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## College of Arts and Sciences E-News Issue 15: July 2014

College of Arts and Sciences

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# College of Arts and Sciences

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*E-News Issue 15: July 2014*



**WMU to receive \$4 million to boost autism research and training**

CAS

## **CAS News**

WMU to receive \$4 million to boost autism research and training  
Dr. Keith Hearit named new CAS associate dean

## **Faculty Feature**

Twenty-two CAS faculty celebrated during Board of Trustees luncheon

## **Alumni Profiles**

Sean Laraway '03 wins Teaching Excellence Award from San Jose State University  
Bob Hercules '79 producing and co-directing documentary on Maya Angelou  
Koty Neelis '11 goes viral with her top ten lists

## **Student Stories**

PhD student, Becky Straples named editor of The Hilltop Review  
Mallinson Institute for Science Education international students share their experiences

**Stay in touch!**



Update your  
information



# New Michigan budget includes \$4M for WMU autism initiatives

by Cheryl Roland  
June 20, 2014 | WMU News



Left to right: Nesbitt, O'Brien, Dunn, Schuitmaker at June 20 announcement.

KALAMAZOO, Mich.—Western Michigan University is slated to receive **\$4 million to boost its autism research and professional training initiatives**, State Rep. **Margaret O'Brien** announced **June 20** during a stop on campus for a news conference.

The University, which has a national reputation for its work in behavior analysis as a treatment for autism, will use the funding to tackle the growing national incidence of the brain development disorder by:

- Increasing the number of new professionals in the field each year and developing a training model that can be disseminated and replicated at other colleges and universities.
- Developing innovative on-campus support networks for college students on the autism spectrum.
- Directing and overseeing a community daycare and treatment center for young children.
- Directing, developing and maintaining community consultation resources, using such technology as podcasts and teleconsultation.

## An 'internationally known program'

"Today we're here to really focus on our children ... It's about what research shows works and about investing in our young people so that we can not only improve quality of lives, but we can actually maximize the resources that the taxpayers send to the state," O'Brien said. "... We're announcing today that we have been able to secure \$4 million of state funding directed toward Western Michigan University so we can increase the capacity to train professionals, and so that, hopefully throughout this state, we will no longer have families waiting up to two years to get services."

Joining O'Brien for the announcement were State Sen. **Tonya Schuitmaker** and State Rep. **Aric Nesbitt**, both of Lawton, who supported the funding decision. The new funding is part of the Michigan budget finalized in a conference committee in Lansing earlier this month.

O'Brien, who has a background in social work and business, noted that she and her two colleagues were among Michigan legislators who worked earlier to secure insurance coverage for autism services in Michigan. Once that was accomplished in 2012, she said, they began to hear too many stories

about the shortage of service providers and long waits for families to get assistance. Allowing the situation to evolve over time and waiting for the supply of trained professionals to grow to match the need was not an option.

"By the time we built that capacity, it was going to be too late for too many children," O'Brien said. "We know that the earlier we reach them the better it is for families and kids."

The solution, she noted was "in my own backyard," where Western Michigan University already has an internationally known program in training people in behavioral health—especially those who serve those families that are dealing with autism.

WMU President **John M. Dunn**, who was at the O'Brien event, praised the Portage representative for her advocacy and for connecting the University's resources with a growing and urgent need in the broader community.

"Rep. O'Brien has been steadfast in her support for what we do here," Dunn said. "She is an advocate for putting the best resources of a research university to work to address very real community needs. This is a population that demands and deserves our commitment to ensure a well-trained force of professionals is available to help realize the full potential of those with autism."

Autism spectrum disorder and autism are general terms for a group of complex disorders of brain development. These disorders are characterized—in varying degrees—by difficulties in social interaction, verbal and nonverbal communication and repetitive behaviors. Earlier this year, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention indicated the prevalence of autism is rising and now affects one in 68 American children. Breaking this number down, the CDC estimates one in 42 boys have autism compared with one in 189 girls.

## **Behavior analysis at WMU**

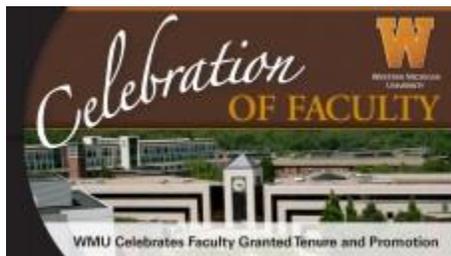
Behavior analysis specialists in WMU's Department of Psychology have a 30-plus year history of work with community partners to offer supervised field experience in the areas of developmental disabilities, autism and education. The University has awarded nearly 400 doctoral degrees and more than a thousand master's degrees to professionals working in developmental disabilities, autism, clinical psychology and industrial organizations psychology—all with a behavior analysis orientation.

