

# WESTERN CAROLINA UNIVERSITY NEWS

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## DUKE, WESTERN CAROLINA LAUNCH NEW DEVELOPED SHORELINES COLLABORATION

CULLOWHEE – An internationally prominent program known for the integration of coastal science and management is moving from Duke University to Western Carolina University this fall as part of a new spirit of cooperation in the marine sciences between Duke and the campuses of the University of North Carolina system.

Through a recent agreement between Duke and WCU, the Program for the Study of Developed Shorelines will progressively shift its operations from Durham to Cullowhee over the next few years. The transition represents a passing of the gavel from a pioneer in the study of American shoreline development policy to one of his top protégés.

Orrin H. Pilkey, the James B. Duke Professor Emeritus of the Earth Sciences who established the program in 1986, has decided to focus his attention on writing books and articles. Pilkey, looking for a way to keep the program that he founded moving forward as an active organization continuing to work on important coastal development issues, says he found just the right person to take over the program in Rob Young, associate professor of geosciences at WCU.

Young, who earned his doctorate as a James B. Duke Fellow studying with Pilkey before joining the faculty at WCU, has become known as one of the nation's leading experts on the science of hurricane impacts and coastal management. He testified before Congress last year on the use of federal money to rebuild in the most-vulnerable coastal areas of the United States, and is frequently called upon by the national news media for commentary on coastal management issues.

"I believe the collaboration with WCU puts this program in a powerful position to have an even greater impact on coastal management programs nationwide," Pilkey said. "This is coming at a time when global warming-induced sea-level rise is increasingly a threat to coastal dwellers. I think the collaborative program will provide

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international leadership in the search for economically viable and environmentally sound solutions to our disappearing beaches and our increasingly threatened beachfront development.”

Pilkey will continue to serve as director emeritus of the program, and will assist in fund-raising and grant-writing activities designed to make the program a self-sustaining entity at WCU. The program will be housed in office space in the Belk Building on the WCU campus.

Under Young, the PSDS will continue its emphasis on research focusing on beach replenishment and other forms of shoreline stabilization, hazard risk mapping on barrier islands, sedimentary processes on shorefaces, and mitigation of hurricane property damage on barrier islands.

“Over the years, the Program for the Study of Developed Shorelines has become a driving force in asking policy-makers to rethink the way our nation’s shorelines are managed,” said Young, who has been studying the impact of hurricanes on the coastline for more than 20 years. “Poorly planned coastal development has cost American taxpayers more than \$100 billion in the last five years alone. I look forward to continuing the program’s work to translate good science into good public policies that would save taxpayers’ money.”

Western’s location in the mountains of Western North Carolina provides some significant advantages to the program, said Young. “Cullowhee is uniquely positioned to provide a home base for the study of shorelines on both the Atlantic and Gulf coasts,” he said. “One of the most important roles of the program is hurricane research and reconnaissance. Universities located on the coast regularly close during hurricane evacuations, which means they would be unable to do the kind of work that we do.”

Relocation of the program to Cullowhee also will provide for consolidation of existing PSDS resources and databases with the Coastal Hazards Information Clearinghouse, a Web-based resource for information about coastal hazards and detailed hazard maps of most U.S. shorelines that is housed at WCU.

Leaders at Duke and Western say the new collaboration is a prime example of the objectives of a recent joint agreement between President Richard Brodhead of Duke and President Erskine Bowles of UNC. “This move

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leverages the talent and expertise within North Carolina in marine sciences to enable us to have the greatest impact on the state,” said WCU Provost Kyle Carter.

For more information on the Program for the Study of Developed Shorelines, call Rob Young at (828) 227-3822.

Western Carolina University is one of the 16 senior institutions of the University of North Carolina system. Western enrolls 8,861 students in undergraduate and graduate programs of study, and is located about 50 miles west of Asheville, N.C., near Great Smoky Mountains National Park.

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