

# IMAGINE

WCU HONORS COLLEGE MAGAZINE 2020



WESTERN CAROLINA UNIVERSITY

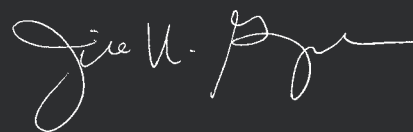
# WORD FROM THE DEAN

Welcome to Imagine! This year's magazine is coming together under highly unusual circumstances. The global pandemic of the SARS-CoV-2 virus, responsible for the COVID-19 respiratory disease, has forced our students, faculty and staff to retreat to safe social distances. North Carolina declared a state of emergency on March 10. Our students, who were enjoying a well-deserved mid-March spring break, got an extension of that release as our WCU faculty were challenged to transition all classes to an online format. Many of us – here in Cullowhee, across the country and around the world – are now adjusting to stay-at-home environments, shifting our schedules, changing our habits and learning to cope with new challenges. Still others of us, including many of our students and their family members, are working on the front lines of the pandemic in crucial roles such as health care, foodservice and retail.

This year's Imagine content, written by our first-semester Honors students in the fall of 2019, does not reflect the current world of social distancing, flattening the curve and teleconferencing. However, the production side of the magazine has moved forward this spring only through the significant and magnanimous efforts of our design team. Working from home, our design team has carried the project forward, collaborating virtually in these uncertain days and weeks. My special thanks to John Balentine, Senior Art Director in University Marketing and this year's production coordinator, who has managed to keep this ship under sail through these unexpectedly turbulent waters. Thanks also to Associate Professor of English Pamela Duncan, who has been the faculty director for this year's issue.

Imagine is a window into the Western Carolina University community. It's a chance to learn more about our students, get a glimpse into their world and see how they connect with the region and with each other. The Imagine 2020 edition is that and more: it's a testament to our community's perseverance and spirit of collaboration during these difficult, strange and uncertain times. I am grateful to all of our Honors student writers and our dauntless design team. I am always impressed by the work our students do to put Imagine together, but I've never been more impressed than I am now. Thank you for all of your efforts!

Yours truly,



Jill Nelson Granger

Writing from my home office and spare bedroom in Cullowhee, NC

April 20, 2020

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**PAMELA DUNCAN**  
ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR, ENGLISH DEPARTMENT



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**RILEY SCHWALM**



**SARAH LONGWELL**



**TORI GRASTY**



**JILL GRANGER**  
DEAN, HONORS COLLEGE

# D E S I G N E R S



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NOT PICTURED: JULIANNA WAGES, COPY EDITOR



# THE SAGA

CONTINUES...

Western Carolina University Senior Alexis Brodie was a just a freshman when some friends convinced her to come to a Sexuality and Gender Alliance (SAGA) meeting, and it was there she began a four-year involvement with the student organization that welcomed her to a community of LGBTQ+ students and allies. SAGA is the only group on campus with the goal of creating a safe space for all LGBTQ+ students where students can feel comfortable to express themselves. Whether it's movie and game nights, discussion panels, arts and crafts, or just hanging out in the University Center, Alexis says SAGA is a great place to have fun or learn new things about the LGBTQ+ community, your fellow students or even yourself.

SAGA also partners with other campus groups to host events such as the WCU Drag Show, the Tunnel of Oppression and, one of Alexis' favorites, the Second Chance Dance. "We reimplemented the Second Chance Dance as a 'we don't care how you present yourself, come have fun' dance experience," she says.

Now president of SAGA, Alexis credits the organization with building her confidence, leadership skills, resilience and persistence. "Being in a leadership position has taught me that even the smallest of victories can have tremendous outcomes," she says. "I find this important to remember when everything seems to be working against you."

Alexis has been instrumental in helping SAGA grow and expand its presence on campus, not only through high profile events like the drag show but also by advocating for LGBTQ+ concerns. Lucas Lombard, a SAGA member and close friend of Alexis', says, "We've had a lot of progress in our level of activism

this year because of all of her hard work. WCU Policy 125, the Preferred Name Policy, and our first ever Cullowhee Pride were all thanks to Alexis' hard work to make sure everything was done right." While those accomplishments might seem like enough for most, Alexis still has one more project up her sleeve, the development of a "Rainbow Hall" LGBTQ+ Living Learning Community (LLC) at WCU. "The other people involved are looking at possible places on campus to house the LLC. They have also started to look into how students would apply to the LLC. We are also hoping to see the question, 'Would you prefer an LGBTQ+ identifying or allied roommate' on the roommate questionnaire."

After she graduates this spring, the Forensic Science and Forensic Anthropology double major ("I love them both and couldn't pick just one.") plans

to attend graduate school to further her education. She hopes to one day work in either a forensics lab or in human remains recovery. No matter where life takes her, Alexis' legacy of support and activism in the campus LGBTQ+ community at WCU will carry on.

*For more information, visit SAGA at WCU on Facebook.*

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# WHAT'S UP?

TORI GRASTY

With his red hair, always-present smile and Western Carolina University t-shirt, Nate Tyler is a portrait of a typical college student. He enjoys watching football, staying up late to catch up on studying and working out in the Campus Recreation Center. What makes Tyler unique is that he is a senior in WCU's University Participation Program (UP), a two-year inclusive program for college-aged individuals with intellectual disabilities.

While Tyler was a senior in high school, UP Program Director Kelly Kelley visited his school to talk about the program. Tyler knew from that moment that he'd found a home. He graduated high school in 2016, worked for a year, then applied to Western in the fall of 2017. "I thought it'd be a great fit and help me to be on my own," he says.

Tyler is very involved in the community here at Western. He has volunteered at Full Spectrum Farms, helped the football team, worked for the motor pool and was nominated for homecoming king and made it into the top ten. He is undoubtedly one of the biggest Catamount fans around, no matter the sport or season. He's a fan who dons purple and gold every Saturday despite rain, snow, wind or whatever the weather may bring. And because of his work with the football team, it's nearly impossible to walk across campus with Tyler and not have a barrage of WCU football players stop to talk about the latest Carolina Panthers game.

The UP Program was founded out of a need in the community, a need that Kelley noticed while she was a WCU graduate student in a Programs and Services for Individuals with Severe Disabilities course. Her professor, Dr. David Westling, described the lack of inclusive opportunities for those with disabilities out of high school, something Kelley found disheartening. She joined Westling, practicing special education teachers and others to design a program featuring inclusiveness in all aspects of college life, high expectations and competitive employment options for everyone involved. The UP Program started as a pilot program in 2007, and since then, 42 students have walked the campus as UP students and 90% have graduated. "We started building the airplane as we were flying it," Kelley says. "Now, WCU's UP Program serves the local community, the state and 279 other programs across the United States, as well as helping to create programs and college opportunities internationally. WCU has been instrumental in beginning and

continuing to support this nationally recognized program in so many ways." There are five components to the UP Program: personal development, vocational preparation, community participation, social participation and course auditing. For personal development, volunteers (called supports) work with students to accomplish goals such as communication skills, personal care and self-determination. Community and social participation help students get acquainted with, find their place in and serve the community, both on campus and locally. Vocational preparation assists students in acquiring skills needed to obtain and keep a job, including learning specific skills for jobs on and off-campus. Some students work in the cafeteria, in the library, in the motor pool like Nate, or elsewhere on campus. Students also audit three to four classes of their choice per semester. These foundational components help UP participants become active members of the community and develop independence. Around 90% of UP students are hired as paid employees in the community within one year of graduation.

As for Tyler, he says that the UP Program has taught him many things, including independence, how to budget money and how to come out of his shell. He has even talked to local high school students about participating in the program at an open house. "It just helped me come out of my comfort zone and try to come out of my shell and overcome my fears. I never really talked much, but ever since I got in, I just started talking more."

After graduating this year, Tyler hopes to stay a third year in the UP Program. He plans to continue to give back in the community and hold a steady job. "I'm thankful. I'm so thankful to be a part of this. I was nervous, but I made the right decision. I love being here. I'm pretty much home."

