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# The Western Michigan University Magazine



## Inside this issue

- 'We have the whole world here'
- Lee Honors College marks 50 years
- Online learning on the rise



## *Dear Friends,*

As a value-added University, we provide an edge for the students who entrust us with their futures.

That edge is evidenced by the work of our accomplished faculty, by our hard-working staff and by our talented alumni who showcase this University's reputation by putting the tools they learned at WMU to work to change the world.

The stories in this winter edition of the *WMU Magazine* showcase some of those accomplishments that impact Broncos everywhere.

Read about how WMU has become an institution of choice for international students from all over the globe. Learn about the leading-edge technology being used in our aviation college. And share my pride in our long legacy of success in enhancing the Carl and Winifred Lee Honors College.

WMU is healthy, focused and committed to the success of students. I was pleased to express just how vibrant WMU is during my State of the University address this fall.

In those remarks, I also proposed an exciting new approach to continue providing a distinctive learning environment for our students and to better distinguish our graduates.

I'm happy to share this plan with you here as well. I've asked our campus to formalize a system ensuring that all students who earn a degree also complete an experiential project.

This project may be an internship, a study abroad trip, a design project, a recital or some other meaningful experience that will demonstrate students' skills and provide them with a unique credential. And this will be a credential that students can readily display, such as in an electronic portfolio.

While many of our students already complete such a project, the University has not formalized a way for them to document the experience and benefit from having done so. This will change.

We are pleased to offer students this opportunity, as one additional way a WMU education gives them an edge in the world.

Now, please enjoy reading this issue, which showcases the myriad ways Western Michigan University does that so well.

Best regards,

John M. Dunn

President

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## WMU School of Medicine breaking ground and recruiting students

The emergent Western Michigan University School of Medicine has taken several momentous leaps forward.

Officials held a groundbreaking to formally kick off the renovation and expansion project for the school's home, a 350,000-square-foot facility in downtown Kalamazoo that was donated by the contract research firm, MPI Research.

At this special ceremony, the school's dean also announced that the Liaison Committee on Medical Education has granted the school preliminary accreditation. The LCME is the national accrediting body for education programs leading to the doctor of medicine degree.

"This is an important step because we now have the go-ahead to recruit students for our first class to begin in August 2014," Dr. Hal Jenson, the school's founding dean, said at the groundbreaking event.

The school's initial class will consist of 50 students, but the medical school will eventually enroll 80 students annually.

WMU and Kalamazoo's two longtime teaching hospitals—Borgess Health and Bronson Healthcare—have partnered to develop and operate the school.

"The Kalamazoo community has a 40-year legacy of collaboration providing outstanding undergraduate and graduate medical education.



Illustration of future WMU School of Medicine

The Liaison Committee on Medical Education noted this as a major strength of the new medical school," Jenson said.

The site for the downtown medical school has been named the W.E. Upjohn Campus, honoring the founder of the Upjohn Co. and the great grandfather of William U. Parfet, chairman and CEO of MPI Research of Mattawan, Mich.

## WMU recognized as one of America's best universities—again

WMU is one of four Michigan public universities included in the *U.S. News & World Report's*



annual ranking of top-tier national universities. This is WMU's 22nd appearance on the list.

The magazine's 2012 assessment included more than 1,500 four-year colleges and universities.

WMU is ranked as one of 281 public and private institutions recognized for their national standing and being among the best in America.

Harvard, Princeton and Yale universities were at the top of the list.

The University of Michigan-Ann Arbor, Michigan State University and Michigan Technological University were the other Michigan schools included in the magazine's top tier.

The top 75 percent of the nation's schools recognized by the magazine are ranked by number. Schools the magazine deems to be in the bottom 25 percent are included in a second tier, listed alphabetically and without ranking.

Three other Michigan public universities—Central Michigan, Oakland and Wayne State—appear in this unranked lower tier.

*U.S. News* wasn't the only publication with high praise for WMU.

*Washington Monthly* named WMU

one of the country's top 100 national universities in a list that appeared in the September/October issue.

WMU is fourth among five Michigan universities to make the Washington D.C., magazine's ranking.

Producing cutting-edge research and doctoral students, encouraging students to give back to the nation through service and recruiting, and graduating low-income students were the publication's principal criteria. But this year it also considered college expense, giving highest marks to institutions "that are both effective and inexpensive."

Michigan schools on the list were: UM-Ann Arbor (13th), MSU (34th), Michigan Tech (63rd), WMU (90th) and WSU (95th).

## Students author infant foster care grant

The University's acclaimed Foster Youth and Higher Education Initiative is one of five Kalamazoo partners in running a new evidence-based, parent-training program, IncredibleYears, that is aimed at improving the parenting skills of the parents who presently have their children in the foster-care system.

Eight WMU graduate students sought and won a \$50,000 grant from the Kalamazoo Community Foundation to provide specialized and intensive training for 15 social workers to lead the parent-training classes that meet weekly.

Graduate students Holly Barra, Jody Ickes, Kerrie Jackson, Bridget Jancarz, Brandan Mitchell, Korrine Wojcik, Dawn Wood and Genanne Zeller authored the grant. The students wrote it in a graduate-level program evaluation course led by Dr. Rick Grinnell, professor of social work.

"We're delighted to be a part of a great partnership that is sure to have a positive impact on our foster-care community," Grinnell says.

The project will involve more than 300 infants and toddlers in foster care in Kalamazoo County, along with their respective biological parents and their foster parents.

"It's an exciting time for us because the evidence-based parenting program is a first for Kalamazoo County," said Robert Peck, county director of the Department of Human Services. "Receiving the grant is a testament to the hard work by WMU students, our local partners and foster-care providers. The program will be a great asset to the community."

This new program has numerous objectives that are aimed at bettering the lives of foster children and their parents. Its main objective, however, is to help parents improve upon their child-rearing skills which will result in their children being returned home faster. The project is also geared toward improving the social and community supports for program participants.

The parent training program is a collaborative effort involving WMU, the Michigan Department of Human Services, Bethany Christian Services, Lutheran Social Services of Michigan, and Family & Children Services in Kalamazoo.

## MLK Jr. observance also marks 50th year since civil rights icon spoke at WMU

"Seeding the Dream" is the theme of the 2013 Martin Luther King Jr. celebration, which begins in January.



President John M. Dunn and others marched during the 2011 MLK celebration.

This yearly recognition of the civil rights icon's legacy has become a campus and communitywide endeavor featuring a variety of events sponsored by the city of Kalamazoo, Kalamazoo College, Kalamazoo's Northside Ministerial Association and WMU.

As part of the observance, Kalamazoo public school students will visit WMU on Jan. 19 and the city of Kalamazoo has organized a Community Day of Service and march on Jan. 21. For a full listing of activities, visit [wmich.edu/mlk](http://wmich.edu/mlk).

One special element for WMU's 2013 celebration involves marking the 50th anniversary of King's appearance on campus.

On Dec. 18, 1963, King delivered a detailed speech on social justice in Read Fieldhouse just months after his famed "I Have a Dream" address on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial.

"We would like to highlight that visit by empowering WMU students, staff, faculty and administrators to engage the topic of social justice," says Tierra Marshall, a program coordinator in WMU's Office of Diversity and Inclusion.

The office has set aside funding for program development. Students, faculty and staff may apply for it to stage activities or programs in 2013.

"Our belief is that we owe it to ourselves to engage in social-justice learning and activities throughout the entire year," Marshall says.

A close-up photograph of a young woman with a joyful expression, smiling broadly. She has her face painted with red and yellow colors, resembling the German flag. She is wearing a black beanie with the 'TAO TECHNICAL-WEAR' logo and a grey herringbone patterned jacket. A red and yellow flag is visible in the background.

'We have the  
whole world here'

## WMU's commitment to global engagement reflected in upturn in international student enrollment

Diana Vreeland scanned the student-crowded ballroom at the Bernard Center, clearly pleased by the scene.

“Look at this. We have the whole world here,” said Vreeland, who leads the Center for English Language and Culture for International Students.



Vreeland

“Who is from Saudi Arabia? How about Iraq? India? China? Korea? Japan? I know we have someone here from Switzerland,” Vreeland said as international students around the room acknowledged their home nations at this Fall Welcome event.

This year, nearly 1,600 students from 95 countries are represented at WMU, with the largest groups of international students coming from Saudi Arabia, China and the Dominican Republic.

These students reflect WMU's commitment to being a globally engaged campus as well as ongoing efforts to grow international student enrollment, a statistic that is up 13 percent overall this year.

Experiencing this kind of global diversity on campus—for both domestic and international students—may be more important today than ever as world countries become increasingly connected, economically and otherwise.

“We know that intellect, creativity and talent are found in every corner of the world. Nobody has it all,” President John M. Dunn told the students that day. “It's about all of us together as a people sharing our experiences, our talents, our discoveries...and making it better for humanity.”



Farran, Saudi Arabia

Freshman Ayman Farran was among the new international students taking in Dunn's words of welcome. One of 333 Saudi Arabian students enrolled at the University this year, Farran chose WMU to achieve a big dream he's had since childhood.

“My first dream was to learn English,” says the biomedical sciences major. Farran studied English for more than a year at a private language program in Grand Rapids and while there, learned about WMU.

“The second dream is I want to be a doctor. I chose Western because they will have a medical school in two years,” says Farran, who plans to become a pediatrician.

Meanwhile, Naudia Turnbull, an actress from the British Virgin Islands, is pursuing film, video and media studies. She had long wanted to study in the northern United States.

And Helder Pereira, from Cape Verde, was drawn to the renowned College of Aviation. He learned about the college from one of his high school instructors, a WMU alumnus who is teaching in the African island nation.

### Global engagement doesn't happen by accident

Global engagement is a “two-way street” at WMU, says Juan Tavares, director of international admissions and services.

It's accomplished as students and faculty members travel abroad and as the campus welcomes international students and scholars to study and teach here.

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Among WMU's strengths in internationalization is the admissions process, which is handled within the Haenicke Institute for Global Education.

"This is key because most universities have a single admissions office that takes care of anybody who applies. International students (who apply elsewhere) may not be given the special attention and importance we pay to them at WMU because we have a dedicated office," he says.

The contingent of Saudi Arabian students on campus is largely owed to a special, full-ride scholarship funded by the Saudi government. Farran, for example, is a recipient.

When that program was announced about seven years ago, a delegation from WMU's international admissions office traveled to Washington, D.C. to meet Saudi officials and promote the University.

"WMU was one of the first universities to go and meet with them, and that's when they started sending us the students. We've gone (to D.C.) quite a few times since it began," Tavares says.

