

## From the Provost

Daylight Savings Time begins March 9 and the vernal equinox is one month away — March 20. I am sure you are as eager as I am to see the calendar move toward spring. Our frequent snow days have been necessary to ensure the safety of our students, faculty and staff but they also have made for a very challenging semester. Let's hope for a snow-free March!

Next month brings a number of special events to our campus, including a visit by NCATE examiners March 23-25, as well as important deadlines, including the application deadline for the inaugural Summer Undergraduate Research Institute. I hope faculty members will consider being a mentor to an undergraduate who is interested in this important, new initiative. I also invite you to come out with your family and friends and enjoy a night of engaging and thought-provoking cinema at WCU's Spring Contemporary Issues Film Series. Learn more about all of these programs and events in the pages that follow.



Dr. Linda Lamwers

## WCU PREPARES FOR NCATE SITE VISIT

### *Re-accreditation process enters final phase*

George Drake is a self-professed “data geek.” So he says he really didn't mind spending many Saturdays at his desk last summer, poring over spreadsheets. Drake, associate dean of the College of Education, and a team of his colleagues, were busy analyzing data for a report that's part of WCU's re-accreditation process by the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE).

That institutional report, which looks at such standards as the teaching performance of WCU graduates and the quality of WCU's professional education faculty, was step one in a multi-pronged process that will culminate in a site visit by NCATE examiners on March 23-25.

Drake takes pride in West Chester University's status as a charter member of NCATE, with continuous accreditation dating back to the organization's founding in 1954. An independent accrediting body, NCATE is considered to be the “gold standard” in helping to establish high-quality teacher preparation through the process of professional accreditation of schools, colleges and departments of education.

Drake is a standing member of an assessment and accreditation committee that includes members from every college. Professional preparation of future teachers occurs not just in the College of Education but throughout WCU. “To list just two examples, the College of Arts & Sciences is preparing secondary math teachers and the College of Health Sciences is preparing health and physical education teachers,” noted Drake.





The NCATE re-accreditation process traditionally occurs every seven years but all institutions were granted an extra year to get ready for this current accreditation cycle. “The process has changed a lot – in the past, all data was evaluated on site,” said Drake. “This time, NCATE examiners have had access to our institutional report for several months and already returned comments and questions in advance of their visit. The communications we have received indicate that the NCATE team appear to be comfortable with the evidence that we have presented.”

Nonetheless, there is a lot of preparation underway as March draws near, particularly because the NCATE team will visit several sites, not just WCU’s campus. As one might expect, they will meet with faculty, department chairs, Ken Witmer, dean of the College of Education, Provost Linda Lamwers and President Greg Weisenstein. But they also will travel to see WCU student teachers in action at area schools, including Kennett Middle School and Bancroft Elementary School.

The institutional report submitted to NCATE as part of WCU’s re-accreditation process can be accessed at [http://www.wcupa.edu/\\_academics/coed/ncate/ncate/overview/](http://www.wcupa.edu/_academics/coed/ncate/ncate/overview/) using one’s WCU user name and password .

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## **CLOSING THE ACHIEVEMENT GAP FOR FIRST-YEAR STUDENTS**

### ***Equity Scorecard™ team issues new report***

As noted in the December issue of this newsletter, West Chester University is participating in the Equity Scorecard™ process developed by the Center for Urban Education at the University of Southern California.

The 12-member Equity Scorecard™ evidence team was formed in 2011 to investigate issues of educational equity at WCU, with the goal of fostering institutional change and promoting underrepresented minority student achievement through the identification and elimination of systemic barriers to success. The team is headed by Idna M. Corbett, dean of Undergraduate Studies and Student Support Services, and Vanessa K. Johnson, a professor of psychology.

“By identifying and eliminating unintended structural inequalities that are obstacles to equity at WCU, we are better positioned to effect and sustain systemic change,” said Corbett. “In fact, several well-intentioned policies, structures, and educational core issues may be contributing to the equity gap.”

