



WESTERN  
CONNECTICUT  
STATE UNIVERSITY

**Meet  
Fulbright  
Scholar  
Allison Vas**

**THE  
CUPOLA**

SPRING 2018



## Academic excellence and regional importance create the future

A college education, whether you study philosophy or accounting, is really about creating your future. Our individual pasts are important, but higher education is where we can all come together to create better versions of ourselves.

My own background is a demonstration of that theory, and it's a big reason I am so happy to work at Western Connecticut State University.

I spend much of my time talking about what our students accomplish. As most readers already know, the Kathwari Honors Program at WCSU challenges students to excel. Five WCSU Honors students were named Fulbright scholars in the past eight years.

Among other successes, WCSU's Department of Theatre Arts has been recognized by the Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival for producing the top musical in the country each of the past two years.

And our Nursing graduates routinely pass the state licensing exam at or near a 100 percent rate — by far the best pass rate in Connecticut. Despite all these triumphs, many people continue to think of WCSU as merely the local university.

It is much more than that in terms of academic excellence and importance to the region. WCSU helps students become teachers, nurses, accountants, local politicians and police officers. A good number of our students go on to become lawyers, doctors, scientists and business leaders. We help more than 1,200 students a year find their way to productive careers in our communities and the state. Our graduates start families and are engaged citizens. They are the foundation of our cities and towns. In other words, WCSU helps young people realize their dreams.

Happily, today everyone has an opportunity to attend college, to gain knowledge and wisdom. The Connecticut State Colleges and Universities, of which WCSU is a part, offers that opportunity, and I invite everyone who wants to learn and work hard to consider joining us.

Who knows? You might end up being a college president.

WCSU President John B. Clark



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# NEWS

## Western Connecticut State University



Chief Diversity Officer  
Jesenia Minier-Delgado

### Chief Diversity Officer

Jesenia Minier-Delgado joined the university as chief diversity officer. She worked previously at Bronx Community College as chief diversity officer and director for the Office of Affirmative Action, Compliance and Diversity. She earned her M.A. in Public Affairs and Administration from the Metropolitan College of New York and her B.A. in Psychology and Sociology from City College in New York. She is studying for a doctorate in Public Administration and Organizational and Leadership Management. As chief diversity officer, Minier-Delgado is responsible for university compliance with affirmative action, equal employment opportunity and other areas of diversity in the academic and administrative areas.

### Assistant Dean of Student Affairs

Daryle Dennis was named assistant dean of Student Affairs, his most recent assignment in a three-decade career at WCSU. Dennis' career is one of steadily progressive responsibilities, helping a wide range of students and making sure that our university is a welcoming, diverse institution where all people grow and thrive. Dennis oversees the Intercultural Affairs Office, the newly re-established Parent Association, the Judicial Affairs appeals process and programming for commuter students.



Assistant Dean of Student Affairs  
Daryle Dennis

### Director of Admissions



Director of Admissions  
Jorge Osorio

Jorge Osorio is WCSU's new director of admissions. He has more than 18 years of academic experience at Farmingdale State College, Hartwick College and The College of Saint Rose. Osorio earned a M.A. in Liberal Studies with an Advanced Certificate in Human Resource Management at the State University of New York at Stony Brook and a B.A. in History with a minor in Political Science from Hartwick College in Oneonta, New York. He currently is studying for his M.B.A. at The College of Saint Rose. Osorio will work with prospective students and school administrators, managing all aspects of recruitment and enrollment.



WCSU Provost Dr. Missy Alexander  
at the Gates Ceremony, welcoming  
new students

### Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs

Dr. Missy Alexander became provost and vice president for Academic Affairs after serving as an interim appointee in the position for several months.

Alexander joined WCSU as dean of the Macricostas School of Arts and Sciences in 2012. As dean, Alexander managed WCSU's largest school with 13 departments, 18 undergraduate majors and five graduate majors. The provost and vice president for Academic Affairs is the chief academic administrator at WCSU and responsible for all aspects of the academic mission — from student recruitment to the administration

of the schools and other units that are central to the academic enterprise. The provost collaborates with the president in setting academic priorities and provides leadership for the school and college deans and their faculties.

"Dr. Alexander is a decisive leader who brings extensive experience and an impressive record of success to her new position as provost," WCSU President John Clark said, adding that Alexander's tenure as dean resulted in stronger ties to the region, which increased student internships and community involvement.

Before joining WCSU, Alexander was the assistant dean of the School of Communications and the Arts at Marist College in Poughkeepsie, New York. She holds a Ph.D. in Media Ecology from New York University as well as a master's in Communication and bachelor's in Anthropology from Hunter College.

*"Dr. Alexander is a decisive leader who brings extensive experience and an impressive record of success to her new position as provost."*

—President Clark

## Career Success Center helps WCSU students become career-ready

The WCSU Career Success Center has moved to the Westside campus and upgraded its many services as part of a major rebranding effort to better serve students and alumni.

The center has sharpened its focus on shaping career success with increased engagement through a variety of face-to-face and online programs that guide students to take the steps to "discover, experience, create and activate" their career opportunities.

A new job board called "WESTCONN Works" can be used by students and alumni to view job postings from employers in the

regional community or even nationally. WESTCONN Works makes the connection with the Career Success Center an easy one, and when supplemented with other new career tools for assessment, research, job readiness, practice and resumes, the opportunities to improve career readiness are plentiful.

The career readiness of college graduates is an important issue in higher education, in the labor market and in the public arena. The National Association of Colleges and Employers, through a task force of college career services and HR/staffing professionals, has identified

the top eight competencies associated with career readiness. The Career Success Center has developed strategies and tactics around these competencies to close the gap between higher education and the world of work.

Kathleen Lindenmayer, the center's director, said she wants students to answer the question, "Are you career-ready?" with a resounding "Yes!"

*If you are interested in donor opportunities supporting the WCSU Career Success Center please contact the Office of Institutional Advancement at 203-837-9820 or [scullyl@wcsu.edu](mailto:scullyl@wcsu.edu)*

## Litchfield Hall renovated for resident students

After one year and nearly \$15 million invested, the new Litchfield Hall opened its doors to students. The 53,600-square-foot building, originally constructed in the 1960s, has been rendered “like new” from the inside out — with a new roof, exterior walls and windows; and updates to landscaping, living quarters, bathrooms and common areas.

Significant interior updates include new resident room and common area furnishings, new air-conditioned lounges on each floor, new restroom facilities on all floors, and the creation of individual and group study rooms on the ground floor.

From a purely visual standpoint, Litchfield’s once dark “open square” design is now flooded with natural light from both the center courtyard and renovated lounges that feature curtain walls constructed of structural aluminum and glass. A visitor to the 5,000-square-foot handicapped-accessible courtyard can literally see through the building and out the lounge windows. The welcoming environment enables residents to expand their living environment from the inside to the outside.

Reducing energy consumption and improving occupant safety were renovation priorities. New roofing, windows and exterior walls now bring the building to current efficiency standards. The complete replacement of the fire alarm system and fire sprinkler system, and the addition of integrated door security hardware and security cameras utilize technology solutions to enhance student safety.

The 229 student living quarters each received new paint, flooring, wardrobes and wood furniture. Additionally, all of the building’s infrastructure systems have been upgraded or replaced — including wireless communications, air handling and heating systems, plumbing and electrical distribution systems. Previous concerns regarding temperature control issues, poorly functioning restrooms and showers, and a failing lock and door system have been resolved as part of this significant renovation.

In addition to the interior enhancements, the exterior entranceway received a makeover, all the landscaping in the courtyard and around the perimeter of the building was replaced, and a handicapped-accessible gazebo has been added to the courtyard space.

*If you are interested in naming opportunities at WCSU please contact Lynne LeBarron at 203-837-8188 or lebarronl@wcsu.edu.*



## Western Connecticut State University offers in-state tuition to New York and New Jersey residents

Students from New York and New Jersey will be able to enroll at the same tuition paid by Connecticut residents, which stands at \$10,017 for the academic year 2017-18. This is an extension of a program that offered in-state tuition to residents of seven counties in the New York Hudson Valley. The extension was approved by the Connecticut Board of Regents for Higher Education as a two-year pilot program for WCSU.

