**Wilkes University Announces Faculty Promotions**

**and Awards Tenure**

Wilkes University has announced faculty promotions and recognized faculty who have been awarded tenure.

The following faculty have been promoted to full professor:

**Diane Wenger was promoted to full professor of history.** Wenger earned a bachelor’s degree in English from Lebanon Valley College, a master’s degree American Studies from Penn State Capital Campus and a doctorate in history of American civilization from the University of Delaware. She joined the Wilkes faculty as an assistant professor in 2003 and was awarded tenure and promoted to associate professor in 2009. Her academic specialties are Pennsylvania history and the history of underrepresented groups, with a particular focus on African Americans and Native Americans. Her current research and scholarship is focusing on studies on the Pennsylvania tobacco industry, with emphasis on the role of women. Her book *A Country Storekeeper in Pennsylvania: Creating Networks in Early America, 1790-1807* was published in 2009 by Penn State Press. She also has published book chapters and peer-reviewed articles in prestigious journals, including *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*. She has been the recipient of advising awards and has served for the last 10 years as advisor to the Wilkes chapter of the Phi Alpha Theta National History Honor Society.

The following faculty were awarded tenure and also received promotions within their respective departments:

**Edward T. Bednarz III was granted tenure and promoted to associate professor of mechanical engineering.** He earned a bachelor’s degree in mechanical engineering with a second major in physics from Wilkes, a master’s degree in mechanical engineering with a concentration in solid mechanics and a doctorate in mechanical engineering, both from the University of Maryland, Baltimore County (UMBC). Bednarz returned to Wilkes as an adjunct instructor while working as a senior mechanical engineer at the Tobyhanna Army Depot, and prior to that was a senior mechanical engineer at the U.S. Army Aberdeen Test Center, at the Aberdeen, Md. Proving Ground. Bednarz joined the Wilkes faculty as an assistant professor in 2013. His research has focused on identifying the magnitudes and location of loads on beams and he was awarded a patent in 2018 for a device used to assess loads. It is Bednarz’ fourth patent. He was the recipient of the University’s Nontraditional and Innovative Teaching Award in 2014-2015.

**Kalen Churcher was granted tenure and promoted to associate professor of communication studies.** She earned a bachelor’s degree in communications with concentrations in organizational communication, journalism, rhetoric and telecommunications from Wilkes. She earned a master’s degree in human resources with a concentration in organizational leadership from the University of Scranton, and a doctorate from the Pennsylvania State University. Prior to joining Wilkes, Churcher was a faculty member in communication studies at Niagara University. Her research interests include minority populations and the media, the intersection of print media and culture, and teaching innovation in communication. Churcher is advisor to *The Beacon* student newspaper. She also coordinates the annual Tom Bigler Journalism Conference, which welcomes high school students and educators to Wilkes each year. In 2017 she received the Interdisciplinary Teaching Award for a cross-listed communication studies and pharmacy course she developed and taught with Thomas Franko for pharmacy and communication studies majors. Churcher serves as a revieiwer for several academic journals and professional organizations, including the Association of Educators of Journalism and Mass Communication and the National Communication Association. She is an active member of the Luzerne County Youth Panel that deals with alternative sentencing for first-time non-violent offenders. As a member and officer of the Junior League, she received the annual “Rising Star” award in 2016.

**Emily Havrilla was granted tenure and promoted to associate professor of nursing.** Havrilla earned bachelor’s and master’s degrees in nursing from Misericordia University. She earned a doctorate in nursing from Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey in 2016. She completed a post-master’s Adult Health Nurse Practitioner certificate. She also holds certifications as a rehabilitation registered nurse and as an adult nurse practitioner. Havrilla joined Wilkes in 2005 as an adjunct clinical instructor and became an assistant professor in 2006. Havrilla’s research focuses on serving vulnerable populations. Her recent research growing out of her doctoral studies focuses on the relationship among food insecurity, perceived stress, general self-efficacy and obesity in female heads-of-households with children. Her service in the community includes serving as the co-coordinator for the Northeastern Pennsylvania Free Health Clinic Consortium, a member and past president of the board of directors of the Rural Health Corporation of Northeastern Pennsylvania and as a volunteer for the RHC McKinney Clinic.

