



Highlights from Academic Affairs

2018-2019



What a great time to be a Catamount! Over the last year, the students, faculty, and staff in Academic Affairs have accomplished many things. The articles that follow highlight new collaborations, pathbreaking research, innovative classrooms, and community partnerships that promote positive change, but they represent just a small sample of the great work taking place on our campus and beyond. Every day, I am amazed at the quality and the breadth of our teaching, scholarship and creative work, and engagement activities. Most of all, as these stories remind us, I am struck by the power of education to transform knowledge, places, and lives. That belief is at the core of all we do in Cullowhee, and we are doing it very well indeed. GO CATS!

Richard D. Starnes
Interim Provost and Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs

MATH PATHWAYS SEEK TO HELP STUDENT SUCCESS PG 2

4TH ANNUAL COLLEGE OF BUSINESS PITCH PARTY PG 4

PROJECT DISCOVERY: EXPLORE, LEARN, & GROW PG 6

ENGINEERING STUDENTS' INGENUITY LEADS TO A TREKKING POLE FOR THE DIGITAL AGE PG 7

MOUNTAINS TO MACY'S PG 11

COLLEGE OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SCIENCES HEALTH EDUCATORS ACADEMY PG 12

GRADUATE STUDENTS PRESENT IN RALEIGH PG 13

A BUSTLING SUMMER IN CULLOWHEE PG 13

BRINSON ENDOWMENT PROVIDES OPPORTUNITY FOR HONORS STUDENTS TODAY AND IN PERPETUITY PG 17

LIBRARY'S SCHOLAR STUDIO SUPPORTS STUDENT'S MULTIMEDIA CONTENT CREATION PG 18

STUDENT SUCCESS PG 18

VIRTUAL REALITY A REALITY IN HUNTER LIBRARY PG 19

CUSTOMIZING COURSE CONTENT TO SUPPORT STUDENT SUCCESS PG 19

LOCAL CIVIC ENGAGEMENT EFFORTS SERVE AS NATIONAL MODEL FOR YOUTH VOTING PG 20

Math Pathways Seek to Help Student Success

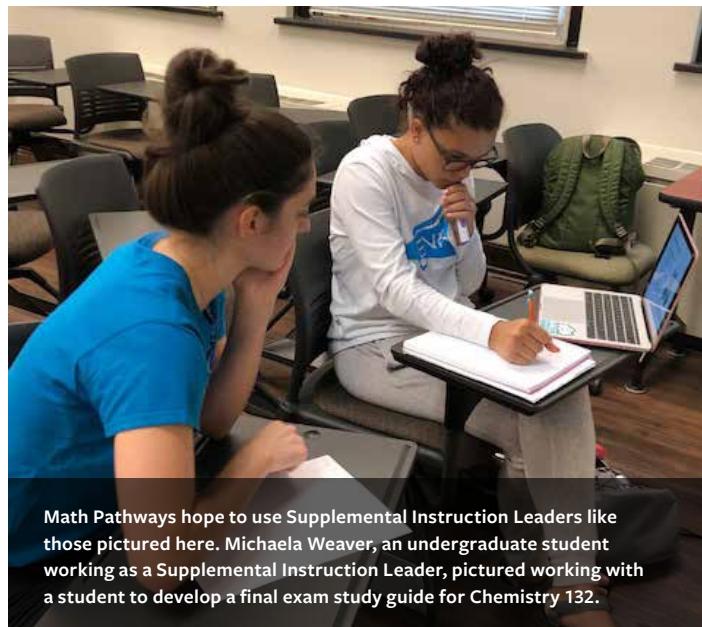
How do we make sure a student is in the right math class? How do we make sure that students succeed in college math courses and graduate on time? WCU faculty and support staff members are seeking answers to these questions through an initiative called Math Pathways. This effort is a joint initiative between the Department of Mathematics and Computer Science (College of Arts and Sciences) and the Mathematics Tutoring Center (Office of Student Success). It seeks to rethink gateway mathematics and improve student success. It poises WCU to be at the forefront of the UNC system in math instruction.

