Faculty Forum

Volume 29, Numbers 1-2* (2016-2017)

* Number 1 is missing.

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Note From the Editor
Chris Cooper, Political Science and Public Affairs

Welcome to the second issue of the Faculty Forum for AY 2016-2017. This issue contains two important sections (and one potentially superfluous one). The first presents a summary of the Collaborative on Academic Careers in Higher Education (COACHE) survey results for WCU. As implied by the name, COACHE is a collaborative effort with more than 230 participants that span higher education. Universities opt into COACHE and provide the PIs (at the Harvard School of Education) with names and email addresses of faculty. The COACHE team then surveys faculty about all parts of university life, analyzes the data, and benchmarks each university against national norms, and selected peers. For universities that have collaborated on COACHE for multiple years (like Western), we can also compare across time.

Ideally, universities then use the COACHE data to figure out what they do well, what they can do better, and how to get there. WCU has developed a multi-pronged approach to fulfilling these goals. First, we developed a Task Force (because, really, what university goal can't be realized with a task force?) that read the results, and discussed them at length. We then determined that there were three primary areas of interest: Personal/Family Policies, Administration, and Diversity, and broke up into subgroups so we could brainstorm ways to improve in all three of these areas. This issue of the Faculty Forum presents the work of these three task force subcommittees. We hope that you will read them, contact the authors with questions and, just as importantly, contact Brandon Schwab (who is facilitating the COACHE initiative at Western) with your ideas about ways we can improve. If we stop here, the COACHE survey will provide some interesting data that might allow you to understand your job and university better. If, however, we can use these data to take action, we can improve the quality of our jobs as faculty and, as a result, improve our university.

This issue also presents the next iteration of the book forum. As many of you know, the idea here is not for participants to simply read a book and regurgitate the major points, Cliffs-Notes style. Instead, we are hoping that faculty will read these important books and consider ways that the messages of these books relate to faculty at WCU. By doing so, we

are hoping to open up a broader dialogue on campus about how the work we do as faculty at Western reflects broader trends in higher education. The participants in this issue's book symposium did this work admirably. James Ullmer (Associate Professor of Economics) and Vicki Szabo (Associate Professor of History) reviewed the controversial, *Academic Freedom in an Age of Conformity: Confronting the Fear of Knowledge* by Joana Williams. As you will see, Jim and Vicki view the efficacy of Williams' arguments in different terms, but both offer us a great deal to consider as WCU faculty.

The last section is a selfish one. As you are no doubt trying to forget, we're in the throes of an election that makes us all want to look for real estate in Canada. I am struck, however, that one silver lining in this election season is occurring right here at Western. After years of effort and talk, a university initiative led by students, but supported in important ways by the Center for Service Learning, and the Public Policy Institute, was able to secure an early voting location on the WCU campus. In this final section of this issue of the Faculty Forum, I did a quick analysis of this early voting location to determine who is using it and what it might suggest for this election. I hope you find it interesting, if not particularly germane to the rest of the issue.

I'm always looking for ideas for future issues, but there's one in particular that I'd like every member of the faculty to consider contributing to. As you may remember, Dr. Belcher closed his opening address by asking us to consider a fundamental question: "who are we?" In this spirit, I thought[1] it would be a good idea for us to formally consider this important question in a future issue of the Faculty Forum. As a result, I am asking faculty to write brief (1 sentence is fine; please no more than one paragraph) responses to this question for publication in the first issue of the Spring. So, please think about this idea for a while and email me responses by January 1, 2017.

Lastly, and with apologies to Click and Clack: the views expressed here are not necessarily consistent with the opinions of the Faculty Commons, the Chancellor's Office, the Provost's Office, the Board of Trustees, any of Donald Trump's kids, the guy who's sitting next to be at Innovation right now, or anyone else other than the authors.

Happy Election,

-Chris

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[1] This is a lie. I didn't think of this idea at all. Bruce Henderson emailed me the idea in early September and I'm absconding with it for my own purposes.