Iraq has a similar scholarship program for its citizens and just this fall, Tavares traveled to the Middle Eastern nation to attend college fairs and meet with prospective students and education officials.

"We came at the invitation of the U.S. state department and government of Iraq," says Tavares who was accompanied by Dr. Emanuel Kamber, a WMU physics professor who is originally from Iraq.

"We're making an effort to bring in more students. We have 27 students from Iraq right now. We're trying to diversify where our students are coming from and we're going to places where we know we'll be able to attract a large cohort," Tavares says.

*"We know that intellect,  
creativity and talent are  
found in every corner of the world.  
Nobody has it all."*

—President John M. Dunn







Dughaiter, Saudi Arabia

Partnerships with higher-education institutions abroad also have been an important conduit for international students.

The University has a 25-year alliance with Malaysia's Sunway University. Through it, hundreds of Malaysians have spent two years studying at Sunway and two years at WMU. And this past summer, Dunn signed articulation agreements with other Malaysian schools. Currently, there are more than 2,500 Bronco alumni in that Southeast Asian nation.

WMU has similar educational partnerships elsewhere in the world and continues to make inroads in this vein.

A new dual degree agreement with Anadolu University in Eskiehir, Turkey will allow its undergraduates majoring in civil engineering and industrial engineering to transfer to WMU after completing two years of study at home. The first two students transferred to the University this fall.



Pereira, Cape Verde

Also, WMU is among 14 U.S. colleges and universities recently selected to participate in the Institute of International Education's 2013 Brazil initiative, an initiative expected to bring more Brazilian students to WMU in the future.

Representatives from each institution will take part in a series of trainings to help develop partnerships with schools in Brazil.

### Language no barrier

WMU also offers programming that helps international students overcome a barrier that some encounter when seeking to study in the United States—lack of English proficiency.

There are students who have the academic aptitude for admission but who don't have the required English language skills.

That's where CELCIS—the Center for English Language and Culture for International Students—comes in.

“What sets us apart from some other universities is that we have what's called



Turnbull, Virgin Islands

conditional admission, which means when we look at an application, we don't admit based on whether they have English proficiency or not. We're looking at their academic preparation and credentials,” Tavares says.

Students who meet the academic qualifications can be admitted on this conditional basis and then go through CELCIS to meet WMU's English proficiency requirements to ultimately gain full admission.

“And CELCIS is tough,” Tavares says. “They have to perform.”

Freshman Fahad Dughaiter, also a Saudi student, is at WMU on conditional admission status. He plans to study engineering.

Dughaiter said his brother recommended he pursue his degree in the United States.

“It looks good to employers, and I like the U.S.,” Dughaiter says. “The people in the U.S. are friendly. You feel like you belong, and the education is really great.” ■

# Campus Quick Reads

## Awarded:

The Minority Corporate Counsel Association honored WMU Trustee **Dennis W. Archer** with its Lifetime Achievement Award in New York City. The award recognized the former Detroit mayor and former American Bar Association president for his lifetime of work as an advocate for the benefits of diversity.



Archer

Achievement Award in New York City. The award recognized the former Detroit mayor and former American Bar Association president for his lifetime of work as an advocate for the benefits of diversity.

The Michigan Sports Hall of Fame has named Athletic Director **Kathy Beauregard** the recipient of a



Beauregard

prestigious Gerald R. Ford Award. The award is reserved for members of the sports community who

have demonstrated extraordinary leadership and vision, and who have enhanced the image of sports and improved the quality of life in Michigan.

**Dr. Ruth Beall Heinig**, professor emerita of communication, accomplished storyteller and expert



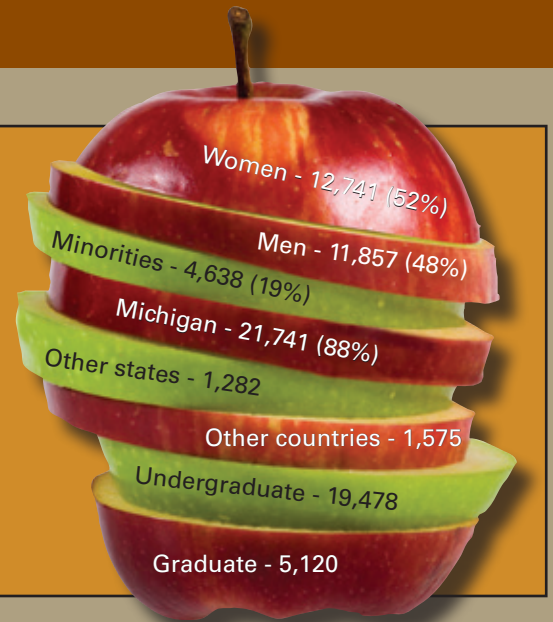
Heinig

in youth-drama texts, has been honored for her work in children's theater. Heinig was presented with a 2012 Orlin Corey

Medallion Award from the Children's Theatre Foundation of America.

## WMU, by numbers, 2012-13

Total students  
**24,598**

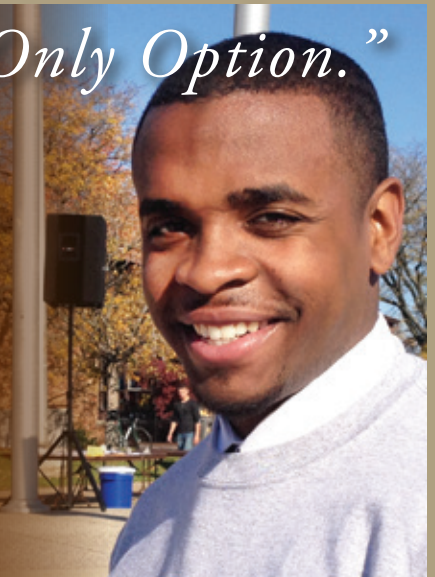


The bell is back. Stolen long ago and returned in recent years, the Bronco Victory Bell is ringing again on the sidelines of Waldo Stadium and at volleyball games. The person who took the bell contacted WMU a few years ago to say he wanted to return it. Safely home, the rusty bell was restored by four members of WMU's chapter of AFSCME—the American Federation of State County and Municipal Employees. The bell's return apparently had national resonance, as news outlets around the country covered the story.

## *"Success is My Only Option."*

—Ryan Gassaway, a WMU senior

This slogan was the rallying cry of an event Gassaway and others organized to encourage student achievement. They gathered on campus, asking students who walked by to commit to academic success by signing a "Success is My Only Option" pledge. Gassaway says this motto became his personal mantra after a high school counselor told him he wouldn't make it to college. "But here I am succeeding," he says.



## WMU attracts high-profile speakers and topics

As part of the Center for Humanities 2012-2013 speaker series, Dr. Harry J. Elam Jr., Stanford University humanities professor and vice provost of undergraduate education, will discuss "The Power and Politics of Performing Race" on Jan. 24. On Feb. 29: Dr. Jocelyne Cesari, professor at the French National Center for Scientific Research in Paris, will discuss "Islam and Democratization: Lessons Learned from the Arab Spring." Both lectures are set for 6 p.m. in Room 2008 of the Richmond Center.

# Professor's book probes Fed's role in credit crisis



The government's ability to revive the U.S. economy dominated the recent presidential election.

At every turn, both candidates touted how he, with his hand at the levers of presidential power, would lift America out of the effects of the Great Recession.

## All eyes remain on the economy

For a new book, WMU political science professor Dr. J. Kevin Corder investigated the role government—specifically the Federal Reserve—played in the financial market meltdown tied to America's recent economic decline.



Corder

Corder's "The Fed & the Credit Crisis" is an account of the financial upheaval that began around 2008, and it also discusses how organizations, including the government, learn from and respond to crises.

The book walks readers through financial-industry practices that imperiled the U.S. economy seriously enough to prompt Congress to authorize a nearly \$1 trillion bailout and pass legislation intended to protect consumers while also putting restraints on Wall Street through regulatory reform.

Corder has researched and written about the Fed in the past. The seed for this new book was planted in summer 2008 when a colleague organizing a conference asked him to write about the role of the Fed in the financial crisis.

The call came months prior to Congress authorizing the bailout, before financial titan Lehman Brothers filed for bankruptcy and really before the impending economic trouble became clear to the broader public.

"People in my (professional) community were talking about how big this was and just observing it as it unfolded. It was interesting to watch it unfold in ways a lot of people had talked about or anticipated," he says.

Corder had the benefit of documenting the federal government response to the economic crisis as it evolved, including passage of the Dodd-Frank Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act of 2010.

In his book, Corder maintains that the Fed's long history of deregulation became a dangerous liability as mammoth banking institutions, to disastrous result, introduced more and more risk into the financial sector.

He says that the Federal Reserve largely ignored risky endeavors in the home mortgage business, for instance, such as complicated financial instruments that were initially hugely lucrative for the industry but eventually imploded in a big way.

"There was just a very high level of deference to the judgments of private industry actors," says Corder, characterizing lax oversight of federal regulators.

"If they said, 'This is going to be positive or this is going to be negative,' the regulators said, 'OK. Who am I to question a Wall Street tycoon and billionaire?'"

He suggests long reluctance on the part of the Fed to strongly regulate also made

officials initially slow to respond to the economic threat. But he says that when the Fed finally did act, it took appropriate measures.

"The regulatory response has been careful and their crisis response was well-managed. But the question is whether they'll address the fundamental problems that led to the crisis, and that we just don't know yet," he says.

Though now law, applying Dodd-Frank regulatory reform is still a work in progress and though his book is complete, Corder is still following the financial crisis story.

In the spring, he'll travel abroad to get a look at how European Union authorities are addressing their financial crunch with sovereign debt. Corder plans to compare and contrast E.U. practices with how regulatory officials operate in the United States.

He's specifically interested in Maltese financial regulation as a case study and has been awarded a Fulbright grant for this overseas research. The Fulbright is a federal international exchange program.

Malta, an island nation south of Italy, has a single regulatory body with its own policies, but it's also working to conform with International Monetary Fund directives, E.U. standards and other international protocols, Corder says.

"The idea is, how is this process of organizational learning and crisis response unfolding in other countries. I'd like to take what I learn there, come back and ask (officials in the Fed) how what they're doing is different from what's going on in the European Union," he says. ■



# Lee Honors College marks 50-year anniversary

**WMU's honors college is one of the nation's oldest**



WMU students, alumni, faculty and staff recently celebrated the remodel and expansion of the Lee Honors College building, a makeover so extensive that the facility feels new.

But the newness of its building belies an honors college that is one of the oldest in the nation.

