



Faculty Forum

from the Coulter Faculty Commons
for Excellence in Teaching and Learning

Volume 27
Number 1

Welcome to the new school year and the new Faculty Forum. The WCU *Faculty Forum* is a vehicle for faculty conversation published each month by the Coulter Faculty Commons. It was first published in October, 1988, and while the original purpose was to “spark a lively dialogue about college teaching,” the issues addressed often went far beyond the classroom.

Yes, we are teachers, and that is our main job. But the triumvirate of teaching, research and service make up our work. Then there’s the elusive 4th leg -- collegiality. It’s one of those “hard to define but we know it when we see it” things. We are teachers, but we are more than teachers.

I am fortunate to have taken the college teaching route for my career. Teaching for 26 years at WCU and at Warren Wilson College for many years before, has afforded me a lifestyle where my life and work are fused. I have loved teaching, enjoyed my students tremendously, and rarely been bored with my work. A big part of that joy in my work has come from relations with colleagues across the campus.

Faculty can be isolated, maintaining office hours, being immersed in their scholarly activities, teaching classes, and doing the required service. Or they can branch out and get involved in the life of the University, get to know other faculty and staff from across the campus. And they have the opportunity to engage in lively dialogue about their work at WCU.

The new Faculty Forum is one way to do that.

The first issue of the Faculty Forum this year is “36 Hours in Greater Cullowhee.” It is about living and working in Cullowhee and the surrounding area. It is an update of a forum published a few years ago.. While it’s not a controversial piece about a hot topic, there is an important sub-text. It seems as if more and more of WCU’s faculty and staff forego the opportunity to live close to campus, which can result in a decline in the sense of community on campus. Coupled with the loss of the Mad Batter, Rolling Stone Burrito and Subway, natural places for conversation, and the increase in distance learning, our 125 year old campus is changing in unpredictable ways.

I hope you will take the opportunity to read and write for the new Faculty Forum. This year we are going to change the structure to allow for themed pieces and debates written by several faculty as well as the traditional format of opinion pieces followed by responses. And we are bringing a limited number of printed copies back, at least till we gauge readership; you can also access this issue electronically [at this link](#).

While you’re thinking about your potential contributions to the Faculty Forum, take a look at the 26 years of back issues. They are listed on the Coulter Faculty Commons website on [publications](#), with the most recent years’ posted on a [Wiki](#).

Now, enjoy the first issue of the 2014-2015 school year, “36 Hours in Greater Cullowhee.” I’ll be editing it this year, and I look forward to lively faculty conversations. Send me (mherzog@wcu.edu) ideas about the topics, concerns and issues you would like it to address this year.

Sincerely, Mary Jean R. Herzog

Welcome to Greater Cullowhee!

36 Hours in Greater Cullowhee (a knock-off of the NYT travel column)

**By Mary Jean Ronan Herzog
School of Teaching and Learning**

As we approach WCU’s 125th anniversary, it’s time to revisit the Cullowhee of today. In 1889, families in the Cullowhee Valley hired James Lee Madison to teach their children. He called his mission “The Cullowhee Idea.” You can read about WCU’s history in books, archives and on the web. The [website dedicated to the celebration of this anniversary](#) is a good place to start!

What is “The Cullowhee Idea” today? Cullowhee is an unincorporated town in [Jackson County, NC](#), with the WCU campus as its geographic center. Driving along U.S. 107, past the high rock walls of Catamount Gap, suddenly the campus rises from the valley floor, surrounded by the high ridges of the Black Balsams and Blue Ridge Mountains.

What is there to do if you reside in Greater Cullowhee? Campus cultural events inform and entertain you, but there’s more to Greater Cullowhee than WCU. As the Western North Carolina region becomes increasingly touristy, Cullowhee and the surrounding area offer space to breathe, especially in outdoor recreation. Let me steal from the NYT travel column ‘*36 Hours in...*’ and describe a few things to do when you live near WCU. Following this log, several of our faculty contributed information on specific recreational opportunities.

Friday.

