House	January 19
CEAP Assessment Day	January 27

Adverse Weather

As we just experienced, the threat of snow, ice or other winter weather affecting class and work schedules is a reality for us in western NC. As a reminder, students, faculty, and staff need to be aware of the University's Adverse Weather and Emergency Event policy (Policy #41) as it relates to campus operating conditions and how decisions will be made and communicated in the event of inclement weather.

First and foremost, safety is always the number one consideration, and in that context, the University is committed to communicating any change in status as far in advance as possible. When making weather related decisions, University officials rely on information from our grounds, public safety and transportation staffs, law enforcement agencies, the National Weather Service, and other sources.

In the event that inclement weather may occur, the Adverse Weather policy outlines three condition levels that can be declared by the chancellor or the chancellor's designee.

Condition 1: Reduced operations, the University is open.

- Classes may (or may not) operate on a regular schedule.
- Non-mandatory employees use their own discretion in deciding whether or not to work, with timely notice to their supervisor. Those employees must account for any leave taken, unless an exception is made through the governor's executive order.
- Mandatory employees must report to or remain at work unless otherwise notified.

Condition 2: Suspension of all but mandatory operations.

- Classes are cancelled.
- All non-mandatory operations are suspended.
- Non-mandatory employees must not report to work or must leave the workplace. Employees must account for any leave taken, unless an exception is made through executive order.
- Mandatory employees must report to or remain at work unless otherwise notified.

Condition 3: University closure. The University is closed due to the most severe situations.

- Classes are cancelled.
- All but the most critical mandatory operations have been shut down.
- Non-mandatory employees must not work and must leave campus. These employees are not required to use personal leave when absent from work.
- All or a limited number of mandatory employees may be directed to remain at or report to work.
- No employees will be required to charge leave or make up work time missed.
- Current UNC system policy will only allow for the designation of Condition 3 on a retroactive basis. As a rule, the University will only declare a Condition 1 or 2 at the time of an adverse weather event.

Classroom instructors who cannot travel to class meetings because of inclement weather are asked to communicate with their department heads to discuss plans, and if the face-to-face class meetings must be canceled, to communicate the news with their students as soon as possible. In those situations, the instructor should coordinate an alternative and meaningful assignment for students.

As always, deciding when and whether it is safe to travel to work, or if deteriorating weather conditions necessitate an early departure, ultimately lies with each faculty and staff member. Employees are asked to communicate with their supervisor as soon as possible when they are concerned about traveling to and from campus. Classroom instructors who cannot travel to class meetings because of inclement weather are asked to communicate with their department heads to discuss plans, and if the face-to-face class meetings must be suspended, to communicate the news with their students as soon as possible. In those situations, the instructor should coordinate an alternative and meaningful assignment for students.

In regards to time missed due to adverse weather, the university may, but is not required to, offer employees designated as non-mandatory the option of “make-up” time. Employees can charge time lost to leave with or without pay, or work with their supervisors to potentially make up for time lost due to adverse weather. If “make-up” time is offered, it must be made up within 90 calendar days.

Supervisors should be aware of their responsibility for communicating to employees whether they are designated “mandatory” or “non-mandatory.” Mandatory employees are required to work during adverse weather conditions, enabling the university to continue providing critical and essential services to students during inclement weather.

When inclement weather causes changes in the class schedule, announcements will be issued by 6 a.m. for day classes and by 4 p.m. for evening classes for both the Cullowhee campus and WCU’s Programs at Biltmore Park. The announcements will be posted on the university’s website and social media channels.

Staff members from WCU’s Office of Human Resources and Payroll will be holding information sessions regarding the Adverse Weather and Emergency Event Policy. The sessions include a general overview of the policy and a time for questions. Upcoming sessions will be held in the auditorium of H.F. Robinson Administration Building (HFR 101). More information can be found on the HR training site <https://wcuhub.wcu.edu/humanresources/Pages/Training%20Events%20Calendar.aspx>.

The full policy may be accessed at:
<http://www.wcu.edu/discover/leadership/office-of-the-chancellor/legal-counsel-office/university-policies/numerical-index/university-policy-41.aspx>

Questions about the policy can be directed to Anne Banks in the Office of Human Resources and Payroll at 828-227-2794 or ambanks@wcu.edu.



