



FALL 2022 |

DEAN'S NEWSLETTER

WESTERN OREGON UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF LIBERAL ARTS & SCIENCES

Message from the Dean

BY DR. KATHLEEN CASSITY

Greetings as we approach the second half of the Fall 2022 term! It's been rejuvenating to see so many people back on campus, enjoying a mix of in-person, hybrid and online classes as well as live performances, sporting events, club meetings, and more.

It feels good to be back, yet we're also enjoying a new flexibility thanks to technology. Some of what we've learned through the pandemic might feel contradictory. On the one hand, we've learned that technology can do so much more than we thought. Thanks to tech, we can now meet across vast distances and time zones. We can deliver curriculum online in ways we could not imagine in earlier decades, and during the worst of the pandemic, we found ways to deliver online courses that we thought could "never" be taught online. As a result, we now have the flexibility to gather in virtual spaces, adding much-needed convenience during a time of ongoing complexity.

Yet on the other hand, the many months of social isolation have led many of us to value more deeply the joys of face-to-face interaction, even though they can be harder to quantify. Often when I've met with others in person for the first time in a long time, we all express amazement at how much we've missed doing things in person (even when we thought we wouldn't), and how much we now appreciate being able to do things that we once considered routine. There is an almost mysterious energy, almost a magic, that we often experience when we share



physical, not just virtual, space with others.

So which of the above statements is true? I would say they both are. I prefer to think of this not as a contradiction, but as what a philosopher would call a paradox: *"a seemingly absurd or self-contradictory statement or proposition that when investigated or explained may prove to be well founded or true"*. Given that both flexibility and personal interactions are valuable, our challenge now is to balance the need for flexibility and convenience with the equally valuable need for face-to-face human interaction.

How to achieve that balance is a challenge, but I believe it's one we are up to meeting. As educators and students, we engage every day with challenging ideas and problems requiring both creativity and analytical thinking. Read on to see the many ways in which our faculty, staff and students in the College of Liberal Arts & Sciences are seizing this paradoxical moment. And while you're at it, try your hand at a new crossword puzzle recently published by our own Associate Professor of Math, Dr. Leanne Merrill (reprinted with permission). Best wishes for the rest of Fall term!

Dr. Kathleen Cassity
Dean, College of Liberal Arts & Sciences

NEWS FROM ENGLISH STUDIES

STUDENT SPOTLIGHT: NORTHWEST UNDERGRADUATE

● CONFERENCE ON LITERATURE

Two of WOU's English Studies students were selected to present essays and poems at this year's Northwest Undergraduate Conference on Literature at the University of Portland., one of the most distinguished conferences of its kind.

- April Massoni presented her essay, originally written for Dr. Ryan Topper's LIT 318 Theory class: "Prufrock's Notes from Purgatory: Modernist and Religious Themes in T.S Eliot's 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock' and Fyodor Dostoevsky's 'Notes From Underground.'" April's essay also won first place in the Meyer Literary Prize, awarded at WOU's Academic Excellence Showcase on May 26, 2022.
- Trinity Herr presented her paper, "The Specter of Imperialist Ideals in *Heart of Darkness*," written for Dr. Ryan Topper's LIT 317 course, as well as a selection of poems drafted in Dr. Henry Hughes' poetry workshops.

● WOU GRADUATE FEATURED IN WOU-TV VIDEO

WOU Linguistics Graduate Chelsea Hunt's success as news editor for KEZI Eugene has been featured in a video for WOU-TV View by clicking here: :

[.https://www2.wou.edu/nora/woutv.video.viewer?pvideoid=1686](https://www2.wou.edu/nora/woutv.video.viewer?pvideoid=1686)

● WOU ALUMNI ACCEPTED TO PRESTIGIOUS GRADUATE PROGRAM

Brianna Lelieur is a WOU English alum who experienced displacement from the family home in San Francisco due to gentrification. During her time at WOU, Brianna decided to dedicate her life to city planning to bring about needed change. Her highest goal was to attend California Polytechnic: San Luis Obispo to pursue a Master's degree in City and Regional Planning. With the support of the English Studies faculty, Brianna was accepted to Cal Poly's program with a complete scholarship. The English faculty is proud of her and excited for her future!

