

Academic Affairs

News & Reflections

From the Acting Provost's Desk

Fall semester in higher education heralds a beginning...a new academic year, a new first year class, new cohorts of graduate and transfer students, as well as new faculty and staff colleagues. WCU is no different from other universities in this regard.

But we are different this fall semester in several key ways. After the celebration of life for Chancellor Belcher, we continue in his memory by building on the path he led us to create. We have an updated **strategic plan, the 2020 2.0**, created with significant input from our community (strategicplan.wcu.edu). We will realize another **record enrollment** with a first year student enrollment of 2,239, currently (up from 1980 last year); 1577 graduate students (which is 96.7% of our target goal for fall 2018); so far an increase of 130 new transfer students compared with last year; and an 82% freshman to sophomore retention rate. Our census date (official recording of enrollment) is the tenth day of classes, Friday, August 31st this year—stay tuned for final numbers on that date. **North Carolina Promise** is already making its mark on our undergraduate in-state students, some of whom have personally shared with me their surprise and appreciation that their tuition is indeed just \$500. We will welcome **49 new faculty** this week and over **180 new staff** have joined WCU since January.

Interim Chancellor Morrison-Shetlar and I anticipated returning to our respective permanent roles this fall and I don't need to rehash the reasons we will remain in our temporary positions—you can see them outlined in detail in local, state, and national publications! I will, however, reaffirm my commitment to continue to serve as your Acting Provost. I hope you will join me in reaffirming your commitment to WCU. I'll close by wishing you a great start to Fall 2018 and in the words of our new PR campaign...**Choose Great!**

Carol Burton

Acting Provost and Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs

President Spellings and the University of North Carolina - July Update

July ushered in a new leader of the Board of Governors as Harry L. Smith, Jr., replaced Lou Bissette as Chair and Margaret Spellings continued her role as System President. Part of her remarks paid tribute to and quoted C. D. Spangler, President Emeritus of the University of North Carolina, who passed away earlier last month: “the only way to measure a university is what its graduates do to make their communities better.” For President Spellings' full report, please visit this link: https://ccnt3.wcu.edu/WebFiles/PDFs/President_Spellings_Remarks_BOG.pdf

5th Annual Summer Institute for Administrative Support Professionals

On July 19th, the Office of the Provost hosted the 5th Annual Summer Institute for Administrative Support Professionals. This initiative began as a half day event to provide more training opportunities for support staff, and it has grown into a full day of trainings and opportunities for networking. The format for the institute has varied over the years, and has now settled into a mini-conference, offering concurrent sessions.

This year's institute had over 75 participants representing all but one division on campus and within those divisions, there was representation from over 50 different units. Sessions this year included Module 1 of The National Coalition Building Institute, Banner 9, Student Banner, Interviewing Skills, Resume Building, Conflict Resolution, WCU Employee Perks and Services, and Gender Styles in Communication. All training sessions are led by university faculty and staff willing to generously give their time and expertise. Each year, the institute offers some repeat sessions and some new. We develop the conference based on feedback from attendees in order to provide sessions that truly meet the interest and the needs of participants.

Interim Chancellor Morrison-Shetlar welcomed the group and shared her appreciation of those leading sessions and those choosing to pursue professional development opportunities. Next year, the institute will have a small budget with the goal of doubling participation and number of sessions offered. Please feel free to reach out to the Office of the Provost if you are interested in providing a training, or have an idea for a session to be offered.



New Student Convocation 2018

from the Office of Student Success

New Student Convocation is an important event that marks the official welcome to the university. Each year we are excited to congratulate and celebrate the arrival of WCU's new students with an event they will not forget. The Academic Processional will be led this year by WCU's Interim Chancellor, Alison Morrison-Shetlar as we welcome the largest incoming first-year class in the history of the institution, along with family, community members, and WCU faculty, staff, and administrators on August 17th in Ramsey, at 5:30pm, with a reception to follow.

Ms. Nikki Giovanni will deliver the Convocation keynote address this year: "Human by the Grace of God: A view of Diversity." An acclaimed poet and distinguished professor, she has a long list of amazing accomplishments, awards, and honors, including being awarded honorary doctorate degrees from twenty-seven colleges and universities. Ms. Giovanni has been awarded the keys to more than two dozen American cities, including New York, Miami, Los Angeles, and New Orleans. Inducted to the Tennessee Writers Hall of Fame, she has authored three New York Times and Los Angeles Times Best Sellers, an accomplishment in and of itself and especially unusual for a poet. To date in an incredibly prolific career, Ms. Giovanni has authored 32 books and over 150 individual essays, short stories and individual poems, in addition to 16 recordings and numerous appearances on radio and television shows. She has been awarded an unprecedented seven NAACP Image Awards, and has been nominated for a Grammy and was also a finalist for the National Book Award. Named one of Oprah Winfrey's twenty-five living legends, Ms. Giovanni was the first recipient of the Rosa Parks Women of Courage Award. Since 1987, she has been on the faculty at Virginia Tech, where she is a University Distinguished Professor.



