

Other Areas of Distinction

Other Areas of Distinction - Please describe your university's admirable characteristics and accomplishments, including services, programs, student success, and community engagement.

The Southeastern Pennsylvania Autism Resource Center (SPARC)

The Southeastern Pennsylvania Autism Resource Center (SPARC) is a nonprofit clinic primarily serving individuals on the autism spectrum. SPARC provides center- and community-based diagnostic, therapeutic, and educational services as well as consultative services to educational and community organizations, such as parent groups, schools, daycares, hospitals, and other medical providers.

More than a decade ago, Phillip Duncan, a professor at West Chester University—now professor emeritus—began placing undergraduate students as therapists working with children on the autism spectrum. One of Dr. Duncan's students, Jennifer Dawson (Class of '97)—greatly inspired by her undergraduate experiences—dedicated her career to working with individuals with developmental disabilities, within the field of behavior analysis. In partnership with West Chester University, Dr. Duncan applied for and received grant funding to conduct a regional needs assessment for behavioral-based autism services. Dr. Dawson worked with Dr. Duncan on the resulting grant to determine a significant need for high quality services for individuals with autism. This evidence provided Drs. Duncan and Dawson the opportunity to establish SPARC.

SPARC first opened in March 2007 and partnered with the West Chester University Foundation in May 2007, receiving its nonprofit 501c3 status in October 2007. During the early days, Dr. Dawson provided behavioral feeding treatment, behavioral consultations, and diagnostic evaluations to area families. Dr. Corinne Murphy, currently chair of WCU's department of special education, joined the clinic in the summer of 2007 as a volunteer and research consultant, running SPARC's first social skills group and has served as the Center's executive director since 2012.

The current partnership between SPARC and WCU offers greatly expanded educational opportunities, providing both graduate and undergraduate students majoring in psychology, communicative disorders, and special education, the opportunity for training in autism and applied behavior analysis, as well as the opportunity to provide direct service to the center's clients under the supervision of top clinicians in the field. WCU students completing work at SPARC are heavily recruited by the top graduate programs in the country for studying applied behavior analysis and autism, including Western Michigan, Ohio State, North Texas, and Temple universities.

HEAT Institute

The HEAT (Heat Illness Evaluation Avoidance and Treatment) Institute supports nationally recognized independent research on heat illness prevention, evaluation, analysis and treatment.

The institute is dedicated to conducting independent research related to the evaluation, avoidance and treatment of heat-related illness in athletes. The institute is interested in collaborating with individuals and private foundations seeking to support and promote independent and unbiased research on thermoregulation and body fluid balance in athletes at risk for heat illness.

The institute's research is published in peer-reviewed journals such as the *American Journal of Sports Medicine*, *British Journal of Sports Medicine*, *Journal of Athletic Training and Medicine* and *Science in Sports and Exercise*. The institute's numerous studies involve athletes who routinely practice and play in environmentally stressful conditions and include investigations into the following:

- Core temperature responses
- Sweat rates and fluid turnover
- Sweat sodium losses
- Hypovolemic hyponatremia
- Fluid and electrolyte replacement
- Mechanisms implicated in exercise-associated muscle cramping

Other Areas of Distinction (Continued)

Assurance of Student Learning

The Academic Affairs division has instituted a process for evaluating student learning assessment plans for all graduate and undergraduate programs. The goal of this process was to better understand the quality of program-level assessment plans and communicate a consistent message to faculty as to what needs to be included in a high-quality assessment plan. Through the use of the assurance of student learning (ASL) rubric there is now more transparency with regard to the institutional expectation related to academic program student learning assessment. Under the direction of the faculty associate for teaching, learning, and assessment, the university assessment advisory committee and the associate deans have been responsible for reviewing program plans each year and providing feedback (using the rubric as a guide) to programs. In addition to scores for each element of the rubric, feedback is provided so programs can improve plan where appropriate in an effort to obtain better student learning outcome results.