COACHE Results for Personal/Family Policies

By Teri Domagalsky, Associate Professor of Management & Provost Fellow for Faculty Relations

This essay addresses one of the twenty benchmark areas from the 2014/2015 COACHE survey. Faculty satisfaction with this benchmark item saw an improvement from the 2011/2012 survey, although personal/family policies ranked 19 of the 20 benchmark areas in the COACHE survey. A side-by-side comparison of the 2014/2015 and 2011/2012 results in displayed below. The focus here is on the three lowest scoring issues: housing benefits, spousal/partner hiring and childcare.

	2014/2015	2011/2012	
Personal and family policies	**2.79**	**2.69**	
Housing benefits	2.02	2.04	⬜
Tuition waivers, remission, exchange	2.66	2.39	⬜
Spousal/partner hiring program	2.3	2.05	⬜
Childcare	1.97	2.07	⬜
Eldercare	2.6	2.46	⬜
Family medical/parental leave	3.09	2.99	⬜
Flexible workload/modified duties	3.48	3.25	⬜
Stop the clock policies	3.08	3.6	⬜
WCU does what it can for W/L compatibility	2.85	2.75	⬜
Balance b/n professional and personal	3.03	2.96	⬜

Housing benefits –This question encompasses real estate services, subsidized housing and low-interest mortgages. As noted in the above graph, this item received a mean score of 2.02/5.0. The limited availability of housing options in the local area has been a long standing area of concern. The concern may be more acutely felt for newly arriving faculty with the elimination of short-term faculty housing across from the main campus.

For those interested in purchasing a home, one attractive mortgage option that readers may find useful is the financing option available through the State Employees Credit Union. Members receive 100% financing for a new home purchase within 12 months of their relocation to the area when they take a new position with a state of North Carolina agency. Real estate services and options will vary based on the county of residence. A working list of mortgage and rental agents in Buncombe, Haywood, Jackson and Macon counties has been developed. We invite readers to weigh in with their recommendations.

Spousal/ partner hiring program – Several new initiatives have been introduced to address this concern. A survey was recently created for distribution by the Provost's office

to newly hired faculty. The objective of the survey was to identify the occupational interests and needs of trailing spouses/partners. The survey also addresses other assistance such as childcare, housing options, interest in local civic organizations and networking opportunities. This is a first step to begin addressing the most acute needs of new hires.

Along with the survey, future changes to the new faculty orientation are planned that will include an open fair component for both new hires and their spouses/partners. Convention and visitors bureaus from the local area will be invited to participate in the orientation. In addition, the Career Development Center is preparing an online handout of career-related resources for trailing spouses/partners. WCU's Human Resources Department has an HR professional – Nancy Ford - who is available to assist trailing spouses/partners to navigate Western's employment system.
Noteworthy is University Policy 57, "Employment of Related Persons", which addresses the parameters and principles associated with hiring spouses, partners and other family members. Hiring departments will want to familiarize themselves with policy 57 to ensure compliance with university procedures. The policy may be accessed at the following link: http://www.wcu.edu/discover/leadership/office-of-the-chancellor/legal-counsel-office/university-policies/numerical-index/university-policy-57.asp

Childcare – This issue yielded the lowest mean score of all personal/family issues, with a mean satisfaction score of 1.97/5.0.
Faculty with school-age children are likely aware that most local schools provide after school programs for their students. Preschool and infant care is offered by a number of churches in the region. Some of these include First United Methodist church - Sylva, First United Methodist Church - Waynesville, St. John the Evangelist – Waynesville, Longs Chapel United Methodist Church – Waynesville/Clyde, and Cullowhee United Methodist Church. In addition, Cullowhee United Methodist Church provides a program for non-native English speaking children. In addition, the Kneedler Child Development Center on campus provides childcare assistance on an income needs-test basis.
The COACHE working group also considered the issue of emergency or unexpected childcare needs that may result in faculty bringing their children to the office. See University Policy 71 "Children in the Workplace or Unsupervised on Campus" for guidance: http://www.wcu.edu/discover/leadership/office-of-the-chancellor/legal-counsel-office/university-policies/numerical-index/university-policy-71.asp
The university offers several family friendly programs throughout the year. One of these is the Parents Night Out Program that is advertised by email to the university community. A second is a summer program for kids age 4 through 17 organized by Harris Regional Hospital, Jackson County Department of Public Health and WCU. Undoubtedly there are other programs that faculty members with children are familiar. We want to hear from those who have participated in programs offered by WCU in order to compile a comprehensive list for interested parties.

