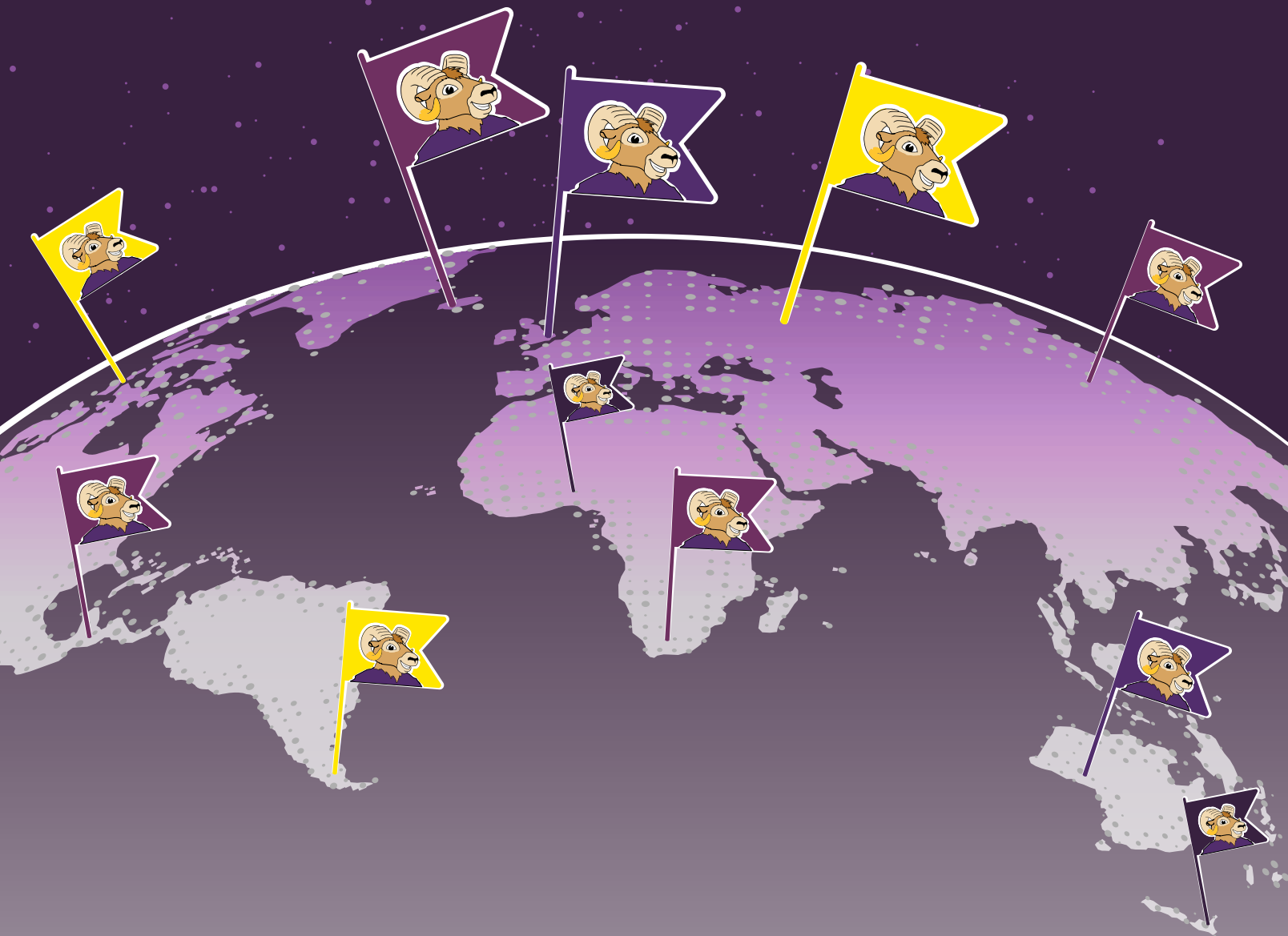


WCU MAGAZINE

WEST CHESTER UNIVERSITY

FALL/WINTER 2023



The Global Experience
PAGE 6

London Bound
PAGE 10

Roses in January
PAGE 15

Welcome Back Address



I intend to give all that I can to ensure that my final year here is my best year.

"I intend to give all that I can to ensure that my final year here is my best year," said President Christopher Fiorentino in his final fall Welcome Back Address in September. He reminded campus constituents that he continues to press forward with strategic initiatives prior to his retirement at the end of this academic year in June.

He highlighted some of the University's many recent successes that have been noticed on campus and beyond, saying, "When people approach me, they say nice things about me, but they say really nice things about our University. Their praise is not so much about anything I am doing as it is about everything you are doing. That praise is coming because of all of those little success stories surfacing everywhere on our campus, showing up everywhere on social media, and turning up everywhere in the news. All those little stories have created one big story that has changed how people perceive our University and how people recognize the University President. I will miss those little recognition moments after I retire. But, I plan to keep wearing purple and gold in the hopes that occasionally people will share WCU stories with me."

Fiorentino concluded, "I look forward to working with all of you to create more success stories."

ON THE COVER

06
**Global
Engagement
Office Brings
International
Focus to Campus**

On the cover:
WCU students can choose from more
than 700 study abroad experiences.



NEWS

19
Stacking Up

WCU achieves notable rankings
in *U.S. News*

DEPARTMENTS

04 President's Letter

13 University News

16 Faculty Profile

25 Chapter News

27 Class Notes

30 Together: Homecoming
and Family Weekend

PROFILES

13
**Donors:
Michele & Eric Goodwin**

Supplying tools for success

26
**Alumni:
Tracy '91 & Mark
Sammarone '84**

A lifestyle of community involvement



The recent *WCU Magazine* survey indicated that many of our readers would prefer to receive the magazine in a digital format. With sustainability top of mind and the increase in printing/postage costs, University Communications and Marketing will be printing fewer copies and requests readers **opt in to receive the hard-copy magazine**. This will occur in the spring of 2024. Watch your Ramblings email for details and, until then, please see the back cover to change your information or unsubscribe.

LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT



Mark Twain once said, “Travel is fatal to prejudice, bigotry and narrow-mindedness.” The American novelist’s words remain particularly relevant today. Widening our angles of vision on the world and expanding our understanding of cultures can only enhance our appreciation for humanity. This is one of the many reasons why preparing our students to be global citizens of the world continues to be a key component of our University’s mission and goals — all of us can learn from one another no matter which corner of the globe we hail.

As a life-changing experience, study abroad is known to yield cross-cultural competence. It also functions as a companion to the tools that we are working to equip our students with during their time with us. You may remember

that the toolkit of essential skills and competencies includes critical thinking, effective communication, thoughtfully considering the importance of diversity, ethical decision making, and community engagement. Our community of educators is not alone in realizing the value of being able to use these essential tools in a dynamic global workforce. The Institute of International Education (IIE) notes in its *Gaining an Employment Edge* study that more than “...70% of students reported that their study abroad experiences significantly helped develop their intercultural skills, flexibility and adaptability, self-awareness, curiosity, and confidence.”

Today, a new opportunity exists for enriched global engagement at a time when we have emerged from the isolation of a far-reaching pandemic. The Division of Academic Affairs has seized this moment with the renaming of the Center for International Programs and, in so doing, has renewed its commitment to advance and promote the University’s globalization efforts. Now known as the Global Engagement Office (GEO), the name better reflects the area’s focus to advance initiatives that support West Chester University’s vision for faculty/staff-directed study abroad programs, foster international partnerships and research collaborations, as well as create global learning opportunities.

As you read the pages of *West Chester University Magazine*, I hope that you, too, will be inspired by the breadth of understanding that our Golden Rams are encouraging through international exchange initiatives, as well as through the promotion of cross-cultural learning.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Chris M. Fiorentino". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Christopher M. Fiorentino
President

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The West Chester University Magazine is published three times a year for the alumni, families, students, and friends of West Chester University. We welcome letters concerning magazine content or issues pertaining to the University. Letters must be signed and kept to one typed page. Please include address and daytime phone number.

Send correspondence to: Editor,
The WCU Magazine, West Chester
University, West Chester, PA 19383

West Chester University Magazine is published by West Chester University Communications and Marketing.
www.wcupa.edu
WCU is an AA/EEO institution.



wcupa.edu/socialmedia

Digital version of the WCU Magazine
is available at issuu.com/wcuofpa.



