

# Academic Affairs

## News & Reflections

### From the Provost's Desk

Dear All,

On campus, much is happening. Spring has sprung, the grass is growing and the birds are clearly enjoying the warmer weather and singing cheerfully early each morning. We have said farewell to our SACS COC accreditation reaffirmation onsite review team, who were here to evaluate our programs and processes across campus. To find out more information about the SACS COC visit, you can find the focus report at ([http://www.wcu.edu/WebFiles/Focused\\_Report\\_Redacted.pdf](http://www.wcu.edu/WebFiles/Focused_Report_Redacted.pdf)), and also go to our DegreePlus quality enhancement plan website at [degreeplus.wcu.edu](http://degreeplus.wcu.edu) and watch the 2 minute video.

Graduation is almost upon us with a record number of our students graduating with jobs or graduate school application acceptances already in hand. Students have been increasingly working with the Center for Career and Professional Development and with their faculty honing their interview and professional skills to make sure that they are the top choice for a job, graduate school, internship or practicum.

We had a highly successful 38th International Festival on campus with over 20 countries represented in the march of the Flags.



### Provost on the Ground

Dean's Outstanding Scholar Award Ceremony	April 3
Literary Festival Reception	April 6
Friends of the Arts Gala & performance of Hair	April 8
Distinguished Professor's Luncheon	April 10
Department of Philosophy and Religion	April 10
Staff Senate Open Forum	April 13
UP Program Celebration Luncheon	April 17
Open Forum- Joint Taskforce on Racism Recommendations	April 17
Telling Our Stories Event	April 17
Spring WCU/SCC Luncheon	April 19
Service Learning Awards	April 19
49th Annual Juried Student Exhibition Reception	April 20
State of the College CEAP Meeting/ Picnic & Faculty and Staff Awards	April 21

WCU hosted a networking brunch to renew the American Association of University Women (AAUW) Chapter.

We have had a phenomenal week of Literary Festival events with readings from featured authors and poets, round table discussions with students, and a lovely reception to celebrate the week long festival.

'Tis the season of awards and recognitions of the strong and impactful teaching, research/creative work and service that are a part of the daily lives of our faculty, students and staff, giving back to the communities in which we live, work and play.

Construction along central drive continues to transform that part of campus; a revitalized Brown Hall is rising from the ground to be a spectacular facility when it opens for our campus community in the summer; Noble Hall is now completely open for business and on my walks around campus in the early morning or evening, it is clear that it really has become a place to hang out, study and eat.

Campus is a-buzz with activity and I could not be more delighted to be part of this beautiful, wonderful place we call home – Western Carolina University.

See you out and about on campus and thank you for all you do to make this a great place to be!

Sincerely,

Alison Morrison-Shetlar  
Provost and Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs

COB Scholarship and Awards Ceremony	April 21
Faculty and Staff Excellence Awards	April 21
Student Athlete Scholarship Gala	April 22
University-wide Open Forum (Strategic Plan, Master Plan, SACSCOC)	April 24
CEAP Honors and Awards Ceremnoy	April 24
Student Memorial Service	April 27
Engineering & Technology Capstone Luncheon	April 28

## **25Live re-implementation in process**

*from the Office of Institutional Planning and Effectiveness*

WCU has employed CollegeNet's 25Live software platform for space and event scheduling and calendaring for a number of years. We have just kicked off a re-implementation process with the assistance of a 25Live consultant. This re-implementation process will provide a much needed clean-up of space-related data and features, and also provide several functionality enhancements, including the ability of student organizations to reserve space, the ability to charge fees for space and related services, and the ability to route event requests to multiple stakeholders.

After the re-implementation and clean-up process users will find the software to be more tailored to their needs when requesting a space or booking an event. Booking "one time" events will be a simpler process for users while booking complex events will become more streamlined so that multiple units on campus associated with the event can be kept up-to-date about all the event's moving parts.

The re-implementation process is scheduled for completion in September 2017.

# Distance and Online Education

*from the Office of Educational Outreach*

Distance students comprise approximately 20% of Western Carolina University's student body. Who are these students? How many distance programs does WCU offer?

Western Carolina University offers ten undergraduate degrees or certificates and sixteen graduate degrees or certificates as online (distance) programs.

