

Faculty Forum

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Faculty Forum

From the Faculty Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning

WESTERN CAROLINA UNIVERSITY

CULLOWHEE, NORTH CAROLINA

Vol. 22, No. 1

September 1, 2009

Planning for Changes to the WCU Learning Management System (WebCAT)

**By Carlie Merritt
Health and Human Sciences**

In April, 2009, Provost Kyle Carter appointed a task force representing faculty, IT Services, and WebCAT support to examine alternatives to our Learning Management System (LMS), commonly known as WebCAT. Our current license with Blackboard will expire in 2011 and WebCAT will no longer be available, so WCU must procure either a substantially different Blackboard product or migrate to a new LMS. We will also no longer be involved in shared hosting with other institutions. Provost Carter charged the task force to take a holistic view of the alternative systems, evaluating their educational value as well as their utility, cost and ease of use. Provost Carter, Dr. Anna McFadden and CIO Craig Fowler will make a final decision for a new LMS at the end of fall semester.

The Task Force members discussed several alternative Learning Management Systems, including Angel, Sakai and Moodle. Using the following rationale, they chose to examine Moodle, an open source LMS, as the best alternative to the new version of Blackboard:

- Coulter Faculty Center had funding and resources for piloting only one alternative while also supporting WebCAT;
- Our sister institutions, including Charlotte, App. State, NC State and ECU, as well as the UNC Online system, are already moving toward Moodle;
- Students from the high schools and the community college system will already be familiar with Moodle;
- Moodle has no licensing cost but will require more personnel
- In two years we will be faced with change to a new and significantly different Blackboard LMS if not to Moodle; and
- We can adjust Moodle to suit our own needs, which we cannot do with Blackboard. This would, however, require more hardware and personnel

Over the summer, Task Force members researched experiences from other institutions that have migrated to Moodle and nine WCU faculty members representing each of the colleges began developing fall courses in Moodle as a pilot project. Additionally, the Coulter Faculty Center provided a link to Blackboard version 9 (<http://ncvista9.blackboard.com>) and created a sample course in Moodle (<http://moodlepilot.wcu.edu>) for faculty to review and test. John LeBaron and Neil Torda developed a central repository for feedback and collaboration (<https://media.wcu.edu/groups/lmstf2009/>) for any faculty who have experienced Moodle or who have comments about the Blackboard 9 and Moodle trial sites.

Feedback to Date:

Based on the experience of sister universities and projected WCU hardware, software, and support needs, cost estimates indicate that Moodle will cost more than Blackboard over the next two years. WCU would pay approximately \$60,000 more per year due to increased staffing, hardware and software costs. This estimate includes the continuation of the

Blackboard license until it expires in 2011. After the expiration of the Blackboard license, Moodle costs will decline to roughly \$70,000 – 80,000 less than Blackboard each year.

Some preliminary feedback received from faculty piloting Moodle and those who have worked with the sample sites shows a mixed reaction to the two learning management systems.

- Most faculty feel Moodle is intuitive as far as loading content.
- A number indicated that either LMS will be better than VISTA and that the cost of ownership and stability issues will be very important.
- One individual mentioned that Blackboard was very good in integration with library services.
- A question was raised regarding how either system will integrate with e-Briefcase and QEP.
- No comments were mentioned about grading or in-depth development issues and also looking at the site from the student perspective, a feature that was made available to pilot sites.
- Several people like Blackboard much better because the learning curve will be less and they are too overwhelmed to take on something completely new. Blackboard has some familiar features, whereas Moodle has a completely different interface.
- Some commented, “You get what you pay for.”

The LMS Task Force will collect data from a variety of sources this fall. Blackboard representatives will come to WCU on September 15th and 16th to present Blackboard 9 and answer faculty questions. The task force will gather assessment information from faculty and students in the Moodle pilot midway through the semester. In addition, concerns of faculty across campus will be crucial in making a final determination. The Task Force will host two Open Forums this fall during which faculty are invited to share their experience and ask questions about Moodle and Blackboard 9. One Open Forum will be scheduled in September and another will be scheduled after data is received, but before completion of the recommendations, likely in November.

Feel free to contact John LeBaron or any of the LMS Task Force members to address issues about Blackboard or Moodle. Your responses will be posted on the LMS Feedback and Collaboration wiki for faculty and staff to review.

LMS Task Force Members

John LeBaron, Chair (Coulter Faculty Center), Chris Baxley (WebCAT Support), Michael Caudill (Arts and Sciences), Sharon Dole (CEAP) Regis Gilman (Education Outreach), Bill McDaniel (Kimmel School), Anna McFadden (Coulter Faculty Center), Carlie Merritt (HHS) Peter Savage (FPA), Chris Snyder (WebCAT Support), Michael Thomas (COB) and Zack Phillips (Student Representative).



A Note from the Editor

The Faculty Forum is now beginning its twenty second year as the official communication vehicle by faculty and for faculty. It is a veritable archive of over two decades of faculty observations and comment about the many issues they face in working on this campus and striving to educate the many students from around the globe who come to this university in search of knowledge, understanding and tools for facing the world. **PLEASE** consider writing an article during this coming academic year. We need to know by the first of the month that you'd like to write one, some idea of its focus, and then we'll advise you as to what month we can fit it in. We try very hard to We would need it no later than the 22nd of the month prior to publication. We also urge you to log on to the Faculty Forum webpage through the wiki: <http://media.wcu.edu/groups/facultyforum> to add your comments each month to the featured article. I look forward to working with all of you another year.

Vera Holland Guise
Faculty Fellow, Coulter Faculty Center

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Faculty Forum

From the Faculty Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning

WESTERN CAROLINA UNIVERSITY

CULLOWHEE, NORTH CAROLINA

Vol. 22, No. 2

October 1, 2009

A Much-Needed Sea Change

Many of our WCU students are weak readers and writers. Okay, I've acknowledged "the elephant in the room" that instructors across the disciplines and class levels often describe to me but will not openly acknowledge in public, a WCU secret I've known for as long I've worked at WCU (since 1992).

As University Writing Center (UWC) Director for the past nine years, understanding and addressing the writing needs of all our students has been my sole focus, and I often describe my job to non-university friends as mission work—meaningful, low paid, and never-ending.

WCU is not the only American university to enroll students who are neither effective readers nor effective writers. Academically effective readers can sustain reading for more than an hour, will look up unfamiliar words in a dictionary (online or otherwise), will annotate texts for the purpose of retrieving meaning later, and will achieve sufficient success in understanding texts. Effective writers know the importance of communicating purposefully with intended readers and will "do whatever it takes" to achieve this success in any given context.

Many of our honors students are effective readers and writers, whereas many of our non-honors students are not, and every semester instructors across the disciplines and class levels are faced with the following daunting behaviors: students do not read their assigned texts and will write papers the way they speak or text-message.

No one instructor, First Year Composition program, or University Writing Center can solve this widespread cultural problem, and to help most of our students become effective readers and writers will require nothing less than a sea change, specifically, a regular context wherein all invested parties, from the highest administrators to the lowest-paid adjunct instructors, can regularly communicate honestly and constructively about—not what "should" be but—what "is, what "can be," and how to get from here to there.

When, if not NOW, and HOW do we begin this important conversation?

Barbara Hardie
Director, Writing Center
Coulter Faculty Center

Disclaimer:

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Coulter Faculty Center for Teaching and Learning

Last month we received no responses to the article by *Planning for Changes to the WCU Learning Management System (WebCAT)* by Carlie Merritt, Health and Human Services. It's not too late! Send us your comments! However, we did receive a thoughtful and in-depth response from **Debbie Singleton** from Health, Physical Education and Recreation to the May 2009 Faculty Forum which featured an article entitled *Make Room For Baby: The Rising Teen Pregnancy Rate and It's Challenge to WCU* by Sharon Jacques, Nursing Program. We are pleased to share that with you and urge YOU to respond to **Faculty Forum** articles and consider writing one yourself.



Sharon Jacques' article, "Make Room for Baby..." in the May Faculty Forum sheds light on a topic that many individuals are very uncomfortable discussing within a classroom setting or with their children. Sex education does not need to be a "taboo" subject. As evident in popular culture, sex is clearly mainstream. There are television shows depicting the life of a pregnant teenager, movies that glorify sexual encounters that have no negative consequences, apparel lines for tween girls that include padded bras and thong underwear, and music with explicit lyrics that describe sexual anatomy. If information about sex is everywhere, then why do we have a problem with teenage pregnancy rates or sexually transmitted diseases? Maybe it is because we have approached education about sexual health as an all or nothing debate. If we get teenagers to promise to be abstinent until marriage, then we won't have these problems. Or... If we educate teenagers about sexual health in a comprehensive manner, then we won't have these problems. It is not that simple.

