

From the Provost

End-of-year reports to complete, papers to grade, finals to proctor – it's a busy time of year for all of us at WCU, but things are finally winding down. I hope that you had many rewarding experiences this semester. Every member of Academic Affairs – deans, chairs, faculty and staff – is integral to the institution. It is because of your collective hard work that West Chester University ranks as one of the nation's top regional comprehensive public universities.

I know that you are already busy mapping out course content or organizing office projects related to the upcoming spring semester. Or, you may even be teaching a class during Winter Session, which began Dec. 14. But do take the time to rest and reflect on your many accomplishments, and to enjoy this special time of year with family and friends.

Happy holidays and best wishes for 2016!

If you have news of interest for this newsletter, please let us know. Send your information to Jennifer Loeper, executive associate to the provost, at jloeper@wcupa.edu.



Dr. Laurie Bernotsky

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MENTORING PROGRAM IS A SLAM DUNK FOR STUDENT SUCCESS

WCU's student athletes juggle a lot, between classes, studying, practices, games and other personal commitments. WCU's Athletic Mentoring Program provides the support that many of these students need to win in the classroom as well as on the playing field.

The program, which is overseen by Tammy James, a professor of health and coordinator of academic support services for Athletics, features multiple tiers of assistance and intervention, based on the needs of each student. James works in close collaboration with Gerardina Martin, director of the Learning Assistance and Resource Center (LARC), and Jacqueline Hodes, an assistant professor of counselor education.

“Student athletes are students first”

Tammy James, director of WCU's Athletic Mentoring Program

At the most basic level of intervention, student athletes meet with tutors at LARC for group tutoring in the subject areas in which they need assistance. At the next level, student athletes are paired with athletic mentors who check in with them weekly. These graduate-level mentors, all pursuing degrees in the Counseling/Higher Education program, play the varying roles of cheerleader, advisor, advocate and nudge to the student athletes. Many of the mentors played sports as undergraduates so they know first-hand the challenges of successfully managing academics and athletics.

“The mentors help the student athletes improve their time management, stress management, and study skills,” says James. “They monitor the students’ academic progression, address their concerns, and help them utilize existing University resources.”



Athletic Mentoring Program mentors join with other mentors and tutors at an August orientation session

Students enrolled in the Athletic Mentoring Program also participate in an open study session for at least two hours weekly. The study hall runs from 7 p.m.-9 p.m. every Sunday to Thursday during the fall and spring semesters. Some coaches require their players to attend three or more nights of study hall each week.

Students are directed to the Athletic Mentoring Program via different channels. Student athletes who are on academic probation enroll in the program because they have to – their participation is mandatory. But many other student athletes seek out the program on the suggestion of their coach, or on their own, from word-of-mouth recommendations from their peers.

Regardless of how they get there, the majority of student athletes who participate in the Athletic Mentoring Program see it pay off. At the end of spring semester 2014, 64 students were enrolled in the program; most of whom came in with grade point averages of 2.0 or lower. Of this group, 27 students saw their GPAs rise to over 2.5; 26 achieved GPAs between 2.0 and 2.5 and only 11 had GPAs under 2.0.

This fall, 83 students signed up for the program, says James, and more than 20 of these students came in with GPAs above 3.0. “We are now attracting a wider population of student athletes, not only those who are struggling academically, but those who want to maintain or improve the good grades that they already have,” notes James. “I think the word is starting to spread about what the Athletic Mentoring Program can offer our student athletes to help them improve in such critical areas as study skills, goal-setting, and healthy lifestyle practices, as well as tutoring in specific content areas.”

The Athletic Mentoring Program was a small-scale effort when it was created more than a decade ago and was greatly expanded under the leadership of Kellianne Milliner, WCU’s associate athletic director for compliance, academic and support services, who led the initiative from 2007 to 2013. Last year, James took over leadership of the program.

