



Western Michigan University
ScholarWorks at WMU

College of Arts and Sciences news

College of Arts and Sciences

9-2013

College of Arts and Sciences E-News Issue 5: September 2013

College of Arts and Sciences

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/cas_news



Part of the Education Commons

WMU ScholarWorks Citation

College of Arts and Sciences, "College of Arts and Sciences E-News Issue 5: September 2013" (2013).

College of Arts and Sciences news. 18.

https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/cas_news/18

This Newsletter is brought to you for free and open access by the College of Arts and Sciences at ScholarWorks at WMU. It has been accepted for inclusion in College of Arts and Sciences news by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks at WMU. For more information, please contact wmu-scholarworks@wmich.edu.



College of Arts and Sciences

W

E-News Issue 5: Sept. 2013



Dr. Alexander Enyedi, Dr. John Dunn, Kevin Knutson and Andrew Doenitz officially opening the CAS Undergraduate Advising office.

WMU News

Washington Monthly calls WMU one of nation's best values
WMU on short list of schools offering exemplary service to veterans

CAS News

Undergraduate advising hosts grand opening
Seventeen faculty join the College of Arts and Sciences
Collaboration leads to Gold Aurora Award for Department of Anthropology

Faculty Features

Drs. Manuel Bautista and Thomas Gorczyca awarded \$602,000 NSF astrophysics grant
Dr. John Geiser named an American Society for Microbiology-National Science Foundation Scholar

Alumni Profiles

Biomedical sciences graduate John Offerdahl '90 joins the Miami Dolphins Honor Roll
Criminal justice alumna Harriet Miller-Brown '97 elected president of national State 911 Administrators
Public administration alumna Turea Erwin '05 appointed to serve on national diversity task force

Stay in touch!



Update your
information



Undergraduate Advising Hosts Grand Opening



On Monday, Aug. 19, the renovated undergraduate advising office was officially open to the Western Michigan University community. WMU President, Dr. John Dunn, College of Arts and Sciences Dean, Dr. Alexander Enyedi, and Kevin Knutson, director of advising, gave their remarks and joined WMU student Andrew Doenitz (applied mathematics major, military science minor), who worked on the renovation with Facilities Management, in cutting the ribbon to officially open the undergraduate advising office.

Academic advisors are charged with helping students make academic progress and are vital to student success. Understanding the importance of the role of the undergraduate advising office, the College of Arts and Sciences wanted to create a physical space representative of its role. Advising is often where students turn during their initial search for well-suited educational path. Led by the vision of Knutson, the undergraduate advising office underwent an impressive renovation with the idea of creating the 'living room of the college.' Knutson and the undergraduate advising office staff worked closely with



WMU's Facilities Management interior designer, Sherri Harper and manager Ron Robyn in order to make the vision for the physical space a reality.



Washington Monthly lauds WMU as one of nation's best values

[More Sharing Services](#)[Share](#)[Share on email](#)[Share on print](#)[Share on facebook](#)[Share on twitter](#)

by Cheryl Roland

August 27, 2013 | WMU News



WMU was recognized by Washington Monthly for the second year.

KALAMAZOO—Western Michigan University students are returning to campus this week just in time to hear the news that their school is one of the **top-50 values among national universities** and already meets many of the performance measures called for in recent weeks by U.S. President Barack Obama.

Washington Monthly, labeled by the Washington Post as an independent magazine for policy wonks, released a series of rankings Aug. 26 that placed WMU on a list of national universities that offer "the best bang for the buck." Among America's national universities, WMU came in at No. 46. The magazine said its analysis was based on the economic value students receive per dollar.

A best value

Meanwhile, a public policy blog has ranked WMU as one of the top 12 schools in the nation "where students get the best bang for the buck" and that would most benefit from a new federal funding structure proposed by the president. In a posting Aug. 26, PolicyMic listed WMU at No. 5 among schools "already meeting many of the standards Obama has laid out."

This is the second year that WMU has garnered praise in Washington Monthly's annual rankings of schools that "are acting on behalf of the true public interest." For eight years, the magazine has run a list of top colleges that "promote upward social mobility, research and public service." After first making the list last year, WMU is once again on the magazine's overall list of top national universities, coming in at No. 123. Among other Michigan schools rated highly on the overall list are the University of Michigan, Michigan State University and Michigan Technological University.

The Best Bang for the Buck rating is a separate new ranking added this year by the magazine. Additional schools on that list include MSU and MTU. The magazine also promises a list in coming weeks of schools that excel in public service.

A change in how schools are evaluated

Washington Monthly editors designed their overall rating system eight years ago, arguing that conventional measures of college prestige are less important than what colleges do for the country and the value they offer students. Editors professed delight at last week's call by the president for a change in how federal funds are awarded and how schools are evaluated.

"It doesn't happen every day that an administration does exactly what you want," Editor-in-Chief Paul Glastris told the Washington Post as he introduced the rankings.

The ranking by PolicyMic used data on average debt load, starting salaries, tuition, room and board rates, six-year graduation rates and percentage of students who qualified for Pell Grants to pick its list of 12 schools that perform better than average on such indicators.