Center for Contemplative Studies at West Chester University

Contemplative Studies is an interdisciplinary field focused on the application of contemplative practices drawn from the full range of philosophical and spiritual traditions to promote human flourishing in the lined spheres of intellectual, physical, and spiritual development. The center has three areas of activity. First, it delivers educational opportunities in contemplative studies for students, professionals, clinicians, and educators. For students, the center offers an 18-credit undergraduate minor in contemplative studies, as well as significant opportunities for graduate students (in public health, social work, nursing, and counseling) to accomplish their field placement hours as paid graduate assistants and volunteer research assistants. For the professional community, the center presents a monthly continuing education series on contemplative topics. Second, the center supports the WCU community and local organizations with contemplative programs. WCU students, staff, and faculty are offered daily opportunities to practice mindful movement and mindfulness meditation, as well as occasional retreat days. Local organizations can request programs, from workshops to 8-week courses, and retreats, to fit their needs and schedules. Third, the center's faculty is committed to adding to the research base in mindfulness-based interventions.

Dr. Edwin Cottrell Entrepreneurial Leadership Center

The Dr. Edwin Cottrell Entrepreneurial Leadership Center serves as a catalyst for regional economic development by promoting entrepreneurship at West Chester University, in Chester County, and throughout southeastern Pennsylvania. The center offers seminars and workshops, guest lectures, and online resources. Each year, the center participates in Global Entrepreneurship Week, designed to celebrate entrepreneurship around the globe; hosts the annual WCU Business Idea Competition; and partners with the Pennsylvania State System to host a business plan competition.

Center for Social and Economic Policy Research

The Center for Social & Economic Policy Research specializes in public opinion research. The center provides up-to-date quantitative research, combining superior service with academic expertise. It supports local economic development by conducting marketing and opinion surveys, evaluation studies and other types of attitudinal research.

WCU's Marching Band

The Incomparable Golden Rams Marching Band is truly a program of distinction. With 325 students representing all WCU colleges, this ensemble frequently presents shows throughout the region, winning numerous prizes and awards. In 2015, the Golden Rams Marching Band was invited to the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade in New York City. They performed before a crowd of 3.5 million spectators, in addition to 50 million people worldwide who watched on TV.

Twardowski Career Development Center

The Career Development Center supports student and alumni success by providing programs, services, employment and networking opportunities that give WCU graduates a competitive edge in the job market. The center assisted individuals via 1,743 appointments and drop-ins in 2014-15, a 10% increase from the previous year. The center conducted more than 220 programs, class presentations, and career events, serving more than 6,000 participants. Ram Career Network, WCU's centralized career management system, connects hundreds of employers and students via on-campus recruiting, job postings, and career fairs. There were more than 61,000 visits to the site in 2014-15. The On-Campus Recruiting Program connected 68 organizations with WCU students and alumni, for a total of 808 interviews. In addition, six career fairs and networking events brought 191 hiring organizations to campus to connect with some 1,200 students and alumni.

Other Areas of Distinction (Continued)

Student Leadership Training

The Office of Student Leadership and Involvement set new participation records this past academic year. A total of 2,662 students enrolled in formal leadership training programs in the 2014-15 academic year. The fall Involvement Fair and spring Organization Fair were well attended; more than 2,000 students attended the spring event. The Community Engagement Scholars program piloted this fall and in spring, with 10 faculty and 10 student leaders from nine academic departments participating. Community Engagement Scholars attended workshops to build their leadership skills, which helped to support the service-learning and community engagement portion of the course.

