

## From the Provost

I hope you are having a good semester; it's hard to believe it is already mid-October! So many positive things have been happening at West Chester University lately. This newsletter will share details about some of those activities, including an important new accreditation achieved by the master of public administration program and the 20th anniversary of the Frederick Douglass Institute.

I also am pleased to note that we are moving forward rapidly and effectively in the implementation of our strategic plan, *Building on Excellence*. As we enter the second year of the first phase of implementing the strategic plan, the Academic Theme Team provides an update on page 5 about goals that Academic Affairs is currently working toward.

I hope you take time from your busy schedule to take a walk amidst the fall foliage and otherwise enjoy all that autumn has to offer here in Chester County.



**Dr. Linda Lamwers**

## GROWTH SOARS FOR INTERNATIONAL PROGRAMS



*The College of Education sponsors a service-learning trip to the Bahamas*

*The world is a book and those who do not travel read only one page*

*Saint Augustine*

Peter Loedel and his team in the Center for International Programs are working hard to help WCU students “read as many pages as possible” by the time they graduate.

One of the *Building on Excellence* objectives is to prepare students to be global citizens, notes Loedel, interim director of International Programs.

“International programs are critically important: they expand the outlook of the campus community, foster diversity, and bring opportunities for collaboration with institutions around the world,” says Loedel. “Most importantly, international programs en-

able our students to learn about different cultures, religions, and ideologies as they prepare for their roles as global citizens.”

WCU has seen tremendous growth in the number of domestic students taking advantage of international programs. Study abroad participation increased by 43 percent in the last year. In 2012-13, WCU sponsored 251 international learning experiences, by 2013-14, that number had soared to 357.

The number of international students studying at West Chester University also has increased. Currently, there are more than 125 international students from 50 countries studying at WCU, including the highest number ever this fall semester from a collaboration with the American College of Norway (ACN). This partnership enables international students to begin their undergraduate degrees at ACN and finish at West Chester.

All WCU study abroad opportunities are now centralized in the Center for International Programs. The center manages study abroad experiences in more than 50 countries, ranging from one-week alternative spring breaks to semester- and year-long programs.

In addition to managing existing programs, the Center for International Programs works with faculty, staff and students to identify new international opportunities. Loedel will be joining Provost Linda Lamwers on a visit to China this month via a program sponsored by AASCU and the China Education Association for International Exchange. The goal is to recruit high-quality Chinese undergraduate and graduate students and build additional institutional partnerships with universities and high schools.

WCU’s strategic plan calls for adding five new agreements with international partners for cultural, educational, and scholarly exchanges by 2015-16. But the University has, in fact, already achieved that goal. In the last two years, agreements were signed with Hosei University, University of Cape Coast, Ulsan University and the University of Costa Rica. In June, WCU entered into a fifth agreement, when a memorandum of understanding was signed with Mary Immaculate College in Ireland.



Possible partnerships continue to emerge from all corners of the globe, reports Loedel. WCU has met with two other Irish colleges, St. Patrick’s College and Trinity College, about possible relationships. In addition, a partnership with the University of West Indies in Trinidad and Tobago will be finalized this month and another with Guatemala’s University Rafael Landivar very soon. (See *related story on next page*).

Some of the University’s longest-running international relationships include the Amazon Center for Environmental Education and Research (ACEER), which has offices in West Chester and programs in Peru; and between the Honors College and community service organizations in South Africa.

WCU and Universidad Nacional de Costa Rica in Heredia, Costa Rica, have partnered for winter term study, student exchange, and to co-sponsor the bi-annual Knowledge Crossing Borders conference. Earlier this month, a group of WCU faculty, staff, students and administrators, including President Greg Weisenstein, traveled to Heredia for the third International Congress on Higher Education - Knowledge Crossing Borders – which featured the theme “Building Partnerships

through Shared Knowledge.”

New this fall, semester- and year-long exchange programs will allow students to pay WCU tuition while studying overseas if a student from the host institution also studies at WCU. The program kicked off with two Japanese students from Hosei University studying biology at WCU while two WCU students study at Hosei.

