

THE RESEARCH REVIEW

A Monthly Newsletter by The Office of Research Administration

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WCU TO EXPAND STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES FOR STEM STUDENTS

Kristin Daiber, the director of the Office of Student Retention, recently received a TRIO grant from the Department of Education for \$1.4 million. Federal TRIO Programs fund outreach and student services programs designed to identify and provide services to individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds.

[Read the full story here.](#)

Research Data Dive

[View the Data of WCU's Research Pursuits](#)



Office of Research
Administration

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PRE-AWARD SERVICES NEWS

Funding to Research or Evaluate Child Education

The Brady Education Foundation invites proposals to research or evaluate projects that improve learning outcomes from children from birth to 18. Proposals can be submitted by:

- February 15, 2026
- June 15, 2026
- October 15, 2026

For more information: <https://bradyeducationfoundation.org/application-guidelines/>

Schedule a Find Funding One-on-One with the Pre-Award Team

Looking for the perfect grant or funding source to support your research and scholarly activities? The Pre-Award Team offers personalized one-on-one sessions to help you identify opportunities tailored to your project. In these sessions, you will receive expert guidance on navigating databases, refining search strategies, and uncovering funding programs that align with your goals.

Schedule your session today and take the next step toward securing support for your work!

Email: Samantha Ellithorpe at sellithorpe@wcu.edu or Matt Salerno at msalerno@wcu.edu to schedule a session.

Subawards

A subaward to the institution should be treated like any other sponsored agreement coming to the institution. As soon as you know that you will be included in another institution's proposal as a subawardee, let us know!

Subaward packages must be routed and approved in InfoEd before submission. These packages will typically include the following documents:

- Subrecipient Commitment Form
- Statement of Work
- Budget and Budget Justification
- Letter of Support
- Biosketch

Contact the Pre-Award Team to ensure your subaward package is complete and submitted on time!

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POST-AWARD NEWS

Reminder on Meal Reimbursements and Food Purchases for Grant Activities

We'd like to remind Principal Investigators (PIs) and grant staff that **meals for individuals traveling on grant-related activities must be reimbursed at the approved per diem rates**. Federal guidance places strict limitations on food purchases. **Meals and refreshments are generally not allowable unless they meet specific criteria.**

- Direct food purchases (such as catering or snacks) are permitted only when:
- They are integral to the program objectives,
- Explicitly approved in the grant budget or by the sponsor in writing, and
- Fully documented to demonstrate necessity and reasonableness.

If your grant allows direct food purchases, please note that Cameron or Ben may request additional details during expense review to ensure compliance.

For any questions about allowable costs or if clarification is needed, contact the Post-Award Accounting Office before incurring expenses.

Prior Action Requests: What You Need to Know

If a grant requires budget revision, no cost extension, change in PI or change in scope, note these prior action requests requires Office of Research Administration's oversight and approval. To start the process, please complete the **Post-Award Action Form**. This form is the simplest and most efficient way for our team to manage requests. Once submitted, Cameron or Ben will follow up with you to discuss your submission and next steps.

We appreciate your collaboration and look forward to supporting you with your prior action requests!

Schedule a Meeting with Post-Award Made Easy

To make connecting easier, the Post-Award team has created a Bookings page with quick meeting templates designed for faculty and staff. These templates reflect Ben and Cameron's availability, so you'll only see times that work with their schedules.

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POST-AWARD NEWS

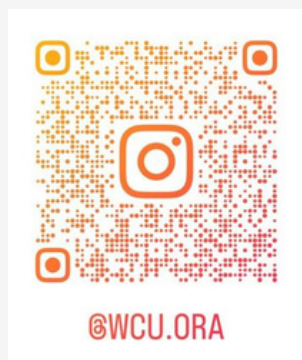
Current meeting options and their purposes:

- **Fund Review** – Schedule time for a detailed review of your project expenditures.
- **ORA PAR Form Follow-Up** – Discuss your Prior Action Request, timelines, and next steps.
- **Project Closeout Meeting** – Meet 90–120 days before your project ends to review your budget, reporting requirements, NCE needs, and more.
- **30-Minute Meeting** – A quick session for questions that need more discussion than email allows.
- **PI Check-In** – Set up recurring meetings to review budgets, procurement realities, upcoming events, travel, hiring grant personnel, AY/SMR effort, and other project activities.

