

## From the Provost

I hope you are having a good semester; it's hard to believe it is already November! So many exciting things have been happening at West Chester University lately. This newsletter will share details about some of those activities, including the re-opening of the planetarium and our new doctorate of nursing practice program.

I also wanted to provide an update on several accreditation visits that recently occurred. The Forensic Science Education Programs Accreditation Commission (FEPAC) was on campus the week of September 30th for a re-accreditation visit for the BS in forensic and toxicological chemistry. This program prepares students for positions in toxicological and crime laboratories. Full approval is expected following the final report from the site visit team.

In addition, the Council on Education for Public Health (CEPH) was on campus the week of October 21st for a site visit for the Master of Public Health (MPH) program. During the seven years since its inception, the MPH program has experienced significant growth and is now one of the largest graduate programs at WCU.

Accreditation reports and visits that are due in 2014 include the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) and the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE).

I hope you have a happy Thanksgiving and enjoy the holiday season!



Dr. Linda Lamwers

## ACADEMIC AFFAIRS STRATEGIC PLAN UPDATE

As one of the nation's top regional comprehensive public universities, West Chester University is ready for even greater success. In preparation, the campus community developed a shared vision to set the institution's direction for the next decade. That vision, the *Building on Excellence* strategic plan, has now been launched in Academic Affairs and throughout the university. The implementation strategy divides the time-span of the strategic plan into three phases, with the first phase setting the foundation for the subsequent two phases.

Academic Affairs held a *Building on Excellence* retreat and planning session in late August. Vernon Harper, associate vice president for planning and academic administration, said that the goal of the retreat was to investigate the plan's Academic Affairs sub-goals by year, and to identify consensus related to those sub-goals.

It was determined that six sub-goals will be the primary focus in academic year 2014. They are: academic planning (goal 1.0); assessment of student learning (1.1); graduation rates (1.6); distance education (3.1); offsite branch campus (3.3); and graduate education (3.4).

Within each sub-goal are distinct areas of emphasis, said Harper. For example, Academic Affairs is instituting new initiatives, such as a Transfer Task Force, with the goal of improving the transfer experience while improving graduation rates.

Looking ahead to year two, academic year 2015, Academic Affairs will focus its efforts on three sub-goals: ensuring that the general education program is high quality (goal 1.2); improving advising (1.5); and expanding access to adult learners (3.7).

Revising the general education program is an exciting component of year two, noted Harper. Faculty will be working to develop an outcomes-based curriculum that will provide students with a strong liberal arts foundation as well as prepare them for citizenship in a technologically advancing global society. By the fall of 2017, Academic Affairs will be rolling out a general education program designed to be more engaging, as well as easier to navigate.

*“The plan . . . reflects the thinking of more than 3,000 individuals on and off campus.”*

By year three, academic year 2016, Academic Affairs will turn its attention to advancing research and scholarship (goal 1.4); obtaining national recognition for teaching (2.1); international experience (2.4); and ensuring quality technology, facilities and support (4.2).

Harper has been involved in the strategic planning process since joining West Chester University in the fall of 2012. “We spent a lot of time listening to people’s ideas, concerns and comments,” said Harper. “The plan, as a whole, reflects the thinking of more than 3,000 individuals on and off campus. The strategic planning team worked very hard to ensure that the plan is inclusive.”

To learn more about *Building on Excellence*, go to <http://www.wcupa.edu/StrategicPlanning/>.

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## SKY’S THE LIMIT IN UNIVERSITY’S RENOVATED PLANETARIUM



This summer, Jimmy Buffett’s performance in Camden, N.J., sold out in a few hours. But musicians aren’t the only kind of stars putting on sold-out shows. The stars as seen from West Chester University’s newly renovated planetarium also are a hot ticket – the October public program sold out in two hours and the upcoming November 15 show in just 35 minutes.