WMU on short list of schools offering exemplary service to vets

[More Sharing Services](#)[Share](#) | [Share on email](#)[Share on print](#)[Share on facebook](#)[Share on twitter](#)

by Cheryl Roland

August 14, 2013 | WMU News



WMU is ahead of the curve in student services for veterans.

KALAMAZOO—Western Michigan University is the only school in Michigan singled out by the Obama Administration as one of the nation's colleges and universities that are "leading the way" to foster postsecondary educational opportunities and dramatically improve employment outcomes for returning service members.

An announcement **Aug. 12** by the U.S. departments of Education and Veterans Affairs identified schools across the nation that have adopted a set of strategies called 8 Keys to Success that are viewed as best practices for serving veterans. The announcement by the two departments included a list of 250 schools in 25 states that already have adopted the recommended strategies. While some states boast dozens of such schools, only WMU was singled out in Michigan as an institution that is embracing those strategies designed to lead to success for student veterans.

Best practices for serving veterans

The keys to success were first outlined by President Barack Obama during an Aug. 10 speech at the Disabled American Veterans National Convention. In their announcement, the two agencies reiterated the president's praise for colleges already on board as well as his challenge to other colleges and universities to become part of a nationwide network that will provide better coordination with government agencies, a uniform set of data tools and an early alert system aimed at student veterans.

"We're announcing what we call '8 Keys to Success'—specific steps that schools can take to truly welcome and encourage our veterans," Obama said in his speech. "...today I'm calling on schools across America to join us in this effort. Let's help our veterans get that degree, get that credential and compete for the high-skilled jobs of tomorrow."

To help draft the 8 Keys to Success, the Department of Education convened more than 100 experts to review approaches that could be scaled and replicated to foster veterans' success on campus and via distance learning. A wide range of stakeholders participated in the discussions, including nonprofit

organizations, foundations, veterans service organizations and, importantly, veterans who had recently completed postsecondary education in a range of disciplines. Best practices learned from existing programs provided the foundation for the keys to success, specifically best practices from the Department of Veterans Affairs' highly successful VetSuccess on Campus programs.

8 Keys to Success

1. Create a culture of trust and connectedness across the campus community to promote well-being and success for veterans.
2. Ensure consistent and sustained support from campus leadership.
3. Implement an early alert system to ensure all veterans receive academic, career and financial advice before challenges become overwhelming.
4. Coordinate and centralize campus efforts for all veterans, together with the creation of a designated space (even if limited in size).
5. Collaborate with local communities and organizations, including government agencies, to align and coordinate various services for veterans.
6. Utilize a uniform set of data tools to collect and track information on veterans, including demographics and retention and degree-completion statistics.
7. Provide comprehensive professional development for faculty and staff on issues and challenges unique to veterans.
8. Develop systems that ensure sustainability of effective practices for veterans.

WMU and two partner institutions, Kalamazoo Valley Community College and Kellogg Community College, have served as a VetSuccess on Campus site since April 2012, when Congressman Fred Upton announced a decision by the Department of Veterans Affairs to locate a VetSuccess on Campus program in southwest Michigan—the agency's first such program in Michigan.

In addition to the VetSuccess program, WMU has a number of other support initiatives in place for veterans, including:

- A mini GI bill, in place since 2007, to cover tuition for an initial semester of enrollment, making it easy for a vet to transition quickly from active service to student life
- A residency policy that recognizes veterans and their families as Michigan residents
- An active campus veterans association
- A special [advocacy office](#) aimed at helping veterans and active-duty National Guard members transition in and out of academic life.

Seventeen Faculty Join CAS

The College of Arts and Sciences is proud and pleased to announce the addition of 17 talented and innovative educators to its faculty. The newest faculty represent an impressive 30 universities from 18 states and 4 countries. Please welcome our new faculty to Western Michigan University. For biographies and photos please view the [2013-14 CAS new faculty booklet](#).

Dr. Wendy Beane, Biological Sciences
Dr. David Benac, History
Dr. Hyunkeun Cho, Statistics
Mr. Peter Distelzweig, Philosophy
Dr. Wafa Hassan, World Languages and Literatures
Dr. Douglas Johnson, Psychology
Dr. Adam Kahn, School of Communication
Dr. Elena Litvinova, Physics
Dr. Nicholas Mantegani, Philosophy
Dr. Alisa Perkins, Comparative Religion
Dr. Brian Petersen, Environmental Studies
Dr. Tabassum Ruby, Gender and Women's Studies
Dr. Sarah Schrader, Anthropology
Dr. Vladimir Skokov, Physics
Dr. Jesse Smith, Psychology
Dr. Joyashish Thakurta, Geosciences
Mr. Nathan Venske, School of Communication

Collaboration Leads to Gold Aurora Award



Using a grant award from the Michigan Humanities Council, Western Michigan University's Department of Anthropology collaborated with the University's Media Services to produce "[Militia Muster on the Eve of Revolution](#)," a thirty minute documentary on 18-century colonial and frontier life. This documentary has earned WMU a 2013 Gold Aurora Award. The Aurora Awards is an international film and video competition designed to recognize excellence. It seeks highlight products, programs and commercials that typically do not have access to international competitions.

