


Western Carolina University
Counseling
Connections

February 2020

A decorative graphic on the left side of the page features stylized leaves and flowers. The leaves are in shades of purple, blue, and green, while the flowers are in shades of red and pink. The background is a light beige color.

"Anything that's human is mentionable, and anything that is mentionable can be more manageable. When we can talk about our feelings, they become less overwhelming, less upsetting, and less scary. The people we trust with that important talk can help us know that we are not alone."

—FRED ROGERS

Introducing Dr. Merry Leigh Dameron

Merry Leigh Dameron joined the faculty of the WCU Counseling Program in Fall 2019 as an Assistant Professor. She teaches human development, crisis counseling, consultation and collaboration, and practicum. Welcome, Merry Leigh!

EDUCATION

- M.A. in School Counseling from Lenoir-Rhyne University
- Ph.D. in Counselor Education and Supervision from University of North Carolina, Charlotte

“Western was my dream job from the get-go.”

EXPERIENCE

- 10 years in public education, including 8 years as a school counselor at elementary, middle, and high schools
- Assistant professor and school counseling program coordinator at Carson-Newman University
- Research interests include social justice in education, cultural competence for school counselors, & school counseling Praxis

BIO

- From Black Mountain, NC
- One of six children
- Has an 8-year-old daughter and a 5-year-old son
- Once worked as a wedding photographer

ADVICE TO STUDENTS

“Be patient with yourself. You’re not going to graduate feeling like you know everything you need to know, but you’ll have what you need to be successful and you’re going to keep growing.”

Program News: Publications

Elizabeth Likis-Werle

Elizabeth is first author for two chapters in a recently released college counseling textbook:

Likis-Werle, E. (2020). Substance Use and Addiction. In D.A. Paladino, L.M. Gonzalez, and J. C. Watson (Eds.), *College Counseling and Student Development: Theory, Practice and Campus Collaboration*. (pp 317-329). Alexandria, VA: ACA.

Likis-Werle, E., Gonzalez, L. M., Rifkin, C., Schwitzer, A. M., & Burnett, D. (2020). Building Collaborative Campus Relationships. In D.A. Paladino, L.M. Gonzalez, and J.C.Watson (Eds.), *College Counseling and Student Development: Theory, Practice and Campus Collaboration*. (pp 125-139). Alexandria, VA: ACA.

Merry Leigh Dameron & Russ Curtis

Merry Leigh and Russ have published research on working with clients experiencing heartbreak:

“Due to heartbreak’s connection with physical and emotional consequences and poor academic performance, helping students manage heartbreak can be seen as supporting student development and academic achievement.” (p. 9)

Dameron, M. L., & Curtis, R. (2020). Hope for the hurting: Strategies for school counselors working with heartbroken students. *Journal of School Counseling, 18*(4). Retrieved from <http://www.jsc.montana.edu/articles/v18n4.pdf>

Program News: Publications



The WCU counseling program is seeking K – 12 public school student art, poetry, and short stories to publish in **Masterpeace: An Online Art and Wellness Magazine.**

The purpose of this engaging online magazine is to:

- celebrate local student art;
- provide mental health and wellness education;
- destigmatize mental health issues;
- provide steps needed to achieve students' full potential;
- increase conversation among parents, students, faculty and community members about the importance of seeking help when needed.

Submit student art to Russ Curtis at curtis@wcu.edu along with the [signed permission form](#).

Follow us on Instagram: [@masterpeace.artmag](https://www.instagram.com/masterpeace.artmag)

Program News: Student Experiences

Several first-year students are doing graduate assistantships at area schools. Below, they share their experiences so far this semester.

Collin McWhite

The Catamount School

"My experience has been a fast-paced and very rewarding experience. The culture of the school is constantly changing and still being formed, which provides me with a unique opportunity to have a positive impact. Being able to practice counseling skills with students as well as leading guidance lesson plans are invaluable experience for someone in a graduate assistantship."

