

Issue No. 9 August 31, 2023

This monthly newsletter features stories about events and programs within the Division of Academic Affairs. It is intended to inform, engage, and recognize members of our esteemed Community of Educators, all the faculty and staff who are committed to student success.

Please share your stories with us by clicking the yellow box below.

If you have an event coming up, please upload it to the university's Campus Calendar. Click "SUBMIT AN EVENT" button. For more information about how to submit an event, see the story below in "Resource Corner."

To share information about an upcoming event, click here for submission to the Ram Report.

Submit Provost's Post Stories Here

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Dear Colleagues,

It is with great pleasure and anticipation that we welcome you back to another exciting academic year at West Chester University! As we prepare to welcome our largest first-year class ever, I want to extend a heartfelt welcome to both our returning faculty and staff and those who are joining us for the first time. Your dedication, passion, and commitment to student success play a pivotal role in shaping an educational community that is diverse, inclusive and strives to offer academic excellence and accessibility for all.

The upcoming year promises new challenges, fresh opportunities, and the chance to make a lasting impact on the lives of our students. Here are a few things to look forward to as we begin this academic year:

- **Student-Centered Approach:** Our shared commitment to student success remains at the forefront of everything we do. Your mentorship, guidance, and innovative teaching methods create an environment where students can thrive and reach their full potential.
- Collaborative Initiatives: We encourage you to engage in interdisciplinary collaborations and cross-departmental projects that foster creativity and the exchange of ideas. Your unique perspectives enrich our institution and contribute to its growth.
- Professional Development: As champions of lifelong learning, we value your growth and development. Take advantage of the various workshops, seminars, and resources available to further enhance your skills and knowledge.

- Campus Events: Join us in celebrating the achievements of our students and faculty members through a diverse array of campus events. These occasions provide opportunities to connect, network, and support one another.
- Innovative Research: Our dedication to research and scholarship drives progress in various fields. Your contributions to research initiatives, publications, and creative endeavors continue to elevate our institution's reputation.
- Wellness and Support: Remember to prioritize your own well-being as you guide our students towards success. Utilize the range of wellness programs and support services available to you.

We encourage you to actively participate in university life, share your expertise, and contribute to the nurturing and growth of our community. Your passion and dedication make West Chester University an exceptional place to learn, work, and thrive.

Stay informed about campus news, updates, and events by subscribing to our newsletter and following us on social media platforms. We encourage you to share your stories with us. To submit, please click on the highlighted box above

As we embrace the opportunities that the new academic year brings, let us stand united in our pursuit of student success and academic excellence. Together, we will inspire, educate, and create a brighter future for our students and our community.

Welcome back, and here's to a successful and rewarding academic year ahead!

Sincerely,

Jeff Osgood

BEING STUDENT READY



PASSHE Board of Governors Votes to Freeze Tuition for 5th Consecutive Year

(Provided by University Communications and Marketing)

West Chester University's tuition for the 2023-

2024 academic year will remain at the 2019-2020 rate, consistent with the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education Board of Governors' unanimous decision today to freeze basic instate tuition for a fifth consecutive year.

Basic in-state tuition for undergraduate students at WCU and the System's 13 other universities will remain at \$7,716 for the 2023-2024 academic year. Also remaining the same will be the System's technology fee for students, which stands at \$478 (in state) for the academic year.

The Board of Governors today voted unanimously to freeze tuition for an unprecedented fifth consecutive year and applauded the General Assembly and Governor Josh Shapiro for their strong support of State System students.

With the decision, tuition for in-state undergraduate students (nearly 90% of whom are

Pennsylvania residents) will be flat for six consecutive years (2018-2019 through 2023-2024). If tuition had kept pace with inflation since 2018, it would be 21% higher today.

"Freezing tuition for a fifth consecutive year has been a major priority for the State System universities to best serve our 85,000 students, many of whom are from low- and middle-income families," said Cynthia Shapira, chair of the Board of Governors. "Our students depend on PASSHE universities for a high-quality education at the lowest cost."

She added that the system appreciates "the General Assembly and Governor Shapiro for their continued strong investment in PASSHE students and the state-owned, public universities that serve them. PASSHE was created to benefit Pennsylvania, and funding from the state is a lifeline for our students to have access to higher education."

In addition to keeping in-state undergraduate tuition at \$7,716 for a sixth year, PASSHE students will receive \$125 million in university-funded financial aid to help them afford their education. The tuition freeze and aid are possible due to increased state funding and PASSHE universities saving \$300 million through a commitment to cost efficiencies.

