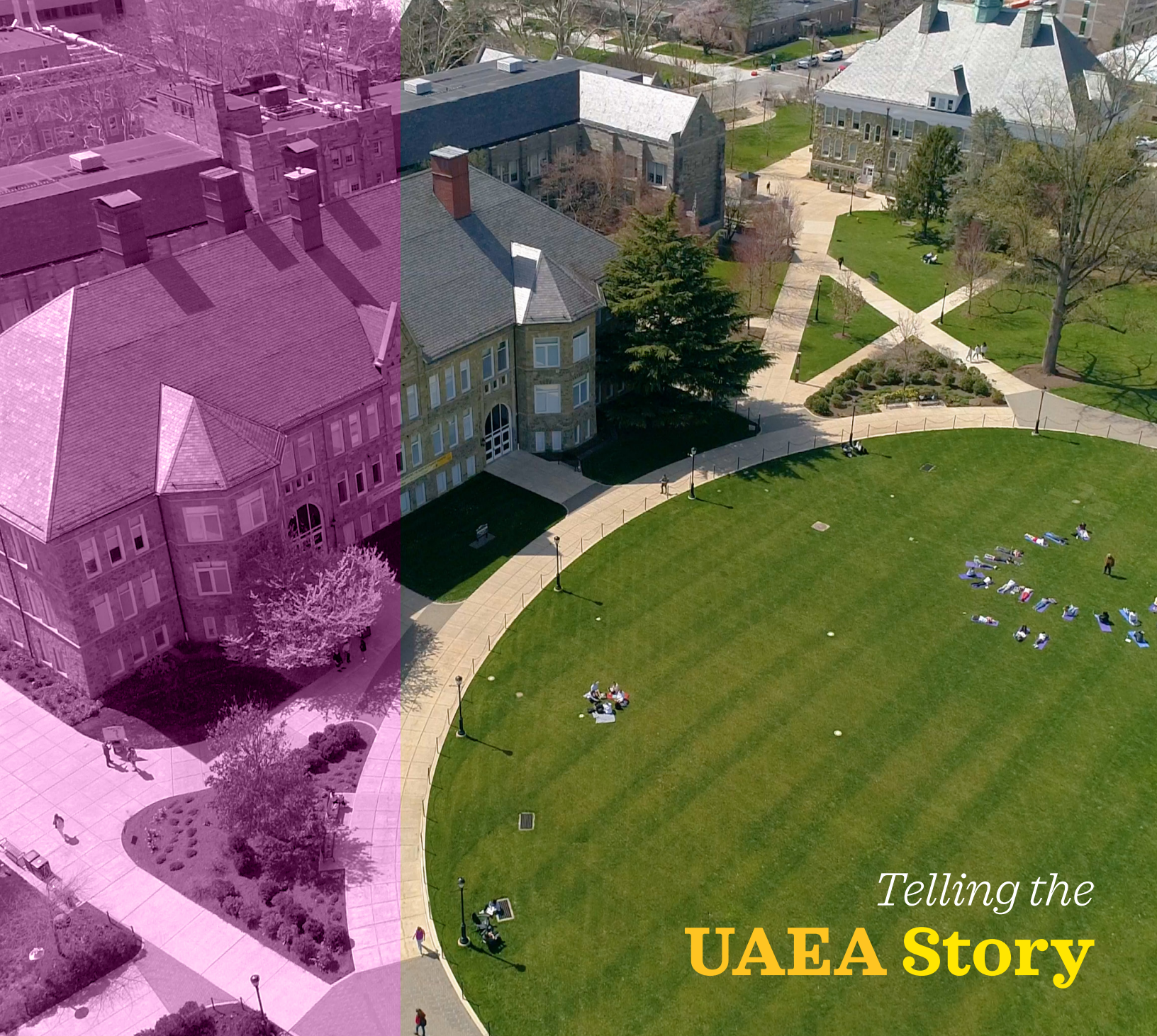




UNIVERSITY ADVANCEMENT & EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

ANNUAL REPORT 2023-2024



Telling the **UAEA Story**

In 2023-2024, UAEA continued to establish itself as one of West Chester University's newer divisions. In order to highlight and enhance the division's visibility and awareness both internally and externally to the university, the UAEA team embarked on a strategic and intentional mission to Tell the UAEA Story. The following section outlines the deliberate ways UAEA has been sharing its story with its constituents and stakeholders. This included the creation of divisional values, the intentional organizational connection to Academic Affairs reflected in the Organization Chart, a collaborative launch of the Experiential Learning website, the start of a UAEA LinkedIn page, and the UAEA Open House. Our strong connection to Academic Affairs is a testament to our alignment with the university's academic mission, a fact that we are all proud of and that strengthens our bond with the university community.