“We will be providing our New York and New Jersey neighbors the same high-quality and affordable education as Connecticut residents enjoy,” said WCSU President John Clark. “I invite everyone in those states to expand your college search and come visit our beautiful campuses.”

The new pricing will save New York and New Jersey students more than \$12,000 a year.

Among WCSU’s 38 bachelor degree programs are numerous professional

degrees — including business management, marketing, accounting, biology, nursing, education, counseling, communication, psychology and justice and law administration. WCSU is the designated school for the visual and performing arts in the system of Connecticut State Colleges and Universities and features a \$97 million facility that houses a concert hall, art gallery, two theatres, rehearsal and classroom spaces.

With easy access from Interstate-84 or Metro-North, WCSU students enjoy up-to-date sports facilities for intramural, club and Division III athletics, more than 80 student clubs, a nature preserve, suite-style residence halls, and a student-to-faculty ratio of 14 to 1. Students looking for the highest academic challenge can explore the innovative Kathwari Honors Program.

The Board of Regents approved the tuition offer at its Oct. 19, 2017,

meeting. Members said they expect the new rate will benefit residents in Connecticut, as well as New York and New Jersey, as highly educated residents strengthen the regional economy along the states’ borders.

The previously approved tuition program for Hudson Valley students increased the number of New York residents studying at WCSU by about 250 percent. Those students filled seats that were left increasingly empty as the university’s enrollment declined by about 700 students over the past several years.

WCSU admissions counselors will visit New York and New Jersey high schools to introduce students to the university and its offerings. Residents are invited to learn about WCSU by visiting [www.wcsu.edu/ny/](http://www.wcsu.edu/ny/) for more information.

*The WCSU Office of Admissions will answer any questions at (203) 837-9000 or [admissions@wcsu.edu](mailto:admissions@wcsu.edu).*

WCSU   
NY & NJ

# Top-ranked Department of Nursing poised for expansion

**New teaching facilities, clinically skilled faculty are ready to meet growing student demand**

Recent regional and national recognitions of the WCSU Nursing department provide timely testimony to a program on the rise, poised after a major expansion in instructional facilities and deepening of faculty strength to meet the challenges of significant growth in student enrollment during the next two years.

The latest citation placing the WCSU nursing program at the top of its class comes from the survey of Connecticut nursing education programs released in January 2017 by the national online service [www.RegisteredNursing.org](http://www.RegisteredNursing.org), which ranked WCSU first among 20 public and private nursing schools statewide. The evaluation was based on criteria including the quality and breadth of academic and clinical training, the affordability of a nursing education, and the percentage of graduates who pass the NCLEX-RN examination, which determines the award of licensing as a registered nurse. Previously the Nursing Schools Almanac inaugural survey of more than 3,000 nursing schools nationwide during 2016 placed WCSU at No. 20 among nearly 150 schools rated in the New England region.

Brooke Wallace, founder and managing editor of [RegisteredNursing.org](http://RegisteredNursing.org), said that her service's analysis of all RN training programs in Connecticut concluded that "WCSU not only supports students during their time in class, but also does an outstanding job in preparing students for a career as a licensed registered nurse. This strong RN program prepares students successfully to conquer the NCLEX-RN and produces graduates who have the ability to carry what they learned into the health care world."

These new honors underscore the fact that WCSU is building on one of the university's widely recognized academic strengths as the Department of Nursing opened new state-of-the-art instructional facilities in 2017 and embarked on a major expansion in undergraduate enrollment in its Bachelor of Science (B.S.) program. The department's core undergraduate program is on track to complete a twofold increase in overall enrollment by the 2018-19 academic year.

Department Chair Dr. Joan Palladino cited WCSU's commitment to offer a three-year bachelor's degree curriculum in nursing, in contrast to two-year programs



WCSU nursing students and faculty at the White Hall nursing labs ribbon cutting

at many institutions, as a decisive academic advantage for students preparing for a nursing career. "Starting in the sophomore year, our students get a great deal of medical and surgical nursing experience as part of our curriculum, with three clinical courses in their sophomore and junior years as well as the senior clinical course that ties it all together," Palladino said. "Our students get more hours of experience in clinical settings, and that means they are very well prepared when they enter the workplace."

Paralleling the growth in B.S. program enrollment, the Nursing Department has opened five newly renovated classrooms at White Hall on the university's Midtown campus, designed to advance and expand the department's capacity to teach critical thinking and decision-making skills through simulation of actual clinical care settings. Four of the new classrooms have been equipped with SIM mannequins that instructors stationed at computer controls behind one-way mirrors may manipulate to simulate standard and critical care scenarios and observe students' care responses. Four new SIM mannequins, including a SIM Mom for obstetrics training and a Trauma SIM for intensive care simulations, have joined a fifth SIM Man for lab exercises. A fifth refurbished classroom seats up to 24 students for simulation debriefing and discussion.

The instructional benefits from these facilities upgrades have been reinforced by the hiring of new nursing professors over the past several years, which has strengthened the department's ranks to 21 full-time faculty members complemented by additional instructors holding adjunct positions. The department also recently hired a nursing laboratory coordinator whose arrival enabled students for



Students at work in the nursing simulation lab

the first time to schedule additional hours for lab practice outside their classroom periods.

Palladino observed that a core strength of the WCSU nursing program is the active and continuing engagement of both full-time and adjunct faculty members in clinical work ranging from acute-care hospital units to psychiatric, pediatric, obstetric and geriatric health care. The nursing faculty's extensive professional relationships and the WCSU program's sterling reputation in the field have made it easier for the department to establish and expand essential clinical training arrangements with health care institutions across Connecticut, including Danbury and Norwalk hospitals in the Western Connecticut Health Network as well as Yale New Haven, Waterbury, St. Mary's, Bristol and other hospitals statewide.

"Our full-time faculty all hold academic credentials in their field, but what sets them apart is that they are very engaged in the clinical setting because they still work in nursing and stay current in their profession," Palladino said. "Our faculty members have real-life experience that they bring to our nursing program."

Such early intervention has helped to maintain NCLEX-RN pass rates in a lofty range of 94 to 100 percent for graduating B.S. classes in nursing since 2004. Even more impressive, Palladino noted, the WCSU Nursing Department consistently achieves 100 percent job placement of its B.S. students within six months after graduation,

securing positions across the professional spectrum from acute care and rehabilitation facilities to community health clinics and long-term care institutions.

The WCSU Department of Nursing currently enrolls 120 students in its RN-B.S. program as a pathway for RNs working in the health care field to complete studies online and at satellite sites in Waterbury and Norwalk to achieve

*"Our students get more hours of experience in clinical settings, and that means they are very well prepared when they enter the workplace."*

—Dr. Joan Palladino

a bachelor's degree in nursing. The department also offers a Master of Science (M.S.) program in nursing leading to certification as a nurse practitioner or clinical nurse specialist, with a program concentration in adult gerontology. Enrollment in the master's program has recently grown by one-third to a total of 68 students, and Palladino anticipates

further growth due to a shortage of nurse practitioners in the region. In a collaboration initiated three years ago, Southern Connecticut State University and WCSU jointly offer an Ed.D. in Nursing Education program, with a total of 38 students currently taking online courses and completing dissertation work to prepare for faculty careers at nursing schools regionally and nationally.

Palladino, who serves as co-director of the deans and directors group of the Connecticut League for Nursing, said that demand for nursing professionals trained at WCSU and other schools will only intensify as a growing number of nurses over the age of 50 begin to retire from the health care workforce. "We're already starting to see more hiring as this big influx of retirements begins," she said.



# With 11 Kennedy Center 2017 awards, WCSU Theatre Arts program is big winner at national event

When the WCSU Department of Theatre Arts hosted the Region One Kennedy Center American College Theater Festival (KCACTF) in 2017 for the second year in a row (this January, WCSU hosted the KCACTF for our third year), it proved that “once-in-a-lifetime” occurrences can happen more than once. WCSU again had the opportunity to show off its stunning Visual and Performing Arts Center and at the same time demonstrate the talents of its students

is: believe in yourself, take risks and support your fellow artists.”

