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Office of Vice President for Research

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DISCOVERY

OFFICE OF VICE PRESIDENT FOR RESEARCH

Electronic versions available at wmich.edu/research/news.html

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OVPR VISION AND MISSION

VISION: TO BE A LEADER AND CATALYST FOR SCHOLARSHIP EXCELLENCE

MISSION: THE OFFICE OF THE VICE PRESIDENT FOR RESEARCH ADVANCES THE OVERALL SCHOLARSHIP AGENDA OF THE UNIVERSITY; SUPPORTS THE SCHOLARSHIP INITIATIVES OF WMU FACULTY, STUDENTS AND STAFF; AND ASSURES COMPLIANCE WITH ALL APPROPRIATE FEDERAL AND STATE REGULATIONS.

WWW.WMICH.EDU/RESEARCH

DISCOVERY ADVANCES

Congratulations to the individuals and collaborative groups that received over \$13 million in external grants in September and October in extremely competitive nationwide efforts. In several cases we competed against the best in the nation and won.

The Discovery Survey is on-line and ready for your input! Your help can identify the support needs of our faculty and staff related to discovery activities. Your input is important regardless of your discipline, type of discovery activities you do, or if you have had funding support for your work or not. Your responses will provide all of us with information about: 1) the quality of discovery support the University provides; 2) services you use or need to support your work; and 3) your experiences with funding proposals and awards. This cumulative information will help us move forward – always forward – to expand the research efforts at WMU.

Please respond today as the survey closes on February 14. It only takes 15-20 minutes to complete. Survey results are most meaningful if many share their views. To access the survey, log on to:

<http://hanoverresearch.DiscoveryActivitiesSurvey.sgizmo.com/s3/>

Hanover Research will manage and compile the results for WMU. Your responses remain confidential and individual responses will not be reported in any form. At the end of the survey, you can opt to enter your name into a drawing to win a 16GB iPad Air. Only Hanover Research staff will have access to any identifying information you provide for purposes of entering the iPad Air prize drawing. If you have any concerns or questions, please contact me or someone in OVPR by email or phone.

Discovery Communities are developing across campus. Department plans helped identify focus areas and potential Discovery Communities: sustainability, STEM, STEAM, education, health, evaluation and assessment, and

entrepreneurship. Currently we are facilitating the development of several of these. Hanover Research is helping with analysis, proposal development, and review.

The “First in World” award is just one example of how the planning of past years is bearing fruit and illustrates the key role department Discovery Plans play in bringing researchers together to work collaboratively in discovery communities. When the U.S. Department of Education issued its RFP for the First in the World Grant, OVPR invited dozens of researchers to come together and discuss submitting a proposal. The leaders of the Center for Research on Instructional Change in Postsecondary Education (CRIPCE) stepped up to lead the effort. Ours was one of nearly 500 proposals submitted and WMU is one of only 24 funded – for \$3.2M – and is the only university to be funded in the State of Michigan. WMU expertise and our ability to leverage it in a collaborative project were successful and will impact the University and the community for years to come. For more information about CRIPCE and the recent multi-million dollar grant award, see page three.

Discovery Plans Now that the program self-studies for the Academic Program Review and Planning process have been submitted, we will ask all departments to review and update their Discovery Plans to help conceptualize, organize, and communicate the rich spectrum of Discovery programs we have. We will send out more information shortly to start the process that we hope to complete by the end of May 2015.

By leveraging our strengths, we successfully compete with the best in the nation. We invite you to join in our discovery communities, and help us leverage our research strength on the national and global stage.

~Dan Litynski, VP for Research

\$3.7 MILLION IN GRANTS FOR BLINDNESS AND LOW VISION RESEARCH

Four recent grants totaling \$3.7 million have been awarded to the Western Michigan University Department of Blindness and Low Vision Studies and are aimed at filling a severe shortage of specialists trained to assist people with vision problems live fuller, happier lives.

The personnel training grants are from the U.S. Department of Education and span five years. The grants will help prepare orientation and mobility specialists, vision rehabilitation therapists, rehabilitation counselors and teachers of children who are visually impaired. Ultimately, the grants will help thousands of people who are blind and visually impaired by educating the next generation of specialists who will work with visually impaired youths and adults in schools and organizations, as well as recruiting scholars who represent the diverse populations they will serve. The awards respond to severe personnel shortages nationally and statewide and address employment challenges faced by those with visual impairments.

The four grants, the principal investigator, amounts and a brief description are:

- Orientation and Mobility Personnel Preparation, **Dr. Dae Shik Kim**, associate professor, \$746,971. Orientation and mobility professionals supported by this award will teach safe and efficient travel skills to working age and older adults with blindness or low vision.

