

Office of HUMAN RESOURCES, TITLE IX & EQUAL OPPORTUNITY

Westfield State University

Employee Recognition

December 2024

**Congratulations to the following faculty and staff who have been recognized by a member of our campus community for strengthening our institutional culture and modeling WSU values.
(A photo only accompanies the recognized that shared approval).**



Brittany Baxa
Human Resource

"Brittany started with HR Benefits in December 2023 and in less than a year, she is such a valued member of the HR team and even more valued to me as her manager. Brittany tackles every day with such zest to help others, applies her many skills to enhance what we do in HR, and is constantly learning and challenging herself. She is super quick with responding to benefit inquiries and excels in service to employees who need assistance. If she does not know, she will find out! I am very proud to work with her and witness her accomplishments and abilities. She amazes every day."



Technology Support Desk, William Harrington, Thomas Casartello, & Adam Burinskas

Office of Informational and Instructional Technology

"Today I submitted 2 tickets to the Technology Support Desk, and they were addressed and resolved in minutes! Seriously, minutes. One was a software issue and the other was an update to our shared drive. Thank you to Bill Harrington, Thomas Casartello, and Adam Burinskas. I have no excuse not to be working and accessible with you all on the team and I appreciate you all very much."



Kylie Hensley
Strategic Marketing and Communications

"I'm reaching out today to express appreciation and recognize Kylie Hensley in the Marketing department. Kylie has taken charge of redesigning our webpage. She is very quick, thoughtful, and knowledgeable. Kylie has taken the time to set up meetings, send me previews of the webpage, and offer her expertise on what would look best on our webpage. She is a wealth of knowledge and has an eye for detail. Our team greatly appreciates all of Kylie's hard work!"



Dr. Vanessa Diana

Dr. Vanessa Diana & Dr. H. Zahra Caldwell
English and Ethnic & Gender Studies, Sociology, Hispanic and Liberal/Interdisciplinary Studies

"I would like to formally acknowledge the invaluable mentorship and support I have received from two exceptional colleagues: Dr. Vanessa Diana, Professor in the Department of English, and Dr. H. Zahra Caldwell, Chair of the Department of Ethnic and Gender Studies. Their guidance has been instrumental in helping me navigate my first semester as a faculty member, and their generosity and dedication have made an impact on my transition to this new academic environment."



Dr. H. Zahra Caldwell

Dr. Diana and Dr. Caldwell have dedicated time outside their regular office hours to engage with my questions, address my concerns, and provide insights into teaching and research practices. Whether it has been through sharing resources, offering constructive feedback, or simply lending a listening ear, their mentorship reflects a great level of care and commitment. I am appreciative of their mentorship and remain inspired by their example."



Athletic Department Recognition

"I would like to recommend we recognize the entire athletics department. We have hosted 15 games in the first 10 days of November, celebrating two NCAA births (men's soccer, field hockey) and working for one more this weekend (volleyball). The staff has been diligent, innovative, and professional and worked tirelessly to provide an exceptional experience for the student-athletes, fans, coaches and parents on site and from afar with livestreaming and play by play."



Cheri Baranowski
Institutional Advancement

"I would like to nominate Cheri Baranowski in Alumni Affairs. I have worked with her for a few years putting together the annual Criminal Justice Hall of Fame. Cheri works tirelessly and never looks for accolades. She has an indefatigable work ethic, is always willing to go the extra mile, and does this all with a smile on her face. She most assuredly keeps our alumni coming back with her kind and knowledgeable welcome."

What could be more rewarding than acknowledging someone who would be more than surprised to receive it? It is people like Cheri that work ceaselessly, in the background, and are true team players. She is an absolute joy to work with and puts the 'can do' in all that she does for our WSU community."



Jenyka Spitz-Gassnola
Academic Affairs

"While Jenyka is brand new to campus, hired just this semester, she has dived into the work of supporting DEI campus efforts head first. She has needed to be agile, flexible, and responsive to faculty, staff, and student needs. She has had to forge many new relationships and collaborations in a short period of time. She has done all of this gracefully, while providing a much-needed space on campus for all of us to feel like we belong and are cared for. I would like to recognize her outstanding efforts to fill a void and work to ensure that we are moving forward in the right direction, where we can truly say our campus is a welcoming home for all. We are very lucky to have Jenyka as a member of our staff, and I hope she gets the support and resources she needs to thrive here."



