

## Academic Affairs Newsletter

April 2024

Spring has sprung and we find ourselves immersed in a season of transition and transformation. Everywhere we look, we are reminded of the potential for growth and renewal. April also carries with it a sense of anticipation and possibility, urging us to embrace new beginnings and forge ahead on our academic journey with vigor and determination.

But, let us not be so forward focused that we overlook the beauty of the present moment and the splendor of our surroundings. April brings us Earth Day (Monday, April 22<sup>nd</sup>), reminding us to consider the impact we have on our planet. We encourage you to reflect on actions you can take, big or small, to protect and preserve our physical world.



### Inaugural Fulbright Week

The Office of National & International Awards (ONIA) in collaboration with the Office of Global Engagement and Dr. Yanjun Yan, associate professor of Engineering and a Fulbright alumna, have organized an inaugural Fulbright Week to take place **April 8-12, 2024**.

There will be a variety of information sessions as well as guest speakers and panels on campus to promote a Fulbright culture and raise awareness of Fulbright opportunities for students and faculty. There will also be a closing Fulbright Celebration on Friday, April 11. An event flyer is attached to this email. For more information contact Dr. Ingrid Bego, Associate Professor of Political Science, the Director of International Studies Program and Director of the Office of National and International Awards, at [ibego@wcu.edu](mailto:ibego@wcu.edu).



## A Century of Cherokee Maskmaking; Gallery Talk



As the current Mountain Heritage Center exhibit, *A Century of Cherokee Maskmaking* ends, you are invited to join a gallery talk, on **Thursday, April 11, 2024**. WCU student and Cherokee cultural specialist, Driver Blythe, and Cherokee storyteller and carver, Davy Arch, will deliver the talk from **4:00pm-6:00pm** in the **Mountain Heritage Center Gallery (Hunter Library)**. Blythe and Arch will be sharing knowledge about Cherokee culture along with mask making techniques. Light refreshments

will be served. The exhibit will close on Friday, April 19, 2024.

## Gathering for Inclusivity Advocates

The next Gathering for Inclusivity Advocates is on **Thursday, April 4th from 2:30-4:40pm** in Forsyth 329. These gatherings are open events with the intention of sharing ideas, making connections, and discussing areas of interest or passions in research, community service, and action around inclusivity. Campus partners may come in at any point and stay for however long they are able. We encourage bringing business cards, research topics of interest, suggestions for campus inclusivity work, and other discussion points. If you have any questions, contact Abi Hammer at [ahammer@wcu.edu](mailto:ahammer@wcu.edu).

## Funding Model Changes

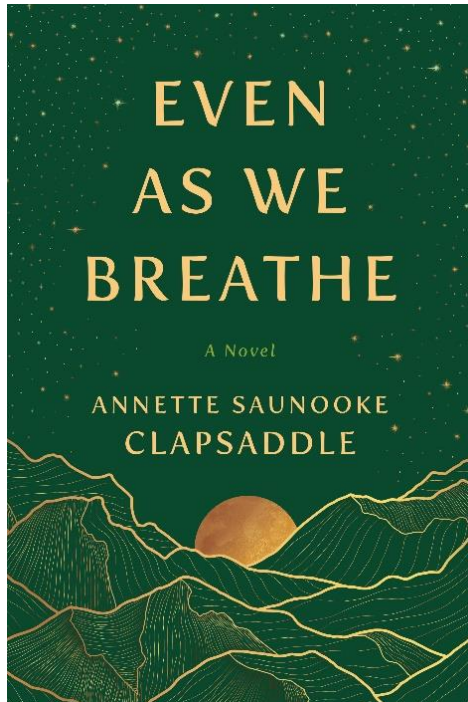
Are you aware of recent changes to the UNC System's Funding Model which is used to allocate resources to campuses? Whereas previously performance was used to weight or modify SCH (student credit hour) production, now the two components of the model (i.e., SCH change and performance) have been separated. Year-over-year SCH change, and the increase or decrease in associated funding, stands alone as a permanent change to WCU's state funding. Performance funding also serves as a one-time bonus or penalty.

Training is being offered for the Funding Model dashboards, which are available to all permanent WCU faculty and staff. Whether you are newly learning about the funding model or trying to understand recent changes to the model and dashboards, all are welcome!

Two open sessions will be offered – one face-to-face (Wednesday, April 17<sup>th</sup> at 11am in Coulter) and one on Zoom (Thursday, April 18<sup>th</sup> at 9am). [Please click here to register to attend.](#)

Individual and group training sessions are also available. These can be particularly helpful for college and department leadership teams. To request training, please contact [catalytics@wcu.edu](mailto:catalytics@wcu.edu).

## 2024-2025 One Book Selection



The One Book Committee proudly unveils its chosen One Book for the 2024-2025 academic year: *Even As We Breathe*, by Annette Saunooke Clapsaddle. Annette Saunooke Clapsaddle, an enrolled member of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians, brings her unique perspective and literary prowess to *Even As We Breathe*. A distinguished alumna of Yale University and the College of William and Mary, Clapsaddle's work has garnered critical acclaim and accolades.

