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WMU Alumni Association board OKs \$1 million for alumni center

by Cheryl Roland
October 11, 2013 | WMU News



KALAMAZOO—Acting at its **Oct. 11** semiannual meeting, the Western Michigan University Alumni Association Board of Directors approved a measure to add \$1 million in association funds to help turn the core of East Hall into a new alumni center.



WMU Alumni Association Board of Directors

The decision comes on the heels of an Oct. 1 announcement by Mark Jackson, board president, that each of the 22 members of the association board also has made a personal financial commitment to the renovation effort. Earlier this year, the board unanimously approved a measure offering its support for the University's decision to focus all of its East Campus redevelopment efforts on renovating the original building that was the birthplace of the University.

"As a board, we're committed to making sure the WMU Alumni Center is a world-class facility that provides a home for all alumni when they're on campus, honors our University's heritage and triggers a 'wow' reaction from everyone who visits it," Jackson says.

The renovation of the core of East Hall into an alumni center was announced in December 2012 by the University. WMU has borrowed \$15 million to transform the 34,000-square-foot core of the building, but has said any amount spent above that figure must come from other sources, such as private donors. The core renovation, for which the alumni association funds will be used, is scheduled for completion in mid-2015.

Jim Thomas, WMU vice president for alumni relations and development, says the commitment by the alumni association's board reflects the sentiments his staff has been hearing from alumni nationwide.

"The University community, in general, and alumni, in particular, feel a real sense of dedication to East Hall and are delighted we've found a way to return this historic site to everyday use," Thomas says. "The alumni association's board has helped ensure the renovation effort is completed in a way that helps us use East Hall to tell the WMU story."

The association's Jackson notes that the board began looking last April at ways to leverage the University's commitment to East Hall. During the board's April meeting, the finance committee was asked to study the issue and bring a resolution back to the full board. The committee's recommendation, made at the Oct. 11 meeting, was to devote \$1 million from the association's funds to the renovation effort.

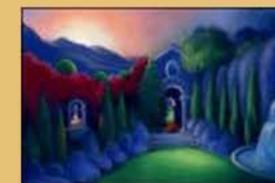
The association's funds are derived from historical member dues, gifts and other revenues. One of the principal uses for the funds is to enable the association to award a series of annual Legacy Scholarships to students who are the children or grandchildren of WMU alumni. This year, for instance, the association offered 100 such students \$1,000 each in scholarship assistance, an increase of 30 scholarships over last year's number.

"We're convinced that in addition to what we're already able to accomplish with those funds, there could be no better investment in our University and the association's future than to help build a home for alumni that also serves as a showcase for the University and a resource for its home community," says Jackson, a Kalamazoo native with lifelong ties to WMU.

Preliminary design work on the core of the building is underway, and the first of a series of community input sessions was held Oct. 1. At that event, design ideas and parameters were presented by TowerPinkster, the design firm leading the effort. Material from that session, other details of the project and information about making a donation to the effort are available online at mywmu.com/alumnicenter.



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The WMU Magazine

