

THE INQUISITIVE scholar

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WCU Museum Studies Students Design Sesquicentennial Exhibition

By Dr. Michael A. Di Giovine, Associate Professor of Anthropology, West Chester University

Among the many events planned for West Chester University's sesquicentennial celebration is the West Chester University Museum of Anthropology and Archaeology's interactive exhibition that brings together artifacts from the university's various departments, archives and special collections, alumni association and private donors, and area museums. Michael A. Di Giovine, director of the museum and an associate professor of anthropology, has since January been working with over a dozen undergraduate and graduate students in the museum studies program as they research, catalog, design and install the exhibition, which opens on September 17.

Sponsored by the Alumni Association and designed by students in WCU's Museum Studies program, *WCU 150: History and Heritage* presents the history and development of the university from a Normal School founded to mold high school-aged elementary school teachers in the post-Civil War period, to a State Teacher's College in the roaring 20's, to a comprehensive liberal arts university. The exhibition features a timeline tracing 150 years of WCU's history, illustrated with period photographs from university archives. Hundreds of artifacts lend depth to the experience, and include an autographed copy of Frederick Douglass' biography, memorabilia from Olympian and Paralympian alumni, a drumhead used in the marching band's Macy's Thanksgiving Parade, flora specimens from the centuries-old Darlington Herbarium, a Torah scroll purchased by students for the university's Holocaust Studies program, award-winning art and music, and different teaching technologies including a rare Donner 3500 analog computer. The timeline begins with a special exhibit that

brings together valuable artifacts from around the world in 1871, putting West Chester into greater perspective. The exhibition does not shy away from addressing historical struggles with race, gender, sexuality, equity and inclusion, and presents the people and events that have shaped the university into what it is today.

At the center of the exhibition is a clear, interactive time capsule created by Tom Haughey, associate professor of theater and the museum's exhibits designer. Visitors are encouraged to deposit their own meaningful objects for posterity. Anthropology, archaeology and museum studies students will catalog and analyze the time capsule's contents upon the conclusion of the exhibition.

WCU 150: History and Heritage is open on the main floor of the Francis Harvey Green Library from September 17, 2021 – May 31, 2022. Entrance is free and special student-curator-led tours can be organized. The exhibition will also have a virtual component by the end of September: www.wcupa.edu/WCU150VirtualExhibition.

Throughout the year, the university will also be taking a condensed version of this exhibition (complete with unique artifacts) on the road to alumni chapters and civic organizations. For more information, or to schedule a visit or traveling exhibition stop, please see the museum's website, www.wcupa.edu/museum or write museum@wcupa.edu.



Museum of Anthropology and Archaeology director Michael A. Di Giovine (left), supervises rising seniors and museum studies students Aaron Stoyack (center), a history major; and Ashley Wallen (right), a graphic design and animation major who's also minoring in art history, as they curate the *WCU 150: History and Heritage* exhibition. Photo provided by West Chester University.



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