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January 2016

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[BLVS chair selected for Fulbright Specialist Roster](#)

James Leja, professor and chair of the Department of Blindness and Low Vision Studies, has been selected for the Fulbright Specialist Roster, a list of expert candidates eligible for project requests from overseas academic institutions.



[Nature Photography as Mindful Meditation art exhibit now on display](#)

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[CHHS faculty and staff recognized at State of the College](#)

At the State of the College event, Dec. 4, 2015, **Dean Earlie Washington** recognized high-performing faculty and staff with the annual faculty and staff recognition awards. Recipients included Cozette Anderson, Jennifer Harrison, Laura Getty, Amy Curtis and Richard Grinnell.



CHHS in social media

Congratulations to Jennifer Harrison, Diana Hassan, Tom Sather, Lydia Schuck, and Katie Strong who all walked in the December commencement ceremony. We are proud of our newly minted PhDs!

[Ph.D. in Interdisciplinary Health Sciences](#) Facebook page, Dec. 19, 2015

In other news

Here are some other WMU news articles you might be interested in:

- [WMU's hometown, Kalamazoo, named one of nation's top college towns](#)
- [Documentary to kick off ethics center's spring series](#)
- [Back issues of WMU student newspaper to be digitized and searchable](#)

[New Facebook page](#)

The College of Health and Human Services has a new Facebook page. Please take a moment to "like" our page to stay in the loop.



New WMU center promoting diversity in primary health care workforce

by Mark Schwerin

December 22, 2015 | WMU News

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich.—A recently created center is taking aim at promoting diversity in primary health care providers, particularly in underserved communities.

The **Western Regional Area Health Education Center**, located in Western Michigan University's downtown Grand Rapids regional location, is partnering with numerous providers across Southwest Michigan to play an integral role in teaching and training the next generation of health professionals. The center is operated through WMU's College of Health and Human Services in Kalamazoo.

About the program

The Area Health Education Center program was developed by the U.S. Congress in 1971 to recruit, train and retain a healthcare workforce committed to underserved populations. WMU's Western Regional Center was created in 2013 through an agreement with Wayne State University, which originally received funding from the Health Resources Services Administration to bring the Area Health Education Center program to Michigan.

One of five regional centers operating across Michigan, the Western Regional Center serves 19 counties, including Mason, Lake, Oceana, Newaygo, Muskegon, Ottawa, Kent, Allegan, Barry, Van Buren, Kalamazoo, Calhoun, Jackson, Berrien, Cass, St. Joseph, Branch, Hillsdale and Lenawee counties.

"The mission is to increase the size and diversity of the primary care workforce in medically underserved and health-care-provider shortage areas," says **Lisa Brennan**, executive director of the Western Regional Center.

That workforce includes everything from traditional family practice medical doctors to occupational therapists, obstetricians and gynecologists, physical therapists, speech pathologists and audiologists, psychologists, social workers and more, Brennan says.

"When they say, 'to increase the size and diversity of the primary care workforce,' they're not just looking at doctors and nurses," Brennan notes. "We really want to diversify the pool of candidates. So we're looking at the underrepresented, disadvantaged minority students and getting them into health care training programs to become our next OTs and PTs and speech pathologists and social workers."



The new center is located at WMU's downtown Grand Rapids regional location.

The Western Regional Center is funded through a combination of grants from the Health Resources Services Administration, the WMU College of Health and Human Services and other sources. Those grants have totaled \$819,000 since its inception. In addition to Brennan, the office is staffed by **Melissa Ponstein**, program manager, and **Olivia Lanctot**, program assistant.

Three Pillars

AHEC is underpinned by three pillars:

- **Recruitment**—The center works extensively with middle school and high school students to try to expose them to careers that would land them in postsecondary training programs in health fields. Efforts are not limited to traditional students, however, and are also aimed at displaced workers, veterans and others looking for a new career.
- **Placement**—The center works closely with community partners to place postsecondary and graduate students in medically underserved and health-care- provider shortage areas for their clinical rotations. The goal is that, if students are introduced to underserved rural or urban areas, they will go back there to practice their profession.
- **Retention**—The center uses a variety of strategies to keep primary care providers in underserved areas. Those include using distance learning technology to connect with professionals and provide continuing education and professional development on pertinent topics. Examples include live video streaming of conferences and professional development opportunities to providers at AHEC's other four centers across Michigan.

AHEC utilizes additional strategies to boost placement and retention in medically underserved areas, such as applying with the National Health Service Corps to provide up to two years of student loan repayments if the graduate sets up shop in designated areas.

Brennan says the center also partners through its 20-member community advisory board comprised of constituents throughout its 19-county region. Members include upper-level health care providers, social service representatives, educators and others to help advise the center and run AHEC's programs.

"The forecast is for a severe shortage of health care workers in certain areas," Brennan says. "People are starting to retire and we don't have enough graduates to fill the void."

WMU student one of six in state awarded prestigious foundation scholarship

by Mark Schwerin

January 13, 2016 | WMU News

KALAMAZOO, Mich.—A Western Michigan University physician assistant student is one of only six students in the state to be awarded a prestigious scholarship.