“ I THOUGHT IT'D BE  
A GREAT FIT  
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ON MY OWN. ”





# Good Neighb+rs

Ethan Haight



If you've ever been to Western North Carolina, you have definitely seen apples. They're just about everywhere, from the Hendersonville Apple Festival to the apple orchards of Brevard to the seemingly infinite red delicious supply in WCU's own Courtyard Dining Hall. But few people stop to think about how all these fresh fruits reach them.

Enter the farmworkers. Migrating up north from Florida and Mexico and Central America, these men and women are responsible for the growth and harvest of not just apples, but strawberries, lettuce, jalapeño peppers, corn, tomatoes, peaches, medicine and culinary herbs, grapes, carrots, turnips, parsnips, radishes, beets, Christmas trees.

Now picture yourself as one of these farmworkers. You're spending more than 12 hours a day crouched in the fields, planting, harvesting, watering, carrying. Your shoulders, knees, back, arms, they're all being stressed. At the end of the day, you come home aching and tired and knowing you'll be back in the fields by dawn the next day. Do you take the time to prepare yourself a healthy meal, maybe do some stretches to help your joints? No. You're exhausted. You're going to throw something together in the microwave and go to bed. You rarely have any time to take care of yourself, and when you do, you're in no condition to do anything about it. Toothache? I can't go to the dentist during the day, I have to be in the fields or I won't get paid. Feeling sick? I can't afford to go to the doctor and I don't have any real way to get there anyway, so I'll just push through it.

Enter Vecinos. Based in the Health and Human Sciences building at Western Carolina University, the Vecinos Farmworker Health Program aims to provide immigrant farmworkers with proper healthcare through their mobile clinic and various partnerships with local medical practices. Vecinos means "neighbors" in Spanish, and with their dedication to a wide variety of services, the program and its volunteers certainly live up to the idea of being good neighbors.

*"With their dedication to a wide variety of services, the program and its volunteers certainly live up to the idea of being good neighbors"*

Vecinos is primarily a volunteer organization, and every volunteer shows just as much dedication to their job as any of the group's founders and leaders. From medical students in the WCU nursing program coming out to help give flu shots, to the campus Spanish department offering interpreters, it is very much a community project that depends on local and regional support.

But Vecinos isn't just a healthcare program-- they are dedicated to "going above and beyond" for those they help. Jessica Rodriguez is a long-time member of Vecinos, having joined as an intern straight out of college. Rodriguez, now serving as the Outreach Coordinator for the organization, is very enthusiastic about her work. "We want to be raising awareness that the

fruits and vegetables that you buy at Walmart, at Ingles, they go through the hands of farmworkers, they're picked by farmworkers that have a backstory. They're probably here trying to get their daughter to have the quinceañera of her dreams, or to help their parents through their diabetic plans, their treatments that they're having in Mexico. They come here for a purpose, and they're helping our economy as well."

North Carolina is one of the top states to bring in farmworkers under the H-2A visa, which is the main program for foreign agricultural workers. A lot of major agricultural products, like tomatoes and tobacco, are grown in the eastern Carolinas, so sometimes the western regions can be left behind; but Vecinos is always working to care for farmworkers anywhere their services are needed.

Farmworker Awareness Week, which involves sponsorships with Vecinos, is the last week of March. Rodriguez fondly remembers one year when she met a pair of young Hispanic girls who reminded her of the joys her own childhood held. She never shows a hint of doubt about her commitment to the program and the service it provides, having joined through the Student/Farmworker Alliance straight out of college. "I fell in love with the job from the first day." If you want to be a part of the Vecinos program, get in contact with them at [vecinos.org](http://vecinos.org). And next time you pick up an apple at the dining hall or some vegetables down at Ingles, keep in mind the farmworkers, who traveled thousands of miles to bring you that fresh produce.





“Something’s wriggling out of the shadow like a gray snake. Now here’s another and another and another,” the radio news anchor, Orson Welles, stated with a quiver in his voice. “They look like tentacles to me. I can see the thing’s body now. It’s large, large as a bear. It glistens like wet leather. But that face, it ... it ... ladies and gentlemen, it’s indescribable. I can hardly force myself to keep looking at it, it’s so awful.”

Radios nationwide crackled, static permeating households as listeners of America sat on edge, hearts hammering, fingernails chewed to the nubs, a dark cloud of fear shrouding the people. In 1938 Orson Welles and his theatre group shocked and terrified America with a radio broadcast of the infamous radio drama “War of Worlds.” This Martian invasion hoax illustrates just how powerful and profound radio can be. Since then, radio has been a prominent influence through the decades, and Western Carolina University has been riding on this broadcasting bandwagon since 1948.

Western’s radio station began as a club started by two students who shared an interest. From there, the station progressed through different incarnations, such as WOO, the original university’s channel name, to the current channel WWCU. It began as an AM station and switched to FM in 1977, enabling it to reach a broader audience and becoming the first FM station within the Jackson County region. When the

internet was introduced in the 1990s, the station was able to replace its outdated technology. WCU Communications Professor Don Connelly, an award-winning former broadcaster who serves as faculty advisor of the radio station, recalls this transition: “When I came to Western in ’99, it was a very small project. It had a three-hour music loop and it played over and over and over when they weren’t live. After I was assigned to the radio station, we looked at it more as a profession.” They introduced a fully automated system to the station and proceeded to introduce more genres of music, quirky live shows such as “Queer Talk” and “Friday Night Bops” and fun, one-of-a-kind DJ’s such as Travesty (pronounced Travis D) and Eddie Foxx, now a renowned country-genre DJ in Asheville. “At the time,” Foxx says, recalling his college radio days in the 1990s, “WWCU was 100% student-run. We didn’t even have an advisor. I mean, we did it all.”

Recently, WWCU’s Power 90.5 switched its frequency to 95.3, extending its reach beyond the rural, Bojangles and sweet-tea-loving small town of Sylva to an area ranging from north of Cherokee to south of Franklin. As of now, the radio tower for this epic switch is still being built; thus, WWCU is broadcasting on both 90.5 and 95.3 as the station navigates this transition. However, content and volunteers are being meticulously prepared for when this transition is complete. Lyndan Jones, a WCU junior and general manager of the station, is excited about the changes. “I’m lit. Oh my goodness, to go to a frequency where you’re going to hear it when you’re driving. Where your friends, your family, your teachers, their families, are going to hear it! It just holds you to a different standard, and to say that I was on this

station, this frequency, this power, this amount of people, in my undergrad? That’s pretty freaking cool.” Jones, a triple-major in communications/broadcasting, sociology and Spanish, had always loved radio and decided to apply her interest during her freshman year, when she discovered it during Valley Balleyhoo. Since then, she has broadcast weather, produced three of her own live shows and has met a plethora of incredible people.

Despite the alleged claims that the radio industry is dying, WWCU FM is continuing to thrive. “The beauty of radio,” Connelly says, “is it’s like a chameleon. No matter where you put it, it changes its stripes and its colors, and fits right in constantly.” Eddie Foxx refuses to believe radio is dying. “That statement is about as far from the truth as a six-year-old is from those cookies Momma hid on top of the fridge. The internet, if anything, has made radio STRONGER! Gone are the days of only being accessible for four hours or when you’re out on location. Your audience has access to you on THEIR time.”

The new and improved WWCCU FM will continue to provide entertainment, information for listeners and opportunities for students who have a love for radio to apply their passions to the creation of broadcasting. “When all the lights go out,” Lyndan Jones says with a proud grin, “when everything else is broken, you’ve got the radio, and I think that’s a superpower.”



# CURTAIN

Just like the closing of a Broadway show, all good things must come to an end. Such was the case for the staff and students in the School of Stage and Screen when they learned that Terrence Mann would be leaving Western Carolina University in 2020. Mann, an acclaimed, award-winning actor with years of experience under his belt, has served as the Carolyn Plemmons Phillips and Ben R. Phillips Distinguished Professor in Musical Theatre at Western since 2006. According to Claire Eye, program director of theatre at WCU, Mann was instrumental in the creation and development of WCU's musical theater program. "Terry came on board right as we were shifting over from a small, quality theatre department to what ultimately became the School of Stage and Screen," she says. "The qualities he brought as an industry professional at the height of his game set the bar for what we expect of students in terms of professionalism."

