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8-2016

## The Graduate Standard - 08/2016

Western Michigan University

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## Dean's Message

Hello.

In our last newsletter, I indicated that with the move of WMU's Office of Development and Alumni Relations, the first floor of Walwood Hall became available and that through generous support from Academic Affairs, the Graduate College will be relocating into this space. We have been very economical and sustainable and have reused just about everything we could. It has been fun to be part of the process and we are getting very close to being able to move. The photos below are of some of the progress that has been made.



Disassembled Cubes



Cubicles, desks, and cabinets stored neatly in the lobby of Walwood Hall



New carpet and paint



### Reassembly of the Cubicles

As indicated before, this relocation allows us for the first time to provide dedicated office space to the Graduate Student Association and to create the Graduate College Student Commons, a room for graduate student meetings, workshops, seminars and study space as well as a lounge area.

We would love to add your name to our donor wall to recognize those who have made financial contributions to the Graduate College in support of the creation of the Graduate College Student Commons. To donate to help us finish this project, go to the Graduate College page on [mywmu.com](http://mywmu.com) or follow the link for Giving to Graduate Education on the Graduate College homepage ([www.wmich.edu/grad](http://www.wmich.edu/grad)).

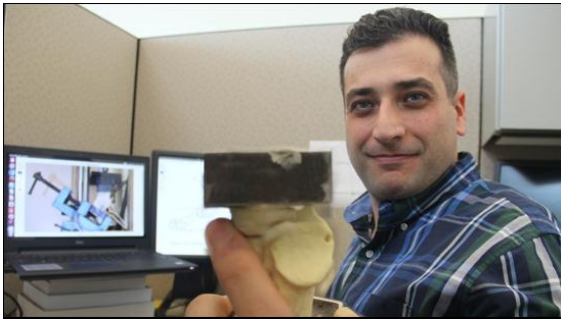
We of course will be planning an open house in the Fall and hope you will be able to attend.

Susan R. Stapleton, Ph.D.

Dean, Graduate College

**Student Spotlight**

**Alumni Spotlight**



### **Saif Alrafeek**

Saif Alrafeek is a truly multicultural citizen of the world. He was born in Iraq, moved to Italy at age four, and returned to Iraq in 1990. After completing his bachelor's and master's degrees in Mechanical and Mechatronics Engineering at Baghdad University in 2008, he became an instructor at his alma mater. As manager of Quality Assurance and Accreditation he spent four years working with the Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology (ABET) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) structuring, writing and archiving an accreditation self-assessment report to help University of Baghdad gain higher education accreditation.

[\[Full Story\]](#)



### **Ben Williams - Master's in Family and Consumer Sciences**

The Graduate Ambassador program instituted by Dean Susan Stapleton in 2012 has given dozens of graduate students first-hand experience in leadership. Ben Williams, alumnus of the first group of Graduate Ambassadors, has put that experience to good use as the Michigan Department of Education's Legislative Liaison in the Office of Public and Governmental Affairs, working directly for State Superintendent of K-12 Education Mike Flanagan since 2014. When Brian J. Whiston was appointed State Superintendent in 2015, Ben was retained in his position, even though many new appointees prefer to hire their own staff. Ben received his master's degree in Family and Consumer Sciences from WMU in 2014. He received his Bachelors of Science in Family Studies at WMU in 2011.

[\[Full Story\]](#)

## Department Spotlight



### **The Department of Occupational Therapy Poster Day**

The Department of Occupational Therapy was the first non-teacher education program at Western Michigan University and it continues to break ground as one of the top 50 such programs in the nation, as ranked by U.S. News and World Report. WMU offers an undergraduate professional entry program at the main campus in Kalamazoo and a professional entry graduate program offered at main campus and also at our regional location in downtown Grand Rapids, Michigan. The program is accredited by the Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy Education, and two WMU professors were inducted into the roster of fellows of the American Occupational Therapy Association

## Department Spotlight

### **The School of Social Work has scheduled several information sessions**

The School of Social Work has scheduled several information sessions in the College of Health and Human Services at which prospective students may learn more about the MSW program at WMU. The Director of Admissions and Student Services will present information about the programs, faculty research, and the unique benefits of attaining a Master of Social Work at Western Michigan University.

Sign up at <https://www.wmich.edu/socialwork/infosessions>.