1. 6:30 or 8:00 a.m. Workout. The Jackson County Recreation Center in Cullowhee ([JCRC](#)) is a good place to start your day. From youth programs through senior fitness, from the Greenways Project to county parks, there are [opportunities](#) for all ages. The JCRC has classes throughout the day and evening, and the low membership fee includes use of the facility and all classes. The Center is only a couple of miles from campus, and it’s a modern facility in a beautiful setting surrounded by mountains with playgrounds, soccer and ball fields. It’s right behind Cullowhee Valley School, and parents can drop their children off in time for the 7:55 step aerobics class. Those who attend the 6:30 yoga classes meet in the dark, and they can watch the moon setting over the Plott Balsams as their sun salutation welcomes the morning light.
2. 9:00 or 10:00 a.m. Work. There are plenty of neighborhoods within a 5 mile radius of campus, as well as options for those who want to live in the country. I have lived in a neighborhood adjacent to campus -- three minutes by car or 10 minutes by foot from my office – for 26 years. I appreciate this ‘commute’ every time I leave the house 10 minutes before my next appointment and get there on time with a few minutes to spare. In the past, I would park at the Methodist Church and stop by the *Mad Batter* or *Cat’s Nip Café* for a cup of coffee and a homemade muffin or breakfast. Sadly, a fire destroyed those vibrant shops in November, 2013.

3. Noon. Lunch in Cullowhee. It's always nice to be able to go home for lunch, but there are several options if you want to eat out. For a quick hot dog, you might want to stop at Bob's, or you can head to downtown Cullowhee to *Tuck's Grill*, the *Cullowhee Café* (the oldest restaurant in town at 40+ years), or for Latin fare, *Sazon*. Keep an eye out for some new food trucks on campus in the near future.
4. 3:00 p.m. Slump. Time to take a walk. The entire campus is good for walking, running and connecting with colleagues and students. If you walk between Killian and McKee, you'll see parents waiting for the school bus to drop their children off from Cullowhee Valley School. It reminds me of my own children – now grown – coming to my office after school, meeting their friends, doing their homework, or getting in trouble for skateboarding on the brick walks and ledges.

To celebrate WCU's 125th anniversary, students in Jessie Swigger's Introduction to Public History class created an historic walking trail in collaboration with George Frizzell in Special Collections and Peter Koch at the Mountain Heritage Center. The class selected 18 sites that document the university's rich and diverse history including its physical expansion and growth and changes in WCU's social life. Check it out with this [campus walking trail brochure](#).

Or, on a pretty, warm day, a short drive south from campus takes you to East LaPorte Park on the Tuckasegee River, where people are wading, playing with their dogs or shooting baskets on the courts. Cullowhee is one of the many areas of NC that has a changing cultural landscape, and it's not uncommon to see large groups of people of color at the parks or recreation center playing ball after school and on the weekends.

5. 5:00 p.m. TGIF! Shut your computer down, close your office door and head over to the old part of campus to Moore Hall for the [U Club's](#) weekly wind-down. It's a good place to catch up on the latest campus news and chatter. The UClub also holds special monthly events like the Gourmet Microbrew Tasting and the Chili Cook-off. It is open to all faculty and staff and charges a \$30 per semester membership fee. Members may bring guests.
6. 7:00 p.m. On Friday evening, step out into the Greater Cullowhee area for dinner at one of the many restaurants in Downtown Sylva. From May to December, you can join the crowd for the Art Stroll on the second Friday of each month. The art galleries and shops are open late for strollers who can enjoy a glass of wine, nibble on some munchies, and chat with friends.

Saturday.

7. 9:00 a.m. Outdoor Recreation and Exercise. There are tons of outdoor things to do, and you probably know that WCU was just voted the [#1 Top Outdoor Adventure School](#) in the Southeast and Mid-Atlantic states by [Blue Ridge Outdoors Magazine](#). All around Cullowhee, you'll see bikers biking, runners

running and walkers walking on tracks around the JCRC, WCU campus and adjacent roads. You might see swimmers swimming in the Tuck above the Cullowhee dam. For indoor exercise, go back to the [JCRC](#) for circuit training, hooping and pilates classes (check out the [schedule](#) for times and other options).