Faculty are encouraged to incorporate the One Book into their courses where first-year students are present. Faculty and staff interested in obtaining a copy of the One Book should contact Caroline LeBoeuf at [cleboeuf@wcu.edu](mailto:cleboeuf@wcu.edu). Books are scheduled to arrive on or before May 1<sup>st</sup>. Additional copies will be available for upperclassmen starting the first week of fall classes in the Killian Annex lobby.

For more information on the One Book and to access its Resource Guide please visit [onebook.wcu.edu](http://onebook.wcu.edu).

### **New Interim Associate Director for Community Engaged Learning**

The Center for Community Engagement and Service Learning (CCESL) is hiring an Interim Associate Director of Community Engaged Learning to develop and facilitate service-learning (SL) pedagogy and relationships with faculty. This position, using an existing vacancy, is responsible for creating resources to support existing service-learning faculty, as well as to build relationships with faculty and programs/departments which may not have Service-Learning designated courses (SLC) or SL incorporated pedagogy. We are excited to announce that **Joy Mischley**, currently a counselor in the Counseling and Psychological Services unit on campus has accepted the position, effective April 1. Ms. Mischley has a rich background in community and academic engagement through her work with DukeEngage, the American India Foundation, B.N. Duke Scholars Program, and other associated roles in higher education engagement and leadership. She earned her bachelor's degree from Duke University and a master's degree from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. For information on developing SLC designation, please visit this [link](#) or the Center's main [website](#) for information on community and civic engagement. You can also contact the CCESL at x2091.

A search for a permanent director/associate director will commence later this calendar year.



### DEIB Community of Practice Showcase

The diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging community of practice (DEIB CoP) was started back in 2021. The group has remained active, splitting into neighborhoods that focus on professional development and training, building community, and using DEI data. Interested in learning more about what this group is up to? Wondering how you could be involved? Join us for our last meeting of the semester where the group will host a drop-in showcase!

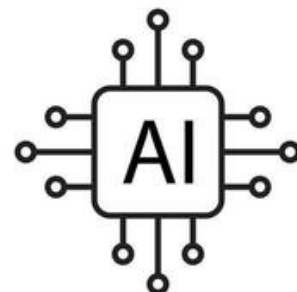
- **Who:** All are invited!
- **What:** DEIB CoP Showcase
- **Where:** Forsyth 214
- **When:** Tuesday, April 16<sup>th</sup>, 3:45-4:45pm
- **Why:** Learn about the important work this group is doing! Help us shape our next steps!

Light refreshments will be served.

### AI Taskforce Updates and Reminders

The group tasked with exploring the use and impacts of artificial intelligence (AI), chaired by Dr. Ken Sanney, has been working throughout the year and will likely continue explorations into the fall semester. As a reminder, the groups' aims are to

- Develop resources for faculty and staff to become better acquainted with AI.
- Develop, with campus partners and institutional resources, professional development opportunities for faculty, staff, and students.
- Facilitate broad campus conversations on the role of AI in the curriculum, pedagogy, and practice.



- Identify opportunities for research and collaboration related to AI.
- Recommend policy revisions and quality practices related to AI to academic leadership and Faculty Senate.

Here are some important reminders about the use of AI for our faculty.

- 1) Be clear about the expectations for using (or refraining from using) AI technology in assignment instructions. Faculty should clearly communicate to students that leveraging AI to bypass or complete learning objectives—such as using AI to complete assignments without engagement or understanding—constitutes cheating.
- 2) If you are considering the incorporation of AI into your learning activities or assignments, it's crucial to guide students on the acceptable and unacceptable uses of these tools. **The only approved AI software platform is Microsoft CoPilot.** It is essential to recognize that CoPilot for Microsoft 365 and CoPilot for Windows are distinct tools and are not currently sanctioned for campus use. CoPilot is built on the underlying architecture of ChatGPT, but it offers a straightforward, secure way for our academic community to interact with this generative AI. When used with your WCU account, chat prompts and responses are not saved, and ChatGPT and Microsoft do not access this information. This safeguard is important to meet our privacy obligations under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). You can access CoPilot by logging in with your WCU credentials at [copilot.microsoft.com](https://copilot.microsoft.com).
- 3) **There are currently no approved software applications that can be used to detect the use of AI in student work.** Use of an AI detection platform is in violation of university policy and may violate students' privacy rights. *This does not mean you have to allow the use of AI.* If you have not permitted students to utilize AI, use your expertise and intuition to discover inconsistencies, unusual language patterns, or sudden shifts in the quality of work. When addressing suspected academic integrity violations, faculty members should apply the preponderance of the evidence standard. This means that based on the available evidence, it is more likely than not that a violation occurred. Best practice is to help students avoid seeking the help of AI if it is not permitted by designing assignments that aim to foster originality and critical thinking. Move away from broad, generic prompts in favor of specific, thought-provoking questions that demand personalized responses.