In keeping with tradition, students will witness the Candle Lighting Ceremony featuring the Academic College Deans and upper-class peers. The candle lighting represents faculty and students acting together to achieve enlightenment through acquisition of knowledge. Once lit, the candles serve as a reminder of students' pride in Western Carolina University and its permanent place in their heart. Wrapping up the event, the Pride of the Mountains Marching Band, under the direction of David Starnes, will perform and introduce students to the WCU alma-mater. Following the Recessional, students will dismiss to have the annual class photo taken and to then sign a banner printed with the Student Community Creed, signifying their commitment to its ideals of citizenship, diversity, and community.

Following the Convocation ceremony, new faculty will enjoy a special evening of celebration as they wrap up their orientation during a reception with honored guest, Ms. Nikki Giovanni. They will be joined by the finalists for the student nominated 2017-18 first-year advocate awards, with the two winners announced: one faculty and one staff member will each be awarded an engraved plaque and cash award.

Submitted by: Glenda Hensley, director Office of Student Transitions in the Division of Student Success

The Chancellor's List

from the Office of Student Success



The Chancellor's List Awards Reception recognizes the academic excellence of students at Western Carolina University each semester. The designation is awarded to students who earned a 3.8 or higher GPA during the previous semester. Sponsored by Student Success, this year's celebrations will be marked by outstanding keynote speakers for both the fall and spring semester receptions.

On September 18, 2018, the university will welcome as keynote speaker **Loretta Lynch, former Attorney General of the United States.**

First-year Retention Report Strategic Plan Update

from the Office of Student Success

Last spring, the Western Carolina University Retention Task Force developed a 'Point-of-contact' list for each of the initiatives and action items within the Retention Strategic Plan. Subsequently, the initiatives were prioritized and a completion timeline established for the 2018-2019 academic year.

Western Carolina University received funding earlier this year through a competitive grant process from the UNC System to support our efforts to monitor and improve progress toward our retention goals. Part of the funding supports two time-limited (one year, ending June 30, 2019) staff positions dedicated to furthering specific areas of retention work. Each position will be working closely with their supervising departments this year and with the guidance of Dr. Lowell Davis, Associate Vice Chancellor for Student Success.



1. Retention-Completion Advisor: Jaime Henkel.

This position will report to the Office of Student Transitions and will also work closely with the Advising Center. Initial work will focus on the Retention Strategic Plan prioritization and documenting and assessing progress. Continued reference to data and best-practice research will inform recommendations related to outreach, programming, and interventions. The Retention-Completion Advisor will utilize the Student Success Collaborative as a means to include faculty and staff in retention initiatives and will work closely with campus departments to document and coordinate retention programs. The development and coordination of advance interventions for incoming students who may be determined at risk will be informed by benchmark, statistical, and trend data with the intention to anticipate needs and put action plans in place early.

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2. Academic Success Program (ASP) Coordinator: Tim Holloran.

This position will report to Mentoring and Persistence to Success (MAPS). The work will focus specifically toward serving students in the Academic Success Program, as they represent one of WCU's more significant at-risk populations. Incorporating a Case Management approach, student support is holistic and targeted to individual student needs. Outreach, dedicated programming, and interventions (group and individual) will inform recommendations on how to best serve ASP students and to insure they persist to matriculation. The Program Coordinator will work with faculty teaching ASP-only courses in the summer, fall, and spring on appropriate intervention strategies, as well as coordinate with faculty, the Writing and Learning Commons, and Mathematics Tutoring Center for targeted supplemental instruction, tutoring, and group study sessions.

As WCU begins the new academic year, it is critical to remember that not only is retention “everyone’s job,” – it is a job never complete. Please always feel welcome to offer your feedback, suggestions, and concerns as related to the retention and the long-term success of new students at WCU!

Faculty Resource: The Education Advisory Board (EAB)

from the Office of Student Success

The Education Advisory Board (EAB) offers “proven, peer-tested strategies and technologies to improve student success, academic resource allocation, faculty affairs, enrollment growth strategy, and more for 4-year universities.” Guided by identifying best practices, EAB research forums address pressing issues in education and share insights with the university through technology and services that are data-driven and designed to help students persist, graduate, and succeed.

CREATE YOUR EAB.COM ACCOUNT

WCU faculty can sign-up for a FREE account with EAB and take advantage of this tremendous resource using the following steps shared on the EAB website and copied below:

How to Create a Web Login on EAB.com

As a service to members, EAB houses a wealth of information online at the EAB website, www.eab.com. As the site is protected for members-only access, please see the basic login instructions below so that you can create your own unique password. All college or university employees of member institutions are authorized to create a personal site login free of charge.