“Attending Kennedy Center for the second year in a row was a thrill,” said Howard, coordinator of WCSU’s Musical Theatre program. “To have our production selected for Outstanding Musical, Direction and Choreography two years in a row acknowledges our reputation within the nation. This has increased WCSU’s visibility with industry professionals, prospective students auditioning for a Bachelor of

Trinity Rep, Curt Columbus; the deputy dean of the Yale School of Drama and the executive director of Arena Stage; the managing director and founder of Woolly Mammoth Theatre and many more. The best part about it was that of the 16 professionals we met, nine of them were women in management positions, which, as a young woman pursuing a career in management, was very inspiring.”

WCSU’s KCACTF 2017 awards included: Outstanding Production of a Musical: “The Drowsy Chaperone”;



Page 10: Scenes from *The Drowsy Chaperone* performances. Page 11 Left: Performers prepare for Festival performance; Center: Tim Howard and Jillian Caillouette; Right: Alex Allyn, Jillian Caillouette, Tim Howard, Sharon Sobel, TJ Swetz and Shaylen Harger

with a festival performance of “The Drowsy Chaperone,” the musical theatre program’s fall 2016 production.

As a result of the 2017 Region One performance, “The Drowsy Chaperone” earned 11 national awards from the KCACTF judges and an invitation for the director, Assistant Professor of Theatre Arts Tim Howard and student Jillian Caillouette, of Meriden, to attend the national KCACTF festival in Washington, D.C.

“My first time at the Kennedy Center was a dream come true,” Caillouette said. “I was a little nervous at first about this new adventure — but it couldn’t have been more fulfilling. I took part in vocal coaching workshops, talk-back sessions, dance workshops and I got to see three remarkable productions. My overall takeaway from the festival

Fine Arts in Musical Theatre, and other learning institutions. I will continue to strive for excellence and I believe the festival inspires us all to reach for new artistic heights.”

Performance major Caitlin White, of Enfield, was selected from all the students who attended the Region 1 festival to represent the region as a Leadership Fellow during national festival week. The fellows from each region spend the week in D.C. meeting with the nation’s leading theatre management professionals.

“Coming back to the National American College Theater Festival at the Kennedy Center for the second year as a Leadership Fellow was truly an honor,” White said. “I met working professionals from all different areas in the field, including the artistic director from

Outstanding Director of a Musical: Tim Howard; Outstanding Choreography: Elizabeth Parkinson and Scott Wise; Outstanding Ensemble of a Musical: “The Drowsy Chaperone”; Outstanding Performance by an Actress in a Musical: Jillian Caillouette; Distinguished Performance by an Actress in a Musical: Shaylen Harger; Distinguished Performance by an Actor in a Musical: Ryan J. Taylor; Distinguished Performance by an Actor in a Musical: TJ Swetz; Distinguished Performance by an Actor in a Musical: Sergio Mandujano; Distinguished Performance by Actors in a Musical: Manuel Torres and Jaret Starkey; and Distinguished Costume Design: Sharon Sobel.

In 2016, the 14 national KCACTF awards for “Parade” were unprecedented for any university theatre program.

# National recognition for Clements' new book

## WCSU professor featured on PBS News Hour



A poetry compilation edited by WCSU Professor of Writing, Linguistics and Creative Process Dr. Brian Clements was released by Beacon Press. The book, "Bullets into Bells: Poets and Citizens Respond to Gun Violence," is a collection of 54 poems that pairs poets with citizens and their responses to gun violence.

The compilation is introduced by Irish author and National Book Award winner Colum McCann with a foreword written by Gabrielle Giffords and Mark Kelly. McCann writes, "The poems attempt to create a community built not just of grief, but of hope, too ... The poems assert the possibility of language rather than bullets to open up our veins."

"Many people in this book have suffered publicly, but the point of their poetry is not to whine or moan or even set things aflame but rather to communicate the intricate nuances of that suffering with others," McCann continues. "It is a form of public sharing. Take these words. Weigh them up. Listen. Pause a while. Help reality touch justice."

Nick Ripatrazone, writer for the online magazine The Millions, picked "Bullets into Bells" as one of the notable poetry books of December. "Poetry won't make us whole again, but we need a form for our shouts and our cries," Ripatrazone wrote.

Clements is the author of multiple books, most recently "A Book of Common Rituals," and editor of "An Introduction to the Prose Poem." He lives in Newtown, CT, where his wife, a teacher, survived the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting.

# Police have a new home



The university Police Department moved to a new building in January.

The \$4 million project was designed to provide modern policing technology and facilities for the members of the department, which has spent the past several years operating out of a section of the boiler house on the Midtown campus.

The new building, at 8,000 square feet, is about four times larger than the old space and is located on Roberts Avenue. It includes administrative office spaces, a lobby/reception area, conference and interview rooms, a dispatch room, detainee processing area and holding cell, communications equipment room, records retention space, evidence receiving, processing and storage rooms, briefing/roll call/training rooms, an armory and detective squad room. The building meets LEED Silver Certification requirements for environmental construction and sustainable use.

# WCSU Justice and Law Society unveils Law Enforcement Memory Garden



JLA Society students Robert Weinberg (kneeling), Michael O'Sullivan, Violet Lisi, Rebecca Sargeant and Mark Buzzetto (from Brewster Flower Garden) with advisor Professor Terrence Dwyer in the memory garden.

WCSU Justice and Law Society students, most of whom are Justice and Law Administration majors, voted to create a law enforcement memory garden for the area they adopted as part of the university's adopt-a-spot program. The garden will have a small law enforcement memorial flag in place for each law enforcement officer killed in the line of duty. Initially, there will be 37 flags, but according to WCSU Professor of Justice and Law Administration Terrence Dwyer, "Yearly totals go in the range of 135-165." There also will be a marble stone in place with an inscription and landscaping with flowers.

Dwyer is an adviser to the Justice and Law Society and explained how the club decided on the garden. "Many of

the members of the Justice and Law Society at WCSU either have family who are in law enforcement or they themselves aspire to join the ranks of law enforcement. At a meeting of the student club, our secretary, Robert Weinberg, proposed the idea and club members joined in support. It has really been a total club effort under the leadership of club president Michael O'Sullivan and vice president Rebecca Sargeant. The club has benefited from the donation of time and services from local businesses, and the Justice and Law Society students have shown a lot of initiative in getting this project completed."

*If you are interested in naming opportunities at WCSU please contact Lynne LeBarron at 203-837-8188 or lebarronl@wcsu.edu.*

# What if Don Gagnon won the Provost's Teaching Award?

*The only requirement of Dr. Donald Gagnon, professor of English, as he accepted the 2017 Provost's Award for Teaching, was to give a short lecture at the university's meeting to open the fall semester. He struggled to choose a topic, he explained, and finally decided to answer a question he has been asking himself during his entire teaching career: What if?*

*Here is Gagnon's lecture.*

The easy answer to that would be "42," with all apologies to the late Douglas Adams, for whom that was the answer to life, the universe and everything, per the title of his comic novel. But if that's the answer, I prefer to focus on the question.

In fact, it's a question that I often hear myself asking in the classroom, on practically a quotidian basis. And I began to understand how such a basic question is actually the basis of much of what I do — of what we all do.

It is the discursive avatar of philosophical inquiry, isn't it? Isn't it at the root of the work we all do in the classroom?

What if we mix this chemical with that one?

What if we introduce another variable into this equation?

What if we see this character as an analog for a particular idea?

What if we choose a Rogerian rather than a classical argument structure?

What if Claudius sees himself as the protagonist rather than the antagonist in the tragedy of Hamlet?

What if?

That question presupposes a

blank canvas, not only wide open but welcoming — if not downright demanding — of some kind of investigation and response. Basically, it's Audrey II, saying, "Feed me."

And that is, in a rhetorical nutshell, the blood and guts of what we do every day, the sine qua non of our professional undertaking.

The question is everything. It is 42. But the question is dangerous too, isn't it?

In his 1963 essay, "A Talk to Teachers," the poet/prophet James Baldwin describes the crucial paradox that confronts us, in which the entire process of education occurs within a social framework that is designed to perpetuate the aims of its society.