WCU Tuition and Fees

STUDENT SUCCESS



Advocacy and Student Success Center Launches

Plans are underway for the fall term, and we are thinking every day about how WCU will best support students who may be encountering academic and other challenges. The goal is to provide good care to all students with an eye specifically to simplifying the path to support for students. We are writing today to provide an update on some these plans, which we see as part of our overall retention efforts.

As we shared during the spring student success webinar, the formation of the Academic Success and Advocacy Center (ASA) has commenced, thanks to several campus partnerships and collaborations:

 The Committee for Advising Excellence, a committee led by Courtney Lloyd and Susan Gans, is providing leadership to envision how WCU offers coordinated and high-touch care to students facing academic and other challenges. We refer to this coordinated care as *advocacy* because it connects a student with an Advocate who is responsible for proactively defining a support plan, coordinating services, and connecting with a student regularly. We are still determining what advocacy will look like and how best an advocate will keep the students' faculty and advisors central to the care plan. Remember, advocacy is meant to support only those students who would benefit from the highest level of care, which means that not every student will have an advocate.

 The Moon Shot Proactive Advising Using Technology Committee is advising on the formation of differentiated enrollment support strategies. This enrollment support area will be a topic of further conversation across campus during the 2023-2024 academic year-- no changes in practice will take place for the fall 2023 semester. There are multiple faculty members on this committee as well.

We are very grateful to the members of these two groups for their leadership and collaboration.

We are also excited to welcome the new Director of Academic Support and Advocacy, Dr. Jamin Bartolomeo. Throughout his career, Dr. Bartolomeo has held various leadership roles at Montgomery College in Maryland, where his responsibilities included overseeing important collegewide areas such as Admissions and Enrollment Management, Counseling and Advising, Assessment and Testing Centers, and Recruitment. He has also played a crucial role in the Student Code of Conduct process, handling academic, disciplinary, and suspension cases. Additionally, he has provided leadership for the behavioral intervention team, which is like WCU's CARE Team. Welcome, Dr. Bartolomeo!

We have also hired two Assistant Directors who will work with Dr. Bartolomeo: Mr. Johnny Tadros, who previously served as the Program Counselor for the Psychology Department, will serve as Assistant Director for Enrollment Support, and Ms. Jessica McMahan, formerly the Student Success Coordinator for the College of Sciences and Mathematics, will serve as the Assistant Director for Advocacy and Coaching. We look forward to utilizing their expertise and years of experience working closely with students in the formation of the ASA.

Finally, we want to bring your attention to **The Academic Success and Advocacy Center website** where you'll find information about the formation of the ASA including goals, research that is informing our approach, progress updates, and FAQs.

A big thank you goes out to all the faculty and staff who are coming together to reimagine coordinated care for our students! We look forward to sharing additional information as the ASA formation continues.

If you have any questions or feedback please don't hesitate to reach out to Tabetha Adkins (tadkins@wcupa.edu) and Megan Jerabek (mjerabek@wcupa.edu). We're eager to share further updates as the fall semester begins.

WCU Launches New Experiential Learning (ExL) Website

The University has launched a new Experiential Learning (ExL) website. The website is a centralized location where



students, faculty, staff, and external partners can learn about the many types of experiential learning at WCU and connect with interesting hands-on learning opportunities. You can view the website **here**.

The ExL website was developed in response to a recommendation from the self-study for the Carnegie Community Engagement Reclassification process. The recommendation was "to utilize

technology to centralize information so students, faculty, and staff can readily access engagement opportunities." The Carnegie Reclassification process recognizes institutions nationwide for their extraordinary work addressing societal responsibilities in and through community engagement and service. Through this process, WCU received recognition from the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching as one of those institutions.

Thank you to Diane D'Arcangelo, Jennifer Long, and Amanda Thomas from the Office of University Advancement and External Affairs, and Eric Stettner from the web team for pulling this information together and launching this helpful resource. As we move into the academic year, the ExL website will continue to grow as this team seeks feedback from university constituents and stakeholders.

ACCESS

WCU eTextbook Initiative Reaches New Milestones

Two initiatives facilitated by the Teaching and Learning Center that train faculty how to build their own free electronic textbooks reached significant milestones recently.

First, the **WCU eTextbook Initiative** saved students \$14,497 during the spring semester, bringing the project's total savings to \$158,913 since it began releasing books in 2018. And in August, it celebrated the completion of its seventeenth book, *Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Terrorism*, by Jaeyong Choi, Assistant Professor of Criminal Justice. Dr. Choi's book will eliminate the need for students to purchase a textbook that previously cost them \$125.