WCU Policy 89, "Serious Illness and Disability Leave for Faculty" was updated in the Spring 2016 semester. It provides enhanced paid leave options for faculty due to childbirth, serious illness and related circumstances. The details of the policy are available

at:
A work-in-progress spreadsheet of childcare and housing resources has been prepared by the COACHE working group. The initial list was made available to newly hired faculty during the 2016 new faculty orientation. More work is needed to develop a comprehensive listing for both new hires and existing faculty members. What are your recommendations? How have you addressed these issues? We welcome your input so WCU can take action on the most pressing personal and family issues that are important to you and your colleagues. Share your ideas either through the Faculty Forum or by contacting a member of the working group at jvaske@email.wcu.edu; tdomagalski@wcu.edu or kauffman@wcu.edu.

COACHE update: administration
By Ian Hewer, Assistant Director, Nurse Anesthesia Program

As I sat to reflect on my task to summarize the on the WCU administration COACHE findings, I thought of the Chancellor's words from the Opening Ceremony: who are we? One might think the idea of the survey is to identify just that, but it might more realistically be simplified as, who do we think we are? Apparently, if one was to take the findings at face value, we are quite satisfied with our administrative team at the College level & above, but less so at the Departmental level. In particular, the difference is notable relative to other sister institutions. Although there is some intercollege variability within WCU, the difference is noticeable across the University, which provided the rationale for the formation of a sub-group to investigate possible explanations for these differences.

The first point that we all agreed on was that the results are generally good: although there is certainly room for improvement, the scores did not raise red flags so much as for their low level, as for their low level relative to other areas surveyed, and a downward trend from previous results in other years. Much of the subgroup's discussion regarding possible reasons for faculty concerns about Departmental leadership focused on the nature of administrative responsibility at that level, and the process by which Department heads are chosen & trained.

The Department head is tasked with operationalizing the lofty goals of everyone from the Board of Governors to the Deans, with fixed resources and no real way to increase those resources. In general terms, everything Department Heads do for faculty results in an increase in workload—for example, committee assignments, teaching load, staff meetings—whereas they have almost no power to decrease workload or increase pay or time off. On the other hand, the higher levels of leadership have very limited direct interaction with staff that could results in a perceived change in workload, and consequently are less likely to be associated with the inevitable negative connotations that go along with those problems. Realizing that the "middle manager" task of a Department head is by its very nature a thankless one, we went on to ponder what measures, if any, could mitigate this problem.

Perhaps not surprisingly, our first area of consideration was the appointment and training of new Department heads, for which we drew on our experience both as faculty observers, and direct experience in the department head position. It seemed clear that being appointed Department Head was not a cause for universal celebration, and in fact, could sometimes be seen as an unwanted position, no doubt for the responsibility/resource mismatch that we mentioned above. However, the Department head IS a critical role for the University, precisely because they are the point person for day-to-day operation, and when we are unhappy with a course assignment, or a committee load, the Department head is the one whose door we will be knocking on. For this reason, we surmise that greater support for this level of leadership could be a start to improving faculty perceptions. Greater support begins with good training; drawing again on personal experience of the working group, it seemed that much of the focus of training for leadership at this level was focused on rules and regulations, rather than the thornier but more common tasks of personnel management and leadership skills. It was our feeling that investigating improvements to new Department Head training would be a productive avenue to explore in this area.