A Message from the Vice President

As the vice president, I am delighted to present the division's accomplishments from this past year. Our second annual report is a testament to the successful journey of University Advancement & External Affairs (UAEA). This year, we made significant progress because of the solid and dynamic leadership team that supports the division at large, each other, and our students in all that they do. While these achievements are an indication of the division's stability and progress, we are pressing forward with new goals and objectives that will support our students as they matriculate in, through, and out of the university. In addition to the results shared by members of this division, I am also pleased with the work of the West Chester University Foundation and Office of Alumni Engagement. They exceeded their capital campaign goal and are positioning themselves to start the next campaign. This annual report will highlight many of the achievements of the Division of University Advancement & External Affairs and our partners at the WCU Foundation and Alumni Engagement.

Sincerely,

Zebulun Davenport, Ed.D.

Divisional Values

In August 2023, UAEA came together for a divisional retreat. This session was not just about crafting division-wide value statements to complement the unit's Mission and Vision statements created in 2022. It was a collaborative and thoughtful process that aimed to reflect the core principles that guide the UAEA culture and moral compass. The division's values are an essential component of the UAEA story and were developed through this shared vision.

ADVOCACY: UAEA promotes and supports student success and community impact through understanding, empowerment, and informed action.

COLLABORATION: UAEA prioritizes trust and unity in every interaction through intentional outreach, building rapport, and sustaining mutually beneficial relationships.

EQUITY: UAEA embodies fairness, impartiality, and justice for all community members through robust and responsible engagement.

INNOVATION: UAEA commits to leveraging creative resources, continuous learning, adaptability, and strategic risk-taking by building on what was and imagining what could be.

Organization Chart

This year, a significant and beneficial change was made to the UAEA Organization Chart. A dotted-line reporting structure was added from the associate vice president for communication, operations, and strategy for Academic Affairs to the vice president for UAEA. This structure allows for greater communication and interaction between the work that emanates from UAEA to the division of Academic Affairs. Associate Vice President Helen Hammerschmidt assists Vice President Davenport and Executive Director for External Relations, Dr. Dietrich, with WCU's chamber relationships and university sponsorships. This organizational change has further solidified WCU's role as an anchor institution in the region, highlighted the expertise of its faculty and staff, and provided students with additional experiential learning opportunities.

In 2023-2024, there were a few open positions throughout the division. However, UAEA is pleased to share that all positions were filled by the end of June 2024, and the division is excited to start 2024-2025 fully staffed. Announcements and introductions of new team members are included in department reports. The chart on the last page reflects changes made to the UAEA organizational chart within the year.

WCU Foundation and Alumni Engagement Highlights

Open House at Filano Hall

In November, the division hosted an Open House on the Filano Hall lawn to increase its visibility and brand awareness on campus. Members of the division welcomed faculty, staff, and students to the UAEA's vice president's suite while enjoying a hot chocolate bar and donuts.

Social Media

UAEA not only serves students but also serves as a connection point and resource to external community partners. In October 2024, the vice president's office started a UAEA LinkedIn page to increase the division's visibility within and outside of West Chester University; connect with community leaders, industry professionals, and stakeholders; share UAEA news, departmental events, and team member achievements; and identify new partners while nurturing existing relationships. UAEA's LinkedIn page has 238 followers, which has increased weekly since its launch.

Vice President Davenport started an Instagram account to post campus events and interactions with the WCU community. He began the account before Summer Orientation 2024, posting daily outtakes from his morning welcome. By the end of summer orientation, his account had gained over 1K followers and continues to grow.

