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Fall 2013

## The Graduate Standard - Vol. 2, No. 1

Western Michigan University

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## Dean's Message



As we head into the season of thanksgiving and I reflect on all the wonderful things we have been able to accomplish over this past year, I want to thank each and every one of you for your contributions and continued support of graduate education. Major accomplishments of the year include the recommendation to move forward with an external vendor to bring our graduate admissions process completely online by Fall 2014, the work of our Faculty Fellows to help develop recruitment material for all our programs and an online orientation for new students, a complete transition of our website to the new university template, the addition of new professional development opportunities for our students and the establishment of a new e-communication strategy for all admitted and matriculating students. A more extensive overview of the year's accomplishments can be found at

<http://www.wmich.edu/grad/planning>.

In addition, the year has been filled with opportunities to meet with many of our current students, alumni and friends of graduate education at WMU. In each of these meetings, all the stories documented how the friendships and the personal and professional relationships that have been forged, the commitment to student growth and development, and the opportunities that were provided have all contributed to individual successes. I think of these stories and how WMU has provided the educational home, family, and community for professional growth for our graduate students. I think, too, of a vision: a physical space, a home, a place for students to gather with other students and colleagues from around the world. I think of a place to learn within and across disciplines, a place to hold and celebrate theses and dissertation defenses, a place for a community of scholars, researchers and creative artists to gather to help others experience the excitement of their work. The vision: a building that we call the Center for Graduate and International Education. Let us know if you are willing and interested in helping us make this vision a reality.

Susan R. Stapleton, Ph.D.

Dean, Graduate College

# Amanda Shuman

Posted on November 5, 2013



Math teachers...rebellious? Those words don't often go together in our minds, but Amanda Shuman remembers her math teachers as rebels who kept the class engaged with their lively teaching style. Since she took to math naturally and found herself two or three grade levels ahead of her classmates, she decided to pursue math as a career. After receiving a

master's degree in mathematics at WMU, she is living in Washington D.C. as a Math for America DC (MfA DC) fellow. She will be following a five-year program in which college graduates and working professionals commit to teaching math in public secondary schools. All fellows are mathematically talented individuals who are new to teaching.

During the first year of the fellowship, MfA DC fellows receive a full scholarship to the American University in Washington D.C. Tuition and fees for the degree, a Master's in Teaching in Secondary Education: Mathematics, are completely covered. Fellows receive a living stipend for the training year. Fellows will have pre-service professional development and mentoring as well as extensive student teaching experience during the training year. Development and training continue through the training year.

During years two through five, MfA DC fellows will teach in a Washington D.C. public or public charter school at the secondary level. Fellows will receive a stipend in addition to a regular full-time teacher's salary in the city. Besides the stipend and salary, mentoring, coaching and support services are available for fellows. They are expected to participate in ongoing, interactive, professional development activities as well.

Amanda hails from Montrose, Michigan and completed her undergraduate work at Aquinas College in Grand Rapids, Michigan. She always found herself drawn to mathematics and she gathered experience in teaching math by tutoring at her high school during her junior and senior years. She was a teaching assistant for the Department of Mathematics at WMU and part of her duties there included tutoring in the math lab. As a TA, she taught math to non-math majors.

Finite and Pre-Calculus were also within the scope of her teaching experience. One thing she wants to do in her career is encourage young women and girls to a love of math. She found the lack of women in math classes and in university settings disheartening, and she wants to increase visibility for women in mathematics.

Studying at WMU, a large, diverse university, was very different from her undergraduate work at Aquinas. Here at Western in a male dominated profession, she felt somewhat isolated. She knew that if she wanted to advance her position in life she would have to do it on her own, and she did so by working out her problems in “self-study.” Diving into something she enjoyed, mathematics, provided an antidote to the inevitable difficult issues that came up during her graduate study at WMU. She was unable to participate much in campus life, as she lived in Grand Rapids and commuted to school in Kalamazoo. She notes that public transportation in Washington, D.C. is more comprehensive than anything available in this area of Michigan, though the cost of living in the city is much higher.

