

# Academic Affairs

## News & Reflections

### From the Acting Provost's Desk

Happy New Year and welcome to the 2018 Spring Semester!

I hope you had a peaceful winter break and are ready and eager for the new year and the many opportunities we will realize at Western Carolina University. The academic calendar for Spring 2018 is available at the following link (<http://www.wcu.edu/learn/office-of-the-provost/resources-for-faculty-and-staff.aspx>).

In recognition of Chancellor and Mrs. Belcher's dedication and service to WCU, a heartfelt and very bittersweet reception was held in their honor following commencement in December. Additionally, a documentary to truly highlight and recognize the significant mark the Belchers have had on our campus and our communities is under development. We look forward to sharing this touching, creative work with our campus community and beyond in the near future.

As you are aware, the search committee for the next chancellor has been formed and held its first meeting of the semester on January 19th. There will be multiple opportunities for input in selecting our next chancellor; visit the following link for the most recent press release on the search, including search committee membership <https://news-prod.wcu.edu/2017/12/wcu-announces-committee-lead-search-next-chancellor/>.

We are also embarking on a search for the next dean of the College of Business, created by the vacancy of Darrell Parker's appointment as President at Limestone College, SC. Hollye Moss has graciously stepped in to the interim dean's role. Special appreciation to Jeff Ray, dean of the College of Engineering Technology, who will chair the search, as well as the other members of the search committee. We hope to have the permanent dean in place by the start of the 2018 fall semester.

Planning for the new science building continues with a groundbreaking scheduled in early March, 2018, and we continue to enhance our facilities and presence at Biltmore Park. Look for an upcoming faculty/staff luncheon with the Acting Provost at Biltmore Park!

Richard Starnes, dean of the College of Arts and Sciences will oversee the Liberal Studies Program and the Mountain Heritage Center while I am filling the Acting Provost role. I thank him for his willingness to serve and his support during this time.



Lane Perry will assume leadership for the next campus theme, which he will announce shortly. Thank you Lane!

We have a very busy and exciting semester ahead. Thank you for your confidence and your support as I assume the Acting Provost role; I will strive to earn them. Alison and I are continuing to work closely to ensure that our campus momentum continues.

I wish you a successful and rewarding Spring semester!

Warm regards,

Carol Burton

*Acting Provost and Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs*

## Staff Senate Survey

*from Staff Senate*

The 2017 Staff Senate Survey results show the strongest overall satisfaction and engagement numbers in the history of the survey. The results in all sections of the survey are trending up indicating continuing improvement in staff morale, connection to the university and perceived feelings of support. For the first time since the survey was initially administered in 2013, the results don't indicate a significant difference between minority and non-minority respondents. Issues surrounding compensation continue to be the single largest issue for staff. Salaries are being adjusted to near market rate for new hires but incremental salary increases for current staff aren't making a significant impact. The raises, while appreciated, aren't keeping pace with the cost of parking and health insurance and, in many cases, aren't keeping up with the salaries of new hires which is creating salary compression or inversion. Staff Senate representatives are meeting with university leadership to discuss the survey results and possible solutions to the issues identified. An open forum will be held with university leadership in April. The survey results are available on the Staff Senate's website: <http://www.wcu.edu/discover/leadership/staff-senate/staff-senate-survey.aspx>.

## Campus Theme: Cherokee

*from the Office of Undergraduate Studies*

The Cherokee Tour, a culminating event for the campus theme, is being spearheaded by Jennifer Cooper, associate director of the Center for Service Learning, and a host of others. The tour is planned for February 27. Please contact Jennifer ([jacooper@wcu.edu](mailto:jacooper@wcu.edu)) if you wish to bring students. Additional details will be announced.



The English Department's Spring Literary Festival will incorporate the theme through its authors and selected works.

Finally, the Eastern Band of the Cherokee Indians' Chief Richard Sneed will make two official visits to WCU this semester. Chief Sneed will be the keynote speaker at the Chancellor's List presentation and reception honoring our students who earned a 4.00 grade point average last semester. The presentation and reception will take place on Tuesday, February 13 at 5:00pm in the Bardo Arts Center. The second event is a public presentation and panel discussion which is currently scheduled for Tuesday, April 3. Additional details will follow.