Departmental Achievements & University Collaborations

This section includes UAEA's departments, which are The Center for Civic Engagement & Social Impact, The Office of External Relations and The Center for Community Solutions, The Twardowski Career Development Center, and featured accomplishments from our partners in The West Chester University Foundation and The Office of Alumni Engagement. Lastly, this section will highlight UAEA's university collaborations. You will see from the work done in 2023-2024 that UAEA is positioned for successful performance and commits itself to our work as partners with external and internal constituents at WCU.

Advancement goals for fiscal year 2023-24 included raising \$10,000,000 in total gift income with a cash goal of \$5.5 million and \$4.5 million in future commitments. As of June 30, 2024, a total of \$15,783,786.62 has been secured.

150Forward: The Campaign for West Chester University began July 1, 2017, and fundraising activity totaled \$70,630,379 as of June 30, 2024.

The final totals for the **2024 Day of Giving** are \$255,769 from 1,507 donors. This is a 45% increase in dollars and an 88% increase in donors over 2023. Athletics raised over \$100,000 on the Day of Giving in 2024.

The 41st Annual Presidential Gala occurred on campus on Friday, March 15th, in a transformed SECC. Over \$76,000 was raised for the Fund to Finish. In honor of President Fiorentino's extraordinary service, the Gala returned home to West Chester University as the Sciences & Engineering Center and The Commons was transformed into a "Starry Night Soirée," featuring a breathtaking 8k video wall presentation by Professor of Astronomy Marc Gagné and the Department of Earth and Space Sciences. The massive wall featured actual NASA images and video from the Webb and Hubble Space Telescopes, the Mars rovers, the planet flyby missions, and more.

Alumni Relations continued to operationalize the Alumni Engagement Strategic Plan. Their 23-2024 highlights include:

- **Sponsored over 50 events and programs this past year to build relationships between the University and its graduates.**
- **Distributed over 4,000 "Rams for Life" branded t-shirts to new graduates and provided students with gifts and opportunities to meet and network with alumni during cap and gown pickup during December and May Commencements.**
- **Managed 24 regional groups, affinity chapters, athletic alumni clubs, and alumni councils with over 65 Volunteers.**
- **Provided volunteer opportunities to the WCU Alumni Association Board of Directors, Past Presidents, and alumni, which include Admissions volunteers, joining a committee, speaking in a class/on a panel, or joining an Alumni Network.**
- **As of June 30, 2024, Ram Nation, WCU's official social and professional networking platform, had 2,241 alumni mentors, 59 faculty/staff, and 1,167 students.**

The Center for Civic Engagement & Social Impact

Mission Statement. *The Center for Civic Engagement & Social Impact promotes community-based learning experiences that address issues of public concern by building mutually beneficial partnerships and empowering students to be active citizens in their local, national, and global communities.*

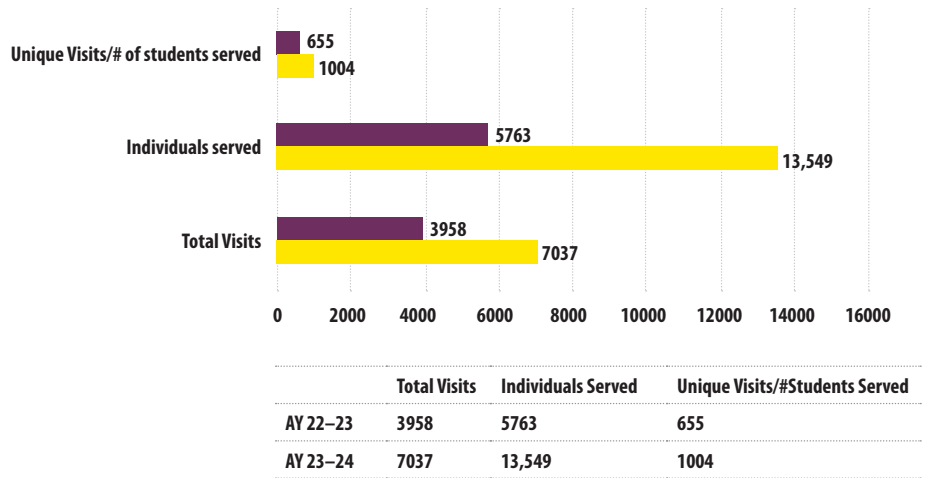
The Benefits Hub connects students to government benefits, community resources, and peer-to-peer support. The Benefits Hub uses a three-pronged support approach: Instrumental support as a Compass partner for Pennsylvania, allowing the Benefits Hub to enroll students in programs like SNAP and Medicaid in-house; Informational support as a connection point to other aid agencies such as West Chester Food Cupboard and Act in Faith; and emotional support as a space where students do not have to navigate these complicated processes alone. In 23-24, the Benefits Hub was accepted as a Community Site partner for Compass PA, allowing students to enroll in benefits on campus in a central location. Initially, it was a site solely for benefits enrollment referrals to external nonprofits. This change allows Benefits Hub staff to upload documents on behalf of Pantry users, ensure students meet submission deadlines for semi-annual reporting, and provide a much faster answer regarding program acceptance/denial.