Sex education needs to be part of a comprehensive, holistic approach that demonstrates positive adolescent health outcomes. A comprehensive program needs to include opportunities for teens to participate in lifetime recreation and sport activities, involvement in the arts, educational support that assists students with career planning and college preparation, work experiences, money management, and a family life/sex education program. In addition to the support programs, teens need access to comprehensive medical care including reproductive health care and mental health counseling. These types of programs have demonstrated lower pregnancy rates, delayed onset of intercourse, better sexual health behaviors and higher graduation rates.

The second aspect of comprehensive, holistic sex education is the responsibility of parents and/or guardians. Children look to their parents for guidance, help with decision making, and the clarification of morals and values. Parents need to take the initiative to assist their children in understanding healthy sexuality and its relation to their overall health and development. This means more than handing them a book on puberty and saying, "read this and then you will understand". A more effective method is to take the time to sit down with your children and read the book together, helping them to understand what will or is happening to their body and being available and willing to answer their questions. Of course, parents need to understand and have some knowledge about sexual health in order to feel comfortable communicating with their children.


The third aspect of comprehensive, holistic sex education is to provide young adults with the knowledge and resources to make healthy decisions surrounding their overall wellness, including their sexual health. In many ways, we have these opportunities already in place here at Western. There are courses on women's health, sexual health, human sexuality, marriage & family and probably others that I am not aware of. The Women's Center, Wellness Program, Counseling Services, Health Services and the Jackson County Public Health Department are all great resources for students. Yet, there are students who still are unaware of the consequences of their risky sexual behaviors or their lack of knowledge surrounding their choices for prevention of pregnancy or sexually transmitted diseases. If we are going to be effective in reducing rates of STD's transmission and unintentional pregnancies among college students, we need to increase educational opportunities and awareness. If we are going to prepare future parents to be a positive aspect of their children's sexual education, then we need to prepare them. (Students in my Health 360 have some interesting ideas on how to address these questions; their comments are in the later part of this response)

The fourth aspect of comprehensive, holistic sex education is to embrace the technology that will allow educators to reach our target population, teens and young adults. Sex education in a classroom setting can be ineffective and insufficient. In many school districts there are constraints placed on what and how you can teach family life/sex education. In college level health classes such as our Health 123: Health & Wellness course, sexual health is only one small part of what we try to cover during a semester. Sometimes we find ourselves devoting only two days to the subject. Is this enough, do students need more? How can we reach students besides a classroom setting?

The state of North Carolina may have an idea. The Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention Campaign of NC, based in Durham, has created a “Birds and Bees Text Line”, an educational text messaging service. The Birds and Bees Text Line allows teens to obtain medically accurate answers to sex and health related questions through personal, anonymous text messages. The line is staffed by individuals who have graduate degrees in public health or social work. The service is supported by a grant from the state health department and is one of several efforts across the country in which health educators are using technology to offer teens “sex ed on their turf”. In addition to text messaging services, there are blunt websites on sexual health such as Columbia’s Go Ask Alice!, Atlantic Health’s TeenHealthFX, and Planned Parenthood’s TeenWire. My students in Health 360 visited these websites and found them insightful and useful.


Educating our children, our students, and ourselves about sexual health shouldn’t be such an uncomfortable experience. If we realize that our sexual health is an important component of our overall wellness, we can learn to respect it in the same way we limit the amount of fat in our diet, make sure we exercise each day, and put on sunscreen to protect our skin.

I asked my students from Health 360: Sexual Health Through the Lifespan to respond to Dr. Sharon Jacques’ article in the last Faculty Forum. Here are some of their comments:

 Classes being offered at WCU are essential for educating students about healthy sexuality. I have learned more in my Health 360 class concerning sexual health than in the past 20 years. I think it should be a requirement for every student to take a class like this, plus it was fun. Also, maybe a class could be offered for students to learn how to respond to educating their future kids concerning sexual health.

Maybe Western feels like they have helped students a lot by having the phone boxes, less expensive contraception and counseling services. I believe Western can step it up a notch. I believe contraception at the health center should be free. I cannot even count the number times I have needed a cat tran late at night and ended up walking to my dorm. I can only recall seeing two emergency phone boxes, and I am a sophomore. I also rarely see police around campus. WCU could improve in these areas.

As for educating the community in general, I think just advertising and getting the word out is doing great justice for individuals. I believe that special events that are held on the UC Lawn displaying information about rape or sexual assault victims are helpful. It reaches people on an emotional level. I think WCU should do things like that and get people involved all over Jackson County.

 WCU does a lot to promote sexual health practices on campus. It is unfortunate that so few students listen. The best we can do is to continue to fund programs and advertisements. We could also make it more convenient for students by having free condoms and programs available in all the residence halls and maybe even in some academic buildings.


As mentioned in the article, the best way to prevent unwanted pregnancies and the transmission of STD’S and STI’S is by educating our future parents and teachers. People are uncomfortable talking with kids about sex so kids are unaware of the risks and ways to protect themselves. If we can become informed and comfortable enough to talk openly and honestly about sex with our children and students, we will see a great improvement in the sexual health of our community.


Conduct outreach programs through health fairs at local schools, recreation centers, churches, anywhere that will allow a WCU health fair to come. The fair can include booths dealing with different topics

such as pregnancy, gender issues, sex choices, games, and learning opportunities through interactive question and answer sessions. We need to be informative in every aspect of educating these groups; parents, teachers and students.

I think that WCU can educate students on healthy sexuality as well as helping decrease pregnancies by getting more word about it out there. Although I have had sex ed classes since fourth grade, I still learned a lot from this semester due to the fact that my earlier classes didn't go into this much detail with my younger age group. They do have contraceptives here on campus but how many students really know about it or where to exactly get them. There are some people who have no idea where the health center is here on campus, let alone where they can receive free condoms. I think more programs or awareness events should be offered throughout the year.


As an assignment this semester in Health 360, myself and a partner taught a demonstration workshop on breast and testicular self-exams in a residence hall. None of the men knew how to do a testicular exam and very few women knew to check for breast cancer. These are important things to know regarding health and lifestyles. In my sophomore year of high school, I had to take home a baby that was so realistic for an entire weekend that it opened my eyes and made me think, twice about engaging in activities that could lead to an unwanted pregnancy. I think it would be interesting to see how if a class of college students could do the same activity. If they did, then there may be more awareness before engaging in un-protective sexual activities.


 As a student at Western Carolina University, and possibly the next generation of parents, I feel like more programs and events should be put in place as an effort to decrease teen pregnancy, unplanned pregnancies, recognition of gender issues and a decrease in sexually transmitted diseases. WCU offers many courses about sexuality, as well as awareness for gender issues and STD'S. I believe that similar programs should be offered throughout the county and the community. WCU could provide courses and programs outside the university so that people can be more aware.

 After reading the article many options came to mind that WCU can do to educate students about healthy sexuality. I know just from taking this course (Health 360) I have probably tripled my knowledge on sexual health and just being healthier as a young adult in general. I think offering more in depth courses like Health 360, PSY 331 and SOC 365, would be a great start. We all have to take electives and I know I was very excited about taking this course when I signed up for it.

Another way to get more information out to WCU students about healthy sexuality would be pamphlets distributed to dorms and freshmen when they first arrive at Western. Another great resource on campus is the women's center. That could be a place that would be great to put more healthy sexuality information. It would be beneficial to have a men's center on campus for the same reasons. These would be great resources because sometime separating genders makes it easier to get the facts and be safe without someone feeling uncomfortable about asking questions or seeking out information.

One of the biggest scares on college campuses is fear of getting pregnant or getting someone else pregnant. WCU needs to get information out about contraceptives by having presentation in dorms and making them readily available to students. Even though they are offered at the health center, not everyone knows that. I also think more STD awareness needs to be brought to the student's attention.

 We need better access to condoms other than vending machines (uncertain about brands, some don't fit properly) and Health Services (embarrassing to ask or take them in front of people you don't know). WCU should provide more learning opportunities for all students in regards to sexual assault and STD prevention. Have students participate in service learning opportunities where they are educating other WCU students about sexual assault and STD prevention. Provide information for parents about college students and sex so they can be informed and be able to talk to their sons or daughters about it or know where to send them for help .I hope in the future that WCU becomes more involved in this issue.... Because I had not seen anything about prevention in high school or college until I took this class (Health 360).

