

WEST CHESTER UNIVERSITY

RESEARCH, SCHOLARLY, & CREATIVE ACTIVITIES

ANNUAL REPORT



ACADEMIC
YEAR
2015-2016



WCU
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West Chester University, a member of the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education, is a comprehensive public institution serving more than 17,000 students. Founded in 1871 as a teacher training school, the University offers more than 200 undergraduate and graduate majors ranging from the arts and sciences to professional preparation in education, business, and the health sciences. More information about WCU is available on the University's website: wcupa.edu.



A Message from the President



WCU's primary objective can be summed up in two words: student success. Essential to our efforts in fulfilling that goal are scholarly and creative activities which engage students in the experiences that prepare them for personal and professional success. Indeed, student participation in research is a "best practice" leading to higher retention and graduation rates and increased professional opportunities.

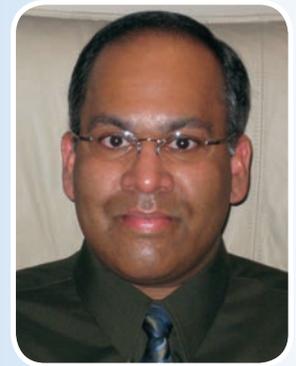
This year's annual research report highlights a few examples of how our faculty and students use research to advance knowledge, serve the community, and help students develop the "tool kit" they need in this rapidly changing workplace. These skills — long valued by employers — include communication, critical and analytical thinking, quantitative literacy, and ethical decision making.

For me, each of the stories in this report underscores how learning is enriched through scholarship. From the Humanities and Sciences to professional disciplines, WCU is proud of what our faculty and students achieve in laboratories, concert halls, and studios not only on campus, but in the community and on the world stage. From Peru to Rwanda and across the Commonwealth, our faculty and students are doing work that makes a difference.

As we continue to grow opportunities for scholarly and creative activities, we are grateful for the financial support provided by both government and private sector investors. Without these funds, much of what we accomplish would be impossible. In a very direct way, these dollars energize this dynamic learning community that serves students, our region, and the nation.

Christopher M. Fiorentino, Ph.D.
Interim President

A Message About Research, Scholarship, and Creativity



Welcome to the third annual WCU research report. We proudly highlight outstanding examples of research, scholarly and creative projects conducted by both our faculty and our students in each of the university's five academic colleges.

At WCU, we strongly support the teacher/scholar model in all of its forms and disciplines. To be most effective in the classroom, our professors need to stay active in their fields by pursuing research or other scholarly activities.

With the support of the university, the West Chester University Foundation, and external sponsors, including corporations and state and federal agencies (such as the National Science Foundation and National Institutes of Health), our faculty engage in an impressively broad range of research and other scholarly and creative activities.

This research spans a broad spectrum, from exploring the publication history of eighteenth-century British novels to probing the past of coastal marshes to foresee the future of climate change; from gauging the effectiveness of an anti-gang youth program in Peru to developing an app to help patients better control their diabetes.

In the true spirit of the teacher/scholar model, most of our faculty are pursuing these activities with the active involvement of both WCU undergraduate and graduate students.

Changing the dynamic from being students in the classroom absorbing agreed-upon knowledge to getting their hands dirty—in some cases literally—by working with their professors in the pursuit of new knowledge can be a life-changing experience. It has inspired our students to pursue advanced degrees and exciting and rewarding careers.

To facilitate this win-win environment, the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs:

- assists faculty seeking funding and support, both internally and externally
- identifies potential collaborators at WCU and elsewhere
- identifies faculty mentors for interested students
- assists in proposal development, budget preparation, and the management of sponsored projects.

Gautam Pillay, Ph.D.
Associate Vice President for Research and Sponsored Programs



Eleanor F. Shevlin

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“The novel has always attracted me because of the way it enables readers to experience worlds different from our own.”
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Exploring the Enduring Appeal of the Novel

Eleanor F. Shevlin, professor of English, is intrigued by the enduring appeal of novels—an attraction that she explores from the earliest 18th century British novels to the modern-day relationships between print and digital media.

This past year, Shevlin’s studies have included her ongoing research of James Harrison, a London publisher who helped elevate the novel’s respectability in the late 18th century.

“At the time, Harrison enabled more readers to buy books by offering a number of titles in affordable, attractive weekly installments that could be bound into complete volumes,” says Shevlin. Between 1779 and 1786, Harrison produced a 23-volume collection comprising 62 novels by such literary pioneers as Cervantes, Daniel Defoe, Henry Fielding, Eliza Haywood, and Samuel Richardson.