Also, the Pennsylvania Alliance for Design of Open Textbooks (PA-ADOPT) launched its new web site at **https://paadopt.org** this spring, and since then has released its first four free and open eTextbooks covering topics in Chemistry, Women's and Gender Studies, and Writing. The alliance consists of faculty from four PASSHE institutions (Cheyney, Kutztown, Millersville, and West Chester Universities) and it funded by a U.S. Department of Education grant. A total of 28 books are slated to be released by the alliance over the next two years.



WCU Partners with CCEDC and PA Department of Labor to Help Students Return to WCU and Complete Their Degrees

Project RECONNECT is a first-ever, cross-county collaboration that will assist at least 100 students pursuing healthcare careers from across Berks, Chester, Delaware and Montgomery counties by providing financial assistance for expenses including tuition, child care and transportation, books and lab fees.

"This is an amazing opportunity for students who may have been pursuing training as an EMT, RN, LPN, dental hygienist, med-tech and so much more, but faced challenges including access to transportation, child care, financial strain and health care issues," said Bethanie Emery, Chester County Economic Development Council's lead navigator for the initiative. "Project RECONNECT is committed to providing the financing students need to re-enroll and be successful, as well as the support services required to help them overcome the hurdles to their career paths."

A dedicated team of WCU faculty and staff from the Registrar, Bursar, Financial Aid, Nursing, Student Sucess & Engagement (SSET) and the Provost's offices partnered to identify and communicate this opportunity to eligible students.

The economic development council unveiled the program June 1, and is encouraging potential applicants to apply as soon as possible at **ccedcpa.com\reconnect** to enroll for in-person and online programs that may start as soon as this fall.

To be eligible for an award from Project RECONNECT and be eligible to re-enroll at WCU, individuals must be a resident of Pennsylvania; have some post-secondary education, but no certificate or degree; have withdrawn from school in the last two years; have a GPA of 2.5; and less than one year left for a certification credential, associate's degree or bachelor's degree. Priority will be given to career pathways in health care fields, according to a press release.

If you know a student who would be eligible for this program, please feel free to direct them to the website below.

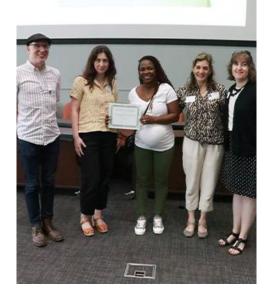
Learn More About Project Reconnect

Wins PHENND's "Lindy" Award

(Provided by University Communications and Marketing)

West Chester University's iCamp Summer Academy – a free media academy held at West Chester University for one week each summer – received recent recognition from the Pennsylvania Higher Education Network for Neighborhood Development (PHENND). The recognition comes in the form of a "Lindy" award.

The Lindy Award is part of the **PHENND's** K-16 Partnerships Program and seeks to honor collaborative partnerships between at least one K-12 school and one university. It is awarded along with cash prizes totaling \$2,500. On June 1, 2023, Program Director and WCU professor Laquanna Cooke attended the Lindy Awards ceremony.



Launched in 2017, the **iCamp Academy** invites rising high school juniors and seniors from the Philadelphia School District to stay on West Chester U.'s campus for one week each summer and participate in structured media production lessons, hands-on workshops, and collaborative open lab time with West Chester University faculty. The 2023 iCamp Academy took place from June 25 – July 1, 2023.

Cooke says, "It is quite an honor to be recognized with this award. 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."

29 Southeastern PA High School Students Examined Health Care Careers at WCU's Health Careers Summer Academy

(Provided by University Communications and Marketing)



At a time when the spotlight remains focused on lifesaving health care and science, 29 high school students in the region discovered what it is like to be an athletic trainer, nurse, physician assistant, registered dietitian, respiratory therapist, and many other health science professions during an immersive Health Careers Summer Academy hosted by WCU's College of Health Sciences. The two-week immersion experience is introducing exciting health care careers to high school-page youth who might not otherwise have opportunities to explore and consider such vital professions. The program is organized in partnership with the Justamere Foundation.

"The College of Health Sciences is committed to showing students of all ages the many career opportunities that exist to be health professionals and lifelong learners who can really make a difference in our world," said Scott Heinerichs, dean of the College of Health Sciences and

professor of sports medicine. "This initiative speaks directly to our commitment to provide access to all students and to make a difference in our Commonwealth. We are proud to be able to offer such a compelling program to these outstanding youth."

