

Scott Sherman, M'86

Please provide your biographical information (major/minor at WCU, town you grew up in, reason why you came to WCU).

My name is Scott Sherman and I graduated from West Chester University with my Master's Degree in Industrial/Organizational (I/O) Psychology in 1986. I grew up in Northeast Philadelphia (PA) and completed my undergraduate education in Psychology and Business at Pennsylvania State University. When considering graduate programs, a PSU professor/mentor shared WCU recently started a program; after visiting the campus and researching the program, I knew it was the perfect place for me. A WCU professor informed me of an HR opening at the university; ironically my planned "three to five years" at WCU has become a 33-year career and continues to be an ideal environment for me and those I serve.

What made you go into your degree?

I took some undergraduate business psychology courses and was so excited by the content and how I could use both my analytical skills and creativity to help individuals and their organizations. That love for the field only grew throughout my graduate coursework, practical experiences and internships made available by WCU.

What is your official title and what are your responsibilities in your current position?

I've served as WCU's Director of Organizational Development for the past 16 years when I was asked to start the function. I oversee and provide training, coaching and consulting services to WCU departments and its over 1900 faculty and staff. This involves researching, developing and delivering a comprehensive training and organizational development (OD) strategy which includes leadership development; new employee onboarding, integration and retention; talent management and development; and performance management. In addition, we share our virtual content with all State System and Office of the Chancellor employees.

What is a typical day like at work?

There is no "typical" day which is what I love about my work. Much of my time is spent working with campus leaders to understand their needs and helping them and their employees achieve extraordinary productivity, results and success using coaching, consulting and learning solutions. Also, I research personal and professional development topics and either develop and deliver programs or curate other subject matter experts' content and make it available to our employees. With over 90% being virtual, we plan to make it available to WCU students later this fall.

What have been the biggest challenges at work?

The biggest challenge is helping employees find the time and capacity to grow and develop themselves and others given how busy everyone is. This has required I shift how content is delivered and consumed.

What do you enjoy most about your current position?

I most enjoy seeing departments participating in and benefitting from retreats and strategic planning meetings I've customized based on a successful needs assessment with the department leadership. No two activities or outcomes are exactly the same. Using creative activities and effective debrief questions helps ensure unique learning and sharing environments each time.

What skills, talents, and other traits are useful and necessary to do your job?

The most important skill in my job (and so many jobs) is to be an engaged listener, hearing what's being said (or not said). Also, integrity and confidentiality are essential for others to seek my help and speak openly. Effective retreat facilitation and platform speaking has come with practice and a realization it takes time to master those talents. Lastly, I must consciously model those leadership behaviors and traits daily that I help others to develop.

What do you enjoy doing in your free time?

After spending 10 years traveling up and down the east coast for our daughters' club and college soccer games, my wife and I now enjoy spending quality time with each other and our miniature poodle Nala. I also enjoy reading, listening to podcasts, cooking and running.

Where do you see yourself in the next several years?

I'm excited about the work ahead, especially how my department's work fits into the university's strategic plan. I am also excited about continuing to expand my external coaching business, Productive Coaching, where I support aspirant and existing leaders and entrepreneurs/solopreneurs to be most productive and effective.

What advice would you give to a current student who aspires to follow in your footsteps and pursue a similar career path?

In general, I encourage all students to find meaningful and purposeful work in organizations that align with their values...really do the homework before accepting an offer. Also, whether you've worked there for one day or 15+ years, approach each day with "beginner's mind" and curiosity; it helps keep the work exciting and fulfilling and you'll never hit the "snooze" button on your phone or clock. Especially for students going into I/O Psychology, business, or consulting professions, know that your industry will change consistently over time. The way I deliver learning content today is VERY different from when I started; and the business coaching field didn't formally exist when I was in graduate school.

How has your WCU education contributed to your success?

My WCU education provided me with the tools, experiences, confidence and opportunity to embark on a job that resulted in a challenging yet rewarding and purposeful career helping so many directly or indirectly.

What do you consider to be your greatest accomplishments (both personally and professionally)?

My greatest personal accomplishment is meeting my wife Jill at WCU ('85), being married to her for over 30 years, and having three amazing children [Josh - 27; Hailey - 24 ('17); and Elexa - 24] who are already making impressive impacts in their careers and communities.

My greatest professional accomplishment is the outcome of taking a two-year intensive program to become a certified professional coach and introducing the service and skills to WCU employees. I chose this accomplishment because its impact has been easily seen and measured, and the benefits are far reaching to those working with the ones being coached.

What's your favorite memory from when you were a student at WCU?

My favorite and funniest memory happened during my last semester when I was presenting and defending my thesis in Anderson Hall. As if that wasn't a stressful enough process, I had to compete with the background "noise" of the full marching band practicing in the "lot" across the street (before Merion was built). While it wasn't welcomed at the time, I'm confident it helped get me through that day and process!