

Academic Affairs Newsletter

May 2024

As we stand on the cusp of summer, we are not merely marking the end of another academic year but celebrating a journey of growth, resilience, and transformation. Throughout the year, your dedication to excellence has illuminated our path to success, guiding us through challenges and inspiring us to reach new heights. THANK YOU!

May also brings us the observance of Asian American, Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander Heritage Month, Cinco de Mayo, Memorial Day, and Mother's Day, providing even more opportunity to celebrate. This will be our last newsletter until the next academic year. Wishing you a fantastic month ahead and a summer filled with joy, relaxation, and exploration.



CLASS OF 2024

Spring 2024 Commencement Exercises

As we approach the end of our academic year, graduation from Western Carolina University is a tradition and milestone event in the lives of our students, as well as a time for celebration for us all. The graduating students and their families appreciate seeing our faculty at this important academic tradition. Please see below for details on the Spring 2024 Commencement exercises.

For the **Friday, May 10, 7:00 p.m.** ceremony (Graduate School-terminal and master's degrees), faculty are asked to assemble in academic regalia at the Ramsey Regional Center truck tunnel **by 6:00 p.m.**

For the **Saturday, May 11, 10:00 a.m.** ceremony (Colleges of Arts and Sciences, Education and Allied Professions, and David Orr Belcher College of Fine and Performing Arts), faculty are asked to assemble in academic regalia at the Ramsey Regional Center truck tunnel **by 9:00 a.m.**

For the Saturday, **May 11, 3:00 p.m.** ceremony (Colleges of Business, Engineering and Technology, and Health and Human Sciences), faculty are asked to assemble in academic regalia at the Ramsey Regional Center truck tunnel **by 2:00 p.m.**

If you did not attend the Fall 2023 ceremonies, please plan to attend at least one of our Spring ceremonies.

Office of Institutional Assessment (OIA) Catamount Improvement Royalty Awards

The WCU Office of Institutional Assessment (OIA) is excited to announce the award recipients for our inaugural **Catamount Improvement Royalty** designation. New for 2024, this designation recognizes individuals who provide exemplary leadership for assessment and a demonstrated commitment to continuous improvement efforts. Nominations were received from faculty, staff, and administrators within the



WCU community and recipients were selected by the Office of Institutional Assessment. In Fall 2024, OIA will be partnering with Marketing and Communications to highlight these improvement influencers. Stay tuned to learn more as we showcase their assessment stories.

We celebrate the following individuals as 2024 Catamount Improvement Royalty:

- Dr. Erin McNelis- Mathematics and Computer Science
- Dr. Jen Schiff- Liberal Studies Assessment/Political Science and Public Affairs
- Dr. Jon Campbell- Psychology
- Dr. Caroline Engler- Counseling and Psychological Services

2024 Impact Awards – Center for Community Engagement and Service Learning (CCESL)

Every year, CCESL honors WCU faculty, staff, students, and community partners for their efforts in impacting our region. This year's ceremony was held on Tuesday, April 17th and honored the following projects/partnerships.

In the category of Community-engaged Teaching, Learning and Research:

- 1) **We are not okay: A collaborative community project on mental health in WNC schools** - A collaboration between WCU Human Services, Counseling, and School of Teaching and Learning; students and educators in pre-K to high school districts in western North Carolina. Faculty honorees: Drs. Joy Howard, Myra Watson, Melissa Mecadon-Mann, Loidaly Rosario Gonzales, Jess Weiler, Sara Pedonti, and Patricia Bricker.

- 2) **Facilitating Fitness Programming at Hinds' Feet Farm** - A partnership between the WCU Recreational Therapy Program and Hinds' Feet Farm. Honorees: Branson Duvall, a 2018 WCU alumna, and Dr. Jennifer Hinton, faculty.

In the Community Outreach category:

- 1) **MSW Field Internship: Community Garden and Multi-Lingual Food Security Education and Resource Cards** - A project between Catholic Charities and the WCU Social Work program. Honorees: Elizabeth Milligan, MSW student. The following partners: Catholic Charities Volunteer Network, Impact Health, Bounty and Soul, MANNA Food Bank, WNC Food Systems Coalition, Change Your Palate, Bountiful Cities, French Broad Stone Supply, BB Barns, Danny's Dumpsters, Asheville Mulch Yard, Johnny's Seeds, Sow True Seed, Southern Seed Exchange, M.R. Gardens, Mountain True, Builder's First Source, Habitat ReStore, Tractor Supply, Lowe's, and Home Depot. Faculty honorees: Emma Miller and Katy Allen, Social Work. Community honorees: Jess Boeckermann and Beck Dubois (both of Catholic Charities).
- 2) **Champion Mill Community Scanning Event** - A collaboration between WCU Hunter Library/Special and Digital Collections Unit, The Canton Area Historical Museum, Canton Public Library, Haywood County Library, and the Town of Canton. Hunter Library Honorees: Liz Harper, Jason Brady, Jenny McPherson, Lucas Rogers, Emma Parrish. Community honorees: Caroline Ponton, Jennifer Stuart, Kathy Vossler, Brandy Proctor, and Lisa Stinnett, respectively.



Impact Awards 2024. Photo courtesy of the Center for Community Engagement and Service Learning

Liberal Studies Summer Assessment

Undergraduate Studies/Institutional Assessment would like to congratulate the following faculty who have been selected to participate in the upcoming Liberal Studies Student Learning

Outcomes Assessment Workshop scheduled for Tuesday, June 4, and Wednesday, June 5. The annual workshop involves a significant review of student learning artifacts that are scored using a rubric based on one or more of ten Liberal Studies outcomes and is a model process for assessment in this area. For additional information about Liberal Studies assessment, please contact Dr. Jen Schiff, director of Liberal Studies Assessment and Professor in Political Science/Public Affairs at WCU at jsschiff@wcu.edu; 227-3860.