Service-Learning and Volunteer Programs

The Office of Service-Learning and Volunteer Programs experienced a very successful 2014-2015 academic year, with nearly 7,500 students performing more than 812,000 hours of public service through service-learning coursework. This set a new record for service-learning at WCU. Co-curricular service programs generated an additional 93,000-plus hours of student public service, for a grand total exceeding 900,000 hours of service. Additionally, students raised \$146,371 for local organizations. In 2015, Service-Learning and Volunteer Programs facilitated six Alternative Break service trips, providing WCU students the opportunity to volunteer with community organizations throughout the nation and world. As a result of the University's culture of community service, WCU was selected for the President's Higher Education Community Service Honor Roll. WCU also is the recipient of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching's Community Engagement Classification, which recognizes outstanding outreach and partnerships, as well as community engagement efforts.

Demonstration and Application Center

The Demonstration and Application Center is a hands-on technology center hosting new and emerging products offered by the technology industry and WCU business partners. The center provides a platform for sharing ideas and access to cutting-edge technology and resources. Information Services team members, faculty, staff and students are able to analyze usability and integration of technology within the context of higher education settings. In addition, Information Services team members work with business partners to understand their technology product offerings and determine feasibility, potential use and benefits of the technology via product demonstrations or training presented at the center.

RECAP Conference

Since 1996, WCU's Information Services has hosted the RECAP (Resources for the Electronic Classroom: A Faculty-Student Partnership) conference, which brings faculty and IT professionals together to share knowledge on technology use in the classroom. This year's conference included participants from 16 universities statewide, as well as the Office of the Chancellor and five other educational organizations. The conference shares best practices and innovations, encourages collaboration, and addresses current topics of interest in the use of technology in the classroom.

Summer Undergraduate Research Institute

Embedding research into the undergraduate experience greatly enhances student development. To provide such a platform, in 2014 the Council on Undergraduate Research and Office of Research and Sponsored Programs established WCU's Summer Undergraduate Research Institute. The program provides students time to pursue their academic passions – from traditional research in a laboratory setting to creating musical compositions - without distraction. The month-long program is supported by a community of faculty mentors. During the following semester, students are provided with an opportunity to present their work as part of Fall Research Day. Experiential learning opportunities such as those provided by the Summer Undergraduate Research Institute give WCU students an edge when they apply to graduate school or seek employment.

Speech and Hearing Clinic

The University's Speech and Hearing Clinic provides superior professional diagnostic and treatment services in speech-language pathology and audiology while offering excellence in clinical education to students in the department of communication sciences and disorders. Students are supervised by certified speech-language pathologists and audiologists, who observe students during clinical sessions via video technology. Evaluation and treatment services are provided in a range of areas, including: articulation/phonology, autism spectrum disorders, developmental disorders, stuttering and other fluency disorders, apraxia, dysarthria, aphasia, traumatic brain injury, and central auditory processing disorders.

Other Areas of Distinction (Continued)

Military Programming & Services

West Chester University is committed to providing the very highest standard of services to its student veterans, military service members, reservists, and their families. The Veterans Center, which opened in 2011, is the hub of campus programming for military members. This center works with Financial Aid and other units on campus to help military members access their educational benefits. This center also plays a vital role in forging connections between military students.

In 2010, there were only six ROTC cadets at WCU; today the University's 55-member Delta Company is one of the largest in the "Dauntless Battalion" – a multi-campus ROTC program. The University also has worked to secure additional funding sources for military scholarships – in the last year alone ROTC scholarships have grown by \$20,000 and scholarships for returning veterans by an additional \$10,000. WCU's military services also include the Troops to Teachers program, which has been recognized for its achievements in placing veterans into America's schools. The Troops to Teachers regional office housed at the West Chester University Foundation is responsible for serving veterans in Pennsylvania and eight other states.

Green Dot Program

Green Dot is a bystander intervention program that asks everyone to take action against sexual assault, stalking, and domestic or dating violence. It was launched in 2007 and since then has trained 4,000 individuals nationwide. The University introduced the program in 2015 to bolster WCU campus norms that violence will not be tolerated and that every member of the University community needs to do his or her part to shape our campus culture and be a force for positive change. Green Dots can be gained by proactive steps (learning about campus resources) or reactive steps (responding to a potential situation).