8. 10:00 a.m. Shopping. Most necessities and amenities are available between Cullowhee and Dillsboro. There are far too many businesses to name them all in this short space, but you can go to the *Town of Sylva* and [Visit Dillsboro](#) websites for a complete list.

Produce. The [Jackson County Farmer's Market](#) at the Bridge Park in downtown Sylva is a great place to start your weekend shopping. It's the place to get early greens, garlic and cut flowers, visit with friends, renew acquaintances and see what's on the schedule of the week. You can get fresh produce, eggs and assorted homemade foods at Terry's Produce, a stand just down the street from town, every day of the week.

Seafood. [Eric's Fresh Fish Market](#), on Mill Street, has been providing fresh seafood for several years. It's open Thursday day through Saturday, and there's usually a short line. You can also order by email earlier in the week.

Coffee, Tea and Baked Goods. From Signature Brew to City Lights Café to Perk and Pastry, downtown Sylva has plenty of pick-me-ups. As you head back out of town, take note of Coffee Shop, which provides tasty food at reasonable prices!

Book Lovers. There are plenty of books in Greater Cullowhee - Hunter Library, the Jackson County Library, Friends of the Library Used Bookstore, and [City Lights Bookstore](#). City Lights, is an indy where you can trade your used copies for credit, buy new books or place an order and attend regularly scheduled events, readings, and signings. Treat yourself to a special outing at [Harry Alter Books](#) for used scholarly and rare books, recently relocated to Sylva's Main Street.

9. 6:00 p.m. After a busy day that may have included a 5K for 'Girls on the Run,' a track meet, baseball game or litter pick-up and landscaping on Old Cullowhee Road with CuRvE, the Cullowhee Revitalization Endeavor, it's time to relax at home with friends who are coming over for dinner.

Your 36 hour tour of Greater Cullowhee over, now it's time think about adventures for next weekend. WCU's win as the "Top Outdoor Adventure School" is well-deserved. There's great hiking, fishing, biking and paddling on campus or just a few minutes away. There's also plenty for kids to do, and for faculty after work. Read on to see what faculty say about recreation in Cullowhee. As you can see there's plenty to do in Cullowhee, so enjoy!

Hiking by Maurice Phipps, Parks and Recreation

Cullowhee is nestled in the Blue Ridge Mountains next to the Great Smokies and so is surrounded by many hiking areas. Within a short time you could be in a wilderness area like Shining Rock, Ellicott Rock, recreational areas like the Nantahala National Forest, National Parks – both the Great Smoky Mountains National Park and the Blue Ridge Parkway, as well as the Wild and Scenic River trails of the Chattooga or

National Scenic trails like the Appalachian Trail. Don't forget the State Parks! Gorges State Park is just over the hill near Sapphire.

Closer to home we have trails in Pinnacle Park and to Black Rock both of which overlook Sylva. Just up 107, Panthertown Valley is full of cliffs, waterfalls and overlooks. Over 281 there are short and long hikes to more waterfalls like Paradise Falls (there are two), the Bonas Defeat Gorge for a more exciting challenge and Dismal Falls. Dismal Falls – we have wondered about the name as it is anything but dismal and is actually one of the most spectacular hiking experiences in the region as it is like dropping into the “Lost World” when you climb down onto the ledge beneath the massive cliff there. (Dismal Falls is recommended only with someone who knows the way.)

These are just some examples – there are many more trails and wild areas to test your hiking and navigation skills or to just enjoy a stroll. Right in Cullowhee once the footbridge over the Tuck is finished, we have the new greenway from Locust Creek to Monteith Gap and new trails on the Millennium Campus. You don't have to go far from Cullowhee to use those hiking boots.

Biking by Chris Cooper, Political Science and Public Affairs

Cullowhee is arguably the best place in the country to ride bikes. Probably for this reason, it's not unusual to see professional cyclists like George Hincapie on the Blue Ridge Parkway less than 20 miles from campus. Our own faculty and staff are chock full of cyclists—from the exceptional (like Darby Harris and Josh Whitmore), to the recreational (too many to name). Some exclusively road bike, while others stay solely on the fat tires, but most of us enjoy both the trails and the roads—and Cullowhee has both to offer.

