Audrey Greene was surprised in 1982 when, standing in line at the World’s Fair in Tennessee, strangers asked her to talk again so they could hear her “Southern drawl.” “There were a lot of people from a lot of countries there with a lot of different dialects, and it was sort of odd that they picked out ours,” said Greene, who has spent her life in Haywood and Jackson counties. “I guess you kind of think at first that because you talk this way and understand what other people are saying that they are talking just like you are.”

Studying how sensitive listeners are to differences in how vowels are pronounced in different dialects is part of the next phase of a research study led by The Ohio State University and taking place, in part, at Western Carolina University. The project was designed to compare dialects in Western North Carolina, Central Ohio and Wisconsin, and changes in dialect from generation to generation. Greene was one of more than 200 participants, ranging in age from 8 to 93, who came to Western Carolina’s speech and hearing center to participate in the first phase. She and others were recorded as they pronounced words such as “head” and “hide,” read sentences and told a story of their own choosing.

WCU recently received a $15,000 grant to continue with the perception phase of the study, which was initially funded by a $1.8 million grant from the National Institutes of Health. Participants will listen through a headset to words and record their responses on a computer. Janaye Houghton, a speech-language pathologist serving as a research associate for the project at WCU, is currently searching for volunteers to participate in the study who are lifelong residents of Western North Carolina between the ages of 9 and 13, and age 50 and older.

“One of the goals is to see whether language is changing here, and language development processes in general,” said Robert Fox, professor and chair of speech and hearing science at Ohio State. The results of the research project could help improve standardized tests for speech and hearing or improve voice recognition systems that understand spoken commands such as “voice mail” or “yes.” Another benefit is simply the historical preservation of how people speak in a region, the researchers said.

“We’ve constructed a corpus of spoken utterances – the largest corpus of spoken American English to date,” said Ewa Jacewicz, principal investigator and research scientist at Ohio State. “The collection can be used worldwide for speech research, speech-language pathology, dialectologists and linguists.”

What researchers also found interesting, in addition to analyzing the different sound waves, were the topics participants chose to talk about when invited to tell a story. While many child participants native to Ohio and Wisconsin chose to talk about school or sports, participants in Western North Carolina talked about their grandparents or church. “I heard about a lot of hound dogs, hunting and fishing, and family,” said Houghton. “Some talked about instruments or music – the banjo, bass fiddle or guitar. They were asked to talk for three to five minutes, but frankly there were times I just couldn’t turn the recording off and just kept listening.”

Participants have been very interested in the results of the study, she said. In fact, one who is a student at Smoky Mountain High School, Jessica Masters, approached Houghton about working with her on a dialect study for her senior project. “I always loved to listen to my grandparents and their dialect, and I noticed it when I volunteered at a nursing home, too,” said Masters, who is considering attending WCU next year. “I’m fascinated.”

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With Gallery Space

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Chancellor Discusses Possible Impact of Economic Downturn on N.C., WCU

Chancellor John W. Bardo convened a town hall meeting Tuesday, Nov. 11, to discuss the impact of the economic downturn on the state of North Carolina and Western Carolina University.

Statewide, revenues are about $300 million behind projections — a significant deficit for the first time, said Bardo. The University of North Carolina General Administration has asked institutions including WCU to prepare for a 5 percent "hold back" this year and permanent budget reductions of 1 to 6 percent for next year.

Strategies to implement this year's budget cuts, which are not permanent cuts, include delaying capital allocation of enrollment growth funding, and equipment purchases; reversing a portion of lapsed salaries; implementing additional utility conservation; restricting travel; and reducing operating budgets by about $590,000.

Bardo said deans, vice chancellors and directors will help make decisions regarding permanent budget cuts, and members of the university community will be asked for their input. The university's strategic planning committee's recommended budget priorities include developing the university's brand and image; supporting program infrastructure, compliance, business processes, diversity, initiatives and selected programs that support engagement; implementing the university's Quality Enhancement Plan; and recruiting and retaining students.

