

THE RESEARCH REVIEW

A Monthly Newsletter by The Office of Research Administration

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2026 RASC SEES THE LARGEST PARTICIPATION EVER IN CAMPUS WIDE SCHOLARSHIP CELEBRATION

The 2026 Research and Scholarship Conference spanned two days where students, faculty, and the community came together to celebrate research, creative inquiry, and scholarly achievement.

For the largest RASC that has seen the widest participation since its inception...

[Read more.](#)

Research Data Dive

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



Office of Research Administration

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PRE-AWARD SERVICES NEWS

Proposal Development & Routing Timeline: What You Need to Know

As we kick off another proposal season, we want you to know that our office is here to support you at every stage: from early concept through final submission. Engaging with us early enables us to provide strategic, hands-on support that enhances the quality and competitiveness of your proposal.

Our services include:

- Brainstorming and refining project ideas.
- Identifying and aligning funding opportunities.
- Interpreting sponsor guidelines and requirements.
- Confirming proposal components and submission criteria.
- Developing accurate, compliant budgets.
- Reviewing narrative sections.

We serve as your partner throughout the entire proposal lifecycle, helping to reduce administrative burden while ensuring alignment with sponsor and institutional expectations.

To support a smooth and successful submission process, we ask that all proposals be routed at least 10 business days prior to the sponsor deadline. This timeframe allows for a thorough compliance review, internal approvals, and any necessary revisions, positioning your proposal for the strongest possible outcome.

Fiscal Year-End Reporting: How We Can Support Your Department

As we approach fiscal year end, many departments are preparing annual reports, assessing research activity, and compiling data for internal planning. Our office is here to support you with the information you need. If you're working on year-end summaries or departmental reporting, let us know what proposal and award data would be most helpful.

We can provide customized reports that include proposal submissions, award totals, and other metrics relevant to your or your unit's goals. Whether you need high-level summaries or more detailed breakdowns, our team can help you access accurate, up-to-date information.

Please feel free to reach out anytime, and know that early requests help us deliver the data you need on your preferred timeline.

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POST-AWARD NEWS

YEAR END ROLL UP GUIDANCE FOR SPONSORED PROJECTS

As Fiscal Year 2025–2026 (FY 26) comes to an end, we want to remind you of some important processes and deadlines. These processes & deadlines apply to all sponsored projects **regardless of the end date**. ORA must work in conjunction with rollup procedures and spending restrictions announced by the University.

Timeline and Processes

April – May 2026:

- Review bi-weekly fund reviews provided in email
- **May 4th, 2026:** Ensure Personnel Action Forms (PAFs) for summer 2025 extra compensation have been signed in Adobe Sign. Please check your email for an Adobe Sign request.
- Anticipate the need to process invoices, contracted services, supply purchases, etc. are made in advance of the purchasing deadlines listed below

June 2026:

- Review bi-weekly fund reviews provided in email.
- **June 10th, 2026:** Post Award deadline to submit FY 26 recodes, invoices, check requests, & travel reimbursements for approval
- **June 10th, 2026:** WCU Purchasing deadlines for PCards and Catamart.
- **June 12, 2026:** Interdepartmental Transactions.
- **June 19th, 2026:** All invoices, check requests, and travel reimbursements are submitted and paid
- Submit any needed requests to the Post-Award Action Form (includes budget revisions, recodes, check requests, etc.) to be processed in this FY.

For questions, please contact Benjamin Peters (bpeters@wcu.edu) and Cameron Lopez (clopez@wcu.edu).

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COMPLIANCE NEWS

IRB Quick Links: Managing Your Study in InfoEd

Navigating next steps in the IRB process? Use the guidance below to ensure your submissions are completed correctly:

Responding to requested revisions:

Use this guide when the IRB has asked for changes to your submission

→ [Respond to Changes Requested by the IRB Reviewer](#)

Making changes to an approved study:

Use this process to request updates after approval

→ [Submit a Modification to an Approved Protocol](#)

Renewing or closing your study:

For full board studies requiring continuing review, or when your study is complete

→ [Complete a Continuing Review or Study Closure](#)

If you're unsure which pathway applies, reach out to our office—we're happy to help ensure your submission is routed correctly.

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

Avoid Common InfoEd Submission Delays: Quick Tips for Researchers

To help streamline review times and reduce back-and-forth during the submission process, we want to highlight a few common issues we frequently see:

- Missing or incomplete consent documentation
- Inconsistent information across study documents
- Incomplete data security/confidentiality descriptions
- Use of outdated templates or forms

Taking a few extra minutes to review your materials before submission can significantly speed up processing time.

