



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. 15

March 2024

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."

Share important information about an upcoming event to the [Ram Report](#).

[Submit Provost's Post Stories Here](#)

Table of Contents

- **Provost's Message**
- **Being "Student Ready"**
 - Fall Class Registration Opens March 27
 - 41st Presidential Gala Funds "Last Dollars"
 - 150Forward Campaign Exceeds Goal
- **Student Success**
 - WCU's MBA Program Moves Up in the Rankings
 - Admissions Trending Ahead of Last Year
- **Access**
 - Resource Pantry Hosts 2nd Annual Hunger Banquet
 - Expanding Students' Global Experiences
 - JARIHE Call for Manuscripts Extended to April 1
- **Community Engagement**
 - Wells School of Music Presents 34th Annual Jazz Festival
 - Department of Theatre & Dance Presents Silent Sky
- **Diversity & Inclusion**
 - Ethnic Studies Celebrates 50th Anniversary

- **Scholarship & Professional Development**
 - Professor Receives Richard Rogers Award
 - Registration Now Open for 2024 RECAP Conference
 - Tenure and Promotion Portfolio Workshops
- **Upcoming Events**
 - The Graduate School Hosts Open House April 6
- **Resource Corner**
 - Sykes Advance Registration Process Launched
 - How To Post An Event On WCU Calendar
 - Professional Headshots Available via Iris Photo Booth at Twardowski Career Development Center
 - WCU Speech & Hearing Clinic Accepting Appointments
 - FAST Schedule & Offerings
 - Navigate Training Sessions
 - LinkedIn Learning



Dear colleagues,

As we celebrate Women's History Month, it is with great pride that I reflect on the remarkable women who have left an indelible mark on the history of our university. From pioneering educators to visionary leaders, their contributions have helped make West Chester University the vibrant academic institution it is today.

This month, we honor the countless women whose dedication, resilience, and passion have propelled us forward. Their achievements serve as a testament to the transformative power of perseverance and the unwavering commitment to excellence. Among these notable figures is our very own Dr. Laurie Bernotsky, whose remarkable journey exemplifies the spirit of leadership and innovation. Dr. Bernotsky's steadfast dedication to our university community has been instrumental in shaping our collective vision for the future. As we eagerly anticipate her tenure as our next president, we are inspired by her visionary leadership and unwavering commitment to advancing our mission of academic excellence and student success.

As we commemorate Women's History Month, let us not only celebrate the achievements of the

past but also reaffirm our commitment to fostering an inclusive and equitable community where every voice is heard, and every contribution is valued. Together, let us continue to honor the legacy of these trailblazing women by striving for progress and building a brighter future for generations to come.

Best regards,

Jeff Osgood

BEING "STUDENT READY"



A graphic for Fall 2024 Class Registration. It features a yellow top section with the Ram mascot holding a sign that says "RAMPORTAL". Below this, on a purple background, is the text "FALL 2024 Class Registration Opens March 27". At the bottom, it says "NEED HELP? VISIT THE REGISTRATION STATION!" with a QR code and the URL "WCUPA.EDU/RAMPARTAL". The dates "March 27 - April 2 • SECC Ballroom A" and "April 3 - 5 • 25 University Ave, Room 103" are listed at the bottom.

Fall Class Registration Opens March 27

Registration for Fall 2024 classes is now open in RamPortal. We invite you to visit **Registration Station** if you need assistance with student registration. Support for faculty, staff and students will be available between **March 27-April 5**.

Given the unique nature of fall 2024 registration including the move to RamPortal, condensed registration

timeline, and later registration date, we are thinking creatively about how we support returning students who reach out for registration support.

Our goal is to ensure students who reach out for support with course selection at Registration Station get real-time support and are not turned away or referred elsewhere to get any support. The commitment to not turning students away aligns with the recommendations presented by Committee for Advising Excellence in their recommendations for how the Academic Support & Advocacy Center supports students. A critical component is ensuring close coordination with students' faculty advisors when the ASA team helps students with course selection.