Updates on the Quality Enhancement Plan and Compliance

from the Director of SACSCOC Reaffirmation



Our QEP, named DegreePlus, will improve student success by re-conceptualizing and incentivizing student engagement. It will complement curricular learning and build on the premise that learning is not restricted to the classroom, but includes student activities like working part-time jobs, membership in academic clubs, participation in athletics, attending seminars, and conducting volunteer work. DegreePlus comprises three levels: (1) exposure and experience, (2) reflection and articulation, and (3) integration and application. In level 1, students will engage in five pre-approved activities in four different skill categories (cultural responsiveness, teamwork, leadership, and professionalism). These activities will be organized on an experiential transcript that will help students communicate all the work that they have accomplished. After completing activities, students will progress to level 2, where they will meet with a mentor who will ask students questions that probe their experiences and learning. Students will then complete personal reflections that could be written or performed. At level 3, students will develop a project that applies one or more skills that they learned in level 1. The project can include curricular experiences like internships, field experiences, research, or capstone courses or extracurricular experiences such as serving as the president of a student organization. Level 3 also involves a new event called “DegreePlus Day” which is an annual, culminating event to celebrate students’ progress and achievement in the DegreePlus program. After the DegreePlus experience, students will be better prepared for their professional aspirations and for a life of learning.

DegreePlus is in its final stages of development. Carmen Huffman, Chair of the Quality Enhancement Plan Development and Implementation committee, and Drew Virtue, an assistant professor in the English department, are managing the completion of the official 75 page (+ 25-page appendix) proposal which will be submitted to SACSCOC on Feb. 2nd. Beginning Fall 2017, DegreePlus will be piloted with students in the Honors College, Academic Success Program, and the Leadership Minor program which is jointly offered by the Office of Leadership & Student Involvement and the Human Services department.

For more information, please see: degreeplus.wcu.edu

Compliance Certification

We recently received the review of our Compliance Certification report from the SACSCOC off-site review committee. Overall, WCU came out of this preliminary review in good shape. However, we were found non-compliant with several standards. We have been busy collecting materials like transcripts, CVs, syllabi, updated organizational charts, reports on facilities, and student complaints to address issues of non-compliance. Heartfelt thanks go out to the many people who have been extremely helpful in gathering this evidence in such a short time frame. Because of the excellent team effort that is occurring across campus, we are confident that we will be compliant with those standards.

Focused Report

Our next step is to develop a written response, with appropriate evidence, to address items of non-compliance. This “Focused Report” will be submitted to the review committee in February.

Open-forum

We will plan an open forum in early February to communicate the final DegreePlus proposal and get additional feedback from students, staff, and faculty. We will also let the university know of our compliance progress as we anticipate the April 4-6 on-site visit.

Making a case for compliance with SACSCOC

Comprehensive Standard 3.3.1

from the Office of Institutional Planning and Effectiveness

While WCU fared quite well in the recent SACSCOC off-site review as part of the decennial effort to reaffirm our institutional accreditation, our peer evaluators did find WCU non-compliant with Comprehensive Standard 3.3.1. This standard addressed institutional effectiveness and requires ongoing unit-level evaluation of goals and outcomes with evidence of improvements made as a result of analysis of results. The standard is composed of five sub-standards each addressing a different facet of university operations: educational programs, administrative support services, academic and student support services, research, and community/public service.

Even though we know significant effort is taking place across the university to make improvements and be strategic in decision making, we find ourselves lacking in the ability to collect and articulate the good work we are doing.

Throughout the Spring, the OIPE in partnership with the Coulter Faculty Commons will be working with academic units to ensure each unit has clearly articulated goals with related measurable outcomes. Thank you in advance for your contributions to this effort as we make our case for compliance.

Chancellor's List Awards and Reception

from the Division of Student Success

This February Western Carolina University will welcome Donovan Livingston, award-winning educator and spoken word poet as the keynote speaker for the awards ceremony and reception to recognize fall 2016 student recipients of the Chancellor's List.

The Chancellor's List is an honor and distinction that recognizes the academic accomplishment of students who have earned a 3.8 GPA during the previous semester at Western Carolina University while enrolled in a minimum of 12 credit hours. This celebration emerges from the WCU Vision 2020 stated commitment to the recognition and celebration of student success and academic excellence. Students who have earned this significant honor are role models as university citizens, having demonstrated their commitment to academic and personal excellence. Students are welcome to invite family members and are encouraged to also invite a special faculty member who has been a trusted advocate; that person who has provided the encouragement, inspiration, and mentorship to help the student accomplish his or her potential. Each semester, WCU presents this prestigious award to approximately 10% of enrolled students in a ceremony that features remarks from Chancellor Belcher and Provost Morrison-Shetlar along with a feature highlight, such as stellar performances from WCU's School of Music.



This spring's keynote, Donovan Livingston, is an award-winning educator, spoken word poet, and public speaker. Livingston encourages students, educators, and communities to realize their potential to change the shape of education with his inspirational and passionate message.