Ready to schedule?

Visit our [Bookings Page](#) to find a meeting option or time that works best for you. You can also click on each meeting option for their respective meeting link.

FOLLOW US ON INSTAGRAM!



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COMPLIANCE NEWS

IRB Study Closures

Remember to close IRB records when ALL are true:

- All data collection is complete
- Access to identifiable or coded data (where a key exists) is no longer needed
- You are only working with de-identified data or all analysis is completed
- All study interventions and participant contact have been completed.

Study closures are created by completing a Continuing Review submission and including in the submission that you wish to close the study.

You can use the following instructions to complete this process: [IRB Study Closure How To](#)

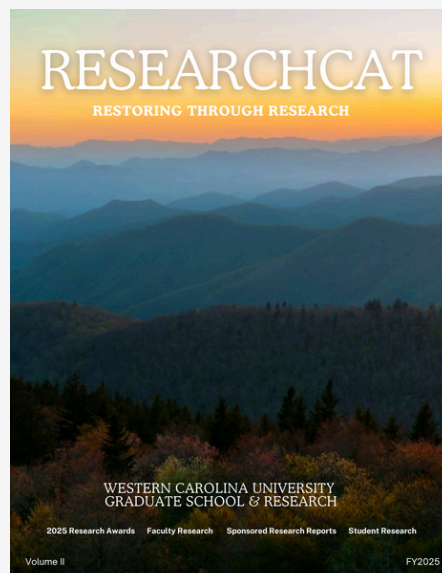
For questions, contact: Mallory Ball mball@wcu.edu

Compliance Bookings

Do you want to discuss something one-on-one with the Compliance unit? Use the Bookings link below to schedule a time that works best for you!

[Book time with Mallory Ball: Office hours](#)

CHECK OUT OUR
[RESEARCH](#)
[MAGAZINE!](#)



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COMPLIANCE NEWS

Post-Approval Monitoring (PAM) Visit

The Office of Research Administration's Research Compliance may be selecting you for a random Post-Approval Monitoring (PAM) visit. The audits will be conducted on a random selection of non-exempt studies that have not been closed.

- To find protocols on which you are listed as PI, you can log into InfoEd (wcu.infoedglobal.com) and click the **"Locate my records"** tab at the top of the screen. If you would like to find any protocols on which you are listed as personnel but not necessarily PI, you will need to click **"Locate Records"** then search by **"Record Personnel"** and enter your name. See below:

The screenshot displays the Western Carolina University InfoEd interface. The top navigation bar includes links for Home, My Profile, Locate My Records, Locate Records, Contacts, Calendar, Messages, and Assignments. A sidebar on the left lists various tracking categories: Grant Proposals, Award Tracking, Financial Tracking, Compliance Protocols, Conflict of Interest, and SPIN. The main content area shows a 'Messages' section with several 'ACTION REQUIRED' notifications. A modal window titled 'Select 'Locate' Criteria' is open, allowing users to choose modules and search fields. The 'Modules available for searching across:' section includes checkboxes for Account, Grant Proposals, Compliance Protocols (selected), and Conflict of Interest. The 'Available fields to search by' section lists various fields, with 'Record Personnel' selected. The 'Selected fields' section shows 'Record Personnel' as the chosen field, with a text input box for the search term. The bottom of the screen shows a table with columns for Record, Assignment, and Record.

For questions, contact: IRB@wcu.edu

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STUDENT RESEARCH NEWS

Academic Project Grants (APG) and the National Conference on Undergraduate Research (NCUR)

Academic Project Grants (APGs) support undergraduate research and creative work efforts at Western Carolina University. Any student or group of students working with a faculty sponsor is eligible to apply for a grant.

Funding Uses:

- Equipment, materials, and supplies
- Individual or group travel to present at conferences
- Support for travel to NCUR

*Awards are competitive, with limited funds awarded

Upcoming Cycle Deadlines:

- Cycle 3: January 22, 2026
- Cycle 4: February 19, 2026

[Discover APG proposal guidelines, the template, and more.](#)

Students accepted to NCUR have the opportunity to present their undergraduate research along with peers from across disciplines. This year's conference will be held in person in Richmond, VA, April 13 – 15, 2026.