- Vision Rehabilitation Therapy Personnel Preparation, **Dr. Helen Lee**, associate professor, \$697,140. These professionals work primarily with blind and visually impaired adults, providing instruction and guidance in adaptive independent living skills, enabling them to confidently carry out their daily activities.

- Rehabilitation Counseling with an Emphasis in Employer Relations, **Dr. Jennipher Wiebold**, associate professor, \$999,782. Rehabilitation counseling is focused on assisting people with disabilities to achieve their personal, career and independent living goals. The project will prepare graduates from the rehabilitation counseling program with an emphasis in employment and employer relations.

- Preparation of Teachers of Children with Visual Impairments and Orientation and Mobility Instructors of Children, **Dr. Robert Wall Emerson**, professor, \$1,248,723. The project will prepare teachers of children with visual impairments. Program graduates will work with students with visual impairments in preschool through elementary and high school.

The highly competitive awards may be applied for every five years, says Dr. James Leja, department chair. This year, their funding cycles coincided and all applications were fully funded.

"They all hit at the same time," Leja says. "So this happened to be, if you will, that perfect, positive storm. This creates a strong foundation for our five departmental programs over the next five years."

The training grants will have far-reaching effects, Leja says. Students come from across the country to earn degrees from the department, then take that training back to their home communities, where they make a difference in the lives of people with visual impairments.

"Each one of our graduates affects a whole lot of people," Leja says. "It has a nice, cascading effect. There's a huge shortage of professionals in all of these areas."

At a time when many professionals in the field are retiring, the number of people with disabilities, including vision problems, is rising, Leja says. This includes many individuals with age-related sources of visual impairment, such as glaucoma and macular degeneration.

People with disabilities represent a small but increasing percentage of the overall population and require crucial support for education, workforce training and ultimate independence. In 2006, the National Eye Institute estimated that there were up to 5 million Americans who were visually impaired and that more than 1 million of these individuals were legally blind.

According to the 2011 American Community Survey conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau, 63 percent of the individuals with visual disability aged 21-64 were unemployed. Moreover, the Michigan Bureau of Services for Blind Persons estimates that 70 percent of the state's rehabilitation staff will retire in the next five years.

The WMU department is the oldest of its kind in the world. It attracts scholars from across the United States and internationally and annually produces more graduates with specialties in blindness and low vision than any other institution.

"We've historically seen, in all the years that we've been around, that many individuals with visual impairments have unmet needs in part because of the challenges of producing enough qualified graduates to get out there and provide services," Leja says. "So the need has always been huge. Obviously, we're very happy about the grants."

Source: University News

WMU GETS \$3.2 MILLION TO CREATE A CULTURE OF DEGREE COMPLETION

Western Michigan University will receive more than **\$3.2 million** from the U.S. Department of Education to use the unique opportunities afforded by the existence of the Kalamazoo Promise to build an institutional culture focused on increased access and degree completion for underrepresented, underprepared or low-income students.

The new grant is one of a small number of awards, and the only one made in Michigan, announced this fall by the DOE and meant to create and validate through ongoing research, student success programs that can tackle the problem of low rates of degree completion. The goal is to create programs that other universities can adopt, knowing there is sound research data behind the strategies embraced and replicated.

Kalamazoo Promise

For WMU, the four-year project will focus on building a campus wide culture that uses mentoring relationships for first-year students to transform WMU's culture and structures to be more supportive of student persistence. The work will be done with the input of students for whom the problem of affordability has been largely eliminated—Kalamazoo Promise students. The Promise is a nine-year-old initiative that provides up to four years' tuition and fees at any Michigan public university or one of 15 private colleges for students who graduate from Kalamazoo Public Schools.

"Western Michigan University is in a unique position to help find what additional barriers to success exist for students, once the issue of affordability is removed from the mix," says WMU President **John M. Dunn**. "About a third of students attending college through the Kalamazoo Promise choose WMU, and we have both a desire and a responsibility to find and change those things within our culture that still make it difficult for students to earn a degree, reach their full potential and succeed. What we learn will benefit all of our students."

Two strategies

Dr. Andrea Beach, professor of higher education leadership and director of faculty development at WMU, will co-direct the effort with **Dr. Charles Henderson**, a professor with a joint appointment in WMU's Department of Physics and its Mallinson Institute for Science Education. Together, the pair recently launched the Center for Research on Instructional Change in Postsecondary Education.