“Our public programs have always been popular but now that our renovations are complete, everybody wants to come and check us out,” said Karen Vanlandingham, an associate professor and director of the planetarium. After being shut for four months, the planetarium reopened on Oct. 3 at a gala in honor of Sandra Pritchard Mather, an alumna and retired faculty member who made a generous gift toward the renovation project. The planetarium has been renamed the Dr. Sandra F. Pritchard Mather Planetarium.

Renovations included replacing the planetarium’s circa 1969 mechanical projector with a state-of-the-art digital projector that provides ultra-high resolution for maximum image clarity and sharpness. The old projector could only show sky views from Earth but the new system allows a look far beyond our solar system. It opens up all sorts of exciting new viewing options within our galaxy, too. “We can zoom in and fly to Mars or orbit Saturn,” noted Vanlandingham. “The possibilities are endless.”

The planetarium’s old dome was replaced with a slightly larger 32-foot dome. But it’s the technology, not the size, which makes the new dome special. “The old dome had exposed rivets but this one was made with nanoseams – meaning there are no overlapping panels or exposed rivets,” said Vanlandingham. “When the show is underway, it looks completely seamless.”

The planetarium features high-definition surround sound and comfortable new seats that have neck rests. “Students come to the planetarium each week for their lab classes. Before the renovations, someone always was complaining of a stiff neck by the end of class,” noted Vanlandingham, as she leaned back and demonstrated the features of a padded neck rest.

Although many things have changed at the planetarium, some things remain



*Dr Sandra Pritchard Mather cuts the ribbon to open the new planetarium named in her honor.*



the same – like the fact that the shows are live, and moderated by Vanlandingham.

“Many planetariums purchase canned shows, and these kind of productions have their value. It would be nice to have one for preschool groups, for example,” said Vanlandingham. “Eventually, we may purchase a canned show for such purposes. But the fact that all our shows are live means that we can tailor each show to the needs of the audience.”

In addition to monthly public programs and use by WCU students in astronomy labs, the planetarium is utilized by K-12 school groups, and community groups, ranging from senior citizen clubs to Scouts. The most frequently requested programs are those about asteroids, seasonal changes in the skies, and black holes.

To sign up for the December 20 program, “So You Want to Buy a Star,” call 610-436-2266. Reservations will be taken starting Dec. 2, so if you’re interested in attending, get ready to speed-dial when the box office opens at 8:15 a.m. that morning.

To schedule a group program, go to - [http://www.wcupa.edu/\\_academics/sch\\_cas.esc/forms/Reservations.aspx](http://www.wcupa.edu/_academics/sch_cas.esc/forms/Reservations.aspx).

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## NEW DOCTORATE TAKING THE UNIVERSITY BY STORM

“It was the perfect storm,” said Charlotte Mackey, chair of West Chester University’s nursing department, describing the confluence of events that led to the launch of the university’s first doctorate – the doctorate of nursing practice (DNP) – earlier this fall.



First, an influential study by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and Institute of Medicine identified a need for high-quality health care, which cannot be achieved without exceptional nursing care and leadership. These expanded roles will require that more nurses be educated at the doctoral level. The national shortage of nurses and nursing educators will soon reach critical proportions, according to the report, which was released in 2010.

In addition, advance practice nurses, including midwives, nurse anesthetists, nurse practitioners and clinical nurse specialists, will soon be expected to have a doctorate to practice. The American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN) suggested that the doctorate be the terminal degree for ad-

vanced practice nursing beginning in 2015.

Finally, Mackey noted that the Affordable Care Act will open up new opportunities for doctoral-level nurses because greater numbers of Americans will be utilizing healthcare in the months and years ahead.

WCU’s DNP is the first doctoral program of its kind in the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education (PASSHE). It was made possible by the 2012 passage of the Commonwealth’s Higher Education Modernization Act, which gives all state universities the ability to offer applied or professional doctorates.

