



Academic Affairs is a community of educators that supports the university's mission by enrolling, teaching, retaining, graduating, and inspiring diverse, lifelong learners prepared to contribute to the common good.

Issue No. 10

October 2, 2023

*This monthly newsletter features stories about events and programs within the Division of Academic Affairs. It is intended to inform, engage, and recognize members of our esteemed Community of Educators, all the faculty and staff who are committed to student success.*

***Please share your stories with us by clicking the yellow box below.***

***If you have an event coming up, please upload it to the university's [Campus Calendar](#). Click "SUBMIT AN EVENT" button. For more information about how to submit an event, see the story below in "Resource Corner."***

***To share information about an upcoming event, click [here](#) for submission to the [Ram Report](#).***

**Submit Provost's Post Stories  
Here**

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Dear Colleagues,

I hope this message finds you all in good health and high spirits as we embrace the vibrant autumn season on our beautiful campus. As we turn the page to October, we look back on the month of September, which was a busy one at West Chester University. One of the many activities on campus was a celebration of Hispanic Heritage Month with the 15th anniversary of the Latino/a/x Communities Conference, its *Quinceñeara*.

Hispanic Heritage Month is a time for us to celebrate the rich and diverse cultures, histories, and contributions of Hispanic and Latino/a/x Americans to our nation and our campus. It is a reminder of the strength and vitality that comes from embracing the multifaceted tapestry of our society.

At West Chester University, we are committed to fostering an inclusive and welcoming environment where all members of our community can thrive. Recognizing and honoring the various cultural traditions and backgrounds that make up our institution is a fundamental part of that commitment.

Diversity and inclusion are not just buzzwords; they are the cornerstones of our university's mission. When we embrace diversity, we open doors to different perspectives, experiences, and talents. We create an environment where every individual feels valued and has the opportunity to reach their fullest potential.

Cultural awareness and competency are essential components of this commitment. They enable us to engage with one another in a respectful and empathetic way, fostering meaningful

connections and a deeper understanding of our fellow community members. This, in turn, enriches our learning experiences, both inside and outside the classroom.

During Hispanic Heritage Month, I encourage all of us to take the time to learn about and appreciate the diverse cultures, traditions, and histories that make up the Hispanic and Latino/a/x communities.

Let us also remember that celebrating diversity and promoting inclusion is not limited to one month but should be a year-round commitment. By doing so, we can continue to build a more inclusive and equitable West Chester University for everyone.

Thank you for being part of our diverse and dynamic community. Your contributions, perspectives, and experiences are critical to our collective growth.

Best regards,

*Jeff Osgood*

## BEING STUDENT READY

### Register for CELT Book Club

Join the **CELT Book Club** this fall semester to read and discuss [Relationship-Rich Education: how Human Connections Drive Student Success in College](#) by Peter Felton and Leo M. Lambert (2020). Because the West Chester University Library has an unlimited e-book license for this title, CELT will offer our book club selection as an e-book rather than send hard copies. You may **access the book here**, when logged in to the library with your WCU credentials.

CELT Book Club meets twice during the semester:

- Wednesday, Oct. 4 at 3:00 p.m. or Thursday, Oct. 5 at 12:30 p.m.
- Wednesday, Nov. 8 at 3:00 p.m. or Thursday, Nov. 90 at 12:30 p.m.

To register, click on the button below.

**Register for CELT Book Club**

## STUDENT SUCCESS



### WCU Places Solidly in U.S. News Rankings

*(courtesy of WCU's Communications & Marketing)*

U.S. News' latest college rankings reflect significant changes in their methodology. They also adjusted for an error in their calculations impacting

the predicted graduation rate performance metric for schools that had changed U.S. News ranking categories (Carnegie Classification), including West Chester University, which

changed Carnegie Classification to an R2 (Research 2) institution.

For 2024, U.S. News ranks WCU #209 overall out of 435 national universities that include the Ivy League schools plus MIT, Drexel, Northwestern, and others.

Among top public schools, WCU ranks #112 out of 227. WCU is tied with Florida Atlantic University, Illinois State University, and the University of Massachusetts-Dartmouth, putting WCU in the top half of institutions. In the U.S. News category for Top Performers on Social Mobility, WCU is listed at #222 out of 434.

Overall, WCU made two other lists: Best Value Schools #111 out of 211; and Best Colleges for Veterans #147 out of 176.

How WCU Compares to Other Public R2 Universities:

When all the R1 and R3 institutions in the U.S. News National Universities category are removed, there are 128 R2 institutions including WCU; of these, 91 are public R2s. WCU's Office of Institutional Research examined the U.S. News data and identified interesting points that prove WCU remains not only competitive with peer institutions, but also excels.