 WCU can continue to offer the options it does for students. I really think it helps that our health services provides so much for students. Condoms, contraceptives, and the vaccine Gardasil are all great to have locally at a college campus. I think more informative classes (such as Health 360) should be offered. This class could train students as peer educators to go to local middle and high schools and educate young boys and girls on the matters of sex and teenage pregnancy. I personally don't think it's a topic that should be sugarcoated. I don't think schools are doing enough for young kids and it is up to us, as future educators, peer mentors, and role models to help our community. I think WCU should hold a seminar for those who want to teach this topic in the schools and train them to do so. If we can make the community more aware, maybe we could reduce the rates of teenage pregnancy and STDS.

The easiest way to solve all of these problems is to stress sex education. I know that that there are already programs in place that teach young people how to be smart as far as sex goes but we need to take it to another level. Kids are bombarded by the media. Sex sales stuff on TV, it is hard for a child not to be influenced by it. That is why parents play a bigger role than they think they do. Whether kids admit it or not they learned the majority of what they knew from their parents. By stressing the importance of healthy sexuality to us (college students) now, we will in turn carry that on to our children. Some ideas: Education that teaches kids about sex and how to deal with uncomfortable situations.... A mentoring system to help teenagers deal with their questions about sex... Classes such as Health 360 allow us to be very open about the topics and as a result we learn a lot both through the class and from each other.

Debbie Singleton & students
Health, Physical Education and Recreation



Faculty Forum

From the Faculty Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning

WESTERN CAROLINA UNIVERSITY

CULLOWHEE, NORTH CAROLINA

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Born Digital: *Creating Reference Materials for Future Scholars*

By Anna Fariello

Associate Professor & Director, Craft Revival Digital Collection

At the start of my undergraduate days, after switching my major to art history in my sophomore year, I started my first paraprofessional job, working in the department's slide library. Back in those days, "slides" were two-inch pieces of transparent film, not the ephemeral light images projected via today's PowerPoint projector. Working with slides meant masking film positives with reflective tape, mounting them into glass housings (more permanent than the commercial cardboard), labeling, cataloguing, and filing according to our own local cataloging system. Thirty years later we've made the full transition to digital. If I used the word "slide" in talking to students today, they would, of course, think of a PowerPoint image, rather than those small squares of cardboard that are but a distant memory.

For many of the intervening years, after digital imaging became available to libraries and the public, digitization projects focused on reformatting source material to create digital surrogates. Along the way, formats have come and gone. At the Science Museum of Virginia where I worked as an exhibit designer, the museum was excited to have recorded its first digital images onto videodiscs. A short-lived product, a videodisc looked like a CD, but was as large as an LP record. (Now you know where that word "compact" came from). Today, these products can neither be used nor read; they've entered the "digital dark age," where information recorded onto obsolete formats is lost.

A decade later, in migrating a photographic collection into a format suitable for Virginia Tech's Digital Library and Archives, our team struggled with what informational elements to capture and what standards to use when scanning. Even the fully-staffed VT lab first scanned to Kodak discs: proprietary and short-lived. Enter the 21st century...and most digitization projects agree on foundational standards for scanning and core metadata elements to be recorded. But how to structure the workflow of getting from individual data files to retrievable and searchable identifiable images is still a work in progress. These questions have challenged us at the Hunter Library where we are attempting to build a digital collection, while simultaneously defining the production "pipeline" needed to sustain it.

Just about everyone now has a digital camera. I joined fellow die-hard film photographers to eventually sell my darkroom equipment and pass on projectors and stacks of slide carousels. Today's challenge is not so much a matter of migrating physical data to digital form, but rather, looking after images that are "born digital." Born digital is not a phrase that I made up. It is an actual digital preservation term that describes materials that originate as digital files, rather than ones that were reformatted into a digital format. These include still photographic images and video taken with digital cameras (or cell phones) along with other items that are created electronically, like emails and text documents. With the lightning speed growth of digital imaging, there is concern that the creation of "born digital" images is outpacing our ability to label, maintain, preserve, and retrieve them. How many of us have digital files stored here and there on computers and external hard drives, wishing we could know what we have and where it is? I know that my very first experimental computer graphic work is on strange looking "floppy" disks that I can neither look at (nor bear to throw away), but where are those tiffs I need for a web page story on Yancy County's Markle School? (Just kidding, I know where they are).

The purpose of this short article is to make a case for what is known as “curation-at-source.” Quoting from the Digital Curation Centre in Edinburgh, “digital curation is maintaining and adding value to a trusted body of digital information for current and future use.” In museology courses that I’ve taught, I explain that the word “curator” replaced the older term “keeper,” (except in zoos and in England where museum curators are still referred to by this term). However outdated as it may seem, those of us engaged in digital preservation projects are “keepers” of visual and virtual collections. As such, we are responsible for tracking images (registration/cataloging), caring for them (preservation/conservation), and making sense of them (curation/interpretation). The question for all of us is how do we become effective keepers of our own digital stuff? Returning to the basics of writing—who, what, when, and where—is a helpful starting point. Who made/who wrote/who created this image/doc? What is it about? When was it made? Where is it (or where to put it)? Most of us rely on “post hoc digital preservation,” rather than the preferred “curation-at-source” model, but going back often proves to be more difficult than taking the time to draft meaningful tags at the time of creation.

When I came to Western in 2005, the task ahead was complex but clear: to identify and create digital images, to provide appropriate documentation and interpretation, to curate a coherent collection, and to make all these into an accessible and understandable resource for students and faculty. In working on the Craft Revival collection, I am constantly aware of the irony of “preserving” the tangible output of 20th century makers in a form that is neither physical nor regional. Our product is immaterial and global. We photograph rivercane baskets to create “born digital” images and load them onto the web for all the world to see. What principles determine the scope of “added value” provided by digital curation? What should we record? Do we want to know who made the basket, or who made the photograph? Do we want to record the measurements of the basket, or the dpi of the photograph? Do we want to know when the basket was made, or the date of the photograph? Of course, the answers to these questions are obvious, we want to know all of this.

Those who came to the mountains in the early 20th century to orchestrate the Craft Revival had preservation on their minds, but theirs was not a world of tiffs and jpps, dpi nor data fields. Theirs was a preservation of skill that meant being able to do something, no matter how small, but being able to do it well. Our goal is to work in that same spirit. The Wiki definition of digital curation is the “process of establishing and developing long term repositories of digital assets for current and future reference by researchers, scientists, and historians, and scholars generally.” That’s exactly what we are attempting to do.

Coulter Faculty Center for Teaching and Learning

*As I prepare this issue of The Faculty Forum for publication, I am finally laughing after several failed attempts to find just where I had stored Anna Fariello’s article about the importance of identifying, storing and being able to actually retrieve important documents and images. Surely she had me in mind when she wrote **Born Digital!***
Vera Holland Guise, Faculty Fellow for Publications



We received one piece of feedback to the October issue of The Faculty Forum which featured an article by Dr. Barbara Hardie, Director of the Writing Center. Her article, entitled, **A Much-Needed Sea Change**, is still open for comment and reflection in next month’s Faculty Forum, so please, after you’ve read Anna Fariello’s article entitled **Born Digital**, (which most of the faculty here at WCU certainly were NOT) please go back and read Barbara’s article and send us a comment on both.



Bruce Henderson
Department of Psychology

I will read nearly 2,000 pages of student writing this semester. I have never been able to grade papers holistically, so it is a relatively labor intensive process. I have graded papers in a wide variety of contexts, including at ballgames (halftimes and injury timeouts are particularly useful), at concerts, by cool running streams, at weddings (while the pictures are being taken—I am not that gauche), at the mall, at doctor’s offices

and emergency rooms, on golf courses (many have benches on the tee boxes), and many other places. I don't enjoy giving feedback to students about word usage, transitions, topic sentences, agreement, punctuation, incomplete sentences, affect-effect, who-that, etc. Correcting APA style turns my mind to mush (so I only do it with psych majors). I tell my wife that if meetings don't force me into retirement, grading papers will. Some of my colleagues just tell me not to assign the papers. But if we don't assign the papers and provide the feedback, how are our students going to learn? I am not so naïve as to believe that I am turning my students into writers. Yet, if every instructor required students to write extensively and gave them systematic feedback, surely they would write better. The students would no longer be able to take 21 hours of courses and hold a 30- or 40-hour-a-week job, but surely they would be able to write better. I have gotten into a lot of trouble before by saying that our students need to be required to read, write and think more. Oh what the heck, I am a tenured old man. Our students need to be required to read, write and think more.