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Fourth Annual Dr. Clifford E. DeBaptiste Frederick Douglass Institute Lecture

President of Lincoln University Brenda A. Allen was the speaker for the Fourth Annual Dr. Clifford E. DeBaptiste Frederick Douglass Institute Lecture in October. Allen spoke about the power of culture in producing educational equity.

Named the 14th president of her alma mater, Lincoln University, on May 11, 2017, Allen began her tenure on July 1, 2017. She was previously provost and vice chancellor for academic affairs at Winston Salem State University from July 2009 through June 2017 as well as a tenured professor of psychological sciences.

Hosted by the Frederick Douglass Institute (FDI), the lecture is made possible through the generous gift of Dr. Clifford DeBaptiste, the first African American mayor of West Chester Borough and a recognized champion of education. His daughter, Lillian L. DeBaptiste '74, current mayor of the borough, also spoke at the event.

FDI recognized President Christopher Fiorentino at this event, his last as president prior to his retirement next June. Pictured (L-R) are FDI board members Assistant Professor of Communication and Media Jeremy McCool; Professor and Director of WCU's Learning Assistance and Resource Center (LARC) Jocelyn Manigo; Professor of Kinesiology Margaret Ottley; Professor of

History Martha Donkor; Associate Professor, Academic Success Program Tiffany Jones; President Chris Fiorentino; FDI Director and Professor of English Chris Awuyah; Vice President for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion & Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer Tracey Robinson; Professor of History tonya thames-taylor; Veterans Center Administrative Assistant June Thompson; Professor of English William Lalicker; and Emeritus Professor of English James Trotman.

In a fitting tribute to the great abolitionist, orator, and statesman, the DeBaptiste Douglass Lecture is held annually in Philips Autograph Library next to the University's Academic Quad and overlooking the Frederick Douglass statue in DeBaptiste Plaza, commemorating the abolitionist's last public lecture on WCU's campus.



WORLDLY WAYS

**OFFICE OF GLOBAL ENGAGEMENT BRINGS
INTERNATIONAL FOCUS TO CAMPUS**



(L–R) Costa Rica; Iceland; Kenya; Poland

WHEN WCU GEOLOGY PROFESSOR DARIA NIKITINA AND HER STUDENTS ARRIVED IN ICELAND TO CONDUCT FIELD STUDY IN JULY 2023, THEY ARRIVED IN TIME TO OBSERVE THE BIRTH OF A NEW VOLCANO.

Nikitina chose Iceland because it is a natural laboratory for geologic processes, such as volcanism and tectonics. The opportunity to watch a new volcano erupting was a geologist's dream. "The site where they were expecting this eruption was very close to where we stayed," Nikitina says.

It's the kind of experience that makes international study and travel valuable for students. "It's the first international trip for many of our students at West Chester," says Nikitina. "It's a major eye opener for them. And for many of them, it's life changing."

Providing such opportunities is the mission of 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. Programs may be for academic credit or non-credit. Some are for an entire semester; others happen during spring break or encompass two weeks during the January term. 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.

"There was this myth that only certain majors can study abroad," Howard says. "We try to dispel that myth by offering all of these different opportunities, especially the performance, research, student teaching, and internship opportunities."

To streamline processes for studying abroad, the office became a passport acceptance facility approved by the U.S. Department of State – the only one at a university in Pennsylvania. Office staff can accept passport applications, administer the required oath, sign forms, collect fees, and send in the paperwork. Since opening in February 2023, more than 250 passport applications have been processed. "We wanted to remove barriers for students who want to travel," Howard says.

Advancing globalization efforts is a priority at WCU. Former President Greg Weisenstein called for an increased focus on internationalization in 2009. That commitment was reaffirmed in 2022 when what was then the Center for International Programs became the Global Engagement



COVER STORY

Poland



Kenya

700+ NUMBER OF STUDY ABROAD DESTINATIONS & PROGRAMS OFFERED

NUMBER OF STUDENTS WHO HAVE STUDIED ABROAD POST-PANDEMIC SINCE 2021 **500+**

105 NUMBER OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS STUDYING AT WCU

COUNTRIES WITH THE MOST INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS AT WCU
CHINA, INDIA, SAUDI ARABIA

NUMBER OF FACULTY-LED STUDY TRIPS IN 2023-2024 ACADEMIC YEAR **38**



Iceland



Costa Rica

The Global Engagement Office provides opportunities throughout the year for students to explore study abroad experiences, including a fall study abroad fair and special events during International Education Week every November.



Office. The new name reflects the next phase of efforts to promote campus-wide global engagement, awareness, and advocacy.

“We wanted to change our name to reflect a new focus in campus internationalization and to reflect what we want to offer our students. We want to create global citizens,” Howard explains. “We want our students to be able to live and work and engage with all cultures.”

RENEWING TRAVEL POST-PANDEMIC

When international travel halted in 2020 because of the COVID-19 pandemic, student travel programs also paused. Howard explains that many of WCU’s international partners did not weather the shutdown, which meant forging new relationships. “Our goal was to re-start study abroad safely after two and a half years,” Howard explains. A focus on faculty-led trips was key to renewing international experiences. Efforts began with 12 faculty-led programs in 2022, followed by 22 in 2023, and 38 planned for 2024.

Faculty-led experiences can include both credit and non-credit offerings. Some are a required field experience in an academic course. One example is the program in Costa Rica run by Patricia Swasey Washington, associate professor of communication sciences and disorders, who directs the bilingual emphasis in the speech-language pathology master’s degree program. As a course requirement, students spend two weeks in clinics at partner school Universidad Santa Paula for an immersive experience working with patients who speak Spanish.

“It gives them the opportunity to see what

it’s like in the real world, doing evaluations and therapy,” Swasey Washington says. Students also have the advantage of being paired with Spanish-speaking peers and participating in cultural excursions, enhancing the international experience. In addition to the clinical and cultural activities in Costa Rica, students receive classroom instruction before, during, and after the trip.

A different kind of study experience was offered by Brenda Gaydosh, professor of history, who took students on a trip to Poland for academic credit during spring break 2023. Students visited historic sites including the cities of Warsaw, Gdansk, and Krakow and visited the Auschwitz and Birkenau concentration camps. Gaydosh notes that many students can take advantage of spring break travel for academic credit because of WCU’s tuition policy, which allows them to take up to 18 credits without additional charge.

While there were academic requirements for the trip – students read a book about Polish history and wrote a paper about one of the sites they visited – the emphasis was on cultural experiences. They included interacting with Polish students in Krakow. “I had contacted a professor at Jagellonian University ahead of time and we invited them to a dinner....” Gaydosh says, “so two professors brought maybe six, seven students to dinner with our students.”

Not all international travel is study-related. Special Education Professor Beatrice Adera runs a service-learning trip to Kisumu, Kenya. Students spend two weeks helping to tutor

Continued on page 12



D-CAP Students Visit London on First Sensory-friendly Trip



Eight WCU students journeyed across the pond in June for a first-of-its kind sensory-friendly cultural immersion trip to London. The students, who all have autism spectrum disorder, are participants in the University's Dub-C Autism Program (D-CAP), which partnered with the Global Engagement Office to offer the 10-day trip.

"This trip was truly one of the top five experiences of my life," says Melanie Schwartz, an interdisciplinary studies major.

Students traveled with Cherie Fishbaugh, director of autism services, Amanda Martin, assistant director of autism services, and Beatrice Adera, professor of special education. Fishbaugh explains that care was taken developing an itinerary and adapting activities for individuals with autism, who can have significant sensitivity to sensory stimuli. Loud noises, strong smells, and unfamiliar tastes and textures are among the factors that can pose challenges.

"It involved making sure there were enough breaks. We watched their behavior to see how they were taking in sensory stimuli.

When we left in the morning, we gave them reminders about what the day's activities were going to be, and gave them estimated times for arrivals and departures," she says. "You have to be highly vigilant throughout to help prevent them from being overwhelmed." Other strategies included alerting students about potential loud noises or unusually large crowds. Sampling new foods can be challenging for some autistic people, and Fishbaugh applauded students' willingness to sample fare at a vegan restaurant and a Brazilian steakhouse.