● NEW CERTIFICATE IN COMPUTATIONAL LINGUISTICS

Dr. Rob Troyer, Professor of Linguistics, collaborated with Drs. Breeann Flesch, Becka Morgan and Tad Shannon, to create a new Certificate in Computational Linguistics, a vital component in the emerging field of Artificial Intelligence Machine Learning. This is a great multidisciplinary pathway with exciting career possibilities for students interested in both technology and language.

NEW BUSINESS & ECONOMICS CLUB: ALL STUDENTS WELCOME!

WOU's Business and Economics Division has formed a new club that provides fun - filled events and opportunities for mutual learning, shared experiences, interaction with industry experts, career advancement opportunities, and workshops that will help students prepare for their careers. This club is open to all majors, not just students in Business or Economics. Join the club and enjoy a variety of networking opportunities, professional panels, professional development programs, resume' writing workshops, professional social media workshops, faculty and guest speakers, enjoyable social activities, and much more. If you're interested, please contact club advisor Ermie Buncal for information (buncal@wou.edu).

Polk County Math Festival

Submitted by Dr. Leanne Merrill

After a 3-year hiatus, the Math Department rebranded its Sonia Kovalevsky Day into the Polk County Math Festival. This diversity-focused, gender-inclusive mathematics event for high school students and community members brought over 30 people to campus on May 21st for a day of math festivities led by our own WOU Mathematics majors and faculty members. High school student attendees had the opportunity to tour campus, hear from keynote speaker Dr. Naomi Adeline from Polk County Public Health, and interact with college student mentors. This annual event aims to increase mathematical creativity, persistence, and community in Polk County and the surrounding areas, and is supported by the Mathematical Association of America and the WOU College of Liberal Arts and Sciences Dean's Office.





The 32 student guests were able to encounter some moon jellies cultured at OCCC, build and test synthetic neural circuits in simulated aquatic animals, identify benthic invertebrates collected from Peavy Pond that provide clues to water quality, and make microscopic examinations of sand sourced from beaches all over the world. We also took advantage of having Dr. Boles on campus and hosted a lunch for our first cohort of Aquarium Science majors to share their experience so far with this new and already vibrant program. We are looking forward to some of our high school visitors joining us as majors soon!

AQUARIUM SCIENCE PROGRAM

Submitted by Dr. Erin Baumgartner

On April 27, the Central High School Marine Biology class was hosted by WOU's Aquarium Science program. Students took part in campus tours and explored learning and research spaces in the DeVolder Family Science Center and the Natural Sciences Building. Following a short introduction to marine biology-related career pathways available through the WOU Aquarium Science and Biology majors, students sampled a series of short lab activities with Biology professors Erin Baumgartner and Mike Baltzley, Biology Lab Preparator Julie Grammer, and Oregon State Community College Aquarium Science Director Larry Boles.



STUDENT CONFERENCE PRESENTATION: EISENHOWER AND THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT

SUBMITTED BY DR. ELIZABETH SWEDO

On April 22, Dr. Elizabeth Swedo and two students from WOU's chapter of Phi Alpha Theta (the national History Honors Society) attended the annual Pacific Northwest Regional conference at Western Washington University. Sarah Hopkins (a senior History major) presented her original research paper, "Rights Undivided: Eisenhower and the Civil Rights Movement."



CABIN FEMUR: FORENSIC ANTHROPOLOGY IN THE AGE OF QUARANTINE

Submitted by Dr. Misty Weitzel

Two forensic anthropology professors at Western Oregon University, Dr. Misty Weitzel and Jerielle Cartales, have started a podcast together entitled "Cabin Femur: Forensic Anthropology in the Age of Quarantine." A recent article in "Today at WOU" discusses how Professors Weitzel and Cartales generated the idea for their podcast. Read more by clicking on [Forensic Anthropology Professors Host Podcast](#), or start listening to their podcast at Spotify, linked here: [Cabin Femur: Forensic Anthropology in the Age of Quarantine](#).