Amanda counts several professors and graduate assistants as major influences on her. She notes that Dr. Steven Culver, then chair of the math department, and Dan Sieviewright and Shelley Speiss, both now holding the Ph.D., were greatly encouraging. She also singled out for praise two “amazing teachers who kept me going.” The first was Dr. Jay Wood. “He is an extraordinary professor who was willing to work with me to catch up with the other students and was always patient with me. He answered even the most mundane questions and constantly encouraged me to continue working hard.” The second teacher who bolstered Amanda’s confidence was Dr. Melinda Koelling, with whom she worked on complex analysis. Amanda had not had much success in complex analysis in her previous classes, but Dr. Koelling gave her the guidance to understand concepts she had not previously grasped. Dr. Koelling’s presence at math club and other departmental events was motivating, as well.

Amanda earned no less than 18 scholarships and just as many non-cash awards during her undergraduate work at Aquinas, and at Western was involved as a member of the Teaching Assistants Union and of Pi Mu Epsilon, an honorary national mathematics society promoting scholarly activity in mathematics. Now, as a Math for America Fellow, she will be using her talents to further mathematics education in K-12 settings. The Graduate College at Western Michigan University is proud to call her one of our own, and wishes her great success in her future endeavors.

# Marcus Johnson

Posted on **November 5, 2013**



When it comes to the path of his academic career, recent graduate Marcus Johnson (M.F.A., Creative Writing, and M.A., Educational Leadership) considers himself a “wanderer.” In addition to his military service in the Army National Guard, Marcus has pursued graduate study in the seminary, in secondary education, creative writing, and most recently, **higher**

**education and student affairs**. His decision to attend WMU provided even further opportunities, as Marcus has worked as an Assistant Director of the **Writing Center**, as a Student Services Coordinator for WMU Financial Aid, and has participated in the **Prague Summer Program**. Reflecting on his winding path, Marcus observes, “I think it still all plays into who I am right now... it shaped the professional I’ve become; it shaped the academic I think I’m becoming.” His patience and curiosity about a variety of career paths has certainly benefited him, for shortly after Marcus graduated in April 2013 with his Master’s degree in Educational Leadership, he was hired as an admissions counselor at Kalamazoo College.

In 2007, in the midst of completing an M.F.A. in **Creative Writing** at WMU, Marcus found his graduate program delayed when he was deployed to Camp Liberty in Iraq. Upon returning, Marcus contacted WMU’s **Office of Military and Veterans’ Affairs (OMVA)** and found a great level of support from the office’s new director, Tracey Quada. Marcus is effusive in his praise for the advocacy and resources of the office, stating that Quada and the OMVA itself made “Western a much more veteran-friendly campus, instituting policies and connecting veterans with resources that were meant to help them during their college experience. With the OMVA, I see in that office a much stronger initiative to engage with student vets and to help them.”

And he isn’t alone in his praise for the office; just last year, **Military Times’ EDGE magazine** named Western as one of the “**Best for Vets**” schools in the nation (one of only two schools from Michigan to make the list). The skills, determination, and experience that student veterans bring to college campuses make them an invaluable addition to university communities, and WMU is making a notable effort to smooth these students’ transitions back to academic life. Marcus says, “I’m starting to see that some of the services that we’re offering, they indicate and show that we

are trying to become more aware of [their] needs, and we are trying to understand those different experiences, and how those experiences can impact the individual education of student veterans as well as how it impacts the overall university community.”