Melissa Scheid, a second-year physician assistant student from Grand Rapids, was awarded a \$1,000 scholarship by the Michigan Physician Assistant Foundation.

The awards were presented at the annual Michigan Academy of Physician Assistants fall conference in Traverse City. The scholarship is awarded to PA students who demonstrate leadership within their class, a high level of academic achievement and who actively participate in various community service projects.

About the academy

The [Michigan Academy of Physician Assistants](#) is the essential resource for the PA profession in Michigan and the primary advocate for PAs in the state. The group is committed to providing quality, cost-effective and accessible health care through the promotion of professional growth and enhancement of the PA practice environment.



From left: Dr. Eric Vangsnes and Scheid

Department chair selected for Fulbright Specialist Roster

James Leja, professor and chair of the Department of Blindness and Low Vision Studies, has been selected for the **Fulbright Specialist Roster**.

The Roster is a list of candidates who are eligible for project requests from overseas academic institutions. Candidates are considered for project requests that require their specific expertise.

Dr. Leja's specialty area is blindness and low vision. However, he has also experience with NGO program development, higher education teaching, workshops and related program establishment. He may be selected as a specialist on a short term project in any of those areas.

His selection marks the beginning of another phase in Dr. Leja's relationship with the Fulbright organization. He was a Fulbright Scholar in 1994-95 as a lecturer in the Department of Special Education at National Taiwan University.



Dr. James Leja

New art exhibit explores Nature Photography as Mindful Meditation

The art gallery at the College of Health and Human Services is hosting an exhibition of the work of **Bill Krasean**, a local photographer and retired reporter from the Kalamazoo Gazette. The exhibit, Nature Photography as Mindful Meditation, features photos Krasean has taken at numerous locations throughout Michigan and the United States.

"One of my great pleasures in retirement is walking in a woods or field, camera in hand, looking, listening and making images of nature's gorgeous varieties," said Krasean. "It is a kind of mindful meditation, very relaxing and rejuvenating."

The exhibit is currently on display in the second floor art gallery of the College of Health and Human Services. The exhibit is open during normal building hours - Monday through Thursday, 8 a.m. to 9 p.m., and 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Friday and Saturday.



Cranes with Full Moon

An artist reception will take place from **4 to 6 p.m., Feb. 4**. This is an opportunity to view the artwork and meet the artist. Light refreshments will be served. The event, and parking in lot 104, are free to the public.

For more information, contact Gay Walker [by email](#) or at (269) 387- 3839.

About the artist

Bill Krasean was born in South Bend, Indiana, and graduated from Lakeview High School in Battle Creek. He earned a bachelor's degree in journalism from Michigan State University and spent much of his career at the Kalamazoo Gazette covering science, health and the environment. He was also the chief photographer at the Allegan County News and Gazette. Now retired, Krasean regularly volunteers at the RSVP Advisory Council, Kalamazoo Nature Center and Kellogg Biological Station, in addition to maintaining a busy schedule with freelance writing and photography.

CHHS faculty and staff recognized at State of the College

At the State of the College event, Dec. 4, 2015, Dean Earlie Washington recognized high-performing faculty and staff with the annual faculty and staff recognition awards.

Cozette Anderson, Occupational Therapy

Customer Service Award

Cozette Anderson's smile, laughter and positive attitude are contagious in the Occupational Therapy Department. She puts 500% effort into each and every task she takes on. Her creative ideas and attention to detail have led to the development of new electronic filing systems for vast amounts of clinical education data and faster processing time for student affiliation agreements. She has restructured the student affiliation agreement processing system and storage for the department. She developed an enewsletter to communicate updates to our clinical education partners. Cozette anticipates needs and takes initiative.



Jennifer Harrison, Social Work

Faculty Teaching Excellence Award

As a classroom teacher, Jennifer Harrison creates an engaging, open and stimulating learning environment, sharing her own challenges in a way that makes her completely approachable. She is known to bring out the best in students, helping them realize their potential.



Laura Getty, Speech Pathology and Audiology

Professional Instructor Teaching Excellence Award

Laura Getty is an outstanding practitioner and educator who has taught in the Speech Pathology and Audiology Department for more than 10 years. She is an ambassador for the department and for the College of Health and Human Services, teaching students from numerous disciplines and every college across campus. She is a model educator who strives to instill enthusiasm in her students while preparing them for careers in audiology and speech pathology.



Amy Curtis, Interdisciplinary Services Ph.D. Program

Research Excellence Award

Amy Curtis has published 29 peer-reviewed journal articles (15 since 2012) and participated in more than 40 peer-reviewed research presentations in the 10 years she has been at WMU. Many of the articles have been published with current or former doctoral students, demonstrating her commitment to mentoring in and beyond the classroom. Her leadership efforts in diabetes education research and her collaborative work in population mapping studies are just two of the areas where her contributions are recognized.



Richard Grinnell, Social Work

Scholarship Excellence Award

Rick Grinnell is a prolific research professor and writer. He has been in higher education for almost 40 years and has produced approximately 30 publications during the last five years. His publications include several research textbooks that are used nationwide to teach graduate research courses. It goes without saying that his many publications significantly contribute to the national ranking of the WMU School of Social Work.