The Resource Pantry has continued to see an increase in usage. See comparisons for calendar years 2022 and 2023 (top, left). The West Chester University Resource Pantry supports student success by minimizing food and basic needs insecurity and preparing students for life after graduation.

The Resource Pantry relies on personal and community-based monetary donations, food, and personal care items.

NUMBER OF ITEMS IN AY 23-24	
72,219	Quantity Distributed
83,467	Items Received in Donation

AY 22-23 COMPARED TO AY 23-24 RESOURCE PANTRY USAGE



The WCU Resource Pantry has continued to see an increase in usage. Compared to calendar year 2022, the pantry had a 53% increase in the number of students who utilized pantry services and experienced a 78% increase in total visits from 2022 to 2023.



NEW TEAM MEMBER

Shay Gillespie joined CCEI in May as the new associate director, focusing on on-campus student and civic engagement. Shay is a two-time WCU alum and has worked in CCEI before as an assistant director and graduate assistant, coordinating experiential learning opportunities and civic leadership programs for students. Recently, they have worked in similar roles at the State University of New York (SUNY) headquarters and Thomas Jefferson University.

Department Spotlight

HUNGER FREE CAMPUS

CCEI was awarded the Hunger Free Campus Grant by The Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) Office to Higher Education (OPHE) to fund programs to address food insecurity on campus. WCU was awarded \$54,399 for the 2022-2023 AY and \$60,000 for the 2023-2024 AY. The Center is using funds from the generous grants to expand the Resource Pantry's capacity to serve West Chester University students experiencing food insecurity, especially those at the highest risk, through additional programs and infrastructure on the University's campus and at the Philadelphia location.

CIVIC 50 AWARD

WCU was recognized as one of three higher education institutions in the region as a CIVIC 50 organization for 2024. WCU was previously recognized on the Civic 50 list in 2022 and 2023. CIVIC 50 Greater Philadelphia recognizes civic-minded businesses using their time, talent, and resources to drive social impact in their communities. This regional initiative is an outgrowth of the national Civic 50, led by globally recognized nonprofit Points of Light.



The Office of External Relations and the Center for Community Solutions

Mission Statement. *The Office of External Relations cultivates and sustains relationships with local, state, and federal elected officials and their offices and government entities and serves as a leading liaison within the community.*

The Office of External Relations completed a successful year of collaboration with government officials and community partners. Below are some of the key highlights and collaborations of this area.

Building on Public Official Engagement

Presentations with institution cohorts to socialize the new Public Official Engagement Policy resulted in the launch of the Advocacy Resource Center (ARC) webpage and the creation of a Faculty Senate Liaison for the Office of External Relations. The ARC provides WCU faculty, staff, and students with the tools needed to advocate effectively on behalf of the University and become established as resources for public officials and policymakers.

GOVERNMENT RELATIONS

The Executive Director for External Relations and Vice President for UAEA met with approximately 30 elected officials from all government levels, including intentional outreach to state leadership. Meeting topics included the presidential transition, institutional advocacy, opportunities to elevate collaboration and partnership, and expressing appreciation for invaluable institutional support. These meetings led to an elected official visit, enhanced partnership with the university's Veteran Center, and secured guest speakers to enrich class instruction.

US Congresswoman Chrissy Houlahan and Senator Bobby Casey's Regional Representative visited campus to witness firsthand the equipment purchased and programming conducted with the university's receipt of "WCU Moonshot: I Want to STEM!" federal earmark funding. Project faculty lead Dr. Brandon Mitchell guided and provided such information during the visits.

