



Presidential International Scholar



Paola Cruz '23, a double major in sociology and anthropology and Spanish from Charlotte, North Carolina, will be Wofford College's Presidential International Scholar during the 2022-23 academic year.

Paola Cruz '23 understands the healing and therapeutic benefits of writing.

Her smartphone has more than 800 notes that capture the moments she's needed to record thoughts and feelings.

"My mom passed when I was 14," says Cruz, a double major in sociology and anthropology and Spanish from Charlotte, North Carolina. "The only way I could grieve was by writing. It turned my life around. The social worker told me every time I had a dream about my mom to just write it down."

Cruz's mother died from gastric cancer. Her journal entries eventually turned into poems and songs. The writing is inspiring her research as Wofford College's Presidential International Scholar for the 2022-23 academic year.

Wofford's Presidential International Scholar is selected by the college's president. "The student most likely to make a difference in the future" is chosen to conduct independent research in non-traditional locations. Students who have displayed a passion for service learning and a globally minded intellectual curiosity are considered.

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[Learn more about the history of the Presidential International Scholars program.](#)

Fulbright Fellow



Fields Chewning '22 is Wofford's 15th Fulbright Fellow since 2008. She'll teach English in Germany during the 2022-23 academic year.

Fields Chewning '22 began taking German courses as a first-year student at Wofford College and soon committed to taking a deep dive to understand the language and culture.

"I knew that to push myself to know more German and become competent in the language, I would need to fully immerse myself in German," says Chewning, a German and math major from Spartanburg.

Her grasp of the language has led to her earning a Fulbright Fellowship. She's the college's 15th Fulbright Fellow in the past 14 years and the sixth chosen for Germany in that span.

"Fields has been highly motivated to improve her German since she started at Wofford," says Dr. Kirsten Krick-Aigner, professor of German. "Unfortunately, due to the pandemic, she didn't get a chance to study abroad in a German-speaking country. However, she continued to seek out ways to live and study and now work in Germany. She put a tremendous effort into her Fulbright application, and her personal essay demonstrates her commitment to reaching her goal."

Chewning will spend the 2022-23 academic year teaching English in Brandenburg, a state in Northeast Germany. She's awaiting details on the city and the school assignment.

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Helping hands



Gracie Hicks '23 was looking for help with a project. The women's volleyball team was looking for a project to help with. The Rev. Dr. Ron Robinson '78 brought them together. On April 29, they packed hygiene kits to ship to Ukrainian refugees in Poland.

When Gracie Hicks '23 saw the images of women and children fleeing Ukraine with nothing but the clothes on their backs, she knew she wanted to do something to help them.

Hicks, a Wofford College psychology major from Murrells Inlet, South Carolina, had a nonprofit, Helping Hands Heal Families, and a project in mind. She just needed people to help make it happen.

The Wofford volleyball team, meanwhile, was looking for a project to tackle. COVID-19 had stymied the players' ability to do a hands-on community service project the past two years, and they were ready to get back in the game.

In the middle was the Rev. Dr. Ron Robinson '78, Perkins-Prothro Chaplain and Professor of Religion. He brought the two sides together.

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Murrell Smith '90 elected Speaker of the S.C. House



State Rep. Murrell Smith '90 was elected speaker of the S.C. House of Representatives on April 28. He assumes his duties on May 12. Smith was first elected in 2000. In 2018, he was elected chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee. He is a co-founder of the Smith Robinson law firm in Sumter, South Carolina. He has been recognized as a Best Lawyer by Best Lawyers in America for commercial litigation, as a Midlands Legal Elite for healthcare law by Columbia Business Monthly and has been a Leadership in Law honoree by South Carolina Lawyer's Weekly. Charles Reid '90, clerk of the state House of Representatives and Smith's Wofford classmate, administered the oath of office.

Wofford mourns loss of Bilanchone



Dr. Victor Bilanchone Jr., Wofford College professor of music emeritus, served as the college's director of music from 1972-2001. He died on April 27.

Dr. Victor Bilanchone Jr., Wofford College professor of music emeritus, is remembered for his jovial spirit, his care for students and colleagues, and knowing how to get the best out of his choral groups.

He died on April 27 at Spartanburg Regional Hospice Home. He was 82.

"I will miss Vic desperately," says Dr. Al Jeter '74. "I honor these 50 years of friendship. I'm grateful he was part of my life."

Bilanchone, who served 29 years as Wofford's director of music, arrived on campus in 1972. Jeter says students immediately felt a new level of excitement.

Bilanchone took groups to perform concerts across the southeast during spring break, and he would form the college's first SATB (soprano, alto, tenor and bass) ensembles. He would invite women from Converse College (now Converse University) to participate, and there were performances with full orchestras.

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Craig Burnette '68 receives Order of the Palmetto



Craig Burnette '68 received the Order of the Palmetto on April 27 from William Grimsley, secretary of the S.C. Department of Veterans Affairs.

Craig Burnette '68 received South Carolina's highest civilian honor, the Order of the Palmetto, on April 27 at the grand opening of a new transitional residence in Spartanburg for veterans experiencing homelessness.

An all-Wofford color guard, including ROTC cadets Rob Bernard '24, Simon Holland '25, Brook Bozarth '23, Carson Maske '25 and Katie Sullivan '25, participated in the event. President Emeritus Joe Lesesne was also in attendance.

Burnette is a retired psychologist with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. He has dedicated much of his life to improving services and resources for Spartanburg's veterans, including those focused on mental health and homelessness. He spearheaded the Upstate Stand Down event, which began in 2012, to help veterans access a range of stabilizing services and resources in one place. Burnette also serves as the board chair for Warriors Once Again, the new transitional residence, and Upstate Warrior Solution's Spartanburg Community Action Board.

2022 Greek Awards



Wofford's fraternities and sororities concluded Greek Week by recognizing organizations and individuals.

Wofford College's fraternities and sororities held their annual Greek Week the week of April 25 and concluded it with the annual Greek Awards that recognized both organizations and individual achievements of members. Additionally, organizations raised \$27,051 for the Grateful Hearts Project, started by Cate Whitlatch '24, a psychology major from Greensboro, North Carolina. The project creates themed boxes of decorations for kids admitted to the hospital.

[See the complete list of award winners.](#)

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