

Academic Affairs Newsletter

September 2021



As we embark on the 133rd academic year since WCU's founding, we are more committed than ever to ensuring the success and safety of our students, to the support and health of our staff and faculty, and to continuing building reciprocal relationships with our community. We are glad you are part of the WCU community, whether you are teaching or working remotely, or in person at Biltmore Park, Highlands Biological Station, Cherokee, Cullowhee, Jamaica, Colombia, or at one of our other sites. Best wishes for a safe and healthy Fall Semester!

A special commencement ceremony is being held in Cullowhee on Sunday morning, September 4th, hosted by the Chancellor, Provost, and Alumni Affairs, for all alumni who graduated from WCU in 2020 but were unable to participate in a graduation ceremony in person, since they were all hosted virtually. The commencement will afford those graduates an opportunity to be recognized in-person in their regalia, with family friends present.

The pandemic has taken its toll on enrollment of our new and continuing students—we will share updates on enrollment once we have an official census report after Friday, September 3rd.

Please review the Frequently Asked Questions regarding COVID 19 developed for instructors and shared by the Provost earlier this week. It is available on the faculty and staff resources section of the Academic Affairs Share Point site. Other COVID-19 related [resources](#) are available on the WCU Website.

September 11th 20-Year Commemoration Events

2021 represents the 20th year since the terrorist attacks that occurred on September 11 in New York City, the Pentagon, and on a plane over a field in Shanksville, Pennsylvania. This year we will respectfully recognize the day and pay special tribute to the 2,977 lives lost on that fateful day 20 years ago. Please visit the [9/11 Memorial and Museum](#) for additional information.

Through both reflective and engaging programs, WCU will pause and remember the events of that day and the impact on us as individuals, as a community, and as a nation. To facilitate this day of remembrance, the Center for Community Engagement and Service Learning, along with other campus partners including Military Student Services, Student Government Association, Health and Wellness, Staff Senate, Educational Outreach, and the Chancellor's Office, have organized the following programs:

- 9/11 Days of Service (*Friday and Saturday, September 10th and 11th*) will engage nearly 100 volunteers across a range of projects around our community (view and sign up here: <https://wcu.campuslabs.com/engage/event/7115997>).
- 9/11 Remembrance Memorial between the Alumni Tower and the University Center where 2,977 American Flags will be displayed commemorating each life lost 20 years ago. Visit and pay your respects from noon on Friday, September 10th to noon on Monday, September 13th.
- 9/11 Reflection Walk around campus will be sponsored by the Office of Military Services. There will be a QR code that attendees can scan for a list of all those who lost their lives on 9/11.
- First-Responder Gratitude Baskets, sponsored by the Chancellor's Office, will be delivered to local first responder organizations with notes of appreciation and sustenance gifts to demonstrate our support and appreciation as a community.
- 9/11 Reflection and Commemorative Video presenting voices of faculty and staff members who remember where they were and the impact that 9/11 had on their lives, and students who reflect on the impact that day has had on the world they live in today. The recordings will be available on the WCU Website.

Please contact [Lane Perry](#) (x227-2643), Executive Director of the Center for Community Engagement and Service Learning and Chair of the September 11 Commemorative Events Committee, if you have any questions about these initiatives.

Office of Student Retention

To improve support of our students on the path to success, Mentoring and Persistence of Success (MAPS) and the Office of Student Transitions have become part of an expanded Office of Student Retention. The directorships of these two offices are restructured to, respectively,

- Associate Director of Retention, Mentoring and Persistence to Success Coordinator
- Assistant Director of Retention, Student Transitions Coordinator

We are launching national searches for both positions. All staff in these offices now report to the Director of Retention. Retention efforts are going to be even more important at WCU in future

years, so combining the offices to a larger Office of Student Retention will allow synergies between the different initiatives, greater flexibility to assign work uniformly throughout the academic year and summer, improvements in efficiency of support staff, and enhancements in continuity of operations.