Successful Collaborations

FEDERAL EARMARKS

The Office of External Relations partnered with The Office of Research and Sponsored Programs, the Provost's Office, and Drs. Dottie Ives Dewey and Gary Couto to submit FY25 federal earmark requests for the Building Inclusive Communities: GIS Training for Affordable Housing Reform project to U.S. Senators Bob Casey and John Fetterman and U.S. Congresswoman Chrissy Houlahan in the amount of \$644,505.00. The project was selected as one of fifteen projects advanced by Congresswoman Houlahan to the next stage for Community Project Funding consideration by the Appropriations Committee.

THE GOVERNOR'S BLUEPRINT FOR HIGHER EDUCATION HIGHLIGHTS WCU AS A MODEL



Governor Josh Shapiro visited campus to advocate for his Blueprint for Higher Education, which was proposed in his budget address. His visit highlighted the university as a model, addressing the teacher shortage through accelerated teacher certification programs, students' effective transition from community college to the university, and diversity in the classroom through the College of Education and Social Work (CESW) PRIZE Program. The visit included a roundtable discussion with select CESW students followed by a press conference with remarks from the state's Deputy Secretary of Postsecondary Education, State Representative Chris Pielli, Chester County Commissioner and Council of Trustee Marian Moskowitz, two CESW students, and the Governor.

The Center for Community Solutions (CCS) experienced notable student and community growth this year. In particular, the number of CCS projects and partners more than doubled from eight partner organizations in the previous year to 19 community partners in 2023-2024, achieving the greatest project total to date, including the largest summer portfolio. Projects included work with the Chester County Partnership to End Homelessness to help develop a social media presence that encourages stakeholders to volunteer, donate, and support the Partnership, the Phoenixville Community Health Foundation to increase awareness of regional substance abuse, the resources available to assist anyone in need, and accessibility to those resources; and the Hearing Loss Association of America, Chester County Chapter, to create a website and app of hearing friendly restaurants. At the end of the academic year, a Gratitude Reception was held to express appreciation to the students, community partners, and institutional supporters. Former President Fiorentino provided remarks, as he was vital in the Center's creation.

Twardowski Career Development Center

Mission Statement. *The Twardowski Career Development Center (TCDC) serves as a bridge connecting students and alumni to the professional world and introducing them to who they can become.*

The TCDC facilitates connections between students, alumni, and employers through recruiting and networking events and offers one-on-one career counseling sessions and career readiness education in group settings. In 23-24, the Career Center served 8,369 unique students who engaged in 18,809 career interactions with the TCDC. In addition, 4,185 students submitted 27,699 job and internship applications on Handshake.

Employer Engagement and Events

The TCDC partnered with several academic and non-academic departments, including Accounting, Economics, Nursing, Computer Science, Communications, Marketing, Nutrition, the Dub-C Autism Program (D-CAP), and the Center for Civic Engagement and Social Impact to host several recruiting and networking events that bring students, alumni, employers, and community partners together. These events include job and internship fairs, industry meetups, sensory-friendly networking events, information tables, and employer lunch and learn events. On-campus recruiting and networking events attracted 3,198 unique students to engage with employers 369 unique employers.



Beyond on-campus recruiting and networking events, the TCDC engaged 175 unique employers across two Employer Town Halls. These virtual events gave employers a preview of the upcoming recruiting season and information on hiring trends.

The TCDC leveraged several on and off-campus partnerships to connect students and employers. In partnership with the Office of External Relations, the Greater West Chester Chamber of Commerce, and the West Chester Business Improvement District, the TCDC hosted the second annual Part-Time Job Fair in downtown West Chester, attracting 34 businesses and 341 students. This represented a 116% increase in student engagement for the Fall 2022 versus the Fall 2023 event. The TCDC also partnered with the Office of External Relations, the County of Chester, PA Career Link, and Chester County Community Development to host a Job Fair for students and any resident of Chester County. This year's event also included a special section for school districts recruiting teacher candidates in response to the teacher shortage.

CAREER READINESS EDUCATION & ACCESS

This year, the TCDC brought career education into more classrooms than any previous year, increasing the number of classes by 19% over the previous highest number (110 to 130). The number of students engaged in the classroom increased by 11%, reaching 638 more unique students and making career readiness education more accessible.