In summary, as with much of the COACHE survey, the scores for leadership were good. However, we noted areas of concern relative to other institutions, and compared to previous years at the Departmental level. Our sense is that this is related to the nature of the job in general, but could possibly be improved by better training, as well as the ability to offer reward (e.g. course release, monetary incentives) as well as responsibility while working with faculty.

Selected Personal Experiences of an African American Academic: Implications for WCU

By Kofi Lomotey, Bardo Distinguished Professor, Educational Leadership

I had mixed emotions when I was accepted into Stanford's doctoral program in educational leadership. I felt intimidated at the thought of attending what was, at the time, the #1 school of education in the nation. At the same time, I was excited because I learned that my advisor would be an African American, (the only one on the full time faculty in the School of Education). But when I went to meet my advisor, she was packing her books; she had been denied tenure. I was crushed.

Fast forward nearly 35 years to 2013, when I joined the WCU faculty with 10,000 students and 450 full time faculty. I was one of two full time African American faculty *in the entire University*, and the other one had just been denied tenure.

Retaining so-called faculty of color is a challenge at WCU as it is at many predominantly white colleges and universities. Retention is more likely to occur when people feel comfortable, valued and respected. Faculty of color, not unlike other faculty, should be made to feel comfortable. Moreover, we should know that we are valued for what we bring to the institution and, relatedly, we should discern that we are respected as colleagues.   A focus on these factors contributes to higher levels retention and, as a result, benefits the

University; we all are better off with a diverse faculty. How does WCU fare with regard to retaining faculty of color? The COACHE survey gives us some indication of the comfort, value and respect that faculty of color sense at WCU. Of course, it is necessary to dig deeper and our campus wide committee has been focusing on that.

According to the 2015 COACHE survey results, there are several areas of concern with regard to the sense of comfort, value and respect that faculty of color feel at WCU. There are moderate or large differences, when comparing the responses of faculty of color and other faculty. The areas of concern include,

- Facilities, Personal/Family Policies, Benefits and Salaries (moderate)
- Interdisciplinary Work, Collaboration and Mentoring (large)
- Department (large)
- Appreciation and Recognition (moderate)
- Governance

These findings give us a number of issues to discuss at WCU. Moreover, they provide an opportunity for us to address these challenges as we seek to make all faculty feel more comfortable, valued and respected and to make our University the best it can be.

I end with another personal experience. When I arrived at SUNY-Buffalo in 1987 as a beginning assistant professor, I was the only African American faculty member in the School of Education. In my second year, I was on a faculty search committee. There were a few good candidates, and, by far, the most outstanding academic in the search was an African American male; however, he was not the best person for the advertised position. I assumed he would not be hired and believed that, if he were not, it would be a serious loss for the department and for the University. I went to my chair and explained the dilemma. Making a long story short, she went to the Dean and they hired the best candidate for the position, a white woman, and created a second position for the African American male.

I share this last story because it reflects an activist position taken by a University geared toward not just recruiting and hiring a well-qualified and diverse faculty, but also retaining a diverse faculty. In the process the institution added to its diversity. At SUNY-Buffalo, I had been told repeatedly that folks wanted me to be happy. So my going to the chair was, in part, to say, "Okay you want me to be happy? I'll be happy if I begin to see some other faculty who look like me."

Other strategies designed to retain a competent and diverse faculty include being proactive when faculty of color are being recruited away from your institution. That is, calling them in and determining what it would require to keep them, and then deciding if that is worthwhile to the institution. Another strategy is to involve faculty of color in meaningful activities on campus, not just those where a black or brown or yellow face would look good, or be politically correct.

The personal experiences that I've described above were uncomfortable at best.

