



HONORS COLLEGE NEWSLETTER

Dear Honors College Community,

As we approach the end of the academic year, I find myself reflecting on the journey we have shared together in the Honors College. It has been a year filled with new opportunities, growth, and discovery. I am immensely grateful for everyone who has contributed to making my first year at West Chester so memorable. I have been continually inspired by your enthusiasm, brilliant ideas, and commitment to excellence.

The Honors faculty, staff, and I are working hard to make sure that students have the best possible experience. I am excited to share the Honors faculty created a new mission statement to guide us in that work:

The West Chester University Honors College prepares students for lives of purpose, engaged in local and global communities. We aim to deliver transformative learning experiences for students looking to become leaders in addressing the most important questions facing our world.

Our new mission statement reflects a commitment to providing students with the knowledge, skills, and experiences they need to make a positive impact in the world. In the past year, our two trips to Norway stand out as great examples of preparing students to become leaders with an informed global perspective.

Our Fall 2023 Norway trip to Oslo for the Nobel Peace Prize was an incredible opportunity to engage with scholars, activists, and citizens from around the world on the issue of women's rights. In May, a group of Honors students will be traveling to both Oslo and Bergen with a focus on the theme of environmental sustainability.

Looking forward, I am thrilled to announce two exciting opportunities for travel next year:

1. In Fall 2024, we are happy to continue the tradition of sending students to Oslo, Norway to attend events surrounding the Nobel Peace Prize. We will have an application process at the start of the fall semester - all students who are taking the Nobel Peace Prize course in Fall 2024, or who have taken the course previously, are eligible to apply.
2. In Spring 2025, we will be offering a brand new trip to Japan! The exciting adventure will provide students with the chance to explore Japanese culture, history, and society firsthand, with an emphasis on the role of technology. I will be teaching the Honors seminar associated with the course and leading the trip, along with our Assistant Director and Chair, Dr. Gerardina Martin.

While more exciting changes are ahead, I'd like to call attention to one that will have an impact on this summer. We will be moving our Summer Symposium to the end of August just before the start of the fall semester. This decision was made in response to feedback from students and faculty and is aimed at maximizing participation and engagement in this important event.

I am confident the change will further enhance the Symposium experience for all involved and be a great introduction for students into the Honors College community. Honors students have accomplished so much this year - in the classroom, at the Honors Student Association (HSA), at Honors events, and as leaders on campus

and in the community - and I do not doubt that Honors students will continue to inspire, challenge, and support one another.

I wish everyone a happy and restful summer. I'm already looking forward to us all returning in the fall!

Best,
Dr. Tim Jussaume
Honors College Director



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CAPSTONE SPOTLIGHT

Students in the Honor College complete Capstone Projects in the course HON 490. Students identify and investigate a problem in a community business, nonprofit agency, or research laboratory, and then work to solve the problem.

LĒNAPEYOK: CONTEMPORARY ARTISANS' WORKS



In an effort to build a connection between Lenape descendant communities and West Chester University, the Museum of Anthropology and Archaeology in Old Library hosted an exhibit to honor Lenape artists and artisans. With the help of tribal leaders and registered Lenape artist, Ben Miller, the student curated exhibit opened February 28th and showcases several pieces created by members of the Delaware Tribe of Indians. The exhibit, created by capstone student Paige Mervine, LĒnapeyok: Contemporary Artisans' Works and mural project consisted of 150 hours of research and service-based learning. A virtual walkthrough of the exhibit will be available on the university's museum website. The mural Miller created will be on display on the second floor of Sykes Student Union after its completion on April 26th. Paige Mervine, is an Anthropology major with minors in Spanish and Museum Studies who will graduate in 2025.

HONORS COLLEGE BACKYARD BEAUTIFICATION

The backyard of West Chester University's Honors House was transformed five years ago as a part of Honors Student Carrie Smith's service-learning capstone project with additional outdoor furniture and restoring existing furniture. Today, her project is still making a positive impact on the local community, and students like Sophia Shaloka continue to add to its success. Sophia says the project started out with a vision to create a mural on a blank wall – a way to paint with her friends in the Honors College and liven up a campus space. What started as a mere idea for the wall has grown into a full-scale renovation, when complete will have not only a student-created mural, but also a living green space. She says, "The project took a lot of outside help to figure out what I was doing, I wanted to ensure the entire process was environmentally friendly."

Shaloka consulted Dr. Joan Welch, a faculty member on campus who established West Chester University's first organic garden in 2001. "I toured campus with Joan, and she showed me all of the living green walls on campus. The tour gave me a really good idea for how I could create my own green wall with the ability to last for years to come." She also consulted with John Baker, a professor of art and ceramics on campus, to gain professional expertise and vision for the mural component.