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The Future of Cullowhee: Staff and Faculty Voice Their Opinions

Todd A. Collins, J.D., Ph.D.
Assistant Professor, Dept. of Political Science
<http://blog.wcu.edu/tcollins>

Last semester faculty and staff shared their opinions about potential development and changes to Cullowhee. This important survey was part of a civic engagement project for upper-level political science students, who were directly involved in writing the survey questions, publicizing the survey, and initial data interpretation. This project mirrors a student survey conducted last spring that measured student opinions. We also worked closely with the Cullowhee Revitalization Endeavor (CuRvE), which is working to improve the area. In total, 589 employees (including 381 faculty members) voiced their views and concerns about Cullowhee. This represented 40% percent of WCU's employees. On behalf of the students in the class, I want to thank you to all those who took time out of their busy schedules to complete the survey. This semester students will be presenting the results in an open forum, probably about mid-March, and I encourage everyone to attend. Watch for more announcements about the event.

While there are many areas in our community that may need revitalization, our focus in the study involved the area along Old Cullowhee Road. Aside from its importance as being within walking distance of campus, our survey results also indicate that many faculty members (65%) travel along Old Cullowhee Road at least weekly. Survey questions included opinions on Cullowhee's current appearance, current use of the businesses along Old Cullowhee Road, and potential use of future businesses and recreational activities.

Many of the results are not surprising to those that have heard complaints for years about the conditions around campus. For example, over 77% of the respondents indicated that the current businesses and structures along Old Cullowhee Road need "a lot of improvement." Many of the open-ended comments mentioned the need to remove dilapidated and unattractive buildings. When asked how often they currently use the businesses along Old Cullowhee Road, about 14% say they

use the businesses weekly, 38% say they use the businesses monthly, 25% said once or twice a semester, and 22% say they never or almost never frequent these businesses. Nearly half of the respondents (48%) said they would be much more likely to use these businesses if they were cleaned up and improved. Out of those that said they currently do not use those businesses at all, nearly half (44%) said they would be much more likely to use those businesses if they were cleaned up and improved.

We also asked about usage of new businesses and recreational activities in the Old Cullowhee Road area. Most respondents (66%) said they were “very interested” in seeing new businesses open along Old Cullowhee Road, with another 29% stating that they were “somewhat interested” in new businesses. Most respondents said that they would use grocery stores (82%), sit down restaurants (96%), and bookstores (84%) if available. Support appears to be present for other businesses, but to a lesser extent, as 60% said they would use convenience stores, 63% for drug stores, 60% for fast food restaurants, and 61% said they would use new clothing stores. It also appears that many employees’ wishes mirror those of the students, as many respondents also mentioned the need for pubs, bars, music venues, and other place to socialize, with the possibility of having an adult beverage, as well.

Most respondents also showed interest in additional recreational opportunities in the Old Cullowhee Road area. Nearly 83% said they would use picnic areas, 82% said they would use hiking, biking, or walking trails, and 68% said they would use canoe, kayak, or tubing put-ins in the river if available. Fewer respondents indicated a desire to use designated swimming areas in the river (49%) or designated fishing areas (37%). As many folks are aware, Jackson County has noted the recreational potential of this area, too, as plans are underway for a greenway trail to follow the river in the Old Cullowhee Road area.

Regardless of whether our concerns are for greater recreational opportunities, having a place to get a beer after work, or just a desire to make the area more aesthetically pleasing as we drive to work, there is another key concern that was clear from this survey: the area around the University impacts who works and attends the University. A majority of the respondents (61%) said Cullowhee’s setting makes it more difficult to hire and retain faculty. These results comply with the anecdotal stories of departments that intentionally avoid taking their job candidates along Old Cullowhee Road when giving area tours. Only 8% said that Cullowhee’s setting has no impact on faculty recruitment and retention, 11% saying that Cullowhee’s setting attracted faculty, and 19% were unsure of Cullowhee’s impact. Similarly, 58% of the respondents said that Cullowhee’s setting makes it more difficult to attract and retain students.

The overall opinion from respondents indicates that due to our surroundings, the University may be losing (or never getting) good colleagues and bright students. While Cullowhee will never be (nor would most want it to be) the next Atlanta, Asheville, or (insert your favorite metropolis here),

issues raised by this study and the student survey indicate a need for concern. The results indicate a pressing need and desire to revitalize our greater University neighborhood, for both personal and professional reasons. While many steps have been taken to improve the appearance on-campus, most would not deny that stepping off-campus is a much different story. If we want to maintain competitiveness for top faculty and students, the answer lies not just in making an attractive campus, but doing what we can in our community as well.

We urge you to add your comments to Faculty Forum articles. It enriches the faculty dialogue about these many issues that concern us all. Comment directly to this article by clicking on this link: https://media.wcu.edu/groups/facultyforum/wiki/0ac30/The_Future_of_Cullowhee_Staff_and_Faculty_Voice_Their_Opinions.html. The command requires you to use your email username and password to access the article. The Faculty Forum is a publication by and for WCU faculty, so this is our method of limiting access.

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Coulter Faculty Center for Teaching and Learning Responses to the December 09 Faculty Forum article



Soaring High or Parachuting Out

Reflections on Phased Retirement

By Gordon Mercer

Vera,

Gordon's article is excellent! Thanks for encouraging Gordon to share his experiences with those of us who just might be looking at phased retirement in the not too distant future. Always a pleasure to work with you!

Don Livingston

Great work, Vera. Thank you.

Beth Tyson Lofquist

I have always enjoyed the Faculty Forum and you have been doing an excellent job. Have a great day.

Fred Hinson

I am thankful that you've been able to place all 21 years online [not to mention making sure Dr. Mercer's article was included in this month's offering].

Mark Crawford

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Faculty Forum

From the Faculty Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning

WESTERN CAROLINA UNIVERSITY

CULLOWHEE, NORTH CAROLINA

Vol. 22, No. 6

March 1, 2010

Service Learning in the Academic Setting: Benefits vs. Challenges

Glenn Bowen, Ph.D.

Director, Center for Service Learning

Over the past five years, there has been a significant increase in faculty interest in service learning at Western Carolina University (WCU). Prompted by curricular reform embodied in the Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP), much of this interest has been translated into exemplary service learning-enhanced courses.

The implementation of the QEP – “Synthesis: A Pathway to Intentional Learning” – is already causing fundamental shifts in the approach to teaching and learning, with greater emphasis on active, integrative student learning and attention to holistic student development. The QEP (in which service learning as a major component) is designed to promote and support engaged learning. Service learning is an approach – and by no means the only one – to student engagement in the learning process, and engagement in the community beyond the campus.

At WCU, service learning is defined as “a teaching and learning strategy that integrates community service with academic instruction and structured reflection in such a way that students gain further understanding of course content, meet genuine community needs, develop career-related skills, and become responsible citizens.” Here, service learning is broadly defined and includes such diverse experiences as a one-week community-based research project, a semester-long social work field practicum or engineering capstone, and a yearlong middle-grades education internship. However, to be regarded as service learning, the practicum, capstone, and internship should include a civic dimension – the element of the experience that is focused on addressing social problems or community issues.

The theoretical underpinnings of service learning are found in John Dewey’s educational and social philosophy, which encompasses learning from experience, reflective activity, community, and democracy. Connection to the curriculum differentiates service learning from community service (i.e., voluntary or mandatory service). The community service project implemented as part of a service-learning experience should be relevant to the goals and content of the course, and ultimately should be meaningful to the student. High-quality service is desirable; high-quality learning is of paramount importance.

And that’s where the role of faculty becomes crucial. Faculty members should see themselves as facilitators of learning and motivators of learners. In this regard, students taking courses that have a service-learning component should not be turned loose in a community and be left to their own devices. Rather, with guidance from faculty, students should be active learners while rendering valuable service to the community. Furthermore, faculty should stimulate deep reflection so that students intentionally make the connection between theory and application – between what they learn in the classroom and what they practice in the community. Accordingly, faculty should guide students in navigating the complexities of higher-order thinking and integrative learning inherent in effective service-learning pedagogy.

Benefits for Stakeholders

Demonstrable benefits accrue to all service-learning stakeholders – faculty, students, communities, and institutions of higher education. For faculty, service learning provides a good alternative to the traditional lecture-discussion format and makes a course of study more interactive and student-centered. Service learning enriches and enlivens pedagogical practice. It often “brings books to life and life to books,” adding new insights and dimensions to class discussions. For students, service learning provides an avenue for the practical application of knowledge and skills in real-world settings. Many researchers have documented the contributions of service learning to students’ cognitive and affective development. There is much evidence of the positive impact of service learning on the development of students’ critical-thinking, problem-solving, and ethical decision-making skills. Several studies have provided evidence that students who complete thoughtfully organized service-learning projects are also more likely to feel positively about the course and the instructor. However, faculty should be aware that the academic advantages of service learning do not necessarily manifest themselves immediately.