Please contact Dr. Lisa Bloom ([bloom@wcu.edu](mailto:bloom@wcu.edu)), the Jay M. Robinson Endowed Professor in the School of Teaching and Learning, for information related to this year's campus theme.

# DegreePlus Update

*from the Office of Undergraduate Studies*

WCU's new QEP, DegreePlus, has been quietly building steam during its pilot year (2017-18). DegreePlus is designed to use extracurricular activities across disciplines and programs to help students build transferable skills, adding value to their education while also increasing student engagement. In this three-level program, students choose one of four DegreePlus skills (Professionalism, Cultural Responsiveness, Leadership, Teamwork) on which to focus. They then progress at their own pace through the three incentivized levels:

- Level 1- Experience and Exposure (attend five events in the skill);
- Level 2 – Reflections and Articulations (discuss and write on their experience with guidance from a faculty or staff mentor); and
- Level 3 - Integration and Application (create and present a capstone project connected to the skill).

Students may work on more than one skill at a time and progress or stop after each level. For the pilot year, the Professionalism Skill was chosen as the focus area. Due to the success of DegreePlus during the first semester, the Cultural Responsiveness Skill has been added for the spring semester.

Faculty and staff involvement has been essential in the success of this fledging program thus far. Through promoting DegreePlus in their classes, submitting events to be tagged as DegreePlus activities, providing feedback on ways in which DegreePlus can reach their students, and offering suggestions for refining the program, they have inspired student participation and improved the QEP. Faculty and staff have also stepped up to become DegreePlus mentors or serve on a research team, led by Dr. Carmen Huffman, to study the impact of DegreePlus on WCU students.

Because of these joint efforts we reached the following goals:

- 711 students from the pilot groups were introduced to the concept of the DegreePlus program
- 20 extracurricular activities that met the criteria to be “tagged” as DegreePlus were hosted by Colleges and university departments across campus
- 465 students attended at least one of the professionalism events
- 8 students completed Level 1
- 32 students had only one or two more events left to meet the requirements for Level 1

Since there is no deadline for completion, students will have the opportunity to continue attending Professionalism Skill events in the spring semester. It is anticipated that most of the 32 students will be able to complete Level 1 and move on to Level 2 by DegreePlus Day on March 14.

Already DegreePlus has positively impacted the lives of many WCU students, especially those who would not have gotten involved in extracurricular events without this impetus. Faculty and staff who are interested in offering a DegreePlus-tagged program or becoming involved in DegreePlus in other ways are encouraged to contact the Associate Director of DegreePlus, Marti Newbold at [hmnewbold@wcu.edu](mailto:hmnewbold@wcu.edu) or Ext. 3884, to schedule a one-on-one or departmental presentation. An overview and calendar of past and future events can be found at [degreeplus.wcu.edu](http://degreeplus.wcu.edu).



DegreePlus Day Kickoff – Sept. 12, 2017 – Alison Morrison-Shetlar, Provost  
WCU



DegreePlus Day Kickoff – Sept. 12, 2017, Benjamin Teague, Chief Operating Officer/Executive Director of the Economic Development Coalition, Asheville-Buncombe County

Hire Attire Fashion Show – September 18, 2017, Anastasia Hillsgrove, WCU Freshman



# Community and Economic Engagement and Innovation Updates

*from the Executive Director of Community and Economic Engagement and Innovation*

Dr. Salido is busy promoting the great things that we are doing at WCU across the region. In addition to his work in Jackson County, he recently traveled to UNC General Administration, the Qualla Boundary, Graham, Henderson, Buncombe, Caldwell, and Haywood counties during the months of November and December to talk with economic developers and county and business leaders to find partnership opportunities. He works primarily with regional councils such as the Southwestern Commission and Land of Sky and with area chambers of commerce.