As a teacher and a writer in that university community, Marcus finds his military experience re-framing the ways he thinks about and approaches his academic work. Speaking about how his military training influenced his teaching preparation, Marcus recalls that “I approached tasks like teaching or writing or studying from a really practical, pragmatic approach, so I would sit down and read a piece of literature, and I would think, what’s the purpose? What’s it going to serve? How am I going to be able to use this tool? How can I use this resource? It’s also something that carries over into the way [...] I get students to think about writing, to think about research. I want them to start thinking about writing and research in very pragmatic terms, in very practical terms, so that it’s something they actually do for a purpose. Because I think that activity— any activity you do in life— there has to be a significant purpose to it, but especially for the time you invest in writing, just like the time I invested in the military, there has to be a significant purpose, there has to be a significant meaning.”

Part of that search for meaning has also unfolded in the pages of Marcus’s memoir. His experience in Iraq is the basis for his creative non-fiction work, *Pogue*, a book about the intersections of war, training, gender, and relationships from the perspective of a soldier who does not leave the military base. Planning to finish the book soon, Marcus will no doubt have a full and promising future as he moves forward with his new job, new writing projects, and hopefully, a continuing urge to wander and explore.

## 2013 Graduate Ambassadors

Posted on **November 5, 2013**



The Graduate College and the Graduate Student Advisory Committee (GSAC) are proud to announce the selection of our 2013-2014 Graduate Ambassadors. Each represents a specific college or area and takes on a range of duties to aid and represent prospective and current



students, as well as the university community as a whole. They support prospective graduate students with information about the application process, graduate student life, and the University and surrounding community. Another of their roles is to arrange campus tours with prospective students. The ambassador from that prospect's college shows the prospective student around campus and the community of Kalamazoo. They escort students to their departments and set up meetings with graduate directors, admissions officers and faculty with whom they would like to work. Ambassadors participate in select recruitment activities and attend Graduate College events to speak to attendees about graduate school and represent GSAC and graduate education in general.

Graduate ambassadors also provide peer support to current graduate students by helping them understand University and Graduate College requirements and policies. Ambassadors must have a good knowledge of Western's unique offerings so they can orient new students to campus culture. Helping graduate students find support services requires that each ambassador have an excellent knowledge of Western's resources. Meeting with department and college level faculty, staff, and administration helps each ambassador to establish a working relationship with the departments and to develop "points of pride" for each college and department. Ambassadors are considered marketers of Western Michigan University as well; they represent the face of graduate education to the University and the outside community. Each also holds office hours in the Student Organization Center in Bernhard Center, so they are available for walk-in student concerns.

Among their many other job duties, ambassadors compose articles for the Graduate College's blog, The Grad Word. We've had entries that highlight the research our ambassadors are doing, their travels, and the trials and tribulations of working on the thesis or dissertation. They also post to our Facebook page with information on upcoming events and links to other sites or articles touching on issues of importance to graduate students from around the world. Check out our pages to see all the issues being discussed and the events that are designed by and for all graduate students on campus. Like us on Facebook to show your support of graduate education and the Graduate College at WMU.

Each ambassador also sits on a University-wide council or on the Executive Board (E-Board) of GSAC. A number of committees on campus have a graduate student representative on their team to give input on how the items being discussed affect graduate students. This ensures shared governance in shaping policy and procedures that affect graduate students. GSAC is an active student organization to which all graduate students automatically belong since each pays student

fees that fund student organizations. They meet once a month, usually on a Friday afternoon, in Walwood Hall or Bernhard Center. Currently the organization is preparing to host the National Association of Graduate-Professional Students (NAGPS) for their 27th annual conference from November 7-10. GSAC also has a funding committee, GFAC, which considers, approves, and authorizes funding from student assessment fees for programming for graduate students.

The new Ambassadors, their fields, and the areas they serve follow.