In addition to the collaborations with LARC and the Counselor Education program, James says that the Athletic Mentoring Program has benefitted from resources from Ray Zetts, associate dean of the College of Health Sciences, and tutoring space provided by Tom Purce, assistant vice president for Student Life.

For more information about the program, contact James at tjames@wcupa.edu.

FACULTY RESEARCH REPORT NOW ONLINE

During the 2014-15 academic year, more than 250 WCU faculty members reported scholarly activity in a range of disciplines. Journal articles were published on topics including crime prevention in Pennsylvania; the role of the home literacy environment in the development of vocabulary and decoding skills; and the kinematics of terrestrial locomotion in harbor seals and grey seals. Faculty members published 15 books, as well as 29 book chapters.



Work by Sandra Fowkes Godek, professor of sports medicine, is included in the Faculty Research Report

In addition, presentations were made by WCU faculty throughout the U.S. and internationally on topics such as learning with music; conflicts of interest in multi-fund management; and health literacy in undergraduate students.

We know all this thanks to a new method for recording scholarly productivity that was launched last year by the Division of Academic Affairs in cooperation with the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs. Scott Heinerichs, interim assistant vice president for academic affairs, spearheaded the project, with assistance from Gautam Pillay, associate vice president for Research and Sponsored Programs and Rabia Khattak, a graduate assistant in the research office.

Earlier this fall, the project team issued the WCU Faculty Scholarship Report, which is now available online at <http://www.wcupa.edu/research/reports.aspx>.

“In the past, this kind of reporting occurred through multiple channels and at multiple times throughout the year, which could sometimes lead to confusion,” says Heinerichs.

Beyond having a better handle on the data, a goal of this new reporting method is to produce research collaborations across departments and colleges.

“We are encouraging faculty members to review this report and look for possible collaborations throughout the colleges in an effort to continue their productivity as scholars,” notes Heinerichs. “WCU’s Annual Research Report is another great way to learn more about what other researchers are doing on campus or in field work worldwide.”

The Annual Research Report can be found at <http://www.wcupa.edu/research/documents/WCUAnnualResearchRpt.pdf>.

FIVE STUDY ABROAD PROGRAMS SCHEDULED THIS WINTER SESSION



WCU students will return to Kenya this winter for a service-learning Alternative Break

This January, WCU students will be studying, volunteering, and making an impact on the lives of others during five international Study Abroad programs, the most faculty-led trips ever offered during Winter Session, says Peter Loedel, interim director and assistant vice president for International Programs.

Three of the trips – to Peru, Kenya and Honduras – are Alternative Breaks, and are presented in collaboration with WCU’s Office of Service-Learning and Volunteer Programs. Alternative Breaks, which also are offered during Spring Break, are geared towards students who want to make a difference through meaningful volunteer work. The overarching goal, says Jodi Roth-Saks, director of the Office of Service-Learning and Volunteer Programs, is to illustrate the process of becoming lifelong active citizens.

The two other trips running this Winter Session also feature a strong service-learning component. A trip to India will explore core concepts of global health that impact community health and public health access to care in resource-limited settings. Students will assess the health care needs of a high-risk population, develop a plan of action that is concurrent with the strategic plan of the Indian government and World Health Organization, and provide care or an educational program to address that need. And a popular trip to Costa Rica will return again this Winter Session, offering opportunities for volunteerism in addition to its main focus of cultural and language immersion.

Here's a closer look at this Winter Session's Study Abroad programs:

Voices4Peru: Service-Learning Opportunity in Ventanilla, Peru

Michael Antonio, assistant professor of criminal justice, leads a second trip to Lima, Peru. He has partnered with Voices 4 Peru (V4P), a nonprofit that works in gang communities in the outskirts and barrios of Lima. This two-week study abroad for-credit experience involves connecting with the people of this remote community north of Lima. Students will have regular opportunities to interact with V4P staff, Ventanilla residents, elementary school students, and local youth during scheduled activities at the community center. The course emphasizes current research findings about gang membership and recruiting techniques (with an emphasis placed on research findings related to Peru), sex trade, child labor, and criminogenic risk factors that evidence-based practices show promote criminal activities among youth.