The equity gap is the difference in admission, retention and graduation rates between underrepresented student groups and the general WCU student population.

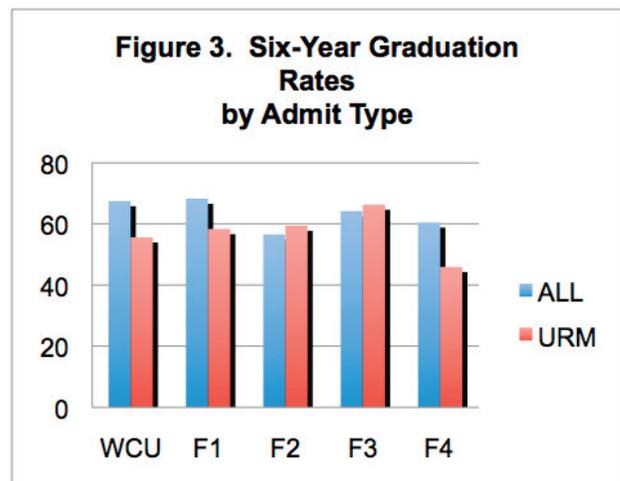
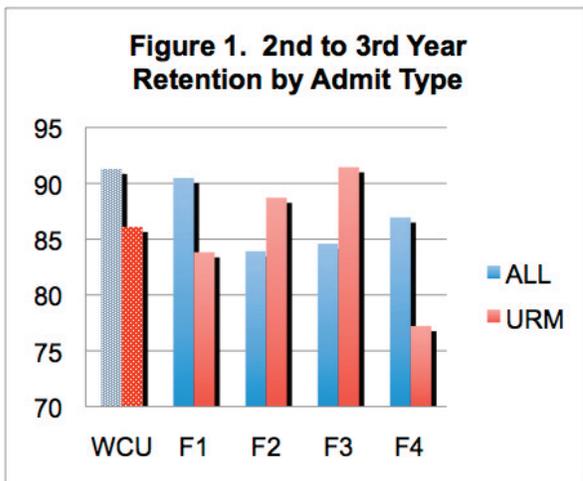
The work of WCU’s Equity Scorecard™ team has focused on four key areas: access, retention, completion, and excellence. The team has identified the following equity goals:

- ▶ Increase the African American first-year acceptance rate from 26.7% to 42%.
- ▶ Increase the African American transfer acceptance rate from 39% to 53%.
- ▶ Eliminate the 5.2% equity gap in 2nd-to-3rd year retention of African American and Latino/a students.
- ▶ Eliminate the 11.9% equity gap in 6-year graduation rate for African American and Latino/a students.

Recently, the team issued a comprehensive report resulting from the inquiry process into retention and completion. An executive summary of this report, *Closing the Achievement Gap for First-Year Students*, is available online at <http://www.wcupa.edu/ussss/>.

The process revealed that there are two clear risk factors that impact the second- to third-year retention and six-year graduation rates – earning less than 30 credits and not having a declared major by the end of the first college year. The cumulative effect of these risk factors is striking; students who meet these two benchmarks succeed at the same rate or better than the general population. Also, the cumulative effect of early intensive support is evident in the Academic Development Program students who experience no equity gap at all.

Students who are most likely to be impacted by these risk factors are those admitted to the university as motivation (F4) students. These students are limited to 12-13 credits in their first semester, which could become a barrier to progression through foundation courses by the end of the second year. Currently, there is no policy in place to move undeclared students to a major early, noted Johnson. She ticked off such impediments as not enough Q and basic foundation classes to accommodate all the newly admitted students who require them and the fact that departments are not required to have a plan in place to accommodate internal transfers.



