

IMAGINE

WCU BRINSON HONORS COLLEGE MAGAZINE 2021



WESTERN CAROLINA UNIVERSITY

WORD FROM THE DEAN

“Tell me, what it is you plan to do
With your one wild and precious life?”
— *Mary Oliver, poet*

Thanks to the pandemic, many of us have had opportunity and motivation this year for introspection. Through a combination of social distancing, online instruction and video conferencing, we’ve had time to consider what we value most in our education, in our relationships, and in the ways in which we find balance in our precious lives. We’ve had time to reconsider plans, reconnect with people in new ways, and reassess what we mean by essential work in our society. This year has been wild. The pandemic has initiated what many have observed to be an acceleration of society’s trends, pushing us to confront not only the actual disease of COVID-19, tremendous loss of life, and economic disruption; additionally, lights have shown on the insidious issues of social disparity, racial inequality, government ineptitude, and educational ineffectiveness.

In this issue of Imagine Magazine, we get a look at the world that our students are confronting during these COVID-times. Stories in this issue are brought forward by first-year students in the Brinson Honors College, students who finished high school at the start of the pandemic, and students who are navigating their first-year college experience through the restrictions imposed and ever-changing landscape of the peri-pandemic world. Despite the additional challenges brought to us in 2020, these students have demonstrated perseverance and resilience as they’ve adapted to the situation at hand in order to promote public health. We thank them for their work and for sharing their ideas and perspectives with us.

The Spring 2021 Imagine Magazine is the inaugural edition published by the Brinson Honors College, our new official name. Re-dedicated this fall, the WCU Board of Trustees named the Brinson Honors College in honor of Jack and Judy Brinson and their family members in recognition of their gifts of love to our students and in “remembrance of their sons Kevin and Kristopher Brinson and their exuberance and love of life.” Despite the pandemic, a small socially distanced outdoor dedication ceremony was held on Sept. 4, 2020, outside of Balsam Hall to recognize and thank the Brinsons for their generosity – another opportunity for introspection and reflection in which two locals, current student Jack Stuckey of Sylva, and alumna, Abigail Fox of Cullowhee, provided their personal thanks to the Brinsons. We are honored and humbled by the Brinsons’ unwavering commitment to our mission. If you would like to watch the ceremony, the video is available on YouTube at: youtu.be/T72gl2DxrWw.

Imagine Magazine was made possible this year under the dedicated leadership and instruction of Pamela Duncan, associate professor of English, who has guided our student writers and worked to mentor them as the university pivoted to distance learning and hybrid modalities. We appreciate the continued direction of John Balentine, senior art director, and Sam Blanton, technical editor, in the University Communications and Marketing department, and the contributions and creativity of our student design team, Rachel High and Sierra Ramsay, who have brought everything together to create the magazine.

As always, we hope that Imagine Magazine brings you a perspective of life at Western Carolina University that you can get through no other source – a first-hand account of student life and the Western community as seen through the eyes of our newest community members. This issue, written and designed during a global pandemic, will also reveal the introspection of the times and reflect the disruption and resilience of our community through the eyes of our students.

I invite you to connect or reconnect with the Brinson Honors College through our social media on Facebook: WCU Brinson Honors College, Instagram: @brinson.honors.college, and on YouTube: Brinson Honors College. We would love to hear from our alumni and friends!

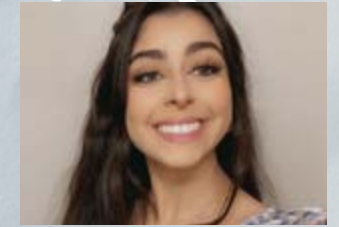
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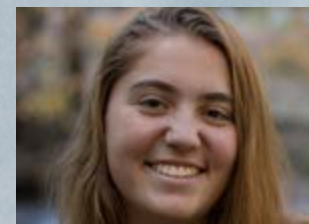
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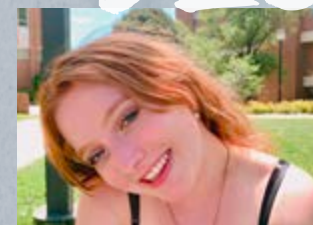
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ENTS

“I FEEL LIKE I’VE ALWAYS HAD THE VOICE OF THIS NARRATOR IN MY HEAD...” –FOSTER DALMAS

“I’ve just always had stories in my head,” says 2020 WCU graduate Foster Dalmas, “and I’ve always just liked reading.” Not surprising for the fiction winner of the first-ever Creative Writing Competition sponsored by the 2020 Spring Literary Festival at WCU.

“Filled with humor and compelling indignation,” is how author and fiction judge Abigail DeWitt described the story. “This story gives us a smartly believable child’s POV without ever veering into sentimentality or cuteness. Dalmas’s prematurely world-weary narrator, outraged by his and his classmates’ imprisonment in school, is a wonderful example of an angry hero. This is a story I won’t soon forget, by an author I’m grateful to have discovered.”

“I feel like I’ve always had the voice of this narrator in my head,” Dalmas says, “and I think it came from my own childhood. When you’re in school, even if you’re a kid who likes learning, it still feels very confining. That idea progressed into this piece.” The story was also influenced by his experience growing up in Leicester, NC as a teacher’s son. “You kind of grow up being at school and being around other teachers,” he says. “And so you have this perspective of both sides.”

While he worried that the story risked not being taken seriously because of its use of humor, Dalmas knew he would regret it if he didn’t try, and his Creative Writing professor, Jeremy Jones, encouraged him to take the risk. “We often don’t think of humor as something that defines a great short story,” Dalmas says. “There’s also the danger that readers may not think it’s funny, or it may be over their heads. Humor can be such an important aspect of stories, but humor is also very subjective.” He adds, “Good writing does challenge you, but a lot of what I write, while I hope it is challenging, also deals with the idea of hope and human connection.”

The human connection became severely limited when COVID-19 hit, and students were sent home. The Spring Literary Festival was forced to go online, which meant Dalmas could not be on campus to receive or celebrate his award. “It was bittersweet,” he says. Since his first year at Western, a fan of the festival, Dalmas hopes it will be able to return to a semblance of normal after the pandemic. “I love Western’s Literary Festival, and I was immediately hooked,” he says. “It was just really cool to hear an author speak about their experience and then relate it to your own as a writer and a reader.” He made it his goal to become a published writer himself and hopes to one day speak at the festival and inspire that same passion in other students.

In addition to the literary festival’s inspiration, Dalmas says the gentle support of his peers and professors in English also encouraged his aim to become a published writer. “English educates you and gives you so much practice; it gives you so many different points of view. It also is just a great place for feedback. They all have this mindset where they want to build you up, and they want everybody else to do that, too. They’re very good at teaching you how to accept criticism and how to get better as a writer.”

Though his original intention was to major in Stage and Screen, Dalmas followed a recommendation to try English. “I took my first English class, and I loved it so much I knew I had to make this my major,” he says. “The classes are wonderful. It’s a great, almost addictive major.” He hopes to put his degree to good use writing for television or perhaps working as a showrunner, but whatever career path he lands on, he will keep listening to and writing and sharing the stories in his head.

STORIES IN MY HEAD

MADELYN REITZ

What makes a good RA?

According to Aidan Koschnitzki, a Resident Assistant in Balsam Hall, “A good RA is someone who is dedicated to their residents, willing to help them whenever they need it, and puts their residents before themselves.” That’s the critical part to Koschnitzki: putting residents before himself, and he takes pride in his ability to help other students.

At WCU, RAs are on duty one night a week, as well as assigned weekends throughout the semester. Their duties include staffing the office, fulfilling room change requests, and coordinating maintenance issues. They also make rounds of the building several times every night, looking for safety concerns or policy violations. However, an RA’s most important job, according to Koschnitzki, is making sure residents are safe and well. RAs are functionally essential to the health – physical and mental – of students in a dormitory. They work to ensure that the environment is safe and productive. “We’ve gone through extensive training to be able to offer support to our residents, no matter the circumstance,” he says, “as well as training on what resources we can provide to our residents, should they need it.”

Koschnitzki’s favorite part of the job is doing individual check-ins with residents. He regularly stops by their rooms to say hello and ask how their semester is going, how they are doing, and what he can do to help them. “It’s important to be able to communicate respectfully and to pay attention to the things that are happening in your residents’ lives,” he says. “Just being someone to talk to, that is a large portion of our role, just being there to support our residents. There’s a lot of development of character that happens in college, and the RAs are there to support that.”

This sophomore from Greenville, SC, chose Western because he loves the mountains but adds that the Forensic Anthropology Program really sealed the deal. “Between NC Promise, a location close to home, and the body farm, I knew that this would be a wonderful campus for me,” he says. He now loves living and working on campus. “I definitely believe that living on campus is one of the great aspects of college life. It’s a stepping stone in learning how to live on your own.”

His love of the new home he found at Western made him want to give back, and that’s what inspired him to become an RA. He was also influenced by his own RA, who became a close advisor and friend who helped him transition from home to college, from family to and a new environment where he didn’t know anyone. “When I first started here,” Koschnitzki says, “I would let my academic life completely take over. I was very stressed about my grades, academic standing, and how all that would affect my future.”

Stress is something every college student is all too familiar with, and Koschnitzki relied on his RA and other campus resources to help him figure out the most effective strategies for dealing with it. “I will set aside certain hours just to work on my homework,” he says. “I make sure I have enough time to eat and hang out with my friends. I usually only block five hours per day, just for classes and homework. Then the rest of the time is for whatever I need to do to keep my social life as manageable as possible.”

He adds, “As humans, we’re social creatures. We aren’t supposed to deal with everything by ourselves. We’re supposed to rely on others. Look at monkeys: they love each other, pick those insects out of each other’s fur. They help each other out, but at the same time, help themselves out. It’s what humans are about.”

Social Creatures

Grayson Tyo

“As humans, we’re social creatures. We aren’t supposed to deal with everything by ourselves. We’re supposed to rely on others.”

–Aidan Koschnitzki





finding family

Kali Robbins

When Brittney Windham chose Western Carolina University, she knew the transition from Charlotte to Cullowhee would be challenging in more ways than one. This self-proclaimed city girl knew that if she hoped to survive and thrive at Western, she'd have to adjust to life in a small, rural mountain town, and she knew that adjustment would be successful only if she first found a supportive community of her peers. "I knew that Western, being a predominantly white institution, wouldn't have a lot of places for people of my community. I made it my mission to find a Black Student Union so I could have a community to go to with people like me. I think that's an important part of a black student's experience."

Windham says that at the very first BSU meeting she attended, they talked about community service and being very involved on campus. "It was kind of like a light that went off," she says. "They're not just an organization; they do things. They have community, and they promote unity. I could tell that everybody was close. That's what I wanted."

Older students in the BSU guided Windham through the new landscapes of college life, campus, and the surrounding area. She says that whenever she felt like giving up, they were there to support and encourage her. "BSU is definitely the reason I'm still here today at this university. Without BSU, I probably would have transferred."