If you're unsure about any part of your submission, we're happy to help before you submit.

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

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COMPLIANCE NEWS

Compliance Reminder: Project-Specific Disclosures + New External Activities

As a reminder, WCU requires project-specific disclosures for externally funded activities. This means that even if you have a disclosure on file, you may still need to submit or update your disclosure when you take on a new sponsored project, especially when there are changes in your role, responsibilities, or funding source.

Additionally, if you begin any new external activity for pay (consulting, speaking engagements, paid advising, contract work, etc.), it must be disclosed through WCU's conflict of interest process. These disclosures help protect both the investigator and the institution, and they ensure we meet sponsor requirements and reporting obligations.

If you're unsure whether an activity needs to be disclosed, it's always best to disclose early or reach out for guidance. For information, click the following link: [project-specific conflict of interest training requirements](#).

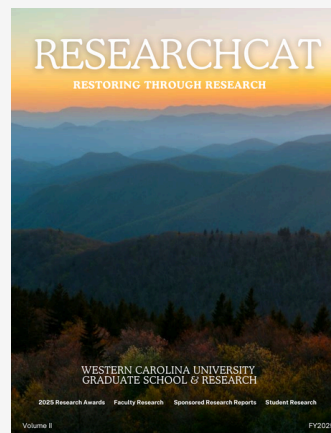
We also have helpful How-To Guides shown below:

- [Creating and Submitting Your Self-Disclosure](#)
- [Supervisor COI Review](#)
- [Responding to Additional Information Needed](#)

We will also be updating these to include clear language specific to both faculty and student scenarios. Stay tuned for updates.

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

**CHECK OUT OUR
RESEARCH
MAGAZINE!**



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STUDENT RESEARCH NEWS

This year at RASC the Graduate School had 24 oral research presentations and nearly 50 research poster submissions! The audience of the oral presentations voted for this year's winners in that category and 7 faculty judges across campus reviewed poster submissions to determine the winners in that category. Thank you to the Graduate Student Association (GSA) for providing cash awards for our winners!

Oral Presentations: Congratulations to Jack Berfield (Social Work M.S.W.) and Ashbury Haight (English M.A.).

- Jack Berfield: "Neighborhood Resilience: A Qualitative Exploration of Social Responses to Natural Disaster"
 - Ashbury Haight: "The Wrong Ship and the Unsung Heroine: Unraveling the Letters of Leonard Kephart"
- Full list of oral presentation topics: <https://affiliate.wcu.edu/rasc/graduate-oral-presentations/>



Posters: Congratulations to Emily Carmichael (Social Work M.S.W.) for finishing in first place and Garrett McCarson (Biology M.S.) for finishing in second place. They are featured here with the Dean Lawson. Special recognition as well to Jessica Minieri (Psychology Clinical M.A.) for an honorable mention.

- Emily Carmichael: "Student Readiness for Integrated Care Practice: Insights from BHWET Scholar Trainees"
- Garrett McCarson: "Movement and Habitat Use of Sicklefin Redhorse (*Moxostoma ugidatli*) in the Little Tennessee River"
- Jessica Minieri: "The Impact of Social Support on Substance Outcomes in Sexual Minorities"

Full list of research poster topics: <https://affiliate.wcu.edu/rasc/graduate-poster-presentations/>

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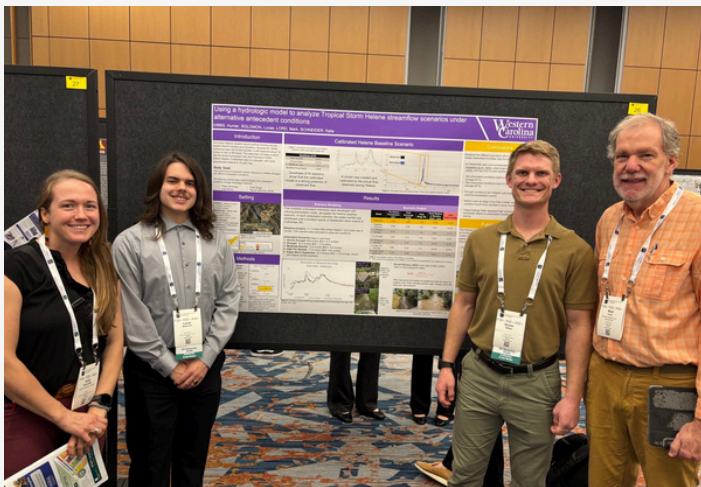
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STUDENT RESEARCH NEWS