Presidential Gala Funds Last Dollars Students Need to Graduate

(Excerpt courtesy of WCU Communications & Marketing)

(L to R) Professor of Management Susan Fiorentino; Student Speaker Jasmine Seals; West Chester University President Christopher Fiorentino

Each year, West Chester University's Annual Presidential Gala attracts numerous friends from throughout the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania to support an annual benefit that works to provide financial assistance to West Chester University students in good academic standing. In

honor of President Christopher Fiorentino's 41 years of extraordinary service and before his retirement in June, the Gala returned home to West Chester University on Friday, March 15, as the Sciences & Engineering Center and The Commons was transformed into a "Starry Night Soirée." The newest building on campus featured a breathtaking 8k video wall presentation by Professor of Astronomy Marc Gagné and The Sandra F. Pritchard Mather Planetarium. NASA images, footage from the Webb and Hubble Space Telescopes, the Mars rovers, and planet flyby missions were among the spectacular images shown.

The special venue was fitting for a special request. President Fiorentino asked that all funds raised at the 41st Annual Presidential Gala be specifically directed to the University's "Fund to Finish" — a fund that provides flexible, emergency funding to students when they have exhausted all other avenues of support to complete their degree at West Chester University. Nearly 300 friends were anxious to shoot for the stars and answer the beloved president's call to fund the "last dollars" students may need to graduate. The total amount raised at the Gala is currently in the process of being calculated. In existence for the past few years, the Fund to Finish has supported 170 West Chester University students.

Jasmine Seals, a graduate of Bucks County Community College and now a 25-year-old West Chester University student in her senior year, personified the impact of the campaign. She told the audience: "My parents raised my brother and me on the idea that they knew we could do better and be better than the situation they were in, [which was] living paycheck to paycheck, getting laid off, and having to work more than the average person might...When transferring to WCU, I worked two jobs...In the fall of 2023, I was stressed, worried, and scared about paying for tuition to get me through my senior year....In order to student teach, I would have to reduce my work hours and step away from working....What about my bills? My loan payments? My car or gas? Then, I got an email saying I had received a very generous scholarship that would allow me to finish my final semester. Like butter on fresh hot pancakes, my worries melted away...This scholarship changed my life and made things a whole lot easier for me to reach my dreams of being an educator."

"The Fund to Finish represents our shared mission as a community of educators to ensure every student has the resources needed to complete their education and cross the finish line to secure their hard-earned degrees," said President Fiorentino to the guests in attendance.

Since its inception in 1983, the Presidential Gala has raised more than \$2 million for West Chester University students. Gala Committee Co-Chairs for West Chester University's 2024 Starry Night Soirée were Elizabeth Leonard and Stephen R. Leonard '72, M'80

150Forward Campaign Exceeds Goal

*(Story courtesy of WCU
Communications &
Marketing)*



(L to R) 150Forward Campaign Co-Chair Jacqui North; 150Forward Campaign Co-Chair Marc Duey; Professor of Management Susan Fiorentino; West Chester University President Christopher Fiorentino;

The Fund to Finish represented just one step in the larger journey to complete the 150Forward campaign, which is the largest comprehensive campaign that the University has launched in its history to support students. While a capital campaign supports bricks and mortar, the 150Forward campaign was specifically designed to help an even greater number of WCU students secure more scholarships; have increased opportunities for academic, civic, and professional experiences; and obtain ready access to technological advancements.

At the gala, a surprise, significant milestone was announced by Executive Director of the West Chester University Foundation Debra Cornelius; the 150Forward Campaign raised \$69,512,930.82. The total exceeded the campaign's overall goal by \$4 million and reached its high point three months before the June 30, 2024 deadline. "We are genuinely excited to share this historic milestone with you," said Ms. Cornelius. "To see the impact that these dollars will have on generations of students is truly humbling."