Nutrition Assessment, Education and Service in Honduras

Joanne Christaldi, an assistant professor of nutrition, will be leading WCU's first-ever trip to Honduras. This non-credit service and volunteer experience will primarily be based in the small community of San Francisco de Yojoa. Sixteen WCU students have enrolled in the program, which will provide them with hands-on clinical nutrition experience at a nutritional rehabilitation center. The program is offered in conjunction with MAMA Project, Inc., which regularly provides nutritional services in Honduras.

Transforming Lives with the Rafiki Africa Foundation

WCU's second Alternative Winter Break trip to Alendu, Kenya, is designed to address multiple areas of need in the community, including education, access to clean water, an adequate and well-balanced diet, regular healthcare and a safe environment. It is being led by Beatrice Adera, an assistant professor of special education, who was born and raised in Kenya.

Adera partners with the Rafiki Africa Foundation, a nonprofit that uses a holistic approach to sustainably build up communities with the goal of training individuals and families to be independent and to learn how to take care of their community needs.

In addition to the primary focus of service learning, last year's trip included extracurricular activities such as a day-long visit to the home of Adera's brother, located in a nearby town, and a two-day safari at the Maasai Mara National Reserve.

Spanish Culture Cluster in Costa Rica

Ana Sánchez, instructor in the department of languages and culture, is taking a Spanish Culture Cluster course to Costa Rica for the third time. She is partnering with Universidad Nacional Costa Rica, located in Heredia, just outside the capital city of San Jose. Seven WCU students, as well as one student from Indiana University of Pennsylvania, are participating in this cultural and language immersion experience. Students will take part in service learning at Escuela Nuestra Señora del Lourdes, which is a sister university of WCU.

Nursing in Kerala, India

Rachel Joseph and Marcia Welsh, assistant professors in the department of nursing, are leading WCU's first faculty-led program to Kerala, India. In this for-credit experience, 10 WCU students will explore core concepts of global health that affect community health and public health access to care in resource-limited settings. They will address health concerns of the Indian populace in this region, including malnutrition, improving infant mortality rates, and limiting the spread of infectious diseases and malnutrition. The primary focus will be on community/public health, integrating education, research and service-learning to promote effective nursing.

WCU RESOURCE PANTRY TO LAUNCH IN 2016



Jamie Williams and Tori Weigant are leading the development of a WCU Resource Pantry

There are at least 28 students on campus who don't have homes to return to during school breaks, instead relying on friends, distant relatives, WCU Residence Life or the WCU Foundation to provide housing. There are many other students who do have permanent homes but often find their budgets stretched thin due to a family emergency or because they're in-between paychecks.

These are the students that the WCU Resource Pantry hopes to serve. Currently in the early stages of development, the pantry plans to stock nonperishable food items,

toiletries, school supplies, winter coats, and business attire suitable for internships and job interviews.

The pantry is a collective initiative between the Financial Aid Office and the Office of Service-Learning and Volunteer Programs. Tori Weigant, assistant director of financial aid, currently maintains an informal collection of sorts in her office and in Commonwealth Hall. "I had a box under my desk with shampoo, soap, notebooks, pens and coats that University Student Housing was kind enough to let me move into Commonwealth Hall. If a student I work with needs something, I will make sure they know what is available," says Weigant.

"Often, we will see a short-term need that can mean the difference between student success and failure," adds Weigant. "For example, a student might need a flash drive for a class project that's due tomorrow but they don't have the money to buy a drive until they get paid next Friday."

Jamie Williams, the assistant director of Service-Learning and Volunteer Programs, is partnering with Weigant to develop and hopefully launch the WCU Resource Pantry. Thus far, the pantry has received support from University Student Housing, the Chester County Food Bank, Education Navigation, Act in Faith of Greater West Chester, and the Pennsylvania State Chapter of PEO.