The other offices in the Division, namely, the Office of Accessibility Resources, the Advising Center, the Writing and Learning Center (WaLC), and the Mathematics Tutoring Center (MTC) will continue their central roles in student success. Accessibility, advising, learning communities, tutoring, coaching, supplemental instruction, and the many other functions of these offices feature significantly in student retention.

Tutoring

The WaLC (Writing and Learning Commons) and the MTC (Math Tutoring Center) are fully operational for Fall 2021, offering both face-to-face and virtual tutoring. Supplemental instruction in targeted courses will operate at full capacity. In addition, we are piloting a peer coaching model for targeted sections in Liberal Studies courses.



The American Association of University Women at Western Carolina University (AAUW WCU) is pleased to announce two upcoming events for the Fall 2021 semester. As an organization that supports promoting and strengthening science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) education, AAUW WCU has invited two faculty from WCU's School of Health Sciences to share their knowledge on current issues in their field. On Monday, September 6, 2021 at 12pm, Dr. Patrick Baron will discuss *Current Epidemiological Trends in COVID-19*. (Click [here](#) to register.) On Wednesday, September 22 at 12pm, Dr. Kathrine Pincura will discuss *Policy Channels of the Opioid Epidemic*. (Click [here](#) to register.) Both events will be held in a virtual format and are open to faculty, staff, students, and community members. For more information about these events or AAUW WCU visit our website at aauw.wcu.edu or contact Dr. Mickey Randolph, AAUW WCU President at randolph@wcu.edu.

The Office of Institutional Planning and Effectiveness welcomes new staff member Srisuda McCollough. Srisuda formerly worked in the Office of Admissions since 2017 as a programmer and data analyst. Srisuda began working in the OIPE as a Business and Technology Applications Analyst in July and fills a position vacated in April 2020. Srisuda will oversee the integrity of data

feeds between WCU and the UNC System Office (which provides for WCU's official data snapshots, including the Fall and Spring census snapshots), and she will also contribute to the maintenance and development of data dashboards, and respond to ad hoc data requests. Welcome Srisuda!

Administrative Search Updates

- The search for the Associate Vice Chancellor for Student Success will begin later in the semester. Information will be forthcoming soon.
- The search for the next Dean of the College of Engineering and Technology is in process. The committee composition will be confirmed and announced shortly with the goal of having a new dean seated July 1, 2022.

WCU Fine Art Museum, Performance Hall, Niggli Studio Theatre, Star Atrium

- Fall 2021 Intentional Learning Opportunities
 - Work with our staff to create original experiences that support your curriculum
 - Consider creating assignments based on a current exhibition or upcoming production
 - Offer extra credit opportunities for students attending Bardo Arts Center events
 - Help students achieve DegreePlus Points in Cultural Responsiveness
 - Encourage a cultural curiosity and an appreciation for the arts

Contact us directly for more details! WCU Fine Art Museum | 227-3591 | museum@wcu.edu or Sara Rincon at svrincon@wcu.edu BAC Box Office | 227-2479 | BACboxoffice@wcu.edu or Kim Kopak at knkopak@wcu.edu

Please see the following link for the WCU Fine Art Museum Exhibition Schedule: [Western Carolina University - Fine Art Museum \(wcu.edu\)](#)

The Division of Advancement is introducing a new initiative: The 1889 Impact Program. This program utilizes the unrestricted fund for WCU gifts that we solicit each year to increase scholarship support and programming/initiative ideas across campus. A copy of the 1889 Impact Program details is included in the link below.

As a part of this program, the 1889 Impact Grants launch, all applications should be submitted by October 1st using this online form: <https://www.wcu.edu/engage/give-to-wcu/about-us/1889-impact-grants.aspx>. The grant application asks that the fund request be vetted and approved by the appropriate dean or division head to make sure it's aligned with the relevant priorities.