The paradox of education, he says, is finally this: that as we lead our students toward a greater consciousness of that social framework, that as students become conscious, they begin to examine the society in which they are being educated — and THEY begin to ask the driving question: "What if?" The purpose of education, finally, Baldwin claims, is to create in people the ability to look at the world for themselves, to make their own decisions as to what happens after the question mark.

To ask questions and then learn to live with those questions and answers is the way we grow into our individual identities.

"What if?" then, is a question of staggering power. It indeed engages life, the universe and everything.

Baldwin encapsulates the power in the question when he says that the kind of person who asks "What if?" is often the kind of person that no society

is anxious to have around, because — whether in the case of Colin Kaepernick or in deciding what to do with our monuments to the Confederacy or in addressing gender or sexual identity in the military — we don't have to read the headlines too deeply to see Baldwin's prophecy play out today in blood-red letters, writ large across the faces of social media and our individual consciences: what societies often seem to want is a citizenry that will simply obey — unquestioningly — the rules of society.

And here we are, practically forcing our students to ask — and derive answers to — that dastardly, troubling, society-shaking question, "What if?"; the question that disrupts the idea of blind acceptance and seems to promise so much, far more than "42" begins to approach.

But nothing, apparently, is promised. One day in 1989, I asked myself, "What if I give up a successful career in finance because I think I'd like to teach?"

Two weeks later, I asked myself, "What if I were to move back in with my undergrad roommate down in Florida after living four years by myself?"

Six months later, I asked myself, "What if I do my first research project on Eugene O'Neill?"

Six years later, I asked myself, "What if I do my dissertation on Eugene O'Neill and race?"

Three years later, I asked myself, "What if I take this job in Connecticut?"

And 14 years later, I asked myself, "What if I take the time and energy,

at the busiest time of the school year, to follow through on this unlikely nomination for this impossible award?"

The answer to those questions may be obvious individually, but in retrospect and collectively, they provide one answer: "You'll discover a life of service and value and joy."

Wow. That's a lot better than "42." It seems then, that little question is bursting with the possibilities of human potential, with opportunities and options and outcomes, and it is redolent of reasons and responsibilities and rewards. That's a big burden for a tiny sentence.

I hope that as we approach the beginning of a new school year, new students, new challenges, and new opportunities, we seize the opportunity to help in new ways to shoulder the load that such a tiny sentence must bear.

We must speak it into power, we must nurture it into long and healthful life, and we must encourage it to find its way through various channels to serve its ultimate purpose, for as Baldwin says, it is the obligation of those of us who think of ourselves as responsible to examine the faults of our society and to try to change and fight them — at no matter what risk.

This is the way that societies improve — not by building walls, but by bursting through them, to see what may lie in store on the other side.

The other side. Hmmm. In 1984, after a year in college and then a year performing on the road — another "what if?" — when I was broke, working at a bank full-time to earn money to return to college, the local



English Professor Dr. Donald Gagnon was the recipient of the 2017 Provost's Award for teaching, celebrated by Dr. Missy Alexander, provost and vice president for Academic Affairs

university advertised auditions for their fall musical. I was not a student, but hey, "Gotta dance!" — so I asked myself, "What if I try? I've got nothing else to do at night and I'd love to get back on stage."

I got the part — a Mexican migrant worker.

I got friends with whom I stay in contact to this day.

I got to sing in Spanish and make my parents cry.

I also got to listen nightly to a monologue spoken by a steelworker, a day-to-day hardworking man who was asked why he did what he did so that his kid could go to college. He says, "I bet the first caveman who went over the hill didn't do it just to see what was on the other side. He did it so he could get his kid out of the cave."

In other words, "what if?" goes back

to prehistory.

This question, this "What if?" then, is the hope of — and hope for — a better society. It is also one of my favorite teaching tools — along with musical theatre video clips.

I hope that we all remember how powerful it can be, how necessary it is to students, and how on those mid-semester days when we might simply prefer to ask, "Must I?", we can pull it out of our pockets, briefcases or backpacks, wave it in front of our students like a standard, and watch it do its very powerful work.

I leave you then to the vagaries and opportunities of the year about to unfold before us. I ask you now to ask "What if?" and I hope that by next May, we have all discovered the gold waiting to be mined from its utterance, for you and for your students.

# Teaching led Allison Vas from WCSU to a Fulbright scholarship

Allison Vas loves to travel, and now she is half-way through a nine-month tour in Europe on a Fulbright scholarship.

Vas, an Elementary Education major with a concentration in English, won the assignment of teaching English at a primary school in Estonia. She is the latest Western Connecticut State University student to become a Fulbright scholar. Previous awardees have studied the church organ in France, socio-political issues in Haiti, folk music in Estonia and social entrepreneurship, also in Estonia.

The Estonia connection comes from Dr. Chris Kukk, a WCSU political science professor who himself was a Fulbright scholar who studied in Estonia, his family's historical country of origin.

Vas insists that is not why she ended up in Estonia. Instead, the small country in Eastern Europe became her destination of choice after she created a spreadsheet of countries that offered Fulbright teaching assistantships. Another factor she considered was the competition, although she didn't do herself any favors in that regard.

Taiwan was in the running until Vas realized that educators there would accept up to 80 teaching scholars. Estonia had only one slot, and Vas decided to apply for that one.

"Estonia really was the one I wanted to work in," Vas said. "My

family thought I was crazy because there was only one position, but Estonia's education system is supposed to be like Finland's, which is held up as a model. I wanted to learn more about that."

Sponsored by the U.S. Department of State, the Fulbright program is the largest U.S. international exchange program offering opportunities for students, scholars and professionals to undertake international graduate study, advanced research, university teaching and teaching in elementary and secondary schools worldwide.

As a WCSU student, Vas was busy.

In addition to her studies, she was a member of the Student Government Association for four years, spending one as vice president of internal affairs.

She helped organize the WCSU Relay for Life fundraiser in support of cancer research for four years, including her last year as chair.

She was an active member of the Kathwari Honors Program as well as an orientation leader for first-year students and a mentor in the residence halls.

Vas was a member of the Education Club and the Newman Club, with which she made mission trips to Jamaica and the Dominican Republic. She also traveled to Louisiana with Habitat for Humanity.

And she earned a 3.94 GPA.

"I got to develop so many communities within the one university community," Vas said. "I always take on more than I can handle. I guess that's the teacher side of me. I have a lot of interests pulling me every which way, and I'm always wishing there were more hours in the day."

In her senior year, Vas was a student teacher in a fifth-grade class in Danbury's Ellsworth School. "It was an incredibly positive experience," Vas said. "It made me more confident and more convinced I wanted to be a teacher."

Her long-term goals include studying federal or international education policy as it affects citizens on an everyday basis.

"Education influences everything — women's rights, the economy, health," Vas said. "I'd like to look at how different countries develop their education systems."

As a senior at Danbury High School, where her father teaches social studies, Vas applied to several universities, and reports she is happy with her choice of WCSU.

"I wouldn't change a thing," she said.

*If you are interested in creating a scholarship for WCSU students, please contact Nancy Barton at 203-837-8832 or bartonn@wcsu.edu for more information.*



WCSU Fulbright Scholar Allison Vas in Estonia. Sponsored by the U.S. Department of State, the Fulbright program is the largest U.S. international exchange program offering opportunities for students, scholars and professionals to undertake international graduate study, advanced research, university teaching and teaching in elementary and secondary schools worldwide.

## Teamwork reveals human traits that should be encouraged, not stifled

**D**r. Paul Nugent is interested in how people and things work, whether they are missile systems, organizations or the people on the shop floor who make components.

Nugent, an associate professor in Management Information Systems at WCSU since 2004, spends much of his time when he is not in the classroom doing research, often at General Dynamics, where he started working in an engineering department as an undergraduate at Dartmouth.

His most recent research challenges conventional wisdom about how to define success in the workplace. A generation or two of thought leaders have emphasized the virtue of objectively measuring factory output as a way of formalizing best practices. The measure called Six Sigma, invented at Motorola and made famous by Jack Welch at General Dynamics, is probably the most well-known. Processes that follow Six Sigma remove almost all errors from manufacturing, and can be applied to increasing efficiency and profits.

But, as Nugent has found, Six Sigma and similar plans can also stifle problem-solving and other creative approaches.