Karen Kandl, Biology	Whitney Waters, English
Darby Harris, Biology	Tory Depew, Stage and Screen
Grace Cheshire, Communication	Emma Hamilton, English Studies
Joe Giordano, Acct./Fin./Info. Sys/Bus Law	JoBeth Shafran, Political Science/PA
Stacey Zimmerman, Math/Computer Science	Daniel Abankwa, Political Science
Bob Lahm, Entr. /Hosp. Tourism/Mkt./Sport Mgt.	Emily Stafford, Geosciences/NRM
Katie Brodhead, Math/Computer Science	Julia Haagar, History
Geraldine Riouff, Health Sciences	Tracy Mensah, History

Summer Institute for Teaching & Learning

The Coulter Faculty Commons (CFC) will be hosting the Summer Institute for Teaching and Learning on **Wednesday, May 15th and Thursday, May 16th** in the Apodaca Science Building. The institute theme will be **SparkED: Kindling Success**. Learn how your peers have sparked student engagement and success and kindled collaborations with others. Inspired by the upcoming campus theme, *Western North Carolina / Mountain Life*, we invite you to envision yourself sitting around a 'campfire', roasting marshmallows to make s'mores, and sharing campfire stories. A diverse slate of speakers from across campus are eager to engage you in thought-provoking teaching and learning concurrent sessions and campfire stories. The deadline for registration is May 7, 2024. [Register here!](#)



2024 Summer Institute for Administrative Support Professionals



[Registration](#) for the 11th annual Summer Institute for Administrative Support Professionals is now open! The Summer Institute will be held on Wednesday, July 17th and Thursday, July 18th. The purpose of the Summer Institute is to provide administrative support professionals with tools, resources, and connections that will allow them to be successful in their roles. By offering a wide array of sessions, ranging from technical skill (Banner) to soft skill (effective communication), and even life skills (stress management), we believe there is something for everyone! And although the sessions are tailored to administrative support professionals, registration is open to ALL WCU employees. In support of the 2024-2025 campus theme: WNC/Mountain Life, this year’s institute will feature tracks organized into hypothetical “hiking trails” with differing

levels of intensity, as well as sessions specific to life in Western North Carolina.

If you have any questions about the Summer Institute for Administrative Support Professionals, please contact the planning committee:

[Holli Stillman](#), Assistant to the Provost
[Alej Coleman](#), Executive Assistant to the Vice Provost
[Sara Ross](#), Executive Assistant to the Associate Provost
[Lindsey Brown](#), Administrative Support Specialist, Office of the Provost
[Logan King](#), Administrative Support Specialist, Office of Institutional Assessment

Upcoming Educational Outreach Opportunities

- Embrace the therapeutic benefits of nature with the newest Forest Bathing Experience at Pinnacle Park, Sylva, with Certified Nature and Forest Therapy Guide and Retired Professor of Parks and Recreation Management, Debby Singleton. Participants will embark on a leisurely stroll through the forest, engaging in mindfulness practices and sensory exercises designed to foster a deeper connection with the environment. The walk will end with a tea ceremony and snacks. To register, visit learn.wcu.edu and click on Workshops and Conferences. This event is scheduled for Friday, **June 7th from 4-6:30pm**. Cost is \$35 per person and registration is required.
- Do you want to learn more about the grant writing process or managing the full cycle of a grant? Join WCU Educational Outreach for a 6-part workshop series covering each phase of the grant writing cycle. Choose to take all 6 to complete the full certificate or select individual courses to refresh specific skills. Cost for total certificate is \$799 or each individual course is \$160. Interested individuals can register [here](#).



For more information contact Educational Outreach at learn@wcu.edu or 828-227-7397.

Cherokee Interpretive Exhibit Planning Project

Through a grant provided by the Cherokee Preservation Foundation, WCU is creating a plan to develop interpretive exhibits throughout campus that educate our students, faculty, staff, and



visitors about the campus's historical Cherokee presence as well as the culture of the Cherokee people, both past and present. In April, two designers from H.W. Exhibits visited campus to meet with stakeholders including Cherokee Studies and Language program faculty, indigenous students, and staff from the Mountain Heritage Center, University Communications and Marketing, and Facilities Management. The highlight of their visit was a whole-day trip to the Qualla Boundary which included a listening session with EBCI tribal members, a tour of the Cherokee Indian Hospital, and a visit to the new Speakers'

Building at New Kituwah Academy. There was a lot to digest from these robust conversations and experiences. We look forward to seeing a draft of the design plan in the coming months and will share their proposal broadly with the EBCI and WCU communities for feedback. For questions, please contact Carmen Huffman, Associate Provost for Academic Affairs, who is leading this project.

Chief Information Officer Candidate Forums

Our current Chief Information Officer (CIO) has announced that he is retiring effective August 1. The Chancellor launched a CIO Search committee that has been working for several months and is preparing to bring two finalist candidates to campus. You are cordially invited to attend the Campus Forums on **May 3, 2024, at 10:30 a.m. and Monday, May 6, 2024, at 10:30 a.m.**, both in the **Blue Ridge Conference Room 108**. Each candidate will introduce themselves and provide you with the opportunity to engage and ask questions. We ask that you fill out the evaluation form for each of the candidates after the forum, provided in the links below.

- [Candidate #1](#) - 5/3/2024 (responses requested by Tuesday, May 7)
- [Candidate #2](#) - 5/6/2024 (responses requested by Wednesday, May 8)