Collaborating with both her undergraduate and graduate students, she also:

- created a website with one of her seminar classes that analyzes the cultural, linguistic, and publishing underpinnings of *The News-paper Wedding*, an innovative, anonymously written 1774 British novel—which was also the subject of her presidential address this October at the annual conference of the East-Central American Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies;
- worked with graduate student Sean Skulski, to analyze *S.*, a 2013 ground-breaking print novel written by Doug Dorst and conceived by J.J. Abrams—the co-creator of the TV hit “Lost.” In July, Shevlin and Skulski presented their findings at the Society for the History of Authorship, Reading and Publishing’s annual conference in Paris.

“The novel has always attracted me because of the way it enables readers to experience worlds different from our own,” says Shevlin. “It’s also a two-way street. Besides being a cultural product, novels also produce culture.”

Delving into British Composer's Folksong and Hymn-Tune Arrangements

Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872-1958) was one of Great Britain's most significant 20th century composers.

When **Julian Onderdonk**, professor of music history, was an 11-year-old Episcopal choir boy in New York City, Vaughan Williams was his favorite composer. Continuing to pursue that interest as an adult, Onderdonk has become one of the world's foremost scholars of Vaughan Williams' work.

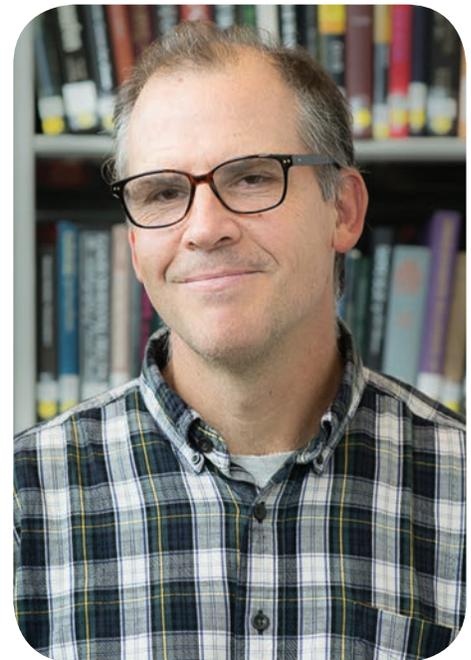
Besides his own symphonies and concertos, Vaughan Williams wrote some of the best known 20th century Christian hymns. He also traveled around England by bicycle to collect more than 800 folksongs, and personally arranged more than 300 of them. As Onderdonk discovered, many of these were converted by the composer into hymn tunes.

The conventional view is that the main goal of the composer's folksong collecting and arranging was to establish a national school of English composition to counter the impact of what Onderdonk calls classical music's "Big Three"—music that has emanated from Germany, Italy, and France.

However, Onderdonk, who recently compiled a definitive checklist and identified the text sources of Vaughan Williams' folksong arrangements, takes a broader view of the composer's motives.

"He wanted to encourage amateur music making," says Onderdonk, whose research was funded by a university grant. "Even though he was an atheist, he believed it was important that people had good music to sing in church, where amateurs were most likely to get involved in music.

"He felt that singing their own uniquely English folk songs in church or at home was a way for English men and women to strengthen their community by getting in touch with their common heritage."



Julian Onderdonk

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"He felt that singing their own uniquely English folk songs in church or at home was a way for English men and women to strengthen their community by getting in touch with their common heritage."

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Amanda M. Olejarski

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“Besides the impact on the citizens subjected to the taking, I’m fascinated by the dynamics involved.”

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Exploring What’s Behind the Government’s Power of Eminent Domain

Amanda M. Olejarski, associate professor of public policy and administration, has been exploring the impact of the U.S. Supreme Court’s publicly controversial 2005 eminent domain decision ever since it was handed down.

By a 5-4 vote, in *Kelo v. City of New London* the court ruled that the Fifth Amendment’s clause prohibiting unlawful government seizures did not preclude a Connecticut town from invoking eminent domain in taking a woman’s house. The town’s purpose: to pave the way for an economic redevelopment project that primarily would benefit a private corporation—in this case, the giant Pfizer pharmaceutical firm—rather than the public.

Besides becoming the topic for her Virginia Tech PhD dissertation, Olejarski has written extensively about the implications of the Supreme Court decision, both for peer-reviewed academic journals and in her highly praised book, *Administrative Discretion in Action: A Narrative of Eminent Domain*, which was reprinted last year.