If you want an easy, but pretty spin on the road bike, you can take off from campus, head over the Cullowhee airport (that's not the easy part), then down and wind your way next to the Tuckasegee River toward Dillsboro. When you get to Dillsboro, just get on the opposite side of River Road and work your way back to Cullowhee. A slightly harder, but beautiful ride would have you heading over toward Caney Fork to the end and back. If you're really feeling like a bigger workout, be sure to try the Ring of Fire--a ride beginning with a grueling climb up Cullowhee Mountain and ending with an exhilarating rocket-ship ride down Tilley Creek Rd. If the 40 mile, 4700' of climbing is not enough, you can always head to the Blue Ridge Parkway through Tuckasegee and tackle the 72 mile, 7500' of climbing aptly named Ring of Hades.

If riding off road is your thing, you can head right out of campus up Wayahutta Rd (which is, oddly, pronounced like "Wurryhut") towards the ATV park where you'll find dozens of difficult, but fun trails. Even closer to home (how wonderful is it that we have a campus where the Wayahutta ride is considered “far”), we have an amazing trail system right here on campus. The WCU trail system has entrance points (trail head in mountain bike lingo) at HSS, NCCAT, and near the Cullowhee airport. This trail system has increased my time on the mountain bike—and made my lunches a lot muddier than they used to be. If you don't mind a short drive, we're only about 30 minutes away from the renowned trails at Tsali and about an hour from the fast, family-friendly trails of Jackrabbit.

If all of this riding takes its toll on your bike, you can just wheel it down to Motion Makers Bike Shop in Sylva where they can work on your bike and give you tips on the next hill to climb. While you're waiting on your tune-up, you may want to visit Innovation Brewery, Heinzelmännchen Brewery, or the (soon to open) Sneaky Squirrel brewery for a terrific post-ride beer (totally gratuitous and unnecessary beer references, I know, but there's no beer section of this guide, so hopefully you'll forgive me--after all, the Sylva/Dillsboro metroplex has more breweries per capita than beer city USA).

Childrens' Activities by Libby McRae, History

For my children, the problem is too much to do - not too little - and much of that (school included) can occur within 10 minutes of campus. They can swim, fish or tube on Caney Fork Creek or the Tuckasegee, visit East LaPorte Park, play soccer, ride their bikes, or play disc golf at the Jackson County Recreation Center. The Recreation Center also offers exercise classes and the weight room for high school students, First Aid and CPR certification, outdoor education programs and recreation league sports including skiing and snowboarding. The Jackson County Swim team practices year around. The new hiking, biking, and running trails on campus (and the soon-to-open Locust Creek greenway) provide additional hours of outdoor fun, and a new grant-funded and community built state of the art playground opens at Cullowhee Valley School in late August.

Beyond the great outdoors, there are dance, karate, and art classes in Sylva and music and yoga classes in Cullowhee. A family can catch dinner and a movie downtown at the Mad Batter. On Saturday mornings, younger children can attend Art in the Park, reading programs at City Lights or at the Jackson County Library. And the Library also has a series of evening activities for teens. They can visit the Curriculum Center at Hunter Library. The Community Table, the Community Garden, as well as The Christmas Store, the Hospital Auxiliary, and various church youth organizations offer hands-on opportunities for teenagers to make their community a better place. Kids (and adults) can paint pottery in Dillsboro or sell their produce and artwork at Jackson County Farmer's Market. The JAM program involves local musicians who teach banjo, mandolin, guitar, and fiddle in afterschool programs.

In warmer weather, they can hang out at the Sylva Public Pool or attend WCU's camps which range from theater to soccer to outdoor adventure. And if scheduled activities aren't their thing, they can spend their time hunting for morel mushrooms or seek at attitude adjustment at one of the awesome rope swings hidden along the banks of several of the area's creeks or lakes.