London was chosen because it is considered an autism-friendly city. The itinerary was limited to one activity in the morning and a second in the afternoon. If students needed a break, they could choose to spend time at their hotel or reading in the park, accompanied by a staff member.

The group visited the British Museum, the Natural History Museum, Tower Bridge, viewed the city from atop the London Eye, and rode the city's legendary underground, called "the tube." At the Maritime Museum, they straddled the prime meridian with a foot in each hemisphere.

I would love to see more opportunities like this for autistic people to travel abroad for international study.

**— Melanie Schwartz,
interdisciplinary studies major**

They also kayaked on the Thames and went horseback riding. The Warner Brothers Studio Tour "The Making of Harry Potter" included high tea, a favorite activity students want to duplicate stateside. They also befriended their tour guide, Ben Broughton, who visited WCU when he came to the U.S. in September.

Katie Noll, a WCU graduate student in history, picked shopping as a favorite activity. "I'm a shoe person," she says. "I got to go to the big Doc Martin store on Oxford Street that's like three floors. I was so excited to get a new pair of shoes."

Schwartz and Noel shared their London experiences at the College Autism Summit 2023, which was held in Nashville in October. Travel opportunities are rare for students with autism and their presentation reflected what is possible. A D-CAP trip to Italy is planned for 2024.

"I would love to see more opportunities like this for autistic people to travel abroad for international study," Schwartz says. "Just that little bit of support can mean so much." **WCU**



D-CAP students toured London's iconic Tower Bridge and Piccadilly Circus, enjoyed local pub fare, and visited a therapeutic riding facility in their first-ever trip abroad.





I'M GRATEFUL FOR THE UNIVERSITY COMMUNITY COMING TOGETHER TO MAKE THIS HAPPEN.

— Angela Howard
Associate Provost for
Global Engagement

Worldly Ways
Continued from page 9

children through a program for academically at-risk youth run by Sawa Africa. While the students worked with youth, Adera and Dawn Patterson, associate professor of special education, provided training to classroom teachers.

Adera, who grew up in Kisumu, says that everyone benefits from such programs. “I know that we are making a significant difference to the people of Kisumu, but also our West Chester students are growing. They are experiencing things that they would have never imagined.”

BRINGING THE WORLD TO CAMPUS

The Global Engagement Office also plays a pivotal role enabling students from around the world to study at WCU. The office facilitates the paperwork required to obtain the visa allowing study in the United States. Responding to the challenges of working remotely during the pandemic, Howard and her team implemented an online system for processing the required forms. It allows international students to be admitted and receive their immigration documents in one week. The Global Engagement team did a presentation about the online system at the conference of NAESA: The Association of International Educators. It has since been recognized as a national model for leveraging technology.

Howard has a unique understanding of what it is like to be a foreign visitor to another country. As a Fulbright Scholar in 2014, she studied the Japanese educational system. “I knew no Japanese. I had to learn how to navigate the transportation system and to order off the menu,” she recalls. It gave her a new perspective on her job.

“I put myself in the shoes of an international student at West Chester. I came back and revamped our orientation program for them,”

she recalls. “I made it more in-depth and more detailed. I recruited other students to be their mentors for the first few weeks.” International students participate in pizza parties called “share and care” events to check in on their transition to the States.

The Global Engagement Office also works with academic departments to coordinate international visiting scholars who spend a semester on campus. Recent visitors have included Henrik Syse of Norway, former member and vice chair of the Norwegian Nobel Committee, who worked with the Honors College and taught a course on international ethics and world challenges related to armed conflict and artificial intelligence. Kaiguo Zhou of China worked in collaboration with Dazhi Zheng, a professor in the Department of Economics and Finance, and Hossein Vojoudi of Iran assisted Patricia Davidson, professor, and Amir Golmohammadi, associate professor, in the Department of Nutrition.

A new era began for the Global Engagement Office during International Education Week this November. The week features events such as an expo highlighting international students and the traditions of their countries. This year the highlight was a ribbon-cutting ceremony for a new Global Engagement Center in Mitchell Hall, providing a campus home for international students and programs. The new center includes a multipurpose room, a multifaith room, study space, offices for visiting scholars and the Global Ambassadors, and the campus passport office. International students decorated their new home. For Howard, it represents the culmination of a long-held goal of a place at WCU dedicated to international students and initiatives.

“It is so near and dear to my heart,” Howard says. “I’m grateful for the University community coming together to make this happen.” **WCU**

WCU students saw the birth of a volcano in Iceland this spring.



Michele and Eric Goodwin

WCU NEIGHBORS MICHELE AND ERIC GOODWIN

FUND SUCCEED WITH EASE

When Michele and Eric Goodwin established Succeed With Ease, a fund helping WCU students fulfill unexpected needs, they thought of it as a way of being neighborly. The Goodwins live two blocks from the University and wanted to support students like the ones they saw walking past their home every day.

“It’s our community,” Michele says. “You just kind of feel a responsibility to help the people in your backyard.”

The Goodwins had supported a fund to assist students with food insecurity at the university where their daughter earned her bachelor’s degree. The idea of doing something similar for WCU students appealed to them. They conferred with Jen Bacon, dean of the College of Arts and Humanities, to see what was needed and came up with the idea for Succeed with Ease.

Succeed with Ease funds a supply area in Main Hall for students in the college. The Goodwins’ goal in establishing the fund is to provide materials to which some students may not otherwise have access and, in doing so, to allow these students to pursue fully their educational aspirations and dreams at WCU.

Students have access to a variety of supplies. Art students have frequently benefited because art supplies can be expensive. They have

been able to get items like canvases, Bristol boards, pens, tape measures, paintbrushes, palette knives, and notebooks. In some cases, the funding has covered a special one-time purchase, such as purchasing a short-term Adobe license for a student project.

Students have received help buying textbooks and in spring 2024, the fund will supply clay for students studying ceramics. The banners

decorating Main Hall’s façade were designed by a student who received Succeed with Ease funding for a laptop.

“This type of funding is extremely valuable for students because it creates a path forward when students have unexpected expenses associated with their courses,” Bacon says. “We want them to have what they need to walk into their classrooms with confidence, never having to worry that a financial challenge will keep them from being able to do the work of their class.”

As parents whose daughter, Anna, and son, Gray, recently graduated from college, the

Goodwins say they understand the many costs associated with higher education. “Having had two kids go to school, you know that even if tuition is taken care of, even if meal plans are taken care of, the books and everything else add up,” Michele says.

The Goodwins grew up and attended college in North Carolina, where they lived until Eric accepted a job in Pennsylvania five years ago with Universal Health Services, which manages hospitals and other health-care facilities across the country. In his role as chief information officer, Eric has had opportunities to hire WCU students for interns and recruit graduates for jobs. The Goodwins consider Pennsylvania home, although Michele goes back to North Carolina frequently to help oversee her family’s business, Loping Crow Distillery. Located in Albemarle, N.C., it is a small batch distillery where her 82-year-old father is the master distiller. Michele coordinates distillery events featuring entertainment and food trucks.

In Pennsylvania, the Goodwins enjoy the vibrancy that comes with living in a college town. They appreciate the many restaurants and businesses that exist because of WCU’s proximity and enjoy campus cultural events and concerts. There’s still one thing at the University they are looking forward to seeing – and hearing.

“We have not made it to a football game yet. I’ve heard the band is incredible. So that’s on our list of things to do,” Michele says. **WCU**

You just kind of feel a responsibility to help the people in your backyard.

Dara Dirhan Named Outstanding Dietetic Educator by National and State Organizations

Dara Dirhan '10, M'12, associate professor of nutrition and director of WCU's Didactic Program in Dietetics, has been recognized by both the Nutrition and Dietetic Educators and Preceptors (NDEP) and the Pennsylvania Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics (PAND) as Outstanding Dietetic Educator.

"Receiving these awards on both the national and state levels has been a very humbling experience," said Dirhan. "Each day, I make a concerted effort to be the best professor that I can be by employing the most effective teaching strategies and techniques, by putting my students' needs first to help them to succeed, and by being a kind and approachable person whom students can turn to for guidance and advice. These awards give me confidence that my efforts are paying off."