To learn more about WCU’s international initiatives, contact the Center for International Programs at 610- 436-3515 or [international@wcupa.edu](mailto:international@wcupa.edu), and check out the faculty resource page at [www.wcupa.edu/international/facultyResources.aspx](http://www.wcupa.edu/international/facultyResources.aspx).

## WCU TO FORM RELATIONSHIP WITH GUATEMALAN UNIVERSITY

Thanks to an emerging partnership with Universidad Rafael Landívar, West Chester University students will soon be able to take classes, intern, and do service learning in the Central American nation of Guatemala.



*Ana Sanchez and María Elena Arias-Zelidón in Guatemala*

They will quickly discover that Guatemala is a study in contrasts. More than 75 percent of the population live below the poverty line. The country has one of the lowest life expectancies and highest infant mortality rates in Central America. Income distribution is one of the most unequal in the world, with the wealthiest 10 percent owning nearly 50 percent of the wealth and the poorest 10 percent owning less than 1 percent.

Yet, amidst such poverty, the country boasts natural, historic and cultural riches. According to the World Conservation Union, Guatemala is number five on the list of world “biodiversity hot spots.” It features 14 eco-regions, ranging from mangrove forests to cloud forests, wetlands to small patches of desert.

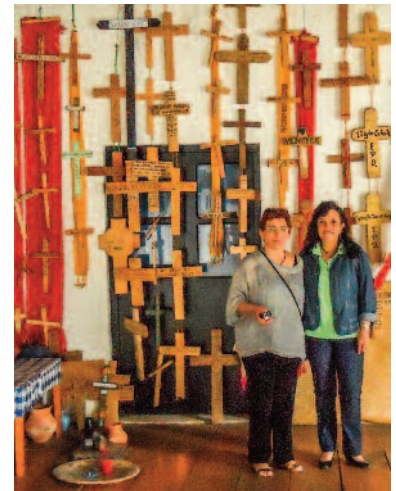
The country has produced many indigenous artists who follow centuries-old Pre-Columbian traditions. Its great writers range from Miguel Angel Asturias, who won the literature Nobel Prize, to Rigoberta Menchú, winner of the Nobel Peace Prize for fighting oppression of indigenous people in Guatemala, and famous for her books *I, Rigoberta Menchú* and *Crossing Borders*. About 40 percent of the Guatemalan population is indigenous and a total of 23 pre-Hispanic dialects are spoken.

It is precisely this diversity of experiences that makes Guatemala such a fertile place for study, says Ana Sanchez, an instructor of languages and cultures. Sanchez partnered with María Elena Arias-Zelidón, also an instructor in the department of languages and cultures, to move forward an academic and cultural mutual cooperation agreement between WCU and Universidad Rafael Landívar, which has campuses throughout Guatemala. A memorandum of understanding is expected to be signed later this fall.



“Students are facing a world that is more interconnected than ever before,” notes Sanchez. “They need to be equipped with the necessary skills to deal with their peers from other countries and become open to cultural diversity. As educators, we have the responsibility to provide students with the opportunities they need to develop multicultural and linguistic skills, which are necessary tools to succeed in a global market.”

The partnership is designed to be multi-faceted, with student and faculty exchanges from WCU to Universidad Rafael Landívar and vice versa. Sanchez teaches a culture cluster course, “History of Latin America Culture and Civilization,” every winter session in Costa Rica. This class will now be taught every other year in Guatemala.



Given Guatemala’s high poverty rate, Sanchez is pleased that service learning will be incorporated into every WCU student exchange. “Universidad Rafael Landívar offers a unique opportunity for WCU students to do overseas service learning and internships in various content areas. The university has a department of social responsibility that serves as a bridge between students and society through community service,” notes Sanchez. “Our students, side by side with Universidad Rafael Landívar students, will volunteer on a range of community service projects, working together to solve problems.”

The first WCU trip to Guatemala will be an alternative spring break this March. WCU senior Devin Kirby has been chosen as trip leader. Students will live with local families and work on a range of community service projects. A College of Arts and Sciences grant is offsetting airfare and other travel costs; the student cost to participate will be low.