The principal goals of Pathways are

- 1) to align every student's choice of major with the path through relevant and engaging mathematics coursework
- 2) to ensure that students begin gateway mathematics courses in their first year of WCU whenever possible
- 3) to provide curriculum, instruction, and support to maximize student success in each path
- 4) to remove unnecessary mathematical barriers that perpetuate equity gaps for underrepresented STEM minority students and first-generation students

This initiative began when the Office of Student Success identified college algebra as a bellwether for student retention. With support from Associate Vice Chancellor Lowell Davis, a task force was formed in Summer 2018 to study the pathways model. Meanwhile, in Fall 2018, the UNC System Office launched its own task force to address mathematics pathways across the system. Daniel Best (Math and Computer Science) and Phil Cauley (Admissions) represented WCU on this task force.

With support from the Belk Foundation, UNC-SO funded a project to support individual campuses to reform mathematics curriculum. The team of WCU investigators included: Daniel Best, Jeff Lawson (Math and Computer Science), and Sibley Brian (Math Tutoring Center). They were awarded a \$100,000 grant for 2019-2020 to implement additional pathways in the mathematics field. They have already formed a team to begin the curricular design work and collaborate with stakeholders. The target date for implementation is Fall 2020.



Math Pathways hope to use Supplemental Instruction Leaders like those pictured here. Michaela Weaver, an undergraduate student working as a Supplemental Instruction Leader, pictured working with a student to develop a final exam study guide for Chemistry 132.



Zay Watkins, Graduate student in Chemistry, is a Supplemental Instruction Leader for Math 146.

4th Annual College of Business Pitch Party

During fall semester of 2018, eight student participants pitched their business ideas to an audience of peers and a panel of judges comprised of outdoor industry professionals at the 4th Annual Pitch Party. This event is sponsored by EPIC Innovation, the College of Business, The Center of the Study of Free Enterprise, and Arthur Salido, Executive Director for Community and Economic Engagement and Innovation, as an approved Degree Plus event for WCU. The competition has steadily gained in popularity, this year packing the UC Theater. Over \$1500 was awarded to the top three business ideas and the People's Choice winner.

The event required students to create a five-minute pitch with three PowerPoint slides to present their business idea to the panel of judges. Weeks, and sometimes months of preparation, involved extensive market research and working with faculty mentors in order to develop a pitch similar to an equity funding pitch. The experience of preparing the pitch and delivering it to a live audience and panel of judges was highly stressful but very rewarding for the student entrepreneurs.

The contest was held this year in collaboration with the Outdoor Economic Conference at WCU, which was hosted by the College of Engineering. This year's Pitch Party had an "outdoor" theme, so each idea presented was required to be related to the outdoor industry. As the competition was open to students across campus, not exclusively from the College of Business, there were participants with varying majors—graphic design, engineering technology, entrepreneurship, and film and television production.

The panel of judges included representatives from on and off-campus, including Hollye Moss, Interim Dean of the College of Business; Noah Wilson, President of Emergent Opportunity Inc. and Program Director



for Outdoor Gear Builders of WNC; Adams Masters, owner of Bellyak; Alex Walser, WCU Alum, previous pitch competition winner and owner of Bearded Crew; Jeff Kaplan, Director of Entrepreneurship for Venture Asheville; David Knight, North Carolina's Outdoor Industry Recruitment Director for the Department of Commerce; and Sandra Dennison, Regional Director for SBTDC at WCU.

The following is a partial list of the student participants from a variety of disciplines and their business ideas:

Kyle Monaghan – Mechanical Engineering – new product design called Power Trek, a trekking pole with a built-in battery that charges as you hike. (First Place and People's Choice Award Winner)

Grant White and **Steven Tate** – Engineering Technology majors – new product design called Shred Light, a snowboard with lights and weight sensors that pull double-duty as learning tools and safety features. (Second Place Winners)

Drew Singleton – Engineering Technology major – a new product design called TuBright, a bike light with a power source that can be inserted into a bike's steering column. (Third Place Winner)

Tuyen Tram – Graphic Design major – hiking backpack with accessible compartments, a new product design for an established business called Genesis Design Consortium, LLC.

Leah Sitterson – Film and Television Production major – new product design called Mobile Outpost, a mobile outdoor store.

Matthew McRae and **Clint Bartlett** – Entrepreneurship majors – video production company called Geomorphic Productions.