Currently, she is preparing a journal article that analyzes the laws that 46 of the 50 states have enacted in the wake of the landmark Supreme Court decision. “Some of the new state laws are more restrictive regarding municipal takings,” she says. “Others now require that a private-public partnership conduct such seizures, while some require greater financial compensation to affected private landowners if the purpose of the taking is economic,” says Olejarski.

Also, she adds, “Besides the impact on the citizens subjected to the taking, I’m fascinated by the dynamics involved. It’s an opportunity for robust dialogue and decision making between government officials and the residents of their communities regarding what they all want their community to be.”

Soccer Helps Peruvian Youths Stay Out of Trouble

Advocates contend that sports build character—particularly among adolescents.

For the past two years, **Michael E. Antonio**, assistant professor of criminal justice, has been assessing this claim while interacting with a Peruvian community troubled by persistent gang activity. His research focus: the impact of Club Deportivo Dan, a soccer program for at-risk youth. The club is sponsored by Voices4Perú (V4P), a nonprofit organization founded by American Dan Klopp which oversees a local community center in Ventanilla, Perú.

Supported by a grant from the West Chester University Foundation, Antonio and his students have found, through self-reported questionnaires and one-on-one interviews, that club members are less likely than non-members to be involved in gangs or otherwise engage in criminal behavior, or to drink alcohol or use drugs; and more likely to visit a physician and take precautions against or get treated for sexually transmitted diseases.

Also, Antonio found that former soccer club members were more likely to be married, to have completed high school, and to have attended college, compared to young adults who did not participate.

“The evidence gathered about role modeling and the emphasis placed on pro-social behaviors by V4P staff suggest the club is helping participants to stay on the right path over the long term,” says Antonio, who previously researched and evaluated the effectiveness of offender treatment programs for the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections and the Board of Probation and Parole.

His Peruvian research has been published in both the *Journal of Gang Research* and as a book chapter in *Crime and Violence Prevention: Moving Beyond Hot-Stove Policing and Perpetrator Rehabilitation*, and has been presented at The American Society of Criminology conference.



Michael E. Antonio

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“The evidence gathered about role modeling and the emphasis placed on pro-social behaviors by V4P staff suggest the club is helping participants to stay on the right path over the long term.”

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Wan-Yi Chen

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“...most mental health professionals are not aware if their clients have been exposed to violence.”

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For Adolescents Exposed to Violence, Mental Health Treatment Provides Long-Term Benefits

Adolescents who witness violence, not surprisingly, have a significantly greater chance of suffering from depression. However, receiving mental health services minimizes the chances that these youths will remain depressed years later, when they are young adults.

These are two of the findings of a study published this year in the *Community Mental Health Journal* by **Wan-Yi Chen**, associate professor of graduate social work, and her research colleagues from Boston and Syracuse universities and the University of Alabama.

The percentages of adolescents who are either victimized by or witness violence, says Chen, is quite high—ranging from about one-third for Asian Americans and whites to 54 percent for Hispanics and 59 percent for African Americans.

“Yet most mental health professionals are not aware if their clients have been exposed to violence,” says Chen. “Our study suggests that screening patients who seek mental health treatment to determine if they have been exposed to violence appears to be an effective way to identify them in order to provide appropriate treatment.”

The study also concluded that: mental health services benefit adolescents who witness violence even more than those who are directly attacked; and young adults are less likely than adolescents to receive mental health care.

The research is based on the responses of nearly 9,000 young Americans who were surveyed four different times between 1994 and 2009 as part of the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent to Adult Health (Add Health).

Chen also presented her findings this year at both the annual Add Health Users Conference at the National Institutes of Health in Bethesda, Maryland, and at the American Psychiatric Association’s 169th Annual Meeting.

Helping WCU Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder Succeed

With the advancements in K-12 special education programs for children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD), many more students with ASD are entering college. This year, at least 25 WCU students have identified with ASD through the Office of Support Services for Disabilities (OSSD); while as many 75 students on campus may also have ASD.

“Students with ASD may have independent living and executive functioning challenges—such as communication, time management, and problem-solving skills,” says **Corinne M. Murphy**, professor and chair of the Special Education Department. “They also have social challenges, both in awareness and in their ability to maintain social relationships with university faculty, staff, and their student peers.”