In addition to plenty of hard work, there will be time set aside for cultural activities. Given Sanchez’s and Arias-Zelidón’s academic interests, these activities will probably include a visit or two to Mayan religious sites. The duo have traveled to Guatemala several times to conduct field-based research on the shamanic practices of *ajq’ik* as practiced by three Mayan ethnic groups in Guatemala: the Maya-Pokomam, the Maya-Kaqchiquel and the Maya-Tz’utujil.

## WCU FAMILIES PLANT TREES AT GORDON NATURAL AREA

WCU’s Family Weekend always features football, a picnic, and walking tours. And this year, it also included a tree-planting event at the Gordon Natural Area, part of the “Plant One Million Trees” program co-sponsored by Bartlett Tree Experts and the Pennsylvania Horticulture Society.

WCU students and their moms, dads, little brothers and other relatives, gathered on a sunny Saturday morning in late September to plant 20 oak seedlings that were donated by Barlett Tree Experts.

“It was great to see WCU students and their families outside, having fun and doing their part to ensure that WCU remains a ‘Tree Campus USA,’” says Gerry Hertel, stewardship manager of the Gordon Natural Area.



*Family Weekend at the Gordon Natural Area*

In April 2013, West Chester University was recognized as a Tree Campus USA university -- one of only nine Pennsylvania colleges and universities to be so designated.

## ACADEMIC AFFAIRS STRATEGIC PLAN UPDATE



In December 2013, West Chester University formally adopted its strategic plan, *Building on Excellence* as a “courageous yet realistic roadmap for the University’s journey.” The plan is organized into five themes, with each theme’s respective goals ordered into three distinct phases over a ten-year period.

Within the division of Academic Affairs, the plan is fully operational and is being monitored by the Office of the Provost and the Academic Theme Team; the group originally tasked with formulating that part of the strategic plan. Previously, Academic Affairs faced the daunting task of meeting a dizzying array of goals set out for it in both the strategic plan and the University’s diversity plan. In the spring of 2014, the division went through an extensive alignment process to identify annual goals that are congruent with the multiple targets and outcomes set out in those documents. As a result, today Academic Affairs and its constituent parts are working collectively, and in unison, to achieve specific goals that are contributing to the strategic direction of the University.

As Academic Affairs enters the second year of the first phase of implementing the strategic plan, the Academic Theme Team provided information about goals that the division is currently working toward, which include:

### **Engage the WCU academic community in academic planning at the undergraduate and graduate levels (1.0)**

Fall 2013 to present: The Graduate Council, academic and graduate deans, and department chairpersons have been identifying plans for moving graduate education forward at WCU. Plans will be operational by the end of the fall 2014 semester.

### **Strengthen and support the Assurance of Student Learning Outcomes (ASL) and the use of assessment results to ensure high-quality academic programming**

Over the last two years, all academic programs have been evaluated and improved their assessment plans’ ability to articulate several core elements. These elements include: outcomes that are specific and direct, curriculum maps that indicate where outcomes are assessed at the program level, use of both direct and indirect assessment meas-

ures, appropriate rationale and criterion for each measure (PART I), and the appropriate reporting of results and action plans (PART II) to continue evidence-based management of student learning. This process began in the Fall of 2012 when programs were asked to evaluate their plans using an institution-wide rubric for each of the core elements discussed above related to Part I. After programs had the opportunity to review and modify their plans, a peer review of the plans was conducted and feedback was provided to the programs in an attempt to further improve plans. Part II of this process began last academic year and programs were evaluated on part II of the core elements using the institution-wide rubric. After receiving feedback, programs were again instructed to make appropriate changes for the next peer review which will occur this fall. This process has allowed the institution to clearly communicate to all academic programs regardless of discipline what the expectation is to ensure high-quality academic programming.

### **Ensure that the general education program provides the cornerstone to a high-quality WCU education (1.2)**

In Spring 2014, the Curriculum and Academic Policies Council passed a framework for the new general education program, which promises to be a bold and innovative transformation of the foundation of our liberal arts curriculum. Rodney Mader is continuing in the position of faculty director of general education and is engaging the campus community in a discussion of the outcomes and structure of the revised program.