"We will try to focus less on across-the-board cuts and more on minimizing disruption to core university functions," said Bardo. "We will keep you informed as we know more about the plans and about the magnitude of the state's budget issues."

The town hall meeting about the budget from the chancellor's "updates and speeches" Web site, located at www.wcu.edu/364.asp.

Celebrating Global Experiences at International Education Week

Western Carolina will host a gamelan concert, "Osthuasen," an Italian movie, an online photo exhibit and informational presentations about WCU’s academic global opportunities during International Education Week, which is Nov. 17-21. The festivities recently kicked off with the induction ceremony for Phi Beta Delta, an honor society recognizing scholarly achievement in international education, and the formal Globall Dance.

Developed as a joint initiative of the U.S. Department of State and U.S. Department of Education, International Education Week is an annual event celebrated across the country and beyond, and WCU is excited to participate again this year, said Kevin Childers, a student services assistant with the Office of International Programs and Services.

"We want to encourage everyone to think about our global community and to learn more about the many related opportunities available to them here at WCU," said Childers. "We are particularly encouraging more WCU faculty to consider leading an international trip."

Jane Nichols, assistant professor of interior design, led her first trip abroad last summer to Russia and Sweden "because when I was there a couple years ago, I kept thinking, 'Wow! My students have to see this!' From the austerity of Lenin's tomb in the Kremlin to the opulence of the Winter Palace and Peterhof, there were incredible extremes in design, cultural values and student input."

"We want to encourage everyone to think about our global community and to learn more about the many related opportunities available to them here at WCU," said Childers. "We are particularly encouraging more WCU faculty to consider leading an international trip."

Childers, a student services assistant with the Office of International Programs and Services, said WCU encourages students to travel abroad to see the world, experience new cultures and interact with people from all over the globe. "We think about our global community and the many related opportunities available to them here at WCU," said Childers. "We are particularly encouraging more WCU faculty to consider leading an international trip."
Ron Rash Wins Thomas Wolfe Award for Short Story Collection ‘Chemistry’

Ron Rash, the Parris Distinguished Professor of Appalachian Culture, is recipient of the 2008 Thomas Wolfe Memorial Literary Award for his compilation of short stories “Chemistry and Other Stories.”

The honor was announced at the annual meeting of the Western North Carolina Historical Association. The Wolfe Award has been presented since 1955 to honor authors of printed works that focus special attention on Western North Carolina. Gwin Jones of Asheville, chairwoman of the association’s Wolfe Award committee, said the stories in Rash’s book “have the power of ancient myths,” adding that the committee recognized the collection “as a worthy recipient of an award named for Thomas Wolfe.”

Earlier this year, “Chemistry and Other Stories” earned Rash a nomination as one of four finalists for the PEN/Faulkner Award, the largest peer-juried prize for fiction in the United States. Published in 2007 by Picador, the collection also was named one of 15 “notable books” of 2007 by The Story Prize committee. While his short stories have been drawing accolades, Rash’s fourth novel, “Serena,” published by Harper-Collins Press in September, has been garnering glowing reviews in the national media. In the New York Times, reviewer Janet Maslin wrote that “for those unfamiliar with the elegantly fine-tuned voice of this Appalachian poet and storyteller, a writer whose reputation has been largely regional despite an O. Henry Prize and other honors, (‘Serena’) will prompt instant interest in his first, second and third” novels.

Another Rash novel, “The World Made Straight,” earned him the Sir Walter Raleigh Award for 2006 and was named one of the nation’s top 10 books for teenage readers by the Young Adult Library Services Association. His other prize-winning novels include “Saints at the River” and “One Foot in Eden.”

WCU Group Planning Trip to South America for Mapping Project

A WCU faculty member and 10 of her students will use a grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture to travel to South America in early 2009 to work on a project testing the remote sensing applications of a new type of radar satellite technology.