Spring Student Entrepreneurship Tradeshaw

Related to the Annual Pitch Party, the Spring Student Entrepreneurship Tradeshaw, which helps students prepare for their pitches and refine their business ideas. The Tradeshaw is an integral part of the Pitch Party. Many of the Tradeshaw participants are accepted into the Pitch Party as contestants. The event is designed to encourage student entrepreneurs to present their ideas and craft a pitch to a small audience. All students are required to have direct marketing research questions at their booths. They seek feedback by asking interactive questions related to their business concept or product prototype. The event is located strategically around the fountain in the middle of campus to capture as many faculty, students, and staff as possible as they move through campus to academic buildings. Seed funding is provided for each student to create tabletop marketing collateral such as business cards, logos, poster board, and material for product prototypes, if necessary. Other items include printing, market research supplies, and EPIC Innovation marketing material.

Project Discovery: Explore, Learn, & Grow

WCU's Project Discovery is a "college connection" program for low-income, first-generation college-bound students; the program helps them make it through middle and high school and enroll in college. The program is funded by a Talent Search TRiO grant from the U.S. Department of Education. Our target population includes students in seven area high schools and middle schools here in western North Carolina who have been identified as having the potential to succeed in higher education. WCU has been a recipient of the Talent Search Grant since 1979, and we have served thousands of students over the years. In 2018-2019 alone, Project Discovery received more than \$377,000 in grant funds to bring college access programs to 836 WNC middle and high school students.

Project Discovery enrolls students in the 6th or 7th grade and works with them through high school graduation, providing a wide range of access services, such as: tutoring, career exploration and interest assessment, study skills, financial literacy, decision-making strategies, assistance with financial aid forms like the FAFSA, college applications, ACT/SAT test preparation, and information on post-secondary institutions. Our staff are in the schools every day, meeting students individually and in classrooms, conducting workshops, and going beyond the classroom to build strong educational habits. All of these services are vital, and we have found that it takes more than the nuts and bolts of "info-sessions" and "how-to's" for low-income students to take the leap of faith to college. The practical, experiential opportunities that Project Discovery provides are focused on the development of character, leadership, personal responsibility, perseverance, relationship skills, and inner strength.

“ Things only change when you're out of your comfort zone... you learn how to take care of yourself, you learn now to take care of others.

We achieve our mission through practical learning opportunities like outdoor classroom programs for middle school students, high and low element challenge course experiences, rock climbing, caving, mountain biking, and even longer expeditionary outings. These opportunities also provide a means for students to explore, learn, and grow. It is not enough to go to college; we help make sure students have what it takes to graduate with a degree. Project Discovery is an investment with a high return. More than 98% of our students graduate from high school, while nearly 80% of them enroll in college, and more than 52% of them will graduate from college with a degree. A Project Discovery student who earns a college degree will repay, in taxes, what it costs for that student's 7-year enrollment in the program in just four months.

For more information about WCU's Project Discovery, visit projectdiscovery.wcu.edu or call 828-227-7137.

Engineering Students' Ingenuity Leads to a Trekking Pole for the Digital Age

Almost as ubiquitous as hiking boots is a hiking stick, an age-old means to steady a climb, keep one's balance, push aside brush and ease a descent. Now, add one more function: phone charger, thanks to the ingenuity of Western Carolina University engineering student Kyle Monaghan.

Kyle's "Power Trek," a hiking stick for the digital age, converts kinetic energy from the motion of walking into a battery-storable charge. This charge can be used to juice up cellphones and other electronic devices while out on the trail and far away from electrical outlets.

Kyle may be on to something, a commercial blockbuster perhaps, based on the numerous awards he's received for presentations featuring the prototype, awards that also help to fund prototype development efforts. While there are similar gadgets by others in various stages of availability, Kyle's has its own unique characteristics, and he is pursuing patent potentials.

Both the idea for the hiking stick and the decision to attend WCU came during a long-distance excursion on the Appalachian Trail. Already holding a bachelor's degree in philosophy from Hunter College in New York City and living and working in Asheville, Kyle was considering what his next steps in life could be.

"I wasn't sure what I wanted to do," Kyle says. "I was just on the trail, giving myself time to think about things, and you want to be able to use your cell phone, to take pictures and send texts and it's nice for me to be in contact with my wife."

