

# West Chester University Golden Rams Marching Band

The West Chester University 'Incomparable' Golden Rams Marching Band is the marching band for West Chester University. The band currently has about 265 members and is directed by Andrew Yozviak and John Villella. The Golden Rams Marching Band plays half-time and pre-game shows at all home football games and frequently travels to away games and high school marching band competitions. The band has also performed at Cavalcade of Bands championships in Hersheypark Stadium, and has the honor of being the host band of the annual Collegiate Marching Band Festival, held in late-September or early-October at J. Birney Crum Stadium in Allentown, Pennsylvania.

## History

The West Chester Marching Band was founded in 1936 at then West Chester State Teachers College. Throughout its history the Golden Rams Marching Band has been one of the most influential ensembles on other marching related groups throughout the northeastern United States.

In the mid-1930s, the marching band was simply an addition to the college's football games. Under the direction of director Mr. Powell Middleton, the band was comprised of 50 male students. Over the next few years, the "Girls Trumpet Corps" was added to the marching band which was said to "add considerably to the effectiveness of the group".

In the early years of World War II, the band was chosen to play at many military ceremonies, including when many West Chester State students left for military service. The Golden Rams Marching Band had progressed from being just a football band to having an active role in the community.

Following the war years, the directorship was assumed by Mr. Paul Carson. Carson, as director, added new service style uniforms for the band and the band increased in size from 50 to 65 men. In 1954, the band earned the reputation as the "best small college band in the Country." By the end of his time as director, Mr. Carson had raised the marching band to the size of 90 playing members, and West Chester was named "the biggest and best band in the east" in 1965. The mid to late 1960's saw a number of changes. New uniforms including shakos and rams on the uniform jacket were introduced as well as a new director, Mr. Richard Boerlin. In 1968, the band travelled with the football team to Orlando, FL for the Tangerine Bowl game.

The biggest step yet in the development of the marching band came in 1970 with the introduction of director Mr. James R. Wells. Under his leadership the band expanded to over 200 members, including an all female colorguard and band front. In 1974, women were allowed entrance to the band proper, not just the colorguard. It was also at this point that some of the most prominent graduates of the Golden Rams Marching Band were taking part in the program. John Villella, current director of the marching band, George N. Parks of the Drum Major Academy and UMass fame, Anthony Yaklick, Drum Corps International Hall of Fame member, and Tom Hannum, former Crossmen drum corps percussion instructor.

In the 1980s, the marching band continued to increase in size and reputation, taking on the name "Incomparable". Few bands in the country could match the quality of performance of the Golden Rams, and no one could compare with the name of West Chester State College Marching Band. Also in the decade, famous marching members such as Michael Klesch, former Crossmen and Phantom Regiment brass instructor and current assistant director at UMass, Tom Aungst, Cadets drum corps percussion instructor, Dan DeLong, current Bluecoats drum corps percussion instructor, and Todd Marcocci, current WCU colorguard designer and former director of Field of View indoor guard.

In the early 1990s, Dr. John Villella took over the Golden Rams Marching band. A uniform change and a new, more modernized style were trademarks of the new directorship. As marching band changed and adapted, so to did West Chester University with a "corps style" technique and modern colorguard. In 1996, the marching band shifted to a themed show concept from the previous and old fashioned varied repertoire shows. In 1999, the marching band received new uniforms, based off a highly modern drum corps design. In the last few years, the Golden Rams Marching Band has continued to serve the school at football games, the community with parades and political rallies including a performance for then presidential candidate George W. Bush, and the marching band and drum corps community with performances throughout the Mid-Atlantic region. West Chester is now known as a state-of-the-art marching band program, bringing in marching members from many states.

In 2006, Mr. Andrew Yozviak began co-directing the Golden Rams Marching Band along with Dr. Villella, bringing a new spin to the themed show concept. The fall of 2007 featured the debut of the newest uniforms to date, also featuring the themed show "What Happens in West Chester, stays in West Chester", a salute to Las Vegas which is widely considered the most difficult and most technical field show in recent Golden Rams history.

## Traditional Songs

The Golden Rams Marching Band changes it's show every year but also retains a special selection of songs for use every season.

- \* "ABC Theme/Rams Fight" - the Golden Rams fight song, beginning with the opening of the Olympic Fanfare. This song is played during the pre-game, half-time, and after every touchdown.
- \* "Pre-game Opener" - The opening of the pregame show which is a take off of the WCU Alma Mater, where the band forms the letters, W-C-U on the field
- \* "WCU Alma Mater"- a tribute to West Chester University played after each football game.

#### Seasons

2007 Season: "What Happens in West Chester, Stays in West Chester"

The 2007 show was a salute to Las Vegas, opening with parts of Elvis Presley's "A Little Less Conversation" and Frank Sinatra's "Luck be A Lady". The show also featured a tribute to Cirque du Soleil, Céline Dion's "When I Fall in Love", and The Beatles' "Can't Buy Me Love". The band's pregame song selection included the Pregame Opener, "Grits Ain't Groceries" by, and the ABC/Rams Fight Song.

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2006 Season: Train Show

The Golden Rams Band featured original music for the 2006 season, simulating a ride on a train.

#### Colorguard

The colorguard is renowned for their excellence in spinning flags and rifles. The 2007 season featured original costumes such as Vegas showgirls, blackjack dealers, and other Las Vegas symbols to coincide with the Vegas field show. The WCU Colorguard was featured in 2007 as part of the opening act for the 6abc Boscov's Thanksgiving Day Parade in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

#### Style

The Golden Rams Marching band marches using a corps style, forming precise drill sets and shapes. The band moves from set to set using a "roll step" or "glide step" and members stay in the form while in motion. Usually, for the main show theme, traditional marching band styles will be used and then there will be some songs that are looser and less rigid and members are frequently encouraged to have fun to excite the audience during these tunes.