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The site features EAB's national best practice studies, descriptions of current research initiatives, and a library of reports completed on behalf of member institutions. You will also be able to access agendas and registration details for any upcoming meetings or web conferences within your membership. Finally, you will be able to manage your subscriptions for all email communications, including the EAB Daily Briefing.

To obtain a username and password, please follow the instructions below:

1. Go to the website, www.eab.com
2. On the top right of the homepage, click on “Log in now” and then click on “I’m a new user” in the middle. Alternatively, there is a box on the right below Today’s Daily Briefing that says, “New User? Create your account.”
3. Clicking the link takes you to the registration page through which you will be prompted to provide your location, institution name, and your personal information. You will also create a unique password.
4. Click "submit" and you will receive an email in your university inbox containing a confirmation code and a link to log in to the website. **Please check your spam folder if the email containing the link does not arrive in your inbox after several minutes.**

If you have any questions about EAB Academic Affairs Forum, please contact Dr. Lowell K. Davis, Associate Vice Chancellor at lkdavis@email.wcu.edu.

SACSCOC Update

from the Office of Institutional Planning and Effectiveness

During the week of July 16, twenty-two WCU faculty and staff participated in WCU’s first university-wide and comprehensive Continuous Improvement Report evaluation event. Participants spent a day and a half in training to ensure consistency of report scoring, and spent two days in teams, scoring a total of 158 reports from academic, administrative, and student support service units across the university. Report writers and their supervisors will receive feedback reports on the quality of their Continuous Improvement Reports, with the expectation units can use the feedback to improve the quality of their assessment processes and associated reporting.

Annual Continuous Improvement Reports serve as important evidence to demonstrate WCU’s compliance with specific SACSCOC accreditation standards. During the 2016-17 decennial reaffirmation of accreditation process, WCU was found non-compliant with three SACSCOC standards encompassing unit-level outcomes assessment, and is currently under monitoring, which requires submission of a monitoring report in September 2018. Improved unit-level outcomes assessment reporting will greatly improve WCU’s chances of coming off SACSCOC monitoring.

Outcomes assessment and reporting training workshops are planned for September and October. Workshop details and registration will be available on the OIPE website soon.

Updates from Undergraduate Studies

from the Office of Undergraduate Studies

Liberal Studies Assessment Director



Dr. Jen Schiff, Associate Professor of Political Science, has worn many hats in her seven years at Western Carolina University, and she just added another one to her wardrobe. Schiff, a two-time chair of the Liberal Studies Program Committee and former Director of WCU's International Studies Program, will now be overseeing the assessment process of the Liberal Studies Program as the Director of Liberal Studies Assessment.

Earlier this summer, Jen began preparing for her new role in advance of the fall semester. In June, she traveled to Salt Lake City, Utah with Carol Burton, Acting Provost; Gael Graham, professor of history; Erin McNelis, associate professor in mathematics and computer science; and Terry Martin, assistant professor of entertainment design and technology to participate in the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) Institute on General Education and Assessment.

Then, in July, Schiff facilitated the first Liberal Studies Assessment Summer Institute at WCU. She served as the coordinator of the two-day institute, offering participants instruction in general education assessment principles and student learning outcomes, along with training in scoring student artifacts against a rubric.

When asked about the Liberal Studies Program at WCU, Schiff said “the curriculum is so significant to the university experience because it encourages students to take courses in new disciplines and subjects they have not necessarily encountered before. In the process, student eyes light up as they discover new topics about which they become passionate and want to study further. For me, that's the cornerstone of a university education -- cultivating intellectual curiosity in the hopes that students will continue to exercise that curiosity throughout their lives.”

It is because of this perspective, as well as her experience working intensively with the assessment process during her time on the Liberal Studies Committee, that Schiff agreed to take on this new role. Assessment allows the university to try understand the ways in which the Liberal Studies Program impacts Western's students, and as such, it plays a critical role in advocating for the strengths of WCU's Liberal Studies courses and the faculty who teach them.

NC Campus Compact Regional Meeting

The Center for Service-Learning hosts North Carolina Campus Compact network meeting.

North Carolina Campus Compact is a collaborative network of colleges and universities committed to educating students for civic and social responsibility, partnering with communities for positive change, and strengthening democracy. Started in 2002 and hosted by Elon University, the network includes 37 public, private, and community colleges and universities and is an affiliate of the national Campus Compact organization. WCU has been a member of the network since 2005.



WCU's Center for Service Learning was honored to host the North Carolina Campus Compact Regional Network meeting on August 1, 2018. This Regional Networking meeting was designed to connect community engagement professionals with each other and with NCCC staff with the intention of collaboration and professional development.