“More and more enterprise-level processes are being imposed to measure things,” Nugent observed. “My research has been on uncovering the dark side of social environment control.”

Nugent wrote his doctoral dissertation on the value of workplace collaboration, based in part on his experience working with and watching colleagues at General Dynamics solve problems. With that, he realized that

the math and physics of engineering were less interesting to him than the study of cultures, which is also labeled ethnography.

He discovered that the “professional bureaucracy” of a workplace creates its own set of problem-solving approaches and rules that lead to excellent products that serve customers’ needs. These rules are usually not written down, but are developed on the shop floor and passed to newcomers as they join the workforce.

“They develop their own code of ethics and standards for quality, individually and as a group,” Nugent said, adding that the process helped team members bond and find value in their work. “It becomes a tight-knit community. It was more than just work, it was work in the context of their community.”

When a corporation then implements a program like Six Sigma, Nugent discovered, it disrupts the team.

“The new program is imposed from the top down and the ones imposing it are not as close to the product,” Nugent said. “You have another set of professionals on the original team’s turf. It creates conflict. One engineer referred to it as ‘an artifact generating exercise,’ as opposed to improving the products.”

With a different team in charge of measuring results, the original group loses some impetus to perform.

“It relieves engineers on the floor of some responsibilities,” Nugent said. “The ones who before were responsible for the outcomes, now don’t have to be responsible. That hurts overall



Dr. Paul Nugent teaching MIS class

quality and production, and I have been evolving that story through many research papers.”

A solution, Nugent said, is to create a measurement structure within the creative team, as opposed to having it imposed from above.

Nugent is also a member of one of several teams measuring processes and suggesting changes that could lead to accreditation for the Ansell School of Business from the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB.)

Nugent meanwhile has also discovered that his interest in philosophy is influencing his research into workplace cultures. He pointed to his office bookshelf — “I like to have my physical library” — and noted the influence of both “What is it like to be a bat?” an essay by Thomas Nagel, and Max Weber’s “The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism.” Both discuss what it means to live as a unique individual and the constraints of societal restrictions that most people accept without awareness.

“More and more, philosophy is informing my research,” Nugent said. “There’s a rigor to the thinking that helps to clarify the question — certain questions that science can’t get at regarding human consensus. For machines, there will always be an explanation gap about consensus. But there’s nothing more obvious to us as humans.”

## Board of Regents recognizes outstanding faculty

### WCSU’s Monette wins research award

Newtown resident Dr. Michelle Monette, assistant professor of animal physiology in WCSU’s Department of Biological and Environmental Sciences, was the recipient of the Board of Regents 2017 Research Award for WCSU. The award recognizes faculty members who are doing exceptional research and creative work at their Connecticut State Colleges and Universities home institutions.

“My research is focused on understanding how animals regulate physiological function in order to respond to changes in their environment,” Monette said. “My current program uses a multi-level approach — from molecule to organism to



Dr. Michelle Monette with biology students Shannon McFarland and Daniel Suquilanda

population — to understand the mechanisms of internal salt balance in vertebrates from fish to humans.”

Monette took six students to conduct research at the Mount Desert Island Biological Laboratory in Salisbury Cove, Maine, as part of her Group Senior Research course.

In his nomination of Monette to the BOR, Professor of Biological and Environmental Sciences Dr. Patrice Boily noted,

“Dr. Monette’s research activities are of great benefit to the scientific community and have a significant impact on our students’ educational experience and professional development.”

### WCSU’s Hegel-Cantarella wins teaching awards

Brooklyn, New York, resident Dr. Christine Hegel-Cantarella, assistant professor of anthropology in WCSU’s Department of Social Sciences, is the winner of the Board of Regents 2017 System-Wide Teaching Award, given to the individual who best exemplifies high-quality teaching among all the awardees. Additionally, Hegel-Cantarella won the 2017 BOR Teaching Award, which recognizes faculty at each Connecticut State Colleges and Universities institution who have distinguished themselves as outstanding teachers, and who have initiated and promoted instructional improvements for their programs.

Hegel-Cantarella earned an M.Phil. and a Ph.D. in Anthropology from the Graduate Center of the City University of New York. At WCSU, she teaches courses on legal anthropology, economic anthropology,



Dr. Christine Hegel-Cantarella teaching class

qualitative research methods, social theory and the Middle East. In 2016, she developed an ethnographic field course, a four-week study-abroad opportunity on the island of Barbados, during which students learn to conduct anthropological research.

“I have been honored to teach and mentor so many students who inspire me with their curiosity and willingness to exceed my expectations,” Hegel-Cantarella said. “Taking students overseas was a new adventure that I look forward to doing again. My students were not just learning to do interviews, observational research and data

analysis, but also learning to be bold and adaptable. It was thrilling to see them dive into research projects in villages across the island.”

# WCSU and Ridgefield Health Department receive EPA grant to educate communities about tick management

Western Connecticut State University and the town of Ridgefield's Health Department are building on a longstanding community partnership to reduce the incidence of Lyme and other tick-borne diseases with a new \$25,000 grant from the Environmental Protection Agency. The EPA Healthy Communities Grant Program funds projects that "reduce environmental risks, protect and improve human health and improve the quality of life." The WCSU-Ridgefield Health Department collaboration was one of 11 projects selected from 70 submissions.

The project, "Spray Safe, Play Safe" provides community education about chemical spraying for tick management. Pesticide sprays are one of the most effective methods for reducing tick populations, but many homeowners have concerns and questions about using this method of tick control. The educational materials will include videos, a public event and a homeowner decision-making tool explaining safe and judicious use of pesticides as part of an effective integrated tick management approach.

Fairfield County is consistently among the highest reporters of Lyme disease in the country. The goal of the collaboration is to help families make more informed tick management decisions to decrease the number of people who suffer from tick-borne diseases, such as Lyme disease. Children are of special concern because Lyme disease incidence is highest in youngsters under age 10, likely because they spend a lot of time outdoors.

"People are becoming more aware of using personal measures, like performing bodily tick checks or wearing repellent, to prevent tick bites," said Dr. Neeta Connolly. "But many residents are uncertain or confused when it comes to thinking about pesticides as a way to reduce the number of ticks in the backyard. Some people spray too often or in the wrong locations in the yard, which can have negative environmental impacts. Others may choose to spray an ineffective product, which can actually increase one's risk for acquiring a tick-borne illness. This grant project will help us empower homeowners, particularly families with young children, to make informed decisions about pesticide use in their backyards."

Connolly is an associate professor of Biological and Environmental Sciences at WCSU and a national expert on the prevention of Lyme and other diseases caused by bites from blacklegged ticks. In 2016 she received a four-year, \$1.6 million grant from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention aimed at determining better ways to reduce tick-borne disease in residential settings. Connolly is a Ridgefield resident and the current scientific advisor to the BLAST Tick-borne Disease Prevention Program, a health education initiative of the Ridgefield Health Department that seeks to reduce tick-borne diseases in the region.

BLAST has been active since 2008 educating residents on how to protect themselves from ticks and tick-borne diseases through a series of steps: bathe after outdoor activity, look for ticks on one's body and children, apply insect repellent, spray the yard and treat pets.

Jennifer Reid, 2017 recipient of WCSU's HPX Distinguished Alumni Award for her Lyme disease efforts, directs the BLAST program for the Ridgefield.

"Whenever I'm making a BLAST presentation, questions about the effectiveness and safety of yard spray as a tick reduction strategy top the list," Reid

said. "Community members are aware of the seriousness of tick-borne diseases and recognize that most people, especially children, encounter ticks in their own backyard."

BLAST program educators engage in conversations about tick-borne disease prevention strategies, including yard spray, at more than 30 scheduled programs, health fairs and community events each year. They have found that homeowners are interested in learning best practices for reducing ticks and preventing Lyme disease near homes.

Dr. Rayda Krell, an entomologist and new member of Connolly's Tick-borne Disease Prevention Laboratory, explained why the new project fits well with the research program.

"Our research explores how to improve integrated tick management practices," Krell said. "This EPA grant is exciting because it gives us a mechanism to communicate about evidence-based approaches. If we don't share our work with the public, it can't make a difference."