Some other key findings from Closing the Achievement Gap for First-Year Students are summarized below:

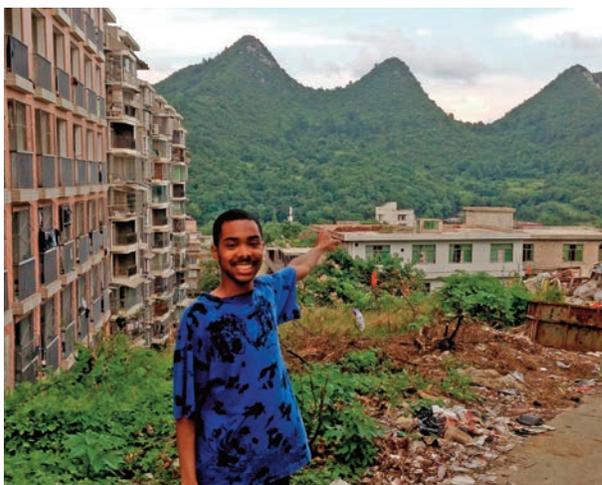
- ▶ Underrepresented minority students are more likely to be first-generation college students. In 2012, 41% of Latino/a students new to WCU were the first in their families to go to college; for African-American students, 38% were first-generation college students. For white students, a little less than 24% were the first in their families to go to college.
- ▶ Over the last three years, 59% of Latino/a students entered the university as regularly admitted students (F1).
- ▶ White students are more likely to be admitted to their first-choice major than underrepresented minority students. The equity gap in admission to first-choice major is close to 30% for African American students and 20% for Latino/a students.
- ▶ The average six-year graduation rate of enrolled participants in the Office of Multicultural Affairs Mentoring Program from 1996 to 2006 is 64% compared to 55.6% for all African American and Latino/a students at WCU.
- ▶ The program that graduates the largest percentage of URM students is Liberal Studies: Professional Studies.
- ▶ Frequent exposure to required tutoring influences students' participation in voluntary tutoring in other courses, as shown on statistics gathered in 2012-2013 for ADP students: 90% register for tutoring in non-ADP courses.

Closing the equity gaps is an achievable goal. For example, WCU needs to graduate an additional 11 African-American and Latino/a transfer students within four years of their entrance to WCU to close the 10% gap (54% vs. 64%). WCU has made closing these gaps a priority, as evidenced by the inclusion of the equity goals as key performance indicators, as well as top-level objectives in the strategic plan.

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## STUDYING, SIGHTSEEING & DODGING RAINDROPS

### *WCU Senior Experiences Life-Changing Study Abroad*



*Daquann Chung at Guizhou University*

After Daquann Chung graduates from WCU this May, he plans to attend language school in China with the ultimate goal of working and living in that country as a business consultant. So he jumped at the chance to study last summer at Guizhou University, in Guiyang, capital city of Guizhou province in China's southwestern region. Chung was one of five participants in a Summer Session Study Abroad sponsored by WCU's Center for International Programs.

West Chester and Guizhou universities have collaborated for a decade, according to Lin Tan, a WCU professor of mathematics who has been involved in the

partnership since its inception. The program has included faculty and student exchanges, an art exhibit, and a joint music camp. This summer, 12 Guizhou students are scheduled to study at WCU.

For Chung, the trip to Guizhou University was an opportunity to see if he had “the right stuff” to live in China for an extended length of time. Guizhou province is off-the-beaten track and doesn’t feature big-name tourist attractions, which made it all the more appealing for Chung, who is a communications studies major.



*Daquann Chung with a street performer in Zhenyuan*

“They aren’t getting a lot of foreign tourists there; in fact, Guizhou has the lowest gross domestic product of any Chinese province,” said Chung. “Very few of the residents speak English so I was immersed in Mandarin and really improved my language skills during my four weeks there,” he said. “There were other international students at the university from places like Russia, South Korea and Japan. These students didn’t speak English and we didn’t speak their languages, so Chinese was the common language between the international students, too.”

Chung’s father is Chinese and speaks Mandarin so during his WCU language classes, Chung would occasionally email his father for homework help. But in Guizhou, while speaking Mandarin exclusively, Chung breezed right through his homework.