With 22 representatives from 8 community-engaged campuses, the meeting was an excellent space to prepare for the upcoming fall semester. During the meeting campus leaders discussed recent research and work from the Community of Practice, Inquiry, and Learning, discussed transferable practices and advice on implementing Civic Action Plans, and showcased Bright Spots of civic and community engagement on each campus. There was engaged learning, networking, and collaboration across our region, which in turn will inform the work on our respective campuses.

Campus Theme Update

defining
America
Past. Present. Future.

The Campus Theme Committee is now accepting requests for promotional and/or funding support for 2018-2019 programs and events related to the campus theme.

This year's campus theme, **Defining America**, seeks to provide campus-wide common intellectual experiences and to invite our campus to take a collective pause to investigate, discuss, and better understand this country; that is... to better understand its past, its present, and its future through the lens of stories.

Campus Theme related programs and events will be classified in to three categories: 1) supported, 2) funded, and 3) signature. Supported events will receive promotion/marketing assistance, including a campus theme signature for digital and printed marketing materials, and inclusion on the campus theme website's calendar of events. Funded events will receive financial support (either partial or full funding, depending on the committee's decision), along with promotion/marketing assistance. Signature events are those that the Campus Theme Committee will be heavily supporting and funding, and in some instances creating, and will be the larger scale/campus-wide events.

If you would like your program(s)/event(s) to be considered for support or funding, please complete the request form at https://wcu.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_026pSVbZSSfFH0x Contact Campus Theme Committee co-chairs, Dr. Dana Patterson (dpatterson@wcu.edu) and/or Dr. Angela Dills (akdills@wcu.edu) or Campus Theme Committee Support, Holli Stillman (hbstillman@wcu.edu).

Community and Economic Engagement and Innovation Updates

from the Executive Director of Community and Economic Engagement and Innovation

Dr. Arthur Salido is busy creating relationships with external partners & leaders throughout the region as well as promoting the great work happening at WCU.

Arthur is organizing and fundraising for the upcoming inaugural Outdoor Economy Conference, which will take place in the University Center on October 5, 2018, from 9am-5:30pm. In addition to showcasing the ways that WCU supports the outdoor industry, the conference will include a keynote address by Pete Ripmaster, a 1000 Mile Iditarod Champion. David Knight, NC's Outdoor Industry Recruitment Director, will be speaking at lunch, and many representatives from companies within Western North Carolina, such as Diamond Brand Gear, Mountain BizWorks, SylvanSport, and more, will be participating in panel discussions. Visit outdoor.wcu.edu to see the full agenda, the list of presenters, and to find out more information about the conference.

Some of Arthur's other recent activities include:

- Serving as a contributor on the \$1.5 million ARC POWER Initiative grant proposal to foster partnership opportunities and workforce and economic revitalization in the outdoor industry
- Finishing an Appalachian Regional Commission and Center for the Study of Free Enterprise funded natural products market analysis with Wendy Cagle and Yue Hillon to be used as preliminary data for future proposals
- Strengthening partnerships with regional communities and leaders, economic developers, and councils of government
- Representing WCU on the UNC Engagement Council and the UNC Economic Transformation Council (ETC)
- Serving on the Inaugural Outdoor Recreation Industry Office Advisory Council for the state of North Carolina
- Managing the WCU's Community Engagement Initiative report for the UNC System (due November)
- Co-sponsoring attendance at the recent Western Women's Business Conference for three WCU employees

Improvements at Hunter Library

New Construction at Hunter Library

On June 12, 2018 Hunter Library unveiled a new study area on the 1st floor of the library. Where once stood the old, dark and dusty orange cubicles is now a bright, open and accessible study area. Construction began during Spring Break and after much assistance from Facilities Management and the University Architects, the library is proud to showcase this new study space where students and patrons have an updated work area with large table spaces and restaurant-style booths to accommodate several people collaborating on projects. The addition of electrical outlets at each table make it easier to support technology, and the open-style allows more light to the area. This has been a popular space during the summer months and we expect that to continue when the new semester starts in August.

Before



After



Coming this Fall—The Scholar Studio at Hunter Library

Hunter Library welcomes makers, creators, scholars, job-seekers, and collaborators in the WCU community to their new home-away-from-home. The Scholar Studio is a new sandbox-style space for students in all stages of research, particularly production and post-production of audio and visual content (sound files, video recordings, graphics, poster presentations, etc.). The space will allow for collaboration and programming between the library and campus partners. It will also serve as a private and professional space for remote interviews, video conferencing, and a place to exhibit student and faculty work.

The services in the Scholar Studio range from the high-tech, such as audio and visual recording hardware, editing software, virtual reality hardware and software, and a 360-degree camera, to more do-it-yourself makerspace items such as die-cutting machines, button makers, a vinyl cutter, a large format printer, and a laminator. Library employees will provide technical support at the point of need and through workshops. For more information, visit this website <http://researchguides.wcu.edu/studio>.



