



**Chancellor Kelli R. Brown**

**Faculty Senate Report – March 2022**

**DEFINING WCU**

Last month during the WCU Foundation Board meeting, the Board discussed Western Carolina University in a post pandemic world and what we want to showcase moving forward. One of the attendees left us with a thought-provoking statement; “we need to start defining Western and stop defending it.” I was moved by that statement and thought it particularly apt as we begin to emerge from one of the most challenging periods in WCU’s history. Moving forward, I hope that we will all consider our perspectives about what we think defines WCU and how others view WCU.

As we move into our University’s next chapter, there will be tremendous opportunities to define Western Carolina University for the future and to share who and what we are with the many stakeholders that have a vested interest in our work. As I look ahead to the visit here next month from the UNC Board of Governors, I intend to remind this important Board of the mission, vision, and work each of us accomplishes every day for Western, its students, its communities, and for the UNC System.

**POST PANDEMIC AND MASK UPDATE**

On February 17, Governor Cooper encouraged schools and local governments across North Carolina to end their mask mandates and on February 25, President Hans asked all UNC campuses to begin shifting their mask policies. In light of this, I elected to lift WCU’s mask requirement in all areas of campus except the University Health Center operations and on the Cat Tran, per current federal regulations related to masks on public transit. When the federal regulations on public transit end, then masks will become optional on Cat Tran as well.

Campus leaders will continue to monitor and evaluate shifting conditions in our continuing responses to combating COVID-19.

**SALARY ADJUSTMENTS**

In addition to the salary increases provided by the state, Western Carolina University used \$1.7M of its own resources to address salary equity and compression as recommended by our faculty and staff salary committees.

Those actions are in process with Human Resources and will be reflected in the March payroll. We were pleased to be able to take these steps toward remedying some of our most acute compression and inversion needs.

And, as a reminder, the next 2.5% legislative increase will go into effect on July 1. More details from Human Resources will be forthcoming as we get closer to that date.

### **UNC BOG and WCU BOT UPDATE**

At the last UNC Board of Governors meeting on February 23-24, WCU had several items on the table for consideration. First, the Athletics Fee was approved allowing us to begin next steps related to master planning around our outdated athletics facilities. WCU also received official word at the BOG meeting that our out-of-state numbers in Fall 2021's incoming class did not exceed the 18% system cap on out of state enrollment. The Board of Governors also had further discussions about the proposed revisions to the UNC Funding Model. Additional discussions and vote will be held at a special called meeting on March 25 and at their April meeting.

WCU's Board of Trustees considered several important items at its meeting on March 4<sup>th</sup> including tenure and promotion decisions, approval of the All-Funds Budget, and approval of the WCU's legislative agenda.

For the Legislative Agenda, the BOT approved four legislative priorities for the upcoming short session and beyond. They are as follows:

- Salary increases for faculty/staff
- Merit scholarship program
- Expansion of engineering programs to meet regional industry needs
- Targeted renovation or new construction for an engineering building

WCU's legislative agenda will next be considered as part of the UNC System's legislative agenda, which will be discussed and considered at the April meeting of the UNC Board of Governors.

### **UNC SYSTEM OFFICE INITIATIVES**

*Meeting and Tour at WCU:* As a reminder, the UNC Board of Governors will be holding their April 2022 meeting here on WCU's campus April 6-7, 2022. That meeting will also include a tour of our campus for BOG members and other visitors. Committee meetings on April 6<sup>th</sup> and the full board meeting on April 7<sup>th</sup> will be held in the University Center. These meetings, like WCU's Board of Trustees' meetings, are public and, when possible, I encourage you to attend or view the livestream.

A lunch for the Board on the 6<sup>th</sup> will be held at the Ramsey Center. We anticipate a large number of external visitors to attend this Board meeting and there will be impact on campus services and parking

during those two days. WCU Parking Services and University Communications will begin reminding faculty, staff, and students where parking and activities will be impacted starting this week and over the next two weeks leading up to the meeting.

*Employee Engagement Survey:* The 2022 UNC System Employee Engagement Survey will launch March 28th and is scheduled to be open for three weeks. The 2022 version will be implemented as a “pulse” survey and will be roughly half the length of the 2018 and 2020 versions. Specifically, the 2022 survey will focus on three areas:

- A set of baseline trend data from past surveys
- Diversity and inclusion statements
- Statements specific to institutional actions taken due to the COVID-19 pandemic

Please take advantage of your opportunity to provide feedback to the System through this important survey. Information on how to complete the survey is being sent via campus email.

## **ENROLLMENT UPDATE**

The past two years we’ve seen enrollment numbers drop as WCU continued to deal with the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. Now as we start to slowly shift into a post pandemic world, we’re seeing our freshman class grow closer to pre pandemic numbers. However, it’s important to remember that even as the incoming class size returns to what we consider normal, we still had two classes of a much smaller size. It may be some time for us to see total enrollment reach pre pandemic numbers, but we are on the right track moving forward.

## **UNIVERSITY ACCOLADES**

*Spring Literary Festival Was a Success—* WCU’s Spring Literary Festival returned in person for the first time in two years from March 14<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup>. The 20<sup>th</sup> annual gathering was a huge success filled with different author readings, a highlight on student work, and a celebration of the region.

*Engineering Professor Receives State’s Excellence in Teaching Award—* Sudhir Kaul, a professor in the School of Engineering and Technology, has received one of the University of North Carolina System’s top awards. He is among the 17 recipients of the UNC Board of Governors Awards for Excellence in Teaching for 2022.

*Engineering Professor Named Resident Scholar for NSF Funded Research—* Martin Tanaka, a professor in the College of Engineering and Technology, has been selected to be a scholar in residence with the US Food and Drug Administration, thanks to a grant from the National Science Foundation.

*College of Education and Allied Professions Faculty Member Receives Award*— Congratulations to April Perry for receiving the 2022 Outstanding Support for Graduate Students Award. She will be recognized at the upcoming 2022 NASPA Conference in Baltimore, Maryland in March.

*Engineering Students Collaborate on Solar Tracking Array*— For a junior design class, three engineering students at Western Carolina University built a solar tracking array. The device finds and tracks the sun to keep solar panels optimally aligned with it as the Earth rotates.

*Track Star Earns Most Outstanding Athlete Honors*— Western Carolina senior Makaila McIntyre earned women’s Most Outstanding Athlete honors by compiling 30 points as the Catamounts completed the 2022 Southern Conference Indoor Championship at VMI’s Corps Physical Training Center.

*Baseball Player on Stopper of the Year Watch List*— Western Carolina redshirt senior reliever Zach Franklin was among 66 players named to the initial watch list for the 17<sup>th</sup> Annual Collegiate Baseball Writers Association (NCBWA) Stopper of the Year Award, which is given to the top relief pitcher in NCAA Division I Baseball.

## **UPCOMING EVENTS**

A few upcoming events to keep in mind as Spring arrives:

- April 6-7: Meeting of the UNC Board of Governors at WCU
- April 7-10: Stage and Screen Spring Musical presentation of “Addams Family”
- April 8-10: African American Alumni Society Reunion
- April 9: Spring Football Scrimmage
- April 11: SGA Inauguration
- April 19-20: Campus Carnival Event (Rescheduled from Homecoming)
- April 27: Bardo Theater aCATemy Awards
- April 29: Faculty and Staff Excellence Awards
- April 30: ICA Prom Party in the UC Grand Room
- May 6-7: Commencement

Thank you for all you do for Western Carolina University!