

Academic Affairs Newsletter

January 2024

Happy New Year Catamounts! The fresh start of a new calendar year is always an exciting time filled with promises of growth, discovery, and success. January is also a great time to reconnect with familiar faces and extend a warm welcome to those joining our vibrant community for the first time. We hope the extended winter break was exactly what you needed it to be, and you are ready to dive into the Spring 2024 semester. Here's to a semester of academic exploration, collaborative learning, and shared achievements. Let's make it amazing!



Martin Luther King, Jr. Celebration

Under the direction of Intercultural Affairs, the WCU community gathers annually to celebrate and commemorate the lives and legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and Coretta Scott King. The focus of the celebration is the concept of community. Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc. will kick things off by hosting the annual MLK, Jr. Unity March on Monday, January 15, 2024, at 11:00am beginning at the Central Plaza Fountain (Catafount). The week-long celebration will be Monday, January 22 through Friday, January 26. For a full schedule of events [click here](#).

Funding Availability for Intentional Learning and Campus Theme Initiatives

The Office for Undergraduate Studies has allocated all funding for Intentional Learning Grants and has limited funding remaining for our current campus theme (community and belongingness) initiatives. We appreciate the many requests for funding innovative and experiential opportunities this academic year and know that our students, faculty, and staff benefit from these experiences. We will notify WCU if unexhausted or additional funds become available this semester.

Faculty Relations Fellows

Dr. Candy Noltensmeyer, Associate Professor of Communications, and Dr. Siham Lekchiri, Associate Professor and Director of the MS program in Human Resources, continue to serve as our Faculty Relations Fellows. They are independent, neutral resources for problem resolution and can provide informal assistance to help resolve workplace issues or discuss faculty concerns without committing to pursuit of a formal resolution. If you would like to discuss an issue with one of these fellows, you can reach out to them directly.

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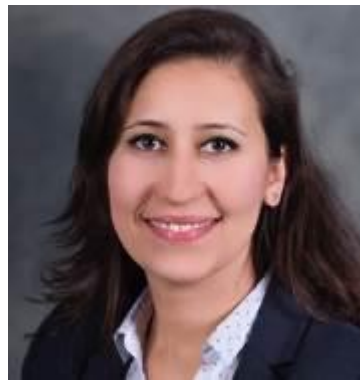
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Bias Reporting Reminder

As an institution of higher education, WCU has a long tradition of maintaining an environment that respects the dignity, rights, and value of all people and protects the tenets of freedom of expression. This includes free academic exploration of ideas, voicing unpopular views, and expressing dissent. However, incidents involving discrimination, harassment or intimidation of a person or group based on a protected class are unacceptable. If you have specific information about an alleged incident, you are encouraged to report it. The reporting form can be found at bias.wcu.edu. This page also contains more detailed information about the bias reporting process, FAQs, and historical bias report data.

Introducing New Civic Engagement Coordinator



As part of our institutional commitment to providing our students with a 21st Century education and fostering the development of engaged and informed citizens, the Center for Community Engagement and Service Learning is pleased to introduce Alyson Umberger, a recent WCU alumna and newly appointed coordinator for Civic Engagement. Originally from Graham, North Carolina, Alyson earned a bachelor's degree in political science and is enrolled in WCU's master's program in Public Affairs: "I am very passionate about voter's rights, and I firmly believe that everyone who is able should exercise their right to vote." Please contact Alyson

(aumberger@wcu.edu; x2842) or visit the [CCESL website](#) if you would like to incorporate civic engagement in your courses or other work with our students.