The University community is encouraged to lend its support to the pantry. In the near future, Weigant and Williams will be collecting items to stock the pantry. Most needed are non-perishable foods, deodorant, soap, shampoo, toothpaste, toothbrushes, feminine hygiene products, school supplies, and winter coats (lightly worn or new). Gift cards to grocery, drug and department stores also are appreciated.

If you would like more information about getting involved with this initiative or know of a student in need that you would like to refer, please contact Weigant at tweigant@wcupa.edu or Williams at jwilliams3@wcupa.edu.

PUPPY LOVE

It's hard to let finals get you down when a Golden Retriever wants to give you a wet, slobbery kiss.

A "Therapy Dog Extravaganza" was held Dec. 9 in Sykes Union to help students relax and de-stress during final exams week. Featuring playful puppies, a border collie who could roll over on command, and a sweet, calm Golden Retriever, the event was the brain child of Rachel Daltry, a psychologist in WCU's Counseling Center. The visiting dogs came from Faithful Friends, a Wilmington, DE based animal welfare organization.

The event was an offshoot of the Counseling Center's ongoing Dog Therapy program, which brings to campus on a monthly basis Tucker, Jack, Darla, Harvey and Zeus, as well as their two-legged handlers and companions. Each of

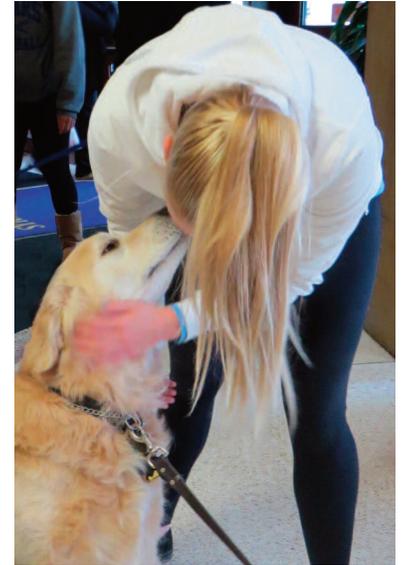


these dogs is

a certified therapy dog, meaning they have gone through extensive training and testing to prove they can behave in large groups.

"Basically, the therapy dogs are ambassadors for the counseling center," explains center director Julie Perone. "We always have a psychologist or two present to provide information about our services. We can see how much this means to stressed-out students. They love it!"

From the looks of it, plenty of faculty and staff who happened to pass by "Therapy Dog Extravaganza" loved it, too.



Holiday Cheer

Ruthanne Ellsworth, a staff member in the Office of the President, and Chris Fiorentino, vice president of External Relations, enjoying the staff holiday party hosted by Greg and Sandra Weisenstein on Dec. 3. A holiday party for faculty members was held at Tanglewood on Dec. 1.



SHARE YOUR RESEARCH AT KNOWLEDGE CROSSING BORDERS

West Chester University will host the fourth annual International Congress on Higher Education, Knowledge Crossing Borders, from May 31 to June 4, 2016. WCU partners with Costa Rica's Universidad Nacional to sponsor this biannual conference, which is designed to share research and best practices in higher education worldwide. WCU last hosted the conference in 2012.

WCU faculty, staff and students are encouraged to submit research proposals for consideration. The five proposal topics are: Cross-Cultural Experiences and Learning Outcomes; Our Physical World: Sustainability and the Environment; International Business and Entrepreneurial Activities; Arts, Humanism and Culture; and Health, Well-Being and Quality of Life. Proposals will be accepted on a rolling basis Dec. 1 through Feb. 15. For more information, go to <http://www.wcupa.edu/knowledgeCrossingBorders/default.aspx>.

HOLIDAY VIDEO RINGS IN THE SEASON



Many familiar faces from Academic Affairs are featured in WCU's 2015 Holiday Video, which was produced by the Digital Media Team in cooperation with the Office of Communications.

Check out the two minute, 12 second video here: <http://wcupa.edu/thisiswcu/>.