Beach says the project will use one of two strategies with groups of first-year students, and the project team will measure the relative outcomes. The first strategy involves connecting students to professional opportunities in the region by placing them with mentors from the local business community who can provide opportunities for career exploration and course content relevancy as well as a relationship with

someone vested in their academic career.

The second approach will be to build mentoring relationships through professional learning communities on campus comprised of the students plus faculty, staff and administrators and focused on identifying and addressing barriers to and supports for student success. Incoming Promise students and others will be invited to be part of the project and will be randomly assigned to one of the two groups. Both approaches will fall within the framework of WMU's First Year Seminar offerings, so that students receive academic credit for their experiences.

The approach for the new work, says Beach, "is a different from 'business as usual' or even 'research as usual' and will take a great deal of institutional work," but both Beach and Henderson point to the campus wide input they received in putting the plan together as evidence of the widespread and interdisciplinary nature of the interest faculty and staff have in the work. The 40 members of the original planning group also showed commitment to rigorous analysis and research as the project moves forward.

"We had to set this up as an experiment that could measure institutional change and evaluate that change as we move ahead," says Henderson. "This is about creating innovation that is grounded in sound research and will also give us the opportunity to advance theory in the area of institutional transformation."

Measuring success

Success at the end of the four-year effort, Beach says, "would mean a move toward transformation of the culture at WMU that is systematic and measurable, and transferable to other universities."

"This is about connecting all the disparate initiatives aimed at student success that every institution has and turning them into one strong and successful effort," Beach says. "The university itself needs to change. Actualizing student success requires integrated institutional transformation involving the whole campus."

Additional principals on the effort will be **Dr. Martha Warfield**, vice president for diversity and inclusion, who will serve as the project's senior advisor, and **Dr. Stephen Magura**, director of WMU's Evaluation Center, who will serve as director of evaluation and oversee the overall scientific conduct of the effort.

Source: University News

DISCOVERY COMMUNITIES BEING FORMED

As mentioned elsewhere in this newsletter, our office has been working to build discovery communities of scholars around shared areas of interest so that we can develop collaborative external funding proposals which support work in these areas.

Based on faculty and departmental discovery plans, we have identified six discovery communities: sustainability, STEM and STEAM, health, education, evaluation and assessment, and entrepreneurship.

In the fall, Hanover Research presented to two groups of researchers in the **Sustainability Discovery Community** and in the **Health-Related Discovery Community**.

The goal of meeting was to hear from Hanover about specific funding initiatives while hearing from each community about their external funding interests and ideas.

It's not too late to join one of these discovery communities. We also encourage you to check your emails and our website for more information on upcoming meetings or for information on new groups forming.

As evidenced by the FITW grant and the Transportation Center's success, we are strong in our research, especially when we leverage our strengths.

Please contact us with any questions or ideas.

RESPOND BEFORE FEBRUARY 14 TO SURVEY ON RESEARCH AND DISCOVERY AT WMU

Faculty and staff have until Feb. 14 to participate to the Survey on Discovery Activities, Funding and Climate.

Responders to the survey will be included in a drawing to win a 16GB iPad Air. Log on to: <http://hanoverresearch.DiscoveryActivitiesSurvey.sgizmo.com/s3/>

The information you provide will be important for our planning, resource allocation, and capacity building to support you in your discovery activities.

Important to note: the survey is confidential and, whether you have external funding or not, we want to hear from you.

FACILITIES & ADMINISTRATIVE COST RATES (F&A)

The work of WMU faculty, staff, and students on externally-funded projects includes direct and indirect costs. Direct project costs are usually straightforward and easily attributed to a specific project. Indirect costs, termed Facilities and Administrative Costs (F&A), are also real costs that are essential for a project's implementation, but would take much time by faculty and staff to attribute and track in relation to specific projects.

F&A costs include such expenses as research space and equipment, utilities, custodial services, security, payroll, purchasing, fiscal management and tracking, and department administration. To relieve the burden on researchers, F&A costs are agreed upon through formal negotiations every four years with our cognizant agency, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. They are based upon data presented by the University via a cost analysis and are expressed as a percentage of total direct costs minus exclusions.

Having such a rate helps the university reduce the costs of having to determine how much of these resources each individual project uses or consumes. WMU recently concluded this process and new rates for research- and instruction-related projects funded externally for both the University and WMed have been established as follows:

- July 1, 2013 – June 30, 2015 = 50% of modified direct costs
- July 1, 2015 – June 30, 2017 = 51% of modified direct costs

Project budgets are required to include full recovery of F&A costs at the appropriate negotiated rate. More information about specific rates and F&A policies are available on the OVPR website (www.wmich.edu/research/policies/proposalsubmit).

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