### **Ensure that advising at WCU is of the same high quality as its academic programs (1.5)**

Cheryl Wanko is providing leadership for the Academic Advising Taskforce. Faculty members from across the University are participating in the important work of this group. Currently, the taskforce's primary focus is to engage multiple stakeholders in the drafting of a definition of excellent advising, to be considered by the appropriate shared governance bodies. Later, the taskforce will seek to identify ways the institution can best support faculty in meeting that standard of advising.

### **Ensure that retention and graduation rates are similar for all demographic groups, and that they meet the State System Performance Goals (1.6)**

The University has contracted with D2L to acquire degree compass, a software system that uses predictive analytics in the advising process. The software is meant as an enhancement to, and not replacement of, the student-faculty interaction that is critical to good advising. Institutions that have leveraged such systems have seen significant gains in retention and completion among underrepresented minority students.

ADP is developing an intervention for second-year students to increase their retention rate, with special emphasis on Pell-eligible and URM students. Also, ADP will pursue a partnership with Professional Studies to work with ADP students interested in graduate school.

PMAA and the LARC are conducting a phone survey of FY4 students who left the university with less than 30 credits and more than 100 credits (not on probation or dismissed). The goal is to determine the reasons why students are leaving and invite back those who are close to graduation, especially those who could qualify for the programs offered in center city Philadelphia.



#### **WCU will provide its students with a high-quality international experience both at the institution and abroad (2.4)**

Last year, 347 WCU students participated in one form or another of study abroad (credit-bearing courses taught by WCU faculty, provider or partner programs, non-credit experiences via athletics or music performances, etc.). This was an increase of 43 percent over the previous year. Thanks in large part to the excellent leadership of Peter Loedel and the staff of the Office of International Programs, WCU is experiencing the largest number of students expressing interest in study abroad already this year. In addition, the highest number of new faculty-led programs are scheduled for spring or summer 2015.

Please see article on page 1 for a comprehensive look at advances in international programs at WCU

#### **Develop a comprehensive plan to strengthen the University's distance education programs with the goal of increasing access while ensuring a high-quality education experience. (3.1)**

The External Operations team has determined that some targeted programs offered at the University have a high demand for e-learning capabilities. The team is currently forming partnerships with faculty in these disciplines to determine what courses can be offered online. In an effort to ensure a high quality experience, all colleges now have an assessment coordinator responsible for designing rubrics that align outcomes and criteria for success that should be achieved during both the classroom and distance education experience.

#### **Establish opportunities for students to benefit from a WCU education through programs offered at off-site locations including community colleges (3.3)**

External Operations is working with Delaware County Community College to form a partnership to offer degree completion programs. In addition, discussions are being conducted with the Community College of Philadelphia (CCP) to offer degree completion programs for its nursing students at West Chester's branch campus in Philadelphia. The External Operations team will be conducting open forums in November to discuss these opportunities with faculty, staff and students.

#### **Strengthen and strategically grow graduate education at WCU (3.4)**

Graduate enrollments increased again this year, with Fall 2014 enrollments 5% higher than last year's fall enrollments. This growth trend continues, despite national trends of shrinking graduate enrollments. WCU is responding to market demand by developing cutting-edge graduate programs such as the DNP, revising and refining existing programs such as the master of science in nursing, and offering programs online to better meet the needs of students, such as the M.Ed. in early childhood education and the MPA. The MPA achieved initial specialized external accreditation this summer, receiving several commendations and being recognized for a breakthrough practice in improving the writing skills of graduate students.



#### **Expand access to WCU education by recruiting, retaining and graduating non-traditional age/adult learners (3.7)**

Strategic plan dollars have been allocated to the Veterans Center. The center director is working on a plan to upgrade equipment and computer resources for veterans.

Receive regular updates about the strategic plan by visiting: <http://www.wcupa.edu/StrategicPlanning>



## MPA EARNS PRESTIGIOUS ACCREDITATION

West Chester University recently earned international accreditation for its graduate program in public administration from the Network of Schools of Public Policy, Affairs and Administration (NASPAA), the global standard in public service education.