His recent activities include:

- Serving on the UNC system Economic Transformation Council
- Serving on the UNC system Engagement Council
- Speaking engagements at regional venues like rotary clubs, county board meetings, or various organization events
  - Speaking at the Amplified Workforce Development Summit, the Land of Sky Board of Delegates meeting, and the Asheville Area Restaurant Week Kickoff event
- Attending events that can expand WCU's network with the region including: area chambers of commerce meetings, business and company events, economic development meetings, conferences, and trade shows
- Promoting WCU's engagement activities and resources to the region and developing partnership opportunities
  - Connecting programs with companies who are seeking educational programs for their employees like Smartrac, UPM Raflatac, and Exela Pharmaceuticals
  - Working with faculty to connect students to internships
- Meeting with program directors across all colleges to learn about engagement activities and future goals
- Performing a natural products industry market analysis to better understand the supply and value chain

# Report on First-Year Student Retention

*from the Office of Student Success*

Improving student retention is an important part of the first strategic direction in WCU's 2020 Vision Strategic Plan: "Fulfill the educational needs of our state and region." The First Year Student Retention Task Group was formed in September 2017 to produce a report that would include recommended strategic initiatives that will support first-year student retention and persistence. The report follows the example of department and unit-level strategic planning, such as the 2016-2020 Commitment to Student Success (<http://www.wcu.edu/WebFiles/SSStrategicPLan2016.pdf>) designed to support and reinforce and be guided by the university plan. The strategic recommendations included in this report emerged from an analysis of WCU enrollment and retention data, a review of current programs and practices, and a review of institutional comparisons and best practices within North Carolina and nationally.

The Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) has identified ten "High Impact Practices" (HIPs) (<http://www.wcu.edu/learn/academic-success/highimpactpractices.aspx>) that have been found to correlate positively with increased student learning and increased retention (Kuh, 2008; Brownell & Swaner, 2009). In order to maximize the potential of HIPs to make a significant impact on the persistence and retention of students at WCU, recommendations include better tracking and assessment of existing high impact initiatives and targeted institutional resources devoted to creating a community of practice among faculty and staff who choose to incorporate HIPs into their work with students.

The overarching conclusion of the report is not that WCU needs to implement additional programs to support student retention, but that the University needs to focus its efforts in three primary areas: 1) enhanced data collection and analysis to illuminate the myriad factors that influence students' decisions to remain at WCU or to leave; 2) improved strategic planning and assessment practices that will allow us to pinpoint those programs and services that make the most impact; and 3) increased communication across university departments to avoid duplication of services and to ensure an adequate allocation of resources to programs that have proven ability to move the needle on student success and retention.

The recommendations section of the report (Mapping Success: Strategic Directions, Initiatives, Action) includes five primary strategic directions, within which are included detailed initiatives and actions to be addressed.

1. **STRATEGIC DIRECTION 1: Support for Academically Underprepared**  
Support initiatives and programs for academically underprepared students (expand support for those that exist and develop new support structures as indicated by data).
2. **STRATEGIC DIRECTION 2: Underserved Population Degree Efficiency**  
Increase undergraduate degree efficiency for underserved populations (minority, first-generation, low-income, males, rural).
3. **STRATEGIC DIRECTION 3: Promote Student Engagement and Involvement**  
Promote programs and opportunities designed to encourage student engagement and involvement.
4. **STRATEGIC DIRECTION 4: Campus Involvement and Administrative Support**  
Involve the campus community in the strategic planning of retention initiatives and implement those initiatives with full administrative support (e.g. resources, marketing, and assessment).
5. **STRATEGIC DIRECTION 5: Outcomes Assessment**  
Develop an outcomes assessment plan to monitor progress and guide refinement that is both global and program specific.

The report concludes with a series of supporting appendices including: data analysis summaries, an overview of WCU's current retention programs, a supplemental instruction proposal, predictive analytics platform examples, and documentation of institutional reviews and comparisons used to inform the research and development process.