"I was talking to fellow hikers and one of the conversations I had on the trail was a through hiker telling me 'what would you want to do with your life if you had no fear?' I had always wanted to be an engineer, but the idea of going through three or four years of calculus and all the math and science behind it was terrifying to me. Then, I thought that is a poor reason not to do something, just because I'm scared of the hard work. At that time, I was getting up at six in the morning to hike 10 hours a day. So, I should be able to handle some school work."

After completing about 800 miles on the Appalachian Trail, he decided to drop-off and return home to Asheville, where he began taking prerequisite courses at Asheville-Buncombe Technical Community College with plans to transfer into WCU's College of Engineering and



Technology. Kyle quickly credits encouragement and guidance from his project adviser, Wes Stone, a WCU Engineering Associate Professor.

“Kyle proposed his Power Trek idea for his Engineering Practices and Principles III course, a one-semester, junior-level product development course,” Stone says. “I was intrigued by the idea and put Kyle and three other engineering students on the project. Four months later, they had a functional prototype, generating a charge from the trekking motion. The device needed additional work, so Kyle spent part of his summer and

early fall making modifications. By early October 2018, Kyle had a polished prototype and a business pitch that earned him first place at the Student Pitch Competition. I am proud of the effort he’s poured into the development of his Power Trek, and look forward to seeing it in the hands of hikers on the Appalachian Trail one day.”

At the recent Innovate Carolina Conference in Charlotte, hosted by Product Development Management Association, Kyle and his digital walking stick took first place in the undergraduate division. Kyle won a \$750 prize, prompting Jeffrey Ray, Dean of WCU’s College of Engineering and Technology, to comment about how Kyle’s achievements were another example of the high caliber of students reaching new heights at WCU.

“I really enjoyed the idea of product-based learning, which we do here at Western,” Kyle says. “I’ve been provided with an amazing amount of resources; I have so much contact with my professors here. The encouragement I’ve received seeking my degree, and the support for this product is amazing. Now I know I made some good decisions when I was hiking the AT.”

With a laugh, Kyle adds, “I’ve gone to other universities, so I can have a contrasting opinion about it.” At Western Carolina University, we have always been committed to providing high-quality, affordable education for anyone who wishes to pursue a degree. Thanks to a new program (NC Promise) from the state of North Carolina, tuition for all undergraduate students at WCU has been further reduced.

Kyle is currently a Nuclear Engineering Science Laboratory Synthesis Intern at the Oak Ridge National Laboratory.

“ I was intrigued by the idea and put Kyle and three other engineering students on the project. Four months later they had a functional prototype, generating a charge from the trekking motion.

–Wes Stone, WCU Engineering Associate Professor



Kyle Monaghan



Mountains to Macy's

Western Carolina University's Pride of the Mountains Marching Band will be enjoying one of the best things about Thanksgiving Day – going back for a second helping.

But in this case, the 500-plus members of the WCU marching band won't be fighting over who gets the last drumstick. Instead, they will be making a return trip to New York City to perform in the 2019 Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade.

Macy's Parade officials came to campus Friday, April 13, to surprise band members with news of the invitation to participate in the annual holiday event next year. The Pride of the Mountains previously was selected to lead the parade in 2014.

David Starnes, WCU Director of Athletic Bands, had invited all members of the Pride of the Mountains to a mandatory full band meeting with Carol Burton, WCU's Acting Provost, in the Grandroom of A.K. Hinds University Center. After a few introductory remarks from Burton, Wesley Whatley, Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade Creative Producer, stepped out of hiding and into the room to deliver the invitation.

Whatley counted down to lead a cheer of "let's have a parade," unveiled a parade banner, and presented a commemorative drum head to Starnes as a shower of confetti rained down upon the participants.

"On behalf of the band selection committee, Macy's is incredibly proud to welcome back Western Carolina University to the streets of New York City," said Whatley. "David Starnes runs a program known for its artistic storytelling, big sound, and highly engaging field shows. The Macy's Parade audience has a lot to look forward to when the Pride of the Mountains Marching Band returns to our parade in 2019."

The return of the WCU unit to the parade represents an uncommon occurrence in the history of the event, Whatley said.

"Bands may only reapply for the Macy's Parade five years after appearing in our event," he said. "In most cases, it takes much longer for a group to receive another invitation, if at all. WCU is a rare case – delivering such a special combination of artistry and big university sound that the committee couldn't resist welcoming them back as soon as possible after the band's five-year hiatus."

