

Cultural and Environmental Immersion

Description: Connecting learning opportunities across the curriculum to WCU's unique environmental and cultural resources.

Goal: Expand opportunities to engage students directly with the natural landscape and cultural heritage of the campus community and the Southern Appalachian region.

Aspirant Metrics (4-5 Years): All WCU undergraduate residential students are exposed to programs emphasizing the natural and cultural landscape.

Description of "Distinction" in this area: WCU is located in a particularly biodiverse and topographically unique area that is also underdeveloped, providing natural environments for study of multiple subjects as well as access to unique cultures such as the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians and native Appalachian culture.

Specific Criteria for Demonstrating "Distinction": Exposure of students to Appalachian history and culture issues (i.e. health, educational, economic and infrastructure challenges).

Regional or National Distinction: National.

Timelines: Ongoing.

Service and Outreach

Description: Learning through field-based service through reciprocal relationships with regional partners in order to prepare students to analyze and solve challenges in communities and in the world.

Goal: Increase number of and participation in service opportunities and community partnerships.

Aspirant Metrics (4-5 Years): Community engagement is a core WCU practice with rubrics to guide consistent expectations; measure participation; and assess graduate and undergraduate student outcomes. Continue to increase the number of Service Learning Course designations across campus; Continue recognition as a Carnegie Engaged Institution and by the Washington Center for Higher Education Civic Engagement; Achieve American Association of State Colleges and Universities' Excellence and Innovation in Civic Learning and Community Engagement; Apply for the W.K. Kellogg Foundation Community Engagement Scholarship Awards and C. Peter Magrath Community Engagement Scholarship Award.

Description of "Distinction" in this area: Service and outreach deepen student connections to curriculum and coursework, and provide a framework for students to understand their potential for impact within the professional realm. WCU has active, strong partnerships with local governments, schools, healthcare agencies, non-profits and businesses through which students provide much-needed resources to the region.

Specific Criteria for Demonstrating "Distinction": Use Design, Examine & Articulate Learning (DEAL) model for Service Learning to frame Service Learning experiences.

Regional or National Distinction: Regional.

Timelines: Ongoing.

Experience-Based Learning

Description: Providing opportunities for students to earn real-world experience in their field of choice including internships, externships, undergraduate and graduate research, project-based learning and capstone experiences.

Goal: Increase participation in research, deliver project-based learning in at least 50 percent of upper-level courses, and increase participation in off-campus and on-campus internships.

Aspirant Metrics (4-5 Years): Experiential learning is a core WCU practice. 85% of our students at WCU will participate in internships, project-based learning, externships, undergraduate research, graduate research or capstone experiences, which are all included in Association of American Colleges & Universities' High Impact Practices. Undergraduate research activities will be monitored and 75% of applications submitted to the National Conference on Undergraduate Research will be accepted.

Description of "Distinction" in this area: Across programs, WCU focuses on delivering experiences that will prepare students for careers after college.

Specific Criteria for Demonstrating "Distinction": Greater participation in the Council on Undergraduate Research at institutional level; Receive Council on Undergraduate Research award (e.g., Council on Undergraduate Research Award for Undergraduate Research Accomplishments); Federal Undergraduate Research grant(s)/award(s) for institution; Host National Conferences on Undergraduate Research and/or NCAA Southern Conference/University of North Carolina system conference. Quality Enhancement Plan activities and outcomes.

Regional or National Distinction: Regional.

Timelines: Ongoing.