Outside of the classroom, the TCDC facilitated 1,680 one-on-one career counseling sessions with students and alumni and reviewed 6,133 resumes. Another 503 students took advantage of the Iris Booth, a professional headshot booth in the Career Center. Several students also shopped in the Career Closet for new, gently used professional clothing.

Lastly, through the generosity of donors, the Fund for Unpaid Internships awarded \$40,100 to 43 students to help them complete unpaid internships, many of which were required for their major.

NEW TEAM MEMBERS

Susan Prince joined the Career Development Center as the Office Assistant in July. She previously worked in the Division of Student Affairs for two years. Susan is a proud first-generation WCU Alum and serves as the advisor for the WC First student group.



Lauren Linder is the newest Assistant Director at the Twardowski Career Development Center on the career counseling team that coaches students and alumni. She also provides leadership for the Career Ambassador program. Lauren is a second-year student in the Higher Education Policy and Student Affairs (HEPSA) program at WCU. She was the graduate assistant in the TCDC last school year. This is Lauren's fifth year working in university career centers. She has worked as an undergrad, graduate student, and now professional staff.

Off Campus Commuter Service's Partnership with UAEA

Throughout 2023-2024, UAEA team members had the opportunity to collaborate with and assist Off-Campus Commuter Services (OCCS). An example of this partnership is the inaugural Welcome to the Borough event during Welcome Week.



Cross-Divisional and External Collaborations and Achievements

Members of the UAEA team collaborated with internal and external constituents throughout 2023-24. This section features collaborations within the university and significant collaborations with external partners.

The outcomes of this event included emphasizing the importance of students being good citizens and neighbors; enhancing the partnership with the Chester County History Center, Greater West Chester Chamber of Commerce, and West Chester Business Improvement District; creating and promoting the volunteer fair; and providing an opportunity for the local fire, police, and EMS departments to talk with students and families.

Another achievement was helping to improve homecoming for the campus and local community, as evidenced by the West Chester Police Department and Office of Student Conduct's positive feedback and comparative data, which demonstrated a substantial reduction of negative student behavior and effective student clean-ups.

The Executive Director for External Affairs partnered with the Director of Off-Campus and Commuter Services and a former Borough of West Chester Mayor to submit the paper, Establishing a Sustainable Approach to Campus and Community Partnership, to the International Town Gown Association (ITGA) based upon the WCCCC as a model for university and community partnership. The executive director, director, and former mayor submitted and was selected to present the paper at the ITGA annual conference.

The Senior Director for UAEA chaired and participated in the OCCS external review team with two other professionals from Ohio University and Naropa University. The review resulted in a ten-page written report for OCCS to use as a guiding document for suggested improvements. UAEA looks forward to another year of collaboration and partnership with OCCS.

West Chester's First

One out of four students at West Chester University identify as the first in their family to attend a college or university. The West Chester First (WC1st) initiative is a university-wide committee whose mission is to celebrate and support WCU's first-generation college students by providing access to resources, opportunities to connect, and spaces to build a sense of community. The committee worked hard from 2022 to 2023 to achieve significant outcomes. Some of these accomplishments include:



- Hosting opportunities for students to connect throughout the year
- Redesigning the West Chester First website
- Creating a first-gen video
- Participating in Charter Day of Giving
- Developing and sharing education programs for first-gen students
- Collecting first-generation demographic information
- Re-establishing a first-gen theme community for 90 first-year students in Fall 2024
- Drafting a first-gen co-curriculum based on Yosso's Cultural Wealth model



FIRST FORWARD DESIGNATION

As a result of these achievements, WCU has demonstrated its commitment to advancing first-generation students since 2019 and received the First Forward designation again this year. The First Forward Designation is given by The Center for First-Generation Student Success, an initiative of NASPA and the Suder Foundation, which recognizes institutions of higher education that have demonstrated a commitment to improving the experiences and outcomes of first-generation college students.

University-Corporate Partnerships

As the academic liaison to UAEA, the associate vice president for communication, operations, and strategy for Academic Affairs collaborated with UAEA and campus leadership to develop a more strategic, intentional, and extensive approach to university-corporate relations, including chambers, rotaries, and organizations.