**Christopher Henkels was granted tenure and promoted to associate professor of chemistry.** Henkels earned his bachelor’s degree in chemistry at Colgate University, his master’s degree in biochemistry at Cornell University, and his doctorate in biochemistry at Duke University. Henkels came to Wilkes in 2012, after holding positions as postdoctoral associate at the University of Virginia, and visiting faculty positions at Franklin & Marshall College and Swarthmore College. His research focuses on protein structure, dynamics and ligand binding via unnatural amino acid incorporation. Since joining Wilkes, he has established a strong research program with his students focusing on the *in vivo* overexpression of proteins in which certain amino acids have been specifically replaced by residues that do not occur naturally. Henkels has presented research with his students at several national conferences as well as at regional/local conferences. He was recognized with the 2014 Outstanding New Faculty Award and has been nominated for an Outstanding Advisor Award.

**Del Lucent was granted tenure and promoted to associate professor of physics.** Lucent received a bachelor’s degree in physics and a second bachelor’s degree in biology from Wilkes and earned his doctorate in biophysics from Stanford University. He joined the Wilkes faculty in 2012 as an assistant professor in electrical engineering and physics with a courtesy appointment in biology. Lucent’s research involves using computer modeling to simulate protein folding in the body, with the goal of developing more effective treatments for life-threatening diseases. His research has been published in 16 peer-reviewed, internationally-ranked journals with seven having been published while at Wilkes. The research for several of these publications was performed in collaboration with his mentors and colleagues at the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organization (CSIRO) in Australia, at Stanford University, as well as at Wilkes. In his research group, he mentors Wilkes undergraduate students in a variety of majors and has ongoing collaborations with other Wilkes faculty in the biology, pharmaceutical sciences and mathematics departments. He was recognized with the 2016 Award for Innovative Teaching, and in 2014 he was a Wilkes University Final Forum Lecturer. Externally, his teaching and scholarship was recognized with the Simbios Visiting Scholar Fellowship at Stanford University.

**Andrew Wilczak was awarded tenure and promoted to associate professor of criminology and sociology.** Wilczak received his bachelor’s degree in political science from the University of Michigan-Dearborn, a master’s degree in criminology and criminal justice from Eastern Michigan University and a doctorate in sociology from Bowling Green State University. He joined the Wilkes faculty as assistant professor in 2012. Prior to coming to Wilkes, he spent a year as a visiting assistant professor at the University of Tampa. Wilczak’s research interests include examining how violence and exposure to violence influence adolescent development and how the desistance process varies by neighborhood context, gender and crime. He has been recognized at Wilkes with the Innovative/Non-Traditional Teaching, the Outstanding New Faculty, and the Outstanding Advisor awards. Wilczak has published three peer-reviewed articles in prestigious journals including *Criminology*, *Sociology Mind*, and *Sociological Perspectives*. In addition, he has presented at 17 conferences, with 13 of those conference presentations made with students, underscoring his commitment to advancing undergraduate research. In 2017, Wilczak published his first book, *Gender, Crime and Justice: Exploring the Dynamics.* Wilczak has been a part of the Luzerne County Disproportionate Minority Contact Youth and Law Enforcement Forums, is a member of the executive committee of the Wilkes-Barre NAACP, also is a member of Action Together NEPA and the Northeast Pennsylvania Prison Advocates.

**About Wilkes University**:

Wilkes University is an independent institution of higher education dedicated to academic and intellectual excellence through mentoring in the liberal arts, sciences and professional programs. Founded in 1933, the university is on a mission to create one of the great small universities, offering all of the programs, activities and opportunities of a large, research university in the intimate, caring and mentoring environment of a small, liberal arts college, at a cost that is increasingly competitive with public universities. The Economist named Wilkes 25th in the nation for the value of its education for graduates. In addition to 47 bachelor’s degree programs, Wilkes offers 25 master’s degree programs and five doctoral/terminal degree programs, including the doctor of philosophy in nursing, doctor of nursing practice, doctor of education, doctor of pharmacy, and master of fine arts in creative writing. Learn more at www.wilkes.edu.

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