The wall has been painted a neutral shade in preparation for the mural and trellises have been installed with new plants to create the green wall. The project will be completed in the coming weeks with the mural painting beginning on April 26th. Sophia Shaloka is a Biology Education Major who will graduate Spring 2024.



STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

BETTER TOGETHER DAYS

An Honors College Capstone is going strong! Now in its fourth year, Better Together Days took place once again this March. The Interfaith Action Committee and The Interfaith Leadership Fellows in partnership with the Office of Student Leadership and Involvement (SLI) worked extremely hard in planning these three events. On Tuesday March 19th, the first event took place which was the Better Together Days Networking Event. This event allowed participants to all meet before the carnival, in hopes to create connections across different beliefs. On Wednesday, the Better Together Days carnival occurred. Over 110 students attended the carnival as well as 18 different on campus and off campus organizations tabling. Students engaged in dialogue with the different organizations, as well as participated in community service, walked the labyrinth, and played games! Students in Dr. Zachary Wooten's HON 212: Moral Choice in a Technological Age course also had the option of sharing their "Unlikely Friendship" posters as part of a research gala. Students highlighted examples of people or organization's who've successfully worked across lines of difference for the sake of the common good. The last event was hosted by Honors Student Association on Thursday night. Malik Muhammed, WCU Alum and the Inaugural Director of Inclusion Initiatives and Social Justice Education at the University of Pennsylvania, gave an incredible talk on Building Meaningful Connections Across Differences, which was a perfect way to wrap up Better Together Days! Thanks to the Office for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion for their continued support.



COMMUNITY & EDUCATION TRIP

Honors College student, Gabi Steffy, Chair of the Student Interfaith Action Committee led a Community and Education Trip in partnership with the Center for Civic Engagement and Social Impact (CCESI), led a two-day Community and Education Interfaith placed-based education experience. Students and staff went to local Chester County religious communities for interfaith dialogue, service, and cultural competence training. Community partners included the Church of the Loving Shepard, Act in Faith, and the Islamic Society of Chester County. CCESI staff facilitated a training on how to have difficult conversations across lines of difference.

INTERFAITH AMERICA

Dr. Zachary Wooten is the Director of the Interfaith, Meaning-Making, and Spirituality Project at WCU. Honors College Seniors Rachel Shirk and Carson Danaher each took part in an Interfaith America program, which provided information, skill-building, and the opportunity to apply for a grant to promote Meaning-Making and dialogue within the West Chester Community. These students, in their role as Interfaith Leadership Fellows, were part of a cohort containing dozens of students from universities across the country, all with the shared goal of promoting interfaith in their respective communities. After completion of an online skill-building program, participation at each cohort meeting, and the completion of a grant application, Rachel and Carson were both successful in receiving a \$1,000 grant.

The first event was an interfaith writing workshop on April 16th, which was a pilot event for an intended annual element of the Interfaith efforts at West Chester University (WCU) for years to come. An alumna of WCU Honors, Brittany Iatarola ('15), lead a small group of students through a discussion on engaging in life's big questions through the written word. Students received feedback and were able to write, share, and examine their written work.

The second event was in collaboration with the West Chester Green Team on April 20th and was centered on an Earth Day rally: Planet vs. Plastic. The grant allowed upwards of 40 students to partake in the event and following dinner at a local Unitarian Church free of cost. The Interfaith Leadership Fellows had a table at the event to converse with both students and community partners on the importance of interfaith within the sustainability movement and beyond. These two events offered WCU students the opportunity to think and respond to the large questions that face humanity and provide tools to embark on their own knowledge-building journey as culturally-competent leaders.