This academic year marks the college's 50th year of offering an outstanding undergraduate experience to some of the nation's most gifted students.

As the University commemorates this milestone, the honors college remains strong.

With 1,613 students, the college is in its third year of posting a record enrollment. And this year, its building underwent a \$2 million renovation thanks to namesakes, Carl E Lee and his wife, the late Winifred Lee, who passed away in October.

Over the years, thousands of WMU students have graduated from the honors college.

## Talented students, talented faculty

The college's appeal to alumnus John Bursch, Michigan's solicitor general, is one that leaders often hear from students.

"You get the resources of a large research university—such as top-notch technology, world-class professors, a world-class music program—while also experiencing small, intimate classes alongside students who are also at the top of their games in their respective areas of study," says Bursch, who earned a bachelor's degree in math and another in music at WMU in 1994 and went on to study law.

A member of the college's advisory council, Bursch is one of the many examples of the high-caliber students the college has graduated over the decades.

"I always used to call the students the best and the brightest, but they were also students who chose to push themselves," observes Dr. Joseph Reish, who was the college's dean for 10 years and is now dean of University Libraries.

"The students are prepared for school, and they see study as important in their lives," says Dr. Katherine Joslin, an English professor. "So it's always rewarding to be in a room full of them. Always."

## Pioneering an honors college

Honors education at WMU can be traced back to the late 1950s, but it was in the 1962-63 academic year that political science professor Dr. Samuel I. Clark was tapped to establish a college.

The first class had an enrollment of 24 students, and the college's first home was a converted faculty apartment unit on West Michigan Avenue where the Student Recreation Center is now located.

### Academically Talented Youth Program

The Lee Honors College is not only home to high-achieving college students, the Academically Talented Youth Program is based here. It offers accelerated courses to gifted middle and high school students.

Founded in 1981 by Carol McCarthy, a Kalamazoo parent who was passionate about gifted education, the program moved to the Lee Honors College 14 years ago.

Each year, about 200 students from southwest Michigan schools take above-grade level courses in mathematics and language arts through ATYP.



Communication instructor and honors college faculty fellow, Diana Berkshire Hearit, teaches a public speaking class.

Its founding reflected a movement in U.S. higher education that sought to better address the educational needs of academically talented students.

"If Western Michigan University is to attract (top) students," former WMU President James Miller said at the time, "we need to develop a rigorous program that will be attractive to such students."

Clark, a well-respected scholar, had the task of forming the foundation for the honors college. The program included honors courses, independent study, foreign study opportunities and noted guest speakers.

Over his 24-year tenure leading the college, Clark, in partnership with many outstanding faculty members, built an honors program that earned national recognition. In recognition of his leadership, he once served as president of the National Collegiate Honors Council.

*Continued on page 13*



***This fall, the Lee Honors College building opened its doors and students saw a transformed facility*** with double the number of classrooms, each featuring the latest technology to support instruction.

Longtime supporters of the college and the building's namesakes, Carl and Winifred Lee, were the principle funders for this privately financed, yearlong renovation and expansion.

The Lees donated \$1.1 million to the \$2 million needed for the project, which added 4,000 square feet to the original 8,400 square-foot building.

But their philanthropic support dates back much further, as the couple's \$500,000 gift 20 years ago helped make this dedicated home for the college in the middle of WMU's main campus possible in 1990.

The recent improvements to that building include a state-of-the-art seminar room and a learning lab. The seminar room, for example, has a tiled screen with Skype capabilities that support distance-learning sessions.

The student lounge, which contributes to the intimate and homey atmosphere of the college, was greatly updated with new finishes, audio equipment, electronic projection screen and furnishings.

Outside the building, a new 500-square-foot outdoor classroom has seating for more than two dozen students.

In September, Carl Lee was at the dedication ceremony for the revamped building. In his remarks, he recalled when it was first constructed two decades ago.

"I said then that I'd like to see it be one of the best facilities in the nation. I think we've met that part of it," Lee said.





Biological sciences Professor David Karowe and his students are shown here using the computing technology in the honors college's new learning lab.

*Continued from page 11*

Though the college's offerings and structure have been adjusted and honed over the years, its basic objective has remained the same: To "deepen and expand the undergraduate experience," as its late second dean Dr. Faith Gabelnick once noted.

### **In the business of young adult development**

Honors students hail from a variety of disciplines from WMU's degree-granting colleges.

Senior Amelia Martin is pursuing a double major in gender and women's studies and philosophy.

Like many of her peers, Martin came to WMU with a history of taking accelerated courses throughout her schooling.

She's the recipient of the Medallion Scholarship, WMU's most prestigious merit-based scholarship. All Medallion recipients are automatically members of the honors college.

"I like to be challenged," says Martin, who is in the throes of her senior thesis, a

capstone project required of all members of the college.

For some, this weighty project that's guided by a faculty mentor often becomes the basis of a master's thesis pursued in graduate school.

"It's a cool opportunity to get a taste of what research is like. It's the first time I've actually been challenged to create something on my own and make it both in depth and something with a lot of nuance," she says.

All high school students accepted to WMU are invited to join the honors college if they have at least a composite ACT score of 26 and a 3.6 grade point average.

But the actual honors college student profile reflects even greater student achievement. The average composite ACT score among honors college students is just under 29 and the average GPA is 4.0 this year.

Mitch Zajac, also a senior, had been considering Ivy League colleges. He chose WMU for its balance of academics and athletics. He's on track to earn

two bachelor's degrees as well as a master's degree.

"As a freshman," he says, "I didn't know what it meant to join the honors college. Now as I've been more involved, I know it entails a whole lot more than taking a couple of honors courses. It's really a lifestyle.

"It's an opportunity to be with a close group of like-minded individuals who will push you to push yourself," Zajac says.

As honors college members, students must maintain their high academic achievement, contribute hours of community service annually, take part in cultural events and complete the thesis to receive an honors recognition on their diploma.

"The closest philosophical statement I can make is that we're not in the business of education. We're in the business of young adult development," Dean Nicholas Andreadis says.

"It's not just about good grades, it's about being a productive citizen of our society." ■



Dr. Debra Berkey, professor of human performance and health education



# WMU online degree programs, classes a popular choice

Up 44 percent in just one school year, enrollment in online education is surging at WMU.

The University has launched new undergraduate programs, and more students are adding online classes to their schedules.

Nationwide, nearly one-third of all college students take at least one course online, according to the Sloan Consortium's 2011 survey, "Going the Distance: Online Education in the United States."

The University is responding to growing demand with online education or "e-learning" offered in a range of ways—single classes and whole degree programs that are fully online as well as "hybrid" courses or degrees delivered in both Internet-based and face-to-face settings.

"The courses we offer online are courses in which the instructional technologies and methods allow instructors to present the courses in at least as an effective manner as traditional face-to-face courses," says Andrew Holmes, executive director of technology for WMU Extended University Programs.

"Our main goal is to extend educational opportunities outside of the Kalamazoo area, and around the world," he says.

In 2009, WMU had just two online degree programs. Today, in addition to a graduate certificate and some minors, the University offers 10 degree programs online.

Among those programs, students may earn a bachelor's degree in child and family development, general university studies or interdisciplinary health studies. There are also graduate degrees offered online, including one in science education.

## Learn online?

Students choose online courses and degree programs for a variety of reasons.

An on-campus undergraduate may take an online course as part of her schedule.

E-learning has attracted busy professionals who seek an advanced degree and want the flexibility of an online program.

There are also a number of nontraditional students who once began a degree, stopped for some reason, but want to complete their schooling. Enrollment in WMU's online degree in general university studies, for instance, is on the rise.

"Online education has provided our nation with incredible access for people who might not otherwise have the opportunity to attain a college-level education," says Dr. Dawn Gaymer, associate provost for Extended University Programs.



## E-learning path to a graduate degree

Melissa Bogard, a 41-year-old single mom from Plainwell, Mich., says pursuing a graduate degree online allowed her to fit schooling into a busy life.

While handling the responsibilities that come with parenting three school-age boys, Bogard earned a master's degree in adapted physical education at WMU.

Students in this hybrid online program learn the theory and practice of teaching individuals with physical and/or cognitive impairments.

There's a great need for certified adapted physical education instructors but there's also a chronic shortage of them, says Dr. Jiabei Zhang, who directs the program.

"When this program was created in 2009, there was no such online program in the nation. Many applicants are full-time teachers. They cannot travel to a local university. That was why we created this online program," says Zhang, professor of human performance and health education.

It was funded with a \$1.18 million grant from the U.S. Department of Education.

Bogard says that while she could have pursued the degree in the traditional way, "my family would have suffered, and I wasn't willing to make that sacrifice."

She had earned her bachelor's degree from Hope College, where she studied English and kinesiology and later, got a teaching certificate. She worked for a period of time, married and as she began having children, chose not to work outside the home.

But after 10 years, Bogard was looking to return to professional life.

"Adapted physical education was one of my favorite classes as an undergraduate. I have a passion for it," she says.

In working toward her degree, Bogard would complete assignments when her children went to bed, on Sunday afternoons, "and in between running them here and there."

For this particular master's degree, most classes are delivered online, but for three courses, students come to campus. Bogard says that this blend was a good fit.



Dr. Debra Berkey speaks with her students online weekly.

Her face-to-face classes and work as a graduate student assistant on campus took place while her children were in school.

## WMU e-learning offers quality instruction

While the concept of online learning may be mysterious for some, it is a form of distance education, which is a practice that has existed for many decades.

And WMU has continually adopted new technology to improve its delivery, Gaymer says.

She also notes that distance education is distinct from what are known as "correspondence courses." Correspondence courses are self-paced classes with minimal student-instructor interaction.

Though WMU offers a few of these courses, Gaymer says that "WMU online courses are not self-paced and they do include high levels of engagement between students and instructors."



Students and their instructors may or may not be online at the same moment, but they do interact.

WMU junior Christopher Rettich had this experience over the summer while taking his first online course at the University.

“The funny thing is, I had had this teacher for in-person classes,” Rettich says. “It actually ended up being a pretty cool experience.”

The course was in anthropology and taught by veteran professor Dr. Vincent Lyon-Callo.

“I was challenged in this class. With the discussions, our professor would jump in a lot, trying to push us further. I did learn a lot, rather than doing a lot of busy work,” he recalls.

Holmes says that online curriculum and instruction,

as delivered at WMU, offer the quality, rigor and interaction students would encounter in a Kalamazoo classroom.

He says that online course development is guided by a strategic instructional design process and e-learning standards that are developed with the Faculty Senate.

