

Academic Affairs Newsletter

December 2023

As we approach the end of the year, we find ourselves amidst a whirlwind of accomplishments, challenges, and the relentless pace of academia. Wrapping up one semester, planning for the next, holiday gatherings, celebrations, commencement, and so much more – it's a busy time! As the semester draws to a close, we invite you to PAWS (pause) and reflect on what this semester was for you, and embrace the spirit of self-care during the upcoming winter break. As always, thank you for your dedication to our students and the entire institution. **HAPPY HOLIDAYS!**



December Commencement Ceremonies

Graduation from Western Carolina University is a tradition and milestone event in the lives of our students, as well as a time for celebration for us all. The graduating students and their families appreciate seeing our faculty at this important academic tradition, and we look forward to your presence in support of our students as they leave WCU to enter the next phase of their lives. Commencement will take place on **Saturday, December 16, at 10:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m.**

For Saturday's 10:00 a.m. ceremony (Colleges of Arts and Sciences, Education and Allied Professions, and David Orr Belcher College of Fine and Performing Arts), faculty are asked to assemble in academic regalia at the Ramsey Regional Center truck tunnel on **Saturday, December 16, by 9:00 a.m.** The processional march will begin promptly at 10:00 a.m.

For Saturday's 3:00 p.m. ceremony (Colleges of Business, Engineering and Technology, and Health and Human Sciences), faculty are asked to assemble in academic regalia at the Ramsey Regional Center truck tunnel on **Saturday, December 16, by 2:00 p.m.** The processional march will begin promptly at 3:00 p.m.

If you did not attend the May 2023 ceremonies, please plan to attend at least one of our December ceremonies.

Helping Students

The end of an academic semester can be stressful for our students. We encourage faculty and staff to make a referral if you notice an issue with a student, whether it's academic, non-academic, or both. By addressing students' needs early, appropriate interventions can help empower them to make choices that positively impact their academic success. Student concerns are addressed in two separate but related processes depending on whether the student concern is academic or non-academic in nature.

- **Academic concerns** are managed via Navigate, a web-based tool which WCU uses to coordinate, target, and report on advising, tutoring, and other student success services. Navigate can be accessed in mywcu.wcu.edu by clicking on the link for Advising/Tutoring.
- **Non-academic concerns** are managed in the online platform, Maxient. Faculty, staff, students, family members, or anyone with a non-academic concern about a student can submit their concern via Maxient. The form can be accessed via scrt.wcu.edu.

If there is any confusion as to which platform to submit your concern, you may submit it in either. All concerns will be routed to the appropriate place once submitted. If you need any assistance issuing Academic or Non-Academic alerts please contact the Academic Advising Center | 828.227.7753 or the Student Concern Response Team (SCRT) | 828.227.7147.



Service-Learning Designated Courses

Thank you to all faculty selected to offer Service-Learning designated courses in the spring semester. A list of approved courses is available at this [link](#).

As we wrap up this semester and reflect on our courses, it is not too early to consider adding a service-learning component to your Summer or Fall 2024 courses. That may be distant, but for courses (or sections) to be designated "SLC" or "Service-Learning," they must be attributed as SLC when built in the Banner system in late January/early February. **The deadline to designate a Summer 2024/Fall 2024 course or section is February 1.** For SLC designation criteria and process, as well as a list of community partners, [please visit this link](#).



NSSE Administration in Spring 2024

Every three years, WCU participates in the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE). Initiated in 2000, NSSE is housed within the Center for Postsecondary Research (CPR) in the Indiana University School of Education. Hundreds of four-year colleges and universities participate each year. NSSE is targeted to first-year and senior students' and focuses on participation in college programs and activities related to learning and personal development. The survey will launch on February 21st and will close on May 13th. NSSE reports and data files will be available in August 2024. For more information about NSSE, visit <https://nsse.indiana.edu/nsse/about-nsse/index.html>.



Interpretive Exhibits of EBCI History and Culture on Campus



Last Spring, WCU was awarded a \$40,000 grant from the Cherokee Preservation Foundation to support the development of a comprehensive plan for adding interpretive exhibits on campus that both teach about and celebrate the history and culture of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians. The project is being led by Dr. Carmen Huffman, Interim Associate Provost, Dr. Brett Riggs, Sequoyah Distinguished Professor of Cherokee Studies, and Denise Drury Homewood, Executive Director of the Bardo Arts Center. The aim of the project is to plan for interpretive exhibits and interactive displays that would educate the

campus and its visitors about the campus's historical Cherokee presence as well as the culture of the Cherokee people, both past and present. With additional financial support from the Offices of the Chancellor and Provost, we have partnered with HW Exhibits to shepherd the design process. The firm will host a virtual kickoff meeting in January with the steering committee, comprised of faculty in the Cherokee and Indigenous Studies program, select staff, and EBCI partners. An on-site visit is scheduled for later in the Spring 2024 semester. Stay tuned for opportunities to share ideas in open forums in the spring.

Faculty Workload Reporting Policy - System Level

The draft regulation (400.3.4[R]) was distributed to Faculty Senate and the deans for feedback, which has been shared with the System Office. More details to follow.

Carnegie Classifications Update 2025

The Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education is now partnered with the American Council on Education (ACE) and serves as the leading framework for categorizing 4,000 higher education institutions in the United States. In preparation for the release of a new classification methodology in 2025, the framework is undergoing extensive review, including more multidimensional categories instead of the current single dimensions.



Institutional Strategic Planning Committee



The Strategic Planning Committee has been established for the current year under new chair, Dr. Jill Granger, Dean of the Brinson Honors College. Broad representation from across the university, including faculty will serve three-year staggered terms.

Office of Student Retention Spring 2024

Kristen Daiber, Director for the Office of Student Retention, will be on leave during the Spring 2024 semester. Chesney Reich, Director for the Writing and Learning Commons, will assume the role of acting Director for Student Retention during Daiber's absence.

Cherokee Center Director Search

The search for next Cherokee Center Director is now underway. The search committee consists of:

- Chair, Andy Denson (Director, Cherokee Studies, Professor of History)
- Brett Riggs (Sequoyah Distinguished Professor, Anthropology and Sociology)
- Jane Eastman (Associate Professor, Anthropology and Sociology)
- Amber Albert (Director, Mountain Heritage Center)
- Anita Lossiah (Cherokee Center Advisory Board Member, Senior Policy Analyst, EBCI)



Associate Provost Search

The Office of the Provost is reviewing the Associate Provost position description and forming a search committee. The search for the next Associate Provost will commence soon.

Mandatory Information Security Trainings



In October, all WCU Faculty and Staff received notification about mandatory Information Security Training that was to be completed before the end of the month. It is imperative that individuals who have not yet completed the trainings, do so prior as soon as possible. Completion of these trainings is important because it heightens awareness for network attacks

and reduces our insurance premiums for our IT security insurance. If you are unsure as to whether or not you have completed the trainings, please reach out to your Dean's Office or to Holli Stillman, Assistant to the Provost, at hbstillman@wcu.edu.

Extended Winter Closing

The University will be closed from Monday, December 25, 2023 through Monday, January 1, 2024, with all six business days being Holidays. No additional leave days will be required of employees.

This schedule will enable the University to lower building temperatures during the closing and, thereby, achieve significant energy savings. Building temperatures, except in areas where research or other essential operations require exceptions, will be lowered to approximately 55 degrees during the period the University is closed. Requests for exceptions to this temperature level should be directed to Mr. Joe Walker, Associate Vice Chancellor for Facilities Management, at 227-7441.

