



## Spring 2022 Newsletter

Graduate School

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## Important Dates

**Saturday, April 23rd** - 38th Annual Tuck River Cleanup, more information can be found [here!](#)

**Friday/Saturday, May 6th - 7th** - [Commencement Ceremonies](#)

**Thursday, May 19th**- [Virtual Open House](#) (Cullowhee Programs)



**Message from the Dean  
Dr. Brian Kloepfel**

The Graduate School and Research team has been busy supporting and highlighting faculty, staff, and graduate student success at the Faculty Scholarship Celebration and the Research and Scholarship Conference. Our faculty and staff earned \$7.2 million from 68 external funding awards in fiscal year 2021. The good news continues in 2022 when we received three National Science Foundation grants in the month of January and we also celebrate three new faculty members with the Million Dollar Circle Award, having earned an accumulated \$1,000,000 in external funding!

The Graduate School continues to break new ground with a record number of submitted applications and enrolled 1,732 graduate students in Fall 2021, the highest graduate enrollment since Fall 2010! We also hosted our first ever faculty Three Minute Research (3MR) competition and built upon the foundation laid by our graduate student 3MT competition.

We have accomplished all of this with strong collaboration across campus and with four new staff members: Leela Livis, Kate Roche, and Laina Lemire in the Graduate School and Nikki Jones in the Office of Research Administration. We highlight several accomplishments of our awesome WCU faculty, staff, and students in this newsletter!

Sincerely,  
Dr. Brian Kloeppe  
Dean of the Graduate School and Research

## Awards and Accolades



Curtis Wood Award Recipient

# David McCord

The recipient of the 2022 Curtis Wood Mentoring Award was Dr. David McCord, Professor in the Department of Psychology. This award has been established thanks to the generosity and long-standing commitment to WCU graduate students by the esteemed Dr. Curtis Wood, Professor of History, who served at WCU from 1969 to 2005. Nominations for this award came from staff, faculty, and students alike, honoring Dr. David McCord as the eighth Curtis Wood recipient. According to one student, David's advising and mentorship was the "highlight" of their graduate career: "His enthusiasm for his students' research and pursuits is unmatched; every idea I have brought to him, he has encouraged in realistic and helpful ways. His feedback is always constructive and intentional, with astute recognition of his advisee's individual strengths." Congratulations Dr. David McCord!

*Selection Committee: Dr. Ramona Whichello, the 2019 recipient, Dr. Amy Murphy-Nugen, the 2018 recipient; Dr. Beth Huber, the 2017 recipient, and Dr. Joy Bowers-Campbell, Associate Dean of the Graduate School.*

## Graddy Award International Programs & Services

The Graddy Award, established in 2005, is presented by the Graduate School to a person or unit who, throughout the year has contributed outstanding service to WCU's graduate education mission. This year during the 2022 Graduate Research Symposium, the Graduate School awarded the Graddy to the office of International Programs & Services. The International Programs and Services team consists of dedicated professionals committed to international student success, working collaboratively with the Graduate School to resolve issues in a timely and courteous manner.



*Top row (from left to right): Wesley Milner (Director of International Programs), Abigail Nelson (International Admissions Counselor), and Kaitlin Ritchie (Associate Director of International Programs)  
Bottom row (from left to right): Josiah Buchanan (Study Abroad Graduate Assistant Advisor), Hilary Ruff (Intensive English Program Admissions Specialist), and Betty Dishman (Administrative Associate)*



## Million Dollar Circle Award

Established in 2016, the Million Dollar Circle Award recognizes faculty and staff who have received a cumulative total of one million dollars or more in external grants and contracts while at WCU. In 2022, three more faculty and staff join the circle, including Dr. Turner Goins (featured above), Dr. Patrick Gardner, and Dr. Sandra Dennison. To date, there are fifteen faculty and staff who have earned this prestigious honor.