Communities benefit by their access to university-based resources, including the time and energies that students contribute to help nonprofit organizations and small businesses achieve their goals. Indeed, at its best, service learning is an embodiment of Boyer’s scholarship of engagement (interlocking the scholarships of discovery, integration, application, and teaching). Through the scholarship of engagement, the university makes its rich resources available for solving the pressing social, civic, and ethical problems faced by communities. The university obviously benefits by its positive image as an “engaged institution” and a good institutional citizen, responsive to the needs of the region and its constituent communities.

Challenges for Faculty

Despite a large body of evidence of the effectiveness of service learning as a pedagogical approach, faculty resistance remains. For some faculty, the shift away from a traditional paradigm and epistemology is difficult. Bear in mind that service learning reflects a paradigm shift from teaching (delivery of instruction) to learning (discovery or construction of knowledge). It is easy to conclude that some faculty members are so set in their ways that they do not readily or willingly accept change and its challenges. What’s more, many professors may fear loss of control when students venture into the community without their direct supervision. Understandably, some prefer to give lectures and offer simulations rather than let their students “take risks” in an authentic community context.

Now, let’s be clear: Although it can be incorporated into any course, from anthropology to zoology, service learning is not appropriate for every course or every professor. For example, some courses require extensive classroom work to explore the theoretical foundations of a discipline. And, to be sure, faculty enamored with an “information-assimilation” style of teaching and learning could not care less about service learning.

A major complaint from professors is that service learning takes too much time – too much time for them and for their students. Clearly, the effective integration of service learning into a course is time-consuming and, in some respects, challenging. Service learning requires more effort than it typically takes to organize a “traditional” class. Coordinating and structuring service-learning activities, including reflections, demand much more attention to process. Building reciprocal relationships with community partners also takes time. No one said service-learning practice is easy or meant to be easy. In reality, it is not; nor is it meant to be. The same can be said for effective teaching and learning.

WCU has a variety of resources (see links below) to assist faculty in incorporating service learning into the curriculum. Faculty who care deeply about their students – and most WCU faculty do – should take advantage of opportunities to promote active, integrative learning by embracing service learning as a pedagogical approach. Through service learning, students can be better prepared for productive roles in the workplace and in society. In the final analysis, the benefits of service learning far outweigh the challenges.

Service-Learning Resources:

- Center for Service Learning Homepage – <http://www.wcu.edu/9815.asp>
 - Community Partners and Service Sites – <http://www.wcu.edu/23004.asp>
 - Course Designation (“SLC”) – <http://www.wcu.edu/9843.asp>
 - Faculty Fellows and Liaisons – <http://www.wcu.edu/9820.asp>
 - Publications and Presentations – <http://www.wcu.edu/9840.asp>
 - Service-Learning FAQs – <http://www.wcu.edu/9824.asp>
 - Service-Learning Forms and Resources – <http://www.wcu.edu/9817.asp>
 - Symposium on Service Learning & Civic Engagement – <http://www.wcu.edu/9818.asp>
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A Note From The Editor:

We urge you to add your comments to Faculty Forum articles. It enriches the faculty dialogue about these many issues that concern us all. Comment to this article by clicking on this link then select the article under What’s Hot on the right:

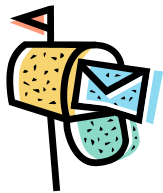
<https://media.wcu.edu/groups/facultyforum/>. The command requires you to use your email username and password to access the article. The Faculty Forum is a publication by and for WCU faculty, so this is our method of limiting access.

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Coulter Faculty Center for Teaching and Learning Responses to ----- Faculty Forum article entitled



The Future of Cullowhee: Staff and Faculty Voice Their Opinions

By Todd A. Collins, J.D., Ph.D.
Assistant Professor, Dept. of Political Science

Hal Herzog, Psychology: *Todd -- great faculty forum. Good data, beautifully written, and important!*

Kyle Carter, Provost: *Todd, I just wanted you to know that I thought your forum piece was great. I think the information is very valuable to the university and illustrates a very nice engagement activity for our students. Nice job!*
kc

Patty Johnson, IT Division: *It's a shame the survey included staff but only faculty are targeted in this article - I'm assuming that the limiting of access is to faculty*

only (and admitting that I didn't try after reading the note about limiting access)??

In any case, I have only 2 comments:

1) WRT whether or not Cullowhee is attractive to new hires/students: I didn't have an option to indicate that it depends very much on the person in question. If a person prefers city life, nothing that can be done to the old Cullowhee area (or anywhere near campus) will matter to that person. So, the question doesn't take into consideration, so much, the people involved.

2) I admit to being embarrassed when asked by some visitors about eating establishments that the Cullowhee Café, I've heard, is a good place to eat but finding it is another question. I suggested they find the building shaped like a Pizza Hut but with no sign indicating what it is. Now, since I rarely venture out of my office for lunch and am guilty of taking the quicker route to/from work (although I admit I rather like the scenery along old 107 much better, in spite of its aging), I'll admit that I don't know whether/not any signage has been added. My instructions were based on the one time I joined a group there (Cullowhee Café).

THANKS for sharing this article - it's quite interesting! I've been attending/working at WCU since '82... have seen much change on campus, very little off campus.

pj

Vera Holland Guise: *As a native of Cullowhee, I found Todd Collins survey results very intriguing. I lived and worked in Asheville many years and returned to Cullowhee 7 years ago to find it changed and at the same time, much the same. While the university grew by leaps and bounds, the village of Cullowhee as I knew it, declined with neglect. It pains me to see this, and I yearn to see it thriving once again as a busy and beloved mountain township, embraced and led by the people who live here. I would be very interested in seeing the results of a similar survey done by the local people.*

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Faculty Forum

From the Faculty Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning

WESTERN CAROLINA UNIVERSITY

CULLOWHEE, NORTH CAROLINA

Vol. 22 No. 7

April 1, 2010

From Miami to Cullowhee: A Frosty Leap of Reason

By Marie-Line Germain, Ph.D.

Assistant Professor of Human Resources and Leadership, Dept. of Human Services

“What should you do in densely-packed snow?” I failed that North Carolina DMV question. I was desperately looking for an answer that involved some snow person building activity. So much for my 22 years of schooling. You may as well have asked me who won the Super Bowl in 2010 (I just checked and it’s New Orleans). Now you know I am TV sports-challenged and I am winter weather clueless. Having moved from Miami, Florida a few months ago to take a faculty position at Western Carolina University (WCU) is my explanation for the latter.

2.2 million; 2.4 million; 74,000. That could be someone’s salary in 1990, 2000, and today, respectively. Rather, it’s the population size of the cities I lived in: Paris, Miami and Asheville. I never said I was cut for rural life, even after a glass of champagne (or two)! Living in Cullowhee would be a stretch for a woman who was Le Louvre’s neighbor for 25 years and a Miami Interstate 95 daily user for another 14 years. Upon landing at Asheville *international* airport for my interview at WCU in 2009, I knew Asheville was where I would want to live. The 2-gate airport did not scare me. However, the flat-out “Original Road Kill Cookbook” (Peterson, 1987) sold at the bookstore near Gate 2 did! Doesn’t the APA formatting make it so much more... digestible? The term organic just got a whole new meaning! What is refreshing is Asheville’s absence of a line for just about anything (including a stall in the girls’ room), and not being searched by Fido, the Transportation Safety Administration’s electronic square-shaped sniff dog trained to find explosive residue.

Teaching 20 year-old undergrad students has been my greatest academic challenge so far. I had been teaching grads or mid-career students forever. Now, although I am still not a pop culture aficionada, I remember to adjust my student learning expectations, and my vernacular. I am embracing the learning experience, nonetheless. I thank them for upgrading my TEXTing vocabulary. I particularly like AAAAA. Many of us know AA. Most of us have heard of AAA. But do you know AAAAA? American Association Against Acronym Abuse. These undergrads are an antidote to aging -- or are they? It took me a few weeks to understand why I would never run into any of my undergrads on campus. Finding them is just a matter of venturing out to the local bar, the campus to-go eateries, or the university library, in that order.

Yet, my department and the university have brought me an incredible amount of support: From setting up my office before I even started my first semester, to providing me with a brand new Mac laptop and its 27-inch monitor; from a phenomenal administrative staff to genuinely caring colleagues; from the prompt technical support, to the endless Hershey’s Kisses supply at the end of my hallway. After all, I am a faculty member in the *Human Services* department. But wait! There is more to this rosy vignette: I even have a jogging coach who is still waiting for me to bring my running shoes to campus! I keep forgetting to put them in the trunk of my car, which, I learned, should contain a 4-ply blanket, a flashlight, and a box of tranquilizers --none of which are to take camping.