Advising Day Survey Results

The 2023 Advising Feedback Survey, conducted with 686 student respondents, reveals key insights into course registration for the Spring 2024 semester. Notably, 87% of participants have completed their course registration, while 13% have not. For those not registered, reasons vary, with 31% planning to register, 26% citing other reasons, and 26% indicating completion of graduation requirements as reason they have not registered. Challenges in meeting advisors were reported by 11%, with issues ranging from scheduling difficulties to miscommunications. The majority, however, rated their advising experience positively (78% rated as Excellent or Good). The survey also highlighted positive outcomes of their advising sessions, such as 97% receiving alt-pins and 75% being reminded of their registration start time. Challenges during registration were minimal, with 59% reporting no issues. Overall, the Spring 2024 course registration experience received positive ratings, with 71% rating it as Excellent or Good. Additionally, 41% of respondents expressed interest in advisor outreach for further assistance.

Liberal Studies – Student Learning Outcomes and Assessment



Our Liberal Studies curriculum consists of approximately 250 courses/sections, and its size means that it touches almost every undergraduate student experience and almost every academic department at the university. The program conducts on-going assessment of student learning around the 10 outcomes approved by faculty and shares the results in an annual assessment report published on the Liberal Studies Assessment [website](#). Additional resources such as liberal studies course

development, and the assessment plan, including outcomes' definitions and rubrics, etc., are also available at the website.

We extend deep appreciation to the 95 faculty members who submitted student artifacts as part of the fall liberal studies assessment--an expectation of teaching in the program. The Liberal Studies Assessment Director notifies faculty the semester before their course is to be included in Liberal Studies assessment to allow time to include an assignment that aligns with the LS outcome being measured. Then, at the beginning of the semester in which artifacts will be collected, the assessment director provides detailed artifact submission instructions and support for artifact creation and submission. For spring 2024, *problem solving*, *diversity*, and *inclusion*, will be assessed; *critical thinking* will be assessed in fall 2024. Please contact Dr. Jen Schiff (jsschiff@wcu.edu; x3860), Director of Liberal Studies Assessment, or Dr. Aimee Rockhill (aprockhill@wcu.edu; x3915), Chair of the Liberal Studies Committee, for additional information.

Resource on Higher Education

WCU is a member of the Education Advisory Board (EAB), a national organization of more than 2,500 colleges and schools focused on postsecondary and K-12 education excellence through multiple topics, including exploration of institutional strategy, student success, data and analytics, enrollment, and inclusive excellence. Searchable database higher education topics include academic programming, libraries, faculty support, campus community, enrollment, student success, etc. Navigate, our student success/advising platform, and Royall, our enrollment partner, are part of EAB.



All WCU staff and faculty can access the large database of best practice studies, research, custom reports, and other material available in the Academic Affairs Forum by establishing an account using your WCU email account. **Instructions below:**

- Go to the website at www.eab.com.
- On the top right of the homepage, hover over the "Login" bar. Select "Create an account."
- Clicking the link takes you to the registration page through which you will be prompted to provide your location, institution name, and your personal information.
- Click "submit" and you'll receive an email in your university in-box containing your username and a link to create your unique password. Please check your spam folder if the email containing the link does not arrive in your in-box after several minutes.

Visit eab.com or contact Carol Burton (burton@wcu.edu; 227-3012), Vice Provost, for more information.

UNC System Financial Literacy Survey

The UNC System Financial Literacy and Wellness Working Group has been established to create a comprehensive set of resources, models, support tools and a recommended plan for financial

literacy and wellness program/resource development at its member institutions. Last year the UNC System Financial Literacy and Wellness Working Group conducted a survey that gathered information about the different types of financial literacy and wellness programs and models that were being employed across the UNC System. This information helped the Working Group establish a baseline for setting priorities by increasing understanding of financial wellness programs and activities in place at your institution.

This January, the Working Group is surveying all degree-seeking students across the UNC System about their knowledge of financial literacy and wellness. The students' responses will help the Working Group better understand the financial literacy and wellness needs of students at our institutions. The responses will directly impact future financial literacy and wellness programming and initiatives offered to students across the UNC System. Students will be emailed on January 12th to complete the financial literacy and wellness programs survey. Reminder emails would be sent to students on January 18, 25, and 31, with the survey closing on February 1.