[Read full story](#)

## Ben Steere and the Hunter Scholar Award

Dr. Ben Steere, director of the Cherokee Studies Programs and associate professor of Anthropology, was recognized for his archaeological work with Cherokee ancestral sites and granted the Hunter Scholar Award. This annual award, presented jointly by the Hunter Library, the Graduate School and Research, and the Office of the Provost, helps provide necessary resources and services to fund research projects like Dr. Steere's. Watch Dr. Steere's Cherokee research and goals below.



## Sarah Carpenter and the Fullerton Medical Scholarship Program

The Fullerton Medical Scholarship Program was established by The Fullerton Foundation in 1985 to support the development of primary care providers in the Carolinas. Sarah Carpenter, featured below, is the second WCU family nurse practitioner student to receive the \$20,000 award in the last three years.



[Read full story](#)

## Holly Pinter National Middle Level Professor of the Year

From the College of Education and Allied Professions, associate professor Holly Pinter was recognized for her dedication and research with middle level teachers by being awarded the National Middle Level Professor of the Year. As a WCU alumnus, she has immersed herself within the local community by being incredibly involved with the Catamount School.



[Read full story](#)

## Ed.D. Program of the Year Award

This year, the Educational Leadership program was honored during the Carnegie Project on the Education Doctorate's virtual convening as its 2021 Program of the Year award winner. That comes on the heels of claiming WCU's Program of Excellence Award for Academic Programs in April. The Educational Leadership program has been a member of the Carnegie Project on the Education Doctorate since 2014. CPED includes more than 100 colleges and schools of education which have committed resources to work together to undertake a critical

examination of the doctorate in education through dialogue, experimentation, critical feedback and evaluation.



*Back row (left to right): Kofi Lomotey, Robert Cron, Heidi Von Dohlen. Front row (left to right): Jess Weiler, Brandi Hinnant-Cranford, Emily Virtue, Cathy Andrews, Darrius Stanley.*

[Read full story](#)

## Graduate Alumni Profiles



### **Martin Schmedt** **Master of Construction Management**

Master of Construction Management alumni returns to WCU as the project engineer for the new Apodaca Science Building.

[Read the full story](#)



### **Frankie Bauer** **Master of Arts in History**

History alumni explores historical, cultural, political and personal connections that cross tribal designations.

[Read the full story](#)

# Office of Research Administration

## School of Nursing Receives \$2.2 Million Grant

The School of Nursing at Western Carolina University received a \$2.2 million grant from the federal Health Resources and Services Administration to provide financial and academic support for nursing students from low-income, first generation and minority backgrounds to enhance classroom and workforce diversity. "The funding will create a four-year Pathways to Equity in Nursing program, which will provide scholarship and stipend support for up to 25 students per year."



[Read full story](#)

## The Makings of an Endangered Whale Documentary

Associate Professor Vicki Szabo and her research team have documented some of the earliest human impacts on North Atlantic right whales, making it a natural starting point for the documentary. She and some research partners met the Spindrift Images team at Iceland's national archives in Reykjavík and then traveled with them to a site in the country's far north, just



below the Arctic Circle, to share their findings.



[Read the full story](#)

## Recent Graduate School Events

### 2021 Student 3-Minute Thesis (3MT)

Emily Deem, current Master of Science in Biology student, was awarded first place in the 2021 Three Minute Thesis Competition for her presentation on [“Extraction Efficiency Testing of Degraded Bone Samples: Comparing Four Extraction Methods for Use in Downstream Massively Parallel Sequencing Applications.”](#)

She recently represented WCU at the Conference of Southern Graduate Schools 3MT Competition as well as this year's RASC (Research and Scholarship Conference) poster presentation.

[2021 3MT Competition](#)

### Graduate Education Week November 1st- 5th, 2021

Aside from the 2021 Student 3MT competition which took place on November 3rd, 2021, Graduate Education week also featured a GRE Information Session, Advising Day, Coffee with the Dean, Graduate School on the UC Lawn, and WCU Graduate School Council. These events focused on preparing students for graduate study and supported current graduate students.