Ashley Waters

The Catamount School

"I am working alongside teachers Beth Poteat and Dr. Holly Pinter as well as WCU professor, Dr. David Strahan. With our action research, we are attempting to answer the question, "How does having a mentor impact students' engagement and motivation?" I meet weekly with four 8th graders to explore four main areas: changing negative self-talk, using problem-solving to cope with difficulties, developing confidence, and understanding behavior and motivation (of self and others). I am building relationships with some really awesome students while also learning and growing myself!"

Mackenzie Rogers

Andrews Elementary

"Working in a school while in graduate school is such a wonderful opportunity. I am discovering ways to apply what I am learning to my job when I officially become a school counselor. I have learned some great examples of best practices firsthand, and I am already educating the faculty and staff at my school about the roles of a school counselor. It's an amazing journey, and I am so thankful."

Program News: Presentations

North Carolina Counseling Association Conference

Five faculty members and one graduate student will be presenting on February 27 at the NCCA Conference, which will take place at the Hilton Charlotte University Place in Charlotte, NC. [Register here.](#)

Counseling Introverted, Shy, and Socially Anxious Clients

Russ Curtis, Merry Leigh Dameron, & Russell Frelinghuysen

Introverted, shy, and socially anxious clients often do not seek counseling because of the very nature of the intimacy of the counseling relationship. The purpose of this presentation is to demonstrate how to reach out to, connect with, and counsel shy clients.

Counseling the Betrayed: Case Study and Demonstration to Build Counselor Confidence and Competence

Russ Curtis & Elizabeth Likis

Post Infidelity Stress Disorder (PISD) can be a debilitating condition which includes: mental and physical health, relationship, legal, and economic implications. The purpose of this presentation, then, is to present a case study of a client who experiences PISD and then discuss and demonstrate how to provide effective care.

Integrated Behavioral Healthcare with Women After Pregnancy Loss

Melodie Frick & Heather Thompson Rainey

In integrated behavioral healthcare, counselors must be aware of how medical issues and mental health issues are related. One issue is pregnancy loss and the effects of trauma and grief. Participants will learn about research findings, counseling approaches, and advocating for trauma-informed care within medical settings.

Upcoming Events

Resume & Job Search Kickoff

*Tips & Tricks
for Masters Students*
(with our very own Megan Myers!)

February 17 & February 20, 2020
5 – 5:30 p.m.

Room 343
WCU Biltmore Park
Asheville, NC

Nu Sigma Chi NCE Prep Workshop

February 22, 2020
8:30 a.m. – 4 p.m.

Mann Hall 323
North Carolina State University
Raleigh, NC

\$35 for Chi Sigma Iota members
\$45 for non-members

[Register](#)

Upcoming Events

**North Carolina School
Counseling Association
Western Region/
District 8 Drive-In Workshop**

March 22, 2020

**Western Carolina University, Biltmore
Park
Asheville, NC**

[Learn More](#)

**27th Annual School and
Community Counselor
Conference**

***Using Technology to Support
Family Engagement***

March 27, 2020

**Covenant Community Church
Asheville, NC**

[Register](#)

Upcoming Events

North Carolina Employee Assistance Professional Association Annual Conference

March 25 – 27, 2020

Winston-Salem Marriott
Winston-Salem, NC

Now accepting proposals for graduate
poster presentations!

Research topics may be related to:

- Behavioral Health Considerations in the Workplace
- Addiction Issues that Impact Individuals in the Workplace
- Career Development Processes
- Work-Life Balance Issues
- Working with Troubled Employees
- Employability Skills

Submit your proposal [here](#) by 2/17/20.

Relevant Articles

[Some states and school districts are allowing students to take mental health days](#)

[How awareness and self-compassion can disrupt the withdrawal response in trauma survivors](#)

[Statewide mental health “warmlines” provide pre-crisis mental health support](#)