You will receive an email confirmation with the room number. Available sessions follow:

- Thursday, August 25 from 5:30 to 7 p.m.
- Thursday, September 23 from 10 to 11:30 a.m.
- Tuesday, October 4 from 5:30 to 7 p.m.
- Tuesday, October 18 from 5:30 to 7 p.m.
- Tuesday, November 15 from 5:30 to 7 p.m.

at its annual conference in April 2016. Dr. Diane Dirette and Dr. Amy Wagenfeld joined Dr. Debra Lindstrom, inducted in 2014, in this prestigious fellowship of professionals.

[\[Full Story\]](#)

- Tuesday, December 13 from 4 to 5:30 p.m.

The School of Social Work at WMU was formally established in 1969, offering both the Bachelor and Master of Social Work degrees at main campus in Kalamazoo. At our Grand Rapids campus the advanced standing Master's is offered to students who have already completed a BSW. Southwest Campus in Benton Harbor also offers the MSW program face-to-face. Employment for social workers is expected to increase by 16% by 2018, and Western Michigan University's program ranked number 46 in a list of national universities that offer "the best bang for the buck" by Washington Monthly.



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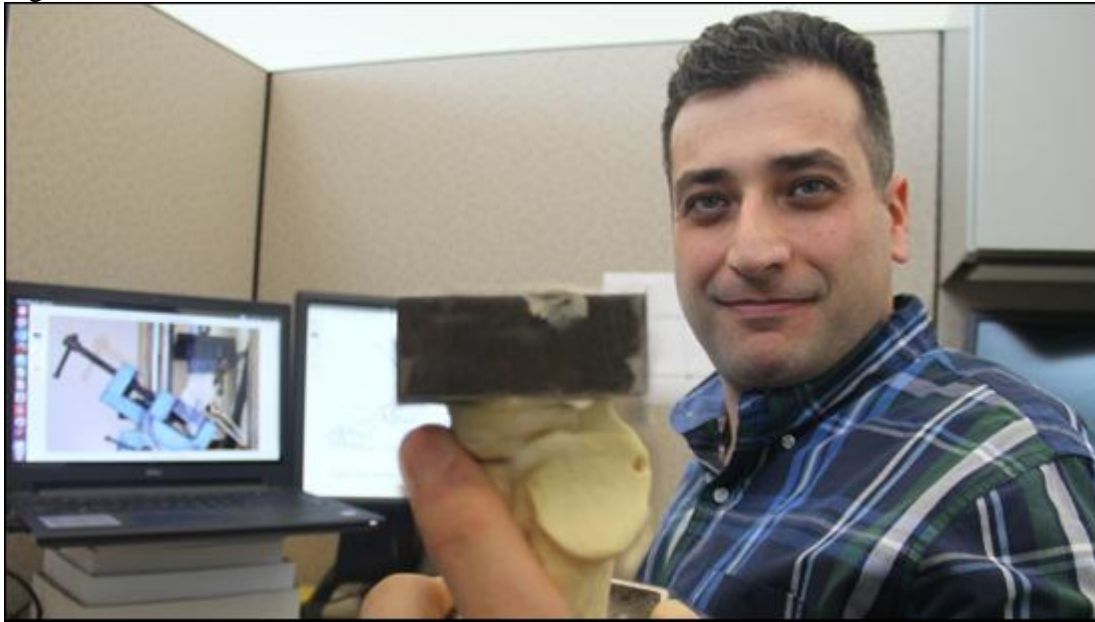
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## Saif Alrafeek: Multicultural Citizen of the World

Posted on [August 5, 2016](#)

Saif Alrafeek is a truly multicultural citizen of the world. He was born in Iraq, moved to Italy at age four, and returned to Iraq in 1990. After completing his bachelor's and master's degrees in Mechanical and Mechatronics Engineering at Baghdad University in 2008, he became an instructor at his alma mater. As manager of Quality Assurance and Accreditation he spent four years working with the Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology (ABET) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) structuring, writing and archiving an accreditation self-assessment report to help University of Baghdad gain higher education accreditation.