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



WCU Recognized as One of the 50 Most Community-Minded Organizations in Greater Philadelphia Region

For a second consecutive year, West Chester 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 civic engagement, showcasing 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. West Chester University is one of only three universities recognized. 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

Click the button below to see the collective impact of these organizations on the region.

Snapshot of Civic50 Awardees' Impact

DIVERSITY & INCLUSION



ODEI Capstone Video
Promotes Correct Use of Plural
Pronouns

By Keri Palasz, PhD, MS, RDN, LDN (reprinted from PASSHE Connectivity Bulletin, August 2023)

Through her studies to complete requirements for the Advanced Certificate in Cultural Competence and Inclusive Excellence, a West Chester University of Pennsylvania (WCU) professor came to appreciate that the rules for correct grammar regarding using plural pronouns have changed. Like many professors, Keri Palasz attaches high importance to using the most current and correct grammar when addressing students. "The recent grammar changes are more inclusive," says Dr. Palasz. "It is now grammatically correct to use the pronoun "they" when referring to an individual."

Dr. Palasz chose to make a short educational video (<4 minutes) with professors as the target audience for the capstone project to complete requirements for the Advanced Certificate in Cultural Competence and Inclusive Excellence, offered through the West Chester University of Pennsylvania Institute for Cultural Competence and Inclusive Excellence.

"I hope this video might help inform other professors of these changes to universally accepted grammar rules for the use of plural personal pronouns," says Dr. Palasz. "For some of us, this change in use of the word, 'they' is natural. For others, it poses a challenge as we have decades of experience using the former grammar guidelines."

ODEI Capstone Video

Historian tonya thames-taylor brings Frederick Douglass and Abolitionists to Life in Juneteenth and July 4 Speeches

Associate Professor of History tonya thames-taylor was featured in the Philadelphia Inquirer discussing abolitionists and a historic site in Chester County. She presented on Frederick Douglass on July 4 at the National Constitution Center in Philadelphia and was one of three experts to help



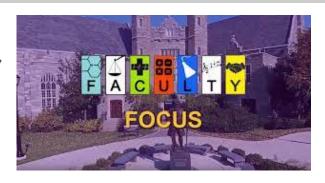
the Chester County History Center celebrate Juneteenth on June 19 with presentations on Douglass and local civil rights activist Bayard Rustin.

tonya thames-taylor, also known as dr. t3, is an Associate Professor of American History and founding director of the African American Studies Program. She is a specialist in the 19th and 20th centuries. Her research focuses on gender, race, human rights, and Southern histories. She has received numerous fellowships and grants. She is a Trustee for the Friends Publishing Corporation, on the Board of Directors for the Friends Historical Association (publisher of Quaker History), and a member of the Governance and Equity Committees of the American Friends Service Committee. She is a magna cum laude graduate of Tougaloo College (an historically Black college)and The University of Mississippi.

SCHOLARSHIP & PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

WCU Launches the Teaching & Learning Center

We are pleased to announce the official launch of the **Teaching and Learning Center** (TLC) whose mission is to advance teaching excellence. The center is a merger of the Office of Distance Learning and

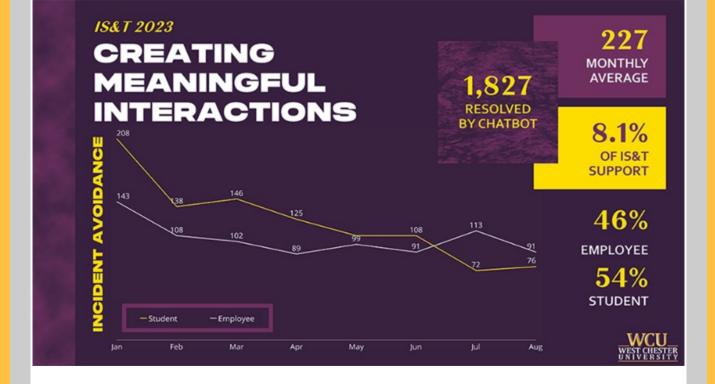


Innovation (ODLI) and the Teaching, Learning and Assessment Center (TLAC). Please be on the lookout for information about programs and initiatives that will be hosted and supported by the TLC.