In December, a survey of undergraduate distance students was performed and results were received in February. Detailed results of the survey were shared with the Provost Council in March and will be shared with the Distance Learning Council in April. The response rate of 29% gives a representative picture of the demographics and satisfaction of distance students. For this survey, only those seeking an undergraduate degree fully online or those enrolled in Engineering Technology were included.

The demographic data show some surprising information and confirms some information traditionally accepted about distance students. Here are some of the demographic data:

- 85% of WCU's distance students are over age 25 (probably not surprising)
- 55% of WCU's distance students are over age 35 (surprising?)
- 93% are working (a 2015 study at Georgetown University stated 70% of online students are working nationally)
- 85% are working full-time (The 2015 Georgetown study said 25% work full-time)
- 69% own their home (surprising?)
- 52% have children
- Only 11% are single parents (surprising?)
- 91% plan to complete their degree online with other students either transferring or completing on campus
- 12% had not taken any online courses prior to coming to WCU
- 86% of online students are taking at least two courses and 35% are taking more than 10 hours
- 67% of online respondents were female
- 82% self-identified as Caucasian

The students identified the following items as **STRENGTHS** of online programs at Western Carolina University.

Strengths:

- Resources available to me are adequate to allow me to track my progress toward my degree.
- Distance Learning Services provides relevant, timely and accurate information to online students.
- Instructional materials are appropriate for program content.
- Billing and payment procedures are convenient for me.
- My program advisor is accessible by telephone and e-mail.

The students identified the following items as **CHALLENGES** of online programs at Western Carolina University

Challenges:

- Student assignments are clearly defined in the syllabus.
- The quality of online instruction is excellent.

- Program requirements are clear and reasonable.
- Faculty provide timely feedback about student progress.
- Tuition paid is a worthwhile investment.
- There are sufficient offerings within my program of study.

The survey also compared the satisfaction of Western Carolina University students with a national group consisting of approximately 136,000 online learners. Western Carolina University students had higher levels of satisfaction compared to this national group on the following items:

1. Student assignments are clearly defined in the syllabus.
2. The quality of online instruction is excellent.
3. Program requirements are clear and reasonable.
4. Faculty are responsive to student needs.
5. Faculty provide timely feedback about student progress.
6. Tuition paid is a worthwhile investment.
7. Instructional materials are appropriate for program content.
8. Billing and payment procedures are convenient for me.
9. My program advisor is accessible by telephone and e-mail.
10. This institution responds quickly when I request information.



\*Items 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6 are also identified as challenges for Western Carolina University based on the survey. However, WCU has a higher satisfaction level than national online learners. WCU students also have higher expectations in these areas than national learners.

The survey identified one area where WCU students had a lower level of satisfaction compared to the national group: Registration for online courses is convenient.

There was one area WCU students ranked of higher importance than the national group: My program advisor is accessible by telephone and e-mail.

Students were also asked to give other information in the comments section and many students did supply comments.

The results of this survey of undergraduate students may be useful as Western Carolina University determines the role of distance learning as we face new opportunities and challenges. These include

- The implementation of NC Promise
- The use of resources at the University
- The availability of student housing
- Discussions about the delivery mode for new and existing degrees
- Other information available about distance students including fall-to-fall retention (2015-2016 retention rate was 79%)
- Increasing numbers of graduates from community colleges desiring to further their education

An overwhelming number of students commented about online programs as being their only opportunity to complete their degree and their appreciation to Western Carolina University for making the opportunity possible. If you are involved in distance learning, give yourself a pat on the back and remember you make a difference in the lives of the people of this region and this state.

# Upcoming Events

*from the Office of the Chief Diversity Officer*

## Hats Off to Women Luncheon Update

On March 21 the inaugural Hats of To Women Luncheon brought together some of our dynamic senior women leaders with some of our young women scholars. Under the masterful leadership of Tacquice Davis and Elizabeth Boney, we were able to deliver what many participants are calling one of the best student/staff interactions on our campus. Here are a few of the many comments we received.