According to Holmes, the design process and standards are based on U.S. Department of Education regulations, accreditation requirements and recognized best practices for e-learning.

“The same faculty members who teach classes in Sangren Hall, the College of Health and Human Services or Wood Hall, for example, are the same ones who teach our courses online,” Holmes adds.

Just as with face-to-face courses, online classes have required readings, class assignments, exams, papers to write and multimedia presentations. Commonly in online courses, students

## E-learning Login For Instructors For Students Contact Us



are expected to contribute to class discussions with their peers and professor through discussion boards.

For one of Bogard’s classes, the graduate students and instructor would meet once a week over Skype. Dr. Debra Berkey, professor of human performance and health education, taught the class.

“We were all sitting in our homes, but were having class that way. Dr. Berkey was very good about directing us and leading us. We would discuss what we went over that week,” Bogard says.

“I really feel that the adapted physical education program was so much more than a general master’s degree. The classes were wonderful and very meaningful.

“On your resume you have Western Michigan University—and that means something,” she adds.

To learn more about WMU’s online education opportunities, go to [wmich.edu/online](http://wmich.edu/online). ■

Share



More info

*“On your resume you have  
Western Michigan  
University—  
and that means something.”*



—Melissa Bogard

**William Pyle**, BS '58, MA '63, was recently inducted into the WMU Athletic Hall of Fame. He was a 1954-1957 participant in men's track and field and cross-country.

**Fred Zook**, BBA '61, MA '64, was recently appointed as a lay member of the State Board of Physical Therapy by Arizona Gov. Janice K. Brewer.

**Gershwin Drain**, BS '70, has been confirmed by the U.S. Senate to a seat on the U.S. District Court in Detroit. He has been a Wayne County Circuit Judge since 1997.

**James C. Foresman**, BA '70, has joined the national healthcare practice of Dickinson Wright PLLC in its Saginaw, MI, office.

**Bob Koehler**, BA '71, recently spoke at WMU as part of the Winnie Veenstra Peace Lecture. His presentation was titled "Peace Journalism." Koehler currently teaches writing at DePaul University in Chicago.

**Jack Gray**, BBA '72, MBA '81, has joined RE/MAX of Kalamazoo Realtors, as an associate broker.

**Clyde J. Robinson**, BS '76, was coeditor and contributor to "Michigan Municipal Law," a legal guide for attorneys published by The Institute of Continuing Legal Education of Ann Arbor. He is Kalamazoo's city attorney and has 32 years in municipal law.

**Jack McKenzie**, BSE '78, was recently presented with a Lifetime Achievement Award for Product Engineering from Troy, MI-Meritor, Inc., a supplier of drivetrain, mobility, braking and aftermarket solutions for commercial vehicle, and industrial markets. He is chief engineer leading the North America Carrier engineering group.

**Tom Vance**, BS '78, MA '05, recently joined the Kalamazoo Community Foundation as director of marketing communications.

**Susan Nutson**, BS '79, was appointed as senior vice president of human resources for building materials company Saint-Gobain Corp. in Valley Forge, PA.



Nutson

**William Bateman**, BBA '80, has been named president of Northwood University's Michigan campus in Midland.

**Cynthia J. Haffey**, BSW '80, was recently named a 2012 honoree for "Michigan Women in the Law" by Michigan Lawyers Weekly. She is an attorney with the Detroit office of the Butzel Long law firm.

**Joanna Learner**, MA '81, was a featured speaker at the Battle Creek (MI) Society of Artists. She is a painter, sculptor, jeweler and teacher.

**Jim Vander Meer**, MA '82, has retired as associate professor of kinesiology and assistant football coach from Hope College in Holland, MI.

**David Kowal**, BBA '83, MPA '85, is the new administration manager for Kalamazoo Metro Transit.

**Keith G. Vandebussche**, BS '84, has recently joined Fishbeck, Thompson, Carr Huber Inc. as a senior construction manager in its Farmington Hills, MI, office.

**Annette Yancy**, MA '84, academic counselor and summer scholars coordinator for Louisiana State University's Center for Advising and Counseling, was named the Outstanding Advising Award winner from the National Academic Advising Association at its annual conference in Nashville, TN.

**Gregory P. Bontrager**, MA '86, has been elected to the Union for International Cancer Control Board of Directors. He is the chief operating officer for the American Cancer Society.

**J. Lynda McLean**, BS '87, was recently inducted into the WMU Athletic Hall of Fame. She was a 1984-87 participant in women's volleyball.

**Mark Betz**, BS '88, MS '94, was recently hired as the senior corporate industrial hygienist for the Environmental, Health and Safety team for Perrigo Co. in Allegan, MI.



Betz

**Brett Nesbit**, BA '89, MBA '91, MSA '92, has been appointed chairman of the managing and

accounting practice committee of the Florida Institute of Certified Public Accountants. He is regional managing partner for accounting and consulting firm Rehmann at its Naples, FL, office.

**Keith C. Valentine**, BBA, '90, president and chief operating officer of NuVasive Inc., recently discussed "The Culture of a \$1 Billion Startup," as part of the WMU Haworth College of Business Distinguished Speaker Series.

**Karen Broccardo**, BBA '92, has joined BASF's automotive refinish business group as distribution services manager in its Southfield, MI, office.

**Sue (McCarthy) Mussat**, BS '92, MA '93, was recently inducted into the WMU Athletic Hall of Fame. She participated in women's gymnastics from 1988-90.

**Milford Muskett**, MA '92, is the new dean of social sciences and career options at Kirkwood Community College in Cedar Rapids, IA.

**Ellen Schnackel**, BS '92, is the new director of special services for the city of Farmington Hills, MI.

**Susan Mattice**, MA '94, was recently hired as the women's softball coach at Kalamazoo College.

**Ilmars Mezs**, MA '94, recently spoke on campus as part of the WMU Visiting Scholars and Artist Program. His lecture was titled "Population Geography of Latvia: Trends for the 21st Century." Mezs is head of the International Organization for Migration in Riga, Latvia.

**Dan Edwards**, BBA '95, was recently inducted into the WMU Athletic Hall of Fame. He was a 1991-1994 participant in men's soccer.

**Kathleen Rose Perkins**, BFA '95, is playing the role of Carol Rance on the Showtime series "Episodes."

**Dannie Alexander**, BBA '97, MA '00, has been promoted to vice president and client and community relations director for the Southwest Michigan region by PNC Financial Services Group Inc.

**David Bocek**, BA '99, is the author of a new novel titled "The Shadow Faction," published by Infinity Publishing.

**Ken Byard**, MA '99, is the new assistant principal at Mona Shores Middle School in Norton Shores, MI.

**Emily (Gillary) Kucinich**, BBA '00, is the program administrator of the Kimberly Anne Gillary Foundation, which works to put defibrillators in Michigan high schools and train staff in their use. They have also worked to advocate for free cardiac screening for high school athletes.

**Katie (Markey) Grisley**, BA '01, was recently inducted into the WMU Athletic Hall of Fame. She was a 1996-1999 participant in women's soccer.

**Darren Keckes**, BS '01, MA '03, is the new athletic director for Dexter (MI) Community Schools.

**Suprotik Stotz-Ghosh**, MFA '01, is the new vice president of community investment for the Kalamazoo Community Foundation.

**Jeremy Bockelman**, BBA '03, has been promoted to director of the Michigan Manufacturing Technology Center-Northeast Regional Office for Saginaw Valley State University's Center for Business and Economic Development.

**Maria Fernanda Carreno**, BA '04, is the new coordinator of bilingual education and world languages for the Kalamazoo Public Schools.

**Stephanie Jass**, PhD '04, won \$147,570 in cash during an eight-day run on the TV game show "Jeopardy!" Jass is an associate professor of history at Adrian (MI) College.

**Matt McSweeney**, BA '04, MA '07, is a new special education teacher at Petoskey (MI) High School.

**Kimberly Morden**, MA '05, is the new principal of Holton (MI) Elementary School.

**Monecia Vashbinder**, MA '06, is the new principal of Three Oaks Public School Academy in Muskegon, MI.

**Ben Fleckenstein**, BS '07, is the co-owner of Paw Paw Brewing Co., and recently released a new beer in honor of WMU and its mascot, Bronco Brown.



Leese

**Sarah Leese**, BS '08, MSM '10, has joined Bronson Internal Medicine in Oshtemo, MI, as a physician assistant.

**Jessica Vela**, BFA '08, exhibited a painting in the acclaimed ArtPrize competition

in Grand Rapids. She teaches art classes at the Nuveen Center for Community Arts in Montague, MI.

**William R. Drafta**, BA '09, is an account executive for Kalamazoo-based Kal-Blue, which offers technology solutions to the architectural, engineering and construction community.

**Aynna Lloyd**, BS '10, helped create a new iPad app called SpeechHero, which helps give voice to those who have difficulty speaking.

**Jennifer Wagemann**, BA '11, is the new manager of events and programming for the Lansing (MI) Regional Chamber of Commerce.