The originator of the role of the Beast in the Broadway production of "Beauty and the Beast," Mann won Tony, Drama Desk and Outer Critics Circle nominations for best actor for his performance of the Beast. He also originated the roles of Rum Tum Tugger in "Cats," his Tony Award-nominated performance as Inspector Javert in "Les Miserables" and his portrayal of Chauvelin in "The Scarlet Pimpernel." He has performed on Broadway in "Lennon," "The Rocky Horror Picture Show," "Getting Away with Murder," "A Christmas Carol," "Rags," "Barnum," "Jerome Robbins' Broadway" and "Jekyll and Hyde." Mann's film credits include "Critters," "A Chorus Line," "Big Top Pee-Wee," "Solar Babies" and he has appeared on television on "Law and Order," "Love Monkey," "Mrs. Santa Claus," "American Revolution" and "All My Children." He earned an Emmy Award nomination for his performance on the CBS show "As the World Turns."

Though he has lived in New York City most of his adult life, Mann's North Carolina roots run deep. "North Carolina has been my theater home," he says. He attended the North Carolina School of the Arts and is the founding artistic director of the Carolina Arts Festival. Mann also served as artistic director of the North Carolina Theatre for 14 years and of "The Lost Colony," North Carolina's long-running outdoor drama. "I wouldn't be where I am today without all of those folks and institutions in North Carolina who helped me," Mann says.

Mann describes WCU as a breath of fresh air, a respite from the hectic pace of New York City, and has been happy to do anything WCU needed, from teaching master classes to recruiting visiting faculty and guests to directing the spring musical each year. "I love being in North Carolina, and I wanted to give back to North Carolina," he says.

During his many years at WCU, Mann has seen the musical theatre program grow to include all aspects of performance, from acting to design to film. His goal has been to develop strong students with a passion for musical theatre, allowing them to learn from his real-world experience on stage and in film. Tyler McKenzie, a 2013 Stage and Screen graduate who has performed in the Broadway national tour of "Hamilton," says that, because of the relationship developed at WCU, Mann allowed him to stay with him rent-free for two months when he was in New York auditioning. He also credits Mann with sharing valuable advice about performance. "He taught me there is a reality in every piece of acting," McKenzie says.

Thanks to his professional reputation and contacts, Mann has also served as a key recruiter of new students to WCU. As Claire Eye says, "There were times when all I had to do was say his name at a conference, and I got six new people interested in our program." But Mann did more than rely on his reputation to attract students. He also started the Intensive Musical Theatre Summer Camp at WCU, which he describes as "a summer boot camp for high school students in musical theater." The three-week camp is held on campus and sponsored by Triple Arts, a musical theatre intensive founded by Mann and his wife, actor and dancer Charlotte d'Amboise. In the last ten years, the number of musical theater majors at WCU has grown exponentially, thanks in large part to the camp.

Mann's departure from WCU coincides with his acceptance of a recurring role in a television show, which means he will not be returning to campus to direct his final spring musical, "Bring it On." When asked what he will miss most about WCU, Mann replied, "I will miss the people and all of the relationships that I've developed over the years. I'll miss the collaboration." And while WCU will miss Mann and what Claire Eye calls his "Terry magic," he leaves a lasting legacy as a teacher, mentor, director and advocate for the arts at Western and in North Carolina.



# CALL

DANI GAMA



# A Tradition of

Pearl Wyatt

Traditions are important here at Western Carolina University, and undergraduate research is one of our most significant and rewarding traditions. Since 2006, WCU has been a national leader in undergraduate research and has been ranked in the top ten for the number of projects accepted to the National Conference on Undergraduate Research (NCUR). All throughout the WCU campus, across every major, you can find interesting research projects going on.

When thinking about research, it is common to imagine a science laboratory with goggles, gloves, beakers and test

tubes. This idea of research can make it seem like only science majors have the opportunity to pursue it, leaving those in other disciplines wondering what they can do to further their education. It may be uncommon for a major such as English, History, or Parks and Recreation to include research, but at Western Carolina University, undergraduate research is a possibility for anyone, any major.

For example, in 2017 Dr. Callie Spencer Schultz, a professor in Parks and Recreation Management, applied for the UNC System Undergraduate Research Award Program (URAP)



grant. “It was a pretty big deal that we won the grant,” she said, because of how competitive it is between all UNC system schools. With this grant, Dr. Schultz was able to purchase the Missouri Community Action Network (MCAN) poverty simulation and begin this research project along with Dr. Gayle Maddox and Taquice Davis, Associate Director of the Office of intercultural Affairs.

Despite the friendly, fun environment that these professors create, this simulation is no game. Participants are given roles such as Mother, Father, or Child and experience fifteen-minute-long “weeks” where they go to work, cash paychecks, pay bills, go to school, buy groceries, and complete other day-to-day activities. While seemingly simple, the process sheds light on how difficult these ordinary activities become when living under the poverty line. The simulation is used to raise awareness and foster empathy among students. This understanding is especially important for WCU students, since “poverty is endemic to this area” according to project presenter and Health and Physical Education major Matt Long.

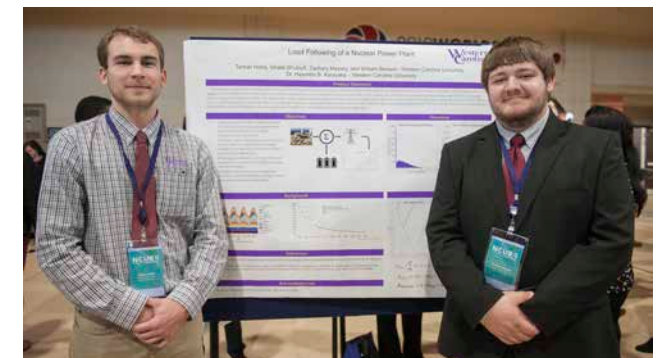
When looking for undergraduate students to assist in this research, Dr. Schultz said they were looking for “independent students who would be able to take the reins and forge their own path.” To these professors, students Ashley Johnson, Matt Long, Krista Patton, and Taylor Carrigan were just what they were looking for. Krista and Taylor participated in the project as seniors and graduated in May 2019, leaving behind Matt and Ashley. Ashley, a December 2019 graduate who majored in Spanish and Parks Management, was surprised when Dr. Schultz approached her and asked her if she wanted to be a part of the project. “Honestly, I just really hadn’t heard of Parks and Recreation students doing undergraduate research.” Ashley ended up writing the research paper for the project, titled Researching an Immersive Poverty Experience: The Efficacy of the MCAN Poverty Simulation.

Matt and Ashley presented their research at NCUR and recalled how often they would run into fellow presenters who were from Western as well. “It happened several times,” Matt said. These students were from departments like math, science, music, and history, and their presentations ranged from an oral

presentation on bacteriophages from the Biology Department to a poster on social media crimes from the Criminal Justice Department. WCU was well represented at the conference.

Beginning the research process can be difficult, and students may not know where to go for assistance, but at Western Carolina, “the professors and the students are all on the same team,” said Matt. He participated in the poverty simulation research project as well as a secondary project, a duoethnography on the undergraduate research experience from the eyes of a beginner. Duoethnography, a qualitative research method similar to ethnography, is a collaborative methodology in which two or more researchers juxtapose their stories in order to explore multiple understandings of a social phenomenon. In fields such as Education or Parks and Recreation where it is difficult to obtain quantitative data, duoethnography is a useful way to conduct research. Matt and his research partner Krista Patton, a Parks and Recreation Management major, studied themselves as first-time researchers as well as their experience of being mentored by professors.

As for the undergraduate research experience, both students and professors had only good things to say. Dr. Gayle Woody says, “I was super impressed with our students.” She added that it was valuable for students to experience every stage of the research process, the frustration as well as the glamor. “I’m really grateful for the opportunity,” Ashley said. “It’s taught me a lot.” Her paper on the research project was recently accepted to the “NCUR Proceedings” online journal, which is a “big win” in the research world, according to Dr. Schultz. “Any time you can get kids to think in a more complicated, nuanced way, as opposed to just black and white, that’s valuable,” Maddox says.