One of the newest and most exciting services we now offer in The Scholar Studio is Virtual Reality. With the addition of the VR equipment and software, faculty and students alike have a host of valuable tools and applications to enhance their education. Several faculty have already experienced the VR offerings and are working to implement it into their course plans. Along with the 360-degree camera and the Oculus Rift headset (both available for check-out), Hunter Library is bringing the latest technological innovations to incorporate into WCU's educational instruction. For more information regarding Virtual Reality offerings at Hunter Library, please see <https://www.wcu.edu/hunter-library/services/VR>.

Farzaneh Razzaghi,

Dean of Library

Updates from the Chief Diversity Officer

from the Office of the Chief Diversity Officer

Inclusive Excellence Award

The inaugural Inclusive Excellence Award is on its way. This award was established by the Council on Inclusive Excellence in honor and appreciation of the faculty, staff, student unit/department, and community agency that has demonstrated outstanding efforts toward advancing the University in its mission of embracing diversity while maintaining academic excellence. If you have questions about the award categories, submission deadlines, or logistical information, please visit the Diversity Office SharePoint site, or contact our office at diversity@wcu.edu. The Diversity Office SharePoint site can also be accessed by typing “diversity” into the myWCU search menu and clicking on “Diversity Resources and Training.”

Colón López Diversity Program Endowment

This past spring 2018 semester, the Chief Diversity Officer established a program endowment in honor of his mother, Francisca Colón López. For more information or to learn how you can make a tax-deductible contribution, please contact Ricardo Nazario-Colón at rnazariocolon@wcu.edu.

Diversity Connections

This upcoming year the office of Equal Opportunity and Diversity Programs will seek to partner with a local youth organization to provide opportunities for young people to be exposed to the arts. For more information, please contact us at diversity@wcu.edu.

National Coalition Building Institute (NCBI)

By now many of you have heard of the successful launch of the NCBI training program. Nearly 150 members of the WCU family have participated in Module 1, and we continue to receive requests and inquiries about future sessions. We have several sessions of Module 1 currently available as well as our first two sessions of Module 2. Please visit <https://secure.my.wcu.edu/division/AcademicAffairs/Diversity/Pages/NCBI-registration.aspx> to register for a session, or click here to learn more about NCBI. If you have any questions about NCBI, or you'd like to join the team, please contact us at ncbi@wcu.edu.

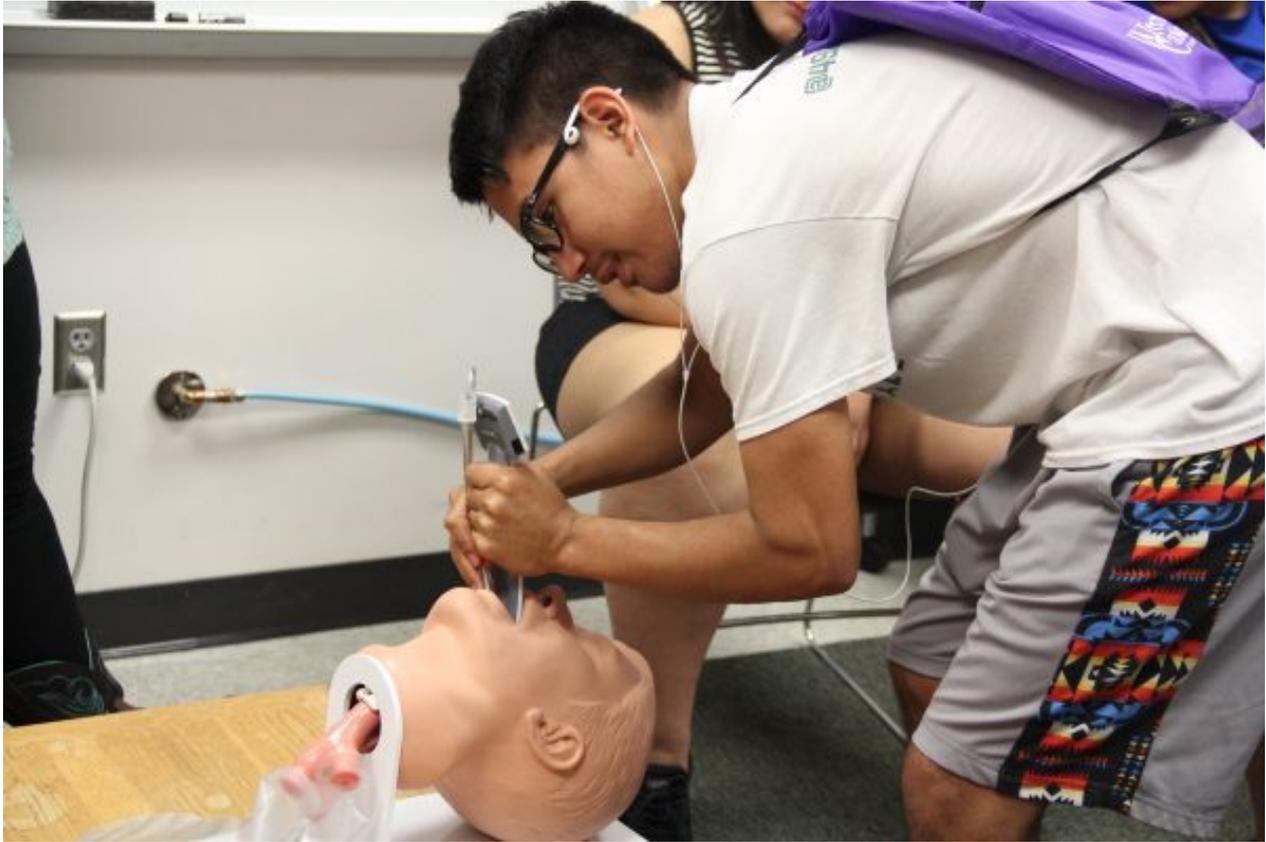
What is Inclusive Excellence?