WCU's graduate public administration program is only the fourth MPA in Pennsylvania to be awarded this prestigious accreditation, joining Carnegie Mellon, Penn State, University of Pittsburgh and Villanova University.

To earn accreditation, a program must undergo a rigorous internal assessment and peer review process to ensure that it is aligned with NASPAA's mission and meets other requirements. In addition to emphasizing outcomes assessment, NASPAA-accredited programs distinguish themselves through their emphasis on public service values, including accountability, transparency and acting ethically.

Jeffery Osgood, chair of the University's department of public policy and administration and director of the graduate program in public administration, oversaw the five-year accreditation process. "This external validation of the quality of West Chester's MPA program and its students and faculty, places the University in an elite group of institutions that have committed themselves to the ideal of public service," notes Osgood.

The MPA program is housed in the newly formed department of public policy and administration in the College of Business and Public Affairs. The process of accreditation began under Associate Provost Laurie Bernotsky in 2009, when the Board of Governors changed the degree designation from a Master of Science in Administration to the Master of Public Administration.

The program has experienced explosive growth in the past five years, and is among the larger graduate programs at WCU. The program is proving to be an important way to meet the strategic plan objective to attract students from a variety of educational, cultural, and economic backgrounds. More than 40 percent of the program's students are underrepresented minorities. The NASPAA site visit team specifically commended the program for its mission-driven goal of increasing access to public service education to a diverse group of students.

In addition to enhancing overall management and administrative skills, students enrolled in the master of public administration program can choose a concentration in human resource management or nonprofit administration. Those who opt for the general public administration concentration also can acquire a graduate certificate in urban and regional planning or other fields.

Learn more about WCU's master of public administration at [www.wcupa.edu/mpa](http://www.wcupa.edu/mpa).



## FROM FITNESS CLASSES TO PERSONAL TRAINING, WCU MAKES IT EASY TO EXERCISE

### *Faculty and Staff Enjoy Unlimited Use of Health Sciences Fitness Center*

"I am motivated to exercise because I like to eat," says Ed Kubachka, director of WCU's Health Sciences Fitness Center. Graduate assistant John Abbott, who works in the center, reports that he exercises "to keep healthy, have fun and to get stronger for mountain bike racing."

Whatever your reasons for exercising, the University makes it easy to get in a workout, thanks to the Health Sciences Fitness Center, located on the first floor of the Sturzebecker Health Sciences Center on South Campus.

This student-run facility is equipped with a variety of cardio machines, upper and lower body machines, free weights, kettle bells and other equipment. The facility can be used, free of charge, by all faculty and staff with a valid WCU ID. Faculty and staff exercise classes are offered every weekday at noon and 4:45 p.m. during the fall and spring semesters. Classes include "body knockout," "core and cardio," "arms and upper body," and "total body toning." Plus, you can sign up for a personal training package – also free – and receive 1-1 guidance from a senior exercise science student.



For center hours or more information, go to [http://www.wcupa.edu/\\_ACADEMICS%5CHealthSciences/kinesiology/fitnesscenter/default.asp](http://www.wcupa.edu/_ACADEMICS%5CHealthSciences/kinesiology/fitnesscenter/default.asp), email [HSFC@wcupa.edu](mailto:HSFC@wcupa.edu) or call 610-430-4568.

## PAUL MORGAN RECOGNIZED BY ENVIRONMENTAL GROUP

On Oct. 23, Chester County Citizens for Climate Protection (4CP) will present its annual Gene Wilson Award to Paul Morgan, a professor in the department of professional and secondary education and WCU's sustainability coordinator from 2011-2014.

The Gene Wilson Award is given to an individual or organization that has provided distinguished service in moving forward climate change education to the citizens of Chester County.

The award committee noted that Morgan has been instrumental in the development of WCU's Education for Sustainability program and has had "a very strong hand in programs at WCU to move toward 100 percent renewable energy on campus."