PUBLIC HISTORY STUDENTS CONDUCT ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEWS OF PANDEMIC

Submitted by Dr. Donna Sinclair

Last spring, Professor Donna Sinclair had the good fortune to teach HST 410, Public History, to an outstanding group of WOU students. Public history connects the academic and public spheres through stringent scholarship in museums, historical journals, archives, and other public spaces. Public history is real-world history, providing a fun and educational way for students to engage in actively "doing" history. The spring class quickly got up to speed on public history by reading, writing, visiting archives and museums, and documenting the recent past via oral history interviews. Students collected eight oral history interviews entitled "Covid Stories," documenting lives during the initial phases of the Covid pandemic.

Some of the interviewees talked about WOU, while others focused on work, family, activism in the summer of 2020, and their experiences in the world outside of WOU. One student even interviewed Dr. Sinclair about her experiences as an NTT professor during Covid. The group had a great time in this course and Dr. Sinclair is thrilled to have many of these students with her in classes again this term. Students transcribed these interviews and posted them on Digital Commons. Hear them at <https://digitalcommons.wou.edu/oralhistorie-sofwou/>

We hope you enjoy listening!

Biology: Oak Ecology Undergraduate Research

SUBMITTED BY DR. AVA HOWARD

Oregon white oak (*Quercus garryana*) savannah and woodland was once a large component of the landscape from British Columbia to California. Land use changes over the past century have removed much of this habitat and are threatening its unique biodiversity. Understanding how these ecosystems function at various stages of succession and restoration is a key goal for land-managers in the Pacific Northwest, but limited information exists for integrating across scales from individual tree physiology to community biodiversity, and tracking dynamics across ecological timescales. To address this, WOU professors Dr. Ava Howard and Dr. Gareth Hopkins partnered to create WOU's Oak Ecology Research Group (OERG) in 2019.



Working collaboratively with WOU undergraduate students, the OERG maintains research on a 22-ha research site in western Oregon's Willamette Valley. The research location includes oak-savannah, oak-maple-pine forest, and oak-woodland, with varying levels of habitat management. The OERG's data collection encompasses trees, herbaceous vegetation, invertebrates, amphibians, reptiles, birds, and their interactions.

The OERG provides WOU students with an opportunity to engage in hands-on, field-based learning under the guidance of WOU Biology faculty. Discoveries made by WOU's OERG are advancing our understanding of oak ecosystems and helping inform habitat restoration and management practice in the Pacific Northwest.

If you would like to learn more, you can read about the OERG in [Today at WOU](#), and [Tampico Ridge LTER Provides Research Opportunities for WOU Students](#). Or, watch [OERG students and faculty engaging in research at Biology:Ecology Undergraduate Research](#).

"I like being a part of the research because it's hands-on. And I do enjoy being outdoors a lot."

JESSICA CHONG '23
BIOLOGY/ PRE-MED



the Laramie project



THE LEGACY OF MATTHEW SHEPARD PROJECT

Creative Arts Hosts Upcoming Events in March 2023

Submitted by Dr. James Reddan

In March 2023, the Creative Arts Division will present collaborative project commemorating Matthew Shepard, who was murdered in Laramie, Wyoming in 1998, in one of the worst anti-LGBTQIA+ hate crimes to ever happen in the United States. Twenty-five years later, we honor and commemorate his life and the lives of all of those who have experienced hate and violence just for being who they are. Thanks to a \$36,000 grant from the Oregon Cultural Trust, Matthew's story will be shared and remembered through the arts at WOU in a variety of ways. These will include:

March 2, 4, 5, 8, 9, 10: Western Oregon University Theatre Presents *The Laramie Project* (most performances at 7:30 pm).

March 3 and 11: Western Oregon University Music Department & Smith Fine Arts present the Oregon premiere of *Considering Matthew Shepard*, an oratorio (both at 7:30 pm).

March 6: Judy Shepard, Matthew's mother, will speak in Rice Auditorium at 7:30 pm. (A big thank you to the Dean and the Provost for donating funds to support bringing Judy to campus.)