- Kenneth Crocker is working on an M.A. in Philosophy. He represents the College of Arts and Sciences in the Humanities areas and the College of Fine Arts. He is GSAC's E-Board Event Chair and as such is actively planning the NAGPS conference, which will bring 200 graduate students from around the country to our campus.
- Alyssa Eminhizer, who is pursuing an Au.D. in Audiology, represents the College of Health and Human Services and is the E-Board Administrative Chair, a job that keeps her busy as she takes and distributes minutes for all GSAC meetings, maintains the roster, and monitors the GSAC information email account.
- Jamie Gomez is finishing up her M.A. in Anthropology. She represents the College of Arts and Sciences in the Humanities and College of Fine Arts, and sits on the Campus Planning and Finance Committee. Jamie also assists with recruiting for the Graduate College.
- Denisha Griffey, Ph.D. student in Geosciences, represents the College of Arts and Sciences in the Math and Sciences areas and takes time out of her active research and fieldwork agenda to sit on the Graduate Studies Council.
- Alex Iseri, M.A. in International Development Administration, carries a 4.0 G.P.A. and represents the Social Science areas in the College of Arts & Sciences. As E-Board Outreach Chair he coordinates events to solicit concerns from graduate students and maintains partnerships with the community and other stakeholders.
- Edmundo Messina is pursuing an M.S. in Civil Engineering and represents the College of Engineering and Applied Sciences. He is assigned to recruitment duties for the Graduate College and makes a point to attend most events sponsored by the Graduate College.
- Marcial Amaury Pineda Moquete, an M.A. student in Educational Leadership, represents the College of Education and Human Development for those who are in a teaching capacity. As GSAC's E-Board Public Relations Chair, he coordinates all promotional materials and maintains the GSAC web and social media sites. Amaury is a licensed attorney in the Dominican Republic.
- Matt Reid is pursuing an M.A. in Sociology. He is dedicated both to serving his fellow students and to his scholarly activity. He represents the College of Arts and Sciences in the Social Sciences and sits on the Research Policies Council.



- Muthanna Yaqoub, Ph.D. student in Geosciences, works on behalf of international students through the Haenicke Institute and sits on the International Education Council. He hails from Iraq and has worked extensively in recruiting and orienting students from the Middle East to our campus.
- Terren Yost is an Air Force veteran working on his M.S. in Occupational Therapy. He serves graduate student veterans in the area of Military and Veterans Affairs and sits on the Academic and Information Technology Council. Terren also holds a graduate assistantship in the Office of Military and Veteran's Affairs.
- Tiantian Zhang, a Ph.D. student in Biological Sciences, serves as an ambassador for the College of Arts and Sciences in the Math and Science areas. He is a returning 2012-2013 Graduate Ambassador who assists the Graduate College with recruiting.
- Yu Zhang is working on her M.A. in the Higher Education and Student Affairs program and represents the College of Education and Human Development for students in non-teaching capacities. She also sits as graduate student representative on the Student Media Board where she provides input on programming with graduate students in mind.

Please contact the Graduate College at (269)387-8212 if you would like an Ambassador to be present at an event or meeting. Ambassadors are also available to meet with student groups and to advise on planning or development of departmental or unit graduate student affairs activities or services.

## 2013 Graduate Fall Welcome

Posted on **November 5, 2013**

A wonderland of candles, golden table draperies, and exotic foods appeared in the West Ballroom of Bernhard Center on September 5th for the Graduate Student Advisory Committee's annual Fall Welcome for Graduate Students. Members of GSAC, including Vice Chairperson Rebecca Sametz, Stephany Coffman-Wolph, and Chairperson Damon Chambers, designed the event as a "welcome back" for all graduate students. Around 250 graduate students gathered to enjoy a beautiful evening of music, friendship, and fun, listening to the smooth jazz sounds of the Dan Willenberg Trio, with Dan Willenberg on piano, Denis Shebukhov on bass, and Dave Van Haren on drums.



