Academic Affairs Searches

Associate Provost for Academic Affairs

The Office of the Provost is pleased to announce Dr. Brandon Schwab has accepted the position of Associate Provost for Academic Affairs effective July 15, 2014. Brandon has most recently served as Department Head and Full Professor in the Department of Geology at Humboldt University in Arcata, California. Please join us in welcoming Dr. Schwab!

We also wish to thank the search committee, Doug Keskula, Natalie Broom, Brian KloeppeL, James Costa, Laura Wright, Erin McNelis and Lowell Davis for their service to WCU.

Dean of the Kimmel School

A search committee, chaired by the dean of the College of Business, Dr. Darrell Parker, was appointed by Provost Alison Morrison-Shetlar to identify recommended candidates for the dean of The Kimmel School of Construction Management & Technology. Two highly qualified candidates have been identified and have visited campus in Mid-June. For more information, please visit the Kimmel School webpage or the Office of the Provost webpage.

Dean of the College of Fine and Performing Arts

Robert Kehrberg, founding dean of the college, is stepping down from that position and will return to the faculty in the School of Music. Darrell Parker, dean of WCU’s College of Business, has agreed to serve as acting dean of the College of Fine and Performing Arts. An announcement is forthcoming about the membership of a campus committee, chaired by Dale Carpenter, that will conduct a national search to fill the vacant dean’s position on a permanent basis.
Western Carolina University’s online bachelor’s degree program in criminal justice has received a No. 1 national ranking in affordability from the distance education information website GetEducated.com.

WCU’s program was ranked the top “Best Buy” for students seeking a “high quality, low-cost” online criminal justice degree following a national survey of 43 regionally accredited higher education institutions that offer online bachelor’s degrees in the same subject area, said Melissa Eubank, director of information services for GetEducated.com.

WCU’s online criminal justice program also received No. 1 national rankings from the website in 2007, 2010 and 2011.

The survey supporting this year’s ranking showed that the average cost of obtaining a bachelor’s degree in criminal justice through an online program nationwide is nearly $47,000. The cost of WCU’s program is $17,294 for North Carolina students and $56,202 for out-of-state students.

Criminal justice is the fourth WCU online academic program to be highly ranked in affordability so far this year by GetEducated.com. Master’s degree programs in human resources and project management have received No. 3 and No. 5 national rankings, respectively, and WCU’s online bachelor’s program in entrepreneurship was ranked No. 2.

More information about WCU’s online criminal justice program is available by through the Criminal Justice program, Distance programs, and the Division of Educational Outreach.
The NSF funded ($625,179) SPIRIT: Scholarship Program Initiative via Recruitment, Innovation, and Transformation will create a new approach to the recruitment, retention, education, and placement of academically talented and financially needy engineering and engineering technology students at Western Carolina University. Twenty-Seven new and continuing students will be recruited into horizontally and vertically integrated cohorts that will be nurtured and developed in a Project Based Learning (PBL) community characterized by extensive faculty mentoring, fundamental and applied research, hands-on design projects, and industry engagement. Our horizontal integration method creates sub-cohorts with same-year students from different disciplines (electrical, mechanical, etc.) to work in an environment that reflects how engineers work in the real world. Our vertical integration method enables sub-cohorts from different years to work together on different stages of projects in a PBL setting.

The objectives of the SPIRIT program include:

- **Recruiting** talented and financially needy engineering and technology students into SPIRIT;

- **Transforming** students’ critical skills and technical competencies through a project based learning and living community and faculty/student teams documented by educational portfolios;

- **Documenting** students’ academic growth to assist development of pedagogy;

- **Placing** distinctive graduates in regional and national workforce and graduate education;

- **Disseminating** lessons learned to promote national engineering and technology education.
The Department of Political Science and Political Affairs is excited to announce a new opportunity for students next academic year. Model United Nations (MUN) (PSC 355) introduces students to the history, structure, and operations of the United Nations, as well as the role it plays within the international community. MUN is an engaged experience class, counting toward the requirements of both the political science and international studies majors, in which students spend the semester simulating activities of the actual United Nations by playing roles as foreign diplomats of a country, researching those countries and their related international issues, giving ambassadorial speeches, and writing detailed position papers and resolutions. During the course of the semester, students are tasked with solving a litany of complex problems, which over the last few semesters have included, but are not limited to, improving both the conditions and humanitarian aid coordination at refugee camps, mitigating global water scarcity, finding a diplomatic solution for the current Russia/Ukraine crisis, and meeting the millennium development goal of eradicating extreme global poverty. While working in tandem to solve these difficult problems, students gain skills in critical analysis, public speaking, diplomacy, teamwork, research, citizenship, and leadership.