Joni Budgen-Storie, assistant professor of geosciences and natural resources, was awarded a grant of $99,612 to develop a project in cooperation with the University of San Juan in Argentina and the National Institute for Space Research in Brazil to test the use of polarimetric radar data in mapping land use and land cover.

Remote sensing through the use of satellites orbiting the Earth has been going on for about half a century, with one of the most widely known modern examples being the weather satellites that produce images of clouds and storms, Budgen-Storie said. The polarimetric radar, which uses microwave wavelengths emitted from a satellite to “see” through clouds and direct targets on the Earth’s surface, has been in operation only about five years, she said.

To test the radar’s ability to discriminate between different types of ground cover, Joni partners will create land-use/land-cover maps using radar data and on-the-ground observations. The project will focus on three particular areas – the semitemperate forests around Golloweh, the tropical forests of Brazil, and a semi-arid desert in Argentina. The project will test the radar’s applications for detecting land use and land cover for water – quality monitoring in Western North Carolina, to track land-use changes in Argentina, and to find illegal soybean fields in a national park in Brazil, Budgen-Storie said.

Accompanied by Christopher Storie, Budgen-Storie’s husband and a lecturer in geography at WCU, the WCU contingent will be in South America from Feb. 28 through March 14. After arriving in Buenos Aires, Argentina, the group will hold a workshop for governmental staff and university faculty and students to teach them to use the polarimetric radar data to create land-cover/land-use maps. Then, the WCU contingent will travel to San Juan, Argentina, to collect field observations in the Tiudum Valley with faculty and students from the University of San Juan. At the same time, the orbiting RADARSAT-2 Earth observation satellite will collect data from the same area so that participants can compare the findings from field collections and the radar data to create maps.

The WCU group will travel to San Paolo, Brazil, to conduct another workshop before returning home. Some of the students who will go on the trip are currently taking a new course, “Land Suitability Classification,” to learn to perform field collection for mapping with radar remote sensing data. During the spring semester, all 10 students will learn how to make land-use/land-cover maps using software and radar satellite data in another new course, “Advanced Remote Sensing.”

The skills gained by the students involved in the project will help them be better prepared to address resource conservation and management issues after they graduate and begin working in Western North Carolina, Budgen-Storie said. The type of work the WCU students are engaged in is not being done anywhere else in North Carolina, she said.

— By RANDALL HOLCOMBE

Ron Rash Wins Thomas Wolfe Award for Short Story Collection ‘Chemistry’

Brandon Tigue joined the staff at Western Carolina University in October 2007 as assistant director of admission. Acting as the diversity coordinator and minority recruiter for Western, Tigue helps develop diversity-building experiences for incoming students in the Experience Western program and events designed to give prospective students a sneak peak of what their experience would be like at WCU.

Tigue, a native of Honolulu, earned his bachelor’s degree in communication, specializing in broadcast and studio work, from Western Carolina.

The Reporter: What was your favorite childhood game?

Tigue: Hide and seek. I was good at it, which may surprise some people. I was quick, and I could hide in all kinds of places.

The Reporter: How did you become interested in working for the Office of Admission?

Tigue: I really enjoyed my time here as a student. Plus, I have a friend working in student activities who encouraged me. I guess the other reason was because I was in a TRIO program in high school that motivated me to go to college. Growing up in a single-parent home, I needed the extra support because my mom was busy working and taking care of us. I always wanted to help others have opportunities to go to college. I just want to give back.

The Reporter: What has been one of your best experiences when working with diversity issues?

Tigue: During the summer, an African-American family drove up to Western because the daughter wanted to apply here. On the drive, though, they saw a Confederate flag in the local area, which created some concern. I spent the whole day with them once they arrived, showing them around the campus. The daughter was excited about the band, so we looked around in the band area. Now, she’s excited about Western again, and she will be attending in January.