Although Guizhou is poor and has been described by travel writers as “gritty” and “a challenging experience” it’s also a ruggedly beautiful region. *No three acres without a mountain, no three days without rain, and no three coins in any pocket*, is how an old Guiyang saying goes to describe the province.

Which pretty much concurs with Chung’s description of Guizhou’s craggy mountains, caves and waterfalls which he viewed on overnight field trips to remote villages. Chung was out in the countryside on the day of the Duanwu, or Dragon Boat, Festival, and he his fellow WCU students gathered to watch the villagers furiously paddle down a river in the traditional dragon boat races.

Chung didn’t get much exercise himself during his time in Guizhou. No three days without rain proved to be right on the mark. “I ran cross country track in high school and I wanted to run while I was in China but the rain got in the way,” he said. “Plus, my classes kept me pretty busy.”

He took “Chinese Modern Language” with former WCU instructor Jie Cai and “Decoding China,” an overview of the country’s cultures, social systems, and economic life that was taught by Guizhou University professors.

Chung said that his study abroad experience has made him more confident about his decision to work and live in China. He was one of about 250 WCU students who participated in some type of study abroad program last year, according to Jeff Conradi, project director for the Center for International Programs. For the 2013-14 academic year, he expects the total to be over 300. For more information about the Center for International Programs, email [international@wcupa.edu](mailto:international@wcupa.edu) or call 610-436-3515.

## PARTNERING WITH THE COMMUNITY

### FIT FOR FIGHTING FIRES

#### ***WCU collaborates on firefighter health program***

*Ever consider adding black beans to your brownie mix instead of eggs and oil? The beans create a brownie that tastes great with fewer calories and more fiber.*

*You can figure out how much sugar is in your beverage by looking at grams of sugar on the nutrition label and dividing by four. That's how many teaspoons are in your drink.*

For the past year, West Chester's volunteer firefighters have received messages like these via a Facebook page dedicated to nutrition and wellness. Social media messaging is just one part

of a healthy eating program for area firefighters created by West Chester Activate and coordinated by Mary Beth Gilboy, Master of Public Health nutrition coordinator at WCU.

West Chester Activate is made up of organizations and community leaders who care about health, including WCU, the Chester County Health Department and Chester County Hospital. In the fall of 2012, Mayor Carolyn Comitta asked the group to discuss possible nutrition and health related projects within the borough of West Chester. "The

health of our volunteer firefighters, especially their cardiovascular health, was identified as a key issue," said Gilboy.

As the WCFD Health & Wellness Facebook page notes: "Over half of on-duty firefighter deaths are heart related. The strength of the WCFD is not just dependent on drills and training but also on the health of the firefighters." The firefighter initiative kicked off last winter when Liz Smith, now an MPH graduate, administered a survey at First West Chester Fire Station to identify the nutritional needs of the group.

"Everything we do programmatically is based on

needs assessments," said Gilboy. "What do the firefighters want from a health program? To be successful and sustainable, health interventions have to address the group's wants and needs."

Smith discovered that the firefighters liked the idea of

healthy eating tips via Facebook and signage in the firehouse but did not want to attend in-person programs. They asked for an environment that would support their new healthy eating habits. Swapping out high-fat or high-sugar snacks in the firehouse vending machines with healthier choices was one way this was accomplished.

They also asked for healthy, quick meal and snack recipes for after fire calls. "Several firefighters talked about the challenge of eating healthy while at the scene of a long fire or after returning to the fire-



*WCU graduate students helped to maintain the WCFD Health & Wellness Facebook page.*

house,” noted Gilboy. “Jeanette Fox, a second MPH student involved in this project, created meal replenishment options for firefighters to keep on the

*“The health of our volunteer firefighters . . . was identified as a key issue.”*

truck during lengthy fire calls, such as when they travel out of the area to help other fire companies.”

The firefighter initiative proved to be successful at increasing awareness about the importance of healthy eating. A post-assessment revealed that 43% of the firefighters made a new, healthy recipe, 39% tried a healthy snack and 39% chose a healthy lunch option. Fifty-four percent of all firefighters reported that they read the Facebook messages. Due to the success of the pilot program, the initiative was extended to the other two West Chester fire stations, Fame and Good Will. Like Smith, Fox has now graduated from the MPH program. Gilboy is looking to place another graduate student on the project sometime later this year.

