

## **Provost's Report**

**24 August 2021**

### **Leadership Transitions**

The sudden passing of Dean Jeff Ray earlier this month was a tragedy for our community. We will miss his energy, his dedication to his College, and his commitment to our students. I have asked Dr. Chip Ferguson, who has long served as Associate Dean, to serve as interim Dean for this year. A faculty-led national search will begin soon and a call for nominations and self-nominations for committee meetings was initiated this week.

Dr. Jeff Lawson has served as the Interim Associate Vice Chancellor for Student Success, supervising the WALC, Math Tutoring Center, Retention, MAPS, First Year Experience, and the Office of Accessibility Resources. A search for this position will begin in the coming weeks.

### **Enrollment**

As of the first day of class, total enrollment was down 2.68% (11,967 vs. 12,206 last year). Graduate enrollment was up slightly, as is transfer and distance. Residential undergraduate enrollment is down for both first year and returning students.

### **Land Acknowledgement**

Dr. Ricardo Nazario-Colon (Chief Diversity Officer) and Sky Sampson (Director of the Cherokee Center) are working with Communication to develop a website for the Land Acknowledgement unveiled during the spring commencement. It will include the full text, a shorter version to be used at university meetings' such as Faculty Senate, and guidelines for use.

### **Budget**

The House and the Senate are moving into conference to complete a compromise budget. We hope for a budget in mid-September. We are monitoring the negotiations on all our legislative priorities, including faculty and staff salaries, NC Promise, enrollment growth funds, and capital projects, and are engaging with our legislative delegation.

### **Office of Student Retention**

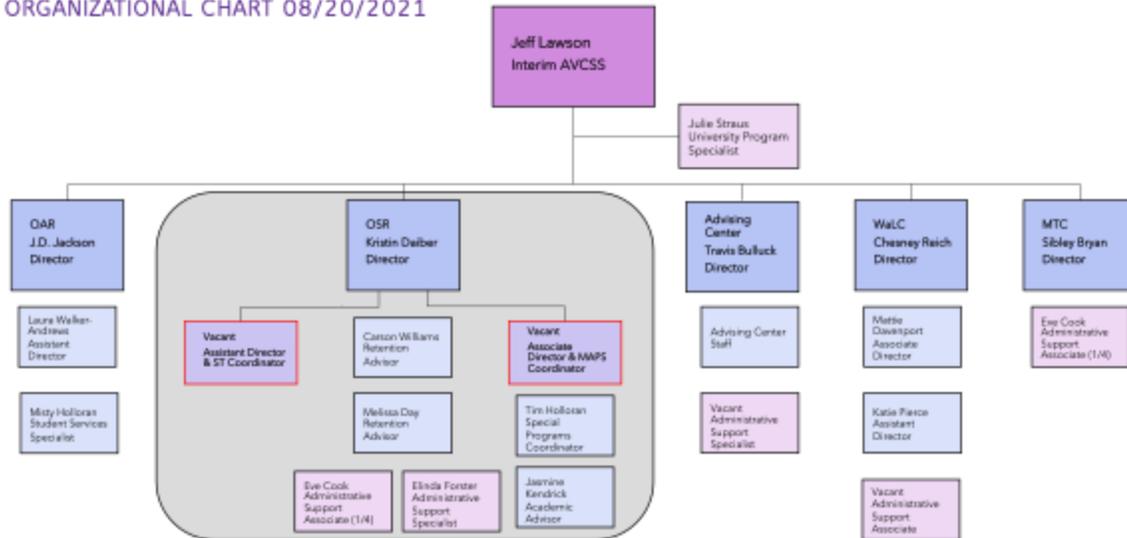
To better coordinate programming, gain operational efficiencies, and enhance support of our students on the path to success, Mentoring and Persistence of Success and the Office of Student Transitions have become part of an expanded Office of Student Retention. The directorships of these two offices are now, respectively,

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

Both positions are vacant, and we are launching national searches for each position. All staff in these offices now report to the Director of Retention. Below is the new organizational chart.

# DIVISION OF STUDENT SUCCESS

ORGANIZATIONAL CHART 08/20/2021



The Office of Student Retention implements targeted advising interventions to support at-risk students, guided by evidence-based high-impact practices and driven by institutional data and analytics. The Office collaborates across campus to coordinate and measure initiatives to support student retention and persistence at Western Carolina University. Mentoring and Persistence to Success focuses on retention efforts for students in particular at-risk categories, including academically underprepared students, first-generation students, emancipated minors, and independent students. Student Transitions focuses on students new to WCU, including first-time first-year freshman and new transfer students. These two offices work closely together with heavy overlap of mission and function.

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

Both the WaLC and the MTC 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 of various liberal studies courses.

### **Canvas Update**

The Canvas implementation and migration is complete, and we are hearing good things from many instructors. Now that Canvas is fully operational, please contact the IT HelpDesk for Canvas questions and issues.

One of the advantages of the Canvas LMS platform is its extensibility, meaning the ability to integrate 3<sup>rd</sup>-party apps to extend the basic platform. The LMS Governance Committee was created in 2020 to have a diverse group of faculty, staff, and administrators review and approve requests for these apps. The process for submitting a request for an integration, along with the integrations that have been approved or denied, can be found at <https://affiliate.wcu.edu/cfc/integrations-Itis-in-canvas/>. Please subscribe to the Faculty tag in InsideWCU to receive our weekly Canvas tips.