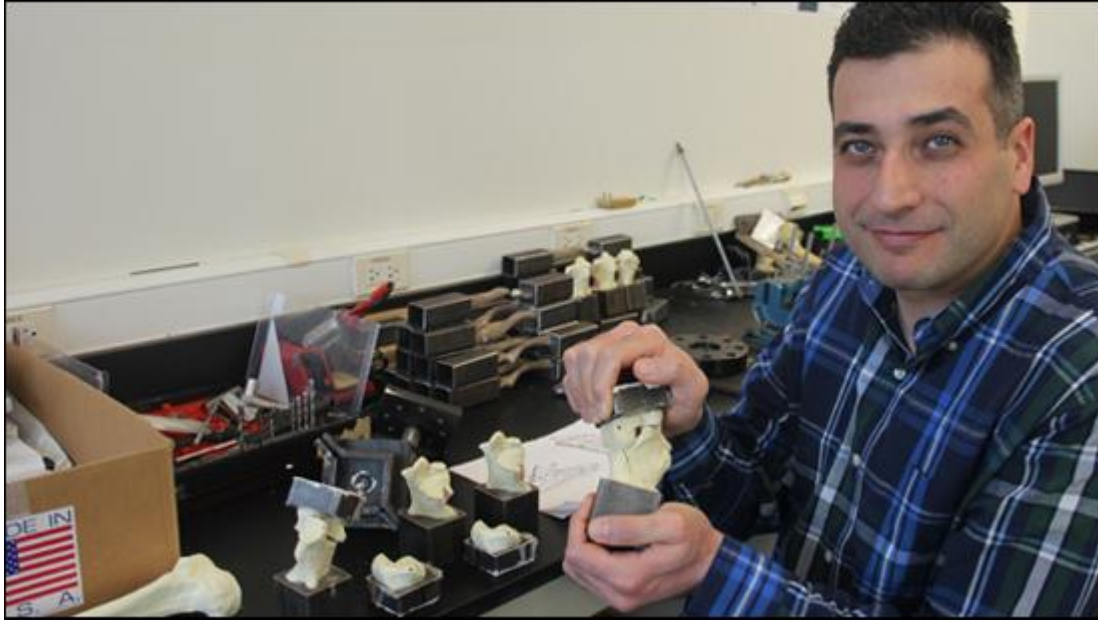


He was selected to travel to Turkey for further education in academic accreditation and in 2012 received a scholarship from the Iraqi Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research (MoHESR) to study for his doctorate in the United States. He came to Western Michigan University in 2014 to begin his research on biomechanical solutions to assist orthopedic surgeons treating patients with arthrodesis, the surgical fusion of bones to immobilize a joint, in the foot and ankle. Saif's research helps surgeons by providing them with computer modeling, biomechanics simulation, and experimental work on foot and ankle samples. In conjunction with that, he has publishing his findings in journals of academic societies and organizations in America. His future goals include teaching, research, and consulting or diplomatic work in academic or cultural affairs. Since he has a keen interest in helping students, Saif enjoys student affairs work in admissions, orientations, immigration services, study abroad, and helping students find funding opportunities.

Because he is interested in higher education administration, he jumped at the chance to attend a full-day 'Behind the W' workshop on June 10 along with ten Graduate Ambassadors. They were the first WMU students to experience 'Behind the W', as they joined with faculty and staff to learn WMU's history as well as tips for communicating with various audiences and WMU visual identity. Saif has also attended several Graduate College sponsored workshops and found "Learning to Manage Time: A Special Seminar for Graduate Students" in March 2014 to be



particularly helpful. By using time management techniques he learned in the workshop, Saif has been able to achieve some of his other goals, including singing karaoke both on-campus and off, attending concerts and meeting some of his favorite musicians. Also, through his collaboration with the Iraqi Student Association he performed a traditional Iraqi dance onstage at the International Festival at WMU in March 2015.



One of Saif's most memorable achievements, besides his academic and professional success, has been to meet his idol, Arnold Schwarzenegger, who earned many bodybuilding world titles. He then became a highly successful actor in blockbuster films, such as the Terminator franchise in the 1980s, before conquering politics by becoming governor of California in 2003. Through the years Saif followed Schwarzenegger's career, finding inspiration in the fact that an immigrant with a heavy accent could reach such heights of fame in America. When he found out that Schwarzenegger was coming to Ohio in March 2016 for a fitness festival, Saif set out in his car to achieve one of his lifetime goals: meeting and talking with Arnold Schwarzenegger. After several hours of trying to penetrate layers of security around the star, the international student met the international star. Arnold, coming out of his dressing room, saw Saif wearing a Terminator II T-shirt and commented, "It is very beneficial for you to wear such a T-shirt!" Saif introduced himself as an international Ph.D. student from Iraq studying at Western Michigan University. Schwarzenegger asked him what kind of studies he was pursuing at WMU, and congratulated Saif upon learning that he is studying for a doctorate in mechanical engineering. He agreed to pose for a selfie with Saif. Saif says that he traveled back to Kalamazoo with a fire burning in his heart to accomplish his next goal: passing his comprehensive exam. Later that same week, with Schwarzenegger's encouraging words echoing in his head, he passed his exam and moved to the dissertation phase of his degree. His proposed dissertation title is "Development and Validation of Hybrid Continuum/Structural Finite Element Model for Evaluating Food and Ankle Biomechanics." With the help of his mentor and chair of his dissertation committee, Dr. Peter Gustafson, along with committee members Dr. Koorosh Naghshineh, Dr. Daniel Kujawski and orthopaedic surgeon Dr. James Jastifer, Saif intends to graduate in Fall 2017.