Ridgefield Director of Public Health Edward Briggs, Ridgefield Lyme Community Program Director Jennifer Reid, Dr. Neeta Connolly and Dr. Rayda Krell

# Federal grant allows WCSU to expand crisis training



Dr. Gabriel Lomas teaching graduate students

WCSU will use a \$1.8 million federal grant to improve and expand training for students in programs that teach them how to respond to mental health crises.

Dr. Gabriel Lomas, professor of Education and Educational Psychology, led the application for the grant, made available through the passage of the Mental Health Reform Act of 2016, which was supported by U.S. Sen. Chris Murphy (D-CT) as an original cosponsor of the bill.

"A key aspect is to grow our program so we can increase the behavioral health workforce in the area," Lomas said. "We will be able to place more students in primary care with physicians and train all students in the behavioral health program in trauma and crisis models. If we have space, members of the community will be able to take the training, too."

The grant is the largest research grant the university has received, surpassing the \$1.6 million grant earned last year by Dr. Neeta Connolly, assistant professor of Biological and Environmental Sciences, to study the ticks that transmit Lyme disease.

"Too many kids and adults with mental health needs in this country don't get the timely care they need for one reason: we don't have enough trained behavioral health specialists to care for them," Murphy said. "I worked hard to reauthorize this grant program as part of my Mental Health Reform Act because I believe that it should be as easy to access a doctor or get prescriptions for an illness of the mind as it is for an illness of the body."

The Mental Health Reform Act reauthorized the Behavioral Health Workforce Education and Training Program, which approved WCSU's four-year grant.

"WCSU prides itself in being a community partner, developing curricula that are responsive to regional needs," said WCSU Provost Dr. Missy Alexander. "This grant is just another example of our commitment to Danbury and the surrounding area. We are extremely proud of Dr. Lomas and the work that he has done to secure these funds."

Patricia Ivry, dean emerita of the School of Professional Studies, said the grant confirms the good work of the department and of Lomas.

"Receipt of this grant calls attention to the significant demand for the region to prepare professionals to address mental health issues," Ivry said. "We are proud to take the lead in this initiative and thrilled to have faculty like Dr. Lomas in our school."

Lomas came to WCSU with a strong background in helping communities respond to crisis. He was a member of a school-based crisis response team and clinical crisis response team in Texas, and he helped to create a Regional Crisis Team in southwestern Connecticut to assist area schools in crisis response preparation. When a disaster happens, the team pools the resources of the university and school districts to provide support immediately after an event such as a shooting, death, natural disaster or other crisis.

Gabrielle Jazwiecki, director of the Office of Sponsored Research Administrative Services, worked with Lomas to secure the funding.

"This grant will allow us to build on everything we have been doing over the past several years," Lomas said. "The community will benefit as we teach more students to handle and prevent crises based in behavioral health."

# Women's basketball wins in the classroom

## Team ranked ninth nationally in Academic Honor Roll

2016-17 women's basketball team with players Kathiana Monestime, Emma Belcourt, Gabrielle Hurlburt, Jessica Davis, Molly Ronan, Kaitlyn LaBonte, Samantha Smith, Alyssa Eannotti, Emily Dobson, Alecia Dulaire, Tashia Price, Genesis Torres and Jancy Sherwood

The WCSU women's basketball team placed in the national Academic Top 25 Team Honor Roll for the first time, with a ninth-place ranking.

WCSU's team, with a cumulative GPA of 3.593, shared the Top 10 with the likes of Emerson College, New York University and MIT, and finished ahead of Williams, Smith, Vassar and Ithaca colleges. The honor roll is compiled each year by the Women's Basketball Coaches Association.

"I am so incredibly proud of our young ladies," said Coach Kimberley Rybczyk, a former WCSU player who has coached the team for 15 seasons. "They work so hard year-in and year-out and to be recognized by the WBCA for their effort is tremendous. They exemplify what it means to be a student-athlete at WCSU."

The WBCA Academic Top 25 recognizes NCAA Division I, II and III;

NAIA and junior/community college women's basketball teams across the nation that carry the highest combined GPAs inclusive of all student-athletes on their rosters for the entire season. The 2016-17 season is the 22nd in which the WBCA has compiled the honor rolls.

WCSU Athletic Director Lori Mazza also expressed pride in the recognition.

"This honor demonstrates a program philosophy aimed at excellence in the classroom, as well as in competition," Mazza said. "When I look around at our athletes, they all understand the Division III philosophy of a student athlete, but this women's basketball team embraced it. Individually and collectively, the athletes and their coaches represent WCSU very well."

*WCSU Tribute gifts including In Memory or In Honor of are easy to make online at [wcsu.edu/onlinegiving](http://wcsu.edu/onlinegiving).*

# WCSU to add four athletic programs

## Men's and women's cross country, and men's golf, diving and swimming

Colonial Chuck

The WCSU athletic department is adding four new programs — NCAA men's and women's cross country, men's golf and men's swimming and diving — as Division III varsity intercollegiate programs. Members of the teams will play full schedules beginning in the fall.

Athletic Director Lori Mazza said the addition of these four programs brings WCSU's varsity athletics sponsorship up to 18 programs and is the first expansion since it re-established the field hockey program in 2005.

"We are very excited about the expansion of our department," Mazza said. "The offerings selected reflect the interest within our region and our ongoing commitment to recruit student-athletes with added opportunities for students who want athletics to be a part of their collegiate experience."

The university is in the process of designing a cross country course on

the Westside campus. Additionally, to establish a home golf course, discussions between the university and managers of several public and private courses are ongoing.

The men's swimming and diving team will compete in the O'Neill Center Natatorium in conjunction with the women's program. Jill Cook has been the head coach of the women's program for the past 18 seasons and intends to take the helm of the men's program next season. The swim season for both typically runs from October to February.

Mazza noted that the Little East Conference sponsors championships for men's and women's cross country with the possibility of men's golf, pending LEC approval. The WCSU men's swimming and diving program will initially compete as an independent while seeking a permanent conference affiliation.



# Women's soccer earns 13th NCCA tournament



Jasmine Grey

The women's soccer team picked up its 10th Little East Conference title and earned its 13th NCAA Tournament bid under second-year coach Alex Harrison. The team lost in the first round of the tournament but finished with a 17-2-2 record. Seniors Autumn Sorice and Andrea Devoe were named to the United Soccer Coaches All-New England First Team. Sorice also earned several other awards, including 2017 Athlete of the Year by the Connecticut Sports Writers' Alliance. In addition, she was named the Little East Conference Player of the Year for the third consecutive year after leading the conference in goals with 16, assists with nine, and points with 41. She led WCSU to the LEC regular season and tournament championships, and was named the LEC tournament MVP in a 2-1, double-overtime victory over rival Eastern Connecticut in the championship match.



Autumn Sorice



LEC championship game vs. ECSU

Contributed image

# Men's soccer Div. III NCAA tournament



Afa Reyes in the first round playoff at Brandeis



Coach Joe Mingachos, Shane Bierfeldt and AD Lori Mazza at the LEC championship game vs. RIC



Starters at the NCAA round one game

The men's soccer team made it to the Div. III NCAA tournament with a 14-6-1 record, and although they lost in the first round, players and coaches were proud of their strong season. Under second-year head coach Joe Mingachos, WCSU picked up its third Little East Conference title to earn its ninth NCAA Tournament bid and second since 2005. It was head coach Mingachos' first trip as the leader of the men's program after taking the WCSU women's soccer team to 11 NCAA appearances, including the Division III Final Four in 2007. WCSU had not won more than eight games in a season since finishing at 13-5-3 in 2005.

Several players also had excellent seasons. Senior back Shane Bierfeldt was named to the 2017 United Soccer Coaches Men's Soccer All-New England Third Team and he played in the 7 New England Intercollegiate Soccer League All-Star Game at Brandeis University. In addition, senior Eammon D'Arcy and junior Christian Osorio were named to the Little East Conference Fall All-Academic Team.