All of this activity leads up to a biannual conference in which students are able to synthesize the skills they've worked on all semester and apply them to a larger collegiate UN simulation. Indeed, every semester, students have the chance to integrate all of the skills gained in class with practical experience at the Southern Regional Model United Nations Conference in Atlanta, GA (in the fall) or Charlotte, NC (in the spring). At the conference, as they have done all semester in class, students must simulate the process of actual treaty negotiations, with the ultimate goal of creating a treaty that attempts to solve a specific geopolitical problem. The central intention of the joint MUN class and conference experience is that it will help students 1) develop an ethos of global civic engagement, 2) gain a more sophisticated understanding of world politics, and 3) further develop and improve the written and oral communication skills they will need throughout their lives and chosen careers so that they can function successfully in the modern interdependent and interconnected world.
Based on feedback and requests, Provost Morrison-Shetlar is pleased to announce the first annual WCU Summer Institute for Administrative Support Professionals. Supervisors are encouraged to support participation in this important professional development opportunity for their staff.

These half day workshops are specifically designed to provide the resources, community, and training needed to thrive. As a valued administrative support professional, SPA staff are cordially invited to attend the Institute sessions, to be held from 1-4:30 on MONDAY JULY 14 and MONDAY JULY 28, both in Forsyth 101.

The format includes whole group sessions as well as concurrent workshops, led by experienced WCU staff. While there is some overlap between the sessions, the workshops do differ, so you are welcome to consider one or both sessions.

**July 14**
- Banner Finance with Debbie Justice (IT)
- PeopleAdmin with Alicia Estes (HR)
- Effective Communication with Rusty Marts (HR)
- Dealing with Difficult People with Anne Aldrich (OP)

**July 28**
- Making Magic in Excel with Johnny Penley (CFC)
- Web Development with Paige Herman (IT)
- Email Etiquette with Anna McFadden (IT)
- Customer Service with Patrick Hughes (HR)
Justin Beebe
Senior, Music Education

Justin Thomas Beebe is a rising senior at Western Carolina University majoring in music education. He is a student of Dr. Travis Bennett, professor of horn at WCU. Justin has been playing horn for nearly ten years. He has competed at the International Horn Competition of America and was named a finalist at the Southeast Horn Workshop Collegiate Solo Competition in 2013. That same year he was also a winner of the WCU Concerto competition and performed with the WCU Wind Ensemble as a featured soloist.

Justin has performed with various professional and student ensembles, including the Asheville Symphony Orchestra, the Asheville Lyric Opera, the Tuckaseegee Brass Quintet, the WCU Artist-In-Residence Orchestra, the WCU Wind Ensemble and more. Justin has served the WCU Wind Ensemble as principal horn for three semesters and has been in the ensemble for six consecutive semesters.

Justin also maintains a small private studio where he teaches horn lessons to middle and high school students. He is also active as a composer and arranger. In 2014 the WCU Horn Ensemble premiered his original composition, Panoply, at the Southeast Horn Workshop.

Justin is the founder and director of The Harmony Initiative, a collaborative musical composition project that premiered at Western Carolina University in April of 2014. In August of 2013, Justin and his team put out a call for original music and provided five chord progressions that people could choose from to write their melodies over. By the end of the submission period in October the team had received over fifty submissions of original music, which Justin later weaved together and orchestrated to create a single piece of music that embodied the creativity and artistic ingenuity of all the contributors. The piece was then recorded in WCU’s state-of-the-art recording studio by Commercial and Electronic Music student David Myers. David was also charged with the massive responsibility of editing and compiling hundreds of tracks in order to bring to life what was on the page. Music student Josh Blue captured the production process on film and created a cinematic to accompany the music. The video captured the beauty of Western North Carolina and the talented musicians behind the sound.