### DEPARTMENT OF KINESIOLOGY PUTS OFFICERS TO THE TEST

#### ***Program evaluates police officer health & fitness***

Do you know your body fat composition? How about your VO<sub>2</sub> max, an indication of aerobic fitness? Any idea how your muscular strength or flexibility rates? The officers of the West Chester Police Department know these health stats about themselves and plenty more, thanks to a new program developed by Melissa Reed, an assistant professor in WCU’s department of kinesiology.

“Last spring, I met with Mayor Carolyn Comitta and Police Chief Scott Bohn about ways my students

and I could make a contribution to the police department,” said Reed. “We discussed how important it is for police officers to be aware of their fitness level and other indicators of health, such as fasting blood glucose and cholesterol. Armed with this knowledge, officers can then take the necessary steps to improve or maintain their health and fitness.”

Soon after this meeting, the West Chester Borough Wellness Initiative was launched. Reed and two of her graduate students, Kali Oberholtzer and Ryan Saltzman, conducted extensive testing on each officer to gauge their cardiovascular fitness, muscular strength and endurance, body composition and flexibility. In addition, the officers were screened for metabolic syndrome via fasting blood glucose and cholesterol tests, as well as checks of blood pressure and waist and hip circumference.

“We are providing a useful, pro bono service to the police department but our grad students also are gaining valuable experience in fitness testing,” said Reed. “In addition, undergraduates will have the opportunity to get involved in the prescriptive part of the program, working with the officers to maintain or improve their fitness.” Under the direction of Ed Kubachka, an instructor of kinesiology, WCU students will conduct 1-1 personal training sessions with more than 20 officers. And all the officers will be back on campus soon for 6-month, follow-up testing.

“The West Chester Police Department is a fit force,” noted Reed. “About 60% were at good fitness levels and another 25% at peak fitness levels during our initial evaluations. But regardless of where they started at, these officers know that the nature of their jobs makes it critical to attain and maintain physical fitness.”

As the second phase of the West Chester Borough Wellness Initiative gets underway, students will present seminars on topics the officers have identified as priorities. These include dealing with sleep deprivation and maintaining a healthy diet while working rotating shifts.

## SERVICE-LEARNING COURSES ON THE RISE



WCU students made blankets for children at area hospitals during the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Celebration Day last month

During the 2012-13 academic year, WCU students provided a whopping 408,665 hours of service-learning and community engagement to organizations here in West Chester and as far away as South Africa. Service-learning hours from courses has increased sharply in the last decade, from 87,292 hours in 2002-3 to 345,743 hours last year.

## Service-Learning and Community Engagement Hours

Category	Fall 2012	Spring 2013	Current Academic Year 2012 - 2013	Academic Year 2011 - 2012
Service-Learning Courses	171,228	174,245	345,473	278,477
College of Education Community Service Experience Pre-Major Requirement	5,435	5,379	10,814	9,079
Faculty Sponsored Community Service Trips	920	890	1,810	N/A
Student Clubs & Organizations	23,095	24,689	47,784	57,047
Office of Service- Learning and Volunteer Programs / AmeriCorps	1,192	1,592	2,784	N/A
<b>Total Number of Hours Served by WCUA</b>	<b>201,870</b>	<b>206,795</b>	<b>408,665</b>	<b>344,603</b>
Money Fundraised for Charity by Student Organizations	\$41,833	\$82,239	\$124,072	\$131,351

Interested in adding service-learning to your curriculum? Contact Sara Lamb Kistler, service learning faculty associate, at 610-436-2233 or [slamb@wcupa.edu](mailto:slamb@wcupa.edu). Or contact Jodi Roth-Saks, director of Service-Learning and Volunteer Programs, at 610-436-3379 or [JRoth@wcupa.edu](mailto:JRoth@wcupa.edu).

