

**Faculty Senate Ad-hoc Research Committee**  
**Updated document on faculty research**  
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**General position statement:** Research, as well as other scholarly and creative activities, are key to WCU's role as "a public, regional, comprehensive institution committed to providing access and offering high-quality [undergraduate and graduate] education" and "a dynamic and supportive learning environment that prepares students for successful and rewarding personal, professional, and civic lives" (*WCU Mission and Values Statement*). As research in high-impact teaching practices has shown, quality teaching and student learning do not only occur as a consequence of traditional classroom-based pedagogy, but are also a function of a culture where faculty have an opportunity to develop as scholars, where intellectual engagement among faculty and students is pursued, and where both faculty and students are encouraged to participate actively in the creation of knowledge. In the 21<sup>st</sup>-century, our institutional mission and our strategic goals can only be realized within an academic culture where research, scholarship and other creative activities are adequately acknowledged, supported, and understood as a necessary complement to other forms of learning.

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WCU faculty currently have a research, scholarship and creative activities expectation, articulated in our CBA, which constitutes 35% of our evaluation load; in our Teacher-Scholar philosophy, which materializes in departmental TS models; and in the general strategic goals of the University, which call for increased scholarly production, involvement of students in a scholarship-active environment, and the development of graduate programs. Our faculty includes world-renowned researchers, scholars and creative innovators that are already making significant contributions at the local, national and international levels. However, WCU faculty must currently implement these institutional scholarly expectations and their potential in this area while navigating (and oftentimes struggling with) a variety of cultural, institutional and administrative factors that do not always work in support of their work as researchers, scholars, and innovators in other creative areas. While we are acutely aware that resources are limited, we also believe in the ability of this institution to adequately foster a culture of scholarly creativity, by means of operational and financial decisions. We also believe that this culture can be fostered within the current parameters of the CBA and current tenure and promotion policies.

The following issues have traditionally had a negative effect on faculty research, scholarship and creative activities at WCU:

(1) research, scholarly and creative endeavors that could significantly enhance the faculty's ability to meet their CBA and evaluation requirements, as well as the research and creative

institutional goals of the University, often appear to be of secondary importance to perceived operational needs; (2) mismatch between the current definition of faculty roles, which includes excellence in research, scholarship and creative activities as areas of necessary development for tenure and promotion, and our University mission, which does not refer explicitly to research, scholarship, nor creative activities; (3) mismatch between the stated strategic goals of the institution, which include increased visibility, increased enrollments in and development of graduate programs (including doctoral programs), increased external grant funding, and, at least explicitly, increased efforts to “advance research, scholarly and creative activities” (*WCU Strategic Plan*), on the one hand, and the lack of an adequate support system on campus for research, scholarship and creative activities, on the other; (4) lack of full understanding at various institutional levels that valuable research, scholarship and creative activities for our institution can include, but are not necessarily limited to, faculty-student collaborations, or “applied” forms of research, scholarship or creative activities; (5) lack of a clear articulation of the rationale for the current differences between departments and colleges in relation to the degree of support and funding given to research, scholarship and creative activities within each unit; (6) as a consequence of all of the above, lack of sufficient resources for faculty to pursue research, scholarship and creative activities (money and, most critically, time).

The following are some steps that would strengthen the position of scholarly activities at the university level, while respecting the current parameters of our CBA and tenure and promotion policies:

(1) a fostering of a scholarship-friendly culture at all levels of administration and other forums where decisions on academic policy and resource allocation are made; (2) a revised phrasing of the mission and values statement of our University to acknowledge the research, scholarship and creative activities expectation that faculty already have and to define research, scholarship and creative activities as one areas of professional development that are intrinsic to our role as a 21<sup>st</sup>-century institution of higher education and that add quality to the overall academic contribution of the University to our community; (3) increased resource availability to cover faculty scholarship course load redistribution when justified, as allowed by university finances and by the parameters of the CBA; (4) more forms of public acknowledgement of research, scholarly and creative excellence at the department, college and university levels; and (5) the incorporation of models from other successful public, teaching-intensive higher-education institutions that have taken successful steps to foster faculty research, scholarship and other creative activities as a central part of the educational experience.

There are many ways in which faculty research, scholarship and creative activities can contribute to advance the goals of the institution, but faculty need support in achieving these goals. Therefore, we request that our University take tangible measures to promote an increased culture of research, scholarship and creative activities. By doing so, we will all contribute to WCU’s mission to be a place for academic excellence.