Not long after joining BSU, Windham was persuaded to enter the Miss Black Student Union pageant. "I am not a pageant girl," she says with a smile, but at the interest meeting, she clicked with the other girls and decided it might be fun. When she won the pageant, she says, "I was very shocked because I never win anything. I was prepared to lose." The pageant victory launched her trajectory as a leader in the BSU, and over the next couple of years, she moved from executive board to vice president to president. As the current face of the organization, Windham says students look to her for guidance in navigating some of the most challenging times WCU has ever faced. "Being the president of BSU can get a bit overwhelming sometimes," she says. "It is a daily battle, especially being in a community where there are not a lot of people who look like you; especially now, during the times we're in, with what's been going on in the world, it's been extra hard." Despite the struggles she and other students of color face, Windham says she wouldn't change being black for anything in the world. "I am forever proud to be black. I love being a part of a community where we speak our own language; we have our own culture. It's such a joy to be black." Her hope as president is that she has made BSU a place where students can be comfortable, be themselves, vent if they need to, and find community.

Windham's academic journey began when she attended a campus Open House and fell in love with the English professors she met there. That led her to choose an English-Professional

Writing major. "I've always loved my English teachers, even in grade school," she says. "They've always been my favorite teachers, and English has always been my favorite subject. The English department here was very highly ranked, very highly praised. My professors are great. They're so understanding whenever I need help."

In addition to her love of language and writing, Windham is deeply interested in mental health, so much so that she is minoring in Psychology. "I am such a big advocate for mental health," she says. "That is one of my number one things I always preach to my friends and family – to make sure they take care of themselves. I have dealt with depression in the past, so I know how it feels, and I know what it feels like to not take care of yourself."

Windham is especially interested in mental health issues within the black community. "Mental health is not talked about a lot, especially in religious households," she says. She grew up in the church and says that, unfortunately, they don't really take mental health as seriously as they should. She believes it's a generational issue that needs to be addressed. "You have to know how the mind works. You have to know how the brain works. I've learned a lot through the psychology classes I have taken, and it's made me understand the human brain a little bit more, which has made me understand people more."

After graduation, Windham plans to attend graduate school at Western to pursue a Master's degree in Social Work. "I took one social work class, and I knew that this is what I want to do with my life," she says. She wants to work with individuals with mental illnesses, especially in the black community. "There aren't a lot of black social workers out there," she says, "and the majority of people who need social workers, unfortunately, are people of color. It's very important for my community to have more people who look like them to help them. Because it helps to have somebody who can relate to you, who can communicate with you in a way that someone outside of your specific group can't."

When the pressure of academics and leadership becomes too much, Windham turns to WCU's Inspirational Gospel Choir for stress relief. "When I go to choir," she says, "I turn off my phone. I don't think about anything I have to do. There's no drama. Everybody's just in the moment. It's definitely an escape." Joining the choir, like entering the Miss Black Student Union pageant, was something she had to be persuaded to try. "I was not planning on it because I cannot sing. I can hold a tune in a group, but individually, no." However, once she got there, she found that many people from BSU were also part of the Inspirational Gospel Choir. "It's honestly another family," she says.

“BEING THE PERSON THAT CAN DO THAT IMPOSSIBLE THING MAKES ME FEEL LIKE A SUPERHERO IN A SENSE.”



A church in Monroe, North Carolina, is filled to the brim with clicking and clacking. Emma Dixon, an 18-year-old speedcuber, picks up a Rubik's Cube and begins to turn it with incredible speed. Her fingers fly as she seems to turn every side of the cube at once. Colors and fingers blur together. Red, green, yellow, blue, orange, and white race around the cube. Suddenly, she slams the cube down on the table, crying, “YES!” The timer reads an incredible 10.82 seconds. This is the world of speedcubing. Many of us know the Rubik's Cube as that frustrating puzzle that sits in some small corner of our room, untouched for many years. It has always been thought of as impossible. If you say you can solve a Rubik's Cube, people immediately think you are lying or cheating. However, in the world of speedcubing, some people can solve the Rubik's Cube faster than you can tie your shoes.

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For Dixon, this all started in March 2016 when she bought her first Rubik's Cube at Target. A couple of days later, she had figured out how to solve it from an online tutorial, and from there, she tumbled down the rabbit hole into the largely unknown world of speedcubing. Now, her average solve time is down from one minute to 14 seconds.

Most of the world is fascinated by the Rubik's Cube, though it's estimated that only 5% of the world's population can actually solve one. Created in the 1980s, it has since grown into a pop culture icon. But why is there such a considerable fascination with this rotating toy? Dixon thinks it's because of the marketing of the puzzle itself. “When they first came out, they were marketed as this impossible thing. As humans, I think we're fascinated by things we don't know, and I guess the cube has always seemed like one of those mysteries of the universe.”

It takes more than just fascination to solve this mystery of the universe and one of the things that has fueled Dixon's passion for the puzzle is a sense of accomplishment. “Being the person that can do that impossible thing makes me feel like a superhero in a sense.” Another thing that has kept her cubing is the overall kindness of the cubing community. “It doesn't matter who you are, what background you come from, the cubing community is going to accept you, and that's one of the things I love about it.” Along with pure

DECODING THE CUBE

EMMA DIXON

enjoyment, Dixon says she has also learned a few things while venturing into the world of speedcubing. “It's definitely made me more persistent than I was before because cubing is something you have to dedicate yourself to. You can't just watch one tutorial and be like, ‘all right, cool; I can go get the world record now.’ It takes lots of practice.”

There are misconceptions around almost everything, and the Rubik's Cube is no exception. One of the biggest misconceptions is that you need to be intelligent to solve the cube. “You don't need to be a super genius to solve it, even though it may seem like that at first. Anyone can do it. I've seen cubers from as young as three years old up to 83.” Misconceptions like this one keep people from even trying to solve the Rubik's Cube in the first place, but one of the things Emma wants to do is to help get rid of these misconceptions.

She not only enjoys cubing, but she also enjoys leading people to the hobby, which she was able to do through the cubing club she started at her old high school. “I have gotten so much enjoyment out of it, and I want others to discover the same enjoyment I have gotten from the cube.” She hopes someday to be able to start a cubing club at Western.

So, if you've been looking for a hobby during these crazy times, Dixon encourages you to try it. Pick up that old Rubik's Cube that has sat untouched for most of your childhood and perhaps most of your parents' childhoods. “Don't let your fears stop you,” she says. “Don't let the what-ifs get in your way because they're only going to prevent you from enjoying life.”

A PASSION FOR CARE

BRIANNA CABRERA



Red lights spill into the night sky. The shrieking of the ambulance's sirens adds intensity to the moment. The white vehicle dodging and weaving through traffic gives a sense of emotional urgency to the street. Olivia Swalm, a junior Emergency Medical Care major focusing on pre-med, sits in the back of the vehicle, preparing herself for what is about to happen. When the ambulance stops, the double doors in the back of the vehicle swing open to expose the scene and the smell of burning rubber. As Swalm looks around, assessing the situation, she sees shattered glass littering the empty street, then looks closer and sees a man pinned underneath an ATV that has struck a tree and flipped over. She hears the faint cry of a little boy a few meters away. This moment is Swalm's first call on the job as an emergency medical technician in her hometown of Greenville, South Carolina, the position that led her to WCU.

Swalm chose WCU because it is home to the first baccalaureate Emergency Medical Care Program in the nation. The Emergency Medical Care Program, established in 1976, is a four-year, on-campus program that has grown to graduate 20 to 30 students annually. WCU is one of the nation's only institutions offering a unique Bachelor of Science degree dedicated to pre-hospital providers.

Emergency medical technicians perform basic and noninvasive interventions that help save lives and reduce harm at emergency sites. Swalm, who serves as vice president of the Emergency Medical Care community service organization Epsilon Sigma Pi, completely fell in love with the entire concept. "I really liked how I could be the first one on the scene, and I could be with patients, and I could show compassion and care for some of these people who don't have anyone else." Swalm feels especially drawn to patient care. "If you can get a patient to talk, sometimes it can do so much better than giving them medication for their pain. I think that's really important to understand: sometimes EMS is not just pushing meds and fixing airways. Sometimes it's just listening to someone and holding their hand."

While Swalm also loves music and art and believes it's truly important to be well-rounded, she never had that "gut feeling" that the arts were her path in life. "It wasn't until I went to EMT school that I truly felt I belonged and that this is where I was meant to be."

Being an EMT, however, also comes with its own struggles. "There was kind of a stigma surrounding it for a long time, that this is what we signed up for, like we'd signed up to see bad things, to watch people die, so it must not bother us. Yes, but we are still human, so that stuff affects us." There are many resources to support medical care workers regarding mental health, and a lot of emergency care workers have their own trauma counselors that they can confide in after traumatic experiences. "Coping with emotions and understanding that it's okay to have emotions and talking to somebody about those emotions is the most important thing," Swalm says.

Swalm also relies on the crews she works with for emotional support. "The people that you work with are actually incredible. There is not a single person that I wouldn't go to bat for. Once you get on the truck, it's just you and your partner, and whether you and your partner agree with things or disagree with things, once you get on the truck, you're a team. From my experience, everything goes away for that 12 hours, and it is all focused on making lives better, and I think that is a beautiful thing to have."

Looking back on her first trauma call, Swalm can see the progression in her training and herself. "I've learned that life is really bittersweet, and you have to learn how to hold on to the good moments because in EMT, you see all of the bad moments of people's lives. It's made me a lot more thankful for the family that I have and the people that I have around me." Though the work takes a physical, mental, and emotional toll, she affirms, "At the end of the day, it is one of the most rewarding things I have ever done in life."

"WHEN THE AMBULANCE STOPS, THE DOUBLE DOORS IN THE BACK OF THE VEHICLE SWING OPEN TO EXPOSE THE SCENE AND THE SMELL OF BURNING RUBBER."





NATURE'S PLAYGROUND

OLIVIA MCGINNIS

Lifting his eyes towards the heavens, Ryan Nesbitt gets a good look at the peak he plans to be perched atop by hour's end. The dark grey granite casts its shadow over Nesbitt in a failed intimidation attempt. He is unphased, and determination courses through his veins.

Nesbitt gingerly steps his feet through the leg loops of his harness, pulls the waist belt to its desired location above his hips, and cinches tight the straps of all three. He loops a rope through the belay loop on the very front of his harness's waist belt and proceeds to rummage through his backpack, which lays open on the damp forest floor behind him. A seemingly endless supply of various climbing gear crowds its insides, although Ryan manages to find what he is looking for with relative ease. He retracts his arm from the mouth of the backpack with a small pouch-like bag full of chalky white powder in tow. This climbing chalk will, ideally, prevent a slip of his grip. Nesbitt clips the pouch to the back of his harness for easy access, and he approaches the wall.