Unfortunately, experiences like these occur too often all across the country. WCU has an opportunity to set the pace in terms of minimizing such occurrences on campus, by demonstrating a sincere concern for faculty of color and the degree to which they feel comfortable, valued and respected. Ultimately, WCU's success at creating a truly diverse and collegial faculty will be determined by its ability to chart a sustained course of action and to accomplish its goals in this area. Our campus has made progress in terms of social justice as it relates to retaining faculty of color. But WCU, not unlike many other institutions in the US, has a long way to go in this area and the recent COACHE survey results illustrate this.

James Ullmer, Professor, Economics

The most critical value for institutions of higher learning is that of academic freedom. In *Academic Freedom in an Age of Conformity*, Joanna Williams, Senior Lecturer at Kent University in the U.K., has written an important book for those concerned about the state of academic freedom in 21st century universities. It is her contention that this imperative core value is threatened, at least in institutions of higher learning in the West. The author asserts that the various aspects of political correctness, such as "academic speech codes" and "safe spaces," as well as the identity politics that is endemic at many American universities has brought academic freedom under attack.

Williams begins her monograph with a brief history of the notion of academic freedom. She traces the roots of the principle to the Socratic notion of intellectual liberty. The concept became dormant as medieval universities were governed more by tradition and religion. The idea reemerges in its modern form during the Enlightenment. The author cites the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) with providing the first formal definition of academic freedom in the United States in 1915 with their *Declaration of Principles of Academic Freedom and Academic Tenure*. AAUP's stated purpose for their statement on academic freedom was to protect professors who held "views that contradicted the beliefs of the church or the beliefs of their institutional financial sponsors" (Williams, 2016, p. 26).

Williams argues that over the last thirty to forty years, academia has veered away from the important principle of academic freedom. Instead, an environment of political correctness has led to a broad culture of conformity and the exclusion of certain ideas. This pervading climate has led to self-censorship in the classroom, as well as in academic research, especially with junior faculty who are trying to obtain tenure. This censorship can take the form of avoiding controversial topics altogether, or strictly adhering to orthodox views on a subject. In this regard, Williams notes the notion that the widely-accepted view on climate change—man-made global warming—is "settled science" and therefore not contestable "is not only antithetical to academic freedom; [but] also calls into question the basic principles of a centuries-old scientific method" (Williams, 2016, P. 9). Academic freedom is vital both in examining and expanding existing knowledge, as well as proposing heterodox theories contradictory to conventional wisdom. Only in such an environment can a "marketplace of ideas" arise and "truth … emerge [as] ideas are set in competition with one another" (Williams, 2016, p. 5).

While Williams is concerned with a loss of academic freedom leading to conformity, the author is more disconcerted by what she views as the denigration of knowledge. The author notes that the philosophical origins of academic freedom arose from the need to challenge concepts of truth and thereby advance knowledge—a notion that was rooted in the Enlightenment. The author writes that some academics have given up on advancing truth claims in favor of a paradigm where there are multiple truths that are equally

relevant. Williams believes that this relativistic view of knowledge, which is especially evident in the humanities and social sciences, is at odds with the modern scientific method.

Joanna Williams' well researched and provocative monograph is a must-read for anyone that is interested in academic freedom and the nature of knowledge in the modern university. We faculty at Western Carolina University, or faculty at any 21st century institution of higher learning for that matter, would greatly benefit from a perusal of this book. *Academic Freedom in an Age of Conformity* would serve as an excellent basis for faculty discussion on the important issues raised by the author. As faculty at Western, it is incumbent that we maintain the core principle of academic freedom at our university.

Vicki Szabo, Associate Professor, History

Academic Freedom in an Age of Conformity (henceforth *AFAC*) by Dr. Joanna Williams[2] may enlighten you to the tyranny of conformity in higher education that has been driven into you since graduate school (85). It may frustrate you with its partial examples of liberal academic malfeasance. It may even bore you with its repeated flashbacks to medieval universities, ye olde days when academic freedom really *meant* something. Whatever your reaction, Williams' *AFAC* is a highly instructive book that allows insight, not always pleasant, into a significant critique of higher education.