Dirhan's research centers on best practices in teaching and learning pedagogy, including game-based learning, and studying student outcomes among undergraduate nutrition students. Her current research focuses on studying mindfulness in undergraduate nutrition students, intuitive eating, presence among educators, and advocating for the inclusion of nutrition as a general education course requirement in the undergraduate curriculum. Given the success and impact the introductory nutrition course has had in fulfilling the science general education requirement at WCU, she is surveying institutions across the country as to whether or not they offer nutrition courses in their general education curriculum.

Dirhan earned her doctorate in educational leadership and management with a concentration in higher education from Drexel University and became a full-time assistant professor at WCU in fall 2016.

NDEP, a unit of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, consists of more than 1,350 educator and preceptor members; its mission is to advocate for and empower educators and preceptors to lead the profession of nutrition and dietetics. The Pennsylvania Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, an affiliate of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, is the advocate of the dietetics profession serving the public through the promotion of optimal nutrition, health, and well-being with nearly 3,700 members throughout the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. [WCU](#)



"These awards give me confidence that my efforts are paying off."

— Dara Dirhan '10, M'12, associate professor of nutrition and director of WCU's Didactic Program in Dietetics

RESEARCH AND GRANT FUNDING UPDATES

HEATHER WHOLEY, professor and chair of anthropology and sociology: Tribal Specialist Program development and archaeological monitoring; National Park Services (NPS), \$240,465

This partnership between the National Park Foundation (NPF), NPS, and WCU will provide archeological co-training with Tribal Historic Preservation Officers and the NPS Northeast Archaeological Resource Program to youth tribal members, enabling them to participate in archeological monitoring on Great American Outdoors Act (GAOA) projects occurring on their ancestral homelands. The training supports resource stewardship practices on park lands and provides job-training and career development opportunities related to Cultural Resource Management.

BRANDON MITCHELL, professor of physics: National Science Foundation (NSF) ExpandQISE, \$797,576

Classical information technologies use optical interconnects to relay information between different media platforms. These interconnects relay digital ones and zeros as pulses with light on and off, respectively. For classical technologies, it is not necessary to precisely control how many photons are emitted or detected, only to be able to distinguish bright from dark. Quantum information technologies require quantum interconnects that can transmit single pairs of entangled photons, which is much more challenging, and requires a source of single photons. This project investigates Er-doped GaAs devices with the ultimate aim of developing an electrically pumped single-photon device.

MAHRUKH AZAM, professor and chair of chemistry: Keystone LSAMP, NSF \$804,108

WCU is one of four PASSHE institutions funded through the NSF-Keystone Louis Stokes Alliances for Minority Participation (LSAMP) program for \$3.5 million, with the sub-award to WCU for \$804,108. The ultimate outcome of this award is to actively recruit and retain the STEM graduates from marginalized populations. Keystone scholars will be provided with opportunities to increase their success as a STEM major, link STEM research and curriculum with aspects of social justice (STEMJ) and increase their STEM identity. Strategies include a summer bridge program, research, mentoring, and Alliance-specific curriculum and co-curricular activities.

Visit the University's website for additional details. [WCU](#)

\$240,465

NATIONAL PARK SERVICES

\$797,576

NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION EXPANDQISE

\$804,108

NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION
KEYSTONE LOUIS STOKES ALLIANCES
FOR MINORITY PARTICIPATION



DRUMMING UP SUPPORT

It has been a jam-packed fall semester for the Incomparable Golden Rams Marching Band as they prepare to march in the 135th Rose Parade presented by Honda in Pasadena, CA, on Monday, January 1, 2024.

In September, the band celebrated “Rose Parade Weekend” by welcoming Tournament of Roses President Alex Aghajanian to campus. Aghajanian attended the band’s final rehearsal before the first home football game of the season and presented band members with official Rose Parade pins and posters. Representatives from the City of Philadelphia were also on hand to present Aghajanian with a special Liberty Bell gift. On Saturday, the band premiered its 2023 halftime show, “In Bloom,” with themes and music that tie to the band’s Rose Parade appearance, and Aghajanian gifted a Tournament of Roses flag to President Christopher Fiorentino.



WEST CHESTER UNIVERSITY
INCOMPARABLE
GOLDEN RAMS MARCHING BAND
ROAD TO THE ROSES '24

From Friday, October 6, through Sunday, October 8, the band hosted “Community Days” to rally helping hands to create the Philly-themed panels that will process with the band in the Rose Parade. Throughout the weekend, volunteers logged more than 500 hours using 27 gallons of glue, cranberry seed, black onion seed, white rice, Italian hot pepper flakes, and other all-natural materials specific to Rose Parade standards to create banners that depict Independence Hall, the Love statue, and the Liberty Bell.

Don’t miss the Incomparable Golden Rams on Friday, December 1, in the West Chester Christmas Parade. The band will debut their new uniforms and preview their Rose Parade performance!

It’s not too late to make a gift to the RamBand Road to the Roses ’24 initiative at www.wcufoundation.org/ramband. **WCU**

IT’S NOT TOO LATE TO MAKE A GIFT TO THE RAMBAND
ROAD TO THE ROSES ’24 INITIATIVE AT WWW.WCUFOUNDATION.ORG/RAMBAND.



Hadih Deedat

HADIH DEEDAT STUDIES CHILD WELFARE PRACTICES IN GHANA

Hadih Deedat traces his interest in child welfare to his years growing up in Ghana, West Africa. An assistant professor of social work, he remembers questioning certain cultural norms that allowed corporal punishment of children and practices such as genital mutilation of young girls. “Growing up, I saw that and I thought, ‘This is not right.’ ... Even at the age of 14 or 15, I was questioning that.”

That reaction informed Deedat’s career and academic research. He worked in Delaware’s child welfare system after earning his master’s degree in public health. He wrote his doctoral dissertation on flaws in foster care, focusing on problems encountered by teens when they age out of the system with no preparation for living on their own. “It’s like a calling,” he says. “I really wanted to do something to protect children.”

His interests in child welfare continued after coming to WCU in 2019. He teaches the only course focusing on child welfare in the undergraduate social work department. He has returned to Ghana, taking WCU students to the West African nation to research child welfare.

Deedat received a 2021 Provost Research Grant that enabled him to take students to Ghana to study child welfare practices in May 2022. Graduate assistant Sarah Vengen and Alex Chips, an undergraduate social work student from WCU’s Philadelphia campus, spent three weeks investigating whether the country employs a public health approach to child welfare practices, which emphasizes prevention.

“We wanted to see if they were using the public health approach, which means they are doing more education, providing more sensitization, teaching people how not to abuse their children and how to avoid neglecting their children,” he says. “We found that the Ghana child welfare system, like most of the world, is more reactionary in nature rather than prevention-focused.”

Deedat presented this research at the 2023 International Conference on Interdisciplinary Social Sciences in Oxford, England. He is preparing a manuscript for publication with Vengen and Chips. When published, it will give the two students their first article in a scholarly journal. Now he is seeking funding to take two more students to study food insecurity in Ghana.

During his first research trip, Deedat forged a partnership with Palm University College in Ghana’s Greater Accra Region. A study abroad experience was created from the partnership and two undergraduate social work students spent the spring 2023 semester studying there, taking online classes at WCU while conducting field work. A second cohort of students from different majors will spend the spring 2024 semester at the University of Ghana.

“What they will be doing is cultural immersion activities,” Deedat

I really wanted to do something to protect children.

explains. “... They will be able to visit historic sites to get to know about the country. Ghana was one of the epicenters of the trans-Atlantic slave trade, serving as one of the main West African holding points for enslaved Africans who were sent to the Americas and Europe.”

Deedat plans to transition the semester-long Ghana experience to a two-week January term session in 2025 that will enable more WCU students to participate. He has recently developed an undergraduate-level elective that looks at the intersection of public health and social work. He plans to connect this elective to the two-week winter term study abroad program in Ghana, which will allow students to gain an understanding of different social work practices there.

“That’s the intent of the study abroad program that I’m revising; that it can be centered on child welfare and other social work practices through a public health and social work lens,” Deedat says. **WCU**

WCU Recognized as One of the 50 Most Community-minded Employers in the Region



The University has been named a 2023 honoree of the Civic 50 Greater Philadelphia by Philadelphia Foundation in partnership with Points of Light and local partners. Modeled after Points of Light's national program, the Civic 50 Greater Philadelphia provides a standard for corporate citizenship and showcases how employers use their time, skills, and resources to drive social impact in their communities and companies.