Previously, WCU has been able to provide academic and mental health supports for WCU students, but necessary, college-level, behavioral supports have not been available—until now.

This year, under Murphy’s grant leadership, WCU was one of four Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education (PASSHE) institutions selected to launch a three-year ASD student pilot program. Financially supported by the WCU provost, Pennsylvania Bureau of Special Education, Office of Vocational Rehabilitation, and PASSHE, WCU opened the Dub-C Autism Program (D-CAP). It provides evidence-based social and behavioral supports to help WCU students succeed.

Under the supervision of the director and two graduate assistants, D-CAP students participate in individualized skill development, as well as group social sessions and Adventures in D-CAP, where WCU students with and without ASD gather for community activities.

Dub-C graduates will be followed beyond graduation. “Success,” says Murphy, “means that our alumni have professional careers, are living independently, and are leading very happy lives once they leave West Chester University.”



Corinne M. Murphy

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“Success means that our alumni have professional careers, are living independently, and are leading very happy lives once they leave West Chester University.”

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Patricia Davidson

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“...what we are testing is whether it enhances their engagement in their own care and improves their metabolic outcomes.”

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Diabetes: There Soon May Be an App for That

The type 2 diabetes epidemic affects nearly 10 percent of Americans—and even higher percentages of Hispanics, blacks and native Americans.

Patricia Davidson, assistant professor of nutrition, knows that how well diabetes patients manage their own conditions, including their blood sugar, blood pressure, and cholesterol levels, is critical.

“But less than 20 percent of diabetes patients keep those three readings at recommended levels, and those percentages are even worse for underserved populations,” says Davidson, who has three decades of experience as a diabetes clinician, researcher, and educator.

Supported by the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Disease, Davidson is collaborating with researchers at the Columbia University Medical Center to develop the Mobile Diabetes Detective (MoDD). The patient-centered program allows participants to use a website or their smartphones to submit and analyze their blood glucose readings and make guided behavior changes.

After building an extensive knowledge base that includes scores of relevant behaviors and customizable self-management actions, for the past three years the researchers have been testing MoDD with several hundred underserved patients in New York City and Atlanta. The program: identifies the problem, such as high blood sugar levels when a patient awakes; identifies behavior triggers for the problem, such as not taking medications or improper diet; identifies possible action-oriented goals; and notifies patients how to respond. It then continues monitoring the situation.

“It wouldn’t replace contact with their physician or diabetes educator, but what we are testing is whether it enhances their engagement in their own care and improves their metabolic outcomes,” says Davidson. “My dream is that it becomes a smartphone app that many patients use.”



Harry Holt

Readmissions Negatively Affect Both Patients and Rural Hospitals

While it is certainly not good for patients, the additional revenue generated by readmitting recent patients might seem to be good for a hospital's bottom line.

However, according to research conducted by **Harry Holt**, assistant professor of health care management, readmitted patients are bad for the financial health of hospitals. That is particularly true for Pennsylvania's critically needed rural hospitals, many of which are the only hospital within a two- to three-hour drive of some patients.

"Readmissions from complications and infections has a strong negative impact on the financial performance of rural hospitals," says Holt. "A patient who comes back within 30 days tends to be a sicker and more complicated patient. The cost of caring for such patients is much higher than for patients who stay out of the hospital, receive follow-up from their family doctors, and continue to improve."

Also, notes Holt, hospitals whose readmission rates exceed targets established by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services are penalized with reduced Medicare reimbursements.

Holt's research has been supported by the Center for Rural Pennsylvania, a legislative agency of the Pennsylvania General Assembly. Previously, Holt worked with hospitals to enhance their financial performance and viability as a health care consultant with Capgemini Ernst & Young.

To minimize readmissions, Holt says, rural hospitals need to do a better job educating patients and their families both prior to any scheduled procedure, "while the patients are lucid and pain-free," and while they are hospitalized. They then need to utilize nurse practitioners to follow up regularly after patients are released to ensure their condition is being properly managed.

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"A patient who comes back within 30 days tends to be a sicker and more complicated patient."
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Daria Nikitina

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“...the public and coastal communities in particular must better educate and prepare themselves for the double-whammy of rising sea levels and more severe storms.”

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Probing the Past of Coastal Marshes to Foresee the Future of Climate Change

En route to Mid-Atlantic beaches, most shore-bound tourists consider the marshes they pass to be relatively empty expanses of mud and marsh grass devoid of everything but bugs, gulls, and fish.