Inclusive Excellence (IE) is a framework. Its goal is to help Western Carolina University (WCU) incorporate diversity and excellence efforts into the core of our campus-wide functions to fulfill the educational benefits of diversity. IE ideas lead to infusing diversity into our recruiting, admissions, and hiring processes; into our curriculum and co-curriculum; and into our administrative structures and practices. It means that we are pursuing a cohesive, coherent and collaborative integration of diversity and inclusion into Western Carolina University's quest for excellence. By embracing the Inclusive Excellence model, we understand that diversity and inclusion are integral to the core of our institutional and educational excellence. More information about Inclusive Excellence can be found at <https://www.aacu.org/making-excellence-inclusive>.

Cherokee Students Learn About College Life at Judaculla Camp

from the Director of the Cherokee Center

An event two years in the making, Western Carolina University and the Eastern Band of Cherokee Education and Training Program partnered this summer to host the first Judaculla Camp.



“The camp is named after a significant Cherokee legend and immortal being that roamed the mountains of Cullowhee at one time,” said Sky Sampson, director of WCU’s Cherokee Center. The weeklong camp, held June 18-22, was designed specifically for Eastern Band of Cherokee rising sophomores, juniors and seniors. “WCU pulled together many departments and collaborators to mark this amazing milestone between the EBCI and WCU communities,” Sampson said.

The group of 11 students had an opportunity to experience college life by living on campus and learning about the many career paths offered at WCU. Some of the topics included engineering, Cherokee studies, cultural diversity, archeology and health sciences. The students experienced hands on-learning and team building exercises that they could take with them after high school. The group also was able to meet with current EBCI students and EBCI alumni during the week, which allowed them to gain insight into college life.

“We want our EBCI students to find a connection at WCU,” Sampson said. “It is our responsibility to show these students all that WCU can offer them throughout their education and that WCU is striving to connect with our communities daily.”

“The Cherokee Center staff would like to thank the EBCI Education and Training staff, WCU’s Educational Outreach staff, EBCI alumni, current EBCI students and WCU higher administration for their efforts and support toward the planning and implementation of Judaculla Camp,” she said.

For more information about Judaculla Camp, contact Sampson at snsampson@wcu.edu or 828-497-7920.

90 New International Students Joining Catamount Family in Fall 2018

from the Office of the Associate Provost for Academic Affairs



Each August or January, International Programs and Services welcomes new international students from all over the world to start their academic careers as WCU Catamounts!

In Fall 2018, we are welcoming 90 new international students and welcoming back 58 returning international students. These students represent 38 countries around the world. The top five countries represented by this cohort are Saudi Arabia, Japan, China, the Netherlands and South Korea.

The 90 new international students will arrive to campus on Monday, August 13 to move in and start to settle into their new campus and new country. IPS staff, along with 18 International Orientation Leaders (IOLs), provide a week-long orientation for the new international students. The International Orientation Leaders are WCU students, who have been at WCU for at least one year and have completed a thorough application process and cultural and logistical training through IPS. Some of the objectives of orientation are to provide knowledge about WCU, student visa rules and regulations, campus resources, and to provide resources on how to navigate culture shock. During orientation, IPS is intentional in their efforts to facilitate opportunities for the new students to bond with their fellow cohort of international students, as well as connect with other WCU students and start to develop a sense of community.