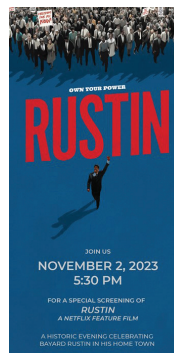
Last year, WCU engaged the deans in all six colleges, the Wells School of Music and the Graduate School, inviting them to contribute to WCU's sponsorship of 25 select events and programs. This allowed WCU to increase its engagement across four chambers (Greater West Chester, Chester County, Main Line, and Greater Philadelphia) and create additional opportunities for the deans, faculty, staff, WCUF, and students to participate in programs and events that meet their specific needs.

This strategy further emphasized elevating WCU's role as a steward of plan in its role as an anchor institution in the region and beyond, highlighting WCU as a critical resource for talent and thought leadership and increasing high-impact experiential learning opportunities for our students.

To measure the success of these relationships, the associate vice president for communication, operations, and strategy developed impact reports for each chamber that track programs and events the university sponsors, noting the levels of investment in each and the benefits gained on both sides. These reports offer a more thorough understanding of both parties of the investment and the significance of these partnerships that will help inform decisions about future investment and engagement strategies. They include financial and in-kind support, benefits, a list and description of programs, and the number of students and faculty/staff who engaged this year.

Community Event Sponsorships

Throughout the year, WCU supported the community through event sponsorship with many local chambers and organizations. Highlighted below are four diverse events for which WCU partnered as a key sponsor and the benefits received from the university's participation.



RUSTIN THE MOVIE

The Chester County History Center (CCHC) hosted a special screening of the Netflix Feature Film "Rustin" and an exhibit to celebrate the life and work of Bayard Rustin in light of the 60th anniversary of the March on Washington. The CCHC hosted approximately 300 people for a cocktail hour, followed by the screening ahead of the movie's theatrical release at the Uptown Theater. The movie and temporary exhibit

highlighted Rustin as an instrumental civil rights leader hailing from Chester County. As a sponsor of this event, WCU contributed to the educational community experience through faculty involvement, marketing, and event tickets.

CHESTER COUNTY HOSPITAL LIGHTS UP HOLIDAY WEEKENDS IN WEST CHESTER

This annual event kicks off a month full of free, family-friendly events, including the holiday parade, sales, and giveaways. In 2023, West Chester lit up more downtown blocks than ever to attract visitors to 50+ retail stores and 60+ restaurants. As a Premium Block sponsor, WCU enjoyed the parade, which included the Incomparable WCU Band, VIP seating, and benefited from website publicity and logo displayed over High Street and in all print/online advertising and social media.



SWEET CHARITY

West Chester University sponsored the annual Sweet Charity fundraising event hosted by The Chester County Community Foundation (CCCF) to support CCCF's mission to connect with people who care about the causes that matter. This event is a dessert competition between the finest

caterers, restaurants, and bakers. As an event sponsor, WCU's advertising was featured in digital and print advertising and received four tickets used by university members. Congratulations to Aramark's pastry chef, Beth Mottola, on her first-place win.

CCEDC HALL OF FAME

On Wednesday, May 15th, Dr. Christopher Fiorentino was inducted into the Chester County Hall of Fame by the Chester County Economic Development Council (CCEDC) for his leadership of the largest university within the PASSHE. As a diamond sponsor for the event, WCU received digital, online, and print advertising and 14 VIP event tickets and parking passes.

Awards and Recognitions

UAEA is proud of its team members and their commitment to education and excellence within the university and beyond. Here are a few of their impressive individual achievements during 2023-24.

SPOTLIGHT ON RESEARCH

Spotlight on Research is an annual campus event that features scholarly achievements focusing on Access, Belonging, Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Student Success. Two members of UAEA collaborated with others at the university to earn this distinction.

Dr. Rita Patel Eng, Senior Director for CCEI, and Dr. Ashlie Delshad, Dean's Faculty Associate for Student Success, College of the Sciences and Mathematics, and Professor in the Department of Political Science, were recognized for their research, Hunger-Free Campus.

Yessica Gutierrez, Assistant Director for the Twardowski Career Development Center, and Chyna Hart, Associate Director for the Dowdy Multicultural Center, were recognized for the Internship Prep Program for First-Generation Students of Color.