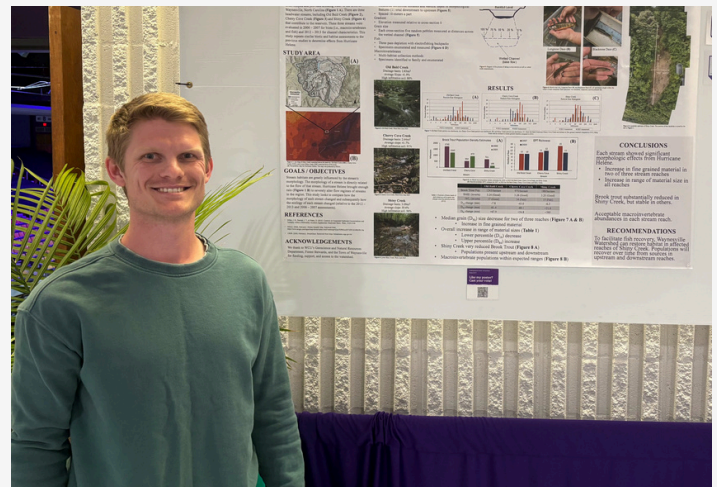
Our undergraduate student researchers showed up this year at RASC! With 29 oral presentations, several performances from the School of Music, two Fine Arts Exhibits from the School of Art & Design, and nearly 80 research poster submissions! Congratulations to all.

This year marked the second-ever undergraduate poster competition, made possible by a \$5,000 Undergraduate Research Support Award (URSA) from the UNC System Office, secured by Suzanne Melton, RASC Director and Research Programs Coordinator at WCU.

Full list of presentation topics: <https://affiliate.wcu.edu/rasc/undergraduate-research-exposition/>



(above) Lucas Solomon, first-place winner:
Using A Hydrologic Model To Analyze How Stream Responses In Western North Carolina To Tropical Storm Helene May Have Been Worse With Different Antecedent Conditions



(above) Hunter Gibbs, second-place winner:
Stream Habitat and Biotic Assessment of Waynesville Watershed After Hurricane Helene



(left) Clay Morton and Gregory Ecklund, third-place winners:
Developing a Cost-Effective Scalable Contextual AI System

CONGRATS
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STUDENT RESEARCH NEWS

Western Carolina University was proud to have 20 undergraduate researchers present at the National Conference on Undergraduate Research (NCUR) 2026 at the Greater Richmond Convention Center in Richmond, VA.

With record-breaking attendance including over 5,200 presenters representing 500 colleges, all 50 states, and 12 countries, this year's conference highlighted the incredible impact of undergraduate scholarship worldwide.

From inspiring presentations to unforgettable moments, NCUR 2026 showcased the energy, innovation, and passion of student researchers everywhere. Our undergraduate researchers represented WCU well!

We look forward to continuing this momentum and hope to see even more Catamounts in Grand Rapids, Michigan, April 12–14, 2027!



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PROGRAMS & MORE

Dogwood Health Trust - Request for Proposals - Limited Submission

Dogwood Health Trust has opened a new Request for Letters of Intent (LOI). WCU is limited to one LOI submission. The Office of Research Administration (ORA) will coordinate an internal LOI review prior to submission to Dogwood.

Titled *Investing in Strategic Networks and Approaches that Tackle Complex Challenges*, this funding opportunity offers grant support for coordinated, collaborative, community-led efforts that strengthen our region. Funds can be used to support both emerging or well-established collaborations spanning organizations, sectors and geographic locations to plan, pilot and scale breakthrough solutions to complex community challenges in Western North Carolina.

Grant Size are between \$50,000- \$500,000, and are usable over a two-year period.

Timeline:

- LOI Qualtrics Portal Opens: April 8
- **LOI Submission Deadline: May 11 by 11:59 pm**
- WCU lead decision announced: May 13
- Finalize LOI/Prepare for submission: May 13-15
- ORA Submission to Dogwood: May 18

[Submit your LOI here.](#)

For questions or support, please contact Kloo Hansen, Director of Research Administration, at kchansen@wcu.edu or Samantha Ellithorpe, Pre-Award Services Manager, at sellithorpe@wcu.edu.