Interfaith Workshop
Meaning-Making Through Writing
Photos by Dr. Zachary Wooten



Earth Day Rally: Planet vs. Plastic
Photos by Dr. Zachary Wooten



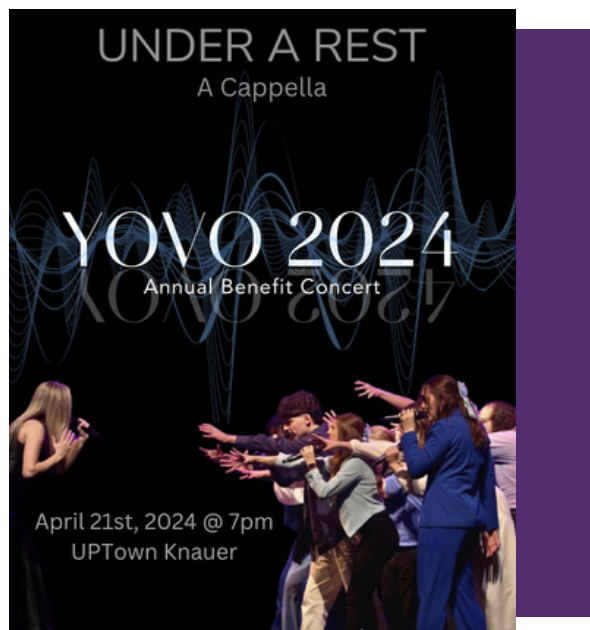
FACULTY UPDATES

CWGE PRESENTATION AND YOVO

Earlier this month, Professor Spencer Camacho presented at the WCU Center for Women and Gender Equity's 4th annual Gender Justice Conference. Among student and faculty presenters, artists, and advocates, Professor Camacho presented a series of photos titled: Black Tie Chrysalis: Beyond the Clothing Binary; a commentary on the implications perceived gender has on what individuals wear and an opportunity to expand perspectives of acceptance and expression as it relates to clothing.



Photo by Halley Everett



Professor Camacho also worked as event producer and faculty liaison for the Your Voice (YOVO) A Cappella Benefit Concert held at West Chester's Uptown! Knauer Performing Arts Center on Sunday April 21st. As a co-creator of YOVO alongside alumni from the hosting a cappella group: Under A Rest (UAR) while he was an undergraduate student and UAR singer, he was grateful to be invited by UAR A Cappella to support the success of the event through Camacho's partnership with Uptown Theater, arranging music, and running live sound for the event. With Various guest groups performed like WCU's own High Street Harmonix as well as groups from the University of Delaware and Millersville University.

TEACHING EXCELLENCE SHOWCASE

Dr. Gerardina Martin has been selected to present at the 9th Annual Teaching Excellence Showcase on May 7th. The Showcase celebrates WCU teaching innovations and shares those innovations with other faculty in mini-workshops and high table formats. The keynote will be given by Sarah Rose Cavanagh, "Hope in a Time of Monsters: Supporting Faculty and Student Mental Health."

Dr. Martin will be presenting on incorporating service-learning into courses and providing students with reciprocating opportunities where students can learn from working in the



community, and the community can benefit from students' time and strengths. She will be highlighting HON 311 – Stewardship and Civic Engagement, HON 451 – Social Change, and HON 490 – Capstone. Last year, Dr. Martin's students completed over 13,400 hours of service to the community.

WCU CIVILITY AWARD

On January 26, 2024, West Chester University President Christopher M. Fiorentino presented Assistant Professor of Leadership Studies in the Honors College, Dr. Zachary Wooten, with the WCU Civility Award. One of WCU's most prestigious awards, this recognition is presented annually by the President of the university to an individual, office, or department nominated for exemplary behavior reflective of civility, community impact, commitment to student success, and collegiality. The award was presented as part of the 30th anniversary for the University's Martin Luther King, Jr., Brunch. The brunch is organized and hosted by the Society of WCU, formerly WCU's Frederick Douglass Society.



MOURNING THE PLANET AND SIGNS OF HOPE: THE ROLE OF GRIEF AND RESILIENCE IN HOW STUDENTS UNDERSTAND CLIMATE CHANGE

Assistant Professor of Leadership Studies, Dr. Zachary Wooten, recently presented one of West Chester University's Sustainability Research and Practice Seminars, entitled "Mourning the Planet and Signs of Hope: The Role of Grief and Resilience in How Students Understand Climate Change." The presentation shed light on a crucial aspect of climate change often overlooked: the emotional toll it takes on young people. Joined by Honors College alumna Jocelyn Brown, currently studying at Malmö University in Sweden, Dr. Wooten underscored the depths of grief and resilience among undergraduate youth in the Northeastern United States. This research, made possible through a grant from the Office for Sustainability and with invaluable research assistance from Honors College students Emily Miller and Caroline Straw, examined how acknowledging, coping with, and working constructively through grief is pivotal for the wellbeing and resilience of today's young people.