INDIVIDUAL SPOTLIGHT

Congratulations to UAEA and their outstanding commitment to engaging with the community and professional associations.

Katie Clay, Associate Director for the Center for Community Engagement & Social Impact, was named one of VISTA's 40 Under 40.

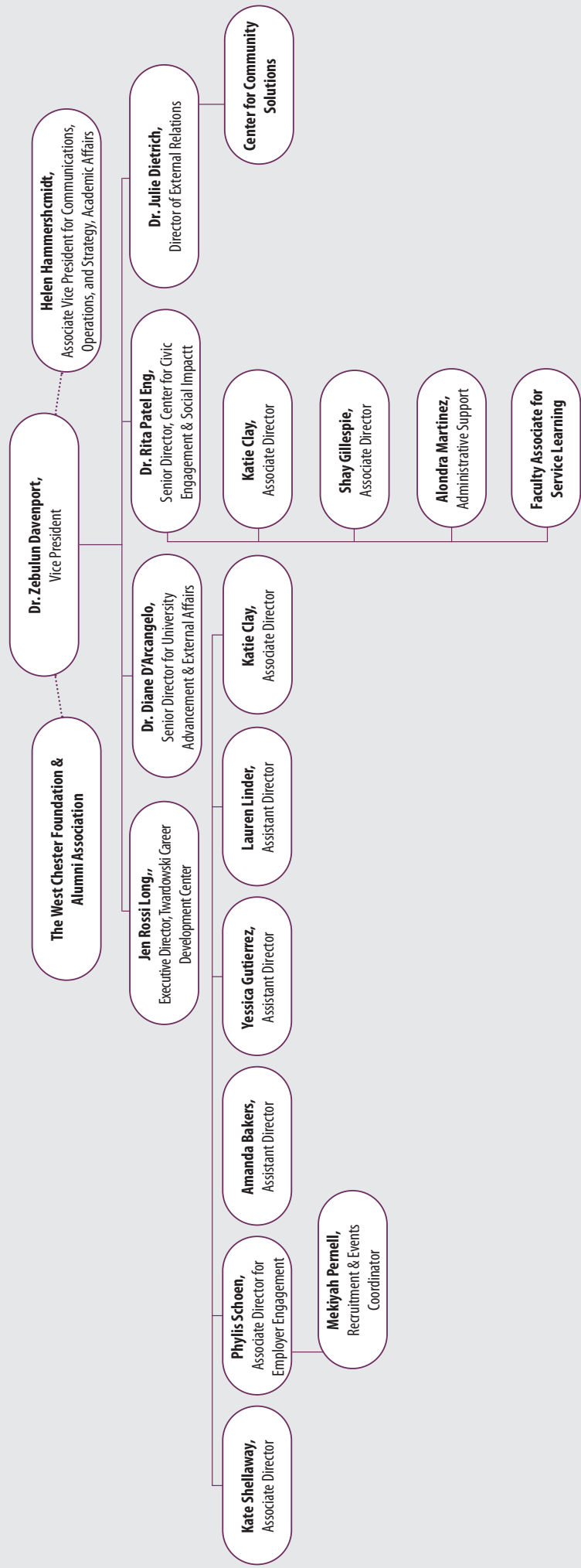
Dr. Diane D'Arcangelo, Senior Director for UAEA, was selected as a new board of trustee member for The Chester County History Center. From June 2023-2024, she also served as the Featured Speaker Chair for the 2024 NASPA Region 2 Conference planning committee at the University of Pennsylvania.

Dr. Zebulun Davenport was named Board Chair for the Chester County Community Foundation in June 2024 and will serve until June 2026.

Dr. Julie Dietrich, the Executive Director for External Relations, was named a [2024 Higher Education Trailblazer](#) by City & State Pennsylvania.

Jen Long, Executive Director for the Twardowski Career Development Center, received *the Eastern Associate of Colleges and Employers (EACE) Tribute Award* for her leadership and service.

Phyllis Schoen, Associate Director for the Twardowski Career Development Center, will serve as Secretary of the Pennsylvania Associate of Colleges and Employers Board of Directors.



WCU
WEST CHESTER
UNIVERSITY

**UNIVERSITY ADVANCEMENT &
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