Yet for **Daria Nikitina**, associate professor of earth and space science, Mid-Atlantic salt marshes tell a far more complex—and increasingly relevant—story of global climate change. She particularly focuses on the marshes around the Delaware Bay. Ten-foot-deep core samples of the salt marsh sediments that she analyzes are revealing a detailed history of the impacts of severe hurricanes and rising sea levels that spans the past 2,000 years.

Supported most recently by grants from the federal Environmental Protection Agency, the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection, and WCU, the Russian-born Nikitina’s research findings include the following:

- compared to the past 2,000 years, the rate of sea level rise over the past 100 years has more than doubled, to more than a tenth of an inch per year;
- the impact of rising sea levels is being compounded by the fact that, as an ongoing byproduct of the glacial retreat that began at the end of the Ice Age 18,000 years ago, the Mid-Atlantic land mass is sinking;
- at least seven storms stronger than 2012’s Hurricane Sandy have battered the Mid-Atlantic during the past two millennia.

“The continuing warming of the ocean’s surface will only create more powerful and more frequent storms, so the public and coastal communities in particular must better educate and prepare themselves for the double-whammy of rising sea levels and more severe storms,” says Nikitina.

Peering Back to the Beginning of Time from One of the World's Highest Observatories

At 17,000 feet above sea level, the air of Chile's Atacama Desert is so thin that some people require portable oxygen. The mercury in June often plummets to 20 degrees below zero (F). And it is the driest place on Earth.

But the altitude and dry, cold air also make the Atacama one of the highest and best places in the world to peer into space back to the beginning of time.

Among the astronomers who trek to the Atacama is **Robert J. Thornton Jr.**, associate professor of physics. Since 2005, he has been involved with the Atacama Cosmology Telescope, one of many world-class telescopes positioned there.

Now, along with researchers from Penn, Princeton, UC Berkeley, UC San Diego, and Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory, Thornton is continuing to investigate cosmic microwave background (CMB) radiation to understand the physics of the Big Bang and the early universe.

Funded this year by an unprecedented joint \$40 million grant from the Simons and Heising-Simons foundations, Thornton and his colleagues are developing new telescopes and cameras with state-of-the-art detector arrays to probe those microwaves. Thornton is a lead designer of the 1,500-pound cameras which—to minimize infrared radiation background “noise” generated by the telescopes and surroundings — are cooled to nearly absolute zero (−459.67°F).

Patterns currently observed in the microwave sky illustrate the structure of the universe 380,000 years after the Big Bang.

“But some of those patterns are thought to have been generated by gravitational waves that were produced during inflation, or a period of rapid expansion immediately after the Big Bang,” says Thornton. “What we find could help prove or disprove the theory of inflation.”



Robert J. Thornton, Jr.

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“What we find could help prove or disprove the theory of inflation.”
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These WCU Students Don't Read About Research, They Create It

Undergraduates Dive In

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Brittany Johnstone, BS physics '12, came to WCU in love with astronomy. She did not know how much she would like combining stargazing with engineering, however, until the Gettysburg, PA native met Robert J. Thornton Jr., associate professor of physics.

Under his tutelage, she spent her first two college summers career redesigning refrigerators and large “cryostat” tubes in a University of Pennsylvania cosmology lab. Their purpose: to chill giant cameras attached to observatory telescopes in Chile to nearly absolute zero (−459.67°F) in order to reduce heat-induced background “noise.” The next spring, she traveled with Thornton to Chile to see the equipment she worked on in operation 17,000 feet above sea level in the Atacama Desert. She then spent the following summer researching solar flares at the National Solar Observatory in Tucson, Arizona.

Now a physics doctoral student at West Virginia University, Johnstone continues to focus on instrumentation and hopes—after earning her PhD in about two years—to work for an aerospace contractor such as Lockheed Martin or Northrop Grumman.

“Dr. Thornton definitely started me along the path that I am on now and really made me realize what I love to do,” she says. “Without those experiences, I would not be where I am today.”

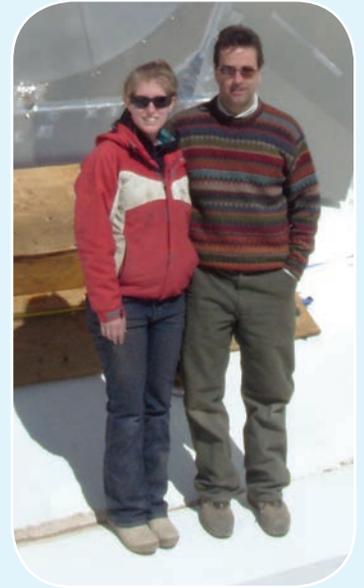
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As a cell and molecular biology major and a member of WCU's Honors College and its Pre-Medical Program, senior Leah Kuntz previously had helped out with some basic research tasks.