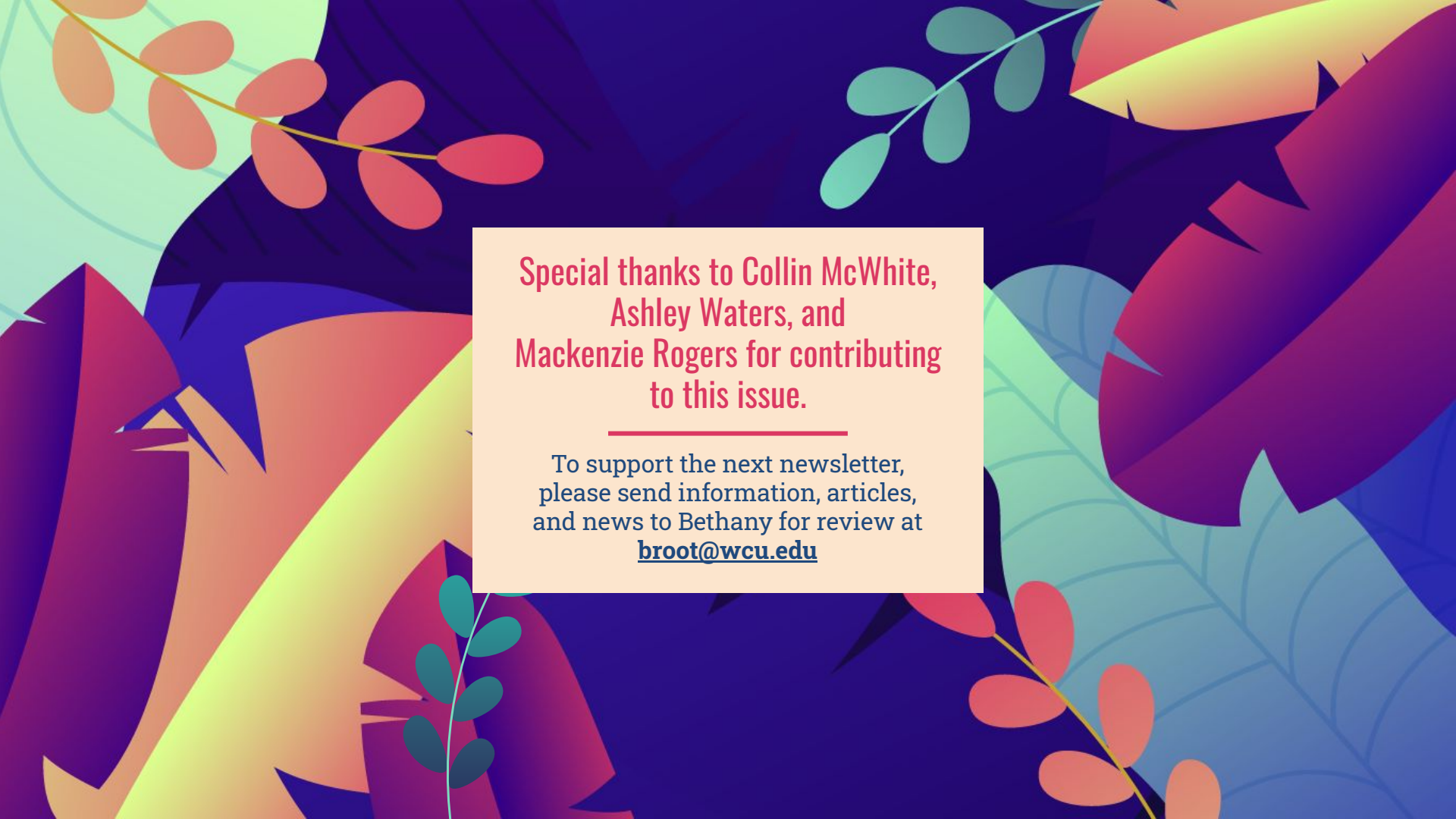
[One dose of synthetic psilocybin alleviated cancer patients’ depression and anxiety for up to five years](#)

[Large corporations have begun offering on-site behavioral-health counseling as a job perk](#)

[Tips for coping with “headline stress disorder”](#)

[California begins paying physicians to screen children for ACEs](#)

[Mind-body therapies can reduce patients’ reliance on opioids by reducing chronic pain](#)



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Mackenzie Rogers for contributing
to this issue.

To support the next newsletter,
please send information, articles,
and news to Bethany for review at
broot@wcu.edu