Introducing West Chester University

West Chester University, a member of the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education, is a public, comprehensive institution committed to offering high-quality undergraduate education, selected post-baccalaureate and graduate programs, and a variety of educational and cultural resources for its students, alumni, and citizens of southeastern Pennsylvania.

The University offers more than 100 graduate and undergraduate programs in the sciences and mathematics, business and public management, arts and humanities, health sciences, education and social work, music, and interdisciplinary studies. See Programs at West Chester (http://catalog.wcupa.edu/general-information/index-course-prefix-guide/program-index) for a complete listing of degree programs. Undergraduates are encouraged to participate in experiential learning opportunities, which range from internships to collaborative research with faculty members. Several years ago, WCU launched a Summer Undergraduate Research Institute that offers even more undergraduates the chance to pursue significant research. Service learning is an integral component of many courses at West Chester and the cornerstone of the Honors College.

Currently, more than 17,000 undergraduate and graduate students are enrolled at West Chester University. WCU is one of the most sought-after universities in the mid-Atlantic region. We received more than 14,000 applications for the fall 2017 first-year class, which was comprised of 2,550 students. We are the largest state-owned university in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and the premier state institution in such key measures as retention and graduation rates. Our entering students come from the top third of their high school class, and their SAT scores significantly outpace the state and national averages.

West Chester University continues to expand its international learning experiences. Currently, WCU has partnerships with 25 colleague institutions worldwide for cultural, educational, and scholarly exchanges. More than 300 students took advantage of international learning experiences last year. These experiences included traditional study abroad programs, as well as participation in conferences, service learning, music performances, and more. An English-as-Second-Language program launched in 2016 and should help to further increase international enrollment on WCU’s campus.

Distance education — comprising both fully online and hybrid programs involving limited campus time — is helping WCU to meet enrollment demands. The University also offers a variety of programs at a Center City Philadelphia location, including an award-winning RN-to-BSN program in nursing, both a B.S.W. and M.S.W. in Social Work, an M.S. in Criminal Justice, and, starting in Fall 2018, a B.S. in Management.

History of the University

Although its founding year is 1871, the University can actually trace its roots to West Chester Academy, a private, state-aided school that existed from 1812 to 1869. The academy enjoyed strong support from the Chester County Cabinet of the Natural Sciences. It was recognized as one of Pennsylvania’s leading preparatory schools, and its experience in teacher training laid the groundwork for the normal school years that were to follow.

As the state began to take increasing responsibility for public education, the academy was transformed into West Chester Normal School, still privately owned but state certified. The Normal School admitted its first students, consisting of 160 students, on September 25, 1871. In 1913, West Chester became the first of the normal schools to be owned outright by the Commonwealth.

West Chester became West Chester State Teachers College in 1927 when Pennsylvania initiated a four-year program of teacher education. In 1960, as the Commonwealth paved the way for liberal arts programs in its college system, West Chester was renamed West Chester State College, and two years later introduced the liberal arts program that turned the one-time academy into a comprehensive college.

In recognition of the historic merit of the campus, the West Chester State College Quadrangle Historic District was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1981. The buildings included in this historic district are Phillips Memorial Building, Ruby Jones Hall, Recitation Hall, and the Old Library. Except for Philips, these buildings are all constructed of native Chester County serpentine stone.

West Chester State achieved another major milestone with passage of the State System of Higher Education bill. West Chester became one of the 14 universities in the State System of Higher Education on July 1, 1983. Along with its new name – West Chester University of Pennsylvania – the institution acquired a new system of governance and the opportunity to expand its degree programs.

Location of the University

West Chester University is located in West Chester, Pennsylvania, a town that has been the seat of government in Chester County since 1786. Nestled in the heart of Pennsylvania’s Brandywine Valley, West Chester is a picturesque and historic community that offers small-town charm with cosmopolitan flair. The Philadelphia Inquirer called it "one of the world’s most perfect small towns."

West Chester was settled in the early 18th century, principally by members of the Society of Friends. In the heart of town is its courthouse, a classical Revival building designed in the 1840s by Thomas U. Walter, one of the architects for the Capitol in Washington, D.C.