Nesbitt reaches behind him and into his chalk bag, coating his hands in the powder. He grips the rock and

pulls himself up off the ground and fully onto the wall. With his body entirely suspended, muscle memory acquired from over three years of climbing kicks in, and he scales the wall with impressive speed. The muscles in his arms, shoulders, and back flex aggressively with each movement. Every several feet that he climbs, he attaches his rope into the protection that former climbers have connected to the rock face. Clipped into the protection, in the case that he were to fall, Nesbitt would only plummet around ten feet before the rope caught him, as opposed to enduring a potentially fatal crash all of the way to the ground. Fortunately, Nesbitt is too skilled to find a use for the protection that he clipped into. His chalky fingers eventually emerge over the top of the rock, followed by his grinning face. "Oh, hey!" he says to me as I am seated atop the cliff waiting for him.

One poor handhold on the rock could cause him serious injury, although fear plays no part in Nesbitt's experience on the wall. "Adrenaline is fun," he tells me with a smile. I doubt that a person meeting Nesbitt for the first time would peg him, with his kind and calm

demeanor, as an adrenaline junky. However, his love of climbing happens to be the reason that he chose to attend Western Carolina University, which has been voted Top Adventure School multiple years in a row.

Ryan Nesbitt is a freshman currently working towards a degree in Environmental Science so that he can spend the rest of his life focusing on the outdoors. Although he grew up in Milton, Georgia, which is far from the most outdoorsy location, Nesbitt's dad made sure to take him on many adventures as a child to instill in him an appreciation of nature. He has been fortunate enough to have his parents' continued support with his activities, although he has had to pay his own way in order to prove his dedication. While many students like Nesbitt decide to attend Western Carolina University to partake in outdoor activities that they are already involved in, WCU also provides students who were not previously engaged in outdoor activities with a fantastic opportunity to get involved. Nesbitt encourages any student wanting to get involved in outdoor activities but not knowing where to start to "go and open the door and go outside and just explore. Just do it."

KEEP THEM COMING BACK FOR MORE

Meghan Lollis

Auburn Collins is part of a unique group at WCU: in Fall 2020, her returning class of sophomores was largely responsible for a record first- to second-year retention rate, which means that Western had an all-time low percentage of dropout, transfer, and withdrawal students. This speaks volumes about the school as a whole: WCU exceeds all retention expectations for both new and returning students.

When she first arrived in Cullowhee, Collins was very reserved, nervous, and afraid she would fail. The first half of her first semester was a struggle, and she even considered leaving. "The first semester, I sank into the shadows. I went to clubs, but I didn't talk. I was very shy." Finally, though, she forced herself to overcome her shyness. "I started saying hi to everybody and trying to be a nice, happy person. I started bonding more with my roommate and meeting new people. And then I was, like, you know what, this is okay, I can be me."

Another way she was able to find her place and her people at Western was by becoming involved. She first joined the Brinson Honors College Board of Directors and enjoyed the feeling of welcome and belonging. Later she became part of the Brinson Honors College Mentoring Program; Alpha Lambda Delta, the National Honor Society for First-Year Success; Whee Turn the Page, a group that promotes reading; the Forensic Science Club; and FEM in STEM.

"My first-year experience was so great that I was excited to come back," Collins says. "There were people I was happy to see when I came back, I wasn't scared to go to class, and I knew what to expect and that I wasn't alone anymore."

Collins credits her success and happiness at Western not only to friendships and involvement on campus, but also to the connection with her professors. She stresses the value of interacting with instructors both in and out of class. "Instead of just showing up to my class and being there, I went to office hours," she says. "Or I would ask questions after class, and I would participate in class, so they learned who I was." Collins says it helped that her professors encouraged her to look outside herself, talk to people, and get involved.

Of her second year at Western, Collins says, "I feel different this year. I'm more powerful. I'm not scared anymore. I feel a lot more confident in myself than I did last year." She encourages students who are struggling to follow her example – to come out of their shells and embrace all that Western has to offer.



CAMPUS QUARANTINE

Moving to a new place to attend a school where you do not know a soul can frighten a young adult. We can all look back at the start of our freshman year at WCU, the crisp mountain air, a large campus, and saying goodbye to friends and family for three whole months. Now, imagine that experience amplified by the anxiety of contracting a potentially deadly respiratory virus. This was the experience of Claire Cable's first time away from home.

"When I first got here," she says, "I was nervous about how I was going to meet friends and, to be honest, within the first week of classes, I had an appointment with my advisor to plan on moving my classes to all online." Cable, a Marketing major from Browns Summit, never got the chance, though, because one week into the semester, she started experiencing symptoms of COVID-19. "I began to feel as sick as I had ever been before, and I knew immediately I had to be put in quarantine. I was terrified."

WCU EMS transported her to Bird Building to be tested for COVID. "Getting the test done was as awful as it looks and sounds, but the nurses were so sweet. They let me know that I wasn't alone and helped me stay calm throughout the entire process." After the test, Cable was escorted to Madison Hall to await her results. She tested positive and spent the next two weeks in isolation.

"I BEGAN TO FEEL AS SICK AS I HAD EVER BEEN BEFORE, AND I KNEW IMMEDIATELY I HAD TO BE PUT IN QUARANTINE. I WAS TERRIFIED." – CLAIRE CABLE

While she anticipated that it would be one of the worst experiences in her eighteen years of life, she discovered it wasn't so terrible after all. She cried a lot at first, but as time passed and she began to recover, she found herself actually enjoying the break from real life. She could rest and take care of herself with no distractions or stress from things like schoolwork or boyfriend drama. She says the experience also helped ease her transition into college and adult life. Cable clarified: "In the beginning of my quarantine, all I wanted was my mom to come take care of me but getting through it on my own helped me realize that I was good on my own and made me feel like a grown-up in a way."

Being in quarantine also helped her realize that her time at school was precious, and she needed to get out there and meet new people, which she did. As a result, Cable is now thriving in university life. "I couldn't imagine being anywhere else," she says. "I have great friends and love the atmosphere here. It's becoming a new home to me." She is beyond grateful for her recovery and the opportunity to further her education at Western Carolina University and cannot wait to see what the future holds. She hopes the future will soon be COVID-free for everyone. "It was one unique experience," she says, "one that I'll keep with me for the rest of my life and know I was a part of history."

ASHLEIGH TYREE

↓ MORE THAN MEETS THE EYE

PEYTON STEPP

As you make your way towards Western Carolina University, miles of mountains and forests meet your eyes, only interrupted by the occasional mountain town and a few houses dotting the mountainsides here and there. Like many, you may find yourself wondering what there is to do in such a remote area. And like many, you'll soon find that the middle of nowhere isn't really boring at all. Whether you're into the great outdoors or the great indoors, there's something for everyone in Cullowhee, Sylva, Dillsboro, and the surrounding area.

JUDACULLA ROCK

Judaculla Rock is a lovely historical landmark to visit in Cullowhee. The rock, after which Western's Judaculla dorm was named, is a place that several students have called a wonderful place to get a glimpse of the history here. The rock is covered with ancient petroglyphs and is often associated with the Cherokee legend of Tsu'kalu, a slant-eyed giant who lived in the surrounding mountains. As the legend goes, the rock got its markings when the giant jumped down from the mountain to a creek below and scratched the rock with his hand. Judaculla Rock is a great place to learn more about the Cherokee history of the area up close and appreciate a beautiful remnant from when this area was all Cherokee land.

JACKSON COUNTY AIRPORT

This mountain-top airport is a great place to watch the sunset while admiring the view of Western and the mountains around it. Sydney Marquand, a senior, and Alejandra González-Céspedes, a first-year grad student who also completed her undergrad at WCU, say it's their all-time favorite place to go in Cullowhee because it's easy to reach and has spectacular views. González-Céspedes says that she enjoys going up there because it's very peaceful, especially at night when she can look at the stars. While many students use this place to stargaze or enjoy a picnic with friends, the airport offers a lot of other activities that are open to students, such as general aviation flight training for anyone interested, occasional astronomy demonstrations, and fly-in events.

"THE FUGITIVE" TRAINWRECK, SYLVA/DILLSBORO

If you can manage a short drive to Dillsboro, you can see the wreckage of a crash from the 1993 film "The Fugitive," starring

Harrison Ford. The scene was shot on the tracks of the Great Smoky Mountain Railroad, and the rusty remains of the bus and train can be seen from the side of Haywood Road near the Jackson County Green Energy Park. "The Fugitive" was made before CGI, so the directors of the movie had to stage an actual crash to get the most realistic effect.

DOWNTOWN SYLVA

Multiple students recommended walking around downtown Sylva, with Emily Faust calling it "something that every student needs to experience" and emphasizing how important it is to get to know some of the people in Sylva so you can connect to the community. Some highlights of recommended places to check out while exploring our historic town are the bookstores, City Lights Café, unique craft breweries, and the public library housed in a former historic courthouse on top of a hill overlooking the town.

DRY FALLS AND BRIDAL VEIL FALLS

Although this one may be more of a drive to get to, Alejandra González-Céspedes highly recommends Dry Falls near Highlands, NC. She says that one cool feature is that you can actually walk behind the waterfall without getting too wet (hence the name "Dry Falls"), and it's only a short walk from the road. Right down the road is Bridal Veil Falls, so named because the spray of falling water resembles a white veil. It is known for being the only waterfall in North Carolina that you can drive behind, although the road is blocked off now for safety.

WCU TRAIL SYSTEM

The 6.8-mile WCU Trail System is accessible to hikers, bikers, and runners. The seven single-track trails consist of primarily intermediate terrain and offer great opportunities for adventure and beautiful views. Another exciting feature of the trail system is an environmental sculpture titled "Dirtmaker," an interactive project that replenishes minerals in the soil when it's rocked back and forth. Trailheads are located at the parking lot of the Health and Human Sciences Building and the parking lot of the softball field.

"THE MIDDLE OF NOWHERE ISN'T REALLY BORING AT ALL"

Culture Club



"SINCE I WAS A KID, I'VE ALWAYS WANTED TO GO TO MADRID. WHEN I FIGURED OUT I COULD, I JUMPED AT THE CHANCE." -JOSUE CRUZ

"It's the excitement of the unknown, ya know?" says WCU senior Josue Cruz of his travel abroad in the fall of his junior year. "Not knowing what's going to happen." Cruz is a fifth-year first-generation student from Burlington, North Carolina, studying in the Forensic Science Program. In the fall of his junior year, amid double-majoring in forensic biology and criminal justice and conducting undergraduate research with Professor Britannia Bintz, he spent a semester abroad in Spain. That may seem surprising for a student who chose Western to remain close to his parents, but he says, "Since I was a kid, I've always wanted to go to Madrid. When I figured out I could, I jumped at the chance."