STUDENT SUCCESS

WCU Online MBA Rises in Rankings

U.S. News and World Report released their 2024 Online MBA rankings and their Best Online MBA for Veterans rankings. WCU placed #60 (up from #73 in 2023) in the Best Online Master's in MBA programs and #41 (up from #46 in 2023) in the Best Online Programs for Veterans rankings. The rankings included almost 350 different schools and the process was very competitive.



Undergraduate and Graduate Admissions Trending Ahead of Last Year

Currently, fall first-year and transfer applications and offers are trending ahead of the previous year. First-year fall 2024 applications are running 6.5% ahead of last year at the same time.



Due to increased demand, additional undergraduate admitted student visit opportunities have been added for this spring. Our spring Accepted Student Days will be held on March 23rd and April 13th.

The Graduate School also reports that admissions successfully exceed their Spring enrollment goals. Efforts that supported this achievement included creating a new MBA inquiry campaign, 16 campus tours, 200 individual meetings with prospective students, and hosting 375 individuals for events across the admissions funnel (info sessions, accepted student events, orientations).

Resource Pantry Hosts 2nd Annual Hunger Banquet

*(Excerpt courtesy of WCU
Communications & Marketing)*



In anticipation of feasting on a meal found around the world, WCU students, faculty, staff, and members of the community came together for the 2nd annual Hunger Banquet on March 7, to highlight the causes and effects of hunger and steps needed to eradicate it.

Attendees randomly drew tickets to sit in areas of a room that represent high-, middle- and low-income levels. Depending on the ticket, participants found themselves eating a small bowl of rice and beans, while others sat at a table with more protein and vegetable options, and a lucky few enjoyed a full-course nutritious dinner at a table complete with linens.

Enhancing the interactive evening was Chief Executive Officer of the Chester County Food Bank, Andrea Youndt, who detailed the reality of hunger and food insecurity within our own neighboring community of Chester County, PA, one of the “richest” counties in Pennsylvania.

“The Hunger Banquet enables participants to truly understand how most are surviving in the world today,” says Director of the Center for Civic Engagement & Social Impact Rita Patel Eng. “The interactive dining experience provides a unique lesson at a time when the World Bank reports that nearly 700 million people live on less than \$2.15 each day; this constitutes an extreme poverty line. Increasing our awareness of this reality is a start and working towards its end is a commitment that we all need to make.”

As an annual fundraiser designed to raise awareness about world poverty, the Hunger Banquet also raises much-needed funds for the University’s Resource Pantry. Since its inception in 2016, the West Chester University Resource Pantry has been actively supporting student success by minimizing food and basic need insecurity while preparing students for life after graduation.

“The University’s Resource Pantry continues to be a critical need on campus,” shares Patel Eng. **“It had 2,903 total visits from students in the fall 2023 semester, which is the highest number of visits that the Pantry has experienced since it opened in 2016.** The need among us continues to be significant. Thanks to the generosity of donors from our community of faculty, staff, students, alumni, countless community partners, and grants, WCU students can receive the support that they need to thrive.”

[Learn More About the Resource
Pantry](#)

Expanding Students' Global Experiences

(Excerpt courtesy of WCU)

For spring break 2024, some WCU students headed to Cuba, Greece, Germany, and France to learn about history, culture, and clashes. These are only a few of more than 700 international study programs offered through the Global Engagement Office.

Angela Howard, associate provost for global engagement, and her four-person staff facilitate a broad range of international opportunities. Programs include faculty-led research and study trips, international internships and student teaching, field study, and exchange agreements with institutions abroad. The office also helps to arrange for sports teams to play in other countries and for performing arts students to perform internationally, plus supports international students and visiting scholars who come to study and teach at WCU.



“We want to create global citizens,” Howard says. “We want our students to be able to live and work and engage with all cultures.”

The Global Engagement Office is located on the third floor (south) of Mitchell Hall. For more information, call 610-436-3515 or email studyabroad@wcupa.edu.