March 7: Dance: A new dance choreographed by Samuel Hobbs, a WOU alum, in partnership with the WOU Dance Program, will be premiered at 7:30 pm.

February 22-March 24: Cannon Art Gallery will have a showing based on this same theme.



Congratulations to WOU Dance Instructor Cynthia Gutierrez-Garner!

Congratulations to WOU dance instructor Cynthia Gutierrez-Garner, who was recently re-elected to the Board of Directors of the American College Dance Association for the Northwest region. Cynthia's second three-year term of service will extend from July 1, 2022 through June 30, 2025.

The American College Dance Association's primary focus is to support and promote the wealth of talent and creativity to be found in college and university dance departments. Almost 400 higher-ed institutions hold memberships in the Association and approximately 6,000 students, faculty and guest artists participate in ACDA events annually. ACDA's sponsorship of 13 annual regional conferences, the biennial National College Dance Festival, and the more recent virtual opportunities are the primary means for university dance programs to perform outside their own settings, to receive feedback on their work from nationally recognized artists and educators, and to gain exposure to the diversity of dance in higher education throughout the country. ACDA events also provide faculty with the opportunity to present research and receive peer responses to their work. Board members are responsible for steering national ACDA policy and are instrumental to the strength and development of dance in the academy.

The duties and responsibilities of ACDA board members include attending the annual in-person Board of Directors meeting as well as regional conferences. The Board's work includes a commitment to anti-racist values and principles, aspiring to institutional multiculturalism, and promoting practices that ensure ACDA becomes a more inclusive and equitable organization.

Professor Gutierrez-Garner writes, "One of the things I'm most excited about in this role is that I am a founding member of the Equity and Justice Committee for the Board of Directors of ACDA. I feel the organization is doing important work of restructuring policy and procedure both for regional conferences and membership nationwide, as well as specific training for our Board. It is an important time to be a part of changes like this and as a LatinX artist, I am excited to be 'at the table!'"



INFO SCIENCE MAJOR IS STUDENT ROCKSTAR!

Submitted by Dr. Breeann Flesch

Marion County Fire District No.1 recently opened an internship and contacted eleven colleges and universities in the Pacific Northwest encouraging students to apply. After review of the applications and a panel interview by chief officers within the district, Antonio Morfin of Western Oregon University was appointed to the position. Antonio is an Information Systems major, and in the internship he developed a digital inventory of all capital assets owned by the fire district, identifying their location and condition along with application of a numbered property



decal for future reference. Antonio did an excellent job, and because the project is digital, it can be customized and other special districts will have the opportunity to use the model project as a guide to develop their own capital inventory asset protection plans.



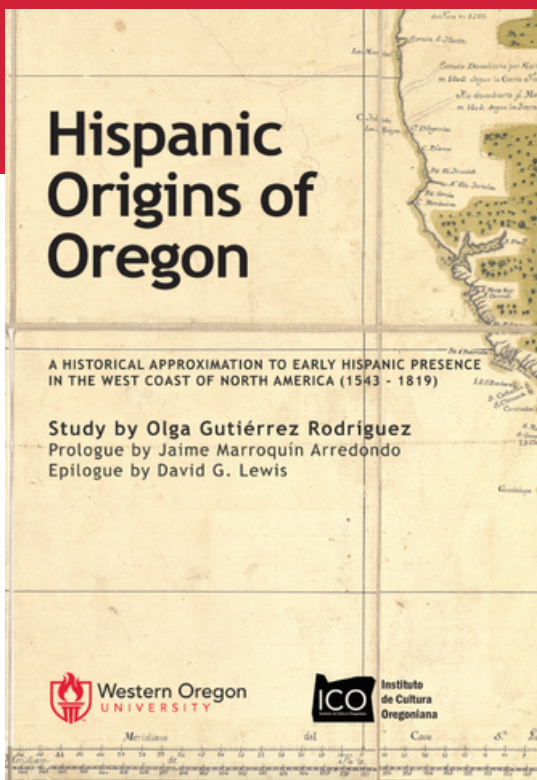
National Science Foundation

CONGRATULATIONS, DR. ALICIA IBARAKI AND DR. KATHY ESPINO-PEREZ!