But the Elizabethtown, PA resident had never been involved with a research project from the ground up until she started working this past spring with Patricia Davidson, assistant professor of nutrition.

Funded by a WCU Foundation Faculty and Student Research Grant, Davidson is trying to determine how the diabetes patients of Community Volunteers In Medicine (CVIM), which provides free medical and dental care to low-income Chester County residents, can better follow their medication routines. Davidson had Kuntz and two other students draft applications for the University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) to approve the research, and to write grant proposals to fund it. After the IRB's approval, the students began surveying CVIM patients.

“Rather than be her lackeys, Dr. Davidson gives students a lot of responsibilities and opportunities for personal growth by putting us in the kind of leadership positions that most students never experience,” says Kuntz.



Brittany Johnstone and Dr. Thornton



Leah Kuntz

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After taking Professor of English Eleanor Shevlin’s spring 2016 undergraduate seminar on 18th-century print novelties, Rachel Ezrin was one of three students to present their findings at the East-Central American Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies’ annual conference in October in Fredericksburg, Virginia. The senior English writing/Russian language major analyzed the arcane spelling and slang found in *The News-paper Wedding*, an anonymous 1774 British novel.

Says Ezrin, who grew up in Clarks Summit, PA, “Instead of just writing a paper on an already-known subject, it was really exciting to conduct research that became a part of work that would be presented and published. The experience has definitely confirmed my interest in grad school.”

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“I am much better at conducting research, looking at peer-reviewed scholarly articles and primary sources on my own, without relying on a professor.”— *Frederikia Wilson*

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As part of the University’s Summer Undergraduate Research Institute (SURI), Shevlin also mentored Frederikia Wilson. The senior English major was one of 10 undergraduates this past summer—and one of 50 over the past three years—who have participated in the SURI. Participating students receive stipends of up to \$1,500, and their faculty mentors receive one credit hours’ worth of compensation.

Wilson spent the summer reviewing newspapers, yearbooks, and books at the

WCU library to uncover the history of African-American and other minority students at the University. Among her findings: George M. Philips, the school’s president from 1881 to 1920, actively recruited black students, with the first eight graduated during the 1910s.

She also discovered that in 1895, when Frederick Douglass, the civil rights giant, delivered his last speech at West Chester, “He was welcomed on campus but a lot of townspeople said that there was no way a black man could have spoken that articulately and intelligently.”

As a result of her research, Wilson—who, following her graduation, intends to teach abroad and then teach English to elementary students—says, “I am much better at conducting research, looking at peer-reviewed scholarly articles and primary sources on my own, without relying on a professor.”

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As an undergraduate, Anderson Amaya, BS ’15 criminal justice, spent 2015 helping Assistant Professor Michael Antonio determine how effective a Peruvian youth soccer program is in keeping adolescents out of trouble.

A first-generation American whose parents emigrated from Colombia to New York City, Amaya used his fluency in Spanish to conduct Skype interviews with current and former members of the soccer club sponsored by a nonprofit group in Ventanilla, Peru.

“It really improved my translation and research abilities, and overall gave me a much better sense of research and academia as a whole,” says Amaya, who is taking advantage of WCU’s fast-track master’s degree program to earn an MS in criminal justice this December. “I also was surprised by how well I was able to connect with these kids on a personal level.”

The former president of WCU’s Habitat for Humanity student chapter, who is teaching himself Russian, ultimately hopes to work for a federal agency as a linguist. “I want to use my foreign language skills to help fight international crime,” he says.



Anderson Amaya '15

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Drew Kaufman, BA geography (GIS) '11, is a geographic information system (GIS) specialist who works for McLane Environmental, a Princeton, New Jersey, consulting firm. It specializes in groundwater modeling and analysis for environmental remediation cases.

While an undergraduate, Kaufman honed his GIS skills working with Daria Nikitina, associate professor of earth and space science, to help her chart and map the effects of storms and sea-level rise on the marshes of the Delaware Bay. With her strong encouragement, he also earned a master's degree in GIS from West Virginia University.