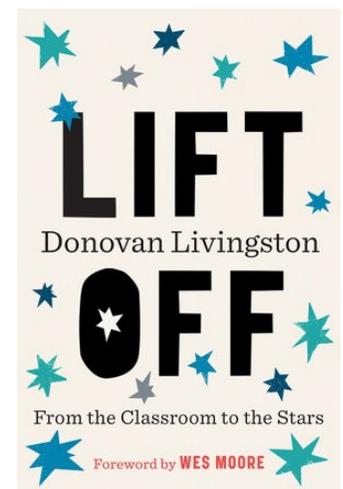
"Drawing on personal experiences as well as scholarship, Livingston examines the legacy of social inequalities in America's school system and encourages educational reform as a means to greater change. An impassioned and dynamic speaker, he incorporates creative elements into his

lectures such as spoken word poetry and audience collaboration." (prhspeakers.com) Emerging from his impassioned speech at Harvard last year (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9XGUUpKITEJM>), his soon to be released book, *Lift Off* has received high praise from author Wes Moore, among many others. Currently a doctoral candidate at the University of North Carolina in Greensboro, Livingston has earned Master's degrees from Columbia University and Harvard University.

You are invited to join us at the Bardo Arts Center on February 6, 2017 at 5:00 pm for the Chancellor's List Ceremony.

Following the ceremony, guests are invited to a reception in the Bardo Arts Center lobby, where students often seize the opportunity to request that prize photo with the Chancellor or Provost. Guests will also have the opportunity to meet Mr. Livingston and enjoy the wonderful sense of community that defines Western Carolina University.

The Chancellor's List Awards Ceremony and Reception is jointly sponsored by Student Success in Academic Affairs and by Student Affairs.



"Base Camp Highlands" Turns 90!

from the Office of the Associate Provost, Academic Affairs



HIGHLANDS BIOLOGICAL STATION

I am sometimes asked "just what, exactly, is a biological field station?" Well, there are lots of ways to describe and define biological stations, I'm sure, but perhaps the best way to express the idea is to think of them as well-equipped base camps. A base camp is a more or less temporary home-away-from-home, a base of operations, and a jumping-off point for field study. Field stations are base camps for research, teaching and learning,

situated by design in biologically interesting areas as a home base for far-flung scientists who would otherwise have a difficult time accessing and studying local natural areas. Tents get the job done for awhile, but how much more productive, not to mention comfortable, would a permanent base be, with laboratories, equipment, classrooms, dorms, dining hall, library...? That's certainly what the founders of the Highlands Biological Station (HBS) had in mind some ninety years ago this summer.

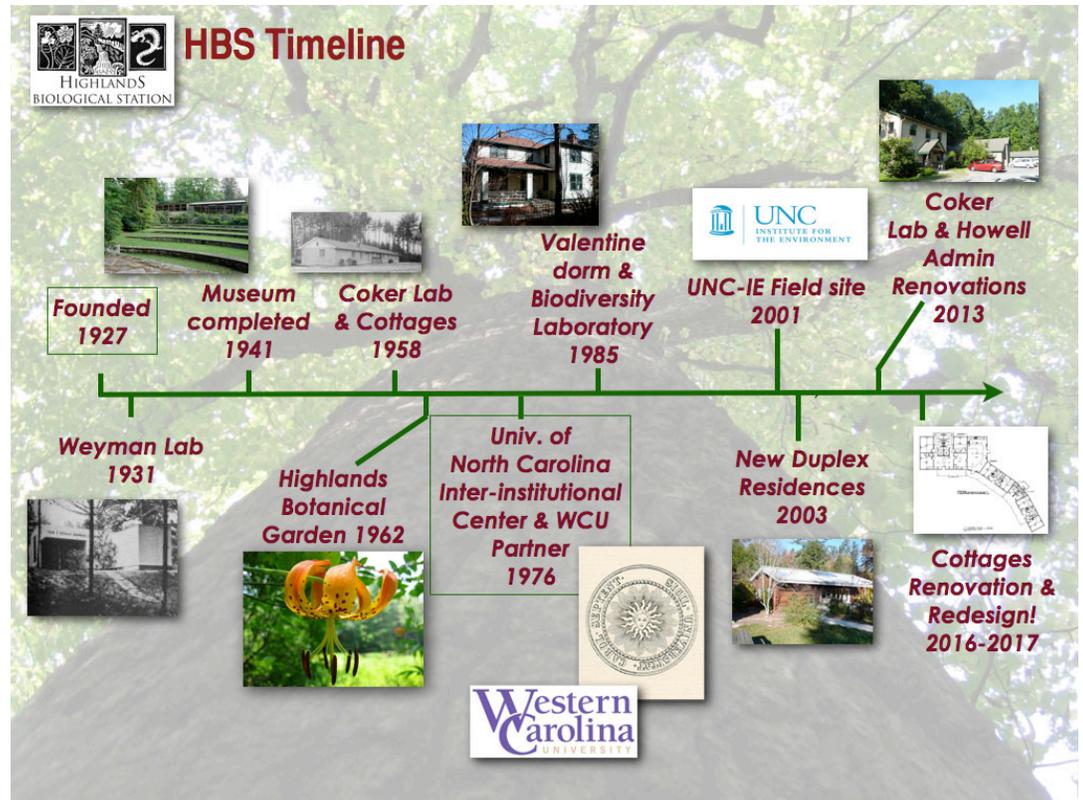
Just about all of us are struck by the natural beauty of the southern mountain landscape, and the naturalists among us appreciate the biological and geological riches as well: our region has been a scientific crossroads for centuries. A circle of Highlands residents, led by Atlantan Clark Foreman, connected these dots and in 1927 came together to propose a museum and biological laboratory in Highlands. Scientists from around the country were invited to assess the suitability of the site for research, and their verdict was unanimous: perched at the edge of the Blue Ridge Escarpment, in the midst of the southern Appalachian temperate rain forest boasting peak diversity for many types of organisms — not only for all of North America, but for the entire temperate zone of the earth — a "base camp" in Highlands would be a tremendous scientific asset.