The presentation explored the multifaceted nature of climate grief, touching on themes such as climate anxiety, shame, and blame. Despite the weight of these emotions, Wooten and his team found that undergraduate participants also exhibited remarkable resilience. From coping mechanisms like humor on the internet to taking local action within their spheres of influence, these students are navigating the climate crisis with a blend of hope, determination, and a call for systemic change. As Generation Z gains more power and influence, there's a growing sense of urgency to cultivate hope and resilience within higher education, preparing students not only to face the challenges of climate change but to lead the charge in creating a sustainable future. Access a recording of the presentation via the link below: [Seminar: Mourning the Planet & Signs of Hope](#)

MILESTONES

SUMMER SYMPOSIUM

Summer Symposium is the welcoming milestone for incoming freshman and sophomore bridge students to learn about the Honors College opportunities they will have throughout their time at WCU. July 16 through July 23, 2023, the students experienced various sessions held by honors faculty based in their future courses and broader vision of the department. They took part in a Challenge Course provided by Mr. Marc Duey at his residence in Chester Springs, PA. Summer Symposium provides students a chance to get to know each other as they prepare beginning their journey at WCU.



CROSSROADS

The sophomore cohort honors students through HON 310: Community & Change traveled to Longwood Gardens on April 20th to attend their milestone event: Crossroads. Directed by Professor Spencer Camacho, students met with twenty alumni ranging a decade in graduation years with diverse majors and career paths. Alongside the honors faculty and alumni, students reflected on their time at WCU so far and brainstormed strategies for how they can leverage their remaining undergraduate experiences to prepare for career building after WCU. Professor Camacho shares a huge thank you to graduate assistant Jessie Hazell and Dr. Wooten for their alumni recruitment support, Michelle Wills and Dr. Martin for event logistical support, and the alumni and faculty in facilitating dialogue throughout the day.



LAUNCHPAD

Launchpad is the final milestone for our senior honors students. On Saturday, September 9, 2023, they traveled to Marc Duey's Challenge Course in Chester Springs to engage in team and community building activities they did not get to experience during their COVID-restricting virtual Symposium in 2020. This opportunity allowed our students to re-connect with their cohort and faculty and celebrate their journey through WCU.



SPEECHWRITING

BY DAVID LEVASSEUR



I have always had an intense love for speechwriting (and, yes, I do recognize that sentence fully affirms my nerdiness). Sometimes that speechwriting is with WCU administrators who are preparing for a major event (e.g. Commencement),

sometimes that speechwriting is for corporate executives facing a significant public speaking challenge (e.g. keynote address at a conference), and sometimes that speechwriting is just for someone who wants to deliver a worthy eulogy for a family member or friend at a funeral service. As a speechwriter, eulogies are actually one of my favorite speech genres as they should ideally be a beautiful celebration of someone's life.

Speechwriting is actually a fairly tricky activity—in some ways more challenging than the public speaking work we do in HON 211. Speechwriting is particularly challenging because you have to create a speech that is not your speech. Unskilled speechwriters craft speeches that are filled with their ideas, and their language, and their communicative idiosyncrasies.

Unfortunately, when the principal (in speechwriting we refer to the person you are preparing the speech for as “the principal”) goes to deliver such a speech, it isn't likely to go very well. Effective public speaking today, as I emphasize repeatedly in HON 211, is all about sounding comfortable and conversational. A principal won't convey such qualities unless the content and language in a speech feel like their ideas and their words. This is what makes good speechwriting so tricky; you are essentially writing a speech that isn't your speech and should not sound like your speech.

How do I work my way through this tricky task? The foremost rule of good speechwriting is that you need to spend time--considerable time—talking with the principal. During John F. Kennedy's presidency, his lead speechwriter, Ted Sorensen, had an office located just outside the Oval Office. Sorensen was in constant contact with Kennedy, and their collaboration resulted in the some of the greatest orations in U.S. presidential history.

In the Trump White House, speechwriting for major speeches was done by a cadre of staffers with only limited access to the President. This process resulted in speeches that sounded decided un-Trumpian, and President Trump's delivery of such speeches always seemed both unnatural and uncomfortable. In the speechwriting process, access matters. When I am writing for someone, I meet with them frequently. I record all of our conversations, and I listen to all of those recordings to capture their way of talking about things. Then, in writing the speech I try to incorporate as much of their language as I possibly can. This ensures a final speech product that is comfortably conversational for the speaker. I often resort to cooking metaphors (because I love all things having to do with food) to illuminate good speechwriting. With good speechwriting, the principal gives you the ingredients, and then the speechwriter acts as the cook who combines those ingredients into a delectable dish that will be delightfully devoured by the audience.



HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE 2023-2024 SCHOOL YEAR!

PRESIDENT'S PICNIC



HON 315 - "SIX" ON BROADWAY



CHECKERS, CHESS & CHAT



BACKYARD PARTIES



TRAVEL TO NORWAY








Photos by Gabby Sasso

**WEST CHESTER UNIVERSITY
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NEWSLETTER**

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