*Continued...*

Successful implementation of the recommendations presented in this plan depends on a university-wide commitment to outcomes assessment and continuous improvement. Necessary to this effort is the ability to readily access data and reports, both predictive and actual, in order to provide effective and responsive support strategies. Finally, administrative support and budgetary allocations for selected initiatives will be crucial to their success and to the success of our students. To read the full report, please visit the following link [http://www.wcu.edu/WebFiles/R-Report\\_FINAL\\_9Jan18.pdf](http://www.wcu.edu/WebFiles/R-Report_FINAL_9Jan18.pdf).

## WCU Concludes the Fall Semester

*from the Office of Student Success*

As the fall term drew to a close here in Cullowhee, the staff of the Registrar's Office were hard at work finalizing thousands of student records. Last semester, the office collected over 48,000 grades—the most ever collected in a single semester at WCU. Commencement signals the end of the hard work for many of us, but the staff of the Registrar's Office accomplished an incredible amount between Commencement and the beginning of the Winter break. Here's a look at the numbers:

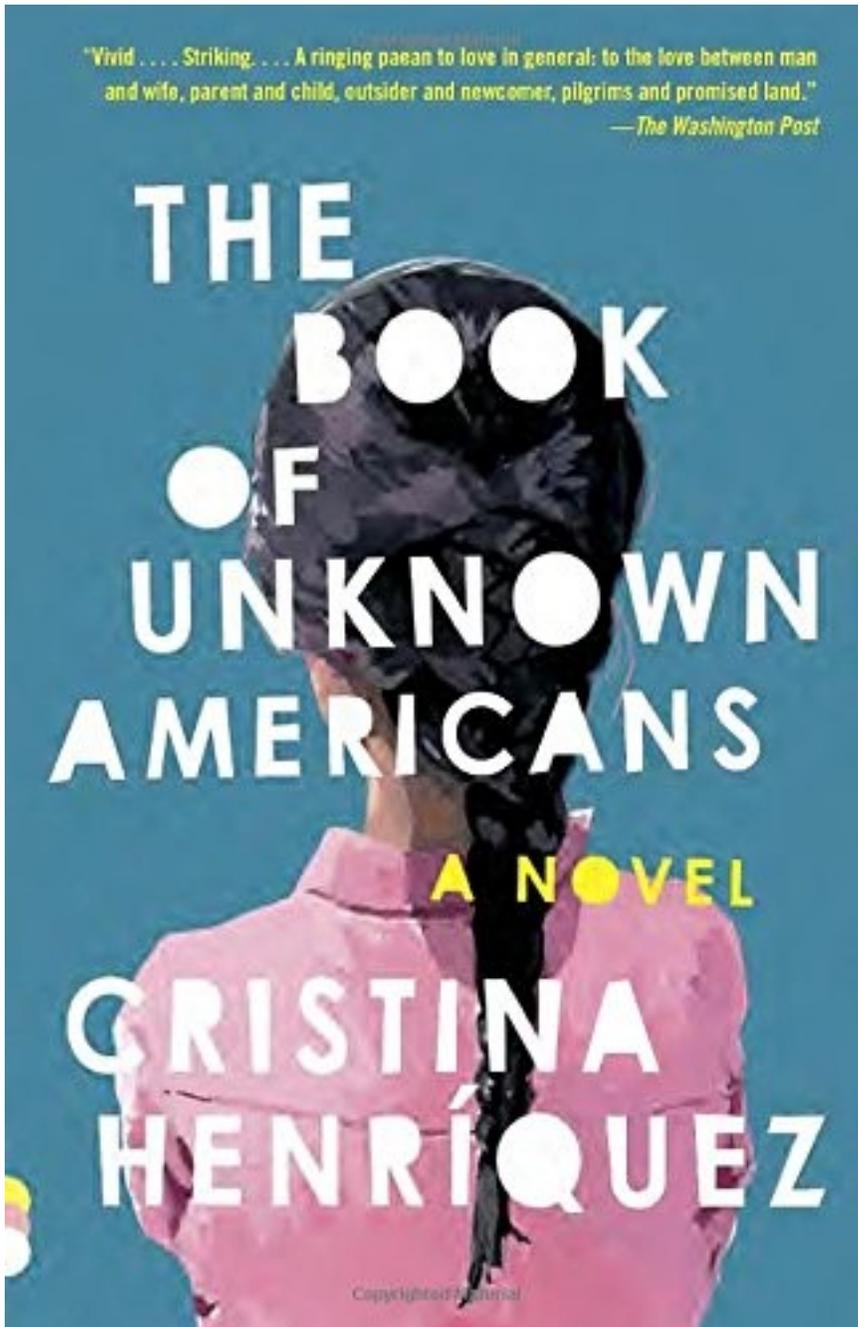
48,289	Grades Received
1213	Warning and Suspension Letters & Emails Sent
401	Grade Replacements Processed
580	Honors Contracts Applied
808	Degrees Conferred & Diplomas Ordered; 61 remain to clear
2729	Dean's List Assignments
1393	Chancellor's List Assignments
826	Transcripts Mailed/Emailed