Philadelphia is 25 miles to the east and Wilmington 17 miles to the south, putting the museums, libraries and other cultural and historical resources of both cities in easy reach. Valley Forge, the Brandywine Battlefield, Longwood Gardens and other world-class attractions are nearby. New York and Washington are easily accessible by car or train.

How to Reach West Chester

The Borough of West Chester can be accessed by car and public transportation. Route 3, the West Chester Pike, leads directly into town from Center City Philadelphia. From the Pennsylvania Turnpike, motorists traveling west should take Route 202 south from the Valley Forge Interchange or the E-Z Pass-only exit (#320), while those traveling east can arrive via Route 100 south from the Downingtown Interchange. From the south, Route 202 from Wilmington and Routes 100 and 52 from U.S. Route 1 all lead to West Chester.

Public transportation is available from Philadelphia and other nearby communities.

Information on public transportation and carpooling is available in Sykes Student Union, 610-436-2984.

Communication Directory

Mailing Address
West Chester University, West Chester PA 19383

Telephones
Dial 610-436 plus number in parentheses. For offices not shown here, call University Information Center: 610-436-1000.

Web
www.wcupa.edu

Academic Development Program
Academic Development Program, Lawrence Center (3274)

Admissions (Undergraduate)
Office of Admissions, Messikomer Hall (3411); 877-315-2165 (toll free); ugradmiss@wcupa.edu

Affirmative Action
Office of Social Equity, 13/15 University Ave. (2433)
The Frederick Douglass Institute

The Frederick Douglass Institute (http://www.wcupa.edu/fDouglass) at West Chester University is an academic program for advancing multicultural studies across the curriculum and for deepening the intellectual heritage of Frederick Douglass, the former slave, distinguished orator, journalist, author, and statesman. Douglass, who was a frequent visitor to the West Chester area, gave his last public lecture on West Chester’s campus on February 1, 1895; an official historical marker has been placed to denote that location. Thirty years earlier, in October 1865, at the inauguration of a Baltimore, Maryland, institute named for him, Douglass said that the mission was “to be a dispenser of knowledge, a radiator of light. In a word, we dedicate this institution to virtue, temperance, truth, liberty, and justice.”

At West Chester University, the Douglass Institute is primarily involved in four academic areas:

1. Conducting research in multiculturalism and on Frederick Douglass
2. Sponsoring distinguished exhibits and lectures
3. Establishing opportunities for advanced study for public, private, and college-level teachers
4. Collaborating with historical societies and other educational and cultural agencies

West Chester University’s Douglass Institute is recognized as the model for other Pennsylvania campuses and is called collectively the Frederick Douglass Institute of the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education.

The activities of the institute take place on and off campus. With undergraduate and graduate students, and West Chester faculty, the institute sponsors seminars and forums on selected topics. The Anna Murray Douglass Circle is a lecture series offering a platform for today’s leading intellectuals. Annually in October, the institute sponsors Douglass Days, a festival of educational activities on Douglass and multiculturalism that involves the entire campus and surrounding communities.

For further information, call the Frederick Douglass Institute at 610-436-2766, or e-mail FDouglass@wcupa.edu. The fax number is 610-436-2769.

The Frederick Douglass Society

Drawing its content from our campus history of social consciousness and its structure from a variety of models in public life, the Frederick Douglass Society (http://www.wcupa.edu/fds) of West Chester University is the organization of faculty and staff at West Chester who embrace Frederick Douglass’ quest for freedom and inclusiveness. Named in 1983 for one of the 19th century’s most distinguished advocates of human freedom, the organization is oriented toward self-help and improvement by offering a collective voice in the affairs of the University. Its programs also aim to stimulate other groups on campus to enrich our climate. The society annually raises money for scholarship funds. It also seeks, by the example of Douglass, to promote an intellectual standard that is not only grounded in excellence but profoundly rooted in the public mission of higher education.