**Kimberly Eling**, MA '12, is the new speech therapist at Ross Park Elementary in Norton Shores, MI.

**Samantha Sanford**, BBA '12, is the new marketing director for Omega Computer Services in Kalamazoo.

**Ferne L. (Acker) Austin**, BA '31, Sept. 6, 2012, in Utica, MI

**Gareth H. Dominy**, TC '35, BA '37, Feb. 4, 2012, in Bridgman, MI

**Blanche L. (Gee) Bader**, BA '38, Sept. 15, 2012, in Lansing, MI

**Bernice (Russell) Ambrose**, TC '33, BS '39, MA '62, Aug. 11, 2012, in Grand Rapids, MI

**Barbara J. (Smith) Diederich**, BA '40, July 21, 2012, in Tampa, FL

**Helen (Ely) Anthony**, BS '41, Sept. 14, 2012, in Alma, MI

**Katherine M. Newton**, BS '41, April 23, 2012, in Adrian, MI

**Marie E. (Durrstein) Christenson**, BS '42, Aug. 21, 2012, in Frankfort, IN

**Carl C. Coolbaugh**, TC '44, June 20, 2012, in Sun City, AZ

**Dawn H. (Haver) Kibler**, BS '48, Sept. 8, 2012, in Kalamazoo

**Lois J. Gratton**, BS '49, Dec. 18, 2011, in Port Orange, FL

**Pauline I. (Dennert) Hill**, BS '49, Sept. 17, 2012, in Owosso, MI

**Harry R. Zemmer**, BA '49, Sept. 13, 2012, in Mattawan, MI

**Ronald R. Adams**, BA '50, Aug. 31, 2012, in Three Rivers, MI

**Raymond E. Hartman**, BS '50, MA '53, Sept. 19, 2012, in Saginaw, MI

**Frank B. Ingalls**, TC '50, BS '52, MA '59, April 25, 2011, in Shelby, MI

**Bryan W. Mead**, BS '50, MA '54, Sept. 1, 2012, in Battle Creek, MI

**August F. Scheid**, BA '50, Aug. 21, 2012, in Kalamazoo

**Walter P. Aalbregtse**, BA '51, April 24, 2012, in Indian Head Park, IL

**Betty L. Frakes**, BS '51, MA '57, Sept. 6, 2012, in Kalamazoo

**Lois E. (Heidanus) Hirn**, AB '51, Sept. 8, 2012, in Kalamazoo

**William A. Peters**, BS '51, Sept. 1, 2012, in Woodbury, MN

**William J. Peterson**, BA '51, MA '56, Aug. 16, 2012, in Richfield, MN

**Edwin W. Richardson**, BS '52, MA '55, Aug. 8, 2012, in Windsor Heights, IA

**Irene K. (Kubovich) Allard**, BS '53, July 7, 2012, in Brookline, MA

**Jane M. (Chapman) Harvey**, BS '53, Aug. 10, 2012, in Houghton Lake, MI

**Beverly J. (Sager) Veldt**, TC '47, BS '53, June 30, 2012, in West Liberty, OH

**Eleanor F. (Houwers) Buelke**, BS '54, MA '58, July 24, 2012, in Kalamazoo

Fred L. Esslair, BA '54, Aug. 13, 2012, in South Haven, MI

**Anna B. Thompson**, BS '54, MA '61, Sept. 13, 2012, in Lexington, KY

**Joan E. (Fox) deMink**, BS '55, Sept. 8, 2012, in Portage, MI

**Ed H. Kahn**, BBA '55, Sept. 7, 2012, in Hinsdale, IL

**Dorothy M. Peterson**, MA '55, July 11, 2012, in Lakeland, FL

**Robert L. Wathen**, BS '56, MA '60, Aug. 23, 2012, in Atlanta

## WMU professor dissects decline in attendance at liberal churches

The Episcopal Church recently released figures that show a precipitous drop in attendance—a 23 percent decline—during the previous decade. But WMU professor of comparative religion Brian Wilson says that Episcopal churches are not alone in seeing their congregations contract.

“The data seem to indicate that liberal churches are really losing members at a fast clip,” Wilson says, “and, in fact, some people are actually talking about the collapse in membership of liberal churches. This is a process that’s been going on since the end of World War II.”



Wilson

Conservative churches have been better at retention and recruitment of members, Wilson says. But all denominations are having trouble recruiting new members, especially young people. Liberal churches, however, have seen bigger declines in attendance.

“There’s a real concern that once you drop below a certain population or membership, you no longer have a very viable organization,” Wilson says.

There are a number of theories as to why liberal churches have seen a larger slip in attendance.

One hypothesis holds that liberal churches tend to deemphasize the ritual and supernatural aspects of religion, as well as a rigorous creed to which one must adhere to be a member. Doctrinal points are taken more allegorically than literally.

In dissecting membership decline, one Canadian columnist opined that the liberal church has substituted the gospel of Jesus Christ for a gospel that’s instead focused on social justice.

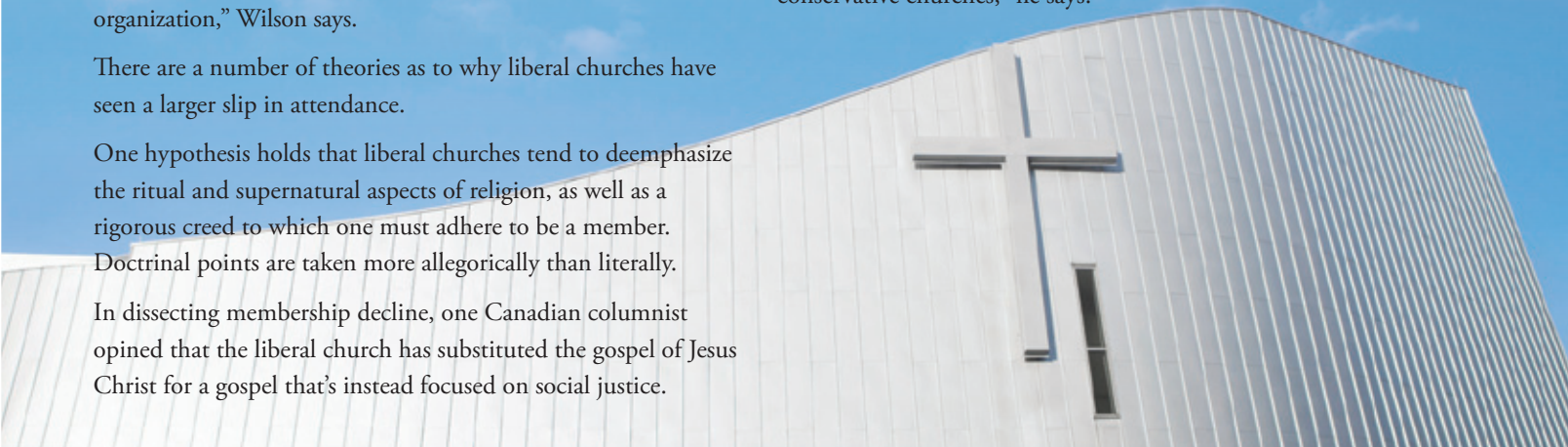
The rub for church membership is that social justice can be pursued in a variety of ways outside the church whereas Christian doctrine is typically the province of the church. Members looking for traditional doctrine may feel a little less vested in the church as a result.

Wilson posits that something else is also at play.

“My personal theory is that religion always is based on both the conceptual element and the emotional element,” Wilson says. “And as you deemphasize the supernatural, you lose a very important component of the emotional side of religion.”

Conservative churches tend to make religion the primary focus of a person’s life, Wilson says.

“Liberal churches are less willing to be that kind of dominant force in people’s lives. The problem is, of course, there are so many other things that you can do with your time and today we’re so overworked and distracted that those things can draw (liberal churchgoers away) much more easily than at the conservative churches,” he says. ■