IPS always looks forward to collaborating with many campus departments for International Student Orientation. Throughout the week, the students get to meet staff and faculty from across campus including Residential Living, Campus Police, Student Accounts, Student Health Center, Writing and Learning Commons, Dean of Students office, Intercultural Affairs, Counseling and Psychological Services, Campus Activities, Base Camp Cullowhee and Center for Career and Professional Development. In between the informational sessions, IPS organizes bonding activities such as a campus scavenger hunt, group dinners, a trip to Asheville and the Blue Ridge Parkway and a picnic and games at the Catafount!

We look forward to welcoming the new international students to campus!

Undergraduate Research Updates

from the Office of the Associate Provost for Academic Affairs

Many of our undergraduate students have been engaged in research, scholarship, and creative projects all summer. Some of them, like John Morgan, a senior Geology/Natural Resources major, and Monica Reece, a senior Biology major, have been involved in nationally sponsored research programs. John has been at Idaho State University this summer as part of a National Science Foundation program for undergraduates. Monica Reece, a senior Biology major, has been at the University of Knoxville conducting research as part of a summer research experience in Biochemistry. Others, like Trevor Burkholder and Emma Hand participated in the third year of WCU's Summer Undergraduate Research Program (SURP) right here in Cullowhee. Trevor, a rising sophomore in Stage and Screen, worked with Associate Professor and Director of Stage and Screen, Jayme McGhan, to understand more about product placements in film. Emma, a rising senior in the Emergency Medical Care Program, worked with Assistant Professor, Jackson Deziel, investigating the links between cellular access and survival rates of rural North Carolina emergency medical patients. SURP participants welcomed ten Summer Scholars, incoming Honors College freshmen, for two weeks during the eight-week program. SURP undergraduates introduced the Scholars to practices in undergraduate research and mentored them through a portion of their project.

In all, ten student-faculty teams, from diverse areas of campus including Business, Criminal Justice, Psychology, Chemistry, and others, worked full-time this summer on their pursuits, gaining valuable experience along the way.

As we switch gears into the fall semester, there are several opportunities for students to gain support for research, scholarship, and creative inquiry at WCU. Some dates and deadlines to keep in mind:

- Academic Project Grants support student work with funding for supplies and materials needs, as well as travel to disciplinary conferences. Deadlines for student or faculty submissions are October 4, 2018, November 1, 2018, January 31, 2019, and February 28, 2019. Grants are competitive and are awarded during each submission cycle. Learn more via: <https://www.wcu.edu/learn/academic-enrichment/the-honors-college/ugres/research-funding.aspx>.
- The Southern Conference (SoCon) Academic Exchange is proud to announce that the third annual SoCon Undergraduate Research Forum (SURF) will be held on November 2-4, 2018 on the campus of Wofford College in Spartanburg, SC. This multidisciplinary conference will bring together student presenters from all ten colleges/universities of the SoCon for a two-day event that features student projects in all academic disciplines. SURF 2018 is a great opportunity for undergraduate students involved in research and creative activities, particularly for those involved in these activities this summer, to display their accomplishments in a variety of small, welcoming venues. Please note that there is no registration fee, expenses may be covered by the university upon acceptance of application, and that the SoCon will provide meals for most of the conference. The application for SURF 2018 is now open and taking submissions. <https://goo.gl/forms/ykrEwMFqo3yj60zk2>
- NCUR, the National Conference of Undergraduate Research, is the premier national conference for undergraduate research across all disciplines. This year's conference will be held at Kennesaw State University, April 11 – 13, 2019, and we anticipate taking a large group of students again this year. Abstract submissions for NCUR open each year in early October. Students must submit an abstract to apply by the deadline, which is in early December. Students interested in submitting an abstract and attending the conference can receive travel support, and are required to apply separately for travel assistance. Find out more: <https://www.wcu.edu/learn/academic-enrichment/the-honors-college/ugres/>.

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- It's not too early to start thinking about the Research and Scholarship Celebration (RASC), WCU's own showcase for both graduate and undergraduate work. You may be interested in building the conference into your course syllabus, as it provides students with the opportunity to present their results and provides a forum for students to engage in peer-to-peer discussions about their academic work, without leaving Cullowhee. If you would like to know more about how to integrate RASC into your course schedule, please email Kloo Hansen, at kchansen@wcu.edu. RASC 2019 will be April 3 – 4, 2019. Students register by submitting abstracts in January. To find out more go to the website at: <https://www.wcu.edu/learn/academic-enrichment/the-honors-college/ugres/research-scholarship-celebration.aspx>
- SURP is an eight-week intensive opportunity for WCU students to collaborate with a faculty mentor in sponsored research and engage with a community of undergraduate research students over the summer, working full-time on a project of interest. SURP is kicked off in the fall with a call for proposals. Students submit a proposal in February to apply. SURP is intentionally inter-disciplinary and seeks to support research, scholarship, and creative endeavors across the diversity of academic disciplines at the University. 2018 was the third year for the program. Keep an eye on your email in late fall for a call out for proposals. For more information the 2018 program, go to: <https://news-prod.wcu.edu/2018/06/faculty-mentors-student-researchers-collaborating-in-third-year-of-summer-undergraduate-research-program/>. For more information about 2019, contact Kloo Hansen at kchansen@wcu.edu.



