

Academic Affairs Newsletter

August 2023

While the Fall 2023 semester has not officially started, it is evident that summer is coming to an end. We hope you found some time this summer to relax and recharge and that you are ready for the year ahead. Whether returning or new to WCU, we are excited to have you here to kick-off the new academic year!

Pride of the Mountains Marching Band

The Pride of the Mountains leadership team and the School of Music are happy to welcome back to campus the 2023 cohort of the Baddest Band in the Land. Our summer band camp will start on August 7th and run through August 18th.

This year POTM presents “Feeling Lucky,” a journey through life in four movements: Feeling Good, Feeling Respected, Feeling Driven, and Feeling Lucky. Our eager young musicians, representing majors across campus, will be practicing in small and large groups from the hours of 8:00 am to 9:30 pm. Musicians will primarily be in and around central campus from noon to 5:00, pending weather.

We also invite everyone and their family to the closing concert and demonstration on Thursday the 17th from 6:00 to 8:00 pm at the stadium. This is an exclusive sneak peek of part of the show just for the Catamount family. We hope you can join us as the excitement builds not only for the amazing fall season, but also for POTM’s preparations to travel to Dublin, Ireland, in March 2024 for the St. Patrick’s Day parade. This will be a memorable and historic season for the entire WCU campus.

New Student Convocation

Western Carolina University will hold New Student Convocation on Friday, **August 18th at 5:00 pm** in the Liston B. Ramsey Regional Activity Center. New Student Convocation is an important event that traditionally marks the official welcome to the university. This year we are excited to recognize the arrival of over 2,100 new students with an opening ceremony and celebration they will not forget.

Please join us in honoring this milestone event as we welcome and congratulate our new Catamounts for their choice in launching their college career at Western Carolina University. Faculty members who choose to participate in the Processional with the Platform Party must wear academic regalia and should gather in the Truck Tunnel at 4:45pm to line up. There will be general seating available for all faculty and staff attendees.

Graduate School & Research

This summer saw a number of new leaders in the Graduate School & Research. As previously announced, Dr. Jeff Lawson became Dean of the Graduate School & Research on July 1. Jeff

previously served as head of the Department of Mathematics and Computer Science and as the interim Associate Vice Chancellor for Student Success. ([Read more](#))

Kloo Hansen, who had been serving as the interim Director of the Office of Research Administration, assumed the position on a permanent basis in June. She is focusing on building capacity in pre-award operations and post-awards support, process improvement, PI training, and research compliance. I am grateful she has agreed to take on this role.

Finally, this fall Dr. John Hildreth – Kimmel Distinguished Professor of Construction Management – will begin duties as interim Associate Dean for Research. This new position results from campus forums last year identifying needs to strengthen pre-award activities, post-ward support, and faculty mentoring in sponsored research, work he has been doing this spring. One of his tasks this year is to co-lead a campuswide strategic planning process on research and scholarship, something I hope will guide our planning and decision-making on resources, support, the value of scholarship at WCU, and other related themes. More information about this will follow in the fall semester.

Interim Associate Provost

Dr. Carmen Huffman, formerly Associate Dean of the College of Arts & Sciences and Associate Professor of Chemistry, became the interim Associate Provost effective 1 August. As you know, this position oversees TPR, curriculum, and a range of other important processes. I thank Carmen for her willingness to assume this role. A search for the permanent Associate Provost will begin shortly after fall break. More information about that search will follow later in the fall.

Org Chart Changes

CATalytics and Human Resources are excited to announce the availability of a new university org chart dashboard. This new interactive tool provides an enhanced ability to dynamically drill down into the org chart, through levels of supervisors and their direct reports, as well as an improved search feature for individual users. One tremendous advantage is that the new org chart is integrated directly with the Banner HRIS system eliminating the current manual update process and ensuring the information is fully aligned with University business systems. To access this new resource, or any CATalytics dashboard, please visit: catalytics.wcu.edu. For questions about dashboards, please contact the CATalytics team at catalytics@wcu.edu. For questions about the HR data on the dashboard, please contact [Alicia Estes](#).

Some notable Org Chart updates that have occurred within Academic Affairs this summer include a new Director of Institutional Assessment, Dr. Karen Price, a new Assistant to the Provost, Holli Stillman, a new Executive Assistant to the Vice Provost, Alei Coleman, and new department heads Dr. Katie Zejdlik (Anthropology and Sociology), Dr. Tonya Westbook (Social Work), Ron Laboray, MFA (School of Art and Design), and Tory Depew, MFA (School of Stage and Screen).

Center for Career and Professional Development Staff Updates

The Center for Career and Professional Development has had the opportunity to welcome a new addition to the team. April McNiff, Assistant Director of Student Development, joined us in May from Southwestern Community College, where she served as a High School Partnership Coordinator. Her experience helping high school students easily translates to Western Carolina University, where she will assist students with their career goals and future planning. In her new role, she will be the liaison to the College of Fine and Performing Arts, College of Business (interim), and our campus partners. April will also manage the career center's communications strategy and social media team.

In addition, the career center will be saying a fond farewell to Ms. Carla Espinoza-Salinas, who has acted as our Assistant Director for Experiential Education. She will move on to a new position at Columbia University in New York as an Associate Director in the School of International and Public Affairs. She will be helping graduate students with career education and working on employer outreach for their departments. Her last day in CCPD was August 4. We are currently in the process of filling this position.

First Gen Advocacy Training

MAPS hosts First Gen Advocacy Training for campus partners to learn more about supporting first-generation Catamounts! MAPS will share relevant data as well as research-based practices campus partners can use to support and develop first-generation students at WCU. Sign in to Engage (engage.wcu.edu) to RSVP. Sessions are being hosted online and at the Biltmore campus, and a separate session can be planned for your department/unit! Contact MAPS at maps@wcu.edu or by calling 828-227-7171 with questions. Fall 2023 sessions are scheduled for the following dates:

- Tuesday, August 15 | 3:00pm | Belk 404
- Tuesday, September 5 | 11:00am | Biltmore Park
- Wednesday, September 13 | 12:30p | Virtual
- Thursday, September 21 | 11:00am | Killian 116
- Wednesday, October 11 | 9:30am | Coulter 358
- Monday, November 6 | 3:00pm | HHS 239

Intentional Learning

Undergraduate Studies is pleased to announce that there is funding available to support Intentional and Engaged Learning opportunities for the 2023-2024 academic year. Allocations will primarily support faculty and student activities directly related to intentional, integrative, engaged teaching/learning. The three primary types of support are:

- Intentional Learning Activities
- Intentional Learning - Conference Travel
- Intentional Learning - Non-Conference Travel

The applications for Intentional Learning funding have all been combined into a single Qualtrics form as of June 2022. To request Intentional Learning Funding click [here](#). (NOTE: Applications will no longer be accepted via email.) Applications will be accepted on a rolling basis in the Fall and Spring semesters. However, requests that are time-sensitive should be submitted well in advance of required deadlines.

To learn more about Intentional Learning, including program goals and outcomes, click [here](#). If you have any questions please contact Alei Coleman, Executive Assistant to the Vice Provost, at colemana@wcu.edu.