Starnes and other Pride of the Mountains staff members worked hard to try to ensure that the announcement was a surprise to all student band members, a task made trickier because most of the seniors in the unit participated in the event in 2014 and may have recognized Whatley.

"We are thrilled beyond belief to represent Western Carolina University and the great state of North Carolina in the 2019 Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade," Starnes said. "This event is a life-changer for band students of all ages and, personally, continues to bring out the kid in me. The respect and admiration I have for this parade goes without saying, and we are deeply honored to have been selected for participation in 2019. As they say on parade day – let's have a parade."

The world-famous event, founded in 1924, attracts more than 3.5 million spectators lining the streets of New York, and 50 million at-home viewers. The world's largest parade, the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade, is televised nationally by NBC.

College of Health and Human Sciences Health Educators Academy

The College of Health and Human Sciences (CHHS) in collaboration with the Coulter Faculty Commons are proud to present the Health Educators Academy (HEA) as a significant highlight. Health sciences faculty often lack the experience and training in pedagogy. The HEA is an interprofessional model for faculty development in a College of Health Sciences to improve teaching. We believe that mentoring, training, and experience facilitate the transition from a strong clinician to a strong educator.

Twenty-five faculty (23 CHHS and 2 CEAP) have participated in the program over the past 5 years, including 11 tenure track, 14 fixed term, with an average of 2-3 years teaching in higher education. Each spring, Academy members are selected through a competitive application process. The selected cohort of 5-6 faculty participate in a week-long summer Master Class led by an outside expert in a relevant area to health professions education. Topics have included; Threshold Pedagogy, Contemplative Pedagogy, Competency-Based Education, Brain-Based Learning, Team-Based Learning, and Designing for Significant Learning. Throughout the year, participants work with their interprofessional cohort to complete goals focusing on improving teaching and engaging in scholarship.

Since the program began, 3 peer-review publications and over 20 peer reviewed presentations have resulted from the collaborative work of academy members. Academy members present pedagogical topics throughout the year to college and university faculty. Both qualitative and quantitative feedback from participants have been extremely positive. Participants consistently noted improvement in pedagogical



skills, facilitation of inter-professional collaboration and promotion of the scholarship of teaching and learning.

We believe this interprofessional faculty development model has the potential to benefit health-related educational programs by improving teaching skills, facilitating interprofessional collaboration and leadership, and promoting scholarship.

Graduate Students Present in Raleigh

Three graduate students from Western Carolina University joined other graduate students from across the University of North Carolina System to participate in Graduate Education Day in Raleigh on May 15th, 2019 where they presented their research and met with State Senators and Representatives to demonstrate the value of graduate education to the state and to the western North Carolina region. Students were selected in a competitive process: each session chair of the Graduate Research Symposium nominated a presenter in their session. A panel of faculty selected the three students to represent Western Carolina University: Maria Hammon (Physical Therapy), Sara Method (Fine Arts), and Mike Sands (Chemistry). They visited Senator Jim Davis, Representative Kevin Corbin, Representative Joe Sam Queen, and Representative Brian Turner.



A Bustling Summer in Cullowhee

It is the lazy, hazy days of summer. Wait. There is a lot going on in Cullowhee in the summer. Educational Outreach is busy hosting a variety of individuals and groups on campus and beyond.

A new and highly unique summer day camp launched in 2019 in cooperation with the Forensic Anthropology Program. Instructor Christine Bailey headed this week-long program entitled: Tales from the Dead: Forensic Anthropology for Teens. About a dozen local high school students learned how to estimate age, sex, ancestry, stature, and pathological lesions from human skeletal remains. Through a combination of lectures, visual presentations, and hands-on labs, the teens were introduced to the same techniques as forensic anthropologists and crime scene investigators who aid law enforcement in determining the identity of unknown individuals. Kristie Walker's son Logan "Loved the camp! He has developed an interest in human anatomy and found the information helpful. He enjoyed the challenge of determining the facts about the remains he was able to examine."

Across campus, another group of campers were boarding the bus for the great outdoors. The Nature Exploration Camp led by Swain County High School Teacher, Max Lanning, visited Highlands Biological Station, the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, and various other nature sites in the area. The camp culminated with river snorkeling at the East Laporte picnic area where students were fortunate enough to see a "Hellbender Salamander or Devil Dog". These giant salamanders grow as large as two feet long and are rarely seen. According to the camp leader the presence of this salamander is a sign of a healthy ecosystem.