The Civic 50 honorees are both private and public companies and other employers operating in the Philadelphia region. They have been selected based on four dimensions of their community engagement programs:

- Investment of resources
- Integration across business functions
- Institutionalization through policies and system
- Impact measurement

Community engagement is integral to the University and is part of WCU's strategic plan, Pathways to Student Success, which illustrates how the University aligns with the Civic 50 dimensions.

"Philadelphia Foundation is proud to recognize West Chester University's outstanding civic engagement," said Pedro Ramos, president and chief executive officer of Philadelphia Foundation. "All of the 2023 honorees have demonstrated great passion and dedication to making a meaningful impact in the local communities they serve. It is this type of commitment that resonates throughout the region and sets the standard for corporate stewardship."

The Civic 50 Greater Philadelphia assessment is administered by True Impact, a company specializing in helping organizations maximize and measure their social and business value and consists of quantitative and multiple-choice questions that inform the scoring process. **WCU**

(L to R) Pedro Ramos, president, Philadelphia Foundation; Helen Hammerschmidt, associate vice president for Communication, Operations, and Strategy, WCU Provost Office; Rita Patel-Eng, director, WCU Center for Civic Engagement and Social Impact; Diane Melley, executive director and senior advisor, Philadelphia Foundation; and Diane Quest, interim president and CEO, Points of Light Foundation.

WCU Named a FOUR-TIME HEED AWARD RECIPIENT

For the fourth consecutive year, WCU earned the 2023 Higher Education Excellence in Diversity (HEED) Award from *INSIGHT Into Diversity* magazine, the oldest and largest diversity-focused publication in higher education. The HEED Award is the only national honor to recognize institutions of higher education for their outstanding commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion.

West Chester is one of only seven Pennsylvania colleges selected for this honor this year.



"The HEED Award demonstrates engagement in a wide array of best practices, in addition to innovation and a collective commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion. This award is all about what we do, not just what we say," said WCU Vice President for the Division for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Tracey Robinson. "Diversity is broadly defined and this award recognizes how the University goes the extra mile."

WCU was selected for these initiatives:

- **WCU's Student Parent Task Force** developed programming and plans in consultation with the statewide Pennsylvania Parent Pathways program to improve both recruitment and retention of pregnant and parenting students. Efforts focused on the identification of resources and systems to support parenting students; development of a listserv of 448 parenting students; and an educational series of six community-building events. The online resource repository is available 24/7.
- **The Center for STEM Inclusion (CSI)** in the College of the Sciences and Mathematics, established in 2021, works to increase access to STEM careers for a diverse body of students, with programming conducted by a large and enthusiastic faculty committee. CSI has four pillars: outreach, access, persistence, and career readiness. Each pillar represents a range of activities to support diverse STEM students and strengthen the STEM pipeline. The outreach pillar encompasses K-12 engagement and includes two one-day hands-on events: Super Science Saturday and the Science Saturday Expo. CSI was also recognized by *INSIGHT Into Diversity* with a separate honor: a 2023 Inspiring Programs in STEM Award.
- **During the 2022-2023 academic year**, WCU hosted workshops and programming on Antisemitism and Islamophobia, and funded an Innovation in Diversity and Inclusion Grant: WCU Interfaith, Meaning-Making, and Spirituality Project.

WCU is featured along with the 108 other recipients in the November/December 2023 issue of *INSIGHT Into Diversity* magazine.

"We look for institutions where diversity and inclusion are woven into the work being done every day across their campus," noted Lenore Pearlstein, publisher of *INSIGHT Into Diversity* magazine. **WCU**





(L to R) Interpreter Patricio Díaz, WCU Associate Professor of Languages and Cultures Daniela Johannes, artist Sebastián González, muralist Alejandro "Mono" González, WCU Emeritus Professor of Art John Baker '73, Associate Professor of Art + Design David Jones, Interpreter Yerko Fernández.

RENOWNED CHILEAN ARTIST/ACTIVIST ALEJANDRO "MONO" GONZÁLEZ INSTALLS MURAL AT WCU

During Hispanic Heritage Month, the University honored Latinx culture with what has become a permanent installation in Sykes Student Union: a custom mural by the renowned Chilean artist and activist Alejandro "Mono" González.

Along with his son, Sebastián González, and assistants, González spent the last week of September on campus to install the mural, speak with classes, and lead a printmaking master class with art students. Simultaneously, Mono & Mural, an exhibit of his work, was on display in WCU's Baker Gallery. He was also the keynote for the University's 15th annual Latino Communities Conference, talking not only about making art but about public art and its social impact.

Daniela Johannes, originally from Chile, associate professor of languages and cultures, is director for the Latino 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'état* 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 González'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 on the second floor of Sykes "an educational monument that honors the heritage" of WCU's Latinx students and employees. [WCU](#)



Paul Stoller

Anthropologist Paul Stoller: Surrounded by the Spirits

This fall, the WCU Museum of Anthropology and Archaeology honored the life work of renowned Professor of Anthropology Paul Stoller, who lived with and studied the Songhay people of Niger, in the exhibit "Surrounded by the Spirits: Paul Stoller and the Songhay Journey Toward Wellbeing." The exhibit, curated by students in Michael Di Giovine's museum studies course, invites visitors to experience the culture of West Africa and gain profound insights into holistic healing practices that place humans in harmony with the social, natural, and spiritual worlds. It runs through December 1, 2023.

The center of the exhibition is a large mud spirit hut, a recreation of the spirit hut used by Stoller's mentor, the possession priest Adamu Jenitongo. On the ceiling inside are illuminated constellations from the summer sky in Niger, evoking the cosmos and allowing visitors to contemplate their own wellbeing.

On the WCU faculty since 1980, Stoller plans to retire in 2024. In 2013, the Swedish Society for Anthropology and Geography selected him to receive the Anders Retzius Medal in Gold — anthropology's highest honor and the field's equivalent of the Nobel Prize — for his scientific contributions to anthropology. He is the author of 16 books and recipient of multiple awards and grants including a Guggenheim Fellowship. [WCU](#)

WCU Places Solidly in 2024 *U.S. News* Rankings

This is the second year WCU has been ranked by *U.S. News* in the National Universities category due to WCU being recognized as an R2 Doctoral University, exhibiting high research activity.

Our improvement in these rankings over last year now places the University **#209 overall out of 435 institutions** — in the top half of all National Universities, which includes 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 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 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 to be 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 and graduate outcomes for National Universities, and there were significant changes in their methodology. 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**

#17

IN FIRST-YEAR
RETENTION RATE

#8

GRADUATION
RATE

#13

PELL GRANT RECIPIENT
GRADUATION RATE

AMONG ALL PUBLIC R2 INSTITUTIONS

DIGITAL HISTORY PROJECT GIVES VOICE TO UKRAINIAN YOUTH



Few understand the first-hand effects of war. WCU Professors of History Bob Kodosky and Janneken Smucker, both known for engaging students in dynamic projects that prompt introspective thinking, wanted their students to do more than just watch a plethora of news stories related to Russia's invasion of Ukraine. To make a lasting impression, Kodosky and Smucker preferred that their history students learn directly from the authentic voices and experiences of students currently living in Ukraine. Kodosky and Smucker also wanted the experience to be immersive and collaborative; it was to take place in Saarbrücken, Germany.

Joining forces this spring with faculty colleagues at Saarland University in Germany, Ukrainian Catholic University, and Temple University, Kodosky and Smucker established an "international summer school" as a collaborative class designed to initiate a powerful exchange between youth from Ukraine, Germany/Europe and the U.S. While in Germany for one week in April during a class entitled "Witnessing and Documenting Wartime Experiences: The Current Russian War in Ukraine, Historical Perspectives, and Global Alliances," students from both West Chester and Saarland universities met with 10 students from Ukraine to listen, talk, and understand.

"We want to bring students of the Great Region (SaarLorLux+) together with students from Mykolaiv and Lviv, Ukraine, and West Chester University to have them engage in a serious dialogue about lives during wartimes in borderlands," reads a course statement of purpose written by faculty to student participants. "In doing comparative and practical work in Border Studies and digital history, we hope that you will learn from each other."