In addition to being acknowledged with the Aurora Award, this announcement is also exciting because it involved WMU faculty, staff and alumni. The award-winning documentary was co-produced by Dr. Michael Nassaney, professor of archaeology and Stephen Kettner '76 '90, media producer and alumnus of WMU's School of Communication. David Tabor '10, also an alumnus of WMU's School of Communication with a minor in sociology was second cameraman on the project.

Physics Faculty Help Land \$602,000 NSF Grant



Western Michigan University physics professors Dr. Manuel Bautista and Dr. Thomas Gorczyca joined colleagues from the United States, Belgium, Germany, Sweden and Venezuela to earn a National Science Foundation grant of \$602,000 in astrophysics. The project, "From Stars to Active Galactic Nuclei. Phototization, Photoexcitation, Opacities, and Spectra of Low Ionization Fe-peak Species" will be led by Dr. Bautista.

The project was initiated when Bautista researched the opacities and spectra of iron-like species. He discovered two problems—it is difficult to get an accurate representation of Fe II (singly ionized iron) emission using current atomic physics methods and once the reliable and complete representations were created, they needed to be made into complex spectral models for astronomical sources. Enlisting the help of researchers from NASA, the University of Mons (Belgium), the Lund Observatory (Sweden), the Max Planck Institute (Germany) and the Venezuelan Institute for Scientific Research, Bautista and Gorczyca presented a compelling proposal to the NSF. With the help of the nine original members of the research team, Bautista and Gorczyca will also select a post-doctorate WMU student, a WMU graduate student and several WMU undergraduate students to be a part of this exciting and innovative astrophysics project. The team will have three years to conduct their research and present their findings by way of annual reports and papers for scientific journals.

Associate Professor of Biology Leading Scholars Residency Program



Dr. John Geiser, Western Michigan University associate professor, is one of five biologists chosen to lead and facilitate the 2013-14 American Society for Microbiology National Science Foundation Biology Scholars Program Research Residency. Research Scholars design research projects to investigate student learning, develop ways to collect, analyze and interpret data about student learning and identify appropriate venues to publish the results. Along with his fellow leaders, Geiser will guide Research Scholars through every aspect of their residency, including the intensive Scholarship of Teaching and Learning Institute held in Washington, DC.

The Biology Scholars Program is a national leadership initiative designed to improve undergraduate biology education based on evidence of student learning. Geiser will guide the instructors as they undertake a classroom research project and assess the outcomes. His experience will culminate with presentations at the ASM Conference for Undergraduate Educators in Danvers, Massachusetts in May 2014. To learn more about the program visit [Biology Scholars](#).



John Offerdahl (BS '90, *Biomedical Sciences*) has become the 26th member of the Miami Dolphins Honor Roll. The former Linebacker was named NFL Rookie of the Year in 1986.

Offerdahl played football at Western Michigan University from 1982-85. As a Bronco, He wore #49, and is considered one of the greatest WMU players with 694 tackles, 17 forced fumbles, four sacks, and six interceptions.

Offerdahl won't be inducted until Oct. 31 during halftime of the Dolphins v. Bengals team. According to ESPN:

He started 86 games during an eight-year career and became the first Dolphins linebacker to be selected a starter in the Pro Bowl. He was chosen for five consecutive Pro Bowls beginning in 1986, his rookie season, and was selected to start four times.

Offerdahl was also among seven athletes inducted in the MAC Hall of Fame Class, 2013. Currently, he is the owner of a successful chain of cafe/ grills in Florida.



Harriet Miller-Brown (*BS '97, Criminal Justice*) has the responsibility of moving Michigan toward the Next Generation 911 System, which will ultimately enable emergency responders to respond to emergencies more quickly and effectively.

She's also been elected the new president of the National Association of State 911 Administrators (NASNA). It is her role to assist the association with recommending minimum

standards for 911 emergency telephone systems and rules or legislation concerning administration of statewide programs. She will also assist other states with resolving issues necessary to accomplish 911 implementation and maintenance.

Since 2004, Miller-Brown has served as Michigan's 911 administrator and is responsible for coordinating 911 functions among state and local governments, communications providers, Public Safety Answering Points, and collaborating with public safety providers. She is credited with helping facilitate the change in funding to an equitable "all device" fee mechanism and create minimum dispatcher training standards.

SPAA Alumna Appointed for National Diversity Task Force



School of Public Affairs and Administration graduate Turea Erwin '05 has been selected to serve on a national diversity task force for the American Association of University Women (AAUW). This two-year term will require Erwin to help lead the task force in evaluating programs and initiatives to make recommendations that will strengthen AAUW's diversity and inclusion practices.

Erwin has been the director of Washington State University's Women's Resource Center for six years. Under her leadership, the Women's Resource Center received the 2013 Diversity and Inclusion Award from the National Council for Research on Women. Erwin also earned the 2013 National Council for Research on Women Trailblazer Award. For more details on Erwin's accomplishments visit the [Washington State University press release](#).