Cruz is of Spanish and Mexican descent but was raised in a predominantly Mexican culture, so being able to experience Spanish culture first-hand seemed like the perfect plan. His love of city life drew him to Madrid, where he lived in the center of the city in a small section called Arguelles, close to shopping, food, clubs, and music. The culture shock was challenging for the first few weeks, as well as having to be more independent than he'd ever been, but Cruz says he quickly got used to it. "I didn't know anybody in the city, so I had to figure out how to manage my money, manage my time, everything." He says it helped that most people in Madrid are very social. "They love conversation," Cruz says. "Sometimes they might seem like they're coming off as rude because they're very straightforward, very blunt, but that's just how they speak." People are very affectionate, though, Cruz pointed out, and greet each other with hugs and kisses rather than handshakes. When he got back home, he says, "nobody was doing it, and I felt weird." The language wasn't an issue for Cruz since he's fluent in Spanish, but for someone intimidated by a language barrier, he says, "If you want to go, just go. Don't be scared of the language. You'll get the hang of it."

Cruz took classes in both English and Spanish. He had never taken a course in a completely different language before, so this was a significant change. The professors spoke very quickly, and there weren't many slideshows to look at, so he really had to pay attention. Still, the professors created a supportive atmosphere. "The whole friendly and social environment allowed classes to be much more interactive and open for debate. This made it easier to ask questions when I had trouble with something."

Cruz's favorite aspect of traveling to a new country was all the friends he made. He went alone, so he was terrified of what would happen, but he was also excited about not knowing. On short trips to other countries, he made Canadian friends in Portugal, Mexican and Italian friends in Morocco, and many others from all over the world. "Everybody would just see me there by myself, so either they would start conversations or I would."

Cruz says traveling abroad is his favorite thing he has ever done and is such an enthusiast that he served as a Study Abroad Ambassador for Western and recommends the experience to everyone. Since his return to the United States, Cruz has realized that Spain is where he is meant to be. After graduating from Western, he plans to attend La Universidad de Barcelona to get his Master's degree and then work at the National Institute of Forensic Science and Toxicology in either Madrid or Barcelona. "I made a whole life over there," he says. "I didn't want to leave."

Madison Barnes



*"There is nothing but
her and the trail before
her, and she loves it."*

Courtney Burleigh speeds down the mountainside, rocks and roots jostling her in her seat, but she is steady, following the movement of her bike in an attempt to keep herself from hurtling over the handlebars. Sunlight shines through the veil of leaves above her, casting a golden-green glow over the trail as she rounds a corner – over the creek, over the rocks, over the roots. Her hands grip the handlebars tight, sweat coating the inside of her gloves as she guides the bike down a drop – the suspension in the bike and the bend in her knees keeping her upright. There is nothing but her and the trail before her, and she loves it.

One of the most common activities the club participates in is group rides. These rides are just for fun and for a chance to get out on your bike as often as you can. "You're not going out there to kill yourself; you're just going out to have fun and enjoy the social aspect of the club." The group rides are considered "no drop" rides, which means everyone meets up at the trails then "rides to a certain point." The faster riders go first, and when they reach the point, they wait for the other riders to catch up. "This," Burleigh told me, "keeps anyone from being left behind and makes everyone feel as included as possible." These group rides don't just happen on the WCU trail system either. There are dozens of other trails and routes for road bikes around Western North Carolina that are easy to get to. "We are in a great area for biking," Burleigh said, telling me about Fire Mountain in Cherokee, national forests such as Pisgah and DuPont, The Ring of Fire, and so many more places to ride.

LAZING TRAILS

It isn't often you'll find someone as passionate about something as Burleigh is about mountain biking. Ever since she was introduced to it her senior year of high school, the sport has claimed a special place in her heart, and not even the fact that she was one of the few girls involved in the sport could stop her from loving it. "It's obviously more of a guy's sport," Burleigh told me, explaining the mixed reactions she receives when she tells people she mountain bikes. "Some people think it's weird, but they're also people who think 'Oh you're badass.'" Because of this noticeable trend towards male mountain bikers, the female riders, as Burleigh explained, are very close and "support each other so much no matter what team you're on."

Making women feel more welcome in mountain biking is one aspect of the sport she hopes to change. As Vice-President of the Cycling Club at Western Carolina University, Burleigh does her best to make anyone who wants to join the club feel welcome. "It might be intimidating at first," she explained, "but it's not designed to be." It is this inclusiveness that makes the Cycling Club so accessible to all students. Whether you've been biking for years or if you just got your first bike, the Cycling Club has something for you.

Of course, group rides aren't the only activity the Cycling Club participates in. There are races every weekend, mountain bike in the fall, and road bike in the spring during a typical year. There are many different disciplines of races, and Burleigh believes "that's the beauty of the sport of cycling. You can choose from so many different bikes and so many different disciplines, and if you really make it a variety, you never really get tired." The plethora of options may intimidate new riders, but there is no pressure to race in the Cycling Club. "The good thing about cycling being a club sport is that everything is totally voluntary."

With group rides and races, there are plenty of opportunities to get involved with the Cycling Club here at Western Carolina University. Whether you are joining to have fun and make friends or participate for the thrill of the races, the Cycling Club has something for you. Burleigh wants to make the club as inviting as possible and "hopes never to take [the location of campus] for granted because not a lot of people have the opportunities we do."

Madelin McEuen

LEARNING FROM THE DEAD

ALEX SCRIMSHER

Imagine this: a skeleton lies before you. While your first instinct might be to call the cops or run away, consider this question instead: How old is this skeleton? No, don't just throw a random number out. Really consider it. Use clues from the body to determine the age. You can't, can you?

Well, Amelia Konda can. "One of the neatest things about this university is that we have our own skeletal collection, the John A. Williams skeletal collection," says Konda, a senior Forensic Anthropology major. "I can actually go and see real bone and look at the actual variances that happen in the human skeleton." She is currently working on a research project for her professor and mentor, Dr. Nicholas Passalacqua. "Dr. P. is allowing me to explore a topic I've always been really fascinated with since I came to the school – age estimation of the human skeleton."

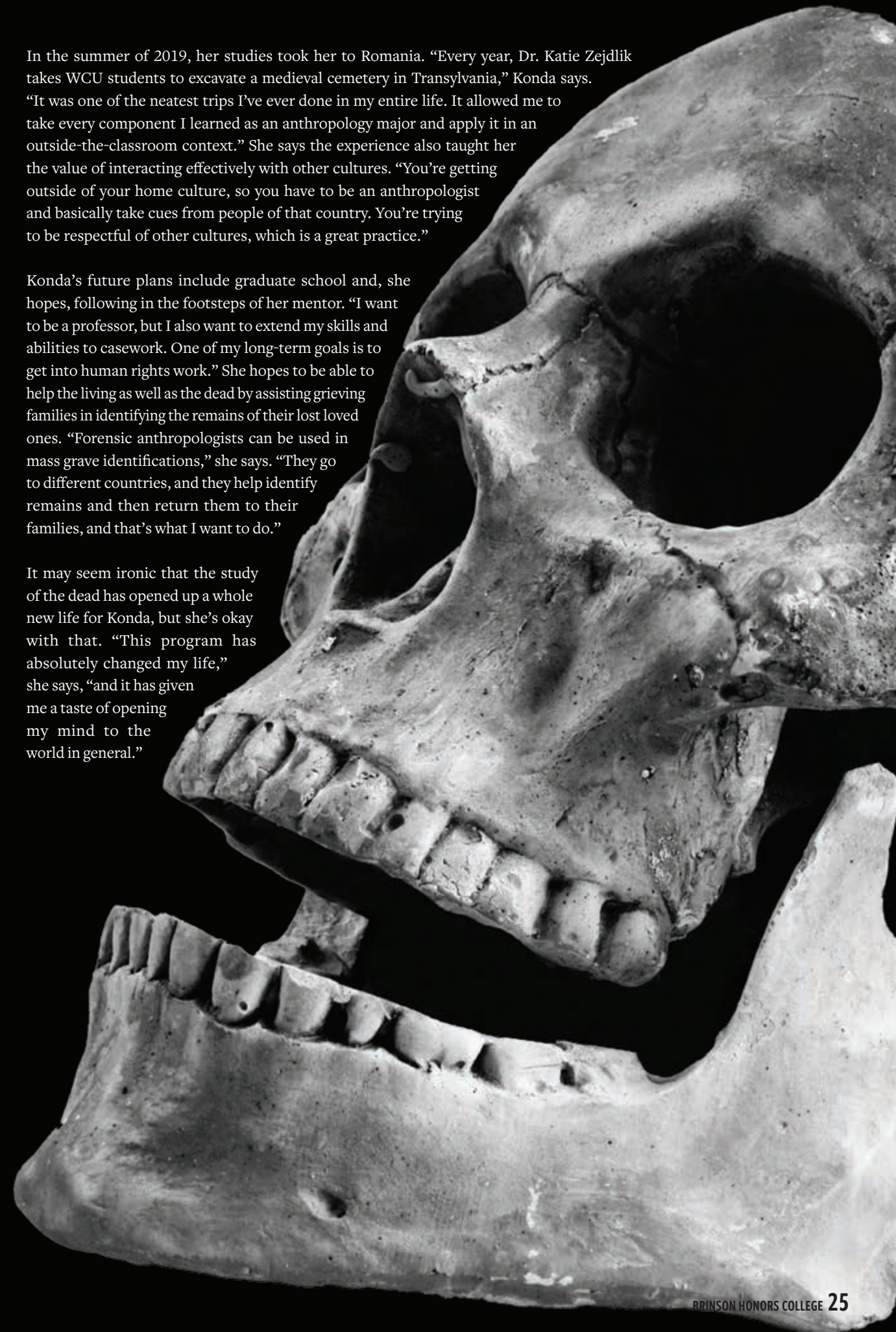
She first discovered her interest in learning from the dead when her research high school placed her in a forensic anthropology lab. "I absolutely fell in love with it," she says, "and just found it absolutely fascinating. So, I started doing research on universities that offer forensic anthropology, and Western was one of the top ones on that research list." The native Californian also credits affordability as a factor in her decision to attend Western. "NC Promise basically allowed me to come to school in western North Carolina with better resources than I could have gotten at home," she says.