The efforts funded by the new state money will move forward under the direction of **Dr. Stephanie Peterson**, chair of the WMU Department of Psychology, and **Dr. Wayne Fuqua**, professor of psychology, whose longtime focus has been on the use of behavior analysis for the treatment of autism.

## **Western Michigan University professor Keith Hearit named associate dean of College of Arts and Sciences**

[http://www.mlive.com/news/kalamazoo/index.ssf/2014/06/western\\_michigan\\_university\\_pr\\_41.html](http://www.mlive.com/news/kalamazoo/index.ssf/2014/06/western_michigan_university_pr_41.html)

# Celebration of Faculty



The College of Arts and Sciences is pleased and proud to announce that 22 of its faculty were recognized on Tuesday, June 10, during a Western Michigan University Board of Trustees Luncheon. This Celebration of Faculty ceremony featured faculty from all WMU colleges. College of Arts and Sciences faculty honored represented 16 departments and schools and are listed below. Congratulations to all of our deserving faculty!

## **Faculty granted tenure**

Kirsty Eisenhart, mathematics  
Jacqueline Eng, anthropology  
Sharon Gill, biological sciences  
Ramakrishna Guda, chemistry  
Whitney Gunter, sociology  
Denise Keele, political science  
Rajib Paul, statistics  
Vivan Steemers, world languages and literatures  
Andre Venter, chemistry

## **Faculty granted promotion to professor**

Stephen Covell, comparative religion  
Charles Emerson, geography  
Charles Henderson, physics  
David Huffman, chemistry  
Barbara Liggett, School of Public Affairs and Administration  
Jane-Jane Lo, mathematics  
Jennifer Machiorlatti, School of Communication  
Edwin Martini, history  
Angela Moe, sociology  
Sherine Obare, chemistry  
Robert Peters, School of Public Affairs and Administration  
LouAnn Wurst, anthropology

## **Faculty granted promotion to associate professor**

Jacqueline Eng, anthropology  
Sharon Gill, biological sciences  
Ramakrishna Guda, chemistry  
Whitney Gunter, sociology  
Denise Keele, political science  
Rajib Paul, statistics  
Vivan Steemers, world languages and literatures  
Andre Venter, chemistry

## **Faculty granted master faculty specialist step increase**

Margaret Dupuis, English

# Psychology Alumnus Receives Teaching Excellence Award



Department of Psychology alumnus Dr. Sean Laraway '03 received the Teaching Excellence Award by the College of Social Sciences at San Jose State University in San Jose, California. Laraway earned a Ph.D. in Experimental Analysis of Behavior and a graduate certificate in Human Performance Technology from Western Michigan University. He began teaching at SJSU in 2004 as a part-time instructor of psychology. In 2008, he became an assistant professor and in 2012, he was promoted to associate professor. Laraway also has an affiliation with SJSU's Graduate Program in Human Factors/Ergonomics.

Laraway chose to attend WMU because of the reputation of both its Department of Psychology and its faculty. Knowing that he wanted to study behavior analysis, WMU seemed an obvious choice as its "psychology department has one of the world's best programs in behavior analysis." Laraway added that "the psychology faculty have long been considered among the leaders and innovators in the field." When asked what WMU's education means to him professionally, he said, "WMU provided me with a first-class education in my field, as well as outstanding research and teaching experience." It was the experience in teaching and research that he credits with landing him the position at SJSU. Laraway says, "Overall, WMU gave me a solid foundation for success in my career and I owe much of this success to the dedication and support of my professors. Personally, WMU allowed me to meet many outstanding students and faculty, many of whom remain my good friends more than 10 years after graduation."

When Laraway learned of his award, he contacted WMU psychology professors Drs. Brad Huitema, Jack Michael and Al Poling to share the news as his thank you. According to Laraway, his own teaching has been tremendously influenced by taking their classes and seeing how they all approached teaching. Laraway thanked Huitema, Michael and Poling during his acceptance speech and believes that the many opportunities they gave him to teach and serve as a teacher's assistant set him up to succeed.

## **Dr. Laraway's 10 notes of advice for psychology students interested in teaching at the college or university level.**

1. Find what you love about psychology and pursue it. It shouldn't feel like work!
2. Learn as much as you can about statistics and research methods.
3. Get as much research, teaching and teaching assistant experience as you can. Seek ever-increasing levels of responsibility.
4. Read as many scientific articles as you can and take notes.
5. Get to know your instructors and fellow students and establish good working relationships with them.

6. Don't be afraid to make mistakes or to challenge yourself.
7. Be prepared to move to find a job or attend grad school.
8. Don't forget to take time for yourself and spend much of that time with friends and loved ones.
9. Study!
10. Again, learn statistics!