Even though research can seem daunting, Ashley and Matt urge anyone and everyone who wants to do research to go for it. Matt says, “If you have an idea for research and you have a favorite professor within that field, go talk to them.” Ashley adds that while her professors approached her about the research project, she thinks it was because she first expressed an interest in learning more. That’s all it takes to be a part of WCU’s proud tradition of meaningful research – an interest, an idea and the courage to take advantage of all the resources Western Carolina University has to offer.



“Who are all of these brown people?” Western Carolina University sophomore Tiara Salaam says with a smile. That’s what she figures people must have been thinking when the 2019 Southeastern Latinx Student Leadership Conference (SLSLC) organizers posed for a photo at the WCU courtyard fountain. The conference, sponsored by the Latino Appreciation Student Organization (LASO), was designed to raise awareness of and support for the Latinx community at WCU. Tiara and her twin sister Zanaya are very involved with LASO and with the organization of the conference. Zanaya describes the event as “empowering Latinx students for success so they can become advocates in their community.” LASO, which is open to anyone and encourages non-Latinx students to participate and learn about Latinx culture, also sponsors social events, fundraising events and community service projects.

One LASO community service project the sisters are involved in is a mentoring program with Cullowhee Valley School where LASO volunteers help Latinx kids learn English. Zanaya gets excited talking about her work with these students. “They don’t know a lick of English and they may belong in eighth grade, but their placement level is fourth or fifth grade. Our goal is to go over there and mentor them. That way they can get back on track and be with their age group.”

Tiara and Zanaya, as Latinx students themselves, are passionate about campus organizations that help minority students feel a sense of belonging and that encourage the recruitment of more diverse students to WCU. Soon after their arrival at WCU they became involved with Project CARE, a program aimed at improving the academic performance and retention of underrepresented students at Predominately White Institutions (PWIs). Initiated by WCU Intercultural Affairs, Project CARE pairs first year and transfer students with student peer counselors who help them adjust to college life academically, culturally and socially. Tiara stresses the importance of that peer connection. “If you’re not around anybody like you, you feel out of place. When you feel out of place, you tend to want to go other places.”

Before starting their first semester at WCU, Tiara and Zanaya both attended Project CARE’s retreat, which involved mostly minority students. Then, when classes started, they discovered they were often the only minority students in the room. That’s when they began exploring campus organizations and found LASO, which then led to their involvement with the SLSLC. “Having those organizations and having people who are higher up who represent diversity so well, it really makes you feel included,” Tiara says. “It makes you want to stay at Western.” Zanaya adds, “It’s like home away from home.”

They encourage all students to explore all that WCU has to offer, to make the same kind of commitment to the university, whether with diversity issues or something else. “A lot of people say they only go to classes and do homework and that’s it,” Zanaya says. “But being really involved helps you feel like you’re part of a bigger community versus just being here to get your education.” Tiara agrees. “Western has just helped me become more involved in being part of things that I actually enjoy. I know it’s hard sometimes putting yourself out there if you’re not used to it, but I recommend getting involved.”

Tiara’s and Zanaya’s relationship with Western Carolina University has gone through some of the same stages as a romantic relationship. When they were introduced to WCU it was love at first sight. Before school started, they went through the honeymoon phase with Project CARE. They hit a rough patch when they saw a lack of diversity in their classes and on campus, but instead of giving up and leaving, they cared enough about WCU to stay, work on the issues, and build a better relationship. “I work so hard to improve diversity and inclusion because it’s important to make all students feel like they have a place on campus, that they are included,” Zanaya says. “It truly improves the community.”

With the second annual Southeastern Latinx Student Leadership Conference coming this spring, Tiara and Zanaya are excited about another photo opportunity with members of their WCU Latinx community because, as Tiara says of last year’s event, “We were all together and we all could relate to each other. It was very, very beautiful.”



# COMMITMENT to COMMUNITY

EZRI VILLIARD



# WHAT IT MEANS TO BE BLUE

Sara Longwell

Every campus police officer has a different type of day. Some go into classrooms and residence halls and speak to students about crime prevention and safety programs offered by the department. Other officers investigate crimes that have occurred on campus, work in victim services and patrol the campus on foot and in vehicles. Each of these jobs is essential to the safety of the university community.

The Western Carolina University police department has a very powerful connection with its campus community. “We have a close-knit, small community where we feel almost like family,” says Sergeant Jacob Deal. Many WCU police officers, including Deal, graduated from Western and later returned to serve as campus police officers. Deal, who graduated with Criminal Justice and Psychology degrees from WCU, interned with WCU campus police before moving on to work with an external police force. He says he returned to Western because “getting to see how it worked through that internship process and getting to see what the campus police department does every day was pretty cool, and I wanted to come back and be a part of that.”

As Support Services Sergeant, Deal serves in three main roles: teaching, investigation, and victim advocate. Deal’s teaching includes 180 to 200 programs each year on subjects such as crime prevention, drug and alcohol awareness, sexual assault risk awareness and surviving an active shooter event. Deal says, “I like going out and teaching because I create and develop relationships with students.” His goal is to create an environment where students feel safe and comfortable so that, in the event they do need law enforcement, they know who to reach out to. Deal also investigates crime on campus and, in his role as victim advocate, provides emotional support and helps victims navigate legal and judicial systems, as well as other community services available to crime victims. This recipient of the 2017 University of North Carolina system’s Officer of the Year Award for Outstanding and Exceptional Service says his favorite part of the job is “building that relationship between our department and the campus community – students, faculty, and staff.”

Western’s police force encourages all members of the WCU community to pay attention to what’s going on around them and to not be afraid to report anything suspicious. “Being aware is really important,” Deal says. “Having that awareness, whether you’re on campus or off campus, is vital to the safety of an individual. Paying attention to where you’re going, letting people know where you’re going, being responsible – those types of things are really important.”

Deal is just one example of the many dedicated members of the WCU police force. These officers are always on duty, 24/7, 365 days a year. They are always out on patrol, even when the campus community is gone, even over holiday breaks. They are always there, making sure the campus family remains safe.

“WE HAVE A  
CLOSE-KNIT  
SMALL  
COMMUNITY  
WHERE WE FEEL  
ALMOST  
LIKE FAMILY.”





# MAKING IDEAS HAPPEN

KIMBERLY METZ

Taking a deep breath, you give yourself one final push of encouragement as you walk on stage. You don't allow the brightness of the spotlight and the echo of your steps through the packed auditorium to phase you. The audience and panel of judges all have their eyes on you and your business pitch is projected on the screen behind you. This is the moment you have spent hours preparing for. Grabbing the microphone, you begin your pitch. This is Western Carolina University's version of the popular show "Shark Tank," which gives young entrepreneurs a chance to showcase their ideas.

Any student at WCU with an idea and a dream has the opportunity to go through this process with the help of an organization called Elevating Potential through Imagination and Collaboration

Innovation, better known as EPIC Innovation. It was established in 2016 by three professors in the College of Business: Wendy Cagle, Yue Hillon, and Wayne Aho. You may be thinking, "I have this really cool idea for a business, but I'm a graphic design major, not a business major." As Professor Cagle says, "EPIC is not just for business students. We want any major, anybody that has an idea."

Each year, EPIC holds its Annual Fall Pitch Party, which offers an opportunity for student entrepreneurs from all disciplines to present their business ideas for a panel of judges and a live audience. Lauren Mounce, winner of the 2018 Pitch Party competition, is a Political Science and Business Law Administration major. Her winning pitch formed when she began talking to a group of friends who helped her identify a need in the area. Her success with the company "Whee Deliver," a

food delivery app, allowed her to sell off her shares to her team members and buy a house. Not many college students are able to do that, especially as a result of their own initiative and hard work. The amount of preparation that goes into the pitches seems like a lot to balance with a full load of classes, work, and a social life, but EPIC students tackle it with grace and poise. Mounce puts it this way: "It's how you balance anything you want to do. If it's a priority, then it's a priority." She is often asked by friends if her pitch is an assignment for a class and Mounce responds, "It's simply something I want to do."

EPIC is a place for students to work with experienced mentors, access a multitude of useful resources, connect with other students with business ideas, gain valuable experience, and grow as individuals. "Everybody has loved working on this, and even the ones that don't win say this has been a

great experience," says Cagle. Just to be surrounded by others who support you and are invested in your idea makes a huge impact. Mounce adds, "It was so rewarding to see our dream come true!"