The Reporter: What are some misunderstandings surrounding diversity?

Tigue: When people hear the word “diversity,” they usually think black. But did you know there have been more than one color? Diversity includes everyone, and it’s not always people of color. It includes all races, cultures and backgrounds.

The Reporter: What’s your sense of what the greatest challenges are facing diversity today?

Tigue: First, the media. A lot of students, the newer generations, play off the media. Some students try to keep an edge about being a minority because it’s broadcasted through the media. But, for example, you can’t talk slang all the time.

Second, we need to start discussing college at an earlier age. College is brought up during high school, but it needs to be discussed in elementary and middle school. A lot of minority students come from first-generation families, and I have to help them. I help the students and their families understand the importance of succeeding in college.

The Reporter: What do you hope to achieve in your current position?

Tigue: I’d like to help people understand the true meaning of diversity and implement more cultural training into our office. Students need to be encouraged to create more events to invite students of color up to events like Experience Western, which turned out great. It gave our potential students a taste of college life. I was able to help them and supported the event did a wonderful job.

The Reporter: What’s your personal motto?

Tigue: I’m not sure this counts, but what I always think of is lyrics from ‘Tha Carter III’s’ “Misunderstood”: “Misunderstood ain’t gotta be explained/But you don’t understand me so let me explain.”

The Reporter: What is your favorite TV show?

Tigue: “Martin.” It’s my show. The jokes make me laugh all day.

Museum Invites Employees to Enjoy Art and Refreshments

Earlier this semester, the Fine Art Museum launched a “Third Thursday” event, a wine and cheese social from 5 to 6 p.m. in the Fine Art Museum, adjacent to the Fine Art Museum, in the Fine and Performing Arts Center.

The event is free, and faculty, staff and community members are welcome.

The final Third Thursday of the fall semester is Nov. 20. Artwork on exhibit at the museum will include “Living with the Enemy” by Donna Ferrato, a series of black-and-white photographs that document domestic abuse in the United States. An accompanying exhibit, “Healing and Art,” will be on display in the Star Lobby.

For more information, call Hillary Brett, assistant curator of the Fine Art Museum, at 227-5591.
Library Finds Niche as Cultural Center and QEP Resource

The university’s newest art gallery isn’t where you might expect. It’s not in the Fine Art Museum, the School of Art and Design, or even A.K. Hind’s University Center. It’s on the second floor of Hunter Library.

An exhibit called “Phases of Currency,” a series of prints by art education associate professor Erin Tapley, is on display now at the new Second Floor Gallery. “Before, this was just an empty hallway,” said Alexis Zanin-Yost, reference librarian and the woman behind the new gallery, as she gestured toward the 20 colorful, framed works.

Other current exhibits include an exhibition about William Bartram, the 18th-century botanist and explorer. An election-related student art exhibit came down just after Election Day. Associate English professor Marsha Lee Baker had her students fill three cases near the library’s entrance with a literature-related project. In 2007, second-graders from Callowhee Valley School exhibited projects related to Black History Month, which brought many community members to the library.

And next year, professor James Conant’s biology students will create an exhibit for a basement space to acknowledge the 200th anniversary of the birth of Charles Darwin. Zanin-Yost, chair of the library’s display committee, is on a mission to fill the library’s blank spaces with art and exhibits by Western Carolina students and faculty. “In doing so, Zanin-Yost said, the library is establishing itself as key component of the university’s Quality Enhancement Plan, which emphasizes synthesized educational experiences, engagement with community, and an intentional path of learning that considers students’ post-collegiate goals.

Students who exhibit their works in the library must synthesize what they have learned in order to relate to the inside world, she said. Their displays often require them to cross curriculums; Zanin-Yost, for example, requires artists statements to accompany the art displays. The result of the increased quality and number of library displays, Zanin-Yost said, is that campus and community members are beginning to consider the library a cultural center.