So far, the biggest culture shocks have been Ingles and the happy and long-standing marriage between church and state (see rural, small, above). In Florida, we had Publix and Winn-Dixie. Here, I was told, there is *Ingles*. My first reaction was to ask: is it a language school? My question wasn’t that far-fetched. Y’all speak with an accent different from mine and different from those I’ve heard in most U.S. states, Scotland, England, and in the country of its own called Miami.

Maybe I should mention the thermal shock I experienced. Every breathing Asheville has told me this winter has been exceptionally brutal. I'll have to wait another winter to verify if what I hear holds true. In the meantime, I walk on the sunny side of the streets.

I am quite impressed with the city of Asheville. College towns enjoy distinctive demographics. They form a kind of demographic archipelago — distinctive places that exhibit a high degree of cultural coherence. With highly educated and youthful populations, they are far more diverse and cosmopolitan than non-college towns of similar size and location. Professors are perceived as “really smart” and “rich”. I only confess to the former accusation. Finally, I can be a vegetarian without derision. But I'm not, yet (without derision.)

Overall, my situation sounds like a heady combination of career and personal bliss, doesn't it? But there's also a dark side: I have not seen much racial diversity, compared to Miami or Paris. Religious diversity, yes. Tree diversity, yes. Beer diversity, yes. And yet, Asheville's mayor is an African American woman; our Governor is a woman, and so is UNCA's president. And the array of restaurants in Asheville could make your stomach spin. A true United Nations: Japanese, Indian, French, Cuban, Italian, Mexican. Oh, and American. Although the Western North Carolina area has breathtaking sceneries, I love living in downtown Asheville. I truly do. It offers big-city sophistication but small-town ease of life. On a single day, I can pretend to watch the mighty University of North Carolina basketball team play, hear a live performance by violinist Amy Lovinger at the Diana Wortham Theater, watch a French movie at the Fine Arts Theater, and attend the Moody Blues' concert at the Civic Center, all downtown (but not all at the same time).

I confess I don't know Cullowhee as well as I know Asheville. In his article relating results of a survey about Cullowhee's revitalization, Todd Collins (2010) indicated that many employees and students would like to see more pubs, bars, music venues, and other places to socialize in Cullowhee. Please note the “pubs and bars”, will you? He also pointed out that “the area around the University impacts who works and attends the University” (p.2) and that Cullowhee's setting has an impact on faculty recruitment and retention. It has not been the case for me. I knew at the time of my interview that rural living was not for me and that I would live in Asheville, where I would peacefully read my *Road Kill Cookbook*. When I shared that concern with my hiring committee, I was told that many faculty members do the same and that the University of North Carolina at Asheville has offices to accommodate WCU faculty. For me, that was enough to overcome the challenges of working in a more rural area.

I consider myself fortunate to have found a faculty position that fits my career and my personal needs, one that involves a reasonable number of hours per week in the classroom, and NOT another 24 on the Interstate! My commute from downtown Asheville to WCU —in a blizzard — is one hour. By Florida standard, a blizzard is any weather condition that involves water. The drive is painless and rather delightful. I see nature at its best, the breathtaking views of the mountains (and their snow caps), an amazing array of mature evergreen trees, and an avalanche of cultural hints. I did realize that Books on CDs do not work for me; I never seem to find the “right” book. So I make my drive a learning opportunity. Lately, I learned a new word (a backhoe) and that a sheriff, if elected, is expected to have morals. I cannot resist grinning when I pass the city of Balsam. I wonder if its residents know that that very balsam substance is used on a daily basis to keep the long-extinct (since 1924) body of Lenin appealing to the crowd who queue up to see him in his mausoleum in Red Square, Moscow, Russia. Be creative when communing. Fill up your iPod if you have one. Whatever you do, avoid speeding (got caught, got a ticket) and do not TXT while driving (got caught, didn't get a ticket).

Potential faculty should know they have choices. I bet they will come to the same conclusion: I would do it all over again. The collegiality and WCU's support are refreshing, as are the small class sizes. And should new recruits choose to live in Cullowhee, they will realize that WCU is very dynamic, with a calendar of events that makes living in some big cities seem a bother. They, too, will learn. I never knew that people could be so friendly; that organic delicacies could be that affordable; that pedestrians could have the right of way; that my cufflinks are perceived as a sign of European sophistication; and that there is such a thing as an organic mechanic (Haywood Rd, Asheville). Living here has been, so far, a breath of (wintry) fresh air. Some of you may say I'm appallingly naïve and that I have the optimism of a newlywed. I would rather say that my recyclable goblet of organic water is half full.

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Coulter Faculty Center for Teaching and Learning

Responses to the March Faculty Forum Article entitled

Service Learning in the Academic Setting: Benefits vs. Challenges

Glenn Bowen, Ph.D. Director, Center for Service Learning



That was a very interesting article. Very well written. – Anna McFadden

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Faculty Forum

From the Faculty Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning

WESTERN CAROLINA UNIVERSITY

CULLOWHEE, NORTH CAROLINA

Vol. 22, No. 8

May 1, 2010

36 Hours in Greater Cullowhee... Living Close to WCU & Loving It

**By Mary Jean Ronan Herzog (with thanks to the NYT for their travel column)
Educational Leadership and Foundations**

During a search committee meeting recently, I was struck by the ambivalent, almost embarrassed tone among faculty when the candidate asked about where to live. You certainly don't have to live in Cullowhee, was the not-so-subtle message. Lots of faculty live in Asheville, or Waynesville because of its proximity to Asheville. In other words, you can work at WCU but *live* in a really cool city and not have to deal with the inconveniences of rural living. (We lived in Buncombe County for 15 years before moving to Cullowhee, and I love Asheville -- it's a great little city.)

Rural places and people are commonly stereotyped in the media. Whether Cullowhee is really rural is debatable (compare it, for example to Kanab, Utah or Bowdle, South Dakota), and I'm not suggesting that all faculty and staff should be encouraged to live in or near Cullowhee. But living near WCU should not be presented to prospective staff and faculty as a disadvantage.

I wouldn't want a job that required a two-hour commute every day. For Marie-Line Germain, that's not a problem. In her April edition of the Faculty Forum, she praises the wonderful world of Asheville living. She knew she didn't want to live in a rural community, so for her it was a wise choice not to move to Greater Cullowhee. But, living in Cullowhee or one of the communities near WCU has great advantages.

What is there to do if you reside in Greater Cullowhee? Let me steal from the NYT travel column '36 Hours in...' and describe a few things to do when you live near WCU.

Friday:

1. **6:30 or 8:00 a.m. Exercise.** The Jackson County Recreation and Parks Department ([JCRC](#)) is a huge asset. From youth programs through senior fitness, from the [Greenways Project](#) to the [parks](#), there are opportunities for all ages. The JCRC has classes throughout the day and evening, and the low membership fee includes use of the facility and all classes. The Center is only a couple of miles from campus, and it's a new, modern facility in a beautiful setting surrounded by mountains with playgrounds, soccer and ball fields. It's right behind Cullowhee Valley School, and parents can drop their children off at school in time for the 7:55 step aerobics class. Those who attend the 6:30 yoga class meet in the dark, and they can watch the moon setting over the Plott Balsams as their sun salutation welcomes the morning light.
2. **9:00 or 10:00 a.m. Work.** (I love not commuting to work.) There are plenty of neighborhoods within a 5 mile radius of campus, as well as options for those who want to live in the country. I live in a neighborhood three minutes by car or 10 minutes by foot from my office. I appreciate this 'commute' every time I leave the house 10 minutes before my next appointment and get there on time with a few minutes to spare. The *Mad Batter* and *Cat's Nip Café* make a good quick stop for a cup of coffee and a homemade muffin for breakfast.
3. **Noon. Lunch in Cullowhee.** It's always nice to be able to go home for lunch, but there are several options if you want to eat out. Depending on your taste, and if you don't feel like driving, you might choose the *Mad Batter*, *Rolling Stone Burrito* or *Cat's Nip Café*. All these places have good, homemade food and quick service. For a different style of food, you might frequent Bob's, Subway or one of the many dining options on campus. Or you can go to downtown Cullowhee to the *Cullowhee Café*, the oldest restaurant in town at 40+ years – or Papa's Pizza, the China Dragon, or El Torrito.

4. **3:00 p.m. Slump.** Time for a walk. There are lots of walking options in Cullowhee. The entire campus is good for walking and people watching. If you walk between Killian and McKee, you'll see parents waiting for the school bus to drop their children off from Cullowhee Valley School. It reminds me of my own children – now grown – coming to my office after school, meeting their friends, doing their homework, or getting in trouble for skateboarding on the brick walks and ledges.