While the summer school class has since ended, critical post-work is now being finished —digital storytelling projects involving one-on-one interviews with the Ukrainian youth. Thanks to the narratives-in-the-making, the voices of these survivors will hopefully serve as important lessons learned for many years to come. **WCU**

CELEBRATING 50 YEARS OF THE GORDON NATURAL AREA

Inclement weather did not dampen the spirits of University and community members who celebrated the 50th anniversary of the dedication of the Robert B. Gordon Natural Area for Environmental Studies (GNA) with a Forest Fest on September 23. Sykes Student Union Ballrooms buzzed with family-friendly demonstrations and activities from WCU student organizations, departments, and offices plus Temple University's Integrative Ecology Lab. Partners including the West Chester Green Team, Stroud Water Research Center, Goose Creek Alliance, Penn State Master Gardeners of Chester County, and others brought exhibits and environmental enthusiasm.

Also participating were members of the Delaware Tribe of Indians, who consulted on the Lenape language on new signage highlighting the Lenape Tribe's relationship with the land that is now part of the GNA. Professor of Anthropology Heather Wholey was instrumental in bringing them to the event and bringing awareness to the pre-colonial cultures that existed here long before the University was established.

The GNA is the site for hundreds of hours of research by WCU faculty and students including studies on natural succession, emerald ash borers, and invasive plant management.

WCU Biology Professor Jessica Schedlbauer, who chaired the Forest Fest committee, is one of many WCU faculty who use the GNA as a living laboratory. One of her research areas is carbon storage and cycling in forest ecosystems. Her work engages undergraduate students in addressing issues of climate change, land-use change, and ecosystem management.

Of West Chester University's 406 acres, the GNA comprises more than 126 acres of preserved forest and open space on South Campus used for environmental studies, reflection, and recreation. 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 designated a Wild Plant Sanctuary by the PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources. **WCU**

(L to R) Chief of the Delaware Tribe of Indians Brad Kills Crow, WCU President Christopher Fiorentino, Delaware tribe of Indians representative Jeremy Johnson.





Laquana Cooke

■ ICAMP SUMMER MEDIA ACADEMY RECOGNIZED WITH LINDY AWARD

The Pennsylvania Higher Education Network for Neighborhood Development (PHENND) recognized WCU's iCamp Summer Academy with a Lindy award.

Since 2017, Laquana Cooke, associate professor of English, has partnered with the Philadelphia School District to bring rising high school juniors and seniors to campus for the residential iCamp Summer Academy. Each summer, these students room on campus to participate in structured media production lessons, hands-on workshops, and collaborative open lab time with WCU faculty.

"It's quite an honor to be recognized with this award," Cooke says. "At iCamp, we teach our students about media projects that can benefit society and we are passionate about working with them to effect social change. Our goal is to develop college-level social, academic, and technical literacies that can help our students achieve success in college and beyond."

The Phillip B. Lindy Award is part of the PHENND's K-16 Partnerships Program. It honors collaborative partnerships between at least one K-12 school and one university. **WCU**

**FOR A FULL SCHEDULE OF EVENTS VISIT
WCUPA.EDU/ARTS**

DECEMBER

9

**Wells School of Music Concert:
102nd Annual Holiday Program**



10

Wells School of Music Concert: WCU Wind Ensemble

JANUARY



1

**WCU's
INCOMPARABLE
Golden Rams
Marching Bands in
the 135th Rose Parade
presented by Honda**

26

WCU Mather Planetarium: Fire in the Sky
(Live Show! Tix on sale 1/5.)

29

Wells School of Music Faculty Recital:
Kimberly Reighley, Flute

FEBRUARY

4

Wells School of Music Faculty Recital: Stephen Ng, Tenor

10

**WCU Live!
Popovich Family Pet Theatre**



18

Wells School of Music WCU Symphony Orchestra:
Irving H. Cohen Memorial and Concerto Winners Concert

23

WCU Mather Planetarium: Raining Stars
(Live Show! Tix on sale 2/2.)

26

Wells School of Music Faculty Recital:
Jonathan Ragonese, Saxophone

29

Dept. of Theatre & Dance presents:
Three Sisters by Anton Chekhov. Through March 3

WCU EVENTS

MARCH

3

Wells School of Music Faculty Recital:
Ovidiu Marinescu, Cello



22

WCU Mather Planetarium: An Eclipse of the Sun
(Live Show! Tix on sale 3/1.)

25

Wells School of Music Faculty Recital:
Ralph Sorrentino, Percussion

APRIL

4 - 7

Theatre & Dance presents:
Silent Sky by Lauren Gunderson

19

WCU Mather Planetarium: Citizen Science
(Live Show! Tix on sale 3/29.)

25 - 27

Theatre & Dance presents: Spring Dance
Concert

9

WCU Live!: Tamagawa University
Taiko Drumming & Dance Troupe

11

WCU Live!: Tamagawa University
Taiko Drumming & Dance Troupe

12

WCU Live!:
Jersey Boys and Girls



MAY



4 - 5

Wells School of Music:
WCU Opera Theatre presents *Candide*

41ST ANNUAL PRESIDENTIAL GALA

Starry Night Soiree

SAVE THE DATE

FRIDAY, MARCH 15, 2024

The Gala returns to campus in the Sciences & Engineering Center and The Commons! All proceeds support the Fund to Finish at WCU, a scholarship that provides the "last-dollar" amount a student needs to complete their degree.



WEST CHESTER UNIVERSITY
FOUNDATION
Student Success Is Our Mission

150FORWARD REACHES

90%
TO GOAL

**This is it —
the final push to
fulfill our pledge.**

West Chester University is closing in on the \$59 million-dollar mark and will continue its efforts to raise \$65 million by June 30, 2024, as part of 150Forward: The Campaign for WCU. Ambitious in its goals, 150Forward broadens access through scholarships and brings in the nation's brightest; leads with technology to connect students and advance research; and creates more academic, civic, and professional opportunities for every student who calls the University home.

It's an everyday mission made extraordinary to ensure that our Golden Rams have the ability to reach their highest aspirations here and now.



Visit www.WCUFoundation.org/150Forward to make an impact.



The Fund for Women and Girls Honors Susan Fiorentino '86 with Woman of Distinction Award

WCU Professor of Management Susan Fiorentino '86, J.D., was recently honored and celebrated by The Fund for Women and Girls for her work as a lawyer, professor, researcher, speaker, and more. During its seventh annual Champions of Change Breakfast held this fall, The Fund presented Fiorentino with the Gladys Black "Woman of Distinction" Award. The highly respected award is named in memory of Gladys Black, a long-time advocate of The Fund and a renowned supporter of women and girls in Chester County.

"We are so excited to have someone as accomplished at supporting women in the workplace as Susan as our awardee," said Kim Andrews, executive director of The Fund. "The Fund celebrates not just the extraordinary achievements of individuals, corporations, and nonprofits advancing women in the workplace, but the unstoppable spirit that drives them to break barriers and champion change."

With expertise in the area of employment and labor law, Fiorentino has conducted extensive research on legal issues pertaining to women in the workplace, including pay equity and sexual harassment.

Fiorentino helped launch the University's master of science in human resource management program, which has experienced tremendous growth since its inception in 2016. She teaches courses related to human resource management, such as employment and labor law, employee relations, and issues of employee health in the workplace. Prior to her transition to academia, she was a full-time attorney with a practice in employment and labor law, where she represented both employers and employees in personnel matters. She maintains a limited law practice, providing employment and labor law counseling to clients. She is also actively engaged in the human resource community and serves as faculty advisor to WCU's student HR Association.

"I am deeply honored to be recognized by such an esteemed organization as The Fund for Women and Girls and to be included among such an extraordinary group of Champions of Change awardees," said Fiorentino. "It takes all of us to advance, empower, and support women leaders so all workplaces can thrive."

Fiorentino is also a staunch advocate and supporter of student success in her active role as the First Lady of West Chester University.

In addition, The Fund also recognized Countryside Consulting, Inc. as a Champions of Change Corporate Awardee, as well as Chester County OIC as a WSFS Nonprofit Workforce Development Awardee. **WCU**



Susan Fiorentino '86

It takes all of us to advance, empower, and support women leaders so all workplaces can thrive.