Ten students from associate art professor Marya Roland’s beginning sculpture class recently spent an afternoon in the library arranging their original works of sculpture made from books, which will be on display through the end of the semester. Students approached the project in different ways. One sculpture made a political statement, with a Democratic donkey rising from its pages. Another was ironic, transforming hardback books into a book light. Another was playful, re-creating three dimensions an illustration from within the book’s pages.

Second-year graduate student Megan Woods, who created a hanging book sculpture, said exhibiting in the library would allow more people to view the student artwork than if it remained in the art building. “It’s more of a communal building than the art building,” Woods said.

The library is a “perfect place for this kind of assignment,” which required students to alter and disassemble books — taboo in this culture, Roland said. The art students have the benefit of a new exhibit space, and library patrons have the opportunity to “come into the library and see something they wouldn’t ordinarily see,” she said.

According to a soon-to-be-published history of the College of Fine and Performing Arts by Christopher Bishop, a graduate student in history, Hunter Library has a long history of serving as a place for WCU students to experience the arts.

“After the completion of Hunter Library in 1953, faculty and students frequently exhibited there than if it remained in the art building. “It’s more of a communal building than the art building,” Woods said.

The inaugural Faculty Scholarship Recognition Week, coordinated by Hunter Library, the Office of Undergraduate Studies, the Honors College, and Graduate and School Research, will be the week of Feb. 18. It is an effort to showcase all forms of faculty scholarship, including books, articles, display panels, sculpture and musical compositions.

Areas of the library will be reserved for distinct disciplines or categories of scholarship.

Placing faculty scholarship on display in the library will counter the fragmented nature of recognition, which until now has happened mostly within individual colleges, said Scott Higgins, dean of WCU’s Graduate School and Research. Prior to this coordinated effort, there has been “no real visibility on campus,” Higgins said.

A reception for Faculty Scholarship Recognition Week will be held at 4 p.m. Wednesday, Feb. 18, on the library’s mezzanine level.

By JILL INGRAM

Four QEP Grants Announced, Applications Open for Spring

Four faculty members have been awarded $750 Quality Enhancement Plan Development Grants this fall from the Office of the Provost to support projects connected to implementation of the QEP: “Synthesis: A Pathway to Intentional Learning.”

• Glenda Hensley, assistant professor of psychology, is applying for funding to help with expenses for the Theatre in Education project. The grant will help cover the cost of program elements, publicity and touring expenses connected with this year’s program, in which students create an educational, theatrical production and perform the show for area schools.

• Ben R. Tanner, assistant professor of geology, is applying for funding for an integrative geology field trip. The grant paid for bus transportation and geological maps for a field trip to Great Smoky Mountains National Park. Nearly three dozen students who are enrolled in “Methods in Geology,” the first course required of geology majors, spent Saturday, Nov. 8, at the park applying what they learned in the classroom.

• Janey Zanglstein, assistant professor of business law, applied for funding intended to expand the student-led Campus Mediation Program. The grant will help pay for banners, fliers and brochures as part of a publicity campaign for the program, which offers free mediation for disputes between students. In addition, the grant will cover travel costs for a student case coordinator from the program to attend the spring conference of the American Bar Association Section of Dispute Resolution in New York. Increasing the number of mediation experiences for students will help students improve skills such as negotiation and time management, as they work on real-world projects, and the experience will help prepare them for the comprehensive capstone virtual law office class or other mediation experiences. Senior business law majors Chris Sonci from Candler and Ashley Brabec from Bryson City wrote the QEP grant proposal under Zanglein’s supervision and worked with Walter Turner, director of the student community ethics department, to develop the concept.

Applications for spring QEP grants will be accepted through Friday, Jan. 30.

Details and grant applications can be accessed from the Web site www.wcu.edu/10935.asp.