"Surf's Up!" WCU and Whitewater Recreation by Hal Herzog, Psychology

Western Carolina University is situated smack in the middle of the world's best whitewater. This is not hyperbole. With a year-round paddling season, dam-controlled rivers that can be turned on with the flick of a switch and levels of difficulty ranging from placid Class II to the terrifying Class V+ rapids of the Upper Raven's Fork, Jackson County is as close to canoe/kayak nirvana as it gets. No wonder [*Backpacker Magazine*](#) named Sylva the best town in America to raise a whitewater family.

A beginner-friendly section of the Tuckasegee River practically flows though campus. One of my favorite spots on the Tuck is The Slab, a "park and play hole" that attracts kayakers from four states. While it's an hour and a half drive for the hotdog Asheville regulars, the Slab is eleven minutes from my office door. (And, yes, I have gone play-boating between classes.)

Admittedly, whitewater sports are not for everyone. (One colleague told me he quit when he realized there are two types of kayaking injuries – shoulder dislocation and death.) But if you think you might want to become a whitewater rat, I recommend taking one of the weekend courses offered by Base Camp Cullowhee or showing up at a free kayak rolling clinic that Base Camp regularly conducts in the toasty waters of Reid Gym.

Keep in mind, however, that whitewater kayaking is the crack cocaine of outdoor recreation. Pretty soon your car will smell like moldy socks and your friends' eyes will glaze over when you launch into yet another

monologue on “aerial loops,” “terminal hydraulics,” and “flat-water cartwheels.” You’ll know you are hooked when it starts to rain and you get a text message that the West Fork is running, and you think, “The hell with tenure. I can finish my critical analysis of the influence of Wittgenstein on the E Street Band later.” Surfs up, dawg! Gotta go...

Fishing by David Claxton, School of Teaching and Learning

Need a break at the end of the day? Why not go fishing? After all, we are the only university in the UNC system that has a trout stream running through the middle of campus.

The 4-5 miles of the delayed harvest section of the Tuck from the bridge over 107 down to the riverside park in Dillsboro is heavily stocked with big trout, and attracts fisherman throughout the Southeast. The river is not too big to make wading difficult, and in most places it’s wide and open enough to make a good cast without getting your fly caught in the rhododendrons. You have to use a single hook and artificial lures in that section of the river, and you have to turn your fish loose, but if you want to pretend you’re starring in *A River Runs Through It*, that’s a pretty cool place to do it.

The rest of the river, from East LaPorte to the 107 bridge at the old Jack the Dipper and from Dillsboro to Fontana Lake is hatchery supported, which means you can keep up to seven fish a day. You can fly fish those waters if you want, but you can also use lures with more than one hook (although Pete Bates in NRM likens that to the use of dynamite to catch fish) or live worms or even corn (yes, yellow sweet corn right out of the can) if you want your 9-year old to have a pretty good chance of catching one just below the Cullowhee dam or somewhere else in the hatchery supported sections.

If you want to go after more “natural” trout, try the upper Tuckasegee around Panthertown or in the streams of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. Those waters require an artificial lure and a single hook, and they take a little more skill than the fish in the Tuck. But if that’s the kind of fishing you’re looking for, you can easily get to Deep Creek on the other side of Bryson City and have a fly in the water before you can get to your house in Asheville.

Miscellaneous Joys of Not Commuting by Brian Gastle, English

The choice of where to live is a deeply personal one and affected by a host of issues, including partners with jobs elsewhere, availability of housing, preference for K-12 schools, and other familial, personal, and professional concerns. As long as we do our jobs well, it should not matter where we decide to live. But often new faculty/staff discount the Cullowhee area, for a host of reasons already addressed. I would add one further issue that may seem obvious, but contributes significantly to quality of life.