LEC championship game vs. RIC at WCSU

# WCSU to Facebook In One Easy Step!

## WCSU alumnus Greg Heimbuecher ('16) reveals what it takes



“It was well worth it,” said Danbury native Greg Heimbuecher, referring to the six years it took him to graduate from WCSU with a double major (a B.B.A. in Management Information Systems and a B.S. in Computer Science) in the spring of 2016. Just three months later, Heimbuecher was a full-time employee as a cybersecurity engineer at Facebook’s world headquarters in sunny Menlo Park, California, where he still works as a cybersecurity engineer.

We asked Heimbuecher how to succeed in this field. “When you start at WCSU as a freshman,” he said, “you shouldn’t wait to work. Know what you want to be doing and get involved in it immediately, in nearly any way possible, paid or unpaid.”

Towards the end of his last semester, a friend knew Heimbuecher was becoming an expert in cybersecurity and mentioned they have a connection at Facebook. After passing along his resume, Heimbuecher began the typical Silicon Valley interview loop. They set up a technical phone screen, where they determined he was a possible candidate for the position.

The next step was flying him out to their California HQ days after his graduation ceremony for a full day of technical interviews with team members. A few days later, he was offered a full-time position. Needless to say, Heimbuecher said yes! Heimbuecher realizes that luck played a big part in finding a connection on the inside to look at his resumè, but at the end of the day, he had the technical skills and attributes they were looking for.

In the fall of 2010, Heimbuecher began his studies at WCSU and quickly found work in an area he liked. “When I began at WCSU, I didn’t wait,” he explained. “I was a student for one week

when I went to the Information Technology and Innovation (IT&I) department, and they hired me to handle various tech projects around campus. I worked for IT&I until I graduated six years later.”

We asked Heimbuecher what advice he has for someone considering Cybersecurity as a major and/or career at WCSU. “Don’t wait to see if you learn missing info in the classroom,” Heimbuecher said. “Instead, use the resources available to you online to fill in those gaps. It’s critical to augment your education with computer science classes like I did. For example, learning the fundamentals of computer languages like C++, Python, SQL and computer networking go a long way during your job hunt. Employers, especially in Silicon Valley, expect that you know how to code.”

We asked Heimbuecher about the skills he thinks were most important in landing him the Facebook job. “Well, in order of importance,” he said, “number one: I did my own self-motivated learning outside the classroom. Number two: my work in the WCSU IT&I department gave me direct hands-on experience in the field. Number three: my computer science coursework in addition to my MIS studies. Having courses in both management information systems and computer science gave me broader scope of knowledge.”

Heimbuecher enjoys what he and his team members do every day at Facebook. “I can’t say too much about what our team does” he explained. “But I can say we defend Facebook’s infrastructure by quickly identifying and analyzing threats that aim to collect sensitive/proprietary information, or disrupt our business. We are constantly hunting for bad guys, analyzing their malware and developing new signatures or methodologies to track their activity.”

Heimbuecher enjoys his work at Facebook. “All this is right up my alley,” he said, “in terms of the skills I learned and practiced.”

—Tom Zarecki ('87, '04)



Dr. Theresa Canada

From the beginning of her teaching career, Dr. Theresa Canada saw the value of engaging parents in the classroom.

Now she has completed research that verifies her theory and, she hopes, could lead to new approaches in how school systems interact with parents to improve education.

Her latest project was a study with 22 parents of Danbury preschoolers. They included native speakers of English, Spanish and Portuguese. All of them, Canada found, were engaged and deeply interested in ensuring that their children had the best chance for a good future. They also understood that education was key to that future.

“Parents really, really want to have their voices heard,” said Canada, who conducted paper and online surveys as well as face-to-face interviews. “You have to find a way to communicate with parents. If you want students to be able to get to high school and be successful, you have to start at an earlier age. Unless we understand what we have to do at this stage, we spend so many resources to fix things later on in life.”

Canada acknowledged that some educators think parents, especially in urban districts, do not want to be involved in the school system. In many cases, though, it could be that the parents don’t know how to begin the conversation.

“Parents are not necessarily familiar with the process,” she said. Especially

## Professor asks parents what they want in the classroom

for recent immigrants, “everything is different for them. They are learning how to interact on the spot. Helping to educate parents better is part of my research. There are issues, concerns and topics that parents want to share with the system.”

Canada experienced this reticence in one of her first teaching jobs.

She worked as a substitute teacher in New York City public schools while she studied for her doctoral degree at the University of Rochester. On her first day in a second-grade class, she opened the

*“There are issues, concerns and topics parents want to share with the system.”*

— Dr. Theresa Canada

door to let in students and found many parents waiting with their children. She invited them in, but they all declined. It was winter, and Canada was alone as she helped the students get out of their coats, gloves, hats and boots.

“On the second day, I asked the parents, “Won’t you please come in and help?” They did come in and helped me remove the coats and boots. So I started my teaching day earlier. This allowed me to be better prepared to teach at the beginning of the day. The previous teacher had not allowed parents into the classroom. But I wanted to communicate with the parents. They have things they want to share and express. And they might not know how to do that.”

In her research, which was coordinated with Danbury Children First and was supported with a grant from the William Caspar Graustein

Memorial Fund, Canada found most parents listed teacher quality as No. 1 on their wish list.

“It’s huge. They want the best teachers for their child,” Canada said. “It might be a new facility with all the best equipment, but if they didn’t have qualified teachers with credentials, and a caring teacher, they would remove the child from the school. I had one parent say they moved their child three times. Parents said they want their child to be happy in the environment. That’s the starting point.”

Canada, while advocating that teachers learn new methods to engage parents, doesn’t put all the blame on the profession.

“The demands of teaching are so heavy,” she said. “I believe the demands on early childhood teachers are even harder. You’re concerned with the emotional, physical, cognitive aspects of children. They determine that child’s future. Unless we focus on that, we are going to miss out on our society.”

Canada said her next step will be to conduct a larger survey with more parents. If that further proves her theory, she said she would create new curriculum for the teacher preparation classes taught at WCSU.

“We have to take time to assist parents to better prepare their children to come into the system, and better prepare the teachers to know what to do with the parents,” Canada said. “It’s a two-way situation. Parents bring different kinds of knowledge to the table and we have not been as conscientious listening to those voices. And if the parents are not engaged, how do you expect the child to be engaged?”

# Chemistry students present research at national conference

## Thirteen WCSU seniors participate in American Chemical Society annual meeting exhibition

Thirteen WCSU students who received Bachelor of Science degrees in chemistry or biochemistry in May 2017 presented their senior research projects at the 2017 American Chemical Society National Meeting and Exposition held in San Francisco.

The students, who conducted research in the laboratories of Chemistry Department faculty mentors at WCSU, were accepted by the ACS to participate

in the Chemical Education exhibition held during the annual meeting in April 2017. The meeting attracted approximately 18,000 chemistry professionals, academics and students from the United States and worldwide. In addition to presenting their research and viewing the work of fellow chemistry students in a professional conference setting, the ACS National Meeting afforded the opportunity

for the WCSU participants to attend lectures on pioneering chemistry research investigations and attend workshops and career fairs.

WCSU students who presented their research at the ACS National Meeting included: Sumra Akhlaq, Sadia Alam, Freddy Balarezo, Gursimran Kaur, Madiha Khan, Trevor Lyons and Edwin Rojas, all of Danbury; Douglas Fleischmann, of Brookfield; Alexander Bieber and Li Shan Lin, both of New Milford; Charbel Khalil, of Sandy Hook; Robert Mownn, of Shelton; and Doneisha Coleman, of West Haven. WCSU student Maximilian Krainer, of New Fairfield, also attended the conference.

Chemistry students attending the ACS meeting and exhibition)



# WCSU defends Mole Bowl championship

WCSU competed and won in the Western Connecticut division of the American Chemical Society ninth annual Chemistry Bowl at Sacred Heart University in celebration of National Mole Day on Oct. 23. WCSU has competed in the championship every year and has won in 2010, 2016 and 2017.

The Chemistry Bowl is a trivia-style competition that covers topics from all chemistry disciplines. The members of WCSU's winning team are Erica Frisco, of Cheshire; Nathaniel Nisly, of New Fairfield; Julio Bernal, of Brookfield; and Damian Esposito, of Danbury. Frisco, Nisly and Bernal are seniors majoring in

biochemistry and Esposito is a senior majoring in chemistry. After graduation, Frisco aspires to teach biochemistry at the high school level, Esposito plans to work in the chemical industry, Nisly will attend graduate school for a doctoral degree in materials chemistry and Bernal will pursue a doctorate in chemistry.