Academic Affairs applauds the staff of the Registrar's Office and is deeply grateful for their commitment and dedication especially during the close of each semester.



# 2018-19 One Book

*from the Office of Student Success*



Announcing.....

The WCU Common Reading Experience for first-year students!

The Unknown Americans

by: Christina Henríquez

“The truth was that I didn’t know which I was. I wasn’t allowed to claim the thing I felt, and didn’t feel the thing I was supposed to claim.” Book excerpt

- Selected by the WCU One Book Selection Committee for its tremendous interdisciplinary potential and the meaningful conversation it will inspire about topics that matter. The Minneapolis Star Tribune offers, “A remarkable novel that every American should read.”
- Common Intellectual Experiences are one of ten high impact practices identified by the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U). What better way to launch a successful college career than by engaging in meaningful conversation about relevant topics!
- The One Book Committee welcomes ideas from the university community to support inclusion in the first-year curriculum, as well as for events and programming. Please contact the Office of Student Transitions if you wish to get involved and join the conversation.

One Book is sponsored by the Division of Student Success, Western Carolina University

For more information, please contact the Office of Student Transitions: [studenttransitions@wcu.edu](mailto:studenttransitions@wcu.edu) or 227-3017

[OneBook.wcu.edu](http://OneBook.wcu.edu)

“Vivid...Striking...A ringing paean to love in general: to the love between man and wife, parent and child, outsider and newcomer, pilgrims and promised land.” Washington Post

# Food Pantry Resource Available to WCU Students

*from the Office of Student Success*

Food insecurity—the lack of reliable access to sufficient quantities of affordable, nutritious food—is a common challenge for many U.S. college students. According to a 2016 report on college student food insecurity ([https://studentsagainsthunger.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Hunger\\_On\\_Campus.pdf](https://studentsagainsthunger.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Hunger_On_Campus.pdf)) as many as 48% of college or university students experience some sort of food insecurity each year (Dubick, Mathews, & Cady, 2016). In an effort to fight food insecurity at WCU, Mentoring and Persistence to Success (MAPS) has collaborated with Home Base to provide a voucher system for obtaining non-perishable food items from the Home Base food pantry for all enrolled WCU students who might be facing food insecurity.

Home Base officially opened in February 2017 through a partnership between WCU's Division of Student Success and the Baptist Children's Homes of North Carolina. Since that time, Home Base has provided a free computer lab, laundry facilities, a kitchen, emergency housing, a place for students to relax, meeting space for student organizations, and a food pantry. The food pantry voucher system was established in Spring Semester 2018 to fight food insecurity at WCU, expand the reach of Home Base and its services, and include WCU faculty and staff in the effort of supporting students in need.

Beginning in the Spring Semester 2018, any currently enrolled WCU student can use a voucher to fill one plastic grocery bag with non-perishable food between 9 a.m.-10 p.m., Monday-Friday at Home Base. There is no limit to the number of vouchers a student can obtain, nor frequency of use. Student information is not collected; all we ask is that students leave the voucher with Home Base as they pick up their bag of food for inventory tracking purposes. Students might be asked to prove they are a student by showing their CatCard to Home Base staff, but their information will not be recorded.