**Ouriginal** is a similarity detection solution that combines text-matching with writing-style analysis to promote academic integrity and help prevent plagiarism. This tool is being adopted to replace SafeAssign which was an embedded tool within BlackBoard. SafeAssign is not compatible with Canvas, so WCU needed to find an alternative for academic use. Only students are allowed to submit work to Ouriginal so it also serves as an educational tool.

The LMS team has installed Ouriginal in our Canvas Test environment and are close to pushing it to Production. At this point we are waiting on the vendor to provide the last few pieces necessary for rollout. The Canvas team is pushing for Ouriginal to be available for faculty use by the middle of September. Ouriginal will be offering a couple of trainings open to all faculty. Those training dates and times should be set by next week. There will also be an Ouriginal Knowledge Article available through the IT HelpDesk.

### **TPR update**

We will again use the SharePoint site created last year, with some minor updates, to handle electronic TPR/PTR documentation. Faculty candidates now have access to their individual folders. One thing that we heard from candidates last year was that they missed the opportunity to review the library of example dossiers in the CFC. While those still exist, they don't reflect the nuance of the digital format. We reached out to a number of faculty who went through review last year and they have graciously allowed us to make their materials available as examples. Those examples will be available on the TPR SharePoint site this week. Brandon will also be offering a number of drop-in TPR Q&A sessions over the next several weeks.

If you have not already done so, I ask that departments and colleges confirm their collegial review committee membership and ideally CRC secretary names with Suzanne Melton as soon as possible. There is a significant amount of work that has to be done behind the scenes to set permissions to make this process work, so the sooner we have that information, the better. To

that point, I urge the CRC to work with Brandon this year to explore what a long-term electronic process should look like for TPR.

As for collegial review committee meetings, I anticipate that those will be held in-person, but electronic voting is allowable. Guides for committees and the use of Poll Everywhere will be updated to incorporate any of the minor updates we made to the SharePoint site this year. Those will be available for reviewers on the TPR SharePoint site.

### **Non-tenure track (NTT) faculty promotion**

DCRD revisions incorporating new titles/pathways for promotion have been approved and are being posted to the Provost Office SharePoint site as final signatures are collected from the colleges. Recall that the Senate approved the additional title of Associate Instructor late in the spring semester as an intermediate step between Instructor and Senior Instructor. In some departments, additional updates will be needed in the coming year to incorporate those changes. We are verifying the list of NTT faculty with HR to identify faculty eligible for promotion in the first round of implementation and will share that list with the deans. A guidance document for implementation will be provided to the deans and department heads next month to help guide college-specific processes. We are also analyzing what the budget implications will be for this first round of promotions.

### **Academic Leadership Program**

The Academic and Administrative Leadership Program will commence in January 2022 with two cohorts of eight each—faculty and administrators—for a total of 16 participants. The academic track of the program will provide opportunities for faculty professional development, increase WCU's investment in a “grow our own” experience, and broaden our perspectives as a campus community by having more faculty participation in senior level discussions. The program has tapped faculty who are interested in higher education leadership and advancement.

The program is designed to provide practical and applicable content in becoming an academic leader and will be run concurrently with a similarly structured leadership program for current or aspiring administrative leaders who are not in faculty positions; sessions will be tailored to meet the needs of each group, although some overlap of sessions will occur. Tentative topics for the Academic Leadership track include:

- budget/funding and resources;
- executive leadership perspectives;
- institutional and State/System level governance and structure;
- equity, diversity, inclusion, and justice;
- crisis leadership and conflict management; and
- communication.

### **Haywood County Flood Assistance**

The Center for Community Engagement and Service Learning quickly mobilized to collect and deliver donations for residents of Haywood County who were badly impacted by tropical storm Fred. The second of two deliveries will take place on Monday, August 30<sup>th</sup> at 4:00.

For a list of primary items needed: [CLICK HERE](#)

Drop off donations at the **Center for Community Engagement and Service Learning Lobby area - Belk 273 between 8:00 am - 5:00 pm, Monday – Friday**. The drop off point will be clearly marked by large YELLOW barrels. Contact Dr. Lane Perry at [laneperry@wcu.edu](mailto:laneperry@wcu.edu) if you have questions.

### **Funding Available for Experiential Learning**

Undergraduate Studies currently has funding available to support Intentional and Engaged Learning opportunities for the 2021-2022 academic year. Allocations will primarily support faculty and student activities directly related to intentional, integrative, engaged teaching/learning. The Intentional Learning Plan Grant Applications can be found on the [Office of the Provost SharePoint](#) page as well as the [Academic Enrichment](#) website. The three primary applications are:

- Intentional Learning Plan Grant Application
- Intentional Learning - Conference Presentation/Student Travel Application
- Intentional Learning - Non-Conference Student Travel Application

Undergraduate Studies also has funding available for programs and events related to this year's [campus theme](#): *Water*. *Water* seeks to engage the campus community in immersive and intellectual experiences to explore the topic of water through myriad lenses (economic, political, educational, cultural, geographic, environmental, and others) and to heighten our understanding of how it impacts us, our region, our nation, and our world. For more information about the campus theme, or to submit a request for support please visit [go.wcu.edu/campustheme](http://go.wcu.edu/campustheme).