*“I literally just spent the last 30 minutes oo-ing and goo-ing...about how awesome your program was today. It was intentional, meaningful, so well organized and executed, and just one of the most outstanding programs I've been to at WCU... in a really long time... maybe ever!”*

*“I am feeling very good. I very much appreciated the obvious care that went into the event. It was really uplifting to see the many fabulous colleagues represented there and even better to see the students. I don't know how I was lucky enough to be seated with Brandi and Rose but thanks for that, too!”*

*“Dear Tacquice and Elizabeth, 'Queen Bees' My hat is off to both of you for hosting a wonderful, elegant and affirming luncheon today. Everything was beautifully orchestrated. We felt so special.”*

*“I had a great time and got to connect with people that I only see their name on paper or voice through the phone. It was nice putting the names and faces together. Looking forward to next year's event.”*

*“Thank you for inviting me to the first Hats off to Women Luncheon. You both did a tremendous job! I had a wonderful group of Young Scholars at my table and the conversation “buzzed” along nicely. I greatly appreciate your hard work and hope to see this event continue.”*

*“A big thank you to you and your office for your support for our students and staff. The luncheon was phen-o-men-al. Seriously, it was the best staff/student interaction I have had the privilege to be a part of.”*

## SafeZone Training

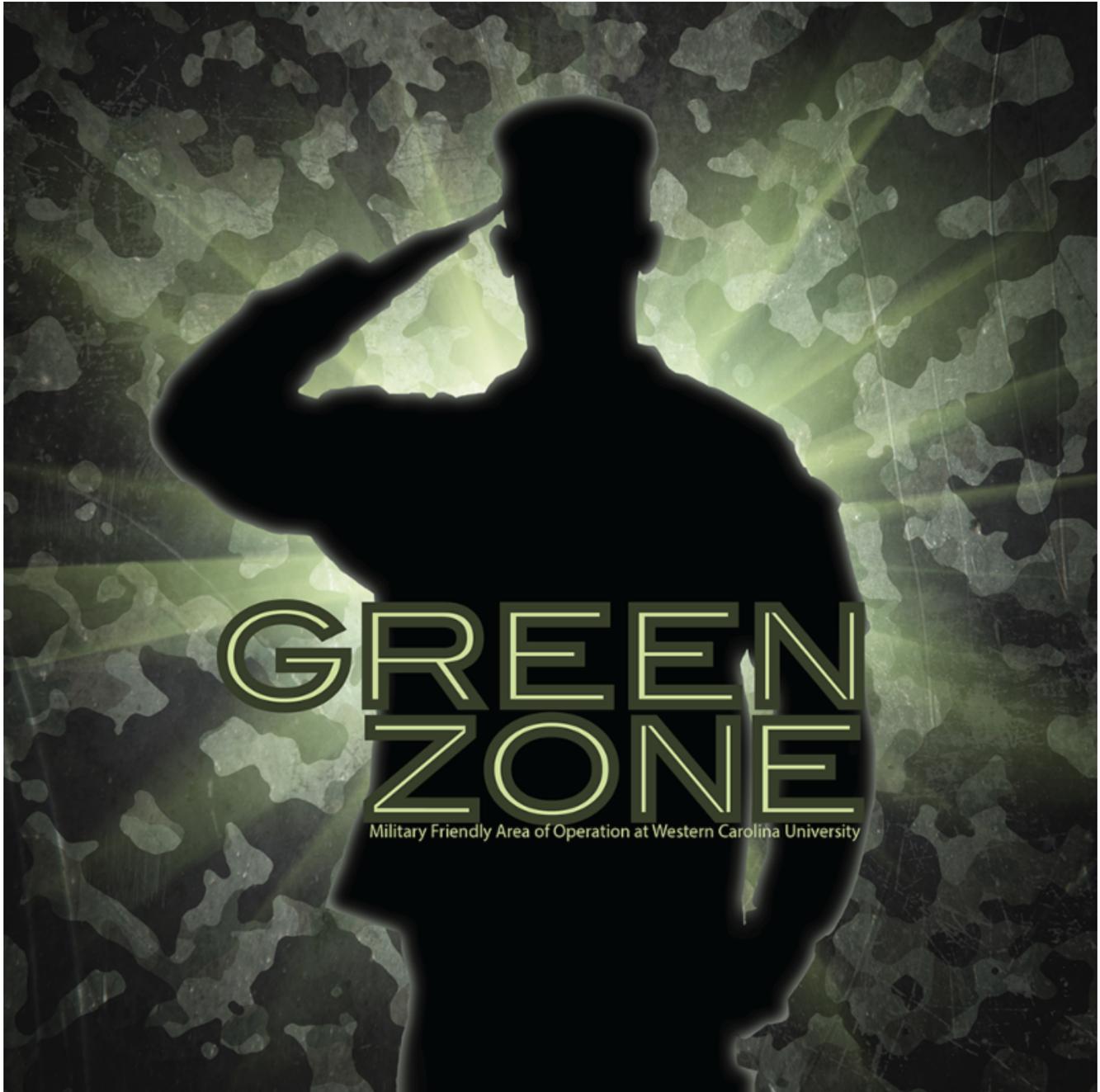
This April WCU continues to offer more training to help us address difficult conversations, safety and student support.