Institute for Women

The Institute for Women (http://www.wcupa.edu/instituteForWomen) was initially designated to serve as the parent organization to represent the interests of women on campus. The institute is an independent body headed by the director of the Center for Women and Gender Equity (http://www.wcupa.edu/womensCenter). Along with the Commission on the Status of Women and the Women’s and Gender Studies program, the Institute for Women engages in campus activities for the benefit of women students, faculty, and staff.

The institute sponsors activities to enhance the self-esteem and career success of women at the University including the Graduate Grant, Endowed Book Funds, and support for campus programs. The institute prepares periodic reports on the status of women at the University and has also secured Charlotte W. Newcombe Scholarship Grants for mature or second-career women for more than 25 years. For more information contact Alicia Hahn-Murphy, director, at 610-436-2122.

Ethnic Studies Institute

The Ethnic Studies Institute, established in 1974, is designed to organize, support, and encourage interdisciplinary scholarly research, teaching, and service/outreach programs and activities that are directed
toward exploring and understanding the social and historical experience of racial and ethnic groups in the United States. The Institute works with groups and constituencies concentrating on diversity, racial, and ethnic understanding, and fostering the development of a diverse university environment. The Institute encourages and supports faculty and students in their research on race and ethnic studies. The Ethnic Studies Institute also works with local groups to meet community needs.

The Ethnic Studies Institute offers an interdisciplinary minor which provides students with a critical understanding of the social and historical experience of racial and ethnic groups in the U.S and the impact of social, economic, political, philosophical, and cultural systems and structures on these groups. The minor offers six areas of concentration: African American Studies, Asian American Studies, Jewish American Studies, Latino/a Studies, Native American Studies, and Multietnic Studies. The Institute is responsible for curriculum development and assessment of the minor, and student academic advising.

For more information about the Ethnic Studies Institute (http://www.wcupa.edu/ethnicStudies) or the minor, contact Dr. Miguel Ceballos, director, at mceballos@wcupa.edu (610-436-2308).

**Poetry Center**

The West Chester University Poetry Center (http://www.wcupa.edu/poetry) hosts the annual West Chester University Poetry Conference (the nation’s premier all-poetry writing conference), sponsors the University’s Poet-in-Residence program, presents poetry readings throughout the year, and collaborates on poetry and music concerts with the College of Arts and Humanities. The center also oversees national poetry awards under the auspices of the Iris N. Spencer Poetry Awards. The center is directed by the Office of the Dean in the College of Arts and Humanities. For more information, email (poetry@wcupa.edu) the Poetry Center, or call 610-436-2598.

**WCU Community Mental Health Services (CMHS)**

WCU Community Mental Health Services (CMHS) is affiliated with the West Chester University Doctor of Psychology (Psy.D.) Program. CMHS serves as a training center for graduate students in the Psy.D. Program and as a clinical research site for faculty in the Psychology Program. As a non-profit training and research facility, CMHS provides low-cost, high-quality psychotherapy and testing for members of the greater West Chester community, staff and faculty of WCU, as well as WCU students referred from the University Counseling Center. Services include psychotherapy for a wide range of psychological disorders and educational assessments, including assessments for ADHD, learning disabilities, and other disorders that may require documentation to secure classroom accommodations. CMHS is located on the 8th Floor of Wayne Hall. For additional information or to schedule an appointment, please call 610-436-2510 or go to http://www.wcupa.edu/communityMentalHealth.

**Dub-C Autism Program (D-CAP)**

The Dub-C Autism Program (www.wcupa.edu/dcap) is part of the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education (PASSHE) Autism Initiative. D-CAP is a campus program supporting full-time, matriculated students on the autism spectrum. The program provides students services across the areas of Executive Functioning, Self-Care, Social Competence, Self-Advocacy, and Career Preparation. Students set their own goals, and skill development is addressed via individual appointments, group meetings, and/or social engagements. In addition, the program provides training and support for faculty, staff, and peers helping West Chester University build an inclusive and accepting campus community. For additional information go to www.wcupa.edu/dcap or call 610-436-3168.