## GRANTS TO BE AWARDED TO “KNOWLEDGE CROSSING BORDERS” PRESENTERS



*A group of WCU faculty, staff and administrators in Costa Rica at the first “Knowledge Crossing Borders” conference in 2010*

“Knowledge Crossing Borders: Building Partnerships through Shared Knowledge,” will be held this October in Costa Rica. Co-sponsored by West Chester University and Universidad Nacional (UNA), in Heredia, Costa Rica, this biennial conference seeks to build a sustainable future through global partnerships in higher education.

The Knowledge Crossing Borders Planning team has announced that up to 12 WCU faculty, administrators and staff will be competitively selected to participate in the conference via individual presentations, as members of panels or workshops, or via poster sessions to include 60 minutes of scheduled presence and dialogue with conference attendees. Individuals will receive travel support in the form of a \$1,000 grant to support participation and will be responsible for contributing approximately \$150 toward the cost of participation, dependent upon hotel and flight expenses at time of travel.

Conference organizers are especially seeking papers that focus on border-crossing perspectives in broad contexts. Topics should address at least one of these topics of inquiry:

- ▶ Communication and Information Technologies in Higher Education
- ▶ World Peace and Higher Education
- ▶ Higher Education and the Reduction of Poverty
- ▶ Ethics and the Role of Higher Education
- ▶ International Cooperation and Institutions of Higher Education
- ▶ Higher Education and Advances in the area of Health Worldwide

Applications will be reviewed by a peer selection committee. Decisions will be based upon quality and alignment with conference goals. Deadline for receipt of complete applications is April 1 at 5:00 p.m. (EDT). Submissions should be emailed to [kcb@wcupa.edu](mailto:kcb@wcupa.edu). For full details on submission requirements, go to <http://www.wcupa.edu/KnowledgeCrossingBorders/> and click on “Call for Papers.”

## FILM SERIES FEATURES THOUGHT-PROVOKING FILMS

### *Topics range from Hurricane Sandy to Rwanda Genocide*

The Spring 2014 Contemporary Issues Film Series is now underway, presenting an international array of films that touch on diverse social, political and cultural realities. The series is sponsored by Student Services, Inc. in conjunction with the Student Activities Council.

Upcoming films:

**Feb. 27:** *Call Me Crazy* – Through five shorts, relationships built on hope and triumph raise a new understanding of what happens when a loved one struggles with mental illness. Co-sponsored by the Wellness Education Center as an Eating Disorders Awareness Month event.

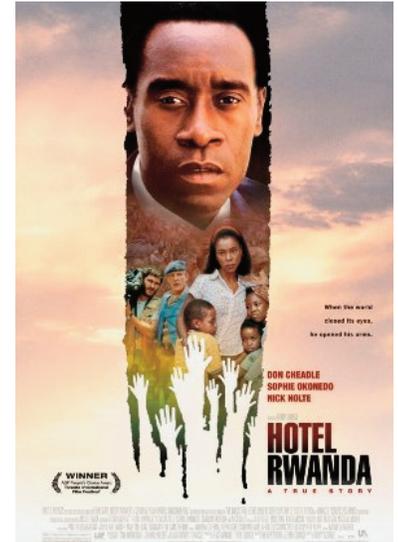
**March 6:** *Hotel Rwanda* – The true story of Paul Rusesabagina, a hotel manager who housed more than a thousand Tutsi refugees during their struggle against the Hutu militia in Rwanda. This screening is co-sponsored by WCU's History Department, Peace & Conflict Studies program and Holocaust & Genocide Studies program, commemorating the 20th anniversary of the Rwandan genocide.

**March 27:** *Telling Amy's Story* – Hosted by actress and activist Mariska Hargitay and told by detective Deirdre Fishel, *Telling Amy's Story* follows the timeline of a domestic violence homicide that occurred in State College, Pa. Co-sponsored by WCU's Criminal Justice Department & the Women's Center.