Joanna Williams is hardly the first author to take higher education to task for a purported relativist, globalizing, truth-denying and speech-restricting liberal agenda. Popular subcurrents of hostility to academic elitism and the abuse of the 'scholar-expert position'[3] seem to have traction in some media and modern society. Stanley Fish, as recently[5] seen in the NYT,[4] as well as Williams' colleagues at the online UK magazine *Sp!ked[5]* frequently decry academic abuses and misbehaviors. The claim of the professorate to unique expertise has aided, in Williams' argument, the capacity of academics to constrain free speech.

The core of Williams' analysis is an assertion that real and open free speech on important social and political issues is withheld from students, non-conformist academics, and the public through faculty contrivances and political abuses of academic freedom. Williams constantly conflates free speech and academic freedom throughout her book.[6]

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[2] Dr. Williams' CV is surprisingly difficult to track down online, but you can read more of her work at the online magazine *Sp!ked*: http://www.spiked-online.com.

[3] See chapters 2-3 for more on the rise of the 'scholar-expert;' in short, academic expertise is an outgrowth of academia's transformation in the twentieth century toward service to the national interest. Williams sees this as an early erosion of knowledge and a move toward consumerism, as manifested in the idea of students as customers.

[4] Stanley Fish, "Professors, Stop Opining About Trump," *NYT*, 15 July 2016. http://nyti.ms/29EOyTL

[5] Please note non!conformist orthography!

[6] You can call our university lawyers for their definition of academic freedom, or you can read it in our Faculty Handbook, Section 4.02: Academic Freedom and Responsibility of the University Community.: http://www.wcu.edu/WebFiles/PDFs/FacultyHandbook_2016_2017.pdf

Topics held up by Williams as prohibited for free debate and thereby controlled by academic conformists include feminism,[7] rape myths, the Holocaust, and climate change (8-9, 67). While her main academic targets are the humanities (English Literature) and social sciences (Sociology), she feels equally free to harangue scientists for claiming to possess specialized knowledge and then prohibiting free dialogue. Climate change, for example, is a subject withheld from popular debate because conformist academics claim the topic requires "specialist knowledge that can only come from years of research" (7). It seems like climate change research does, in fact, require specialized knowledge, but apparently I'm an academic conformist, so what do I know. Moving on, trigger warnings and safe spaces are further manifestations of radical, liberal, conformist intolerance to free speech (16-17). Knowledge and truth cease to be relevant goals of academic inquiry, she asserts, and relativism, globalism, and individual truth and feelings instead of evidence comprise the new canon (107). Sadly, her claim that the intrinsic value of knowledge has been replaced by marketability and consumer culture (120) does ring true, or so it would seem according to the views of legislators or certain governors in our state.[8]

Williams' *AFAC* is not without merit. Faculty will recognize some interesting debates about the importance of departments and disciplinary culture, with the positive and negative effects of 'silos,' an expression frequently used across our own campus in strategic planning and collaborations. Interdisciplinary ventures and 'Studies' programs are presented in a more negative light. Given that we are encouraged and at least theoretically supported to pursue interdisciplinary work at WCU, it may come as a surprise that Williams brands these ventures as among the most damaging in academia: "The recent vogue for interdisciplinarity speaks to the rejection of knowledge as the driving force of higher education" (114). Interdisciplinary programs, she argues, not only contribute to the demise of truth, but negatively promote relativism and globalism.

In an odd coincidence, no doubt due to the crushing subconscious conformity of academia, Jay Schalin[9] of the J.W. Pope Center for Higher Education Policy has issued forth a new manifesto entitled *Academic Freedom in the Age of Political Correctness*.[10] Schalin's titular-twin is not a complete academic doppelgänger, and his piece stays truer to the title as he rails against the pandemic of academic liberalism. Unlike Williams, Schalin at least distinguishes clearly between free speech and academic freedom before launching into a screed on political correctness, the politicized faculty, weak administrators and trustees, and the radical AAUP.[11] Finally, somewhat surprisingly given their proximity of publication and nearly identical titles, Williams' book (Jan. 2016) does not appear in Schalin's latest paper (Sept. 2016).