Mary- Jo Bosley
Registrar

"I'd like to take a moment to spotlight an employee here in the Registrar's office, Mary-Jo (MJ) Bosley. She is a wonderful and longtime employee and Alum of WSU. She embodies all we should want in an employee. She is kind, attentive and always goes the extra mile. She sees a need and takes care of it. Her smile and enthusiasm are infectious!"

When she greets a student in the office you can tell she genuinely cares about them and their successes. She makes sure that they understand the processes and ensures they are well taken care of. She impresses me daily with her thoughtfulness and positive attitude.

She is a true Shining Star of Westfield State University!"



David Caspole



Steven Moussette

David Caspole and Steven Moussette Athletics

"I'd like to take a moment to recognize Dave Caspole and Steven Moussette, the athletic communications office in the athletic department. 1st weekend of November alone, they had over 10 home games, including MASCAC playoff contests and covered them well. They don't often get a lot of kudos so I think this is a great time to say thank you for all you do to support the Westfield State student-athletes, coaches, admins and university!"



Carolyn Healey Ethnic & Gender Studies, Sociology, Hispanic and Liberal/Interdisciplinary Studies

"I would like to nominate our EGST Dept.'s Admin Assistant Carolyn Healey for the competence and sincerity with which she discharges her responsibilities. She is a gem!"



Facilities & Operations Team, Joel Moser, Jason Miller, Maureen Socha, Grounds Crew & Sarah Tomas Facilities and Operations & Biology

"Our WSU Greenhouses are seeing renewed life recently, thanks to the work of many folks in Facilities and Operations over the past two years. I'd like to thank Joel Moser for the many hours he has spent figuring out how to get the automatic vents working, Jason Miller for working on the heating system, the grounds crew for assembling new plant benches, and Maureen Socha who has been supportive at every step. The grounds crew also helped set up new perennial plant beds around the greenhouse and a potting area behind it. I'd also like to recognize Sarah Tomas (Biology and Environmental Science Department) for all her day-to-day work both inside and out. The greenhouses are an incredible campus resource that I hope will now grow and flourish for years to come."



Deb Pise, Deb Grobe, & The Admissions Department

"I would like to nominate:

Deb Pise

Deb Grobe

all other members of the office staff in Admissions

For their hard work processing applications so that students come to WSU."



**Michael Twarkins
Environmental Services**

"I wanted to take a moment to give a huge shoutout to Mike Twarkins, one of our dedicated maintenance working foremen here at WSU. Mike is not only a fantastic professional but also a truly wonderful person. His positive attitude and compassionate nature shine through in everything he does. Mike consistently goes above and beyond the call of duty. Whether it's setting up for campus events by arranging tables and chairs or setting out sandwich boards, he ensures that everything runs smoothly behind the scenes. His commitment to our students, faculty, and staff is evident in his willingness to help out whenever needed. Thank you, Mike, for your hard work and the caring spirit you bring to our campus. We are so grateful to have you on our team!"



**Karen Gamelli
Dining Services**

"I would like to recognize Karen Gamelli. Since my arrival she has been willing to jump in when needed, always making time for students, staff and all community members. With her knowledge of the campus she is always willing to share it and enjoys training anyone who needs it.

She goes above and beyond to make everyone feel welcome and a part of the Westfield State University Community."



**Michael Mazeika
Admissions**

"Through his daily actions, Michael Mazeika exemplifies the values of our institution. He makes students feel valued and welcomed, actively engages in campus activities, goes above and beyond, and demonstrates strong ethics and integrity in his work. Thank you, Mike, for being a role model for others to follow."



Dr. Vanessa Diana
English

"I would like to celebrate Prof/Dr. Vanessa Diana from the English Department for her small acts of kindness that I witness very often, acts that transcend the color of skin, gender and ability of a person. There is no doubt she is accomplished, but it is not a particular news or achievement that I am referring to, but just the everyday small things and actions that reflect how dedicated a teacher she is and what a great friend and colleague she can be. This holiday season, I want to celebrate her for being that kind face and voice for many, and for being truly inclusive, to seeing the value in everyone regardless of their background and conditions."



Vera Vlasenko
Academic Affairs, International Programs

"I want to thank Vera Vlasenko for her work and dedication to our students, the IPO staff, and WSU University. While maintaining a low profile, Vera supports a diverse population of students and keeps WSU in excellent standing with government agencies. Her care, leadership qualities, and strong work ethic are inspiring."