MY UKRAINE

WCU's Department of Art + Design is hosting "My Ukraine" through December 9, 2023 in Baker Gallery. Also acting as a fundraiser for You Are The Angel, a New York-based non-profit that provides support for the victims of the war in Ukraine, My Ukraine includes selections from the art collection of Ukrainian curator and former WCU Professor Igor Roussanoff. The exhibit is presented in conjunction with the Dept. of Theatre & Dance's production of the U.S. premiere of *Me, War and Toy Grenade*, which ran November 16 – 19. In a series of vignettes, Ukrainian playwright Nina Zakhozhenko spotlights how the people of Ukraine are coping during this time of war. Pictured L-R: Associate Professor of Art Andrew Snyder, Professor Emeritus of Art John Baker '74, Professor Daria Nikitina, Carnegie Mellon University's Susan Tsu, exhibit curator and former WCU Professor Igor Roussanoff, WCU President Chris Fiorentino, and William Patterson University President Richard Helldobler. **WCU**

SENIOR MADISON RICHTER SAILS INTO STUDY ABROAD



Ask WCU senior Madison Richter where she spent the spring 2023 semester and it might take her a while to answer. That's because Richter visited 11 foreign cities in 11 countries on three continents as a participant in Semester at Sea. The program offers a floating college campus to some 500 students on the ship MV World Odyssey. For 105 days, from January 5 to April 20, Richter took classes while seeing the world.

Richter said she had considered studying abroad in Australia but didn't like the idea of being in one location. Semester at Sea afforded her the opportunity to visit many places while studying.

"You get the experience of going to all of those places, but it's organized. You have the transportation to get there. I'd never seen anything like that before," Richter says.

Before she even set sail, Richter traveled farther than she ever had before, flying to Dubai in the United Arab Emirates, where she boarded the ship. Her travels took her to India, Kenya, Jordan, through the Suez Canal, and then on to Cyprus, Greece, Croatia, Spain, Morocco, and Portugal.

Richter took four classes with 12 academic credits on shipboard. As a finance and economics major, Richter chose economics courses, which have a required field class that students attend in the various countries. Richter's field classes included a visit to the World Bank in Morocco. In addition, all students take the required core course Global Studies where they learn about the countries they visit. Guest lecturers brief students about destinations.

The ship boasted everything found on most college campuses, including activities, workout facilities, and entertainment such as movie nights and game nights. Students have roommates and dine together.

The first stop in Mumbai, India, was a humbling experience, Richter says, showing students what a privilege it was to live in a first-world country. "We toured the slums and people were so happy to show off their houses. They were so grateful to have a place to stay and to sleep. And when you compare it to what we have here. ... We're traveling the world on a cruise ship."

One of Richter's favorite places was Kenya where she went on safari, seeing wild zebras, elephants, and other wildlife, and visited children in an orphanage. "I would go back there ten more times," she says. Another highlight was visiting the Dead Sea in Jordan, with its super-saturated salt water that allows people to float effortlessly. "You couldn't even walk halfway in before your feet would start bobbing up," she chuckles.

She also remembers a special night on the ship. "One night the captain turned off all the lights on the ship so we could stargaze," she recalls. "We were in the middle of the ocean and everyone was just lying there on the deck listening to him describe which stars we were seeing."

Richter says Semester at Sea convinced her that she wants to travel more. And thinking back to how quickly those 105 days passed, she says, "I need to be living more in the present." **WCU**



CHAPTER NEWS

Our fall semester kicked off and we've loved every opportunity to connect with Golden Ram alumni. As we look forward to welcoming our newest alumni in December, we're excited to announce the restructuring of our Alumni Chapters.

With more than 128,000 Golden Rams, we are always seeking the most effective and meaningful ways to connect and enhance your relationship with WCU. In doing so, we have realigned our chapters into Alumni Networks for better engagement with you.

- **Regional Alumni Groups** | Geographically based alumni groups with global Golden Ram ambassadors.
- **Affinity Alumni Chapters** | Alumni chapters who share affinity or interests, degree tracks or career fields.
- **Athletic Alumni Clubs** | Collaborative clubs of athletic alumni who work alongside the coaching staff to provide support for current athletes and engagement opportunities for alumni.
- **Alumni Councils** | Alumni advisory committees dedicated to leadership, mentoring, and/or professional services and the support of student success.

Are you looking to get involved with your fellow alumni? Check out our new opportunities available through Alumni Networks. For more information on specific networks and how you can get involved, visit our website: www.wcualumni.org/alumninetworks.



A MESSAGE FROM THE ALUMNI ASSOCIATION PRESIDENT

What a great fall semester this has been! The 2023-2024 West Chester University school year is off to a great start!

For example, the combined Homecoming & Family Weekend was a tremendous success. Not only was the weather perfect, but the Golden Rams also defeated Bloomsburg University on the football field in overtime.

During Homecoming Weekend, I was fortunate enough to meet some members of the Classes of 1963 and 1973 who were back on campus for their reunions that weekend. It was evident how much pride they had in graduating from WCU (or West Chester State College, as it was known when they graduated).

Speaking to these fellow Rams made me wonder, "What would make someone want to come back to campus 50 or 60 years after graduating?" The answer, I believe, is connections. As members of the WCU Alumni Association, I urge you to seek out, build, and strengthen these connections. It can be with people you spent time with as a student: former roommates, band or sports team members, Greek organizations, ROTC, interest groups. Or you could make some new connections by participating in WCU alumni events. Connections will make you feel even better about being one of the 128,000+ of us who are fortunate enough to be members of the WCU Alumni Association.

If you do not know where to go to start building new connections, the WCU Alumni Association and the West Chester University Foundation are busy planning numerous events for the remainder of the academic year. I encourage you to plan on attending a sporting event, the President's Speaker Series, a play, the Fall or Spring Dance Concerts, a faculty recital, the 102nd Annual Holiday Program, and especially Alumni Weekend from April 19 through 21, 2024.

Visit www.wcualumni.org/volunteer to find even more ways you can be involved.

I hope to see you on campus soon!

Rams Up!
Patrick O'Connor M'93
President, WCU Alumni Association

ALUMNI TRACY '91 and MARK SAMMARONE '84: FOSTER RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN TOWN AND GOWN

Tracy (Staikides) Sammarone '91 and Mark Sammarone '84 say that they came to West Chester as students and never left. Mark was a native of Pittsburgh and Tracy came from southern Chester County when they entered WCU just three years apart.



Tracy '91 and Mark Sammarone '84

"We landed in the community, found out how special it was, and we stayed," Mark says.

Both work at Arthur Hall Insurance in the borough, where Mark is executive vice president and Tracy is an account manager. Their work focuses on supplying property, casualty, liability, and workers compensation insurance for businesses. Mark joined the firm in 2000 and became part of the third generation of owners who bought the company in 2005.

Giving back to the community is as important to the Sammarones as career success. The couple,

who met after they graduated, have volunteered in various West Chester organizations for more than 30 years. They share their passion for volunteerism with daughter Chelsea, who earned her master's degree in education at WCU in 2023.

"She didn't have a choice but to be part of the community too, because we had her with us all the time," quips Tracy.

"Community involvement is a lifestyle," adds Mark, who majored in speech communications. "People sometimes say 'I wish I had more time.'

It's really not about having time or not having time. It's what you make a priority."

It's also been a way to stay connected to WCU. Good relationships between the University and the town are important and the Sammarones say fostering them is a priority for President Chris Fiorentino. "In almost everything we do as volunteers, there is usually somebody related to the University connected as well," Mark says.

Tracy, who majored in American Studies, serves on the board of the West Chester Downtown Foundation, the nonprofit arm of the Business Improvement District.

For 17 years, she chaired the group's major event, Up On The Roof, held atop the Chestnut Street Parking Garage. She also is on the West Chester Advisory Board of the Greater Brandywine YWCA.

Mark served multiple terms on the Greater West Chester Chamber of Commerce board, including two years as board chair, and was president of the Rotary Club of West Chester. During the early years of his chamber service, he met President Fiorentino, who recently invited him to join the Student Services,

Inc. (SSI) board. "He realized I valued the University and wanted to help students," Mark says. SSI is a non-profit organization that oversees the finances of all co-curricular student and campus activities.