## Hercules Reflects on Angelou

Posted on Wednesday, June 11, 2014



Bob Hercules (*BA '79, Communication Arts and Sciences*) is co-directing and producing a documentary and is faced with a difficult task: to showcase the life of Maya Angelou and keep it to a mere 90 minutes. As he was working through this important project, Hercules received news of Angelou's passing in late May, 2014.

In a video interview with CNN, Hercules had the opportunity to reflect on his two year relationship with the influential author.

"She's a riveting person," Hercules said. "I still think of her in the present, and it's

hard to imagine that she's passed. She was a giant in the world of arts, politics, and political activism."

Hercules last saw Angelou in April 2014 while she was in Washington, DC. The cameras were rolling as Angelou attended the installation of her portrait at the National Portrait Gallery in the Smithsonian. Hercules said that Angelou was in tremendous spirits for the ceremony.

Work on the documentary began approximately two years ago, and Hercules said Angelou was more than supportive from the very beginning. This is the first film made about the life of Angelou.

The film, 'Maya Angelou: Poet of the People,' is the first film made about the iconic poet

and author, and will air on PBS American Masters in early 2016.

To view the CNN interview with Hercules, please [click here](#).

To read more about the documentary, please [visit PBS.org](#).

*Maya Angelou (seated, center) and the American Masters — Maya Angelou: The People's Poet crew at her house in Winston-Salem, N.C., January 2014. Pictured (standing, left to right): Bob Hercules (co-director/producer), Rita Coburn Whack (co-director/producer) and Keith Walker (D.P.) Photo by Christopher Howard.*

## Born and raised in Michigan, Kalamazoo writer turns home and travels into viral '10 Signs' lists

[http://www.mlive.com/news/kalamazoo/index.ssf/2014/06/kalamazoo\\_writer\\_turns\\_home\\_an.html](http://www.mlive.com/news/kalamazoo/index.ssf/2014/06/kalamazoo_writer_turns_home_an.html)

## Meet Becky Straple, new Editor of The Hilltop Review

POSTED ON **JUNE 12, 2014** UPDATED ON JUNE 12, 2014



Hello, everyone! As the new Editor of *The Hilltop Review: A Journal of Western Michigan University Graduate Student Research*, I wanted to drop in at *The Grad Word* and introduce myself.

I'm a PhD student in the Department of English, currently working on my coursework. I specialize in medieval literature, particularly Old English and Old Norse and issues of gender, sexuality, and the body in those literatures and in Anglo-Saxon and early medieval Scandinavian cultures. I'm considering branching out into early medieval Ireland, too... so if anyone knows where I can take a good intensive on Old Irish, drop me a line. (Or where

there's an outdoor archery range in Kalamazoo!)

I have what I consider to be good, well-rounded experience in the fields of English and publishing, from teaching to copy editing to technical writing. I once worked for a safety consulting company that specialized in industrial shipping, doing technical writing for them and copy editing things like safety manuals and tables specifying the load-bearing capabilities of specific clamps or the severity of pinch points on a shipping vessel (so for anyone out there feeling insecure about their job prospects with an English degree, never fear—you'd be surprised at the jobs you can get). I've worked in IT departments and for web design departments and I've been working as a freelance copy editor and proofreader for the last five years or so, working on projects from young adult Christian sci-fi novels to scholarly monographs and from academic journal articles to my uncle's Vietnam memoir.

I'm excited to start working on the Fall 2014 issue of *The Hilltop Review*, and on that note, I'd like to let you all know about the [Call for Papers](#) (and Artwork, and Creative Work, and Book Reviews, and Letters to the Editor!) for that issue. The deadline for this CFP is **September 22**, but I highly encourage you to [submit](#) early—maybe you have a seminar paper from last semester, or are finishing up a chapter of your thesis or a literature review. Take advantage of all the free time you have over the summer (ha!) to prep it for submission and send it in! I'll send out a reminder about the CFP when the semester starts, but I thought it might be good for everyone to get a jump on things and open the call now.

Submitting to *The Hilltop Review* is a great way to gain experience about or to try out the publication process at a scholarly journal. We're completely run by students, but we follow the same procedure that many other peer-reviewed journals do. You submit, your work is blind reviewed by one graduate student and one faculty member in your field (they don't know who wrote the work they're reviewing), and we let you know whether your work will be included in the next issue, whether it needs work and can be resubmitted, or whether it's not right for the current issue. If you need to revise and resubmit, we review the work again, and hopefully you'll see your name and your research in the next issue! It's also a great line to have on your CV and something to brag about! Plus, we have awards for the three best articles (\$500, \$300, and \$150), for the best creative work (\$250), and the for the artwork selected for the cover (\$250)!