There are still slots available to participate in part one and part two of SafeZone training.

Part I is April 11, 2017 from 5-7pm in the UC Dogwood Room.

Part II is April 25, 2017 from 5-7pm in the UC Dogwood Room.

Please contact Holli Stillman to register: [hbstillman@wcu.edu](mailto:hbstillman@wcu.edu)



The first, Green Zone training for the spring term will be on April 12th from 11-1:30 in the UC Multipurpose room.

This is a perfect opportunity to learn about our Military students and how to support them!

Please RSVP to Briana Ford [blford@wcu.edu](mailto:blford@wcu.edu)

OFFICE OF ACCESSIBILITY RESOURCES PRESENTS

# Autism Awareness Month

## Autism Awareness on the Lawn

*April 3&4, 11am-1pm UC Lawn*

Come get some Autism Awareness swag, view and purchase crafts from Full Spectrum Farms and sign up for Alpha Xi Delta's 5K!

## Lunch & Learn

*April 5, 12pm, UC Raleigh Room*

Bring your lunch and receive a special training for faculty and staff about working with students on the autism spectrum. Led by Wesley Satterwhite.

## Diversity Dialogue

*April 6, 5:30pm-7pm KL 220*

Director of OAR, Wesley Satterwhite, will lead a panel discussion about autism in higher education.

## Blue Out Baseball Game

*April 21, 5pm-7pm Baseball Field*

Wear blue and come support our WCU baseball team against VMI!

## Alpha Xi Delta's Autism Speaks 5K

*April 28, 6pm, Catafount*

Help raise awareness and money for Autism Speaks by walking or running in this 5K!



**Visit @WCUOAR on  
Facebook for more info**

Help WCU promote inclusion and acceptance for all!

# Summer Institute for Teaching and Learning 2017

*from the Office of the Associate Provost, Academic Affairs*

May 16, 17, & 18, 2017 (9am - 4pm each day)

It's time to mark your calendar and register for the new and improved 'Summer Institute for Teaching and Learning' (SITL) which will be held at NCCAT this year! We have redesigned this seminar to give faculty more of what they want and need to be successful in the classroom. The theme for this year's SITL is "Take Your Teaching to the Next Level." There will be an all-day Quality Matters workshop, followed by two days consisting of four different mini sessions each day. Each session is geared towards supporting faculty to enhance and innovate their teaching techniques. In addition, we will be offering General Course Improvement with 1-on-1 assistance all day on Day 2 and Day 3 for Blackboard, Panopto, Collaborate, Course Design, pedagogy, or any other area that faculty would like assistance with. Lunch, snacks and drinks will also be provided each day.



Remember, if you want to "Step Up" your teaching, please join us for SITL 2017! For more information, please contact [mhawes@wcu.edu](mailto:mhawes@wcu.edu) at ext. 2927 or check out the CFC's Web Page (<https://cfc.wcu.edu/>) or our Faculty Resources Web Page (<https://sandbox.wcu.edu/>). The SITL Agenda is also available here: <http://ccnt3.wcu.edu/WebFiles/SITL-2017-Agenda.pdf>.

To register for one or all sessions go to: [https://wcu.az1.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV\\_8vKBAYhujLipDxj](https://wcu.az1.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_8vKBAYhujLipDxj).

# Staff Spotlight

## Drew Thomas

*Director of Academic Resources & Business Operations, Office of the Provost*



Drew Thomas is the Director of Academic Resources & Business Operations.

Drew joined Western Carolina University's Office of the Provost in 2016. Earning his BSBA in Finance and his MCM in Construction Management from Western Carolina University, this position allowed him the opportunity to give back to his alma mater. His parents are alumni of Western Carolina University as well!