- U.S. News predicted WCU's graduation rate is 63% but our actual rate is 72%. Our over-performance of 9 percentage points ranks us #16 out of 128, placing us in the top 13% of institutions.
- Among all 128 R2 institutions, WCU's fall first-year student retention percentage of 82% ranks us #46 out of 128 institutions, putting us in the top 36% of these institutions.
- Looking at only the public R2s (91 institutions), WCU's first-year retention rate places us at #17; our graduation rate places us at #8; and our Pell grant recipient graduation rate places us at #13.

WCU's ranking is relative to other institutions: It is not only determined by our own performance on measures, but how other institutions perform on those measures. In total, U.S. News collected data on more than 1,800 institutions and ranked nearly 1,500 schools.

U.S. News calculated rankings using 19 key measures of academic quality for National Universities. Five ranking factors that were in the previous edition's formula – alumni giving, class size, high school class standing, the proportion of instructional faculty with terminal degrees, and the proportion of graduates who borrowed federal loans – were removed from the formula to place greater focus on outcomes measures and to rely on data universally reported by schools or obtainable from third-party sources. U.S. News increased the emphasis on how often schools' students from all socioeconomic backgrounds earned degrees and took advantage of information on graduate outcomes that was not available until recently.

**WCU Rankings from U.S. News & World  
Report**

**Wells School of Music Hosts  
Series of Free Concerts**



The Madeleine Wing Adler Concert Series kicks off on Thursday, October 5, from Noon to 1 p.m. in the Wells School of Music's Ware Recital Hall, Swope Music Building and Performing Arts Center, 817 S. High St., West Chester. Named for the former WCU President Madeleine Wing Adler (1992-2008), a champion of the arts, this event is held at noon on the first Thursday of every month and concerts are FREE and open to the public.

Keyboard Division.

The October 5 event is a concert of the

The schedule for other upcoming concerts includes:

November 2: Vocal Division

December 7: Jazz Division

February 1: String Division

March 7: Sophomore Instrumental Scholarship Competition

April 4: S. Powell Middleton Freshman Instrumental Scholarship Competition

May 2: Jazz Division

## ACCESS

### The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 Turns 50\*

(\*correction from previous version)

*by Dr. David Thomas, Director of the Office of Educational Accessibility  
and Assistant Professor in Interdisciplinary Studies and Academic Support Programs*

The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 – the first major piece of modern disability rights legislation – was signed into law 50 years ago this past Tuesday, September 26. However, it wouldn't be until four years later, in 1977, in light of the historic occupation of the San Francisco federal building for 25 days (still the longest occupation of a federal facility) and nationwide protests that the regulations implementing the protections laid out in the Act were enacted. To this day, disability continues to carry significant stigma and is frequent cause for discrimination, leading to further marginalization – according to the Department of Labor, only 21% of people who identified as disabled were gainfully employed in 2022, and those who were only made \$.69 cents on the dollar compared to their non-disabled peers.

Despite having reached this historic milestone in terms of disability rights and civic engagement, we still have a lot of work to do to create a truly inclusive and accessible society. Ableism is deeply rooted in our systems and our culture -- a 2014 study by Scope found that 67% of people feel uncomfortable talking to a disabled person, and according to the U.S. Census Bureau, only 17.9% (as opposed to 37.7% in the general population) of people who identify as having a disability have earned a Bachelor's degree or higher. In Pennsylvania, 20% of high school aged students have received or are receiving disability related support. The presence of disabled people, students, faculty, and staff, in higher education means that the disabled perspective will be represented in leadership roles with the ability to impact the lived experiences of people in all walks of life. The Office of Educational Accessibility is here to help make that a reality through ensuring the civil rights of disabled students and broader accessibility in all aspects of the WCU experience. As the late Judy Heumann said, "Nothing About Us Without Us" has become

“Nothing Without Us”.

**About Dr. Thomas:**

Dr. David Thomas is the Director of the Office of Educational Accessibility and an Assistant Professor in the Department of Interdisciplinary Studies and Academic Support Programs and identifies as a multiply disabled individual. He is the immediate past Chair of the Mental Health Advisory Council of Disability Rights Pennsylvania, where he has been a member of the Board of Directors since 2015. His work with Disability Rights Pennsylvania centers around protection and advocacy for Pennsylvanians with disabilities, advocating for the closure of the state mental hospitals, and advocating against treatment over objection in healthcare and mental health treatment. He serves as the President of Delta Alpha Pi International Honor Society, which recognizes the accomplishments of high achieving students with disabilities, and in addition to his disability work, serves as a non-affiliated member of the IRB at St. Joseph’s University in Philadelphia. He was previously an English faculty member with a focus on sociocultural linguistics, composition, and Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL).