**Claudia R. Moor**, BS '57, Aug. 11, 2012, in Lawton, MI

**Terry A. Tiffany**, BS '57, Aug. 13, 2012, in Battle Creek, MI

**Beverly J. Marks**, BA '58, July 28, 2012, in Decatur, MI

**Gary B. Walters**, BBA '58, Aug. 21, 2012, in Kalamazoo

**Jack L. Moore**, BA '59, Sept. 9, 2012, in Los Angeles

**Abbott P. Sayre**, BA '59, July 10, 2012, in Eugene, OR

**Francis J. Warnement**, BA '59, Sept. 4, 2012, in Shaker Heights, OH

**Nancy E. D'Angelo**, BA '60, July 31, 2012, in Santa Cruz, CA

**William Baker**, BA '61, MA '69, July 29, 2012, in Kalamazoo

**Barbara J. (Schram) Cook**, BS '61, MA '72, Aug. 18, 2012, in Charlevoix, MI

**Barbara A. Copland**, BA '61, Aug. 24, 2012, in State College, PA

**Charles H. Jones**, BS '61, MBA '63, Aug. 12, 2012, in Coshocton, OH

**George D. Rhoades**, MA '61, Sept. 9, 2012, in Wheaton, IL

**Guy E. Frizzell**, BM '62, July 28, 2012, in Independence, MO

**Thomas L. Savich**, BS '62, July 22, 2012, in Hartland, MI

**Julia A. (Cludius) Brown**, BS '63, May 7, 2012, in Blue Springs, MO

**Robert E. Bassett**, BS '64, MA '67, Sept. 9, 2011, in Petoskey, MI

**John M. Carpenter**, BS '64, Aug. 9, 2012, in Pentwater, MI

**Jon P. Hawes**, BS '64, Sept. 11, 2012, in Knoxville, TN

**Susan E. Jensen**, TC '64, Aug. 7, 2012, in Bangor, ME

**David D. Nelson**, BS '64, Aug. 4, 2012, in Bloomington, MN

**James R. Ozinga**, MA '64, Sept. 11, 2012, in Rochester Hills, MI

**Foster L. Sherwood**, BS '64, Sept. 8, 2012, in Kalamazoo

**James L. Harris**, MA '65, Aug. 28, 2010, in Livingston, TN

**Jack L. Holtman**, BA '66, MA '68, July 19, 2012, in Allegan, MI

**Jane F. Innis**, MA '66, July 29, 2012, in Kalamazoo

**Robert J. Johnson**, BBA '66, July 25, 2011, in Irvine, CA

**Richard L. Mead**, BA '67, Aug. 9, 2012, in Kalamazoo

## OBITUARIES

**Randall D. Bos**, BS '68, MA '70, EdD '76, July 21, 2012, in Durand, MI

**Jacquelyn G. (Postma) Thaden**, BS '68, Sept. 13, 2012, in Merritt Island, FL

**Judith A. Bennett**, BS '69, MA '72, Sept. 22, 2012, in Portage, MI

**Jean G. (Gray) Kenz**, MA '69, Aug. 19, 2012, in Kalamazoo

**Alice (Tanner) Foote**, MA '70, Sept. 24, 2012, in Urbana, IL

**Francine F. (Zeidman) Rossi**, BA '70, Aug. 25, 2012, in Russell, IL

**Beatrice M. Lavender**, BA '71, MA '73, Aug. 10, 2012, in Honor, MI

**Bruce E. Preston**, BS '71, Dec. 31, 2011, in Northville, MI

**Christine M. (Hoepflich) McWatt**, BS '72, Aug. 5, 2012, in Plymouth, MI

**Jane (Hayes) Nuyen**, BA '72, MA '77, Aug. 1, 2012, in Kalamazoo

**Patrick W. Tank**, BS '72, July 29, 2012, in Little Rock, AR

**Diana L. Artz-Iffland**, BS '74, Aug. 7, 2012, in Kalamazoo

**Peter J. Bis**, BS '74, Aug. 16, 2012, in Washington, DC

**Mary B. (Bergh) Broere**, BA '74, Sept. 10, 2012, in Marion, IA

**Carole D. (Suabedissen) Daily**, MSW '74, July 17, 2012, in Niles, MI

**Kenneth A. Krug**, BS '74, July 15, 2012, in Gaylord, MI

**Sandra S. McClain**, BS '75, Sept. 13, 2012, in Traverse City, MI

**William VandeKieft**, MBA '75, July 30, 2012, in Sherman Township, MI

**Pamela S. Berryman**, MA '76, EdD '02, Sept. 19, 2012, in Kalamazoo

**Stephen T. Herman**, BS '76, Sept. 17, 2012, in Kalamazoo

**Christopher D. Johnson**, MSW '76, Sept. 5, 2012, in McMinnville, OR

**Michael R. Wood**, BS '76, June 25, 2012, in Hamilton, MI

**Sandra L. Travis**, BS '77, Aug. 20, 2012, in Richland, MI

**Stephen J. Chorny**, BBA '78, July 8, 2012, in Grosse Pointe Woods, MI

**Stephen M. Sherman**, BBA '78, Aug. 5, 2012, in Charlotte, NC

**Kathy A. Wicht**, BS '78, Sept. 19, 2012, in Fountain Hills, AZ

**Fredrick R. Binning**, BBA '79, Sept. 3, 2012, in Ashley, IN

**Paul J. Kelemen**, BBA '79, April 23, 2012, in Warren, MI

**Mark G. Sarbacker**, BS '79, Aug. 25, 2012, in Fredericksburg, VA

**Alvin E. Bailey**, BS '80, MA '85, Sept. 23, 2012, in North Manchester, IN

**Ann L. Bavin**, MLS '82, March 13, 2012, in Shelby, OH

**Ronald L. Ballast**, BSE '83, Aug. 3, 2012, in Berrien Springs, MI

**Diane E. (Bowles) Blaesser**, BS '83, Jan. 19, 2011, in Oxford, PA

**Thomas J. Kozachik**, BS '83, Sept. 13, 2012, in Ionia, MI

**Randy J. Kowalski**, BS '84, Aug. 1, 2012, in Ludlow, VT

**Jeannette A. (Shroyer) Upp**, MFA '84, Sept. 13, 2012, in Grand Rapids, MI

**Susan M. Carr**, BA '85, Sept. 3, 2012, in Chicago

**Uma Pandrangi**, BBA '89, Aug. 21, 2012, in Kalamazoo

**Nicole M. (Groleau) Battenberg**, BA '92, Aug. 5, 2012, in Kalamazoo

**Cynthia E. Puzevic**, BS '92, MA '99, Aug. 14, 2012, in Mattawan, MI

**Karen E. Echelbarger**, MA '93, Feb. 16, 2012, in Traverse City, MI

**Hope A. Fritz**, BS '95, Aug. 14, 2012, in Centreville, MI

**John E. Helm**, BS '95, Aug. 17, 2012, in Bangor, MI

**James C. Miesch**, BA '99, Aug. 18, 2012, in Norton Shores, MI

**Scott C. Oakes**, BS '00, July 17, 2012, in Farmington Hills, MI

**Matthew E. Gray**, BBA '01, July 24, 2012, in Berkley, MI

**Michael J. Poindexter**, BS '01, Oct. 12, 2011, in Flushing, MI

**Mindi K. Kornoely**, MA '02, Sept. 1, 2012, in Kalamazoo

**Jennifer L. Hollomon**, BSN '07, July 23, 2012, in Coloma, MI

**Steven S. Robertson**, BSE '07, July 19, 2012, in Lexington, KY

**Ellen N. Herron**, MA '08, May 29, 2012, in Spring Lake, MI

**Anastasia E. Schauer**, BSN '09, Aug. 15, 2012, in Kalamazoo

**Richard E. Shuck**, MA '09, July 24, 2012, in Tipton, IN

### Faculty

**Gene S. Booker**, professor emeritus of management, Aug. 15, 2012, in Fairhope, AL

**Do Young Chang**, professor emeritus of political and social science, Aug. 3, 2012, in Windermere, FL

**Nita H. Hardie**, associate professor emerita of political science and chair of the Department of Science Studies, Sept. 23, 2012, in Carefree, AZ

**Cameron W. Lambe**, professor emeritus of education and professional development, Aug. 11, 2012, in Kalamazoo

**R. Marcus Spink**, professor of media services and coordinator of production services, June 17, 2012, in Kalamazoo

**Morvin A. Wirtz**, professor emeritus of special education, Aug. 17, 2012, in Naples, FL

**Jack S. Wood**, professor emeritus of biological sciences, Sept. 18, 2012, in Battle Creek, MI

## Alumna wins prestigious national writing award

Rachel Swearingen won't share much about the book she's writing.

But the Western Michigan University alumna is not being intentionally mysterious.

She will disclose that the novel is set in an area called Frogtown in St. Paul, Minn., and that it began life as a short story in which a man discovers that his teenage neighbor is building a bomb in her bedroom.

"That's as much as I'll say, because it's still changing on me," Swearingen says of the nascent work of fiction.

This small insight into Swearingen's novel came days after news broke this fall that she was among six women to receive the 2012 Rona Jaffe Foundation Writers' Award.

This prestigious national honor is reserved for emergent women writers who show "unusual talent and promise" for their craft. The recipients are nominated anonymously.

In addition to being a huge endorsement to these early-career writers, the Jaffe comes with a \$30,000 grant, thereby gifting Swearingen with the resources and the precious time to complete her still-evolving, unfinished novel.

"That's huge, because my biggest hurdle has been finding the time to work on a larger project and finish a book," Swearingen says.

"I find myself being blown away by the idea that Rona Jaffe, who wrote so many novels, thought to create this foundation and to help so many writers," she says.

A noted novelist who died in 2005, Jaffe created this program 18 years ago. The awards go to writers of fiction, poetry and creative nonfiction. Since the program's launch, according to the foundation, it has awarded more than \$1 million to writers.

Now an awardee, Swearingen says that when her academic-year appointment as a visiting assistant professor at Kalamazoo College ends next summer, she'll take the following year to write full time.



Swearingen



It was just two years ago that she received her doctorate in creative writing from WMU.

Writing has been one of Swearingen's passions and talents since her early childhood growing up in rural Wisconsin. But it didn't become a serious preoccupation until she was in her 20s.

After studying German and earning a bachelor's degree from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, she became involved in professional writing.

"After college, I worked a number of jobs while I wrote fiction, including waiting tables at a number of restaurants, working in a wreath factory, and later working a variety of jobs in the high-tech publishing and translation field," Swearingen says.

She learned about the high caliber of WMU's writing program after winning a scholarship to attend the Prague Summer Program in creative writing through the University's English department.

That's where she met her future mentor, Dr. Jaimy Gordon, a celebrated novelist and now-retired WMU English professor.

Gordon says she immediately tried to recruit Swearingen to the University's doctoral program.

"First of all because her stories were accomplished and—strange as this may sound—deeply charming, not a quality I particularly look for in fiction, but wonderful when I happen to find it," says Gordon, who won the National Book Award for fiction in 2010.

Gordon says that Swearingen is "...One of the best four or five writers to develop under my tutelage in 30 years of teaching—although the best qualities of her writing, I must admit, she brought with her when she came."

Swearingen, who also has particular praise for Gordon, says that too few people realize "how good Western's writing program is, and how many great writers have come out of it because of its phenomenal teachers."

She credits the program, in part, for developing her talent. While at WMU, Swearingen taught writing and for a few years, served as editor of *Third Coast*, the University's national literary magazine.

Swearingen's writing has appeared in several literary publications, such as *AGNI*, *The Missouri Review* and the

*Mississippi Review*. More recently, she had a short story accepted for publication by *The Kenyon Review* and next year, she'll have a piece featured in the anthology "New Stories from the Midwest."

An anonymous admirer, moved by her work, nominated Swearingen for the Jaffe prize. Receiving it has been a confidence booster for the writer.

"Part of what this award shows me is that someone out there is paying attention, and I really need to get this next novel finished and out," Swearingen says. "It makes me feel accountable to the people who dedicated this kind of time to make sure that women writers can keep on doing the work they're doing."

Read excerpts of Swearingen's work on her website, [rachelswearingen.com](http://rachelswearingen.com). ■



Wells

## Previous WMU alumna to win Jaffe has new book

Dr. Rachel Swearingen is not the only WMU graduate to receive a Jaffe Award.

Author Kellie Wells, who earned her doctorate in English from WMU in 1999 and today teaches at the University of Alabama, also won the award in 2002. The

two writers happen to know each other. Wells served one semester as a visiting professor at WMU, and Swearingen was one of her grad students. "I'm really thrilled for her," says Wells, whose second novel, "Fat Girl, Terrestrial," was released in October.

Wells recalls that the year she won the Jaffe Prize, she met many editors, writers and agents from New York's literary world.

"You write in isolation, and at the beginning of your career, you just don't know if those urgent ideas that press against your mind in the middle of the night and catapult you out of sleep and into your desk chair are going to be of any interest or use to anyone else, so that interest was so encouraging to me. The prize does open all sorts of doors for a writer, but it was getting to experience the enthusiasm of others for my work and the work of other women writers I admire that was invaluable," she says. ■

# PBS to air alum's film on famed ballet company



Joffrey dancers perform "Les Sylphides" in this archival photo.





**Bob Hercules' film will broadcast on Dec. 28 on most PBS stations.**

Documentary film director Bob Hercules was astonished to learn that no other filmmaker had produced a deep retrospective of the Joffrey Ballet, a revolutionary company that altered the world of American dance during its 56-year history.

Sure, there is Robert Altman's 2003 motion picture, which offers a fictionalized story of Joffrey dancers.

But on film, at least, "nobody had ever done a complete history," says Hercules, a Chicago filmmaker and 1979 graduate of WMU. While at WMU, Hercules worked at the student-run radio station WIDR, a confidence-boosting experience that set a shy young man from Milford, Mich., on a path toward filmmaking.

"It's rare to find a subject that's so rich that has not been documented," Hercules says of the ballet company's story.

"I thought, 'What an incredible opportunity.'"

That incredible opportunity resulted in his film, "Joffrey: Mavericks of American Dance," which will be broadcast on PBS American Masters on Dec. 28 (check local listings), as part of the PBS Arts Fall Festival.

Hercules wrote and directed the film, which premiered to a sold-out crowd in the Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts in New York City earlier this year.

Using archival footage of famous ballets and interviews with Joffrey dancers from several eras and narrated by award-winning actor Mandy Patinkin, the 82-minute documentary chronicles this now-legendary ballet company, founded by dance teacher Robert Joffrey and dancer Gerald Arpino in 1956.

The two men were visionaries. Their company produced ballet that was classical at its foundation but unabashedly influenced by modern movement.

"They were very liberated because they weren't beholden to those older European and Russian traditions in dance," Hercules says.