[Learn More About Global Engagement at WCU](#)



Journal of Access, Retention, & Inclusion in Higher Education

JARIHE Call for Manuscripts Deadline Extended

The Journal of Access, Retention, and Inclusion in Higher Education (JARIHE) is seeking qualitative and quantitative manuscripts that share best and promising practices on student success programs. This call applies to research addressing all students, including those in regular admissions and developmental programs. Please note: submissions by graduate students are also encouraged. **Submission deadline is April 1. Please contact John Craig at jcraig@wcupa.edu if you need additional time.**

JARIHE is a peer-reviewed scholarly publication that supports research in the areas of developmental education, access, retention, inclusion, and student success in higher education.

[Guidelines for JARIHE Manuscripts](#)

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



Wells School of Music Presents 34th Annual Jazz Festival

(Story courtesy of WCU Communications & Marketing)

The Wells School of Music at West Chester University (WCU) brought world-class entertainment and free live jazz to the surrounding community during the 34th annual Jazz Festival this month. All performances took

place in the Madeleine Wing Adler Theatre, Swope Music Building and Performing Arts Center.

“We are very excited to offer world-class jazz programming for our campus and surrounding communities to enjoy,” says Director of Jazz Studies Jonathan Ragonese. “This year’s jazz festival features some of the finest musicians in the business including jazz legend Bob Mintzer, the Ron Thomas Trio, Phil Haynes and Herb Robertson, the student ensemble Kitchen Sink, and the WCU Faculty Jazz group.” Mintzer headlined and performed alongside West Chester University’s beloved Criterions Jazz Ensemble in an all-Mintzer concert under the direction of Ragonese.

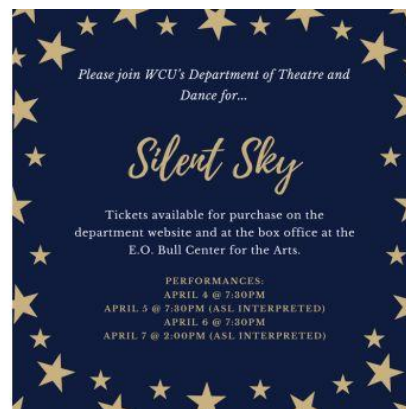
Department of Theatre & Dance Presents Silent Sky

(Story courtesy of WCU Communication & Marketing)

West Chester University’s Department of Theatre and Dance is proud to present *Silent Sky*, a play by Lauren Gunderson that spotlights the untold stories of women astronomers at the Harvard Observatory in the early 1900s.

Performances are **April 4, 5, and 6 at 7:30 p.m., and April 7 at 2 p.m.**, at the MainStage Theatre in the E.O. Bull Center for the Arts. Tickets are \$12-15 and available at <https://wcupatix.com/theatreanddance>.

Silent Sky explores the life of Henrietta Leavitt, a pioneering astronomer whose work was instrumental in mankind’s understanding of the universe. Despite facing numerous obstacles, including not being allowed to touch a telescope, Leavitt and her fellow women “computers” made groundbreaking discoveries that shaped modern astronomy. “The play highlights the fact that without music and art, we would not know our place in



the universe,” said Christen Mandracchia, assistant professor of theatre and production manager for the Department of Theatre and Dance. “Literally speaking, from an astronomy perspective, we wouldn’t know what our coordinates are without music and without women.”

The importance of women in various fields and narratives is a theme woven throughout the department’s productions this academic year. It gives WCU students a chance to tackle complex, often underrepresented, roles, Mandracchia said.

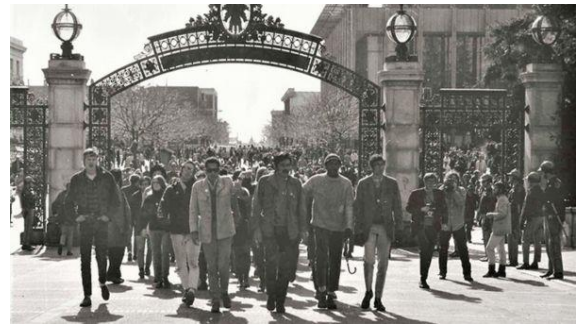
[Purchase Tickets for "Silent Sky"](#)

DIVERSITY & INCLUSION

WCU Celebrates 50th Anniversary of Ethnic Studies

(Story courtesy of WCU Communications & Marketing)

This year marks the 50th anniversary of the establishment of [ethnic studies at WCU](#), now known as the Institute of Race and Ethnic Studies, which offers an interdisciplinary minor degree program. The series began on February 7 and will conclude on Thursday, April 4.