Join Dr. Thomas to discuss the history and present state of disability at West Chester University and to engage in conversation about how to best provide the most accessible experience for Golden Rams of all abilities. Presentations will take place in person and via Zoom throughout the Fall semester.

Virtual Sessions will be held via Zoom at the following dates and times (see zoom link below):

**Thursday, October 26, 2023 - 1:30 pm - 3:00 pm**  
**Friday, November 17, 2023 - 12:00 noon - 1:30 pm**

On Campus Sessions will be held at the following dates and times in these locations:

**Friday, October 13, 2023 - 1:00 pm - 2:30 pm - Sturzebecker 329**  
**Monday, November 20, 2023 - 10:00 am - 11:30 am - Swope 204**

[Register Here](#)

[Zoom Link](#)

## WCU eTextbook Initiative

The Teaching & Learning Center is pleased to offer the **eTextbook Initiative** again for 2023-2024.

This eTextbook Initiative is a university-wide effort that aims to replace and/or supplement expensive commercial course textbooks with free, faculty-produced electronic textbooks. These eTextbooks will save students money while providing additional types of content, learning experiences, and assessments not found in a typical textbook. As of the Spring 2023 semester, books produced by this initiative have eliminated over \$150,000 in student costs.

Permanent, full time West Chester University faculty are eligible for this initiative. Details about the initiative and the application form are attached.

We invite you to submit the completed application by **Monday, October 9, 2023** to Pat Brander at [pbrander@wcupa.edu](mailto:pbrander@wcupa.edu). If you have any questions, please contact Marc Drumm at

## Call for Proposals: Quality Matters Initiative

With the rapid growth of online education at West Chester University, the Teaching and Learning Center looked to ensure that our online courses are built upon research-backed standards. Therefore, we partnered with Quality Matters (QM), a non-profit organization that specializes in standards for quality assurance for online course and program design. We run this initiative each academic year in which faculty members are compensated for preparing their courses for review and obtaining QM certification. More details about the opportunity are available on the **Call for Proposals**.

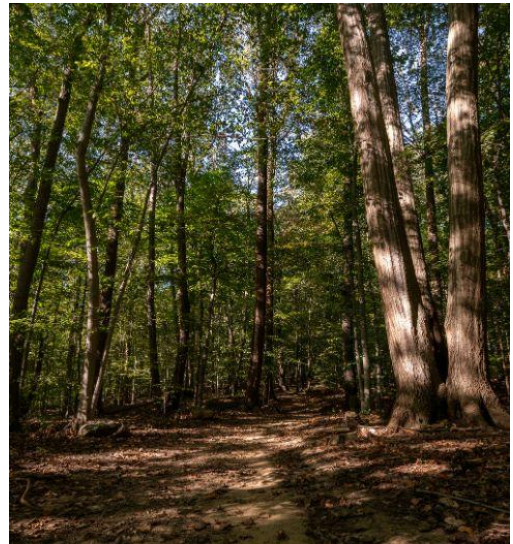
Applications are due by Friday, October 6, 2023.

## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

### Forest Fest Celebrates 50 Years of the Gordon Natural Area

*(Story courtesy of WCU Communications & Marketing)*

Of West Chester University's 406 acres, more than 126 acres is a preserved forest and open space on South Campus used for environmental studies, reflection, and recreation: **the Robert B. Gordon Natural Area for Environmental Studies (GNA)**. On the heels of the first Earth Day in 1970, the GNA was protected from development in 1971 and officially dedicated in 1973. It has been since designated a Wild Plant Sanctuary by the PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources.



To celebrate the 50th anniversary of the GNA's dedication, the University hosted a free "Forest Fest" on Saturday, September 23 with tours and activities.

WCU Biology Professor Jessica Schedlbauer, who chairs the committee organizing Forest Fest, said, "Those of us who work in and care for the Gordon Natural Area are very excited about bringing the campus and community together to celebrate the 50th anniversary of its dedication."

[Learn More About  
GNA](#)

## DIVERSITY & INCLUSION



## WCU's Latino/a/x Communities Conference Celebrates Its Quincenara

*(Story courtesy of WCU Communications & Marketing)*

During Hispanic Heritage Month, West Chester University is honoring Latinx culture with what will become a permanent installation in Sykes Student Union: a custom mural by the renowned Chilean artist and activist Alejandro “Mono” González.