Dates for this year's Graduate Education Week are November 14th- 18th, 2022.

Graduate Education Week

## 30th Annual Graduate Research Symposium

The Graduate Research Symposium, sponsored by the Graduate School and Research, the Office of the Provost, and the Graduate Student Association as a part of WCU's campus-wide Research and Scholarship Conference (RASC), provided graduate students and faculty the opportunity to highlight their scholarly research and projects. Along with featuring posters, academic papers, and oral presentations, this event included a Keynote Address from Dr. Brian Byrd.

Dr. Brian Byrd's Keynote  
Address

Virtual Graduate Research  
Projects

## Poster Celebration and Winners



*From left to right: 1st Place Poster Competition, Emily Deem (Biology) and 2nd Place Poster Competition, Dakota Taylor (Biology).*

During the 30th Annual Graduate Research Symposium, research posters were used as visual representations that showcased Graduate student's scholarly research and other creative endeavors. With a total of 18 posters, 5 chose to present their work at the Poster Celebration held on March 23rd at the Ramsey Center.

This year's first place winner was Emily Deem from the Biology department who presented her work on "[Extraction Efficiency Testing of Degraded Bone and Tooth](#)

[Samples: Comparing Four Extraction Methods for Use in Downstream Massively Parallel Sequencing Applications](#)".

In second place, Dakota Taylor, also from the Biology department, presented on "[Analyzing the effects of secondary mutations on CFTR-N1303K](#)".

Virtual Posters

## Oral Presentations & Academic Papers

This year, students submitted pre-recorded oral presentations on their academic and creative work. Oral presenters joined group discussions in the UC on Thursday, March 24th. In total, 7 programs and over 60 participants submitted oral presentations and attended the 4 discussion sessions at the UC on March 24th, 2022.

This year's Academic Paper Competition featured 9 student authors who chose to write research papers, literature reviews, or business proposals. After being reviewed by faculty judges, Nicole Dennis (Psychology) won with her research paper on "[Crawling at 9 Month Predictive of Later Development: Investigations of Social, Cognitive, and Language Development](#)" and Julie Ann Daggerhart (Elementary Education) won with her literature review on "[The Science of Reading at Play: A Literature Review](#)"

Oral Presentations

Academic Papers

## Faculty 3-Minute Research (3MR)

With only three minutes and a single static slide, faculty members displayed their scholarship, research, and creative endeavors at the UC on March 24<sup>th</sup>. With a total of 12 faculty participants ranging across disciplines, the first-place winner was English Professor Brian Gastle with his presentation on "Chaucer and His Knight: Representing PTSD in the Middle Ages". In second place, Dr. Channa De Silva (Chemistry and Physics) presented "Developing Nanomaterials for Biotechnological Applications". As the People's Choice winner, Dr. Tammy Simmons represented Physical Therapy with the presentation "Maintenance Physical Therapy: Consideration for a Continuous Practice Paradigm for Physical Therapists".



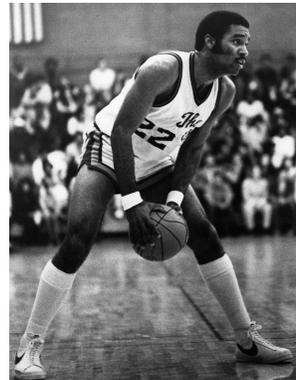
*From left to right: Dr. Brian Gastle, Dr. Channa de Silva, and Dr. Tammy Simmons*

[Watch recorded 3MR](#)

## Fun WCU Facts



The WCU mascot the Catamount was founded in 1932, barely beating out the mascot suggestion Boomers.



The first 3-pointer in college basketball history happened at Western Carolina on November 29th, 1980 by Ronni Carr.

[WCU History](#)