For more information, contact Carol Burton, assistant vice chancellor for academic studies and QEP project director, at 227-7497 or burtonc@wcu.edu.
Monday, Nov. 17
Concert — University Chorus, Early Music Ensemble and the Concert Choir. 8 p.m. RH. (227-7242)

Monday, Nov. 17-Friday, Nov. 21
International Education Week — Sponsored by International Programs and Services. (227-3455)

Tuesday, Nov. 18
Chancellor’s Speaker Series — Forensic anthropologist Kathy Reichs, author of the novels that inspired the TV series “Bones.” 7:30 p.m. FAPAC. Free, tickets required. (227-2479)

Catamount Concert Series — Jazz Ensemble. 8 p.m. RH. (227-7242)

Wednesday, Nov. 19
Visiting artist — Art Rosenbaum, painter, muralist, illustrator, collector, and performer of traditional American folk music. 4-6 p.m. Room 130, FAPAC. (227-3599)

Thursday, Nov. 20
“Electronic Records and Employment Law” — Electronic documents and the law, social networking. Web pages, e-mail policies, instant messaging and text messaging in the workplace. 9 a.m.-12:30 p.m. Room 143, CCB. $ (1800) 928-4968

Third Thursdays at the Fine Art Museum — Wine and cheese social. 5-6 p.m. Star Lobby. FAPAC. (227-3591)

Friday, Nov. 21
University Club TGF — For members and their guests. 5 p.m. UClubhouse, Central Drive. $ (227-3933)

Movie — “Tropic Thunder.” 5 p.m. and 9 p.m. UC theater. $ (227-7479)

Kids Climb — For children of students, faculty and staff. 6-8 p.m. Climbing wall, CRC. $ (227-3633)

Galaxy of Stars Series — “It’s a Wonderful Life: A Live Radio Play,” set in a radio station circa 1946. 7:30 p.m. FAPAC. $ (227-2479)

Saturday, Nov. 22
Movie — “Tropic Thunder.” 5 p.m. and 9 p.m. UC theater. $ (227-7479)

EXHIBITS
Fine Art Museum

“Living with the Enemy” — Photographs documenting domestic abuse by New York photographer Donna Ferrato. Through Nov. 22.


School of Art and Design BFA Student Portfolio Exhibition — Creative research and studio art production from graduating students. Through Nov. 22.


Hours: 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Tues., Wed. and Fri., 10 a.m.-6 p.m. Thurs. and 1-4 p.m. Sat. (http://fapac.wcu.edu or 227-3591)

Mountain Heritage Center


“Migration of the Scotch-Irish People” — Story of the Scotch-Irish Appalachian settlers in WNC. Permanent exhibit. Gallery A.

“New Threads on Old Patterns” — Slideshow spotlight, November.

Hours: 8 a.m.-5 p.m. Mon.-Fri. (www.wcu.edu/mhc or 227-7129)

Hunter Library

“Bartram’s Journey” — The 18th century botanist’s life and observations. Through December, ground floor. (227-3398)

“Phases of Currency” — Original artwork by Erin Whittier; and late feminist Hollis Sigler of Chicago. Star Lobby, FAPAC. Through Nov. 22.

Hours: 8 a.m.-5 p.m. Mon.-Fri. (http://lib.wcu.edu or 524-3405)

Huntersville, Nov. 29-24
Hard Candy — Christmas arts and crafts show. 10 a.m.-5 p.m. RRAC. $ (524-3405)

Wednesday, Nov. 26- Friday, Nov. 28
Thanksgiving holiday — No classes meet. Offices closed Nov. 27-28. (227-7495)

Frack, Nov. 28
University Club TGIF — For members and their guests: 5 p.m. UClubhouse, Central Drive. $ (227-3933)

Friday, Nov. 28
University Club TGIF — For members and their guests: 5 p.m. UClubhouse, Central Drive. $ (227-3933)

Friday, Nov. 28, and Saturday, Nov. 29
Hard Candy — Christmas arts and crafts show. 10 a.m.-5 p.m. RRAC. $ (524-3405)