### **Two International Students Enjoying the Fall 2013 Welcome**

Chambers, a Blindness and Low Vision master's student, student employee chef for Bernhard Center, and new Chair of GSAC, drew on his own Jamaican heritage to inspire the delicious food for the event. Students enjoyed hors d'oeuvres of fried plantains and roasted sweet potatoes with pomegranate seeds made from a special recipe Damon created, as well as corn bread with honey butter which was a big hit with the crowd. This was a unique request by Damon based on a popular dish in Jamaica. Later in the evening, funk jazz band Fusion Base (Marcus Johnson on saxophones, Bryan Blowers on guitar, and Dave Van Haren returning on drums) got the crowd dancing to the beat as students got to know each other and enjoyed themselves. The gathering was a diverse mix of American and International students, many of whom were just starting at Western. The event followed the Graduate College Resource Fair, which ran from 3-6 pm in the adjoining ballroom, at which graduate students could meet and greet representatives of various departments and units across campus and the community. Participants included Sindecuse Health Center, University Libraries, University Recreation, the Office of Military and Veterans Affairs, Career and Student Employment Services, the Office of Diversity and Inclusion, Miller Auditorium, HSIRB Research Compliance, Teaching Assistants Union, Faculty Development and more. Graduate College staff were on hand to greet and mingle with the students. Altogether, the fair and welcome celebration provided a great opportunity to get to know new students and to see returning students who stopped in to say "hi."



**Two International Graduate Students Enjoying the Food at the Fall 2013 Welcome**



**Three Graduate Students Talking at the Fall 2013 Welcome**



**Graduate College Staff at the Fall 2013 Welcome**



**The Dan Willenberg Trio perform at the Fall 2013 Welcome**





**Graduate Students dance to the band at the Fall 2013 Welcome**

## Linda Comrie

Posted on **November 5, 2013**



Linda Comrie is Office Coordinator for the Graduate College. While all our employees are vital to our functioning, everyone turns to Linda for help. She joined the staff in 1999 and knows just about everything there is to know about the office. She stays busy reconciling

budgets, ordering supplies, doing payroll, processing graduate appointments, and organizing events like the Graduate and Professional School Fair, the Graduate Student Resource Fair, and many other meetings and events year round. She also monitors and coordinates the King/Chavez/Parks Future Faculty Fellowships and makes sure all paperwork is kept up for the Fellows. She supervises our office associate and does an amazing job of keeping track of our very active dean, Susan Stapleton. Setting up appointments, scheduling meetings, arranging travel, and preparing reports for Dr. Stapleton is a big part of Linda's job.

Linda is known for her dedication to her work and her calm, cool demeanor even when the office is busy and everyone is competing for her time. She always makes the effort to demonstrate the right way to do a job and even knows how to fix the copier most of the time! In 2004 Linda received a Semiannual Staff Service Excellence Award, and in 2006 she received the first Griselda Daniel Award from the Graduate Students of Color (GSOC) organization. Linda was selected for the WMU Make-A-Difference award in 2009 based on the special attributes she brings to her work environment. Linda is grateful to past and current supervisors for giving her the opportunity to grow in her job and for the students who make every effort worthwhile. She has made lasting friendships among the many students she has helped over the years; they come back to the Graduate College with jobs in higher education, spouses, and children to be greeted with a hug from Linda. Linda earned a bachelor's degree in Social Work from Western Michigan University. She and her husband Leo live in Galesburg and enjoy taking trips to northern Michigan where they appreciate the lakes, the fall colors and the UP food specialty – Cornish pasty. Linda and Leo's daughter Stacy graduated from WMU and now lives nearby with her husband. Linda is dedicated to her family and spends her spare time cooking, shopping and traveling with her sisters and her mother.

### **Professional Email Etiquette in 12 Easy Steps**

1. Address Email Recipients by Name
2. Write a Definitive Subject Heading
3. Identify Yourself and State Your Intentions Briefly
4. Attach Documents
5. Say "Thank You"
6. Include a Valediction or Complimentary Close
7. Use a Formal Signature and a Professional Email Address
8. Check Grammar, Mechanics, Tone
9. Review Your Email Before Sending
10. Acknowledge Receipt Within 48 Hours

11. When Necessary, Make a Phone Call instead

12. Never Send An Email When You are Angry or Upset

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The Graduate College  
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