In order for the voucher system to be successful and to expand the program's reach to students who do not already know of Home Base or its food pantry, MAPS requests the help of WCU faculty and staff. Each academic department will be provided vouchers to distribute to faculty and staff as they see fit. In a discreet fashion, faculty or staff can simply give a student in need a voucher and direct them to Home Base. MAPS asks that vouchers are given only to students in need, though we recognize the difficulty in determining need. Please use your best judgement based on previous interactions or what you might have learned about the student through conducting your duties. In the case that faculty and staff are unsure if the student is facing food insecurity, faculty and staff are encouraged to go ahead and provide a voucher to the student.

To request additional vouchers, faculty and staff can stop by MAPS at 205 Killian Annex (next to the Registrar's Office), by phone at 828.227.7127, or by email at [maps@wcu.edu](mailto:maps@wcu.edu).

For more information on the food pantry program, or other MAPS and Home Base initiatives please contact:

Brian Gorman, Director, MAPS

or Dr. Jim Dean, Director, Home Base

205B Killian Annex

Home Base: 82 Central Dr, Cullowhee, NC

[bjgorman@wcu.edu](mailto:bjgorman@wcu.edu)

[jedean619@gmail.com](mailto:jedean619@gmail.com)

828.227.2217

828.293.4660

*Dubick, J., Mathews, B., & Cady, C. (2016). Hunger on campus: The challenges of food insecurity for college students. Creative Commons Attribution 4.0. Retrieved from: [https://studentsagainsthunger.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Hunger\\_On\\_Campus.pdf](https://studentsagainsthunger.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Hunger_On_Campus.pdf)*

# Updates from Institutional Planning and Effectiveness

*from the Office of Institutional Planning and Effectiveness*

## **The 10th day of classes is Census Day**

Each term, the 10th day of class marks the day for official reporting of institutional data, including student enrollment, student credit hours, student retention, and other key performance metrics. This term, census day is Monday, January 29th. Behind the scenes, this day is a very busy one for several administrative offices, including Institutional Planning and Effectiveness, the Registrar's Office, Financial Aid, and Information Technology as time-sensitive data is entered into the Banner system, and data errors are corrected, in order for the reporting process to proceed in a timely fashion. Look for public announcements of WCU's official student enrollment and other information shortly following census day.

## **2018 WCU Assessment & Improvement Symposium**

James Madison University's (JMU) Center for Assessment & Research Studies will be leading a series of presentations, workshops, focus groups, and consultations on Monday and Tuesday, February 5–6, 2018. JMU is nationally recognized as a premier leader in program assessment. The Symposium is designed to frame WCU's continuous improvement efforts and celebrate our best practices. Sessions cover such topics as learning improvement, outcomes assessment in administrative and student support units, program assessment in educational programs, focus groups with administrative/student support units and educational programs to see what is working and what could be improved, interviews with programs and units demonstrating best practices, and consultations with senior leadership. Because time and capacity are very limited, sessions have been scheduled by invitation only. We are very encouraged by the high interest and growing requests to attend. We look forward to repeating the event in the future.

## **Institutional Assessment Software Platform**

As you might be aware, the Institutional Effectiveness Council and key assessment leads throughout the university have been evaluating a range of software platforms to meet our institutional accreditation, assessment, and strategic planning needs. The process of review usually begins with a preliminary review by OIPE staff to see if a platform has the potential to move us forward. If so, the platform vendor presents a one-hour demonstration to the evaluation team. If the evaluation suggests the platform could meet our needs, a deeper look into the platform is requested. The deeper look usually entails a one-hour guided walkthrough with the vendor and the opportunity to experience the platform in real time. Most vendors provide the team with two or more weeks to “play in the sandbox” to see if the platform is easy to use and meets our institutional effectiveness needs. The adhoc group is in the process of looking at six platforms, with the potential for more. The goal is to narrow the list down to a select few, at which time an even more detailed review and analysis will be undertaken. The goal is to have a platform identified by the end of the spring term. We envision a small pilot group of educational programs and administrative and student support units beginning to use the platform in the fall. Of course, this is all contingent upon identifying a product that meets our needs and resources being available.