The Harmony Initiative was presented by Justin and David at the 2014 National Conference on Undergraduate Research. Justin and his team plan to release the video to the public in the near future.

Justin is the recipient of the WCU School of Music Outstanding Sophomore Award, the School of Music Outstanding Junior Award, the North Carolina Teaching Fellows Scholarship, and the WCU College of Fine and Performing Arts Rising Senior Scholarship.
Faculty Spotlight

Dr. Heather Coan
Assistant Professor, Biology Department

Dr. Coan graduated with a BS in Biology from Appalachian State University in 2005. She earned a Ph.D. in Molecular Genetics at the Wake Forest University Institute for Regenerative Medicine within the Molecular Genetics Program. Her work at Wake Forest focused on translational medicine where she performed adult stem cell studies and preliminary studies aimed at developing bone biomaterial substitutes. Upon completion of her doctorate, Dr. Coan was recruited for a postdoctoral position at the Texas Biomedical Research Institute in San Antonio, Texas. At Texas Biomed, she performed work isolating mesenchymal stem cells from the knee joints of osteoarthritic baboons. She also learned new techniques in bioinformatics and in using large gene expression databases to elucidate molecular pathways of interest in skeletal disease. Her focus at Texas Biomed was to use their unique resources to expand our understanding of how osteoarthritis initiates and progresses. She also focused on bone-related work to understand the genetics of bone biomechanics and how factors influenced by both of these areas can intertwine to create bone fragility. In fact, Dr. Coan was a recent co-author on a manuscript published in a clinical journal aimed at informing MDs of recent scientific advances in the bone field.

The Office of Undergraduate Studies provided Dr. Coan with funds to lead students through a May-mester course/workshop aimed at teaching basic cell culture techniques and commonly used cell-based assays. The cell-based course introduced students to the concepts and methods used in human and mammalian cell culture. Students not only learned techniques and laboratory methods, but they also gained an understanding of why these techniques are used in biomedical research and how they can be used in varying research scenarios. Students were introduced to a number of cell-based assays including cell survival, proliferation, and death assays and possibly, if time permits, stem cell based assays. Students came away from the course with an understanding of techniques used in cutting edge laboratory research. The techniques that the students learned will make them more competitive when applying for jobs and postgraduate programs.
Staff Spotlight

Shay Davis
Facilities Maintenance Technician-Mechanical Trades, Facilities Management

Shay grew up here in the wonderful mountains of Jackson County. As a child growing up in Western Carolina he was taught to have some of the best mountain values anyone could ask for. Davis graduated from Smokey Mountain High School and from there is where I started my plumbing career with Ward Plumbing for over 13 years of service. Davis recalls, “I was blessed to move on from there and to get the call I needed from WCU Residential Living, to be their lead plumber.” Shay has also been a member of the Balsam Volunteer Fire Department for over 9 years now. “Lots of schooling comes from being a fireman. I earned my level I and II state firefighting degree. I love helping the people of the community when a situation happens.” Other things that Shay loves to do in his spare time include coaching Little League Baseball, working in his flower garden, fishing with his friends and, of course, spending the day with his awesome family.

“Being part of Western Carolina couldn't have gone any better over the past few years,” Shay says. This year he won the Bright Idea Award for a few ideas that he put into place over the last 2 years. Starting with some of the biggest residential halls on campus (Scott, Walker, Reynolds, Albright-Benton and Buchanan), Shay replaced toilet valves which save close to 3700 gallons of water daily. Davis then moved on to Norton and Central Halls with the new green dual-flush handle, which saves approximately 30 percent of water on each flush when the handle is activated upward, saving close to 400 gallons of water. Shay then changed 51 of the old toilets in the hall to the new 1.28gpf (gallons per flush), saving over 340 gallons a day. This summer Shay has worked at Scott Hall to also help with more effective heating in the winter.

Want to include news in next month’s issue? Please send information to vcacademicaffairs@email.wcu.edu