Because preparing their pitches is a huge workload and time commitment, EPIC students are bound to get discouraged at times, but Mounce says the positive far outweighs the negative. "It's just so exciting!" she says. "There are so many opportunities and possibilities." Her philosophy is: "If you're happy doing it, you never work a day in your life." More than anything, Professors Cagle and Hillon "want EPIC to give people who want to be innovative or have an innovative idea, a voice,

and make sure students are aware of the resource on campus that would not be judgmental of their ideas." And as Mounce points out, "There is an infinite amount of resources in college, especially compared to when you leave college."

So, if you have a business idea, why not picture yourself where Mounce and many other WCU students have been: on stage with your business pitch projected on the screen behind you. It is your time to shine and show off your hard work. In the audience are your friends – students and professors – who have supported your idea from the start. Now, grab the microphone and begin your pitch. No matter the idea, make it a reality. Make it EPIC.

**"EPIC is not just for business students. We want any major, anybody that has an idea."**

**-Wendy Cagle**







# ON-FIELD ADVANTAGE

Alice Goldberg

Action shots: the most desired photo of every marching band member. After all, who wouldn't want a picture of themselves in the zone, excelling on the field? These highly sought-after images also come with other benefits, like bragging rights and providing a great profile picture. Every band member loves to get one of these taken of them.

Marching band photographers are responsible for making the magic happen; they'll be standing on the sideline, camera in hand, ready to snap a shot at any moment. However, their action shots are hardly ever close-ups because they are not allowed to cross the front sideline threshold.

Unless you're Ryan McGinty, the marching photographer.

McGinty first started to do photography in middle school, where he got involved with the yearbook staff, then he moved on to TV productions at Providence High School in Charlotte and joined the marching band. Seven years later, now a communications major at Western Carolina University, McGinty is in his third season in the Pride of the Mountains marching band, but this time around, he's marching with a camera at his side.

Officially, McGinty is the "On-Camera Specialist" for the marching band's media team, POTM Productions. He loves POTM for its team-building, and his friendliness and social personality only adds to the familial feel of POTM. He is often asked how he manages to split his time between photography and marching. "I usually try to keep a ratio of 70-30 or 60-40," McGinty says, "When it comes to marching and playing, my priority as a marcher always comes first." This focus on marching doesn't stop him from getting excellent shots, especially during warm-ups, when he has the most opportunity. McGinty loves being able to take the more "candid" shots of marchers on the field, the stuff that the regular photographers can't get, and the stuff that makes the cut. "It's one thing to be standing and doing photography from the sideline — you're not moving, but when both parties are moving, you gotta be really on your feet and snappy about it. You're always looking for opportunity, always scouting when there's a pause — quick, camera up, snap-snap, and you're ready to go again, ready to play."

McGinty originally got his position in Spring 2019 when he applied to be the Inside the Pride (POTM's member spotlight initiative) host, but as the media team changed over time, he ended up being POTM's one-and-only marching photographer. "I would say my POTM experience is different than a regular marching member's in the sense that I have more duties. POTM keeps me a lot busier." Despite this extra effort required, McGinty says that he would love to move on to become a full-time photographer next season. "I just loved being able to photograph more this year, and I want to experience more of that. So, I would love to do it full-time next year, to capture, really, what POTM is, and why we're just as amazing as we are."

Despite his desire to be a full-time photographer for the band, McGinty still loves his job on the field. "I would say the biggest thing about being a marching photographer that I love is that you can get stuff that the non-marching photographers can't. When you're there — in the action — you can get a lot of cool photos, and that's a lot of what makes the POTM Productions media page."

McGinty, like every POTM member, was very excited about POTM's New York trip and performance in the Macy's Day Parade. "This was a once-in-a-lifetime experience, with your closest friends right there with you, two steps apart in any direction." All media team members marched in the parade, including the non-marching photographers, so they were unable to capture the parade, but WCU's team did cover the magic of the 4 a.m. rehearsal on Thanksgiving Day.

Despite the hardships and difficulties of both learning the halftime show and preparing for Macy's in the fall, McGinty says, "I just wanted to say that POTM has been a great experience for me so far. There's nothing I would rather do in college. It's my family. It's my home. I love it."

Next time you see an action shot of the Pride of the Mountains, there's a chance that it could have been one from WCU's very own, Ryan McGinty: On-Camera Specialist.





# CHASE GOT PHAGE!

ALLY SMITH

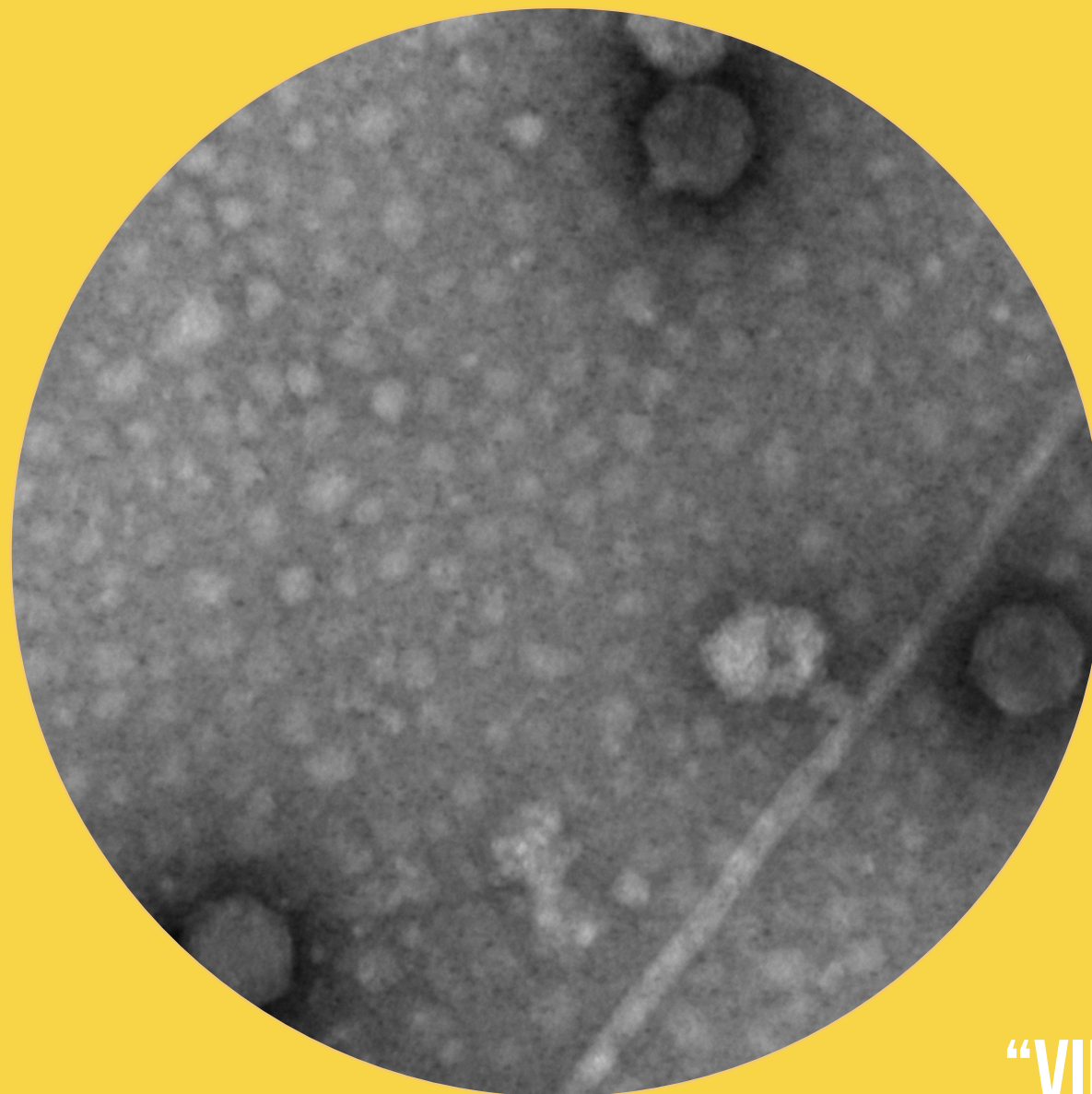
When you picture a scientist, you may imagine the “Big Bang Theory” or the stereotypical mad scientist with hair sticking up everywhere. Scientists, however, can come in all different forms. They can come in the form of a guy who wears an American baseball cap, loves fishing, played football, is all about teamwork and wishes there would be more Karaoke nights here at Western Carolina University. This guy is Chase Bishop. Chase is a freshman at WCU, a chemistry major and a member of the Virus Hunters Living Learning Community.