Some things to know, if you're interested in submitting:

- While the last few issues of *The Hilltop Review* have had themes, I thought I'd start with an issue that's open to any topic, methodology, field of research, etc. The Spring issue will probably feature a theme, and we'll let you know what that will be when the time comes.
- *The Hilltop Review* publishes research articles, creative writing, artwork, and letters to the editor. This year, we decided to try **book reviews**, too; so if there's an exciting new publication out in your field, please review it and submit the review for consideration!
- *The Hilltop Review* is also looking for new Editorial Board members and peer reviewers. If you are interested in either of these positions, feel free to [email me](#) any questions you have. To self-nominate, please [send me a short cover letter and your CV](#) (which should include a statement about what fields you are comfortable reviewing in).

- You can see a detailed description of the guidelines for submission (for all types of submission listed above) at [The Hilltop Review on ScholarWorks](#).
- All submissions are now being handled through [ScholarWorks](#). This is a platform for hosting scholarly journals, on which *The Hilltop Review* has been available digitally for several years. This is a great system; you can upload your submissions here, and I can assign a reviewer to it, edit it, and respond to you, all through one system. We hope this will be more efficient and useful than emailing back and forth between multiple people. You will need to create a new account to submit if you don't already have one.

## The Mallinson Institute, Globally Engaged

Western Michigan University has a long history of and increasing dedication to recruiting international students. WMU's strong graduate programs have helped foster a great reputation across borders and one such program is the Mallinson Institute for Science Education. This research-oriented unit is devoted to science education and the study and improvement of how people teach and learn science.

MISE has recruited students from China, Indonesia, Korea, Malawi, Romania, Saudi Arabia, Thailand, Uganda and Turkey. According to Dr. Bill Cobern, director, MISE "benefits greatly from having international students because they bring a rich set of experiences that are new to many of our faculty and domestic students." He added, "Our understanding of how science education is practiced is expanded through our conversations with international students about science education in their home countries." He would love to have more students from even more countries study at WMU, but "the limiting factor is funding. We are more likely to have students come from countries that (financially) support their students studying abroad."

When asked what he would tell American students about the value of recruiting international students, Cobern reiterated the importance of learning how science is taught from a global perspective. He also stated the benefit of "citizen-to-citizen diplomacy." He added, "Students coming together from different parts of the globe have a chance to get to know each other in friendship and with respect—even when our political leaders seem unable or unwilling to do the same. Such friendships help all of us."

### Student experience

Five MISE students met to discuss their experiences and perspective on being an international student at WMU. When asked what they found most surprising about life in Kalamazoo Listiani (Listi), Esty Haryani, Fatemah Khalifa, Haifa Alhamazani and Hend Alsharari smiled and nearly in unison responded, "The temperature." Winters in Michigan are a drastic change compared to Listi and Esty's



home of Indonesia and the heat and sand storms that Fatemah, Haifa and Hend weather in Saudi Arabia. The cold and snow is not enough to deter them from studying at WMU. All five women expressed that they have had positive experiences in Kalamazoo. Esty stated that her family had concerns about

her safety, especially because she would be so far from home, but the friendliness of the faculty and students helped ease both her family's fears, as well as her own. She explained to her family that living in Kalamazoo is nice and "the environment for studying is good."

When asked if Kalamazoo met her expectations, Listi stated that has received more than she expected and has been very excited to learn at WMU. Fatemah has recommended WMU to one of her friends in Saudi Arabia. "People are friendly, it's a small city and it's affordable," she shared. She also told her friend that WMU has lots to study and felt that Dr. Cobern was helpful throughout the process and when she arrived to campus. In addition to the friendly people, all stated that they are actually learning differently at WMU. Their prior educational experiences focused on memorization and limited classroom discussion. It's been a welcome change to engage in classroom discussions and active learning. Another unexpected benefit is their ability to write so well in English without the need for a dictionary.

When asked what advice they would share with their American classmates they shared a similar sentiment. Be open to other cultures and do not be afraid of Muslim people. Listi, Esty, Fatemah, Haifa, Hend and many more students like them are interested in connecting with American students to learn about culture and to practice their English conversational skills.

### **International student recruiting**

As WMU works harder to remain discovery driven, learner centered and globally engaged, more departments are taking a strategic look at their international recruiting efforts. Juan Tavares, director of international admissions and services, says that his office works with all graduate departments. "When we travel for recruitment we promote all programs of study," he said. Many academic departments are engaged in international recruiting, but those looking to start can begin by "implementing a strategy to create promotional materials to highlight programs from a global perspective." Tavares also recommends that departments are more intentional about "highlighting current international students in programs by featuring them on websites." For more information about the Mallinson Institute for Science Education please visit [MISE](#).