## Alumni Spotlight: Ben Williams

Posted on [August 5, 2016](#)

The Graduate Ambassador program instituted by Dean Susan Stapleton in 2012 has given dozens of graduate students first-hand experience in leadership. Ben Williams, alumnus of the first group of Graduate Ambassadors, has put that experience to good use as the Michigan Department of Education's Legislative Liaison in the Office of Public and Governmental Affairs, working directly for State Superintendent of K-12 Education Mike Flanagan since 2014. When Brian J. Whiston was appointed State Superintendent in 2015, Ben was retained in his position, even though many new appointees prefer to hire their own staff. Ben received his master's degree in Family and Consumer Sciences from WMU in 2014. He received his Bachelors of Science in Family Studies at WMU in 2011.

His background in Family and Consumer Sciences focused on families and the needs of family units, which has helped him tremendously in his career. As a lobbyist for the Michigan Department of Education he sees directly a link between his studies and how he effectively lobbies for the educational success of Michigan children. He understands how children are affected by unmet needs at home and works to improve educational services to meet those needs, and also looks at how unmet needs at school can affect family life. By looking at how educational issues, legislation and departmental policies in Michigan serve children, he is able to effectively work to better address the needs of Michigan families and children.

He directs legislative activities for the Superintendent of Public Instruction and the State Board of Education and

maintains positive relations between that department and the Michigan Legislature and Congressional Delegation. Through lobbying in Lansing and Washington D.C regarding education and appropriation issues, coordinating lobbying activities, and promoting Department of Education initiatives, he responds to education related issues that affect each district and its constituents.

His path to the House of Representatives in Lansing and in Washington, D.C. began when he worked as a Page in the Michigan House of Representatives and continued as he worked for ten years in a non-partisan role. The State Department of Education is considered a non-partisan entity since it does not fall under the umbrella of the Governor's office. Instead of being