TLC initiatives to support faculty and to build their own free electronic textbooks recently reached significant milestones: WCU students saved a record \$41,617 during AY 2022-2023 from books produced by the eTextbook Initiative, and the Pennsylvania Alliance for Design of Open Textbooks (PA-ADOPT), which is funded by a U.S. Department of Education grant, launched its website at https://paadopt.org and released its first four free and open eTextbooks.

In addition, the Online Faculty Development (OFD) program has been redesigned to increase faculty flexibility and choice flexibility in how they meet the CAPC training policy. Faculty can now complete the OFD program at any time in this self-paced, always available training. Visit the **OFD D2L site** and select **"Enroll in Course"** to get started.

WCU's Teaching & Learning Center



Operationalizing Artificial Intelligence (AI)

Al-driven solutions, such as IS&T's ServiceNow Virtual Agent, offer a streamlined troubleshooting process that delivers users precise, real-time solutions for their technical concerns. This not only elevates customer satisfaction but also diminishes wait times, affording support personnel the bandwidth to cater to incidents and support requests effectively.

Al technology is constantly evolving, and its capabilities can reach possibilities that can be beneficial in cybersecurity. Currently, Al can be helpful in scoping through massive datasets and detecting threat patterns and new threats, providing guidance for future protection plans. Although Al is beneficial for defenders, it also has been benefiting attackers just as much. Hackers are exploiting the benefits of Al for their malicious activities and utilizing Al technology to analyze computer systems and identify vulnerabilities that can be exploited. Of particular concern is the use of Al-generated phishing email campaigns and leveraging Al tools to create malware that can evade detection by constantly changing its characteristics. IS&T also leverages Al against cybersecurity threats utilizing 24/7/365 alert monitoring tools to ensure our systems and servers stay protected, and security teams stay proactively informed of suspicious activity.

The increasing sophistication of Al-generated content presents new challenges and opportunities for teaching and learning. Generative Al tools can be incorporated into learning and assessment activities to enhance student learning experiences. A major concern is around the difficulty of distinguishing between human and Al authorship and its implications for academic integrity.

The Teaching and Learning Center has developed a **Teaching with Generative Al Toolkit** that provides faculty guidance on developing an approach to engaging with Al tools that is best suited to their teaching style and context. Faculty are encouraged to reach out to their instructional designer or email **tlc@wcupa.edu** to explore strategies for their specific teaching context.

STUDENT SPOTLIGHT



New Student-Created Artwork Adorns Main Hall

(Provided by University Communications and Marketing)

This summer, the college of Arts & Humanities unveiled new artwork in the form of large banners that are now adorning Main Hall. Junior Art + Design student Noah Burns – who last year gained recognition for creating and painting a mural for one of West Chester borough's historical buildings – is the designer of the banners, with Assistant Professor of Art Scotty Reifsnyder as art director.

Reifsnyder says, "This project was spearheaded by Dean Jen Bacon, who wanted new banners that represented social justice and equity through the lens of the College of Arts & Humanities. She wanted art that spoke to the diversity of our students."

Reifsnyder and Burns came together to brainstorm ways to bring Bacon's concept to life. "When you do something like this, you don't really know the destination until you get there," says Reifsnyder.

One day Burns showed Reifsnyder his sketchbook. In it were dozens of sketches of students doing everyday activities on the quad, interacting on campus with each other, and doing their chosen activities.

"This is it," thought Reifsnyder.

After discussing with Burns, the concept was born to use the sketches to depict "captured moments" of students who attend WCU, and to represent as many A&H majors, races, cultures, and genders as possible.

"We did our best to represent every major in the College of Arts & Humanities visually," says Reifsnyder. "If we offer it, you can find it amongst Noah's illustrations."

The purple and gold hued banners will hang on Main Hall through the academic year. Meanwhile, Burns is earning well-deserved recognition and accolades from across campus. Says Reifsnyder, "Noah is very versatile, and his work is professional-level quality. His art background influenced this project, as seen in the sophisticated color palette. I am grateful for his exceptional work and for the opportunity to work with him."

Noah Burns says, "It was a great experience to work with Professor Reifsnyder and Dean Bacon on this project. I appreciate the opportunity to showcase my art on campus and to represent through my work the environment that West Chester University is fostering. It is wonderful that WCU gives students the chance to demonstrate their skills and displays their work around campus. I hope this is a continuing trend and that other students are given these same

UPCOMING EVENTS

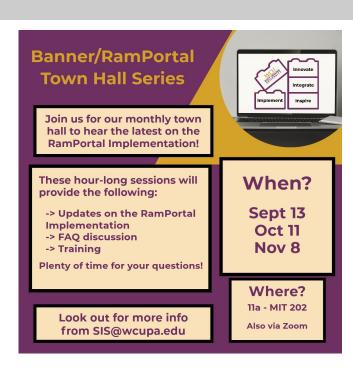


President's Welcome Back Address

As the new academic year approaches, we want to be sure that you save **September 14, 2023, at 12:30 p.m.** on your calendars to attend President Fiorentino's Welcome Back Address. This year it will return to the Emile K. Asplundh Concert Hall beginning at 12:30 p.m.