# Research and Scholarship Celebration (RASC)

## Registration Now Open

*from the Office of the Associate Provost for Academic Affairs*

RASC event dates:

Wednesday, March 21, 2018

Undergraduate Expo, Undergraduate Oral Presentations, Keynote Address, Faculty Research Presentations, Undergraduate & Graduate Poster Sessions

Thursday, March 22, 2018

Graduate Research Symposium, Graduate Oral Presentations, Graduate Awards, Featured Undergraduate Speaker Presentations, Undergraduate Expo Oral Presentations

Faculty Mentors, please note the following information regarding your students' submissions.

Registration Information:

The RASC Registration Form is now available and open for students to complete.

Before you register for the Undergraduate Expo, please be sure to have the following finalized and approved by your faculty mentor and ready to enter into the registration form:

1. A complete project title, italicized, and in sentence case (ex: Flipping the classroom in an undergraduate social work research course).
2. An abstract (<= 300 words) in Microsoft Word format. Please include the title of the project in italics and sentence case on the abstract, but no names, please.
3. If you are doing an oral presentation, have a location, time and date set up to enter into this form. It is the student and faculty mentor's responsibility to arrange locations ahead of time.
4. Spell all names correctly, including your faculty sponsor(s) and co-presenters, if applicable.
5. Complete only one registration per project (unless presenting in 2 different formats, for example, both an oral and poster presentation).

Students who do not register via this registration form will not be permitted to present at the event.

Abstracts can describe expected results if the results of the study are not complete at the time of registration.

[https://wcu.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_1YtQoQydSaQCLgV](https://wcu.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_1YtQoQydSaQCLgV)

Before you register, consider joining us for a poster workshop!

In an effort to support students in the construction of a poster, two poster writing workshops for students will be offered by Hunter Library's Scottie Kapel. To register for the workshop, please contact Scottie Kapel ([skapel@wcu.edu](mailto:skapel@wcu.edu)).

Poster Workshop Dates:

- Thursday, February 22, from 4-5 PM (location: HL 186)
- Monday, February 26, from 4-5 PM (location: HL 186)

Please contact [undergradresearch@wcu.edu](mailto:undergradresearch@wcu.edu) with any questions.

# Intensive English Program News

*from the Office of the Associate Provost for Academic Affairs*



Jill Cargile, Director of the Intensive English Program, was invited to consult with Voice of America in Washington, DC over the summer on a new series of online English teacher training materials, Let's Teach English (<https://learningenglish.voanews.com/z/5203>) based on the textbook Cargile co-authored at the University of Oregon in 2012: *Women Teaching Women English*. The textbook and accompanying teacher's manual, co-sponsored by the US Embassy Lebanon and the University of Oregon, were developed to instruct Arab women in rural Lebanon at a low proficiency of English. The new Voice of America teacher training video series provides models of communicative language teaching through simulated language classroom interaction for English educators worldwide.

# Bon Voyage: The Journey of Refugees

*from the Office of the Associate Provost for Academic Affairs*



November 2017, an amazing Middle Eastern Dinner and screening of "Bon Voyage" was hosted by Folkmoot USA and co-sponsored by Western Carolina University. There was an overwhelming response from the community!

We are grateful for the presentations of Jay Abdo, Fadia Afashe, and Abeer Aman regarding the refugee crisis.



# Staff Spotlight

## Dana Patterson

*Director, Intercultural Affairs*



Dana Murray Patterson is the Director of Intercultural Affairs. She earned her BA in 1992, her MA in Student Personnel Services in Higher Education and Community Counseling in 1998, and her Ph.D. in Higher Education Administration with an emphasis on Cultural Studies and Social Thought in Higher Ed in 2006, from Berea College, Kentucky.

Dana's current research areas include Race and Social Justice, Intersectionality and Identity, and Performance Ethnography as a tool for Social Justice Reform.

She is serving as a Co-Professor for LEAD 346 in Spring 2018, and was recently appointed to the Council on Inclusive Excellence.

Dana is a published author, writer, actress, and spoken word performer, who is also a mother of four adult children.

Dana studied and taught Aquatic Arts (dancing in the water) at Berea College.