Submitted by Dr. Ethan McMahan

Drs. Alicia Ibaraki and Kathy Espino-Pérez in the Behavioral Sciences Division were recently awarded with a planning grant from the National Science Foundation in conjunction with collaborators at Oregon State University and Heritage University. This grant allows the three institutions to establish and strengthen partnerships between their psychology departments. The partnership is beneficial for students because neither Heritage (a Hispanic Serving Institution and Native American-serving Non-Tribal Institution in Washington State) nor WOU offer doctoral programs in psychology.

Relationships with a local research institution such as Oregon State can provide pathways for students from these minority-serving institutions to learn about and have better access to graduate school and research opportunities. As part of this planning grant, the research team will develop community partnerships with organizations that reflect the lives of our respective student bodies, such as the Yakama Reservation and local Hispanic/Latinx serving organizations, as future sites of service learning and research. Additionally, the team will investigate ways to incorporate culturally relevant frameworks in the study and practice of science, and build toward applying for a multi-million dollar Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (S-STEM) program grant that will provide scholarships to low-income, high ability psychology students at each of these institutions.



This publication provides more than 250 years of little-known history of the Pacific Northwest coast, offering examples of the ethnic diversity of the Hispanic expeditionary crews and featuring histories of the exploration of the Pacific Northwest that are not normally presented in history books. *Hispanic Origins of Oregon* is the first academic publication about the early modern Pacific Northwest that has been issued in both the Spanish and English languages, and the work contributes to the cultural and historical empowerment of the Hispanic population of the United States.

The event was presented by WOU's Dean of the College of Liberal Arts, Dr. Kathleen J. Cassity; the President of the Instituto de Cultura Oregoniana, Efraín Díaz-Horna; the Consul of Mexico in Portland, Carlos Quesnel Meléndez; and WOU's Emeritus Professor of Spanish, Eduardo González Viaña. The author, Olga Gutiérrez Rodríguez, made some brief comments via Zoom. WOU also hosted a panel discussing the book editing process, which involved three editors: Spanish Professor Dr. Jaime Marroquín-Arredondo, Scholarly Communications Librarian Sue Kunda, and English Professor Dr. Lars Soderlund, as well as Oregon State University Professor Dr. David G. Lewis, who served as one of the book's reviewers.

A 6-minute video of the event can be seen here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=txRfRa3g6fM>

BOOK LAUNCH: *LOS ORÍGENES HISPANOS DE OREGÓN*

Submitted by Dr. Jaime Marroquín

Western Oregon University and the Instituto de Cultura Oregoniana proudly celebrated the launching of the book *Los orígenes hispanos de Oregón*, a collaborative work that tells of the first knowledge and commercial exchanges between Native Americans, Hispanics, British and Russians along the Pacific Coast of North America. The event took place in the Willamette Room on Wednesday, May 25, 2022.



PUZZLE PIECES

Crossing Barriers

—LEANNE MERRILL

I'd never given much thought to crosswords until mid-2020, when I discovered they were a reprieve from the constant screen time we all experienced early in the pandemic. After a few months of solving them, I realized there was a lot of math hiding behind the surface. All standard crossword grids are symmetrical (turn the page 180 degrees and you can see what I mean!), no answers have fewer than 3 letters, and there are patterns in the sequences of Across and Down clue numbers. I started to ask some questions: What sequences of clue num-

bers are allowable? Does a sequence of clue numbers uniquely determine a puzzle grid? How many puzzles are there of a given size?

These questions, along with others, turned into research that involved graph theory, number theory, combinatorics, and topology. I've always loved the mathematics of puzzles and games. So, together with my collaborators—many of whom are students—we've begun to explore some of these questions in the relatively unstudied field of crossword mathematics. Along the way, I started constructing puzzles as well, and the puzzle I'm sharing here is my first puzzle publication. I invite you to try this puzzle, keep an eye out for the mathematics of crosswords in other journals, and ask your own questions about the fun and mysterious world of crossword puzzle mathematics!