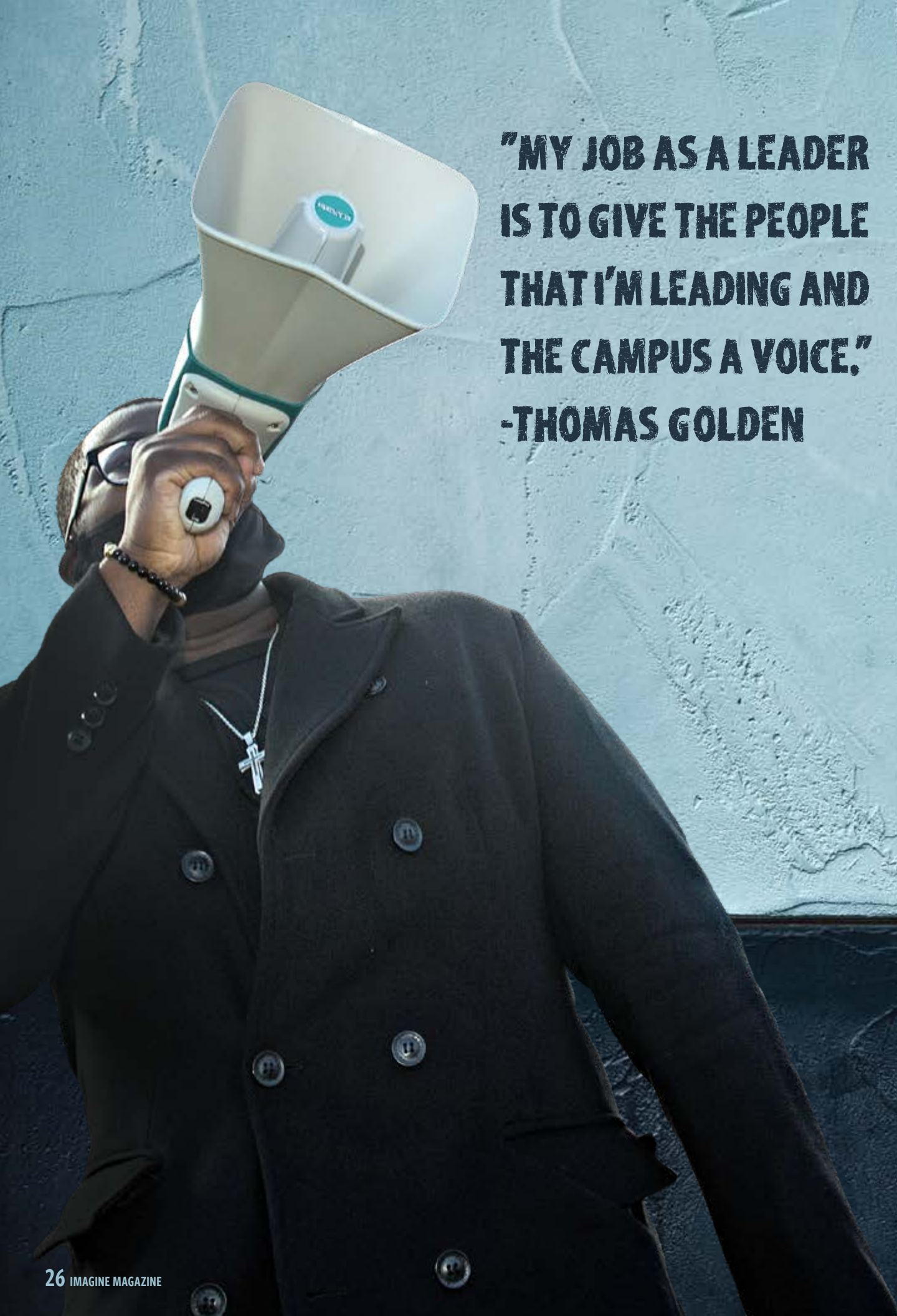
Konda's fascination with the past also inspired her decision to pursue a double major in History. "I adore history with a passion," she says. "I absolutely love it. And anthropology and history are really intertwined. With history, we're studying everything in the past, and with anthropology, we're studying people and how they change through time. Anything I learned in history, I could probably turn around and apply to anthropology and vice versa." She jokes that whenever anyone asks what she's studying in college, she tells them, "I study the dead, and then I study the more dead."

In the summer of 2019, her studies took her to Romania. "Every year, Dr. Katie Zejdlik takes WCU students to excavate a medieval cemetery in Transylvania," Konda says. "It was one of the neatest trips I've ever done in my entire life. It allowed me to take every component I learned as an anthropology major and apply it in an outside-the-classroom context." She says the experience also taught her the value of interacting effectively with other cultures. "You're getting outside of your home culture, so you have to be an anthropologist and basically take cues from people of that country. You're trying to be respectful of other cultures, which is a great practice."

Konda's future plans include graduate school and, she hopes, following in the footsteps of her mentor. "I want to be a professor, but I also want to extend my skills and abilities to casework. One of my long-term goals is to get into human rights work." She hopes to be able to help the living as well as the dead by assisting grieving families in identifying the remains of their lost loved ones. "Forensic anthropologists can be used in mass grave identifications," she says. "They go to different countries, and they help identify remains and then return them to their families, and that's what I want to do."

It may seem ironic that the study of the dead has opened up a whole new life for Konda, but she's okay with that. "This program has absolutely changed my life," she says, "and it has given me a taste of opening my mind to the world in general."





**"MY JOB AS A LEADER
IS TO GIVE THE PEOPLE
THAT I'M LEADING AND
THE CAMPUS A VOICE."
-THOMAS GOLDEN**

One week into the fall 2020 semester, just after a handful of WCU students circulated videos containing racial slurs on social media, Chancellor Kelly Brown contacted student leaders, asking what she could do to better support the Black student population on campus. Thomas Golden was one of those student leaders. A senior from Holly Springs, NC, Golden is the secretary of the Black Student Union and president of the Nu Zeta Chapter of Alpha Phi Alpha, a fraternity founded by the black community. The university's swift response was appreciated, Golden says. "The video was released on a Saturday, and the chancellor contacted student leaders that night, and then literally within a week, the perpetrators were no longer enrolled. I think that's pretty quick action."

Helping students deal with racial tension and the pandemic's added strain has been an intense experience for Golden, and making sure black students felt heard became his priority. "My job as

a leader is to give the people that I'm leading and the campus a voice. I had to process not only my feelings but a lot of other people's feelings." He adds that while it has been stressful, it has also been exciting because one of Alpha Phi Alpha's objectives is to prepare members for the greatest usefulness in the causes of humanity, freedom, and individual dignity.

While the student population at WCU is predominantly white, Golden sees cause for optimism. "For the people that we have," he says, "I would say it is fairly diverse. While we're not the best at diversity by any means, we're doing all right." It could be better, he says, but you can't expect a predominantly white institution to offer the same experience as an HBCU (Historically Black College or University). "For black people, we're a small community," he says.

An important part of Golden's community at WCU has been his fraternity brothers. "Alpha Phi Alpha has always been a part of my life," he says. "My dad's an Alpha, so I've seen Alphas throughout my whole life. I told myself I wouldn't ever be a fraternity man, but when I came on campus, it

was just something about the brothers here that really spoke to me." He credits them, along with his parents and grandparents, as his inspirations in life. "Over the past two years, I've grown as a leader," he says. "At times it is lonely to be a president of any fraternity or any sorority because you deal with a lot and have to process your feelings differently than anybody else. You're the person that everyone sees. You're the face of your chapter. But I wouldn't trade the experience for anything."

Western was the only school Golden applied to after his campus tour here, and he says it's been an excellent fit for him. "I got to the school for a visit, and I just fell in love with the campus. It's beautiful up here. I told my parents when I stepped out of the car; I said, 'This is where I want to go.'" The Construction Management major with a minor in Business Administration says his favorite thing about Western is the people. "You meet so many different people," he says. "They all shape you and help you be the person that you are when you graduate. Every experience, whether it's good or bad, shapes you and helps you grow as a person."

LEADING FOR CHANGE

Deja Gordon

"EVEN WITH THE STRESS OF THIS PANDEMIC, THE MENTAL AND EMOTIONAL TOLL OF RESTRICTED LEARNING, AND THE DIFFICULTIES THEY NOW FACE IN A STRUGGLING INDUSTRY, THE STUDENTS OF STAGE AND SCREEN HAVE BEEN ABLE TO PERSIST AND CREATE INCREDIBLE THINGS."

In the Belk Building Annex lies the vibrant School of Stage and Screen. But things are not bustling as they once were. Though the occasional group of students passes through on their way to or from class, the box-shaped hallways remain largely empty, devoid of the usual swaths of boisterous students.

The School of Stage and Screen is home to all things theatre, dance, and film at WCU. Its students spend a substantial part of their time in direct collaboration with one another, and COVID-19 and the introduction of online learning have made this difficult. Ashlee Wasmund, a dance professor and the Program Director of the BFA Musical Theatre Program, quickly realized how complex classes had become. For example, her dance students were forced to complete all their movements in their own living spaces without access to a studio. "They have maybe like a four-by-four space to be in, and they've got other people in their room. They've got neighbors or other family members that are also trying to complete work. It's just a nightmare."

Leo Lei, the Assistant Professor of Lighting and Sound, has run into similar restrictions. Most design tech classes, including sound technology, entertainment drafting, and many others, are almost exclusively hands-on. The suspension of in-person classes cut off access to the technology necessary to teach many crucial programming skills.

Colin Wasmund is also a professor in Stage and Screen, as well as the Program Director of the BFA Acting program. He discovered early on that the morale of his students plummeted when online learning was implemented. He was concerned some of his students might give up, not only on school but on their careers. "There's not a lot of work out there, and theatre is really scary right now. I get worried that students will lose that hunger that they once had."

Entertainment is struggling more than almost any other industry. With limited group sizes, social distancing, and mask mandates, producing live theatre has become virtually impossible. Even Broadway has completely shut down. As Leo says, "We can't have live theatre if we can't have people gathering."

Because Leo, Ashlee, and Colin all still work professionally in addition to teaching, they too have felt the effects of this lame-duck industry. Ashlee lamented the creative opportunities she has lost. "Starting in April, I had five independent contracts that I was supposed to be working at. One by one, those were postponed and then cancelled." This has been hard for her, as it has been for many artists. As she pointed out, "We're all sort of collectively grieving our industry right now, collectively grieving our individual place in the industry."

Each professor had stories to tell of friends in the industry losing their contracts, taking up "survival" jobs, and going without creative work for months at a time. However, they made it clear that the industry is slowly returning and is filled with creative innovation. Ashlee described the immense power artists currently hold in this challenging time. "What I wish could shout from the mountaintops is look what we can do. Look at what the arts and creative thought and inquiry and creation can do to heal, promote, rebuild, and stabilize a society and the individuals in that society."

Despite the circumstances, students have continued to produce high-quality work and explore creative opportunities. In Fall 2020, students produced, directed, created, and performed in numerous short films, two Zoom plays, an outdoor directing showcase, and a radio play. Some students were even able to perform and participate in a workshop with New Light Theatre Company in New York City. The original songs premiered from Metropolis, an Afrofuturist musical. Creative opportunities for students in the spring semester included a comedy sketch show, an outdoor adaptation of the musical Into the Woods, and a production of the comedy play The Foreigner.

Even with the stress of this pandemic, the mental and emotional toll of restricted learning, and the difficulties they now face in a struggling industry, the students of Stage and Screen have been able to persist and create incredible things. Ashlee says, "I'm so proud of the perseverance of the arts, the program, and the people that make up Stage and Screen."

She is adamant that, although things are hard right now, we must not lose sight of the great discoveries being made. "The arts take big leaps forward when something this large scale happens to society... what a time to be alive and be an artist."