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[7] Feminism is worthy of a full chapter in *AFAC*, even though it is only *partially* to blame for the erosion of academic freedom.

[8] http://www.dukechronicle.com/article/2015/02/value-humanities-education-doubted-academic-circles

[9] http://www.popecenter.org/author/jayschalin/

[10] http://www.popecenter.org/2016/09/academic-freedom-political-correctness/

[11] In another divergence from Williams, Schalin includes a defense of Sen. Joseph McCarthy's trials against academics, which he says was not a "heavy-handed crusade of injustice conducted against earnest scholars" (14-15).

Read Williams' book. It includes interesting debate and some key historical context and references about an important topic for all academics. It's not a perspective you may appreciate, but having read it, you will better anticipate the arguments made against academia. And, if you feel a bit deflated when you've finished it, remember: "the intellectual environment of today's university precludes all but the most determined attempts at groundbreaking free thought" (83). Maybe conformity's not all bad.

<h1 style="color:red; text-align:center">A Quick Analysis of the WCU Early Voting Site</h1>

Chris Cooper, Political Science and Public Affairs

After years of talk, WCU secured an early voting location this year. While faculty and staff helped (most notably, the Center for Service Learning and the Public Policy Institute), this was primarily a student-initiative. In fact, Junior Social Work major Joanna Woodson deserves the lion's share of the credit for this effort. The idea behind this initiative is simple, but important: scores of papers in political science demonstrate that the closer a person lives to a polling place, the more likely she is to vote. So, if we put a polling place on campus, presumably, more of our students will vote. In addition, we know that voting is best thought of as a habitual act (akin to brushing your teeth or going to the gym); if we can make voting a habit for our students, presumably they will continue to vote, long after they leave Cullowhee.

The counterarguments (at least as I heard them) centered around two primary critiques. First, many argued that the students wouldn't vote, the polling place would be used predominately by faculty and staff, and would thus duplicate the efforts at the Cullowhee Recreation Center In some ways, this is not an irrational argument. After all, youth voting rates are abysmal, so the potential for this pitfall was significant. Second, some worried that opening a polling location on campus would advantage one party over the others—and, potentially sway a local election counter to the wishes of the longtime residents of Jackson County.

After three days of early voting at WCU, it looks like the fears were overblown and the effort has been in a success. In brief, the WCU early voting location has seen more activity than any other early voting location in the County, with the exception of the Jackson County Board of Elections site (which has been open over a week longer than the other locations). Further, the average age of voters at the WCU location is 24 years old—and 90% of voters are below the age of 30. We can't be sure that these are all students, but the circumstantial evidence is hard to refute. Finally, the data on the partisan registration of voters at the WCU polling location doesn't lend any credence to the idea that opening a polling place at WCU will benefit one party at the expense of another. In fact, data from our polling location suggests that the overwhelming plurality of our students are registering as "unaffiliated." (this reflects a larger trend among younger voters nationally). For those who find this sort of thing interesting, I've pasted a summary of the data on the next page.

NC Early and Absentee Voting Statistics Through October 29

	Statewide	Jackson County	Jackson County Early Voting Locations						UNCA
			WCU	C'Whee Rec	Savannah	Wolftown	Cashiers	Jax Cty Board of Election	
Total Votes	1,717.967	6,834	868	714	155	238	683	3,516	2,358
Democrat %	43%	44%	33%	56%	48%	42%	27%	50%	53%
Libertarian %	0.27%	0.35%	1%	0.28%	0%	0%	0%	0.23%	0.68%
Republican %	31%	26%	24%	19%	26%	28%	39%	23%	7%
Unaffiliated %	25%	30%	42%	24%	26%	30%	34%	27%	39%
% White	72%	91%	77%	95%	96%	52%	97%	94%	83%
Average Age	55	54	24	57	63	57	63	58	39