Virus Hunters is a group of freshmen all interested in scientific research who take four classes together. Their goal is to find bacteriophages, which are viruses that kill bacteria, making them potential alternatives to antibiotics. The students begin by collecting soil samples. Chase’s came from an area next to his dorm, Albright-Benton. Then they grow their virus and then possibly get their virus’ genome sequenced. If the bacteriophages the students find are brand new, they get to name their virus and leave their own mark on scientific knowledge. Chase considered naming his virus after his mom but ended up naming it Pabst instead.

“Virus hunting is a lot like fishing,” he says. “It takes a lot of luck, but a lot of educated luck.” He and some other Virus Hunters got lucky. They discovered a new bacteriophage that earned them the opportunity to visit Wake Forest University, where they got to look at their virus through a transmission electron microscope. Chase compared the experience to what it must be like to see your child’s first ultrasound.

Chase’s favorite part of being in the Virus Hunters is finding bacteriophage. He described the feeling this way: “It’s like coming in Christmas morning not knowing what you’ve got, and you look in your petri dish and see those little freckles on your plate, and you’re like, yes, I got phage!”

His extensive scientific research background is what pushed him to join the Virus Hunters. During all four years of high school, he attended international science fairs. He won either first or second place in NCSAS (North Carolina Student Academy of Science), and NCSEF (North Carolina Science and Engineering Fair). His past projects consist of designing and constructing an engine that runs off dry ice and growing



algae from artificial urine and artificial Mars dirt for the future colonization of Mars. He has also done work with mosquitoes, looking at frequencies that repulse or attract them. Chase and his colleague are currently in the process of getting a provisional patent for the tool they designed to test different mosquito frequencies. Chase’s interest in mosquitoes is what led him to Western. He became interested in working with mosquitoes because they kill nearly one million people per year, and he wanted to find new ways to control mosquitoes to help people. Chase is currently working with Dr. Brian Byrd, associate professor of Environmental Health Sciences at Western Carolina University and supervisor of the Mosquito and Vector-Borne Infectious Disease Facility in WCU’s School of Health and Human Sciences.

Chase already has a contract with his current employer, Pisgah Labs Incorporated, in Brevard, North Carolina. In return for assistance with paying for college, Chase is going to work for them for a year after he graduates. After completing his contract with Pisgah Labs, he plans to start his own science research company, possibly based around mosquito control.

Chase has one recommendation for all students interested in coming to Western. In Cullowhee Creek on campus, Chase has pulled out the biggest trout he has ever caught. So, he suggests bringing a fishing pole. Chase’s experiences spotlight one of Western’s most significant accomplishments: whether you’re interested in science, fishing, karaoke or anything else, there are opportunities available, so anyone can find their place at Western.

**“VIRUS HUNTING IS A LOT LIKE FISHING. IT TAKES A LOT OF LUCK, BUT A LOT OF EDUCATED LUCK.”**



# HOME AWAY FROM HOME

Mia Littlejohn



4,193 miles. That's how far sisters Judith and Andrea Martin Ruiz are from their home in Spain, and it's all because of basketball. Judith and Andrea are part of the Women's Basketball team at Western Carolina University. What are the odds that two international sisters would find themselves in Cullowhee? One explanation is the bond they share as sisters and as friends. "We have a really close relationship," Judith says. "We grew up together, went to the same schools, played on the same teams and we hang out with the same friends."

Judith, the eldest, describes her desire to come to the United States this way: "America gives you the opportunity to study and play basketball at a high level. In Spain you can't play basketball and get a degree at the same time. I was also looking for a small campus because at the time my English was not really good." Through her agent, Judith was able to get in touch with Western's women's basketball coaches. "He made highlights for me and sent them to several coaches in the United States." Not many high school players have agents, but in Spain it was necessary in order for Judith to achieve her goal of studying and playing abroad.

Both Judith and Andrea started playing basketball when they were nine. While Judith favors European basketball, which she says is more tactical, Andrea prefers American basketball. "Basketball here is more physical and has more contact than in Spain," she says. "I like the American game more because there is more contact, and you have to be more prepared since every team is different."

While Andrea says that her transition to America went very well, Judith's transition wasn't as smooth, and not just because she didn't have a big sister to lead the way. "I came here three years ago," she says, "and I didn't know anyone, and my English was really bad. In my opinion you have to be really open-minded if you want to live in another country. Everything is so different from the things you are used to. Western has an amazing international program and because of it I made a lot of friends, and also being an athlete helps with meeting people."

In Spain, Judith says, success in sports isn't valued as much as success in academics. "Our culture is just different. I think we value things differently than Americans." She and Andrea both agree that women's sports receive much more publicity in America than in Spain. "I think American women's sports are more valued and have more resources for success," Judith says. Andrea adds, "In the news [in Spain] 90% of sports is masculine. In the United States, they give more importance to men's sports, but women are also well regarded and therefore have more support."

Judith, a senior Psychology major, chose that field because she believes it has a natural connection with sports. "When we think about sports most of us just see the physical part, but it is not just that. Sports also have a mental part that is probably more important than the physical." After graduation she plans on working as a general practice psychologist for a few years before moving into a sports-related field such as coaching or sports psychology. Andrea's major is Nutrition and Dietetics and her goal is to work with people who already have existing health conditions to encourage them to live a healthy lifestyle by making the right choices.

Judith and Andrea say they have learned from their time at Western to value their family, friends, and culture more. They have become more open-minded about different cultures here in America and have also matured in basketball, learning more and more each day. While both say they'll miss the relationships they have formed while being on campus, they also look forward to being home again. "Being far from home teaches you to value your family, friends and things as simple as food. We don't realize how important those things are until we don't have them."

"BEING FAR FROM  
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# MORE THAN A

Balsam and Blue Ridge residence halls, centrally located on the Western Carolina University campus, house around 800 students and serve as the headquarters for the Honors College. They were built as part of a 50-million-dollar project meant to revitalize the heart of campus, as well as highlight Western Carolina's growing academic stature. In honor of the 10-year anniversary of these residence halls, I decided to talk to two people integral to the functioning and life of these dorms who are long-term members of WCU's housekeeping staff: Kat Prindiville and Bonnie Gunter.

Housekeepers take pride in what they do and how what they do affects the living environment of the students. "To make you feel at home, that's our job. A clean, safe, healthy living environment, that's what we strive to provide," says Prindiville, a self-proclaimed ghost hunter and a housekeeper with 16 years of experience at WCU under her belt. "You come over here (Balsam and Blue Ridge), and you see how nice it looks, and you just seem to have a little bit more pride," Prindiville says. "I see a nick on the wall or something, and I try to see if it's dirt and can be washed off or not."

Housekeeping supervisor Bonnie Gunter has noticed a difference between these two residence halls and others on campus. "It's easier in a dorm like this where you don't have the common bathrooms and stuff because that takes up a lot of your time. It's nice to supervise in a building like this because everything is a little bit newer. The students, I don't know if it has to do with Honors College, but they seem to have a little more respect for the buildings."

Prindiville adds that better behavior in Balsam and Blue Ridge may also be due to location. "I think being the center of campus, I think that has a little bit more to do with it." Residence halls that are a bit more "off the beaten path" don't seem to get the same respect from students.

Both acknowledge the difference in how students at Balsam and Blue Ridge act towards the buildings themselves, and they also notice a difference in how students act towards them. "I interacted with a lot of kids," Prindiville says, "and I don't know why but they were just like family when I was here. I really enjoyed that, and kids graduating and still communicating with them after they graduate and things like that. That was one of my favorite parts."

There are always students who are friendly and talkative and some who are not. When given the chance, Prindiville and Gunter both like to have fun with students and lighten the mood. Prindiville remembers a time she was sweeping the stairs at Blue Ridge, and teasingly encouraged students to do the limbo under her broom. Something like that "puts you more on a human level," she says.