*"My intention was to tell the story of Joffrey Ballet to a general audience, not just to a distinctly ballet-loving audience. It's basically just a great story. It just happens to be about dance."*

—Bob Hercules



**Joffrey dancers performing "Trinity."**

Their ideas at times challenged the dance establishment in New York, but their unique vision also won them acclaim.

Dermot Burke, a Joffrey dancer from 1965 to 1976, remarks in "Mavericks of American Dance" that though "it was an amazing period of time, those of us who were in it were just tired, sore and hungry. "We didn't realize that we were living through a revolution in American dance."

On tour, the company took Joffrey's and Arpino's visions around the country and the world.

This feature-length film documenting their legacy came about almost by chance and became a three-year labor of love for Hercules, whose filmography isn't exclusively focused on the arts.

*Continued on page 25*

## WMU students to be directed by a Joffrey ballet master



Shives

WMU dance students will be performing the Joffrey Ballet piece "Viva Vivaldi" under the direction of guest artist Willy Shives. The performances will take place

at 8 p.m., Jan. 31-Feb. 2, and at 2 p.m., Feb. 3, in the Shaw Theatre at the Gilmore Theatre Complex.

"Viva Vivaldi" is a work of Joffrey's legendary artistic director, the late Gerald Arpino.

It's a great honor for WMU students and the Department of Dance to work with Shives, who learned the ballet from

Arpino himself, says Sharon Garber, professor of dance.

Shives, who is a ballet master for the Joffrey Academy of Dance, has served as a guest artist at the University on two previous occasions. He is also among the dancers who appear in the WMU alumnus-produced documentary, "Joffrey: Mavericks of American Dance."

Shives began auditioning and teaching WMU students earlier this fall.

"He is a wonderful artist who is very generous with his knowledge... We are just thrilled," Garber says.

Through him, she says the dancers will be afforded a direct link to the history of the famed Chicago-based ballet company.

"Their repertoire and level of artistry is so superb. I like to call the Joffrey Ballet a national treasure because it's truly an American ballet company," Garber says.



The late Joffrey Ballet cofounders, Robert Joffrey and Gerald Arpino, are shown here in the late 1960s.





Robert Joffrey is shown here directing dancers during a rehearsal.

His Media Process Group, now in its 27th year, has produced films and other projects covering an array of subjects, such as Hercules' 2007 documentary, "Senator Obama Goes to Africa," and 2009 film, "Radical Disciple: The Story of Father Pfleger," about a priest's quest to fight against the ravages of racism and substance abuse in a Chicago community.

Hercules' work has appeared on PBS, the Independent Film Channel, the Discovery Channel and in other high-profile venues.

It was while producing the dance documentary "A Good Man," which follows choreographer Bill T. Jones, that Hercules was approached in 2008 to interview and take footage of Gerald Arpino.

Aware of the icon's failing health, the people who ultimately served as producers on the Joffrey movie—Harold Ramis, Jay Alix, Una Jackman and Erica Mann Ramis—had simply wanted to get Arpino on film.

But through researching Arpino and the Joffrey Ballet, Hercules soon realized

there was "just an unbelievable story" to tell. The dramatic story covers the Joffrey Ballet's deep influence on American dance, its groundbreaking performances, its persistence despite periods of financial struggle and Robert Joffrey's death in 1988, and its success today as a Chicago-based company.

Hercules did capture Arpino on tape and some of those moments do appear in the film. But the legendary choreographer died at age 85 in 2008, long before the dance documentary premiered.

While it has garnered praise, including by the *Village Voice*, some critics suggest the film doesn't feature enough dance performance in it.

Hercules says, "I understand the criticism, but (creating a performance film) was not my intention.

"My intention was to tell the story of the Joffrey Ballet to a general audience, not just to a distinctly ballet-loving audience. It's basically just a great story. It just happens to be about dance," he says.



Hercules filming the documentary in 2009.

Hercules, who holds a bachelor's degree in communication from WMU, still returns to campus occasionally. He was in town this fall for the 60th anniversary of WMU student radio station, WIDR.

He says that serving as radio station manager in 1978 gave him "one of the greatest years of my life." He was also a WIDR disc jockey for about five years. ■

# There's an app for that

## Aviation students use leading-edge iPad technology

At the College of Aviation, Capt. Steve Jones holds up a fat bundle of manuals and maps—vital references required in a cockpit for each flight.

“This is only a portion of what a pilot would carry in a flight bag,” says Jones, the college’s executive director of flight operations and a retired airline pilot.

The flight bags you see airline pilots pull onboard planes can weigh up to 40 pounds and are full of maps, charts and other navigational material used to guide them through open skies and safely to airports.



Jones

By contrast, Jones lifts an iPad that weighs less than two pounds but contains as much information that is accessible with the tap of a fingertip.

With technology like this, the days of pilots carrying aboard a flight bag are quickly coming to an end, and WMU’s College of Aviation is on the leading edge of that change.

As part of its iPad initiative that began this fall, the college has entered into an educational licensing agreement with ForeFlight LLC.

The company’s critically acclaimed apps are used by individual pilots and professional flight operations to gather preflight weather information, plan flights, conduct preflight research, file flight plans, and to keep charts and terminal procedures up-to-date.

All this information is embedded in an iPad versus a 40-pound flight bag that takes up space and can lead to back strain in the limited confines of a cockpit.

The iPad can also hold a library of reference material used in the process of learning how to fly, Jones says. So instead of carrying around a backpack of books, for example, aviation students could access those texts through their iPad.

But Jones adds that the ForeFlight electronic flight bag app is “arguably the cornerstone” of the iPad’s utility for pilots.

Aviation student Josh Blain says he appreciates that the college is preparing students for what they’ll experience as professionals.

“Most of the major airlines are now going to cockpits with iPads,” says Blain, who took it upon himself to buy the Foreflight app a year ago after learning about it from an instructor at the college.

“I learned the basics on all the paper (navigational material) and I just wanted to step up with what the industry is doing,” he says.

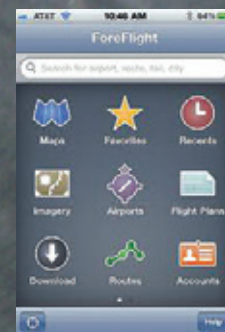
Jones says that the Federal Aviation Administration is in the process of approving the use of tablet computers as flight bags in an increasingly large number of air carriers, and they are quickly gaining acceptance in the industry.

Blain, who was a student pilot for more than a year before getting the app, says it wasn’t much of an adjustment to move from paper maps and charts to the digital versions of these references.

“Students have grown up in this information age where we are accustomed to looking at computers,” he says.

Tyson Weihs, CEO of ForeFlight, says the company is thrilled to be in partnership with the college.





“The college pioneers new methods of instruction that are designed to improve the pilot’s ability to fly and work efficiently, and this vision is aligned with ForeFlight’s goal of making pilots more productive before and during flight,” Weihs says.

The addition of the ForeFlight app to the WMU training regimen continues the University’s commitment to ensuring its students use the top technology available.

For the past seven years, WMU’s aviation college has used a fleet of Cirrus aircraft equipped with one of the industry’s most sophisticated avionic systems to train its flight students.

College officials maintain that their technical equipment is four to five years more advanced than that used by any other collegiate flight program in the world.

To learn more about the College of Aviation, go to [wmich.edu/aviation](http://wmich.edu/aviation). ■

## College of Aviation

### Sky Broncos qualify for national competition

The college's precision flight team, the Sky Broncos, took third place in the National Intercollegiate Flying Association Region III competition in October, qualifying the team for a national competition at Ohio State University in May.



When the 12-member WMU team competed in NIFA's Safety and Evaluation Conference at Ohio State in October, they took second place in ground events and third place in flight events, finishing third overall. Ohio State captured first place, and Kent State University placed second. All three teams advance to the national competition.

According to Sky Bronco Head Coach Ryan Seiler, this year's team is made up largely of new pilots.



Seiler

"The most senior people on the team were competing in only their second regional competition, and for half of the team, it was their first competition," Seiler notes. "Even with their inexperience, they still represented themselves and the University very well."

## Lee Honors College

### Best Midwestern High School Writing contest launched

The Lee Honors College and the Department of English, with the support of WMU's Third Coast Writing Project, have created a writing competition for high school students. Organizers of the Best Midwestern High School Writing contest hope to

draw the exemplary work of young writers from across a six-state region.

This new program was the brainchild of Charles and Lynn Zhang, longtime friends of WMU who have pledged financial support to launch the competition.

Students from Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio and Wisconsin may enter the competition. Teachers may nominate student work that they believe merits submission.



All entries must be accompanied by a teacher recommendation, among other requirements. The deadline to submit an entry is Jan. 10.

The contest covers three categories of writing: creative, non-fiction and journalism. Selected entries will win young writers a cash prize and publication in the honors college's literary magazine, *The Laureate*.

Learn more about the contest at [wmich.edu/honors/writing](http://wmich.edu/honors/writing).

## College of Arts and Sciences

### Student lands NSF graduate research fellowship

Doctoral student David Sellers is the second student in WMU history and the first in chemistry to be awarded a coveted National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellowship.



Sellers

Starting this fall, Sellers will receive \$42,000 a year for three years to further his research on building molecules that act as sensors that could detect the release of nerve gas agents.

Securing the fellowship puts him in an elite group of chemistry graduate students across the country. Out of the some 2,000 applications submitted, 153 were awarded in chemistry, of which five went to graduate students in Michigan. In addition to Sellers, four went to students at the University of Michigan.

"It was great to be singled out for this honor," Seller says. "I'm very thankful for this and am very grateful."

## College of Education and Human Development

### Former superintendent with long ties to WMU named interim dean

Dr. Walter L. Burt, associate professor of educational leadership, research and technology, has been appointed interim dean of the education college.



Burt

Burt takes the helm following the passing of Dr. Van Cooley, who had been serving as interim dean until his unexpected death in July. While the college searches for a permanent dean, Burt will remain in his new position through next June, pending WMU Board of Trustees approval.

Burt has been a member of WMU's faculty for the past eight years. Over his decades-long career in education, Burt has been a school administrator in several Michigan school systems and has also taught at a number of universities in the state.

## College of Engineering and Applied Sciences

### Goodwill benefits from college's pulp

Some 800 pounds of pulp donated by the college's Paper Engineering Program will keep Goodwill's Paperworks program in Traverse City in business for the next year. The program employs people with disabilities who create handmade greeting cards.



These talented artists make high-quality recycled greeting cards as well as custom corporate cards used by companies and individuals from around the country.