*Paul Morgan*

## TEACHER EDUCATION DONE RIGHT, SAYS NCATE

*“West Chester University does educator preparation in a way other institutions of higher education strive to do.”*

“That remark brought broad smiles to our faces,” reports George Drake, associate dean of the College of Education. The comment was made by a member of the Board of Examiners from the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE). The Board of Examiners was at WCU this past March for a continuing accreditation visit.



As a standing member of an assessment and accreditation committee for WCU’s professional education unit, Drake helped spearhead preparations for the continuing accreditation visit. The professional education unit is comprised of educator preparation programs from all five of WCU’s colleges.

Drake takes pride in West Chester University’s status as a charter member of NCATE, with continuous accreditation dating back to the organization’s founding in 1954. An independent accrediting body, NCATE is considered to be the “gold standard” in helping to establish high-quality teacher preparation through the process of professional accreditation of schools, colleges and departments of education.

From March 23-25, six members of the Board of Examiners was onsite at WCU for meetings, presentations, public school visits, and 24 individual focus group interviews. They arrived on campus after spending several months examining hundreds of electronic exhibits and artifacts related to educator preparation at WCU collected between 2006 and the present.

The Board of Examiners was seeking to answer the following questions: Does WCU present evidence that it meets all six NCATE unit standards at both the initial and the advanced levels? Has WCU provided evidence that it is making progress toward target level on the standards it has so declared? Has WCU addressed any existing areas for improvement? Are any new areas for improvement warranted?

### **The following findings were shared at the Board of Examiners’ exit interview:**

- Standards met at the initial level. WCU met or exceeded all six NCATE unit standards at the initial preparation level. This includes all undergraduate programs and post-baccalaureate programs leading to Pennsylvania instructional I certification.
- Standards met at the advanced level. WCU met or exceeded all six NCATE unit standards at the advanced preparation level. This includes M.Ed. programs that provide opportunities for practicing teachers to attain more advanced knowledge and skills related to their areas of professional practice.
- Movement toward target. One of the obligations WCU had entering the self-study phase of continuing accreditation was to declare and demonstrate substantial movement toward target on one NCATE standard based on the rubric for that standard. WCU elected to do so for two standards. The Board of Examiners concurred that WCU is moving toward the target level of performance on Standard 2 – assessment system and unit evaluation at the initial and advanced levels, and Standard 3 – field experiences and clinical practice at the initial level.

- No new areas for improvement. No new areas for improvement were identified for the next accreditation cycle (2014-2021).
- Removal of existing areas for improvement. All existing areas for improvement were removed. During the 2006-2014 accreditation cycle, WCU had five areas for improvement: one related to assessment, two related to field experiences and student teaching and two related to diversity. Moving forward, WCU has no active areas for improvement.

## FREDERICK DOUGLASS INSTITUTE CELEBRATES 20TH ANNIVERSARY

West Chester University's Frederick Douglass Institute is celebrating its 20th anniversary this year. The institute advances multicultural studies across WCU's curriculum and works to deepen the intellectual heritage of Frederick Douglass, the famed African-American abolitionist and champion of human freedom. The institute director is Tim Golden, who also is an associate professor of philosophy,

Douglass and West Chester University have a long and special association. Douglass was a visitor to West Chester every decade after his escape from slavery in 1838. He gave his last public address on the WCU campus on February 1, 1895, just 19 days before he died.

The institute held its annual interdisciplinary conference on Oct. 15. This year's conference brought together a diverse group of scholars from WCU and other Pennsylvania institutions, as well as DePaul University in Chicago and the University of Nottingham in England. In addition to sessions on democracy and voting rights, WCU professors LaTonya Thames-Taylor and Chad Lassiter led a panel discussion on the events surrounding the shooting death of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Mo.



Another initiative that celebrates Douglass' intellectual legacy is the institute's summer scholars program. Members of underrepresented groups who are finishing their dissertations are eligible to come to WCU or another State System university to acquire teaching experience at the college level.

For more info about the institute, go to [www.wcupa.edu/\\_academics/fdouglass](http://www.wcupa.edu/_academics/fdouglass), email [fdouglass@wcupa.edu](mailto:fdouglass@wcupa.edu) or call 610-436-2766.