**STAGE AND SCREEN
& COVID-19**
FIONA MARTY

UNFILTERED BEING ME: JANAYA GLENN

The idea for Autumn James' Being Me in Cullowhee docuseries began in the summer of 2020 as a response to racial tensions around the country. Autumn's supervisor at Western's Last Minute Productions (LMP) came to her with the idea of creating a film in response to the racial events that happened over the summer. Autumn, who is LMP's Enrichment Coordinator, suggested that they expand their response to include other points of view and provide an opportunity for each underrepresented group on campus to express themselves and their culture. "There are more identities on this campus and a lot of people want to know about other people, especially faculty that want to create this safe space for students. They need to know."

Autumn felt that the understanding facilitated by the series would garner a type of safety that would surround campus. That remained her primary focus for each episode. The series has since been promoted by LMP to the student body to serve as a reflection WCU's attitude towards racism and discrimination. "I would say the message is really to bring awareness to other people's experiences because everybody has different experiences," she says. It's a simple message but in a year where everyone has become defensive it's a powerful one.

The four episodes that Autumn directed focus on sharing the thoughts of the people who are sometimes left unheard: "Being Black in Cullowhee", "Being Asian in Cullowhee", "Being Latin X in Cullowhee", and "Being a First-Year Student in Cullowhee". Posted on the Campus Activities Facebook page, each episode has the same message: "It is our hope that our fellow Catamounts will listen, learn from, and be respectful of their experiences."

It can be easy to take things like diversity for granted and, as Autumn learned, part of being an Honors Student is considering the experience of others. WCU advocates for their Catamounts to change their perspectives for the benefit of others and themselves. The questions

asked in this docuseries were designed to "give people a different lens to look through." No matter the focus of each episode Autumn made sure to ask the core questions: "What are all of your identities?", "What has been your experience?", and "What resources do you need to improve your experience?"

Imagine walking into Walmart and having every associate's eyes on you, ready to scream that you're stealing. This was one scenario Autumn asked students to discuss in the debut episode "Being Black in Cullowhee". Most commented on feeling afraid, angered, and saddened by their experience. One student said that they feel so guilty walking in and buying nothing that they buy something to escape the worker's judgmental gaze.

There seems to be a divide, not only on campus but in the world, that Autumn believes could easily be solved if everyone stopped the finger pointing and talked it out. "If everyone was direct, if everybody would say exactly how they felt, there would be a lot less misunderstanding." She points out that we're so quick as a society to group people and assume we understand their experience, and nothing breaks down that wall of assumptions like art. That's the goal of Being Me in Cullowhee: to critique society and point at a solution. Autumn draws inspiration from her favorite films like Barry Jenkins' Moonlight and Ava DuVernay's 13th, art that highlights flaws in society with the purpose of encouraging people to create change.

In addition to her work with LMP, Autumn serves as a member of the Delta Sigma Theta Sorority and as a Project Care mentor. That may seem like a lot on the plate of an undergrad, but it's all part of what makes Autumn the strong leader, mentor, and activist that she has become at Western. She continues to develop films that are socially active and pushes for the things that she believes in. Even after graduation, she plans to continue her commitment to the work of enhancing Western's social awareness.



CAPS & COVID

Dean Benne

College students everywhere are under an immense amount of strain during the best of times. From grades to finances, there is a seemingly endless pool of things that cause stress. They are the most anxiety-stricken group in America and have been for years. And now, with the pandemic and everything else that's going on in the world, it is more important than ever that there are professionals who want to help.

Luckily for Western Carolina University students, there is Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) and its director, Dr. Kimberly Gorman. Dr. Gorman is dedicated to helping those in need, and she is an expert in mental health.

"I had always wanted to be someone who helped other people," Gorman says, in part because of an inspiring therapist who helped her with her own mental health challenges. Gorman's passion transforms the lives of countless students through CAPS, and now more than ever, she wants to make sure that those who need help are able to get it.

"I would want any student who is struggling to come to CAPS. That is our main message: if you need us, that's what we're here for. Whatever that looks like, we always want to be there to let students know if they're struggling alone or believe that there is no one to help, we are there."

Contrary to popular belief, the advice of a mental health professional isn't always expensive. In fact, any student who has paid the health fee is eligible to receive their services for free. In the spirit of her fight to help as many students as possible, Dr. Gorman gives general, yet helpful advice for dealing with the symptoms of anxiety, depression, and loneliness that have been caused or worsened by the pandemic.

For anxiety, she says, "It is all about not feeling in control and trying to gain control over things that you don't have control

over. If we can get that focus back to what is in your control, it might help. Part of that is finding a routine because routines have been disrupted so much by the virus. What is a routine that you can establish for yourself which includes rest, being able to be social in a safe manner, and self-care? Try to focus on what you do know, and not what is uncertain."

For loneliness, Gorman advises, "I think what is helpful is for us to reach out to the friends and people in our social group. Being a good friend is reaching out and saying, 'Hey, I haven't heard from you in a while. Are you okay?' We want that community of care for people who are isolated who don't always have the energy, and sometimes courage, to reach out. If we have other people doing that for us, it makes such a big difference."

For depression, she says, "Depression feeds off of itself, kind of like how anxiety feeds off of itself, so depression can really push someone to be unmotivated and withdrawn. We often teach opposite activation skills, which is basically just trying to do something, because once you get going, it's easier to keep going and doing things. Do something, even if it's just taking a shower, because doing that something will help lead to another something, and that's one of the best ways to start. It doesn't cure depression by any stretch of the imagination, but it's a good way to fight it enough so we can move along."

COVID presents a myriad of mental challenges for us to navigate, but it's important to know that there will always be people who want to help. Here at WCU, those people are our friends, family, classmates, allies, Dr. Gorman, and CAPS. We will get through the physical and mental challenges thrown our way. CAPS has a large variety of services available to anybody who needs them, and they are all available on the CAPS website. Dr. Gorman and her team want nothing more than to be there for those who need them.





You anxiously tap your foot. You are about to watch a live theater performance; only, you are not in a theater. You are on the couch with a laptop open in front of you, waiting for WCU’s first-ever socially-distanced theatrical performance, Translation of Likes, to begin. Your eyes fill with wonder as you watch your previously blank screen transform into a kaleidoscope of brilliant blue and beautiful faces. Each face is inside a square representing that performer’s screen, and they are all positioned at different points on a world map. One face, in particular, stands out above the rest: WCU senior theatre major Alaina Newell. Her bright smile floods the room, even from miles away, as her eyes crinkle up at the corners.

The virtual performance was broadcast live in Fall 2020. The play, written by Nambi E. Kelley and directed by Daniel Carlton, initially scheduled for Spring 2020, went virtual because of the Covid-19 pandemic. Translation of Likes revolves around social media complexities and the unique impacts that this relatively new and evolving technological platform has on individual users. Student actors appeared in front of green screens on Zoom from their own homes. The technical crew was in an entirely different location performing the special effects that created a cohesive setting and plot illusion.

Newell, who played the role of The Whiner, has an array of accomplishments under her belt and claims she has “always been an artsy kid” who played piano and took dance lessons as a child but only got into theatre her freshman year of high school. She says this was due to her parents’ undying support and encouragement to follow her dreams and how they taught her the importance of emotional exploration and management. She says, “It saved me from making a lot of mistakes that I’ve seen other people make when they go to college... Shoutout to Patricia and Al [Newell], honestly.”

Newell described her experience with socially-distanced performing as much more mentally challenging than a theatrical production under normal circumstances since every aspect of her life took place in the same vicinity, giving her no refuge away from her work. “I was always reminded of it. Because

it was always here.” Nevertheless, she was very grateful to have had the opportunity to create art with her peers again after not working with them for six months due to Covid-19. She also formed meaningful connections with the writer and director. They helped her advocate for herself and impacted her leadership of Black Theatre Ensemble, a student-led organization that she helped revive.

The Black Theatre Ensemble is one of the few student-initiated organizations on Western’s campus. Newell was approached as a freshman by senior theater majors asking if she would revive a club that started in the 1980s and had since fallen out of use. She agreed to take on BTE because she saw a need for a safe space for theater students who were marginalized because of race, ethnicity, or stereotypes. “I sometimes would tolerate things that made me feel unsafe or uncomfortable. I never felt like there was someone I could go to, someone to stand up for me if I wasn’t strong enough to do it on my own.” Newell strives to provide for others what was not available to her when she needed support most. “It’s so exciting, and it warms my heart to know that we’re doing something that could potentially make a difference here.”

Along with reanimating the Black Theatre Ensemble, Newell has recently made a difference by simply discovering a new way to spend her time: podcasting. During quarantine, she and her friend Abigail Brazier worked together with producer Tyler McKenzie to create Fourth Wall: the podcast, which explores discrimination and bias in the theatre industry. Newell and newest addition to the team, Corey Barrow, invite guests involved in the theatre industry to discuss their experiences every week. Fourth Wall has recently been rated number 12 of the top podcasts to listen to in 2020, according to Feedspot.

In light of her accomplishments and experience in performing, it is abundantly clear that Newell truly is making a difference at WCU. She lives her belief that creativity and the arts can help us all survive and thrive during a time that will go down in history as one of the most challenging of our lives.



THE ROAD TO NOWHERE

TELA SWAFFORD

Destiny Greene always wanted to have a paranormal experience. While other kids grew up watching Spongebob Squarepants or My Little Pony, she contentedly watched shows like Ghost Hunters alongside the adults. Probably that's what led her to the gaping, moss-covered stone arch signaling the entrance to a tunnel. It looked like something out of a fairytale. Dark shadowy figures danced along the walls, a reminder of broken promises and loved ones left behind. Taking one last look around, she took a deep breath before stepping in and letting the darkness swallow her...

2020 was a rough year for everyone: stores closing, masks covering up everyone's faces, and of course, the lockdown. However, this is not just another story of self-pity, but one of triumph over adversity. Destiny Greene was just as affected as everyone else by the pandemic. Her graduation was messed up, her club traditions broken, and her college experience turned upside down. The difference is, she decided to look at this scenario as an opportunity rather than a loss. Something you might expect from a marketing major, especially one remembered in her hometown of Forest City, NC for two things: rebuilding the Rutherford Early College High School Robotics Team's outreach program (T-shirts, brochures, and all) and wearing cat ears. The animal headbands are a fashion choice she happily calls "a deflection mechanism" for human eye contact, a little bit of sarcasm, and self-deprecating humor from this slightly introverted WCU student.

So, what did she do that was so different from everyone else? Simple. If she was going to be trapped during her time at WCU with a nearly infinite amount of free time, she was at least going to put it to good use. "College students usually fill that free time with pointless YouTube videos," she explained. However, this was not healthy behavior, especially considering how long the pandemic was lasting. She needed a place to go, something to do. Greene was still new to Western and decided that she would explore her new home rather than sitting around being depressed by her situation. And soon enough, she found exactly the place she wanted to visit. The appeal to

her supernatural side was all she needed, and before she knew it, she was headed to Bryson City and "The Road to Nowhere."