Thus was born the Highlands Biological Station, which grew steadily over the decades with National Science Foundation, State of North Carolina, and private support. Through generous donations of land and funds the first museum in Highlands was built as an add-on to the public library by 1928, followed in 1931 by its first research laboratory — with a design so innovative for its time that it was featured in architectural textbooks. Thanks to the Federal WPA program, in the early 1940s a stand-alone museum was built of local stone and chestnut; now known as the Highlands Nature Center, it has served as the home of HBS's vibrant public outreach education program ever since. In the early 1960s the Station's native-plant botanical garden was established: a 12-acre conservation and demonstration garden around Lindenwood Lake, featuring nearly 450 plants native to the southern highlands in a diversity of habitat types.

The growing biological station existed as an independent non-profit until the mid-1970s, when it joined the University of North Carolina system as an Inter-institutional Center. Soon after, in 1981, HBS commenced its long and fruitful relationship with Western Carolina University as the Station's administrative campus in the UNC system. The founding non-profit is still thriving today, reorganized in the 1970s as the Highlands Biological Foundation, Inc., whose mission is to help support and advance the Highlands Biological Station. One of the several important contributions made by the Foundation is funding for an annual grant-in-aid program in support of graduate research, yielding hundreds of scientific papers and many dozens of graduate theses and dissertations.

Fast forward to the present, 90 years after it was established, and the Highlands Biological Station has grown to a "base camp" that would do its founders proud. Sleeping up to 40 and featuring modern classrooms, laboratories, and other amenities in addition to the museum and botanical garden, each summer HBS supports researchers from across the country and around the world as well as a menu of immersive field biology courses for undergraduate and graduate students. The summer season is followed each fall by a semester-in-residence program offered in cooperation with UNC-Chapel Hill.

But HBS is not only for visiting scientists and students. It has also always been a community and university asset: the garden trails and grounds are open year-round, dawn to dusk,



with weekly summertime tours and programs, and the Nature Center offers an extensive menu of lectures, exhibits, family programs, day camps, and special events for all ages (mostly, but not exclusively, in the summer). We invite you to come on "up" to the HBS base camp. Stroll through the Botanical Garden, picnic on the lake, take a workshop or field course, or enjoy a Thursday evening lecture — the Station's 90th anniversary year will be exciting in more ways than one, as we look to forge an even closer relationship between HBS and WCU. Check us out at highlandsbiological.org for programming and other announcements!

Jim Costa, Director

Charting a Path of Distinction

from the Office of Undergraduate Studies

In light of the new UNC strategic directions, Undergraduate Studies is pleased to highlight two noteworthy items in the “excellent and diverse” and “economic/community engagement” categories. First, WCU’s recent inclusion as a College of Distinction for 2017 is based on our continued commitment to excellence in and outside the classroom, including undergraduate research, first year seminars, capstone experiences, global and diverse opportunities, collaborative and common interdisciplinary themes, and our emphasis on community engagement as a vehicle for teaching, learning, service, and scholarship. Recognition as a College of Distinction places a seal on WCU as a place where students go “to learn, to grow, and to succeed” in an active learning environment that also prioritizes faculty-student mentoring, outstanding teaching, and diverse and excellent academic and co-curricular programs. WCU’s profile is available at <http://collegesofdistinction.com/school/western-carolina-university/>.