A free film series is being offered in recognition of the anniversary. These short films examine the 1968-1969 student strikes at San Francisco State College and the University of California-Berkeley in which students demanded the creation of a “School of Ethnic Studies” and a “Third World College.” Faculty and, eventually, non-academics joined the protests, which led to the creation of the first ethnic studies programs in the country.

“The institute selected the film series to show how ethnic studies is still relevant to WCU students today as it offers a critical perspective for understanding structural and systemic racism,” says Miguel Ceballos, institute director, associate professor of sociology, and assistant chair of anthropology and sociology. “The discipline of ethnic studies is uniquely placed to examine issues of race and racism as the discipline was born out of protests during the civil rights movement in the 1960s with a mission to address issues of race in the university, including the lack of access, underrepresentation, misrepresentation, and overall neglect of racial minorities within the university curriculum — issues that continue to resonate today.” On Wednesday, March 6, the institute will screen and discuss a film that documents the student/faculty strike at San Francisco State College. The event begins at 4:30 p.m. in Sykes Student Union Room 255, 110 West Rosedale Avenue, and is also presented via Zoom.

The University was still West Chester State College in 1974 when ethnic studies was established, notes Ceballos, adding, “The institute was founded to increase the understanding and appreciation of racial and ethnic diversity and multiculturalism on the campus.” Katharine Newman of the English Department was the Institute’s founding director. Succeeding directors included Andrew E. Dinniman, Irene G. Shur, and Bonita Freeman-Witthoft.

For the last 50 years the Institute of Race and Ethnic Studies has promoted the understanding and appreciation of racial and ethnic diversity, multiculturalism, racial and social justice, while also informing students on what a more equitable and inclusive world on the WCU campus looks

like through teaching, student engagement, cultural programming, and scholarly research. The minor provides students with a critical understanding of the social, cultural, and historical experiences of racial and ethnic groups in this country, leading to a concentration in one of these areas: African American Studies, Asian American Studies, Jewish American Studies, Latino/a Studies, Native American Studies, or Multi-Ethnic Studies.

[Learn More About Film Series](#)

SCHOLARSHIP & PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

WCU Professor Receives Richard Rogers Award

West Chester University Professor of Music Theory and Composition Robert Maggio was recently named one of the winners of the 2024 Richard Rodgers Studio Production award for a musical he has worked on for more than a decade.



The award is presented by the American Academy of Arts and Letters, an honor society of artists, composers, and writers, that annually distributes more than \$1.2 million in awards to foster interest in the arts. The Richard Rodgers Awards, specifically endowed by acclaimed composer Rodgers in 1978, supports musical theater by subsidizing productions in New York City for emerging composers and writers.

Maggio's musical, "Far From the Tree," is a collaborative effort between Maggio (music), Justin Warner (libretto), and Kristin Maloney (lyrics). Inspired by Andrew Solomon's nonfiction book of the same name, the musical explores the challenges and triumphs of parents raising children who are profoundly different from themselves. The musical follows three sets of parents who are raising a child who is deaf, a child who is transgender, and a child who is autistic.

"The focus is on the parents," Maggio said. "It's about how the parents find a way to understand and love their child despite the extreme differences between parent and child."

The road to this stage of production has ebbed and flowed throughout the last decade. It started with Maggio and Maloney coming off of a stalled project when they read Solomon's book. They secured rights to adapt it into a musical and brought in Warner to structure the narrative. The three had met at the BMI Lehman Engel Musical Theater Workshop nearly 20 years ago.