As students, we have the luxury of taking summer break; however, housekeepers must take this time to get the dorms ready for the semester to come. "Summer is our hardest time," Gunter says. "It's when we go in the rooms as soon as students leave and start cleaning and scrubbing the floors, waxing and cleaning bathrooms. We are there for about six weeks."

"I get aggravated sometimes," Gunter explains, "but anywhere you go, you're going to have something. For example, you get a call about a leaking trash bag. Well, that's our job. We have to clean it up. This is our home and their home." Even though it's not always easy, both housekeepers enjoy their jobs and enjoy providing a good environment for students. "I'm just comfortable with cleaning," Gunter says. "I really do love my job."

# ALUMNI UPDATES

**Katie Allison** graduated from Western Carolina University in 2019 with a B.S. in Environmental Science. During her time at Western, she was a recipient of the Dean's Outstanding Scholar Award and presented at the National Conferences on Undergraduate Research, W.C.U.'s Research and Scholarship Celebration, the Appalachian Energy Summit and the Innovations Conference, as well as studying abroad at James Cook University in Australia. Allison is currently a graduate student at Indiana University's O'Neill School of Public and Environmental Affairs, working towards a master's degree in public affairs with a concentration in international development. After graduation, she hopes to work with the United Nations on sustainability goals on a global scale.

*"If I could take only one thing to a deserted island, I'd take a good book to keep me busy."*

**Brennan Burke** graduated in May 2019, earning a B.S. in Mathematics with a concentration in Actuarial Science, Accounting and Finance. While at W.C.U., she served as a student ambassador for the College of Business, as well as the Department of Mathematics and Computer Science. During her freshman and sophomore years, Burke worked as a writing fellow and writing tutor for the Writing and Learning Commons and as a peer academic leader for the Summer Gap Program. She worked for the Registrar's Office her junior and senior years and tutored quantitative analysis her last semester. Her extracurricular activities included Beta Alpha Psi (an accounting honor society), the Finance Club and the Wesley Foundation. She served as co-chair and founding member of Fem in STEM, a club focused on uniting females across science, technology, engineering and math disciplines. Last summer, Burke interned for the accounting firm Elliott Davis in Charlotte, working in its accounting advisory department. Ultimately, she hopes to earn a doctoral degree in business and work as a university professor. She is currently researching different graduate school programs and traveling. In the last year, Burke visited Barcelona, Lisbon, and South Africa.

*"I have a special place in my heart for animals (adopt, don't shop!), so if I could have any superpower, it would be the ability to talk to my dogs."*

**Brooke Burns** graduated in May 2019, earning a B.S. in Biology and a minor in Chemistry. While at Western Carolina University, she completed research on bacteriophages and on black Angus cattle vocalizations. Burns also attended the National Conferences on Undergraduate Research for both projects. She is currently a first-year student at N.C. State University College of Veterinary Medicine and is pursuing a doctorate in veterinary medicine with a focus on food animal medicine. Upon completion of her D.V.M. in 2023, Burns hopes to work in a rural area of need treating bovine, swine and small ruminant species.

*"If I could have one superpower, it would be to know what my cats are truly thinking about me."*

**Gabrielle Davis** graduated in May 2019 with a B.S. in Criminal Justice and a minor in Emergency and Disaster Management. She currently resides in Providence, Rhode Island, and is employed with AmeriCorps VISTA for the Rhode Island Free Clinic. Davis' primary purpose there is to ensure that the clinic is updating its technology to keep up with current health care. In addition to this, Davis is also learning medical Spanish, which is very exciting to her. She hopes to further her education in the future so she can become a P.A. or M.D. and enter the field of disaster medicine. "I hope to help communities mitigate and prepare their medical needs and services prior to a disaster to decrease their workload during times of relief aid being rendered."

*"If I could be any mythical creature, I would want to be a Valkyrie because they are highly intelligent, fierce leaders."*

**Monica Reece** graduated in May 2019, with a double B.S. in Molecular Biology and Biomedical Chemistry. She earned a B.S. with honors in each major. During her time at Western Carolina University, she was part of several research projects, including a collaboration between professors Channa de Silva, Maria Gainey, and Indrani Bose. Monica presented her undergraduate research at national and regional conferences 15 times and locally six times. She is currently at Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia, pursuing her doctoral degree in microbiology and molecular genetics. Monica plans to base her thesis on virology and to pursue a career in infectious disease research.

*"If I could have a superpower, it would be the ability to absorb information instantly. It sure would save me a lot of time reading all the papers in grad school!"*

# PAYCHECK

MATTHEW JOHNSON



# NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH

Below are the projects accepted, titles, student presenters and their sponsors listed by discipline and project titles for NCUR34, this year planned by Montana State University in Bozeman, Montana. More than 50 abstracts from WCU students were accepted to NCUR for the March 26-28, 2020 conference which was canceled due to travel and gathering restrictions related to the coronavirus pandemic.

## ANTHROPOLOGY AND ARCHAEOLOGY

A Pilot Study on Ancient Burial Practices in Medieval Transylvania Using Ancient DNA

*Chelsea Jones and Ashton Jones, presenters  
Katie Zejdlik-Passalacqua, sponsor*

## ART HISTORY AND VISUAL ARTS

Exploring the Function of Beauty and the Grotesque in Art

*Victoria Alexander, presenter  
Ron Laboray, sponsor*

Das Reingold: Richard Wagner's Musical Impact on Thomas S. Buechner's Vitreographs

*Savannah Bennett, presenter  
Carolyn Grosch, sponsor*

Technology of Ancient Mosaic Production: Huqoq Excavation Project, Lower Galilee, Israel

*Connor Henderson, presenter  
Karen Britt, sponsor*

## BIOCHEMISTRY

Antimicrobial Properties of Cotton Treated with Altered Zinc-metal Based Nanoparticles

*Kaitlyn Brasecker, presenter  
Channa De Silva, sponsor*

Structural Characterization of a Mycobacteriophage Repressor Protein

*Kimberly Gragg, presenter  
Channa De Silva, sponsor*

Expression, Purification, and DNA Binding Affinity of a Tagged and Tag-less Mycobacteriophage Bacteriophage Repressor Protein

*Brandon Stamey and Kimberly Gragg, presenters  
Maria Gaine and Jamie Wallen, sponsors*

## BIOLOGY

Isolation and Exposure of Human Embryonic Kidney (HEK) Cell Exosomes To HEK Cells in Oxidative And Non-Oxidative Environments

*Brinley Harrington, presenter  
Dakota Perez, Fletcher Metcalfe, Jacob Kulp, co-presenters  
Heather Coan, sponsor*

Annotation of the Genes and Features in contig20 of the F-element of *Drosophila ananassae*

*Montana Henson, presenter  
Indi Bose, sponsor*

Keratin's Modulation of Protein Aggregation and Autophagy Pathways May Underlie Its Cytoprotective Effects

*Jade Hollars, presenter  
Sydney Phillips, Zane Billings, Emily Zipay, Connor Davis, co-presenters  
Heather Coan and Robert Youker, sponsors*

Investigating Impacts of  $\gamma$ -keratin on Oxidative Stress and Autophagic Flux in Human Embryonic Kidney Cells Using a WST-1 Assay and Dual Reporter Fluorescent Plasmids

*Sydney Phillips, presenter  
Heather Coan, sponsor*

The Effects of Keratin on Human Embryonic Kidney Cell Survival and Mitochondrial Integrity Under Oxidative Stress Conditions

*Emily Zipay, presenter  
Jade Hollars, co-presenter  
Heather Coan, sponsor*

## CHEMISTRY

Separation and isolation of [6,6]-Closed epoxide derivative of fullerene using semi-preparative high performance liquid chromatography

*Mitzy Garner and Jesse Ingham, presenters  
Rangika Hikkaduwa Koralege, sponsor*

Identification of Mosquito Egg Species Utilizing Infrared Spectroscopy

*Connor Larmore, presenter  
Scott Huffman, sponsor*

Characterization of Vanilla Extracts by Attenuated Total Reflection Fourier Transform Infrared Spectroscopy (ATR-FTIR)