The Fine Art Museum in the FPAC is a good place to make a regular stop on campus walks. It's a beautiful space, and the exhibits are among the best in the region. Or, on a pretty, warm day, a short drive south from campus takes you to East LaPorte Park on the Tuckaseegee River, where people are wading, playing with their dogs or shooting baskets on the courts. Cullowhee is one of the many areas of NC that has a changing cultural landscape, and it's not uncommon to see large groups of people of color at the parks or recreation center playing ball after school and on the weekends.

5. **5:30 p.m. TGIF!** The University Club ([UClub](#)) is open for TGIF, and it's a good place to catch up on the latest campus news and speculation, or it may be one of the monthly special events like the Gourmet Microbrew Tasting or the Chili Cook-off. The UClub is open to all faculty and staff, and it's a good place to meet people from other departments. Some Fridays, my department gathers at my house for our own private TGIF. Or I may just go home, work in the yard, and get ready to go to Sylva for a book-signing at City Lights Bookstore and dinner at one of the downtown restaurants.
6. **7:00 p.m. Dinner in Sylva.** Downtown Sylva is just a few miles from campus and has an authentic and active Main Street. When we first moved to Cullowhee from Asheville, downtown Sylva (like downtown Asheville at that time) was near-death. The Sylva merchants rose to the challenge to recreate downtown when Wal-Mart came to the outskirts threatening its final demise.
7. **Dinner options:** There are several restaurants in downtown Sylva. All the restaurants on Main Street would be popular in Asheville, and if I still lived there, I would probably frequent the same ones I do now. My favorites are [Lulu's on Main](#); [Guadalupe Cafe](#) and Spring Street Café. Spring Street recently reopened, and the *Travelin' Grits Boys* are playing, so it's a good choice tonight.

After dinner, the *Signature Brew Coffee Company* is a good place to stop for a cup of freshly roasted, fair-trade coffee or herb tea and a homemade cookie from the *Mad Batter*. They have live music on some nights, at *Guadalupe* and several other places, including Papou's Wine Shop. From May to December, the first Friday is *Sylva After Dark*, and the art galleries and shops are open late for strollers who can drink a glass of wine, nibble on some munchies, and chat with friends.

Saturday:

8. **Exercise options.** At the JCRC, there's Spinning at 8:00 and Mat Pilates at 9:00. And all around there are runners running and walkers walking on tracks around the JCRC, WCU campus and adjacent roads. You might see swimmers swimming in the Tuck above the Cullowhee dam.
9. **Campus and Community Gatherings.** Most weekends have campus or Greater Cullowhee activities going on – a 5K for 'Girls on the Run,' a track meet, baseball game or litter pick-up and landscaping on Old Cullowhee Road with CuRvE and the Honors College students. For LGBT individuals and friends, groups and organizations such as Out in the Mountains and local PFLAGS, in combination with WCU student groups, provide gathering opportunities.
10. **Shopping.** Most things I need are available between Cullowhee and Dillsboro. There are far too many businesses to name them all in this short space, but you can go to the *Downtown Sylva Association* [website](#) map and the *Visit Dillsboro* [website](#) for a complete list. I'll mention a few of the typical Saturday morning shopping stops I like to make.
11. **Produce.** I start at the [Jackson County Farmer's Market](#) beside the Bridge Park in downtown Sylva. It's the place to get early greens, garlic and cut flowers, visit with friends, renew acquaintances and listen to Ian Moore, fiddler extraordinaire, singing and dancing. I also shop for produce and fresh eggs at Terry's Produce, a stand just down the street from town.

Seafood. My next stop is usually [Eric's Fresh Fish Market](#), on Mill Street, a welcome addition to living in Greater Cullowhee, with a delicious selection of fresh, frozen and smoked fish. It's only open Wednesday through Saturday, and there's usually a short line. You can order by email earlier in the week.

Baked Goods. [Annie's Naturally Bakery](#) is open for coffee and a bagel or croissant as well as lunch. Annie's has a full selection of baked goods, including breads and sweet and savory treats, and they are open every day except Sunday.

Book Lovers. There are plenty of books in Greater Cullowhee - Hunter Library, the Jackson County Library, the Friends of the Library used book store, and [City Lights Bookstore](#). City Lights, is an independent book store where you can trade your used copies for credit, buy new books or place an order and attend regularly scheduled events, readings, and signings. Treat yourself to a special outing at *Harry Alter Books* (<http://harryalterbooks.com/>) on 23/74 just north of Sylva for used scholarly and rare books.

My Saturday morning shopping over, now it's time for adventure. Below you will find tips on indoor and outdoor adventures around Cullowhee written by aficionados, from biking to gardening. As you can see there's plenty to do, and all things considered, I would have to say, *I'd rather be in Cullowhee*.

Coulter Faculty Center for Teaching and Learning Responses to This Month's Article Entitled

36 Hours in Greater Cullowhee...Living Close to WCU & Loving It

By Mary Jean Ronan Herzog

Editorial Preface: Our author this month asked specific faculty to read and comment on her article, adding their particular notes of interest. We hope you will add your comments to the dialogue.

Biking by Chris Cooper, Political Science & Public Affairs

Cullowhee is arguably the best place in the country to ride bikes. It's so good in fact that Sundog Cycling located on Caney Fork Road brings cyclists in from across the country to ride on our roads. There are scores of serious and not-so-serious cyclists who work on campus and can help you out. If you want an easy, but pretty spin, you can take off from campus, head over the Cullowhee airport (that's not the easy part), then down and wind your way next to the Tuckaseegee River toward Dillsboro. When you get to Dillsboro, just get on the opposite side of River Road and work your way back to Cullowhee. A slightly harder, but beautiful ride would have you heading over toward Caney Fork to the end and back. If you're really feeling like a bigger workout, be sure to try the Ring of Fire--a ride beginning with a grueling climb up Cullowhee Mountain and ending with an exhilarating rocket-ship ride down Tilley Creek Road. Local resident Scott Baker has been known to hit 60 MPH coming down this hill if the wind's at his back. If the 40 mile, 4700' of climbing is not enough, you can always head to the Blue Ridge Parkway through Tuckaseegee and tackle the 72 mile, 7500' of climbing aptly named Ring of Hades. Although Political Scientist Gibbs Knotts sometimes seeks out more climbing after this ride, most of us will be plenty tired.

If riding off-road is your thing, you can head right out of campus up Wayahutta Rd (which is, oddly, pronounced like "Wurryhut") towards the ATV Park where you'll find dozens of difficult, but fun trails. If you look carefully you might see Geologist Mark Lord struggling up one of those hills. If you don't mind a short drive, we're only about 30 minutes away from the renowned trails at Tsali where you might find Justin Menickelli taking a lap on the left loop.

If all of this riding takes its toll on your bike, you can just wheel it down to Motion Makers Bike Shop in Sylva where they can work on your bike and give you tips on the next hill to climb.

Activities for Children by Libby McRae, History

First, my girls, 8 and 10, go to school less than one mile from campus. Their bus ride is less than 5 minutes, and they are dropped off at my building. In their spare time, they wander to Caney Fork Creek, visit East LaPorte Park, play soccer or basketball or ride their bikes and scooters at Jackson County Recreation Center. Some afternoons, we feed the koi at NCCAT or visit the Curriculum Center at Hunter Library for children's books and puppets. There are dance, karate, and art classes in Sylva and violin, piano, fiddle and yoga classes in Cullowhee. The Jackson County Swim team practices year around. They can paint pottery in Dillsboro, learn about gardening at the Jackson County Farmer's Market, practice rolling a kayak at Reid Gym, or participate in their school's clogging team or choir or band or Girls on the Run.

In warmer weather, there are hikes galore; they see their teachers and friends at the Sylva Pool (a public pool that is very affordable). They can attend reading programs at the local library, Super Saturdays at Mark Watson Park, go to soccer, creativity, basketball, art, or theater camp. And if scheduled activities aren't your thing, they can join mine hunting for morel mushrooms or planning a woodland war between fairies and monsters.

“Surf’s Up!” WCU and Whitewater Recreation by Hal Herzog, Psychology

Western Carolina University is situated smack in the middle of the world’s best whitewater. This is not hyperbole. With a year-round paddling season, dam-controlled rivers that can be turned on with the flick of switch and levels of difficulty ranging from placid Class II to the terrifying Class V+ rapids of the Upper Raven’s Fork, Jackson County is as close to canoe/kayak heaven as it gets. No wonder [Backpacker Magazine](#) named Sylva the best town in America to raise a whitewater family.