González was the keynote for the **15<sup>th</sup> annual Latinx Communities Conference** on September 28 and spoke not only on making art but about public art and its social impact.

González was joined by his son, Sebastián González, and assistants to paint the mural on the second floor of Sykes. He spoke with classes and held a printmaking masterclass with WCU art students.

Daniela Johannes, originally from Chile, associate professor of languages and cultures, is director for the **Latino/a/x Communities Conference** and is responsible for bringing Gonzalez to WCU for the conference and to create the mural. She notes that September 11, 1973 (“the other 9/11,” she says), was the Chilean coup d’etat and “Gonzalez was part of the movement, painting clandestinely during the dictatorship.”

In the late 1960s, Gonzalez founded La Brigada Ramona Parra, a street arts informal school and a collective of young painters who left a heritage of visual social messages on the walls and public buildings of Santiago, Chile. During the Chilean dictatorship, several of Mono’s authored murals were covered with white paint but were later restored and declared national monuments of heritage during the Chilean democracy.

Johannes calls the mural “an educational monument that honors the heritage” of WCU’s Latinx students and employees.

González’ mural installation coincides with Mono & Mural, an exhibit of his work in WCU’s Baker Gallery in E.O. Bull Center through Friday, October 13.





## Moon Shot for Equity Hosts Dr. Russell Lowery-Hart

In support of WCU's Moon Shot for Equity as well as our commitment to student success, we welcomed Dr. Russell Lowery-Hart to campus on **September 20**. Dr. Lowery-Hart's keynote focused on how to "rethink student success through privileging the student voice, removing barriers, and committing to a culture of caring."

His lecture drew from his experience shaping Amarillo College's enrollment, advocacy, and resources to increase retention and persistence rates.

Dr. Lowery-Hart was recently named Chancellor of Austin Community College. He served as president of Amarillo College in Amarillo, Texas, since 2014. Dr. Lowery-Hart previously served as vice president of academic affairs for Amarillo College. Under his leadership, Amarillo College was named co-winner of the prestigious 2023 Aspen Prize, a Community College Excellence award.

After the lecture, Dr. Lowery-Hart moderated small group discussions aimed at creating an action plan addressing a specific aspect of student success: emergency aid, mental health, basic needs (e.g., housing, transportation, food etc.), and academic experience.

To see the full lecture, click on the button below.

[Click to View Dr. Lowery-Hart's  
Lecture](#)

## SCHOLARSHIP & PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

### Sustainability Research Grant Opportunity

The West Chester University Office of Research and Sponsored Programs invites you to apply for the **Campus Sustainability Research and Creative Activity Grant**.



This program supports faculty efforts to investigate and develop sustainability-related projects on campus. Funding preference will be given to proposals that specifically address and work to realize one or more goals of WCU's Climate Action Plan (<https://www.wcupa.edu/Sustainability/documents/climateActionPlan.pdf>) while fostering collaboration between members of the WCU community (faculty, students, and staff).

We encourage faculty applicants to include a model for student/faculty collaboration and **all proposals must demonstrate student impact**. Applications are **limited to a 250-word abstract** that specifies WCU's **Climate Action Plan** goal(s) addressed, expected expenditures, the Principal Investigator, and collaborators (student,

faculty, and/or staff). To review WCU's climate action plan click on yellow button below.

**Amount of Award:** Proposals will be funded for up to \$2,000.00. Each applicant may submit one proposal per funding cycle. An applicant may not be listed as a team member on multiple applications during the same funding cycle.

**Important Dates:**

1. Proposals are due by **11:30pm on Tuesday, October 31<sup>st</sup>, 2023.**
2. Semi-finalists will be invited to present their proposals to a panel of judges **during the week of November 13<sup>th</sup>, 2023.** Presentations are limited to 15 minutes.
3. The WCU Office of Sustainability will notify grant awardees by **Wednesday, November 29, 2023.**
4. **This research/creative activity project will take place over the Spring 2024 semester** and all funds must be used by June 17<sup>th</sup>, 2024.

**To Apply:**

If you are interested in applying for the WCU Campus Sustainability Research and Creative Activity Grant, please go to: **InfoReady (infoready4.com)** to learn more details about the Application Process (including eligibility and funding limits) and to apply.

**For those who are awarded, you are required to post a Project Final Report on the WCU Digital Commons** upon project completion\* and you are strongly encouraged to present your project at a WCU event such as the Sustainability Research and Practice Seminar series, or WCU's Research and Creative Activities Day (April 17<sup>th</sup>, 2024).