In the 1930s and 1940s, the creation of the Fontana Dam and the Great Smoky Mountains National Park forced many Swain County residents to abandon their homes. The waters of Fontana Lake covered the only access road to what was left of their communities. The government promised to replace that road so former residents could access family cemeteries, but an environmental issue stopped construction soon after it began. The unfinished road became known as "The Road to Nowhere" and ends in a Bryson City tunnel. A monetary settlement was given, but for many people, it was not enough to make up for what was lost. Now, some say the tunnel is haunted by wandering spirits of the dead who mourn their lost homes.

Greene couldn't resist this local ghost story, and that was how she found herself standing at the mouth of the tunnel last fall. As she made her way inside the graffiti-covered walls for the first time, a scream echoed around her. But it was no ghost. It was a little boy yelling as his family followed not far behind. No supernatural experiences today, she thought. The tunnel was quiet, but not in a threatening or scary way. Of course, this was in the daytime. It might be a different story at night, and she did learn that it is a favorite party spot on Halloween.

Oddly enough, she says her favorite part of the experience was not the tunnel but the drive to Bryson City. "Beautiful," she says. "The trees, the mountains, the changing leaves. It was the most peaceful ride I've been on in a while." She discovered that what she needed most wasn't a paranormal experience but simply an exciting story and scene change. It allowed her to de-stress during this tough time and allowed her to learn about the area in which she now lives. Greene's take-away from this adventure: while life can throw all sorts of roadblocks our way – be it a pandemic or something else – we don't have to get stuck on our own road to nowhere; we can find a way to keep moving forward.

HONORS COLLEGE DONOR HIGHLIGHT

Ambassador Jeanette Hyde is a retired businesswoman, diplomat, and former social worker. She was Ambassador of the United States to Barbados, Dominica, St. Lucia from 1994-1998, and to Antigua, Grenada, St. Vincent, and St. Christopher-Nevis-Anguilla from 1995-1998, under President Bill Clinton. In her early career as a social worker in the mid-1960's, Hyde served as the first female family counselor with the North Carolina Administration of the Courts. She started her first business in 1971, a boutique which ultimately expanded to three stores before Hyde sold it. She was an early investor in Golden Corral restaurant chain, co-founded by her first husband, William Carl. In the late 1980's Hyde worked to found Triangle Bank in the Raleigh area, which was ultimately purchased by Centura Bank in 1998. Hyde co-founded North State Bank in 2000, and served on the board of directors of its holding company, North State Bancorp, until 2011.

Ambassador Hyde is the widow of Western Carolina alumnus Dr. Wallace Hyde ('49, MAE '53) who served as chair of the WCU Board of Trustees, and later served on the WCU Foundation Board for more than fifteen years. Dr. Hyde was a significant figure in Democratic politics at both the state and national level, serving as Executive Director of the NC Democratic Party. The Wallace Hyde Academic Scholarship fund was endowed through the generosity of James Bennett in honor of Wallace Hyde, and provides financial support for students in the Brinson Honors College.

Ambassador Hyde is a strong supporter of the Brinson Honors College in encouraging and supporting Honors Students in pursuing study abroad opportunities and helping them to



meet additional costs of travel and living abroad. The Ambassador Jeanette Hyde Study Abroad Scholarship fund is an endowment that provides annual financial support for Brinson Honors College students studying around the globe.

Ambassador Hyde's support is greatly appreciated by our students:

"In the fall of 2019, I was fortunate enough to spend a full semester abroad living in the astonishing city of Granada. My experience immersed within the Spaniard culture was transformative and inspiring. The scholarship I received from Ambassador Jeanette Hyde made my trip

more affordable and financially realistic. Receiving this honor opened doors that enriched my understanding of what it means to be a global citizen."

–Megan O'Halloran

"The Ambassador Hyde study abroad scholarship allowed me to be more financially stable during my semester in Joensuu, Finland, as it covered nearly all my rent throughout my stay."

–Rachel Rhodes

"The [Wallace Hyde] scholarship allowed me the financial support to supplement nursing school expenses and supplies during COVID-19. This support was immensely helpful and has allowed me to pursue a degree in nursing while allowing me to provide care to people in need. This scholarship has provided both the academic recognition as well as the financial support to pursue a degree in nursing. This recognition serves as a reminder to persevere in nursing school knowing that I have the support of generous individuals behind me."

–Christian Edwards



ALUMNI UPDATES

SAVANNAH BENNET

Savannah Bennett received a bachelor's degree in music in performance after graduating from Western Carolina University in May 2020. During her time at WCU, she performed at the 2019 Jazz Education Network Conference in Reno, Nevada, as the pianist in the WCU Fusion Jazz Ensemble, presented research at the 2019 National Conference on Undergraduate Research and the 2019 SoCon Undergraduate Research Forum, and received the Pride of the Mountains Marching Band Front Ensemble Rookie of the Year Award in 2016. Bennet's hopes and plans are to "work full-time at a museum or historical site preserving the art, history, and culture of Appalachia while still writing and conducting research on Appalachian music."

What would the theme song of your life be?

"'Funky Duck' by Vulfpeck because I self-identify as the funky duck."

MAKAYLA COOK

Makayla Cook graduated from Western Carolina University in May 2020 with a bachelor's degree in social work and a minor in psychology. She was a member of the Brinson Honors College, a sister of Phi Mu, served on the executive board for Miracle at WCU, served on the executive board of the College Panhellenic Council (the council that oversees sorority life on WCU's campus), and was a senator on Student Government Association. Cook's hopes for the future are to begin a career working in a hospital setting with infants and children with terminal or chronic illnesses and return to a university setting to teach social work.

What would the theme song of your life be?

"'Rise Up' by Andra Day. It reminds me of the way I attempt to live my life every day – with perseverance, courage, and confidence – 'rising up' and finding the power within yourself despite the challenges that may arise."

BRITTNEY COLLINS

Brittney Collins graduated from Western Carolina University in May 2020 with a bachelor's degree in psychology and a bachelor's degree in international studies with a concentration in religions, cultures, and civilizations. She was incredibly successful and involved during her time at WCU. Collins was a member of Alpha Gamma Delta, the Brinson Honors College, and she graduated with a DegreePlus Level 2 for cultural responsiveness. Currently, Collins lives in Ohio and works online as an executive assistant for the Junkin Group organization. At her job, she organizes schedules, helps with research and writing reports, and contributes to her team. She hopes to explore going to grad school to pursue a career in either international psychology, creative/expressive arts therapy, or experimental/social psychology.

If you could be any mythical creature, what would you be and why?

"I think that I would want to be a dragon because it would be cool to be able to fly. I would also love to have a pile of treasures, though my treasures would be mostly books."

ROBIN DONAHUE

Robin Donahue graduated from Western Carolina University in May 2020, earning a double bachelor's degrees in hospitality and tourism management, and marketing. During her time at WCU, she was a member of the Brinson Honors College, vice president of the Event Management Club, and a campus tour guide. She graduated magna cum laude. Donahue is currently working as a front desk agent at a hotel in Wilmington, NC. She plans to move up in hotel management and hopes to make other career moves once COVID-19 tensions ease.

If you could only take one thing to a deserted island, what would you take and why?

"Probably pen and paper. There's a lot you could do with that to entertain yourself."

NATHANIEL EVANS

Nathan Evans graduated from Western Carolina University in May 2020 with a bachelor's degree in English as a professional writing major and an interdisciplinary studies undergraduate degree in Japanese studies. While attending Western, he was a part of the Pride of the Mountains Marching Band and had the opportunity to march in the 2019 Macy's Thanksgiving Parade. Evans now writes a Christian blog as he is waiting to find a full-time writing job and hopes to revisit Japan.

If you could have a superpower, what would you choose and why?

"I am an inquisitive person by nature, and one of the questions I think we can never truly know the answer to is, 'What were they thinking?' I'd like to be telepathic, so I could answer that question whenever I liked."

GIANNA GERARD

Gianna Gerard graduated from Western Carolina University in May 2020 with a bachelor's degree in biology with a pre-health professional concentration. While at Western, Gerard enjoyed being an ambassador for the Brinson Honors College, being part of pre-health clubs and FEM in STEM, and conducting undergraduate biology research with Dr. Heather Coan. She currently works full-time as a CNA in the ICU/Med-Surg units at Transylvania Regional Hospital as she gains patient care hours to apply to UNC-Chapel Hill School of Medicine in spring 2021. Her goal is to go into emergency and trauma medicine, and assisting doctors and nurses with COVID-19 patients throughout the pandemic has made her even more driven to do so.

If you could have a superpower, what would you choose and why?

"If I could have any superpower, it would have to be either super speed or teleporting— whatever would help me be on time. I'm always running late to things, so definitely one of those two!"

CHEYANNE HELMS

Cheyenne Helms graduated in May 2020 with three degrees: a bachelor's in secondary education with a minor in teaching English to speakers of other languages, bachelor's degrees in English, and Spanish. Of all the things she accomplished while studying at WCU, Helms is most proud of her study abroad experience in Costa Rica. She is currently living in the greater-Charlotte area, where she works as an English teacher for Union County Public Schools. Her greatest dream is to one day travel and teach English abroad.

What would be the theme song to your life be and why?

"I would say 'Stop This Train' by John Mayer. I constantly find myself wanting life to slow down, but when I take a second to take it all in, I realize that I love exactly where I'm at right now."

KATHERINE HENRIQUES

Katherine Henriques graduated in May 2020 with a bachelor's degree in athletic training, was a member of the Brinson Honors College, and president of the Women's Club Lacrosse team. She works as the head athletic trainer at Westchester Country Day School in High Point, NC, and teaches an exercise science course there. Currently, she is completing the requirements to attend a physician assistant studies program.

If you could have a superpower, what would you choose and why?

"I think it would be awesome to be able to fly and get places quickly and see the world!"

JADE HOLLARS

Jade Hollars graduated from Western Carolina University in May 2020 with a bachelor's degree in biology and a minor in chemistry. While at Western, she participated in research with Dr. Heather Coan and Dr. Robert Youker. She presented this research at the TERMIS (Tissue Engineering and Regenerative Medicine International Society) conference in Florida. She also worked as an Honors Peer Academic Coach and a tour guide through the Office of Administration. She is currently attending UNC-Chapel Hill for a master's in public health with a concentration in maternal, child, and family health. She hopes to become a professional advocate for mothers and children in rural communities and work to implement programs and services to improve their health and development.

If you could be any mythical creature, what would you be and why?

“I would probably choose a phoenix; they are strong, powerful and have the power of rebirth. I feel as if I already rise from the ashes and persevere through challenges while embracing every new opportunity.”

LAUREN HOLLEY

Lauren Holley graduated from Western Carolina University in May 2020 with a bachelor's degree in business administration. She majored in accounting and minored in finance and economics. Holley accomplished many things in her time at Western, including: making the Chancellor's List every semester and winning the Brinson Honors College Distinguished Achievement Award. She was a member of the Brinson Honors College and a tutor at the Writing and Learning Commons for more than two years. Today, Holley is studying to receive her master of accountancy at Clemson University while simultaneously pursuing a CPA license. After she gets her master's, she hopes to begin a doctorate program for a Ph.D. in accounting. In the fall of 2021, Holley plans to start work as a tax associate at a big four accounting firm. In the future, she hopes to be an accounting professor and continue her accounting research.