A more formal announcement will follow closer to the event, but we wanted to share the date, time and location of this alluniversity event.

We will livestream the event for those of you who are unable to attend in person.



Banner/RamPortal Town Hall Series Resumes

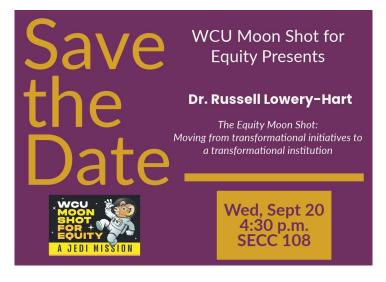
We are gearing up for the next RamPortal Town Hall on **Wednesday**, **September**13th at 11 am. Join us in person (Mitchell Hall 202) or via Zoom (**Zoom link**). Pre-registration for any of the 2023 Town Halls is now open. Secure your spot by using this **registration link**. Please note that you must be logged into Office365 to use the registration link.

There will be two other opportunities this fall: **10/11** and **11/8**.

Agenda:

- Information will be shared orienting first-time attendees to the project.
- Important milestones and updates on the project status will be shared.
- Special Sneak-Peeks of some page views within RamPortal!

Click to Register



Dr. Russell Lowery-Hart to Speak at WCU

In support of WCU's Moon Shot for Equity as well as our commitment to student success, we welcome Dr. Russell Lowery-Hart to campus on **September 20 at 4:30p in SECC 108**. Dr. Lowery-Hart's keynote will discuss how to rethink student success through privileging the student voice, removing barriers, and committing to a culture of caring. He will draw from his experience shaping Amarillo College's enrollment, advocacy,

and resources to increase retention and persistence rates.

Click to Register

RESOURCE CORNER



How to Submit Your Event to Online Campus Calendar

The WCU Calendar is populated by events submitted in **25Live**, WCU's room reservation and calendaring program. Faculty/Staff may submit events to the calendar by selecting "WCU Featured Events Calendar" in the "Resources" section of the 25Live Event Form.

WCU Event Calendar

How to submit your event to WCU Calendar

FAST Schedule & Offerings

Check out what IS&T has on tap for the summer! The Faculty and Staff Training (FAST) unit supports WCU faculty and staff in becoming proficient in various applications, in



addition to providing best practices in trending platforms (e.g., OneDrive, D2L, RamCloud). Courses are designed to accommodate all levels of learning and allow users to build on acquired skills. Click below for the full schedule or take **self-paced options**.

Click for Schedule

ODLI On Air Podcast

ODLI on Air is a podcast on digital learning & innovation at WCU that expands teaching and learning perspectives by connecting theory and practice through conversations with expert WCU faculty. Check out episodes on a variety of topics including sustainable study abroad, using H5P interactions, inclusive learning, and e-portfolios.



Listen to ODLI On Air



WCU's Bike Lending Library

Can't find a parking space? Need to get to class faster? With the opening of the Bicycle Lending Library (BLL), you're in luck!

The BLL offers 28 Trek bicycles available in sizes XXS-XL. WCU students and employees can

borrow a bicycle for two-week increments or full semesters. Riders should submit an **online request** for a bicycle and wait to be contacted by the library staff. From here, the lending process will begin. After scheduling a pick-up time, riders will present their WCU ID and receive their bicycle, as well as a helmet and a combination lock.

More Info on BLL



Want to learn more about Navigate?

Visit our **webpage**. You'll find an overview, information about **Progress Reports**, and our **training site**.

Navigate Homepage

You can also check out the **FAST training site** and search "navigate" to final all of the Navigate-specific offerings. Here's a **quick guide** to the offerings.

FREE LinkedIn Learning Content Available to WCU Faculty, Staff and Students

LinkedIn Learning with Lynda.com content is an industry leader in online training, with a digital library of over 180,000 videos, covering a wide range of technical, business, software, and creative topics. West Chester University faculty, staff and currently enrolled students have unlimited access.

Access LinkedIn Learning





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