Down the hall from the Nature Exploration camp, the roar of laughter and the click of thousands of Legos™ can be heard, one of the three robotics camps being held in the Camp Building. “The kids are having so much fun they don’t realize they were learning physics principles” according to the camp leader Larissa Miller. Each camper built a robot which they navigated through a maze. The camp involves both building and programming the robot. In addition, the campers visited the College of Engineering to be introduced to the larger robots operating there. The campers also heard from the Public Safety Division at Western Carolina University about how they use technology. Also, involved in one of these camps were members of the Smoky Mountain High School Robotics Club. The club members acted as mentors for the younger campers and were able to earn volunteer hours and test their knowledge of robotics.

Also held during the summer is the Pride of the Mountains Marching Band camp. This camp brought 460 campers to campus for five days of fun and learning. Along with the student campers, there were 100 band directors from across North Carolina honing their skills for the coming fall band performances. The Pride of the Mountains Marching Band and the band camp continue to result in students choosing Western Carolina University as their school of choice for admission. The sound of music can be heard on almost every corner of campus.

The Native Plants conference brings over 300 people to campus and is one of the oldest native plants conferences in the United States. The conference began on Wednesday with field trips to the surrounding area to see plants and hear from national experts on the origin, propagation, conservation and preservation of native plants in the region. This year’s conference includes a panel of experts from non-profit Land Trusts. These organizations are thriving and currently protect hundreds of

thousands of acres across the country on both private and public lands with conservation easements. The panel will discuss what these trusts mean for individuals and the environment. A diverse mix of land trust professionals will discuss the various ways properties are protected by different types of land trusts, what a trust’s role is in conservation, public vs. private properties, and landowner benefits. During the conference, Hannah Cook was recognized as the recipient of the scholarship endowed by the conference in 2016.

Music, Theater and Visual Arts camps are also taking place this summer. The “Art Tastic” camp serves 6th through 10th graders who explored the various studios that Western Carolina University offers and gain experience with various art mediums. This camp offers campers an opportunity to explore art forms not available to them in most public-school settings. On the other end of the Fine and Performing Arts building, Triple Arts campers are gathered for a unique musical theatre intensive designed to give aspiring performers, at any level, the opportunity to work directly with top industry professionals. The camp was founded by Broadway veterans, and current stars of the Tony-winning Broadway revival of ‘PIPPIN,’ Terrence Mann and Charlotte d’Amboise. Triple Arts workshops build a strong foundation of confidence and skills while challenging students to reach new levels of personal achievement across the triple arts of the trade: acting, singing, and dancing. Campers hail from Puerto Rico to Washington state and points in between. Campers must audition and be accepted to spend two weeks honing their skills.

A few steps away, the melodious sounds of the mountain dulcimer can be heard near the fountain. Attendees at the Dulcimer U conference range from the novice player to the national champion. The Conference is led by Larry and Elaine Conger. In 1995, Larry won the Southern



Native Plants conference

Regional Mountain Dulcimer Championship in Mountain View, Arkansas. Three years later in 1998, he won the prestigious National Mountain Dulcimer Championship in Winfield, Kansas. Larry has authored fifteen dulcimer books and has three recordings to his credit. Elaine is a professional music educator and Orff-Schulwerk specialist who has a passion for instilling a love for the arts in young people. Her past musical experience includes touring with her own country band, performing on the General Jackson showboat at Opryland in Nashville and touring as pianist and back-up vocalist with country music superstar, Faith Hill. More recently, she has directed and accompanied numerous musical theater productions and even starred in a few herself. Her favorite role to date is as Patsy in “Always Patsy Cline.” Elaine also serves as organist/music director for an Episcopal Church. They are joined by a roster of nationally recognized artists, including Sarah Morgan. At 18, Sarah was named the 2012 National Mountain Dulcimer Champion in Winfield, KS. A year later, she went on to become a finalist in the 2013 International Acoustic Music Awards. She has also won other titles, including Mid-Eastern Region Mountain Dulcimer Champion, Kentucky State Mountain Dulcimer Champion, and Southern Region Mountain Dulcimer Champion. She is currently studying Traditional Music and Appalachian Studies at Morehead State University and teaches classes for the advanced player at the conference. There are jam sessions and impromptu concerts to fill the air with music from this traditional Appalachian instrument.