## College of Fine Arts

### Professor's musicianship wins him a top award, grand piano



Siskind

Assistant Professor of Music Jeremy Siskind took top honors in the prestigious Nottingham International Jazz Piano Competition in England in October, bringing home a Kawai grand piano valued at about \$25,000.

He outperformed pianists from Great Britain, Poland, Austria and the Republic of Mauritius, as well as five from the United States.

"I look at these competitions as great ways for high-level musicians to meet and share ideas and inspiration," he says. "However, it's always nice to have what you do validated through this kind of process."

## Haworth College of Business

### Professor honored for innovative teaching



Veeck

Dr. Ann Veeck, professor of marketing, is the 2012 recipient of the Marketing Management Association

Teaching Innovation Award. Veeck was selected from three finalists during the association's Fall Educators' Conference for her social media analysis materials and teaching concept "Learning Tools to Effectively Monitor Social Media: A Social Media Marketing Research Project."

## College of Health and Human Services

### Researcher studies vehicle sound for safety of blind pedestrians

Dr. Dae Kim, assistant professor of blindness and low vision studies, was awarded a \$124,226 grant from the Nissan Technical Center North America Inc. Kim is studying the effect of vehicle sound on blind pedestrians' orientation and mobility performance.

Of particular interest in this study is the detectability of the notoriously noiseless hybrid electric vehicle while the vehicle is in operation, including when idling and then departing from an intersection.

"The advent of these quiet cars has great benefit for the environment, but they pose some specific safety threats to blind pedestrians because they are very hard to hear," Kim notes.

# Stephen Haakenson, a quiet force for bioscience innovation at WMU



Haakenson in his office at WMU's Biosciences Research and Commercialization Center

Don't bother looking in a laboratory stocked with state-of-the-art technological equipment to find the force behind the latest advances in biosciences research at Western Michigan University.

Look instead inside a plain, unadorned office overlooking U.S. 131 from a quiet building in WMU's Business Technology and Research Park.

It is in that nondescript office at the WMU Biosciences Research and Commercialization Center that you will find the hand guiding innovative bioscience startups from dream to possible breakthrough. The hand belongs to a lanky former track and soccer star and Hope College graduate seated behind a neat desk.

Meet Stephen Haakenson, a soft-spoken finance professional, who assumed the center's helm on Feb. 6 and whose calm demeanor belies the flurry of scientific discovery he is charged with bringing to the marketplace day in and day out.

Haakenson's office is filled with anything but sensitive diagnostic equipment. Its bare white walls enclose the requisite office furniture, computer and boxes filled with reams of paper, paper representing the most recent business plans for startup companies looking for help in establishing themselves in the ultra-competitive world of bioscience research and development.

Haakenson sits behind his desk as cars and trucks whiz past the window, dressed in dark, creased slacks and starched white shirt, open at the collar, no tie. His demeanor is as unassuming as the office itself.

He was named the center's executive director after six years at the Michigan Economic Development Corp., where he managed state investments in companies to help them







develop, grow and expand within Michigan. For the BRCC, he looks closely at the business plans of various startup companies and assesses their readiness, assets and what each is trying to bring to the marketplace.

“Most of the companies we invest in don’t have a product yet,” says Haakenson, who often takes stacks of business plans back to his family’s home in Grand Ledge, Mich., to review over the weekend. “When I say they’re in the early stages, it’s typically before a venture capitalist would invest.”

His is a one-man shop with the mission of deciding if the real world will accept a particular company’s product, whether it’s a therapeutic drug or medical or diagnostic device. Though the responsibility would weigh heavily on most people’s shoulders, Haakenson is matter of fact about it.

“I enjoy it,” he says, smiling. “You see some neat stuff out there.”

One possible reason behind the no-frills atmosphere of Haakenson’s office, in addition to being new to the job, is that he’s only there about half of the time.

When not in the office, he’s often visiting a prospective business interest or maybe attending one of its board meetings.

“You see some business plans that are just crazy,” he says. But others show much promise.

The BRCC Haakenson leads is a life science economic development initiative established in 2003 by the Michigan Legislature with \$10 million in funding. It has supported startups that have created some 225 new jobs and attracted \$156 million in investment capital. Haakenson’s appointment coincides with the launch of a second round of life science investment funding totaling \$3.8 million.

He’s excited about new prospects, like Axonia Medical and FreeStride Therapeutics Inc., which both recently joined the BRCC team.



Axonía is a Kalamazoo-based startup biotech venture attempting to commercialize a novel approach to rebuild and restore damaged nervous systems using tissue-engineered nerve grafts.



**FreeStride Therapeutics** FreeStride is an Ann Arbor-based venture trying to commercialize veterinary oral medication for racehorses to treat leg inflammations and injuries.

Haakenson also is eager to see what development of the WMU School of Medicine might bring.

“When the School of Medicine gets in place, that’s going to be fantastic,” he says. “We’ll get a lot of referrals from it.”

Shepherding bioscience startups into viable businesses is a hit-or-miss proposition, Haakenson says. Getting FDA approval alone is a tall order; finding other investors, next to impossible.

“It takes a lot of time and a lot of money,” he says. “It’s high-risk. Only one out of every 10 or 20 makes it.”

The BRCC falls into the category of “angel investors,” those who provide seed capital to get a fledgling idea off the ground.

“If we get our money back, that’s a good scenario,” Haakenson says. “Anything more than that is great.”

Haakenson grew up in West Michigan and graduated in 1991 with a degree in business administration from Hope College. In addition to the MEDC, he also has held private-sector finance positions with First Michigan Bank, Capital BIDCO and Herman Miller.

He and his wife, Jennifer, a special education teacher, have three children, Maddy, 12, Sam, 9, and Ben, 5. Haakenson commutes from the family’s home in Grand Ledge. A soccer coach for five years, he still enjoys running and likes to mountain bike when he has the time. The family spends a lot of time exploring Michigan’s many state parks.

If there’s one frustration with his new job, it’s not being able to help bring to fruition all the good ideas out there.

“You see some fantastic ideas and what people are trying to bring to the market to help someone’s life,” he says. “We want to be a part of that. I love to see somebody creating something novel and beneficial out there.”

Learn more about the BRCC at [www.brcc.wmich.edu](http://www.brcc.wmich.edu). ■

# WMU students, seniors teach each other 'resilience'

WMU junior Michael Marotta didn't grow up in the nationwide scarcity of the Great Depression and he wasn't alive during World War II when, as his 81-year-old friend Al Castle has said, "America was truly at war and not at the mall."

Much of Castle's boyhood was spent during those difficult periods in history.

But then, Castle wasn't born suffering from drug withdrawal, as Marotta experienced. And Castle's mother never lost parental rights because she couldn't provide her children with a safe home.

From those completely different angles, the lived experience of each man is teaching the other about resilience.

Theirs is the kind of candid, meaningful exchange envisioned by creators of the Resilience project, a relationship-building program that has brought together WMU



Marotta

students and seniors citizens—each taking lessons from the other's personal story.

"You never stop learning," Castle says. "Everything Michael tells me teaches me something brand new and good from what he has gained through his difficult life."

Despite Marotta's difficult childhood, today he is an involved and successful student earning top grades at WMU.

Castle went on to have two long careers—20 years in the Air Force and later, two decades as a high school teacher. These days he's enjoying retirement and occasional volunteering.

Marotta and Castle are two of the senior citizen-WMU student friendships that have taken root through the Resilience project.

"I feel some young people, they don't want to get to know older people, but it's definitely worth the time because you definitely learn a lot," Marotta says.



Castle



Savoy



Williams

"A connection is what I now have," says Marotta, who is double majoring in criminal justice and behavioral psychology at WMU.

One night a week for a semester, WMU students and residents at Friendship Village Senior Living Community in Kalamazoo bonded and swapped life stories while doing various projects.

The program was developed by Judy Savoy, director of resident services at the center, and Patricia Williams, who until recently was an academic support coordinator at WMU for Kalamazoo Promise scholarship students.

The Kalamazoo Community Foundation as well as the Fetzer Foundation helped support their efforts.

Both women came together seeking a meaningful project for their constituents.

“I was looking for a way for the Kalamazoo Promise students to give back to the community...as a group,” Williams says.

The college students in Resilience are either recipients of the Kalamazoo Promise scholarship at WMU, or they are Seita Scholars, part of an initiative at the University that provides support for former foster youths.

Savoy says that, “I thought this would be something our residents would enjoy and that it would engage them...I always look at our residents as such a resource.”

The obvious premise of Resilience is that despite a wide generation gap and other disparities, there is value to be had in developing a relationship.

But creators didn't want these pairings to go in the obvious direction when much older and much young people come together.

“We didn't want it to be a mentor relationship,” Williams says. “We wanted them to bring what they had to the table, both sides, and be equal partners.”

Savoy, Williams and others have witnessed how each of these new friendships developed their own unique value and their own story of connection. No two pairs are alike.

Kiara Gathing, an 18-year-old sophomore and biomedical sciences major, says that “My biggest enjoyment has been coming together as different age groups and connecting on such a high level and seeing we have so many different things in common.”

Her partner is Phyllis Seabolt, who taught for almost 20 years at WMU, until retiring in the mid 1980s.

“I don't have a grandchild so I feel a long way away from college students of today. So I was particularly interested in being involved,” Seabolt says.

Gathing and Seabolt discovered they share a love of reading, which dovetails nicely with their latest project in Resilience.

The seniors and students were given the acclaimed book, “The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks” by Rebecca Skloot to read.

**Gathing**



**Seabolt**

The seniors and students aren't meeting weekly as they once did, but the plan is for them to come together again, using the common read as a launch point.

There are also plans under way for a second class of students and seniors to come together this academic year. The program received additional grant funding from the Kalamazoo Community Foundation.

Friendship Village resident Beth McShane says that program has given her “a lot of pleasure and hope.”

“If kids are like this today,” she says, “we'll be all right.” ■



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WMU art instructor Paul Flickinger's recent sculpture captures the spirit of the Kalamazoo Promise scholarship. The piece, titled "Kalamazoo Promise: Who Benefits," is a collection of upraised hands. It has literal ties to the Promise and its legacy, as the arms depicted in the sculpture were molds made from the arms of several scholarship recipients who studied or are studying at WMU. The scholarship, funded by anonymous donors, covers up to 100 percent of college tuition and fees for graduates of Kalamazoo Public Schools. Recipients may use the funding at Michigan public universities and colleges. Flickinger's sculpture celebrating this gift is located in the Trimpe building on the west side of campus.