Mackey had no doubt that WCU’s nursing department was the logical choice for a DNP. The department has earned an excellent reputation for its bachelor’s and master’s programs, as well as its fast-track “Advance to BSN,” a second degree program for individuals who already have a bachelor’s degree who want to become nurses. It also offers a popular RN to BSN program.

Consider, too, the fact that there are so many advance-practice nurses and hospitals within an easy drive to West Chester. Sixty percent of all Pennsylvania-licensed advance practice nurses, and about half of the commonwealth’s hospitals, are within a 75-mile radius of the university. In addition, 82% of hospitals in Delaware, 48% of New Jersey hospitals, and 35% of Maryland hospitals also fall within that 75-mile radius. “We didn’t need to do any advertising,” said Mackey. “We put information about our program on our website but that was it. Prospective students have been coming to us via word-of-mouth.”

The first cohort of 10 students began their studies with an in-person, two-credit class, “Transition to Doctoral Study,” which was held at the Graduate Business Center for four days in mid-October. All other classes will be held entirely on-

line. Seven of the 19 faculty members in the nursing department are eligible to teach DNP courses, with an additional faculty member expected to be hired for fall 2014.

“Although the DNP is an online program, the students enjoyed meeting in person for this first class and some say they plan to study together in person,” noted Mackey. “Everyone in the first cohort happens to be from Pennsylvania, but I expect we will attract students from other states in the future.” The second DNP cohort, of 15 students, will begin in February, with two 15-person cohorts each academic year, thereafter.

Mackey said that the launching of the new doctorate has been, without a doubt, the pinnacle of her career. “I wasn’t teaching ‘Transition to Doctoral Study,’ but I had to be there for that first class meeting,” said Mackey, with a big grin. “After all the work and planning to make it happen, it was exciting to see the DNP actually get underway.”

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## FACULTY MEMBERS TO BE HONORED AT WINTER COMMENCEMENT

Several West Chester University faculty will be honored for their achievements at Winter Commencement, which will be held on Sunday, December 15.

The E. Riley Holman Memorial Faculty Award, which is given to a faculty member who demonstrates innovative teaching techniques that foster student creativity, will be presented to Dr. Donna Sanderson in the department of early and middle grades education.

The Distinguished Sponsored Research Award will go to Dr. Kevin Aptowicz, of the department of physics. This award recognizes a faculty member who has made a significant contribution to the scholarship of the university community through the acquisition of external grants from peer-reviewed funding sources.

The Council of Trustees recognizes distinguished creative achievements by current West Chester University faculty members through its Trustees’ Achievement Award. This year’s award is being presented to Dr. Charles Hardy, a member of the department of history.

Although the Lindback Distinguished Teaching Award is typically presented at Winter Commencement, this year it will be awarded during the Faculty Retirement Luncheon on Nov. 6. Dr. Linda Stevenson, of the department of political science, will receive this award, which is presented to a faculty member for demonstrated excellence in teaching, the development of a course(s) based upon innovative concepts, or the development of an innovative method of teaching.

Several retired members of the university faculty will be designated emeritus/emerita professors at Winter Commencement. They are being honored with this designation because of their major contributions to the university and/or their major contributions to their academic fields. This year’s honorees are Dr. William Hewitt, from the department of history; Dr. Gail Bollin and Dr. Frances Slostad from the department of early and middle grades; Dr. Larry Nelson from the department of music theory, history and composition; Dr. Louis Porter from the department of psychology; and Dr. Richard Yoder, from the department of kinesiology.

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## CONGRESSMAN JIM GERLACH VISITS WCU

U.S. Congressman Jim Gerlach, who represents Pennsylvania’s sixth congressional district, visited campus in late October to meet with WCU students. Seen here, in the Phillips Conference Room, Gerlach gave a talk to the Department of Political Science’s Honor Society, Pi Sigma Alpha, and other interested students. Afterwards, he answered questions on topics ranging from gun laws to the recent government shutdown. Hayley Dunn, a WCU senior political science major, is interning with Congressman Gerlach and helped facilitate the visit to campus.