The couple also supports WCU students by contributing to several West Chester University Foundation funds. The Fund to Finish, which provides emergency aid enabling students to graduate, is especially meaningful to Tracy, who worked her way through college, taking extra time to finish. "I would have finished [on time] academically, but financially it was a little more difficult," she says.

Mark also supports WCU in his chamber role. "We put together several programs to allow the business community to interface with the University," he says, adding that such opportunities allow students to gain experiential learning. Initiatives have included pairing marketing classes with businesses to develop custom marketing plans; involving local employers in a student job fair; and connecting businesses and students through Handshake, the online platform for jobs and internships.

Partnerships work both ways, the Sammarones say, noting many student volunteers come to help at community events. "There's a lot of good energy between downtown and the University." **WCU**

Community involvement is a lifestyle. It's really not about having time or not having time. It's what you make a priority.



Young '73



Yarnall '14



Broden Hudson
Senior Accountant

Hudson '22



Waddington '04



Maier '15



Tellez '23



Hargust '07



Jones '17

1960s

Norman Lieberman '61 was named 2023 Penn Relays honorary meet referee for his 30+ years as a member of the relays staff.

David M. Rentschler '63 received the first Dr. Brenda Gilio Center for Education Alumni Leadership Award presented at Widener University's graduate commencement on May 11, 2023.

1970s

Marie C. Conklin Young '73 was inducted into Pleasant Valley School District's hall of fame in Brodheads-ville, PA.

Richard E. Daniels '75, M'81, president of the West Chester University Killinger Foundation, was named a 2023 Chester County Sports Hall of Fame inductee for football.

Paul Parente '79 appeared at Philadelphia's Quintessence Theatre in the first production of Season XIV, George Bernard Shaw's *Major Barbara*.

Karen Shelton '79 was inducted into the Delaware County chapter of the Pennsylvania Sports Hall of Fame on June 25, 2023.

1990s

Mark A. Barnes '93 was chosen as one of the newest board members of American Rivers, an organization that strives to protect and restore all rivers.

2000s

Bronwyn L. Martin M'00 was recognized as a 2023 Million Dollar Round Table Top of the Table member.

Brett E. Waddington '04 recently joined Eiseman Construction to spearhead their growing solar roofing division.

Allison Maier '15 received her master of arts degree in counseling from Arcadia University in May 2023.

Natalie D. Shaak M'07 was promoted to associate director of communication and administration at Drexel University's Center for Hunger-Free Communities in February 2023. She was elected to the Drexel University Alumni Board of Governors in July 2023.

Zenobia S. Hargust '07 has been appointed vice president for human resources at Santa Clara University in California.

Ryan S. Sheehan '09 graduated from the FBI National Academy in Quantico, VA, on June 8, 2023.

2010s

Brian T. Zepka '13 recently published his novel, *The Temperature of Me and You*, which is in development to become a TV series on Disney+.

Daniel Yarnall '14 was recently appointed to the Delaware County Community College Paralegal Studies Advisory Committee. Yarnall currently works for Unruh Turner Burke & Frees, one of Chester County's largest law firms.

Ashley Jones '17 graduated from Penn State Law with her juris doctorate in May 2023.

Eleftheria Zerefos '19 graduated from Pennsylvania State University with a master's in education and acquired her administration certification. She was nominated for teacher of the year while teaching at Pottsgrove High School as the band director.

2020s

Broden Hudson '22 was recently promoted to senior accountant at Belfint, Lyons & Shuman, P.A., a top 300 certified public accounting and consulting firm headquartered in Delaware.

Samantha Tellez '23 was recently sworn into Pennsylvania Governor Shapiro's Advisory Commission for Next Generation Engagement. The newly established commission recognizes that Pennsylvanians between the ages of 16-26 make unique, diverse, and valuable contributions to the Commonwealth.



Several WCU alumni and current WCU students were deployed with the Pennsylvania Army National Guard to Jordan this year as a part of Operation Enduring Freedom (Spartan Shield). **Pictured L to R:** Maj. Ryan Funderburg '05, Sgt. Tasi Mkwayaya '25 (expected), CW2 Tom Hooper '09, Sgt. Christian Wilson '21, Spc. William Jackson '25 (expected).

In Memoriam

1957 Marilyn N. Reynolds
 1963 Annette C. Ortiga
 1963 Jordel V. VanDeventer
 1963 Dale A. Waters
 1965 Joseph G. Lewis
 1968 Daniel T. Civitello, Jr.
 1968 William Lauris
 1970 Mark B. Eckell
 1973 Joseph P. Decker
 1973 Gregory F. Kuhns
 1973 John D. Munro
 1977 Christopher J. Higgins

Engagements

- 1. Timothy Grossman '13, M'18 to Melanie Riland '15, M'17**
on June 17, 2023.
- 2. Kelly A. Baker '13 to David Scheffler** on June 26, 2023.

Marriages

- 3. Gina Tophoney '00, M'09 to Sarah Grym** on June 17, 2023.
- 4. Kevin E. Sibre '13 to Alexis Walley '15, M'17** on August 19, 2023.

- 5. Matthew Parsons M'15 to Melanie Solano '19, D'22**
on July 8, 2023.

Future Alumni

- 6. Linsey (Wisor) Avile '07** and Michael Aviles welcomed Benjamin Paul in April 2023.
- 7. Natalie D. Shaak M'07** and partner William Holland welcomed Josephine Gray on July 29, 2023.
- 8. Kevin Phelan M'20 and Caitlin (Kendzulak) Phelan '16, M'19** welcomed Haylie Paige in September 2022.

DEATH NOTIFICATION PROCEDURE

Contact the Office of Alumni Engagement with a copy of the decedent's obituary from a newspaper or the internet, or a copy of a letter or email from a family member of the deceased. Please note: Death notifications will not be accepted via telephone.

ALUMNI

PHOTO SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

Photos should be no less than 300 DPI and in JPG format.

If you are scanning a printed photo, please set the scanning resolution to at least 300 dpi.

Digital camera and/or cell phone shots should be taken on the highest resolution setting available.

Photos should be emailed as an attachment, not pasted into the email or document.

We reserve the right to not publish a photo of low quality, and not all photos can be published.

Please send your photos as email attachments to the attention of the Office of Alumni Engagement at alumni@wcufoundation.org.

SUBMIT your class notes to the Office of Alumni Engagement at alumni@wcufoundation.org.



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1.



2.



5.



3.



6.



4.



7.



8.



Meet the New Bachelor: Joey Graziadei '17

If you're a fan of reality TV, you may know which partner the most recent Bachelorette chose on the TV series. First runner-up was Joey Graziadei '17, who was named as The Bachelor for the spring 2024 TV series.

"Surreal" is how he described the opportunity when interviewed at the close of The Bachelorette.

Graziadei grew up in Collegeville, PA, and earned his WCU bachelor's degree in communication and

media studies. He was involved with Pi Kappa Alpha, the Public Relations Student Society of America, and played on the men's tennis team.

After graduating, he became the head tennis professional at Princeville Makai Golf Club Hawaii for a year and a half before continuing his role in Kukuiula on the South Shore of Kauai. He is currently a lifestyle and experience ambassador at the Kukuiula Development Club, leading guests and members in activities onsite and all over the island. **WCU**

ALUMNI



THERE'S NO PLACE LIKE WCU

FOR **Homecoming & Family Weekend**

For the first time, two great Golden Ram traditions took place simultaneously: Family Weekend and Homecoming! Students and their families, alumni, employees, and friends enjoyed *The Wizard of Oz* theme as they followed the yellow brick road to a family-friendly block party outside the Sciences and Engineering Center and The Commons (SECC) at Shack's Way, rekindled friendships at reunions, got active at the Student Recreation Center, and cheered the football team to victory. With discounts uptown and at Longwood Gardens, the combo Golden Rams celebration was a rousing success.





West Chester University
West Chester, PA 19383-7401

The West Chester University Magazine is published three times a year for the alumni, friends, and family of West Chester University of Pennsylvania by the Office of Communications, West Chester University.

Postmaster: Send address changes to:
West Chester University Foundation,
202 Carter Drive, West Chester, PA 19382

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