**April 3:** *The Big Picture: Rethinking Dyslexia* – Successful leaders reflect on their dyslexic experiences, as a high-school senior must overcome the challenges of dyslexia to achieve his dream of getting into a competitive college. Co-sponsored by the Office of Services for Student with Disabilities.

**April 24:** *Shored Up* – When Superstorm Sandy devastated the East Coast it was a wake-up call to a new reality. *Shored Up* takes us to the heart of the climate change controversy, following communities in New Jersey and North Carolina where politics, economics and science collide. Co-sponsored by the Sustainability Advisory Council.

All films are free for WCU faculty, staff and students with valid ID; \$2 for the public. Showtime is 8 p.m. in Sykes Theatre.



## LAST CHANCE TO SUBMIT RESEARCH DAY PRESENTATION

### **Submission deadline March 4**

You have less than two weeks left to submit a presentation for consideration to Research Day, which takes place Thursday, April 10 from 1 p.m.- 6 p.m. Research Day is sponsored by the West Chester University Research Consortium. Each presentation must have an individual named as primary author. The primary author must be a WCU faculty member or student winner of the WCU Award for Student Research and Creative Activities, or a person invited by the Research Consortium to present.

Presentations can be in the form of posters, table displays, videos, demonstrations or a published book, copy of a journal article or reprint for display in an Authors' Corner. Deadline for submissions is Tuesday, March 4, 11 p.m. EST. The online application is available at <http://www.wcupa.edu/wcurc/researchdayapp/>. Visit

<http://www.wcupa.edu/wcurc/> for more details about Research Day.



*Research Day keynote speaker James Hansen. Considered a leading authority in the field of climate science, Hansen has contributed significantly to the public debate about climate change.*

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## UNDERGRAD RESEARCH INSTITUTE KICKS OFF THIS MAY



### **Program will help to establish community of undergraduate scholars**

Have you heard about the new Summer Undergraduate Research Institute? Perhaps you teach music or English and think it's not a viable option for your students. If so, think again.

“Conducting research or creating scholarly or creative work should be a part of every undergraduate’s experience,” said Gautam Pillay, WCU’s associate vice president for research. “The Summer Institute will support students doing traditional research in a lab but we also hope to include students who are creating musical compositions or writing poems or any number of other creative endeavors.”

“Experiential learning opportunities such as these give our students an edge when they apply to graduate school or seek employment,” noted Pillay.

WCU’s colleges are funding the pilot summer program, which was developed by the WCU Council on Undergraduate Research. Held during Summer Session I (May 27-June 23), the Institute will allow current WCU undergraduates to “pursue a significant research question, contribute to a scholarly endeavor, or to produce an artistic or creative work.”

Each Undergraduate Research Fellow must be mentored by a WCU faculty member. There isn't flexibility in the timeline – all Fellows must engage in their projects during Summer Session I – but there's plenty of flexibility as to the hours and location of the work. "Students can partner with area businesses or government organizations and pursue their projects off campus; students can work evening hours if that's more conducive to executing their research," said Pillay. "Originality is one of the things we will take under consideration when we review the applications, in addition to a project's feasibility, scholarly significance, methodology in sharing project outcomes, and ability to enhance the student's development."

Summer Research Institute applicants must be fulltime WCU students, with a minimum 2.5 GPA. Freshmen through rising seniors are eligible to apply, as well as graduating seniors who have been accepted into a WCU graduate program.

Ten to 15 Fellows will be selected for the pilot program and each will receive up to \$1,500, as well as be eligible for paid USH campus housing. Faculty mentors will receive one credit hour of summer compensation based on rank and step.

The deadline to apply is March 15. The online application form and more information can be found at <http://www.wcupa.edu/research/>. If you or your students have additional questions, contact Pillay at [gpillay@wcupa.edu](mailto:gpillay@wcupa.edu) or 610-436-3592.



*Winter snow storms can be inconvenient but they also can be a thing of beauty, as seen in this image from nearby White Clay Creek Preserve*