In 2019, the summer will wind down with the first annual Jamaican alumni week. With almost 4,000 graduates from the Jamaica program over a 40-year period, many alumni have expressed interest in returning to their alma mater to see the changes and to continue learning. The week will include professional development sessions, cultural



immersion activities, and the renewal of friendships. There will also be conversations about the past and plans for the future.

The summer sun sets just in time to welcome new distance and military students to campus and begin the year anew with visits to North Carolina Community Colleges, professional development programs and academic year conferences.

Brinson Endowment Provides Opportunity for Honors Students Today and In Perpetuity

Through their generous support of student scholarships with both annual gifts and endowment, Jack and Judy Brinson have made it possible for top students like Alexia Bevers, pictured here with the Brinsons, to complete their degrees at Western Carolina. In 2018-2019, the Brinsons expanded their impact through a planned gift, bringing their lifetime total giving above the \$2 million threshold. In recognition of the Brinson's generosity and commitment, in December of 2018, The Board of Trustees approved the naming of The Brinson Honors College,



upon the settlement of the Brinsons' estate. The Brinson endowment will continue to support student scholarships, and will also provide support for Honors students to engage in experiential learning through undergraduate research and study abroad. The Brinsons' support for undergraduate research has been an important part of the University's Summer Undergraduate Research Program, providing scholarship support for incoming freshmen Honors students to get an early start at Western, embedded in a faculty-student research team. Alexia Bevers is one of ten students this summer participating in the Summer Research Program with her faculty mentor, Dr. Sean Mullholland from the College of Business. The Brinsons were seminal benefactors in creating an endowment-supported program for Honors College Scholars, in collaboration with the Center for Life Enrichment in Highlands. The Scholars program helps to recruit high-achieving students to Western Carolina University. In September of 2018, Jack and Judy hosted members of the Honors College Advisory Board (Judy is a member) and board members of the Center for Life Enrichment, along with guests, at Wildcat Cliffs Country Club in Highlands for dinner with some of our top Honors Students, including Brinson Scholarship awardees, students active in undergraduate research and those who have studied abroad. The Honors College is a community of 1300 undergraduate students pursuing majors across the University. Currently, about 30% of Honors Students receive a merit-based Honors College scholarship.

Library's Scholar Studio Supports Student's Multimedia Content Creation

Increasingly, college students arrive for classes already adept at consuming multimedia content. They also experience pressure to create multimedia content of their own for class, work, and personal life. Faculty need to record content for online, hybrid, and flipped classrooms and face similar expectations. Despite the growth in multimedia assignments at Western, few media creation facilities existed on campus, and none were open for use by students and faculty across all disciplines. Hunter Library set out to create new spaces and support services that would be open to all students, faculty, and staff, and open outside of traditional business hours.

In support of this goal, the library created the "Scholar Studio." The overarching goal of the service is to encourage students to become more comfortable learning new technologies, to master the use of communication tools, be fully engaged members of society, and be proficient communicators in an interconnected world. Hunter Library patrons now have access to many creative tools, including a laminator, poster printer, button maker, vinyl cutter, virtual reality hardware and software, and sound-isolating recording booths.

Among some of the equipment included in the Scholar Studio is the sound-isolating recording booths with four high-end computers for editing work with access to Adobe Creative Cloud and other software. Since its debut on October 2018, the booths have had over 500 confirmed reservations, with students as the primary users. The booths were used for everything from recording podcasts for a class assignment, to creating music, to leading a webinar, to recording a reading for a family member.

Student Success



Savannah Mostellar is one of the students who have discovered the abundance of resources in the Scholar Studio. Savannah is a Forensic Science major and L.E.A.R.N.™ peer mentor who has found several ways to leverage the Scholar Studio for her class assignments and poster presentations in the classroom or at conferences.

She attended one of the library's new poster presentation creation workshops offered by Scholarly Communications

Librarian Scottie Kapel. Savannah attended the session with a L.E.A.R.N.™ class and learned to create a presentation for her class. The workshops include information on poster layout best practices, explore poster customization resources, and provide insight into what students can expect on the day of the presentation. Savannah said, "The poster information session that Scottie held was extremely beneficial. Without her session, I would have been lost as to how to even begin my poster." Savannah was able to use the equipment at the Scholar Studio to print her poster.