Drew is from Fairview, NC, and spent some time in South Florida as an analyst at the University of South Florida. His other work experience includes financial planning, and as the Manager of Fiscal and Business Operations at the University of South Florida.

Drew loves the outdoors, and enjoys hiking and camping, dogs, and great food.

"The good thing about science is that it's true whether or not you believe in it." by Neil deGrasse Tyson is Drew's favorite quote.

# Faculty Spotlight

## Alesia Jennings

*Chemistry Lecturer, Department of Chemistry & Physics*



Alesia was born in Germany, and lived in several states including Arkansas and upstate New York, before settling in Ohio for high school and college. Her vast travels as an adolescent were a direct result of her military father's travels.

Alesia earned a BS from Notre Dame College in South Euclid, Ohio, and a PhD from the University of Akron in Akron, Ohio.

After graduating with her PhD, she worked at Goodyear Tire and Rubber Company for two years, and Stark State Community College on weeknights and weekends.

In January 2012, Alesia and her family moved to Franklin, NC for her husband Jacob's employment. They decided to move to western North Carolina on a whim, leaving all of their family in Ohio. Even on a whim, it has been positive for their family. At the time, Alesia was a stay-at-home mom for her three children. In August 2014, Alesia began her employment at WCU as a part-time adjunct faculty member. In August 2016, she was hired as a full-time lecturer in the Chemistry and Physics department. As for her family life, they decided to move to Clyde in November 2015. Her husband, Jacob, recently began a position with Western Carolina Ear, Nose, and Throat Specialists as a Physician Assistant.

Alesia spends her "free" time with her kiddos, and they are the "light of my world". They inspire her to be a better person every day. The kids keep her heart full (they are 2, 4, and 5). Alesia, enjoys coaching

her oldest daughter Annabelle in soccer, as she played all the way through college and enjoys seeing her daughter love the same sport that she also loved so much. Alesia enjoys drawing with Emmalyn - age 4 - and spending time at her preschool, reading to her class. Her son is a ball of energy, always keeping Alesia on her toes. His happy personality can not help but bring a smile to her face. Alesia and her children love reading books and spending time cuddling together.

Being at Western has been a wonderful experience for Alesia, as she truly enjoys every single minute of teaching. Alesia strives to have a personal connection with each of her students, making sure she knows each and every one of their names. This semester that is approximately 250 names! Alesia's students inspire her to be a better instructor every day, and help her to remember to never stop learning herself.

Alesia is honored to be nominated, and now a finalist for the FYE Advocacy Award.

As for a favorite quote, Alesia likes to follow the Golden Rule, and do unto others as you would have them do unto you. Alesia's father, her hero, taught her this rule as a child. She believes in treating everyone with kindness and happiness. You never know when a smile or a kind word can change someone's day. Alesia also loves the quote "Don't Forget to be Amazing Today" ... it's on a framed elephant picture at the foot of her bed. "I love elephants!"

Her theme song would most definitely be "Walking On Sunshine".

# Student Spotlight

## Dakota Little

*Undergraduate Student, Environmental Science*



Dakota Marie Little is a freshman from Ashe County, NC currently majoring in Environmental Science here at WCU. She is the adopted daughter of David and Jeannette Little, and the youngest of three.

Dakota currently serves on the Sustainable Energy Initiative committee and is an active member of Eco CATS. She also conducts research with Dr. JP Gannon, Gracie Erwin, and Veronica Ferry in the Gribble Gap watershed on Water Hydrology Relation to Headwater Catchments and Runoff Generation.

This summer, Dakota hopes to intern through the Student Conservation Association out west in Yellowstone National Park, or on the North Carolina coast working on sea turtle conservation.

In her free time, Dakota enjoys listening to music while making jewelry. She also enjoys hiking, exploring the area, and hanging out with friends.

Dakota is involved with the following groups on campus: Eco CATS, Alpha Lambda Delta, National Society of Leadership and Success, and the Honors College. She is proud to have made the Chancellors List for Fall 2017, with a 3.85 GPA.

Dakota's favorite quote is "Happy are those who dare courageously to defend what they love" by Ovid. She likes this quote as she is a firm believer in fighting for what you are passionate about. It motivates her to continue the path toward her dream of becoming an environmental lobbyist, and maybe one day, head of the EPA.

Want to include news in next month's issue?  
Please send information to [sctobin@email.wcu.edu](mailto:sctobin@email.wcu.edu)