Second, the Office for Undergraduate Studies and the Center for Service Learning recently selected the 2016-17 STAR Community Engagement Projects which highlights the work of up to ten faculty members and their students that are grounded in community or civic engagement. Selection of the successful projects is based on responses from faculty who complete the annual Community-based Activities Survey and faculty recipients each receive \$500 in professional development funding. The new list of STAR Community Engagement Projects is available at the following link: engagement.wcu.edu. Please see below for two examples of the STAR projects.



Students from Heather Mae Erickson’s ceramics fundraiser project (College of Fine and Performing Arts).

Students from Jennifer Hinton’s Adventure-based Recreation Therapy course, HIGHTS (College of Health and Human Sciences).



Student Spotlight

Joanna Woodson

Undergraduate Student, Social Work



"I am a returning student entering into my senior year studying social work. It took me a long time to find this path--four schools and a few more majors--but to say the journey has been worthwhile would be an understatement. The professors in the social work department at Western have shaped my life in ways inconceivable to me before I came here. Because of them, I have committed myself to law school, as well as a life of service.

I work in the Center for Service Learning, as well as the university's marketing department. I am also the lead ambassador at WCU for the Andrew Goodman Foundation and Student Democracy Coalition. I have always worked multiple jobs since I was 16, but for the first time in my life I love the work I do because it is all interconnected. I feel as though all of my employers have taken the time to mentor and push me--and set me straight when necessary.

I love to read, but I can't concentrate well enough on one book at a time. I am currently reading about 16 different books, but it will take me a year to finish them all. I consider myself a novice runner, and I run with my boxer Delilah in order to de-clutter my mind. A fun fact, at least to me, is that I keep a rolling list of folks I would like to have dinner with. In case the opportunity ever presents itself, I don't want to forget anyone. So far my list includes names such as Sheryl Sandberg, Sonia Sotomayor, Temple Grandin, Diane Rehm, Jim

Valvano, and John Adams. Some have tougher availability than others, so it will be difficult to make my dream a reality.

My favorite quote of all time is "Rather than love, than money, than faith, than fame, than fairness, give me truth." This is Jon Krakaur paraphrasing Thoreau in his book *Into the Wild*. When I was in high school I wrote this quote on my bedroom wall, and it stuck with me ever since. I value that quote for many reasons, but especially now because the most honest version of myself is someone who is able to laugh at the world around me. Until recently, I was insecure with my silliness. I thought it made me less intelligent or less serious than my peers. But I now own my laughter, because as Paul Loeb once said, only someone who knows how good life can be is in a position to appreciate what's at stake when life is degraded or destroyed."



Faculty Spotlight

Ashlee Wasmund

Dance Program Coordinator



Ashlee Wasmund is an Assistant Professor and the Dance Program Coordinator for the School of Stage & Screen.

She earned her B.A. from Franklin College of Indiana, and her M.F.A. from Western Illinois University.

Although this is Ashlee's first year with WCU, she was a professional choreographer, actor, director, and adjunct instructor at several colleges and institutions in Chicago.

Ashlee's favorite activity is "chillin' with my homie", Fiona (who happens to be her 17 month old daughter), and her "incredibly dapper" husband, Colin.

As far as hobbies, Ashlee loves a good cup of Haversack Coffee. Her husband Colin is the owner and master roaster of Haversack Coffee!

Ashlee's favorite quote is from the hit show The Office, "You miss 100% of the shots you don't take. - Wayne Gretzky" - Michael Scott.

Production photo from The Syrian Refugee Film Project



Staff Spotlight

Sky Sampson

Director of the Cherokee Center



Sky Nicole Sampson is the new Director of the WCU Cherokee Center.

An alumna of WCU, Sky earned her Bachelors of Science in Communication in 2010. She went on to earn her Masters of Science in Human Environmental Science, Interactive Technology in 2014 at the University of Alabama.

Sky's talents include graphic design and project coordination.

She stays busy at home with her four beautiful children ages 9, 6, 3, and 3 months!

Sky enjoys watching movies, splurging on an occasional sweet treat, and has a passion for our young people's growth.

"To the world you may be just one person, but to one person you may be the world" by Dr. Suess is Sky's favorite quote.

Want to include news in next month's issue?

Please send information to sctobin@email.wcu.edu