A beginner-friendly section of the Tuckaseegee River practically flows through campus. My favorite spot on the Tuck is The Slab, a “park and play hole” that attracts kayakers from four states. While it’s an hour and a half drive for the hotdog Asheville regulars, the Slab is eleven minutes from my office door. And, yes, I have gone play-boating between classes.

Admittedly, whitewater sports are not for everyone. (One faculty member told me he quit when he realized there are two types of kayaking injuries – shoulder dislocation and death.) But if you think you might want to become a whitewater rat, I recommend taking one of the weekend courses offered by Base Camp Cullowhee or showing up at a free kayak rolling clinic that Base Camp regularly conducts in the toasty waters of Reid Gym.

Keep in mind, however, that whitewater kayaking is the crack cocaine of outdoor recreation. Pretty soon your car will smell like moldy socks and your friends’ eyes will glaze over when you launch into yet another monologue on “aerial loops,” “terminal hydraulics,” and “flat-water cartwheels.” You’ll know you are hooked when it starts to rain and you get a text message that the Upper Nanny is running, and you think, “The hell with tenure. I can finish my critical analysis of the influence of Wittgenstein on Snoop Dogg later.” Surfs up! Gotta go...

Fishing by David Claxton, Health & Human Performance

You can certainly go fishing in Asheville, but by the time you drive home, get your fishing gear, go to the river and get a hook in the water, you could already have taken home enough fish for dinner, or caught and released quite a few from the Tuckaseegee River if you lived in Cullowhee.

If you’re learning to fly fish, or just enjoy catch and release, the 4-5 miles of the delayed harvest section of the Tuck from the bridge over 107 down to the riverside park in Dillsboro is heavily stocked with trout. The river is not too big to make wading difficult, and in most places it’s wide and open, making for a good cast without getting your fly caught in the rhododendrons. You have to use a single hook and artificial lures in that section of the river, and you have to turn your fish loose, but if you want to pretend you’re starring in “A River Runs Through It”, that’s a pretty cool place to do it.

The rest of the river, from East LaPorte to the 107 bridge at the old Jack the Dipper and from Dillsboro to Fontana Lake is hatchery supported, which means you can keep up to seven fish a day. You can fly fish those waters if you want, but you can also use lures with more than one hook (although Pete Bates in NRM likens that to the use of dynamite to catch fish) or live worms or even corn (yes, yellow sweet corn right out of the can) if you want your 9-year old to have a pretty good chance of catching one just below the Cullowhee dam or somewhere else in the hatchery supported sections.

If you want to go after more “natural” trout, you can fish in the upper Tuckaseegee around Panthertown or in the streams of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. Those waters require an artificial lure and a single hook, and they take a little more skill than the fish in the Tuck. But if that’s the kind of fishing you’re looking for, you can easily get to Deep Creek on the other side of Bryson City and have a fly in the water before you can get to your house in Asheville.

Here are two links about locations in Jackson County:

<http://www.flyfishingtrail.com/3/miscellaneous2.htm>

<http://travel.nytimes.com/2009/05/15/travel/escapes/15fly.html?scp=2&sq=%27cullowhee%27&st=nyt>

Hiking by Maurice Phipps, Health & Human Performance

Cullowhee is nestled in the Blue Ridge Mountains next to the Great Smokies and so is surrounded by many hiking areas. Within a short time you could be in a wilderness area like Shining Rock, Ellicott Rock, recreational areas like the Nantahala National Forest, National Parks – the Great Smoky Mountains National Park and the Blue Ridge Parkway, as well as the Wild and Scenic River trails of the Chattooga or National Scenic trails like the Appalachian Trail. Don't forget the State Parks! Gorges State Park is just over the hill near Sapphire.

Closer to home we have trails in Pinnacle Park and to Black Rock both of which overlook Sylva. Just up 107, Panthertown Valley is full of cliffs, waterfalls and overlooks. Over 281 there are short and long hikes to more waterfalls like Paradise Falls (there are two), the Bonas Defeat Gorge for a more exciting challenge and Dismal Falls. Dismal Falls – we have wondered about the name as it is anything but dismal and is actually one of the most spectacular hiking experiences in the region as it is like dropping into the “Lost World” when you climb down onto the ledge beneath the massive cliff there. (Dismal Falls is recommended only with someone who knows the way.)

These are just some examples – there are many more trails and wild areas to test your hiking and navigation skills or to just enjoy a stroll. Coming soon right into Cullowhee will be the Greenway to connect with the trails we will be building on the Millennium Campus. You don't have to go far from Cullowhee to use those Hiking boots.

Back to the Farm by Vera Guise, Undergraduate Studies & Faculty Fellow, Coulter Faculty Center

I, too, lived in Asheville for over 34 years, and have been back in Cullowhee, where I grew up, for almost eight years now. At first, I was very torn about making the move, but felt I needed to be near an aging parent, who, as it turned out, was able to live at home for the remainder of his life because we made the change. I must say, I've only missed two things Asheville had to offer: a close proximity to my grandchildren and access to the fabric shops, which we now don't have because Wal-Mart pushed them all out of business before they, too, stopped carrying fabrics! Other than these two inconveniences, I haven't missed Asheville one bit, especially the increasingly hectic pace of Asheville living.

I like Mary Jean Herzog's term “Greater Cullowhee” -- local folks whose lives have been spent for multiple generations tucked in the coves and hollers would appreciate it, though Hog Back Mountain, Punkin' Town and Tilley Creek sound more like home to the “from here folks”. Two of the biggest rewards of coming back to Cullowhee for me, besides the deep gratification of caring for a parent, have been my relationship with WCU, and the satisfaction of tending the gardens my parents and their parents fed large families from, though this year it is a bittersweet undertaking to plant without my dad at my elbow telling me just how it should be done.

“Slow food” is a “growing” national trend, a term used to describe the new emphasis on growing one's own food, or buying from local farmers rather than eating food from grocery chains, food that's been grown by strangers far away and most likely stored in cold storage for long periods of time before ever reaching the local store. CSA (community supported agriculture) is also a growing trend, with local farmers offering a “share” of their harvest each week through the season for a flat annual fee—there are several CSA gardens in Greater Cullowhee! North Carolina now has an Agritourism office (<http://www.VisitNCFarms.com/>) that assists with networking among growers and promoting farming and tourism activities related to farm and rural life, and our own Jackson County Farmer's Market now sponsors annual farm tours in the county that draw people from far and wide. The NC Extension Education system, with a horticulturist, a forester, a home extension agent and a 4-H leader in every county is, in my opinion, one of our greatest government inventions. John Naisbitt, author of the Megatrends books, predicted that as life in the U.S. became more high-tech, we would yearn for more high-touch, and he was right! Every new food contamination scare you see on the news makes “home grown” more meaningful! Heritage and Agri-tourism are now the primary economic engines of our state, and places like Greater Cullowhee will increasingly become the destination vacations of all those city folks who yearn for safe, fresh food straight from the field, and a quiet place of peace under a big blue Carolina sky.

More Miscellaneous Joys of Not Commuting by Brian Gastle, English

The lack of commute is a wonderful benefit. 2 hours on the road (to and from Asheville) vs. 2 hours drinking G&Ts on my porch (or Kinser's porch, or Heffelfinger's porch, or, well, you get the point), or gardening, or reading, or writing, or really just about anything but spending 2 hours in the car in I-40, is quite nice.

And while Asheville is a small city, Sylva and Cullowhee are small towns in every sense of the term. Most of us "aren't from around here" (as they say around here) – we weren't born here nor do we have ancestral ties to the area – but the community makes this home for us: when Terry at Terry's produce congratulates Catherine on an award announced in the Herald, when I don't need to ask for extra pickles at the Cullowhee Café, when Hollifield Jewelers helps me hide the surprise present...

As for other things to do:

Catch a movie – at \$7 a ticket and \$5 for a bucket of popcorn (with a free refill) the Quinn is less expensive than virtually any other theater around. And WCU has a regular selection of first-run and foreign movies as well as other special movie events.

Volunteer – organizations like A.R.F. (<http://www.a-r-f.org> Watershed Association of the Tuckasegee (www.watnc.org/), Friends of the Library (www.fojcmf.org), and the Community Table (www.communitytable.org) offer opportunities to engage with the community.

A Note From The Editor:

We urge you to add your comments to Faculty Forum articles. It enriches the faculty dialogue about these many issues that concern us all. Comment to this article by clicking on this link then select the article under What's Hot on the top right: <https://media.wcu.edu/groups/facultyforum/>. The command requires you to use your email username and password to access the article. The Faculty Forum is a publication by and for WCU faculty, so this is our method of limiting access.

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