Savannah finds the library's spaces, collections, and workshops useful in support of her own coursework. As a peer mentor for L.E.A.R.N.™, a WCU-based living-learning community that helps students in science,

technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) find academic success, she often refers her peers to Hunter Library for mentoring and research sessions. She advises them to visit the library "for books, spaces, and technology that they could check out to help them with their studies or any issues."

She says the things she discovers inspire her curiosity and help her to be a "more well-rounded individual."

Virtual Reality a Reality in Hunter Library

The Scholar Studio's newest technology includes a Virtual Reality room equipped with hardware and software accessible during library hours. Students, faculty, and community patrons are welcome to experience the state-of-the-art computer-generated simulation of an image or environment that can be interacted with in a very realistic sense.

Virtual Reality has been very popular with students from Arts, Sciences, and Humanities. Since coming online, 836 reservations have been confirmed to use the VR services.



Customizing Course Content to Support Student Success

Another example of the value of the Scholar Studio's offerings come from Kloo Hansen, WCU's Coordinator for Undergraduate Research and L.E.A.R.N.™ Program Coordinator. Kloo has also worked with Scottie Kapel, to prepare her students to design and present research posters. Kloo says of Scottie, "her poster workshop was a fantastic opportunity for students. It can be a great way to recruit students to participate in undergraduate research conferences. Each time she works with my students, the workshops are fantastic. She's always adding something dynamic to engage the students in a different way."

Kloo also has worked regularly with the STEM subject specialist, Krista Schmidt, to ensure her students are prepared to meet their academic and professional goals.

Kloo worked with Krista to develop content. "Krista helped me create a workshop. The students come in fall and work through it with Krista. She helps them understand the nuances of source credibility, shows them the tools of the library, and becomes a contact person and a face. It's really helpful for the students. Her time helped me as an employee, too; the burden of having to invent that assignment and develop that curriculum was daunting. Krista took that burden off my shoulders. Each semester we meet in advance or talk via email about the needs and direction of the students and how we think we're doing. She contacts me to get the pulse on the students, and it's not a one-size-fits-all workshop. Each year we tailor the workshop to the specific group."

Local Civic Engagement Efforts Serve as National Model for Youth Voting

At Western Carolina University (WCU), the Student Democracy Coalition (SDC) serves as the non-partisan, student-led (institutionally supported) organizing entity for all civic engagement efforts. It was formed to bridge WCU's student development mission with civic action while harnessing the energy of our developing members of an engaged democracy. In this, WCU seeks to create fertile soil and provide the conditions where growth in all aspects of student life, student success, and community development can thrive.

For their sustained efforts, in 2018 the SDC was recognized nationally by the American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU) with the Excellence in Innovation in Civic Learning and Community Engagement Award, the Engagement Scholarship Consortium's (ESC) inaugural Civic Engagement Student Program of the Year Award, and as one of 150 NASPA Voter Friendly Campus Designees. Also, in 2018, SDC leaders were recognized by their peers on WCU's campus with the Advocacy Award and Outstanding Event for their 'Democracy Day' program.



THE PRIMARY OBJECTIVES OF SDC INCLUDE

REGISTERING VOTERS: SINCE 2016, SDC HAS

REGISTERED NEARLY
5,000 VOTERS

EDUCATING VOTERS:
SINCE 2016, SDC HAS

FACILITATED
75 EDUCATIONAL/
INFORMATION
PROGRAMS

ACTIVATING VOTERS:
SINCE 2016, SDC HAS

ENGAGED
5,000 VOTERS
THROUGH THEIR ON-CAMPUS
POLLING PLACE AND
SHUTTLING VOTERS.

ADVOCATING ISSUES: SINCE 2016, SDC HAS

OBTAINED
AND RE-
TAINED AN
**ON-CAMPUS
POLLING
PLACE**

ADVOCATED
FOR
**INCREASING
THE AGE
FOR ADULT
SENTENC-
ING FROM
16 TO 18**

PUSHED FOR
**ONLINE
VOTER REGIS-
TRATION**

CELEBRATING DEMOCRACY: SINCE 2016, SDC HAS

FOCUSED ON **REFLECTION
AND HABIT CREATION** IN OUR
STUDENT CITIZENS



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