Her favorite quote is from Martin Luther King Jr., "The function of education is to teach one to think intensively and to think critically. Intelligence plus character - that is the goal of true education."

This quote drives her work and life.



# Faculty Spotlight

## Kristen Hedberg

*Assistant Professor, Musical Theatre*



In addition to serving as Assistant Professor of Musical Theatre, teaching voice at WCU, Kristen Hedberg enjoys a freelance career in musical theatre and opera, both as a performer and director. Her former students can be seen on the stages of regional houses, theme parks, cruise ships, National and International Tours, Off Broadway and Broadway companies. Additionally, Kristen enjoys working as guest voice instructor for Terrence Mann and Charlotte d'Amboise's Triple Arts musical theatre summer intensive.

Favorite opera roles performed include Norina (*Don Pasquale*) and Despina (*Così fan tutte*). Favorite musical theatre roles performed include Witch (*Into the Woods*), Kate Monster (*Avenue Q*), and Julie Jordan (*Carousel*). Notable directing credits include *The Rocky Horror Show* (WCU), and *The Sound of Music* and *Brundibár* for Asheville Lyric Opera.

Kristen earned her Bachelor of Music in Vocal Performance and her Master of Music from the A.J. Fletcher Opera Institute at UNC School of the Arts. Additionally, she earned a Bachelor of Arts in Musical Theatre from Catawba College.

When not working, Kristen spends free time with her husband and dogs, makes soap, visits rescued farm animals, and dreams of working at Hogwarts. She is the author of *God Is Not a Bully: A Not-So-Churchy Memoir*. Her favorite quote is "Of course it is happening inside your head, Harry, but why on earth should that mean that it is not real?" (said by Albus Dumbledore to Harry Potter in *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*).

Kristen spends a great deal of time roaming through her imagination; this quote acknowledges that what is made in thought, creativity, and dreams, can be in concert with what is seen, touched, and experienced in the everyday. Balance between the two, and how they fuel each other, informs her deeply as an artist, teacher, and a person.

# Student Spotlight

## Emma Larkin Hand

*Undergraduate Student, Emergency Medical Care*



Emma Larkin Hand is an honors student majoring in the Emergency Medical Care (EMC) Program under the science/pre-med concentration. She is currently certified as an EMT-Basic, and will be a certified paramedic upon graduation. Emma has earned a minor in Spanish. She came to Western as a freshman on a contract/scholarship to be on the Cross Country and Track & Field teams. Emma ran with the team for two full years before resigning due to the time commitment of clinicals. Her goal is to attend medical school after graduation and she will focus in pediatrics. Emma volunteered at the Jeff Gordon Children's Hospital under Carolinas HealthCare System in Concord, NC (near Charlotte) this past summer, and was a junior volunteer with Carolinas HealthCare System for 4 years (2011-2014) in the Post-Anesthesia Care Unit.

Emma is a course tutor at the Writing and Learning Commons for SPAN 101, 102, and 231; General Chemistry I and II; and Human Anatomy and Physiology I and II. Emma also serves as a lifeguard (for the past 4 years) at her local YMCA (Cannon Memorial/West Cabarrus YMCA).

Emma is involved with the I-PALs program (International student Peer Advisor and Liaison) with International Programs and Services (IPS) where current students are paired with an incoming international student to help them adjust to campus; she is also a Chancellor's Ambassador.

Emma enjoys reading, listening to music, and spending time with her friends and family. She loves Walt Disney World and all things Disney.

Her favorite quote is, "A smooth sea never made a skillful sailor" which is adapted from an old English proverb. Emma admires this quote because it demonstrates that there are always adversities and obstacles in life, but those hardships are what make you the best person you can be. Emma says, "If life was always easy and you didn't have to work for anything, then you're not performing at your optimal level". This quote especially rings true for her as she has only one sibling who has Down syndrome. It hasn't been easy for Emma having a younger brother with a disability, and there are many difficulties that come along with that; in all, it has helped shape Emma into the person she is today.

Want to include news in next month's issue?  
Please send information to [scmelton@wcu.edu](mailto:scmelton@wcu.edu)