1	2	3	4		5	6	7	8		9	10	11	12	
13					14					15				
16				17						18				
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22			23			24	25	26				27	28	
		29			30			31			32			
			33				34			35				
	36	37				38			39					
40					41				42					
43				44					45			46		
47			48				49			50			51	52
		53					54	55	56			57		
58	59					60	61				62			
63						64					65			
66						67					68			

Across

- 1 The set of all linear combinations of a collection of vectors
- 5 Ripped apart
- 9 The largest continent
- 13 The Buckeye State
- 14 Greek letter before "x" in calculus
- 15 You might wait in line for yours
- 16 Gloria ____-____, the first African- American woman to publish a non-thesis mathematical paper
- 18 Follow orders
- 19 Singer DiFranco
- 20 Look lecherously
- 21 Open-source software initiative or African antelope
- 22 Extend, as a subscription
- 24 Alberto _____, Argentinian who revolutionized operator and partial differential equation theory
- 29 Big smile
- 31 It might be glossed over
- 32 Hrt. rate unit
- 33 Chowd down
- 34 URL concluder
- 35 Suds in *ein stein*
- 36 A word to describe 16-, 24-, 47-, and 60-across, as well as everyone who is solving this puzzle!
- 40 Tasty treat in a tiny tortilla
- 41 A type of product
- 42 Zenith
- 43 A portion of a circle
- 44 Scoreboard abbreviation for the Browns
- 45 Event tkts. without seats
- 47 Clarence _____, the ninth African-American to obtain a PhD in mathematics who then transformed college mathematics departments
- 50 Skilled
- 53 Golden ratio letter

- 54 Shaped from wood or stone
- 57 Sedan or SUV
- 58 Letter two before 14-across
- 60 Maryam _____, Iranian geometer who was the first woman to win the Fields Medal
- 63 Years and years
- 64 Ready
- 65 "¿Que ____?" ("What's up?" in Mexico City)
- 66 Traveled upon, as a bus
- 67 Alan ____ of M*A*S*H fame
- 68 And the rest: two words

Down

- 1 Up to this point: two words
- 2 Communication device
- 3 Something done with grievances, perhaps at Festivus
- 4 Silent assent
- 5 Show and ____
- 6 Early Central American civilization
- 7 Numbered hwy.; 66 is a popular one
- 8 It's got a drum and a canal
- 9 Make amends
- 10 Zone between city and country
- 11 Extreme anger
- 12 "____one? Bueller?"
- 14 Excavate or enjoy
- 17 Accompany: two words
- 21 Country's econ. measure
- 23 Muse of lyric poetry
- 25 "I'm ____ like you," according to Dylan: two words
- 26 They are used to precisely define derivatives
- 27 By definition, sets in a topology have this property
- 28 Imaging type used in chem. and med.
- 30 Most fragile part of a record player
- 34 Purrfect companion

- 35 Two-legged support for a camera or telescope, maybe
- 36 K- or Wal follower
- 37 Ideal status for a college application or journal submission
- 38 Faucet brand
- 39 The dimension of the cokernel of a linear transformation
- 40 Many PhD students
- 44 When squared, a distribution
- 46 Reciprocal trig function
- 48 Transitory period
- 49 Destroy documents
- 51 Giant black and white bear
- 52 A Bernoulli one has two outcomes
- 55 First name of Cornell's founder
- 56 Angkor ____
- 58 Decoration that signifies a sample mean or set complement
- 59 The self, in Freudian terms
- 60 Org. that publishes this newsmagazine
- 61 Sickly
- 62 Gardening tool

Dr. Leanne Merrill recently earned tenure at Western Oregon University, where she teaches a wide range of mathematics courses from developmental through abstract algebra. She is an aspiring crossword constructor and avid boardgamer, and loves finding mathematics hidden in puzzles and games. In her free time, she spends time with her husband, puppy, and four cats.

Submit a Puzzle Today!

We are looking for puzzles and games that involve math and logic-based thinking along the lines of Sudoku and its variations, the game *Set*, Nerdle (the math version of Wordle), and other recreational math puzzles that could have been found in Martin Gardner's *Mathematical Games*.

Please email submissions to Michael Dorff at mdorff@math.byu.edu.