SURP Students on a recent trip to Highlands Biological Station.

Staff Spotlight

Yasin Muhammad

Administrative Support Associate, Biltmore Park



Yasin Muhammad is the Administrative Support Associate at our Biltmore Park Instructional Site. Yasin recently became a WCU alumnus, class of 2018, after earning his undergraduate degree in Film and Television Production.

Over the last five years, Yasin ran a number of YouTube Channels where he played video games and made vlogs/comedy videos about his college life. These videos ranged from tips on saving money to the crazy stories he and his friends shared. Yasin believed this was a great way for him to relieve stress, help others, and make people laugh. Yasin's interest has shifted to music and music production. When he has free time, you can find him somewhere with a guitar, covering songs, and writing his own music.

Yasin tries to live his life around a message "that it's never too late to start something or to find yourself. Graduating college feels like I am supposed to know what I want to do next or I'm supposed to have it all figured out. That might be because of social media where everyone posts their lives. For example, you find a 16 year old

who has made a name for themselves which in turn makes you think, "what am I doing with my life?" All in all... I don't have my life figured out and that's okay. I don't need to be on a timeline or compare myself to anyone else because everyone is different. Everyone's life is different and things may happen early, it might happen when you are 30. My advice to anyone, no matter if they are like me just getting into the workforce or they are many years into their career, is if there is something you want to do or try... a career you dreamed of but no one said you could do it because of XYZ, go do it. Take the risk because if it's something that makes you happy, then you deserve the chance to try to make that thing a reality, and you deserve to be happy. Have fun and enjoy the journey".

For now, Yasin is using his knowledge and years of experience working in the Provost Office as a student employee, to give back to WCU as a staff member.

Faculty Spotlight

David W. Brock

Associate Director, School of Health Sciences



David W. Brock is the Associate Director for the School of Health Sciences, and the inaugural Program Director for Integrated Health Sciences.

David earned his BS in Nutrition and Dietetics from WCU, his MS in Exercise Science from Appalachian State University, and his PhD in Exercise Physiology and Public Health from the University of Virginia. David also completed his National Institutes of Health Postdoctoral Fellowship in Cardiovascular Disease and Public Health at the University of Alabama-Birmingham.

He most recently served as the Director for the Physical Activity and Wellness Research Laboratory at the University of Vermont, where he was a tenured professor. David's main focus has been on understanding and promoting physical and mental health, largely through physical activity, healthy dietary practices, and cognitive/behavioral strategies. He has over 100 peer-reviewed publications and presentations, and has received state, federal, and private funding for his research.

David is delighted to be back in Cullowhee, and is excited and honored to serve the student body and the mission of this great university.

In David's spare time, he loves to be outside trail running, hiking, and surfing. His favorite quote is from Ghandi, "Be the change you want to see in the world".

Student Spotlight

Vincent Christopher Cuffee II

Undergraduate Student, Interior Design



Vincent is a senior in WCU's Interior Design program, minoring in art. He joined the United States Navy at age 18, and ranked FMF Corpsman for the 2nd Marine Division at Camp Lejeune. After serving for four years, Vincent moved to Charlotte, NC to open a nightlife event space with a partner. After three years, he withdrew his equity in the company and moved to Europe. Vincent lived in Rome, Malta, and finally England, where he took some courses in art. Vincent eventually moved back to North Carolina to be closer to his mother, and decided to attend WCU to finish his bachelor's degree.

Vincent is currently working two internships: one with

the Office of the Provost, under Dr. Lowell Davis, as a Summer Intern assisting in the design and logistical planning of events connected to Student Success, including the Chancellor's List and Student Convocation. His other internship is in Cashiers, NC, with Design South Builders. In this role, Vincent performs draft work for residential home builder Jim Robinson. Vincent also manages Robinson's social media marketing as an admin editor of the company website www.designsouthbuilders.com.

Vincent is a photographer and mainly does portrait photography and landscape. He also dedicates time to his artistic interpretation of photography.

Vincent loves to read and owns roughly 200 books. He reads mostly academic literature connected to interior design and architecture. His latest purchases were "The Versailles Settlement: Peacemaking After the First World War" by Alan Sharp, "Unreal Engine 4 Design Visualization: Developing Stunning Interactive Visualizations, Animations, and Renders" by Tom Shannon, and "A Pattern Language" by Christopher Alexander.

His favorite quote is by Edgar Allen Poe, "The true genius shudders at incompleteness – and usually prefers silence to saying something which is not everything it should be." Simply put: be sure to educate yourself before speaking.



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Please send information to scmelton@wcu.edu