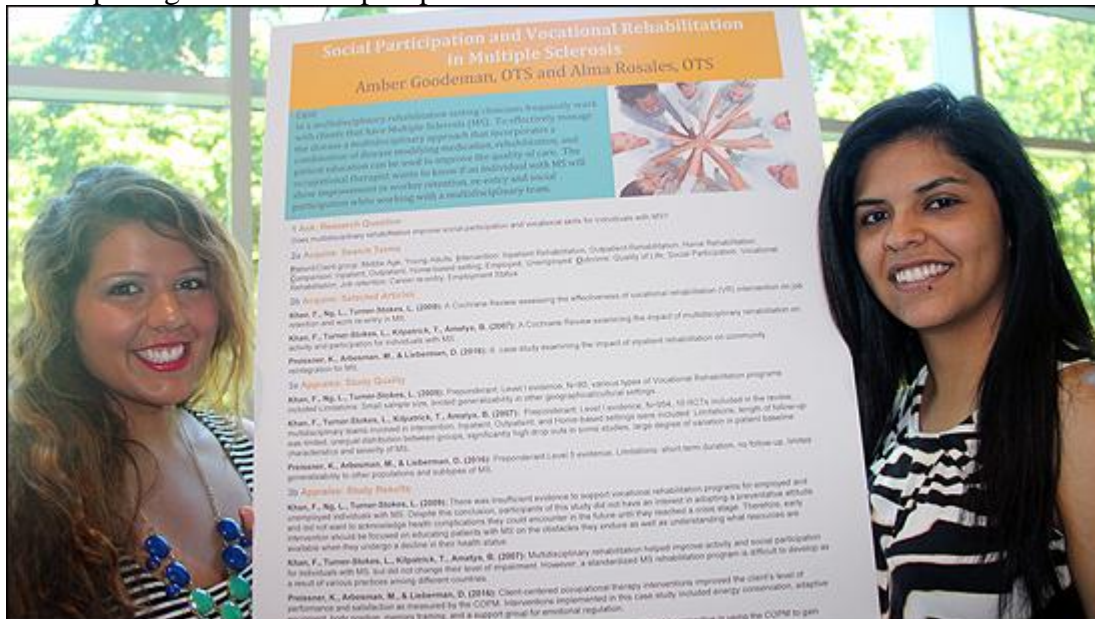


appointed by the governor, the State Superintendent is hired by the State Board of Education. Ben has been working in government for a long time and found that his bachelors and master's degrees from WMU have helped him as he communicates with constituents and with legislators as well as staff at the Michigan Department of Education. He especially recognizes the invaluable help of several faculty members at Western. He says Ms. Bryce Dickey, Master Faculty Specialist and Family Science Program Coordinator, made his educational experience fun. Dr. Karen Blaisure made the experience challenging. He has stayed in touch with his advisor, Ms. Linda Dove, Faculty Specialist II, from his initial enrollment as an undergraduate until he completed his Master's. Finally, he appreciates how Dr. John McElroy challenged students to think outside the box and gain the perspective needed to understand others better. As one of the first group of Graduate Ambassadors, Ben was an Extended University Programs ambassador working with students from WMU campuses in Lansing and Grand Rapids. He found it "challenging because it was a new program at the time" but says it was a highlight of his graduate work. He thanks Dean Stapleton and the other ambassadors, who were very supportive. When he begins to work on his doctorate next year, he plans to return to WMU, where he would also like to teach one day

# The Department of Occupational Therapy at Western Michigan University

Posted on [August 5, 2016](#)

The Department of Occupational Therapy was the first non-teacher education program at Western Michigan University and it continues to break ground as one of the top 50 such programs in the nation, as ranked by U.S. News and World Report. WMU offers an undergraduate professional entry program at the main campus in Kalamazoo and a professional entry graduate program offered at main campus and also at our regional location in downtown Grand Rapids, Michigan. The program is accredited by the Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy Education, and two WMU professors were inducted into the roster of fellows of the American Occupational Therapy Association at its annual conference in April 2016. Dr. Diane Durette and Dr. Amy Wagenfeld joined Dr. Debra Lindstrom, inducted in 2014, in this prestigious fellowship of professionals.



In 2015 the department attained a 100% graduation rate with 96 out of 96 admitted students in the cohort crossing the stage to receive their Master's diploma. Since U.S. News & World Report lists occupational therapy as number 10 in the top 25 best jobs, these alumni of WMU's OT program are sure to get placement in jobs after they take the National Board of Certification in Occupational Therapy exam and move into the workforce. Graduates already get plenty of experience; after 22 months of academic study in which they attain 66 credits, they do a six month fieldwork experience for six credit hours. Part of their final work includes a research project that culminates in a poster presentation as part of OT Poster Day. This year the event was held on June 21 in the lobby of the College of Health and Human Services.

Sara Clark, Occupational Therapy Fieldwork Coordinator, explained that each student pairs up with another student whose interests are similar, and together they examine a question that has been posed by clinicians in the field. The finished product is called a Critically Assessed Topic, or CAT. The team produces a poster showing the results of their findings, which explore research that has already been done on that topic. For instance, students Gabrielle Lober and

Rachel Walker assessed the most effective cognitive screening tool for patients on ventilators. Brandon Lubish and Patrick Yee looked at the effectiveness of extracorporeal shock wave therapy on burns and scars. Kathleen Nickens and Ceara Fauble examined age, frequency, and precautions in relation to stimulation in the NICU. Each team must use the same format, and some produced brochures and handouts on their topic. They must capture the objective of the research question. They must list the databases and sources they used to assess the research in the field and define the research criteria as well as any exclusion criteria. Then, based on the findings, they list the main results and implications of the research on that question. Students also put their topic into context in a background section. The result is a professional effort that links them to cutting edge research in their field.



Alma Rosales and Amber Goodeman addressed the research question “Does multidisciplinary rehabilitation improve social participation and vocational skills for individuals with Multiple Sclerosis?” Both women completed their Bachelor’s degrees at Western Michigan University and went on to pursue an advanced degree in the field of occupational therapy to fulfill a childhood dream and a promise to their family. Rosales was born in Mexico and migrated with her family to Michigan when she was eight. She is very thankful for their support as she became the first person in her family to go to college. Goodeman was raised by her single mother in Frankenmuth, Michigan. She overcame hardship and maintained her educational goals after the death of her mother three years ago. Both Goodeman and Rosales profess a deep desire to help others through their work, and both wish to work with children. Goodeman had an opportunity to study abroad in Ireland and in Jamaica, and there she encountered children who had no access to health care. Her dream job involves working with children in a pediatric facility where she could implement hippotherapy, in which horseback riding is used as a therapeutic or rehabilitative treatment. Rosales would like to use her bilingual and bicultural skills to provide services to minorities, increasing access to healthcare and improving health outcomes for underrepresented populations. Rosales is a recipient of the Thurgood Marshall Fellowship, a competitive award through the Graduate College that supports diversity among students pursuing graduate degree at WMU.