WCSU Associate Professor of Chemistry Dr. Nicholas Greco supported the student competitors.

"The victory was very much a team effort," Greco said. "All of the

students correctly answered a number of questions along their way to victory. The final round was a landslide. The Mole Bowl is a wonderful experience for our students to see how they stack up against the other schools in the area."



Champions Damian Esposito, Erica Frisco, Nathaniel Nisly and Julio Bernal

# WCSU ranks No. 1 among online Applied Behavior Analysis programs

## Survey ranking of top universities in field cites WCSU's ABA master's degree as nation's best

Western Connecticut State University has earned recognition from the Applied Behavior Analysis Programs Guide for offering the nation's best master's degree program in applied behavior analysis, a growing field where employment is projected to increase by one-third nationwide by 2020 according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

The 2018 ABA Programs Guide survey released in December ranked WCSU at No. 1 among higher education institutions nationwide that offer an online master's degree in applied behavior analysis. The ABA Programs Guide profile of WCSU noted that the university's fully online instructional program prepares students "to effectively quantify and measure behavior in order to make effective changes that will improve overall behavior of an individual, group or organization." The guide noted students in the WCSU program learn how to measure behavior, collect and analyze data, and make suitable modifications to increase appropriate behavior and decrease inappropriate behavior.

The WCSU Master of Science in Applied Behavior Analysis, housed in the Education and Educational Psychology Department, is achieved through completion of a rigorous curriculum of nine courses for a total of 30 credit hours. The M.S. program includes 19 credits of core coursework designed to qualify graduates to sit for the Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA) Examination sponsored by the Behavior Analyst Certification Board (BACB). Dr. Janet Burke, coordinator of the WCSU graduate program in applied behavior analysis, has created a required course in Assistive Technology for Applied Behavior Analysis, an area of study with important applications in the profession that sets WCSU apart from other programs in its field.

"The top ranking of the Master of Science in Applied Behavior Analysis program is due to the tireless efforts of Dr. Burke and Assistant Professor of Education and Educational Psychology Dr. Stephanie Kuhn to maintain a quality program," Department Chair Dr. Catherine O'Callaghan remarked. "Demand for the program is so great that WCSU now has a waiting list" for applicants

seeking admission to the ABA master's cohort, she said.

The ABA Programs Guide survey criteria for online master's program rankings included affordability in tuition costs, a low student-faculty ratio and availability of a program concentration, as well as verification that the university offers the approved course sequence to sit for the BCBA exam. The Programs Guide noted that Board Certified Behavior Analysts are in especially high demand from employers specializing in work with individuals with autism and developmental disabilities, as well as for a diverse range of positions in areas ranging from treatment

*"Demand for the program is so great that WCSU now has a waiting list."*

—Dept. Chair Dr. Catherine O'Callaghan

planning and therapy to school psychology and employee training in the health care, educational and social service sectors.

The mission statement for WCSU's M.S. in Applied Behavior Analysis program establishes the goal "to provide high-quality behavior analytic instruction to practitioners, offering courses with advanced online technology in an academic environment dedicated to education and research." Specific learning objectives seek to prepare students to measure and interpret behavior, design and implement assessment procedures, and use data collection and analysis as a basis for maintaining or modifying behavior.

A separate ABA Programs Guide 2018 survey ranking of universities offering the applied behavior analysis graduate study certificate online placed WCSU at No. 3 among all institutions nationwide. The survey introduction noted that top rankings for certificate programs were based on relatively low student-faculty ratios, affordable tuition levels and high BCBA examination pass rates.

The online Applied Behavior Analysis Certificate option offered by the Education and Educational Psychology department features a five-course, 19-credit curriculum qualifying candidates who have completed an accredited graduate degree to take the BCBA certification exam, and a four-course, 16-credit curriculum qualifying candidates who have completed an accredited bachelor's degree to take the Board Certified Assistant Behavior Analyst (BCaBA) certification exam. Both certificate programs are approved by the BACB.

## Yamaha honors percussion educator David Smith with Yamaha Legacy in Education Award

In honor of his profound influence on the percussive arts and music education, Yamaha Artist Services Indianapolis has presented WCSU Professor of Music Emeritus David Smith with the Yamaha Legacy in Education Award. The award was presented during a Percussion Ensemble concert dedicated to Smith, at WCSU's Westside campus.

Presented by Yamaha District Managers Chris Manners and Ian Wudyka, the award recognizes distinguished Yamaha Artists and music educators for their extraordinary service to, and impact on, the field of music education. Smith retired in May 2017, after an extraordinary musical education career spanning 50 years.

A beloved faculty member of WCSU since 1970, Smith previously taught instrumental music in Elmira, New York, from 1967-69, and served as a graduate assistant at East Carolina University in the 1969-70 academic year.

As a performer, Smith served as the long-time principal percussionist with



Yamaha representatives Chris Manners and Ian Wudyka present Professor Smith with award

the New Haven Symphony Orchestra. Smith has performed with the Ives Symphony Orchestra as timpanist and principal percussionist, the Bridgeport Symphony as timpanist and the Ridgefield Orchestra as timpanist. An active solo recitalist throughout his career, Smith performed world premieres of two compositions by Milton Babbitt – “Beaten Paths” for solo marimba and “Homily” for solo snare drum – at the International Percussive Arts Society Conference in Nashville, Tennessee, in 1989.

Smith has recorded on CRI and

Desto Records with the New England Contemporary Ensemble and recorded David Amram’s “Native American Portraits” for National Public Radio. He has performed with the Paul Whiteman Band throughout the United States and Italy.

Smith holds a B.S. in Music Education from Mansfield State College and an M.M. in Percussion Performance from East Carolina University. He completed post-graduate work at New York University and the Hartt School of Music. In 1995, he was selected as the Higher Education Music Educator of the Year in Connecticut.

“With a career spanning more than a half century, David has touched the lives of thousands of percussion students,” said John Wittmann, director, Artist Relations and Education, Yamaha Artist Services Indianapolis. “We’re honored that he chose Yamaha to accompany him along his extraordinary professional and artistic journey, and wish him a wonderful retirement.”



John Trentacosta, the WestConn Society 2018 Champion for Student Success

### Join us at the WestConn Society Breakfast for Student Success

The WCSU Foundation Board will host the annual WestConn Society Breakfast on Wednesday, May 9, at The Amber Room Colonnade. This year's honoree John Trentacosta was the President and CEO of Newtown Savings Bank for the past 20 years. John is an active supporter of WCSU and other community organizations that support students and local residents.

Your participation in this event will help provide the much-needed support for talented students, with limited means, to participate in out-of-classroom opportunities that enhance their college experience and foster their growth as individuals.

The WestConn Society is the oldest continuous giving program sponsored by the WCSU Foundation, providing an important source of private donations.

**Please visit [wcsu.edu/ia/events.asp](http://wcsu.edu/ia/events.asp) for sponsorship opportunities and/or to purchase tickets for the breakfast.**



# Join the Legacy Society

For more than a century, WCSU students have benefitted from the generosity of those who know the importance of a college education. Indeed, what better role models than the graduates of a former teachers college to highlight the significance of higher education to our society? Including a charitable bequest in your will is a simple way to make a lasting gift to WCSU.

Today, Western Connecticut State University educates more than 6,000 students a year, many of whom cannot afford a college

education without the support of our alumni and friends. In fact, some of the largest support WCSU receives comes in the form of charitable bequests.

The Institutional Advancement office is here to work with you and your advisers to help craft a legacy that meets both your philanthropic and estate planning goals.

*For more information, please contact Lynne LeBarron, Director of Institutional Advancement at (203) 837-8188 or [lebarronl@wcsu.edu](mailto:lebarronl@wcsu.edu).*

## Listen to the WCSU podcasts!



Dr. Chris Kukk, left, and Tracy Day, right, interview Farooq Kathwari, CEO of Ethan Allen Furniture for the “Compassionate Achiever,” one of several podcasts produced with WCSU Media Services.

<http://wcsu.edu/podcasts/>



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