The lack of commute is a wonderful benefit of living close to your job. Two hours on the road (to and from Asheville) vs. two hours drinking G&Ts on my porch (or Kinser’s porch, or Heffelfinger’s porch, or, well, you get the point), or gardening, or reading, or writing, or really just about anything but spending two hours in the car on I-40, is quite nice. Many folks enjoy that time in the car to decompress (listening to NPR or podcasts, thinking about scholarship or teaching, or just decompressing after a day of work), but I appreciate having that time – what amounts to 8-10 hours a week – at home with my family. And the financial and environmental benefit is not inconsequential. A three-day-a-week commute from Asheville in a 50 mpg hybrid requires 6 gallons; at \$3.50 a gallon that’s about \$21/week, \$336/semester, or \$672/year. If you drive a vehicle that gets 25mpg, double that (\$42/\$672/\$1344). In that latter case, commuting contributes approximately two tons of CO2 emissions per 16-week semester, over four tons in an academic year. Living within four miles of campus

reduces that to .15 tons per semester. So for a variety of quality of life issues, the greater Cullowhee-Sylva area is an excellent option.

While Asheville is a small city, Sylva and Cullowhee are small towns in every sense of the term. Most of us “aren’t from around here” (as they say around here) – we weren’t born here nor do we have ancestral ties to the area – but the community makes this home for us: when Terry at Terry’s produce congratulates Catherine on a poetry award announced in the Herald, when I don’t need to ask for extra pickles at the Cullowhee Café, when Hollifield Jewelers helps me hide the surprise present, or when Randy Hooper at Bryson’s farm supply offers advice on bees, we feel like we are truly part of a community; it is a great place to live for the kind of life I want. I have friends and colleagues who feel the same way about Asheville, and I certainly respect that, but I hope folks recognize the benefits of living the Cullowhee life.

As for other things to do:

Catch a movie – at \$5.50 to 7.50 per ticket Sylva’s [Quin Theater](#) is less expensive than most. And WCU’s [University Center](#) has a regular selection of first-run and foreign movies as well as other special movie events on Fridays and Saturdays, or stop by for dinner and a film at the new [Mad Batter](#) in Sylva.

Volunteer – organizations like [A.R.F.](#), the [Watershed Association of the Tuckasegee](#), [Friends of the Library](#) and the [Community Table](#) offer opportunities to engage with the Greater Cullowhee community.

Disclaimer

The opinions printed here belong solely to the authors and do not necessarily represent the opinions of the editorial staff or of the Faculty Commons. If you would like to respond, you may input your comments directly through the wiki on the Faculty Forum webpage, or e-mail your comments to mherzog@email.wcu.edu and we will post them to the Responses to the article.

Web Links for This Issue

36 Hours in Greater Cullowhee

<http://www.wcu.edu/celebrate125/history.html>

<http://www.jacksonnc.org/geography.html>

<http://www.jacksonnc.org/parks-and-recreation.html>

<http://www.jacksonnc.org/jackson-county-recreation-center/projects.html>

<http://news-prod.wcu.edu/2014/07/students-produce-walking-trail-brochure/>

<http://www.wcu.edu/faculty-staff/uclub-the-university-club/>

<http://news-prod.wcu.edu/2014/08/wcu-named-top-adventure-college/>

<http://www.blueridgeoutdoors.com/>

<http://www.visitdillsboro.org/index.html>

<http://jacksoncountyfarmersmarket.org/>

<http://ericfreshfishmarket.com/index.html>

<http://www.citylightsnc.com/>

<http://harryalterbooks.com/>

Surf's Up

http://www.backpacker.com/august_09_top_cities_to_raise_a/destinations/13127

Fishing

<http://www.flyfishingtrail.com/3/miscellaneous2.htm>

<http://travel.nytimes.com/2009/05/15/travel/escapes/15fly.html?scp=2&sq=%27cullowhee%27&st=nyt>

Miscellaneous Joys of Not Commuting

<http://www.quintheater.com/>

<http://www.wcu.edu/student-life/division-of-student-affairs/departments/ak-hinds-university-center/programs-events-at-the-uc/>

<http://www.madbatterfoodandfilm.com/>

<http://www.a-r-f.org/arf/>

<http://watnc.org/>

<http://www.fojcm1.org>

<http://www.communitytable.org>

Electronic Version Available at: <http://media.wcu.edu/wiki/projects/facultyforumvol27/>