*Meredith Stone, presenter  
Rangika Hikkaduwa Koralege, sponsor*

Boroxines as Complexing Agents for Amines in Water

*Christen Thomas, presenter  
Bill Kwochka, sponsor*

The Synthesis and Complexation of Boronic Acid Derivatives with N-Oxides

*Keely Thomas and Hannah Kline, presenters  
Bill Kwochka, sponsor*

## CRIMINAL JUSTICE

Nonviolent Offenders and Prison Population

*Lexie Chandler, presenter  
Maggie Skiscim, sponsor*

WCU Student Campus Crime Risk Perception and Clery Act Report Awareness

*William Towery, presenter  
Barb Russo, sponsor*

## ECOLOGY

Water Strider Predation of Invasive *Aedes Japonicus*

*Miranda Pavey, presenter  
Brian Byrd, sponsor*

Mosquito Wing Measurements Separate Potential West Nile Vectors: A Morphometric Study of Three *Culex* Species

*Paige Robinson, presenter  
Brian Byrd, sponsor*

## ELECTRICAL & COMPUTER ENGINEERING

Theoretical Evaluation of Using Solar Power to Increase Drone Flight Time

*Ian Green, presenter  
Martin Tanaka, sponsor*

Investigating the Impact of Friction, Internal Resistance, Mass, and Control Theory on Rotational Wave Energy Conversion System's Peak to Average Power Ratio Fluctuation

*David Inscoc, presenter  
Andy Ritenour and Hayrettin Karayaka, sponsors*

Load Following Capability for Hybrid Nuclear and Solar Photovoltaic Power Plants with Energy Storage Systems

*Caleb Lowe, presenter  
Faisal Alosaimi, Muhammad Yousf, Jay Stanley, Jacob Bordelon, co-authors  
Bora Karayaka, sponsor*

## ENGINEERING & TECHNOLOGY

Utilizing the Iterative Design Process to Develop a Heel Strike Detection Device

*Jazz Click, presenter  
Martin Tanaka and Ashely Hyatt, sponsors*

Determining the Drag and Nusselt's Number with Lattice Boltzmann Method for Flow in Vegetation

*Christopher Hall, presenter  
Hayri Sezer, sponsor*

Computational Model of Methane Production in a Small-Scale Biodigester

*Lindsey McGregor, presenter  
Martin Tanaka and Erin McNelis, sponsors*

Pumped Fluid Loop Thermal Management Design Proposal for NASA's Stirling Power Conversion System

*Kyle Monaghan and Mary Emma Haywood, presenters  
Nicholas Kropelnicki, Jarid Williams, co-authors  
Bora Karayaka, sponsor*

Swarm Robotics Using Crazyflie 2.0 Drones

*Jesse Sarver, presenter  
Yanjun Yan, sponsor*

## ENGLISH & LITERATURE

Confronting Death: A Study of Dying Through Denis Johnson's *Largesse of the Sea Maiden* and John Gunther's *Death Be Not Proud*

*Faith Ayers, presenter  
Brian Railsback, sponsor*

Shifting Eons: the Comparative Occult Practices of Aleister Crowley and H.D.

*Jonathon Bost, presenter  
Annette Debo, sponsor*

The Final Stories: An Examination of Writing Therapy in Denis Johnson's "The *Largesse of the Sea Maiden*"

*Autumn Boyles, presenter  
Brian Railsback, sponsor*

A Commodity of the Culture: The Value of Women in Jack Kerouac's "On the Road" and Leslie Marmon Silko's "Ceremony"

*Katelynn Brown, presenter  
Brian Railsback, sponsor*



# NCUR CONTINUED

“Reality’s Never Been of Much Use Out Here”: No Country for Old Men and Close Range: Wyoming Stories as Anti-Westerns

*Katelyn Hallman, presenter*  
*Brian Railsback, sponsor*

The Terrors of Time and The Mind: How Leslie Marmon Silko and Kurt Vonnegut Use Nonlinear Writing to Portray PTSD in Their Novels

*Laura Jester, presenter*  
*Brian Railsback, sponsor*

Can You Hear Me? Living in the In-between

*Hannah Grace Lemacks, presenter*  
*Brian Railsback, sponsor*

Biblical Allusions and Influence in Denis Johnson’s “Starlight on Idaho”

*Kate McCosh, presenter*  
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“The Starlight on Idaho” and Redefining the Coming-of-Age Genre

*Gabriel McCoy, presenter*  
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Rebuilding Trust: How Big Pharma Markets Its Products Through Influencer Partnerships on Instagram

*Melissa Rogers, presenter*  
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The Presence of God in Suffering: The Problem of Evil in Denis Johnson’s “Starlight on Idaho” and C.S. Lewis’ “Till We Have Faces”

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Christ, the Devil, and Mark: An Examination of Addiction and Rehabilitation in “The Starlight on Idaho” by Denis Johnson

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## HISTORY

Maternalism During the Jim Crow Era

*Katelynn Patterson, presenter*  
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The Untold Stories of a Western North Carolinian Couple During World War II: How They Survived Japanese Internment

*Katelynn Patterson, presenter*  
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The Phantom Letters: A Visualization of Acadian Correspondence, 1764-1770

*Alexis Peters, presenter*  
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Hessian Mercenaries in the American Revolution: Their Lives Before, During, and After the Conflict

*Nathaniel Smith, presenter*  
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Eleanor Roosevelt: an Analysis of Public and Private Motherhood

*Marklee Wegmiller, presenter*  
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## LINGUISTICS & WORLD LANGUAGES

Artistic Expression as a Tool to Revitalize the Cherokee Language and Culture

*Rebekah Moose, presenter*  
*Rainy Brake, sponsor*

## MICROBIOLOGY

The construction of ura5 mutants in the pathogenic yeast *Cryptococcus deneoformans* using the CRISPR/Cas9 system

*Michelle Chamblee and Jack Evans, presenters*  
*Indi Bose, sponsor*

## MUSIC

Music on the Porch: the Life and Legacy of Samantha Bumgarner

*Savannah Bennett, presenter*  
*Andrew Adams, sponsor*

Music in the Stars

*Sofi Kiser, presenter*  
*Enrique Gomez, sponsor*

Popular Music and the Profit of Protest: the Interconnections Between Queerness, Community, and Capitalism

*Tucker McGrew, presenter*  
*Tyler Kinnear, sponsor*

## POLITICAL SCIENCE AND PUBLIC HISTORY

Combating Water Scarcity in Chile: A Three-Part Policy Solution

*Madison Green, presenter*  
*Niall Michelsen, sponsor*

Rapid Urbanization of Melanesia: Effects on Future Healthcare Institutional Capacity

*Michaela Proffitt, presenter*  
*Ingrid Bego, sponsor*

## PSYCHOLOGY

Women’s Perceived Partner Responsiveness, Sexual Motives, and Sexual Pleasure

*Lacey Rutherford and Kendall Poovey, presenters*  
*David De Jong, sponsor*

## SOCIOLOGY

Western Carolina University’s (WCU) Historic and Contemporary Relationship with the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians (EBCI): A Sociological Analysis

*Emalee Money, presenter*  
*Munene Mwaniki, sponsor*

## WRITING AND RHETORIC

Redefining Therapy: Writing’s Role in Eating Disorder Treatment

*Carina Blomberg, presenter*  
*Jonathan Bradshaw, sponsor*

# HONORS COLLEGE DONOR HIGHLIGHT

KIMBERLY METZ

To Dr. Mark and Kathy Whitehead, “education is the most important thing you can do.” Their continuous generosity and support have allowed the Honors College to provide even more students scholarship assistance to Honors students with financial need.

Retired urologist and retired registered nurse, the Whiteheads were drawn to Western, wanting to become involved with the university, even with this not being their alma mater. “We are involved because we have noticed the supportive environment on campus.”

The Whiteheads are longtime supporters of Western Carolina University and are original members of the Honors College Advisory Board. They have endowed four scholarships for Honors College students. These endowments are specifically for pre-med, engineering, music and nursing students.

“We have always been very impressed with the students in the Honors College. We found out students had to consider dropping out of school because they did not have the funds and just wanted to support what we consider a wonderful Honors College, filled with great students.”







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