"Being able to work with a professional geologist like Dr. Nikitina helped me transition into my current field," says the Hatboro, PA resident, "because I continue to use GIS and modeling to assist geologists and hydrologists in a professional setting.

"I've always enjoyed maps and geography, and I've been able to turn my interests into a career. I really love what I do now."

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"I've always enjoyed maps and geography, and I've been able to turn my interests into a career. I really love what I do now."

— Drew Kaufman '11

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Graduate Students Delve Deep

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By day, Laurie Sacerdote is a research analyst with the Administrative Office of the Pennsylvania Courts in Philadelphia. By night and weekends, however, she is pursuing her doctorate in public administration online under the guidance of Amanda M. Olejarski, associate professor of public policy and administration.

Sacerdote's current research focuses on the City of Harrisburg's 2011 filing for bankruptcy protection—particularly the human relations implications of how to best communicate such decisions to municipal employees. "Working in the public sector can at times be disheartening," says Sacerdote, "but working on projects like this outside of my normal day-to-day operations, and communicating with students in the program who are as far away as Texas and California, has reinforced my commitment to the public sector."

Since February 2016, another of Olejarski's students, Laura Bleiler, has worked part-time as a government relations intern with the County Commissioners Association of Pennsylvania (CCAP). The master of public administration student designed and conducted a survey of 46 of the state's 67 counties to determine how the state's 2015 budget impasse had affected them, and she wrote several related articles that were distributed to county officials, state legislators, and the governor's office.

With her internship extended, the Oley, PA native has also researched the impact of taxation on local economic growth and presented her findings to a CCAP committee.

"In terms of speaking and working cooperatively with government officials, this has pushed me outside of my comfort zone," says the former violinist, "and I've learned more than I ever imagined about how government works and the function of government.

"Both personally and professionally, this has definitely been a transformative experience."

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"Working on projects like this outside of my normal day-to-day operations, and communicating with students in the program who are as far away as Texas and California, has reinforced my commitment to the public sector." — Laurie Sacerdote

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Oluwafemi Adegboyega, MPH '16, spent his last year at WCU crunching and analyzing patient readmission rates for rural Pennsylvania hospitals to support the research of Harry Holt, assistant professor of health care management.

“It really improved my data collection and analysis skills,” says Adegboyega, a native of Lagos, Nigeria, who also holds a Nigerian pharmacy degree. “In Nigeria, we always believed that the United States had a perfect system in which rural communities were better than those in Nigeria.

“But our research showed that there definitely needs to be significant work done in terms of funding and management for Pennsylvania’s rural hospitals.”

In the short term, Adegboyega is looking to utilize his pharmacy background by conducting data analysis for an American pharmaceutical company. However, he says that his WCU research experience has convinced him to ultimately return home “to commit myself to the rural communities of Nigeria.”



Dr. Holt and Oluwafemi Adegboyega '16

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Argyro Kalli, a native of Athens, Greece, came to West Chester University to get international experience and got it—both here and in Perú.



Argyro Kalli

After participating in a study abroad visit to Ventanilla, Perú this past January, she returned in June and July to conduct her criminal justice master’s degree research under the guidance of Assistant Professor Michael E. Antonio. She interviewed a total of 140 children and adults—all in Spanish.

Kalli’s goal was to determine how effective the nonprofit group Voices4Perú is, for enhancing educational achievement while preventing criminal involvement and reducing victimization among the community’s youth.

“It was a lifetime experience,” says Kalli, who is analyzing her data this fall. “I hope my results help the organization strengthen its program. It’s also made me consider doing something with children after I graduate in December.”

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Young children of mothers who have either witnessed or experienced violence or domestic abuse are more likely to exhibit such behavioral problems as being aggressive, withdrawn, anxious, or depressed.

That is the conclusion of a study that Meghan Pasqualette, who will earn her master of social work degree in May 2017, conducted with Associate Professor Wan-Yi Chen.

“Instead of just taking the results of a study at face value, it was quite valuable to actually go through all the stages of a research study to see what is involved in developing effective, evidence-based social work practices,” says the Enola, PA native, who wants to work with adults experiencing mental health issues. “I am more of a word person, so initially dealing with the statistics was a challenge for me.

“But Dr. Chen really helped me to decipher what the stats signified and turn the data into meaningful text.”



Meghan Pasqualette and Dr. Chen



Beatrice O'Hara '14

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Marine environments, such as the salt marshes rimming the Delaware Bay, capture and retain carbon for thousands of years, according to master's geoscience student Beatrice O'Hara, BS geoscience '14. A non-traditional student from Exton, PA, she has worked with Daria Nikitina, associate professor of earth and space science, since she was an undergraduate.