Director Michael Greif, known for Broadway successes like "Rent" and "Dear Evan Hansen," joined the project in 2017. That same year "Far From the Tree" was workshopped in Martha's Vineyard, and again in 2019 in New York City – then the COVID-19 pandemic brought the performing arts industry to a halt.

The trio continued working on the musical and applying for grants. The Rodgers award

represents new momentum in getting the musical in front of an audience, Maggio said. "If you learn anything from working on musicals, it's patience," he said. "This breathes new life into the development of the project."

Coincidentally, MusiCoLab, an organization that showcases new musical theatre work in Philadelphia, is presenting a 30-minute excerpt of "Far From the Tree" on Sunday, April 14, and Monday, April 15. Click the link below to purchase tickets online.

[Purchase Tickets for "Far From the Tree"](#)

Registration Now Open for 2024 RECAP Conference

Join us at RECAP 2024 on Thursday, May 16 to collectively navigate the challenges and explore the opportunities that arise with the integration of technology in higher education. The keynote speaker is Dr. Jason Gulya, who speak about AI for Teaching and Learning. The conference is FREE for WCU faculty, staff, and students.



[Register Here for RECAP Conference](#)

Tenure and Promotion Workshops

The Promotion and Tenure Workshop Committee (PTW) will be hosting **two** workshops. The first one is designated specifically for faculty applying for promotion only. The second one is designed for those applying for either just tenure or tenure and promotion together. While the information is geared towards applicants, committee members and department chairs are welcome to attend. Both sessions will be held via Zoom. The workshops will not be recorded, but there is a recorded version of the general PTW workshop available that you can watch. Contact Danielle Skaggs at dskaggs@wcupa.edu.

The **Promotion only workshop** is designed to assist faculty with building their promotion portfolio. The following topics will be addressed:

- Overview of the process and timelines
- Organizing your materials
- Answering questions regarding teaching, scholarship and service
- Electronic submission process
- Q and A with TeP members

The **Tenure and Promotion workshop** is designed to assist faculty with building their tenure and/or promotion portfolio. The following topics will be addressed:

- Overview of the process and timelines

- Organizing your materials
- Dividing your work into teaching, scholarship and service
- Writing your narrative
- Electronic submission process
- Q and A with TeP members

Please contact Danielle Skaggs (dskaggs@wcupa.edu) for more information and to get the Zoom links.

UPCOMING EVENTS



Graduate School Hosts Open House

The Graduate School will host an Open House on Saturday, April 6 from 10:30 am to 12:00 noon at the SECC. To register, please click on the link below.

[Register Here for Graduate School Open House](#)

RESOURCE CORNER

LOOKING TO **RESERVE A LARGE SPACE IN SYKES**

FOR 2024-2025?

2025 Advance Reservation process. Please review some of the FAQs in the link below and note the tentative timeline.

Advance Reservation is the process that Sykes Union and Student Activities implemented in 2022 to assist student organizations and university departments with reserving space within Sykes Student Union for future events.

Advance Registration Process For Sykes Student Union Now Available

After a successful inaugural year, Sykes Student Union is pleased to begin the 2024-

[Learn More About Advance Registration](#)

[Click Here to Submit an Advance Reservation Request](#)

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](#)



Professional Headshots Available via Iris Photo Booth at Twardowski Career Development Center

Students, Faculty, and Staff now have access to the Iris Booth, a free professional photo booth located in the Career Development Center (Lawrence 225).

Students, Faculty, and Staff can stop by anytime Monday through Friday between 8:30am and 4pm to get a photo taken, no appointment needed.



Accepting Appointments

West Chester University Speech and Hearing Clinic

FREE hearing evaluations available

Schedule your appointment now by contacting
Jacqueline Johnson at 610-436-3402 or email
jjohnson@wcupa.edu

[Click to Schedule a Hearing
Evaluation](#)



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**.

[FAST
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](#)



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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