### Inclusive Excellence Faculty Fellow

We are pleased to announce that Dr. Jaclyn Bandell, Assistant Professor, School of Nursing, has been selected as the inaugural Inclusive Excellence Faculty Fellow for 2024. She will be working through the Coulter Faculty Commons to collaborate with the DEIB Community of Practice and Interim Chief Diversity Officer, Dr. Marie Billie. Part of her project is to gather information on all the DEIB initiatives and activities happening across WCU, and to help coordinate the schedule and



communication of the DEIB Community of Practice. Dr. Bandell's dedication and contribution to DEI initiatives are numerous both at WCU and with The American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN), where she is involved with the AACN's Diversity Equity and Inclusion Leadership Network. She is a member of the CHHS Inclusive Excellence Committee and the DEIB Community of Practice.

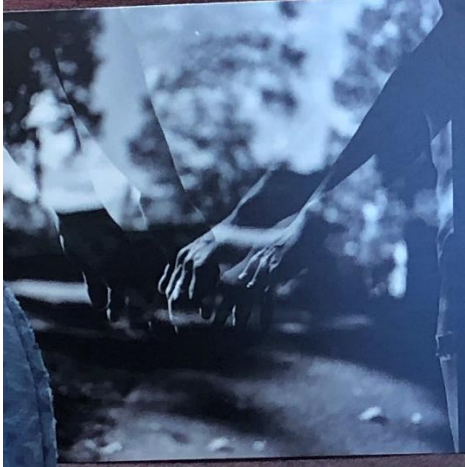
### **Community and Belonging Campus Theme Faculty and Student Project**

The current campus theme, *Community and Belongingness*, ends with the current academic year and the new theme, *Western North Carolina/Mountain Life*, commences this fall.

Undergraduate student, Cheyenne Hall, composed the following poem as part of her work with Richard Tichich, Professor of Art and Design at WCU.



Cheyenne, Professor Tichich, and other students in his photography class completed an engaged learning opportunity incorporating the current campus theme. Photographs depicting interpretations of community and belongingness by local and regional partners culminated in an exhibit that will be hosted by the following on and off-campus sites: Sylva Woman's Cancer Center, Southwestern and Haywood Community Colleges, Tuscola High School, Christ School, Deerfield Retirement Community, WCU English Studies, Music, and Health and Human Sciences. Funded by the Campus Theme Steering Committee, the 11 photographs and poem were derived from six WCU students, and one representative from each of the external sites referenced above. Sample of the images below.



## 2024 Alumni Awards Nominations are Open

Every year at Homecoming, the WCU Alumni Association celebrates three distinguished former Catamounts through the Professional Achievement, Academic Achievement, and Young Alumni Awards. Please consider nominating outstanding alumni in each of these areas for the Alumni Board's consideration.

The 2024 Alumni Awards nominations are officially open—you can check out previous winners, learn more about each award, and submit your nominations on the [Alumni Engagement website](#). To be considered for 2024, nominations **must be received by May 1**, so be sure to get your former students submitted soon!

Honorees will be recognized during November 1-3, 2024 Homecoming Weekend festivities, and at the Alumni Awards Brunch on Saturday, November 2.

## University Survey Policy Update

The university policy covering surveying has been revised and approved. [Policy 51](#) provides information on management of surveys and proper protocol for surveying students, alumni and employees of the university. This policy applies to any person(s) planning to conduct a survey, including those outside of the WCU community. There is a section outlining the various criteria which would exempt a survey from the policy.



New aspects of the policy include survey registration, sampling, respondent privacy, and data collection, reporting, and storage. The policy includes information about the roles of the

Institutional Review Board, the Office of Research Administration, the Coulter Faculty Commons, and the Office of Institutional Planning and Effectiveness (OIPE).

The OIPE maintains a [web page](#) that provides additional information and access to survey-related resources, including a new surveying SharePoint site.


### American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU) Workshops



AASCU's American Democracy Project [Practicing Democracy: Voter Education and Engagement on Campus](#) workshop series continues in April with sessions to empower our campuses with the tools and knowledge necessary to participate in the upcoming elections.

As an AASCU member institution, we encourage faculty, staff, administrators, and librarians to attend these workshops. [Register today](#).

### Open Educational Resources (OER) Initiative

The WCU Bookstore and campus partners are seeking feedback on the development of an  [Open Educational Resources \(OER\) initiative](#). This program will award grants for the adoption of OER materials in the Textbook Rental Program. We are interested in your feedback and ideas on what a successful program might look like at WCU. Please contact Robert Walker ([rgwalker@wcu.edu](mailto:rgwalker@wcu.edu) – 828.227.2652) if you are interested in providing feedback to help guide the development of this program.