\*Grant Recipients can post their Project Final Report by e-mailing it to Walt Cressler ([WCressler@wcupa.edu](mailto:WCressler@wcupa.edu)).

All questions about the grant should be directed to Brad Flamm, Director, WCU Office of Sustainability ([bflamm@wcupa.edu](mailto:bflamm@wcupa.edu)) or Dr. John Pisciotta, Chair of the Sustainability Council's Scholarly and Creative Activities Committee ([JPisciotta@wcupa.edu](mailto:JPisciotta@wcupa.edu)).

[WCU's Climate Action Plan](#)

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### Banner/RamPortal Town Hall Series Resumes

There are two remaining opportunities to participate in the Banner Town Hall Series:

**October 10 and November 8**

Join us in person (Mitchell Hall 202) or via Zoom ([Zoom link](#)). Pre-registration for any of the 2023 Town Halls is now open. Secure your spot by using this [registration link](#). Please

## Banner/RamPortal Town Hall Series

Join us for our monthly town hall to hear the latest on the RamPortal Implementation!

These hour-long sessions will provide the following:

- > Updates on the RamPortal Implementation
- > FAQ discussion
- > Training

Plenty of time for your questions!

Look out for more info from [SIS@wcupa.edu](mailto:SIS@wcupa.edu)



### When?

Sept 13  
Oct 11  
Nov 8

### Where?

11a - MIT 202  
Also via Zoom

note that you must be logged into Office365 to use the registration link.

### Agenda:

- Information will be shared orienting first-time attendees to the project.
- Important milestones and updates on the project status will be shared.
- Special Sneak-Peeks of some page views within RamPortal!

[Click to Register](#)

## RESOURCE CORNER



### How to Submit Your Event to Online Campus Calendar

The WCU Calendar is populated by events submitted in **25Live**, WCU's room reservation and calendaring program. Faculty/Staff may submit events to the calendar by selecting "WCU Featured Events Calendar" in the "Resources" section of the 25Live Event Form.

[WCU Event Calendar](#)

[How to submit your event to WCU Calendar](#)

## FAST Schedule & Offerings



Check out what IS&T has on tap for the semester! The Faculty and Staff Training (FAST) unit supports WCU faculty and staff in becoming proficient in various applications, in addition to providing best practices in

trending platforms (e.g., OneDrive, D2L, RamCloud). Courses are designed to accommodate all levels of learning and allow users to build on acquired skills. Click below for the full schedule or take **self-paced options**.

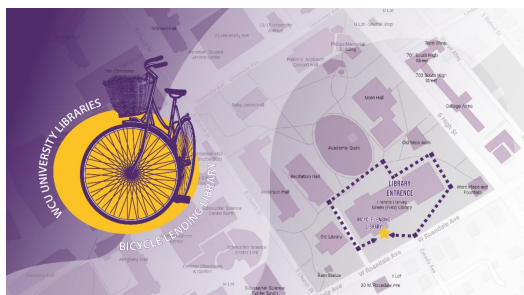
[Click for Schedule](#)

## ODLI On Air Podcast

ODLI on Air is a podcast on digital learning & innovation at WCU that expands teaching and learning perspectives by connecting theory and practice through conversations with expert WCU faculty. Check out episodes on a variety of topics including sustainable study abroad, using H5P interactions, inclusive learning, and e-portfolios.



[Listen to ODLI On Air](#)



## WCU's Bike Lending Library

Can't find a parking space? Need to get to class faster? With the opening of the Bicycle Lending Library (BLL), you're in luck!

The BLL offers 28 Trek bicycles available in sizes XXS-XL. WCU students and employees can borrow a bicycle for two-week increments or full semesters. Riders should submit an **online request** for a bicycle and wait to be contacted by the library staff. From here, the lending process will begin. After scheduling a pick-up time, riders will present their WCU ID and receive their bicycle, as well as a helmet and a combination lock.

[More Info on BLL](#)



## Want to learn more about Navigate?

Visit our **webpage**. You'll find an overview, information about **Progress Reports**, and our **training site**.

[Navigate  
Homepage](#)

You can also check out the **FAST training site** and search “navigate” to find all of the Navigate-specific offerings. Here's a **quick guide** to the offerings.

## FREE LinkedIn Learning Content Available to WCU Faculty, Staff and Students

LinkedIn Learning with Lynda.com content is an industry leader in online training, with a digital library of over 180,000 videos, covering a wide range of technical, business, software, and creative topics. West Chester University faculty, staff and currently enrolled students have unlimited access.

[Access LinkedIn Learning](#)



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