Currently she is studying the potential impact that disturbances to such marshes—dredging, land-use changes, or large storms—could have on climate change by releasing this so-called “blue carbon” into the atmosphere.

“I love being outside, getting my hands dirty, taking core samples of the marsh sediments and interpreting them,” says O'Hara, whose research has been well received at Geological Society of America conferences and other professional conferences, as well as at WCU, where she won the \$1,000 first-place student prize for her studies at WCU's Research Day last spring.

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A master's of English degree student focusing on creative writing, Sean Skulski had conducted very little academic research until he took a primarily online course during the summer of 2015 with Professor Eleanor Shevlin. That led him to delve into the construction of *S.*, a digitally created, highly innovative 2013 print novel conceived by J.J. Abrams—the co-creator of the TV hit “Lost”—and written by Doug Dorst.

A year later, Skulski found himself last July in Paris, France, speaking about the book on a panel with Shevlin at the Society for the History of Authorship, Reading & Publishing's annual conference.

“I felt intimidated at first, because Dr. Shevlin's class was really my introduction to the field of manuscript, print, and digital cultures,” says Skulski. “But after I began fielding questions, I really felt comfortable and realized that the research I had done was relevant and well supported.”

Also, adds the budding novelist, “I like to be more experimental as a writer, and *S.* is unrivaled in its innovation. It's really inspired me.”



Sean Skulski

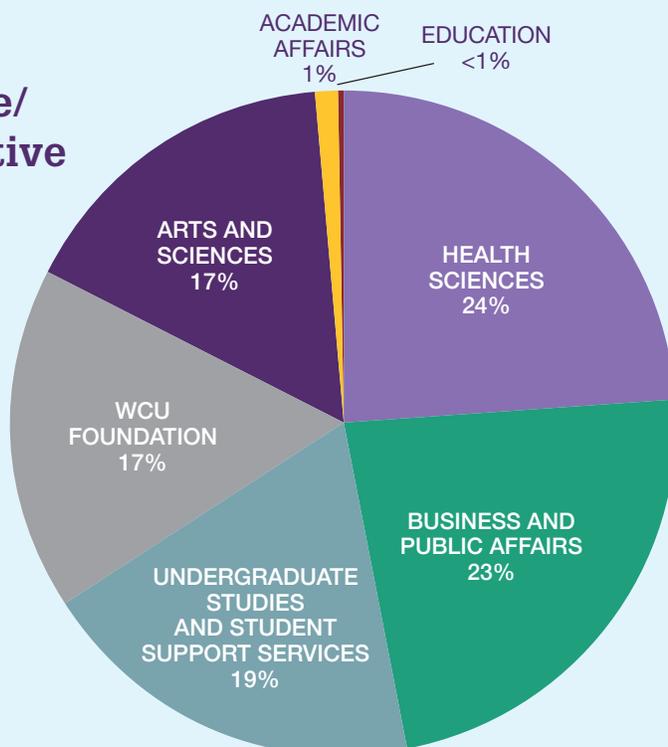
External Research Funding

FISCAL YEAR 2015-2016

College/Administration Unit	Submitted Proposals	Requested Funding
Academic Affairs	1	\$11,775
College of Arts and Sciences	40	\$4,942,634
College of Business and Public Affairs	5	\$474,691
College of Education	4	\$245,135
College of Health Sciences	20	\$1,066,431
Library	1	\$15,000
Undergraduate Studies and Support Services	2	\$169,402
Totals	73	\$6,925,067

College/Administration Unit	Received Awards	Approved Funding
Academic Affairs	2	\$23,903
College of Arts and Sciences	16	\$346,831
College of Business and Public Affairs	3	\$484,447
College of Education	1	\$5,000
College of Health Sciences	8	\$517,560
Undergraduate Studies and Support Services	2	\$409,782
WCU Foundation	1	\$349,000
Totals	33	\$2,136,523

Funding by College/ Administrative Unit



These academic college designations reflect the university's structure prior to the July 1, 2016 reorganization.





Office of Research and Sponsored Programs

628 S. High Street
Filano Hall, Room 205
West Chester, PA 19383

Phone: 610-436-3557

Fax: 610-436-2689

Gautam Pillay, Ph.D.
Associate Vice President
for Research and Sponsored Programs

research@wcupa.edu