Important NCUR Dates:

- Abstract Submission Portal Opens: September 9, 2025
- Abstract Submission Portal Closes: December 5, 2025
- Abstract Acceptance Notifications: January 14, 2026
- Registration Portal Opens: January 14, 2026
- Early Bird Registration Deadline: January 30, 2026
- Final Registration Deadline: March 6, 2026
- NCUR 2026: April 13–15, 2026



Contact Suzanne Melton, Research Programs Coordinator, at scmelton@wcu.edu for more information.

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STUDENT RESEARCH NEWS

Graduate Student 3-Minute Thesis (3MT®) Competition

The Graduate School held their annual **3-Minute Thesis (3MT®) Competition** earlier this month! Graduate students from residential and online programs submitted their research presentations and the final Top 10 were premiered at an in-person event held in the main Graduate School office in Cordelia Camp.

Special thank you this year's faculty judging panel who selected our First and Second place winners: Dr. Darden (Assistant Professor, College of Business); Dr. Marie-Line Germain (Professor, Human Resources and Leadership); Dr. Sam Castelblanco (Assistant Professor, Psychology); Dr. Curtis Beimborn (Assistant Professor, Chemistry and Physics); and Dr. Melissa Mecadon-Mann (Assistant Professor, Counseling). The People's Choice winner was selected by an open voting process in which nearly 1100 votes were submitted this cycle!

First place: Kristina Gray, Chemistry M.S. ("Flooded with Microplastics!")

Second place: Kathryn Ross, School Psychology S.S.P. ("Non-Autistic College Students' Openness to Friendship with an Autistic Peer: The Roles of Attitudes and Knowledge")

People's Choice: Cameron Robinson, Educational Leadership Ed.D. ("Bridging the Gap: Identifying and Supporting Students with Unidentified Preexisting Mental Health Needs").

Sincere gratitude to the family, friends, and faculty members who attended the premiere to cheer on each graduate student, as well as the Graduate Student Association (GSA) who generously provided the tuition and cash awards for our winners.



Pictured (left to right): Dean of the Graduate School, Dr. Lawson; Kristina Gray; and Kathryn Ross.

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PROGRAMS & MORE

To meet growing interest, the ORA has scheduled more workshop sessions for the spring! Don't miss these opportunities to build your grants knowledge and connect with peers.

- **Grant Seeking, 2/19/2026, 3:00–4:00 pm, Apodaca 115:** designed to help faculty search and locate funding opportunities using the SPIN database and other grant-seeking resources.
- **Grants 101, 2/12/2026, 3:30–4:30 pm or 3/31/2026, 3:30–4:30 pm, Apodaca 115:** designed for the entry-level knowledge-based faculty who want exposure to the world of grants. It covers the who, what, and how...a great place to start!
- **Financial Management, 3/03/2026, 3:00–4:00 pm, virtually:** designed for our more experienced faculty who want to learn more about shadow budgets, personnel costs, and purchasing rules and guidelines to help manage their grant.

Register Now. Seats are limited.

RASC

RESEARCH FOR ALL

**Research and Scholarship Conference
(RASC) 2026 – Registration Now Open!**

The Research and Scholarship Conference returns March 25–26, 2026 with in-person showcases of student and faculty research, scholarship, and creative inquiry. Join us for a full day of engagement featuring:

- Oral and Poster Presentations
- Fine Arts Exhibits and Performances
- Keynote Address
- Faculty 3-Minute Research Talk (3MR) Competition
- Celebration Receptions and Awards

New This Year: Faculty are invited to present alongside students on March 25. Plus, we'll feature research related to Hurricane Helene in dedicated sessions.

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PROGRAMS & MORE

Important Deadlines:

- Student & Faculty Presentation Registration: Feb. 16, 2026
- Faculty Scholarship Celebration Submissions: Feb. 1, 2026
- Hunter Scholar Award Applications: Jan. 25, 2026
- Luncheon RSVP: Mar. 1, 2026

Event Highlights:

- March 25: Full day of presentations, keynote, and reception
- March 26: Faculty Scholarship Celebration & 3MR Finals

Visit research.wcu.edu/rasc for details and registration links or contact Suzanne Melton at scmelton@wcu.edu for more information.



**Undergrad
Research
Exposition**



**Graduate
Research
Symposium**



**Faculty
Scholarship
Celebration**