If you could have a superpower, what would you choose?

“I would want to induce truthfulness. I am very honest and confrontational, so I think life is too short not to speak your mind.”

ASHTON JONES

Upon graduating from Western Carolina University in May 2020, Ashton Jones decided to attend Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis and strives to complete a master's in forensic and investigative sciences to accompany her bachelor's degrees in forensic biology, forensic anthropology, and chemistry minor. While at Western, she was a member of the Brinson Honors College, made the Chancellor's and Dean's List each semester, and traveled abroad to Romania. Jones hopes to complete graduate school, return to North Carolina, and pursue a career involving both casework and research.

What would the theme song to your life be?

“‘Care’ by Kid Rock, featuring Martina McBride, because I know I can’t change the world, but I can try to make it a better place for others by caring.”

ALLY THOMPSON

Ally Thompson graduated from Western Carolina University in May 2020. She graduated with two bachelor's degrees: in finance and in mathematical economics. While at WCU, Thompson was the VP, Treasurer, and Community Service Chair of the Brinson Honors College Board of Directors. She helped to start Book Buddies, a program where WCU students read to elementary students at Smokey Mountain Elementary School. She also participated in Finance Club and Economics Club. Thompson wrote a journal article which is scheduled for publication and presented it at the Eastern Economic Association meetings in Boston. She was a first-generation college student and received the Top Finance Major and Top Economics Minor awards, which are given to one student in each major in the college of business. She is currently living in Sierra Vista, Arizona with her husband who is an officer in the US Army. She works as a remote consultant for the Corporation for Entrepreneurship and Innovation. In her free time, Thompson is raising and playing with her and her husband's golden retriever puppy. She hopes to receive her CFA designation in the next four years while her husband is in the Army.

If you could have a superpower, what would you choose?

“If I could have a superpower, I would be able to breathe underwater (and hopefully have it where the pressure doesn’t affect me!). I love to swim and have always loved the ocean. I would be at the beach all the time if I had the choice!”

DANE WAGNER

Dane Wager is an overachiever who graduated in May of 2020 with a 4.0 GPA and a bachelor's degree in Spanish as well as in communication with a concentration in health communication. Some of his accomplishments include making the Chancellor's List every semester; studying in Valencia, Spain and becoming fluent in Spanish; keeping his spot in the Pi Lambda Phi Fraternity; and working as an RA for two years until he worked his way up to head RA of Walker Hall in its final year. Currently, he works as a community coordinator at WCU's Judaculla Hall, and in the near future he hopes to become a Spanish professor by taking graduate school courses.

What would the theme song to your life be?

“‘Spread Love’ by Mick Jenkins because it simplifies life, with all the interactions and relationships you have with people, to one thing: spreading love. I firmly believe in the idea that it is much easier to love the people around you. It makes your life more positive.”

DEVIN WALKER

Walker graduated in May of 2020 with a double major; he earned a bachelor's degree in nursing and another in Spanish. During his time at Western, he worked at the Writing and Learning Commons tutoring fellow students seeking assistance. He is following his passion for health care by working as a nurse in a COVID-19 intensive care unit in Raleigh. He is currently undecided when it comes to his future education, but he hopes to enter a graduate program so that he can work as a nurse practitioner, specializing in migrant clients.

What would the theme song to your life be?

“A Latin song called ‘¿A quien le importa?’ (translates to ‘Who Cares?’) by Alaska y Dinarama, a song about ignoring critics and focusing on what makes you happy.”



NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH

Listed by discipline for NCUR35, below are the projects accepted, with titles, student presenters and their faculty sponsors. This year’s conference, NCUR@Home, was held online due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Students who were accepted last year, when the conference was canceled, were allowed to present this year and those who elected to do that are denoted in the list with an asterisk.

ART HISTORY AND VISUAL ARTS

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

*Student Author: Savannah Bennett**
Faculty Sponsor: Carolyn Grosch

BIOCHEMISTRY

Human Embryonic Kidney (HEK) Cell Exosome Isolation and Characterization

Student Author: Brianna Cowan
Faculty Sponsor: Heather Coan

Investigating an unknown protein (3UN6) in Staphylococcus aureus NCTC 8325

Student Author: Charles Wise
Faculty Sponsor: Amanda Storm

BIOLOGY

BacMam Actin and Lysoprobe Method Development in Human Embryonic Kidney and Mesenchymal Stem Cells

Student Authors: Jessica Adams, Amelia Ray
Faculty Sponsor: Heather Coan

Visualizing Autophagy in Nutrient Starved Cells Via Transfection of an LC3 Dual Fluorescence Plasmid

Student Authors: Bryan Gutman, Renee Saneholtz
Faculty Sponsor: Heather Coan

May the Homeostasis be With You: Physiology of the Animal Kingdom in George Lucas’ Star Wars

Student Author: Melissa Rogers
Faculty Sponsor: Joe Bill Mathews

CHEMISTRY

Effect of Weathering on the Clear Coat Across Vehicles for Forensic Purposes

Student Author: Madeline Dunn
Faculty Sponsor: Nuwan Perera

Luminescent Property Studies of Fluorobenzoic Acid Ligand-based Europium(III) Metal Complexes Using Computational Chemistry Tools

Student Author: Matteo Fratarcangeli
Faculty Sponsor: Channa De Silva

Separation and Isolation of [6,6]-Closed Epoxide Derivative of Fullerene Using Semi-Preparative High Performance Liquid Chromatography

*Student Author: Mitzy Garner **
Faculty Sponsor: Rangika Hikkaduwa Koralege

Kinetic Study for Adsorption of Cu²⁺ onto Modified and Unmodified Peanut Hulls

Student Author: Susan Kenny
Faculty Sponsor: Carmen Huffman

Detection of Biogenic Amines in Grave Soil and Cadaver Dog Training Aids Using High Performance Liquid Chromatography

Student Author: Allena Opoku
Faculty Sponsor: Nuwan Perera

Microwave-Assisted Synthesis of Zinc Oxide Nanoparticles with Europium Metal Doping for Potential Antimicrobial Applications

Student Author: George Paulino
Faculty Sponsor: Channa De Silva

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

*Student Author: Meredith Stone **
Faculty Sponsor: Nuwan Perera

Criminology and Criminal Justice Does It Matter If You Have a Defense Attorney?: Importance of Defense Counsel at Bond Modification Hearings

Student Author: Morgan Robinson
Faculty Sponsor: Jamie Vaske

ENGINEERING

Biomaterial Printer

Student Authors: Riley Johnson, David Yang, Nicholas Umiling, Jeff Albriton, Levi Johnson, Nazmul Ahsahn, Cameron Lewis
Faculty Sponsor: Nazmul Ahsan

A Simple, Real-Time Method for Measuring Firebrand Heat Flux using Semiconductor Devices

Student Authors: Birch Newell, Marcus Chester
Faculty Sponsor: Andy Ritenour

Load-Following Flexibility of Small Modular Reactors Coupled with Wind Farms in the Presence of Extreme Wind Conditions

Student Authors: Joseph Rolland, Carl Robinson, Elijah Bloom, Chris Rodriguez, Fawaz Alsubaie
Faculty Sponsor: Bora Karayaka

ENGLISH AND LITERATURE

Something to Hold on To: Barry Lopez, Ralph Waldo Emerson, and Finding Purpose in Art and Nature

Student Author: Carina Blomberg
Faculty Sponsor: Jonathan Bradshaw

The Final Stories: An Examination of Writing Therapy in Denis Johnson’s “The Largesse of the Sea Maiden”

*Student Author: Autumn Boyles **
Faculty Sponsor: Brian Railsback

The Biblical Paranoia of Macbeth: An Analysis of the Paranoid Effects of Christian Principles on the Life of Macbeth

Student Author: Valerie Dillard
Faculty Sponsor: Mary Adams

“Like the Worst, She’s a Woman”: Objectification and Degradation of Women in Salvage the Bones

Student Author: Dabney Doeppner
Faculty Sponsor: Brian Railsback

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

Student Author: Katelyn Hallman
Faculty Sponsor: Brian Railsback

Colson Whitehead’s Extinguished World

Student Author: Elias Hutchinson
Faculty Sponsor: Brian Railsback

The Folly of a Perfect Wife: Why Shakespeare Made Lady Macbeth the Beginning of Macbeth’s Downfall

Student Author: Grace LaMack
Faculty Sponsor: Mary Adams

9/11 and Zombie Apocalypses: How Zone One Mirrors Life Today

Student Author: Jessica Martin
Faculty Sponsor: Brian Railsback

Chestnut or Mahogany: The Relationship Between the Characters of Ron Rash’s *Serena* and the Environment

Student Author: McKenzie Twine
Faculty Sponsor: Annette Debo

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

Student Author: McKenzie Twine
Faculty Sponsor: Brian Railsback

HEALTH & HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

Task and Language Effects on Spanish-English Narrative Performance

Student Author: Jessica Cano
Faculty Sponsor: Claire Wofford

Linguistics and World Languages

Vocabulary Use in Writing Samples of Adolescents with Autism Spectrum Disorder

Student Authors: Amanda Davis, Yana Clarke
Faculty Sponsor: Johanna Price Vinyard

Task and Language Effects on Spanish-English Narrative Performance

Student Authors: Jessica Cano
Faculty Sponsor: Claire Wofford

MECHANICAL & INDUSTRIAL ENGINEERING

1-Dimensional Lithium Dendrite Formation

Student Author: Rylan Paye
Faculty Sponsor: Hayri Sezer

MUSIC

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

*Student Author: Savannah Bennett **
Faculty Sponsor: Andrew Adams

Cultural Appropriation and Appreciation in Western Art Music: A Look at Non-Western Influences in Classical Music

Student Author: Mattie Mabes
Faculty Sponsor: Tyler Kinnear

Batá Drumming: Ethical and Respectful Use by Non-Santeros

Student Author: Kendall Rhymmer
Faculty Sponsor: Adam Groh

Electronic Music of Steve Reich

Student Author: McKenzie Squires
Faculty Sponsor: Christina Reitz

PHILOSOPHY, ETHICS, & RELIGIOUS STUDIES

The Pragmatic Methodist’s Trilateral

Student Author: Nathan Travis
Faculty Sponsor: Daryl Hale

POLITICAL SCIENCE

Rapid Urbanization of Melanesia: Effects on Future Healthcare Institutional Capacity

*Student Author: Michaela Proffitt **
Faculty Sponsor: Ingrid Bego

PSYCHOLOGY

Investigating Associations Between Women’s Interoceptive Awareness and Sexual Function

Student Authors: Sophia Frank, Kendall Poovey
Faculty Sponsor: David de Jong

RHETORIC AND WRITING STUDIES

Redefining Therapy: Writing’s Role in Eating Disorder Treatment

*Student Author: Carina Blomberg **
Faculty Sponsor: Jonathan Bradshaw

**2020 accepted project (COVID-19)*

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