



Western Michigan University  
ScholarWorks at WMU

---

College of Arts and Sciences news

College of Arts and Sciences

---

11-2014

## College of Arts and Sciences E-News Issue 19: November 2014

College of Arts and Sciences

Follow this and additional works at: [https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/cas\\_news](https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/cas_news)



Part of the Higher Education Commons

---

### WMU ScholarWorks Citation

College of Arts and Sciences, "College of Arts and Sciences E-News Issue 19: November 2014" (2014).

*College of Arts and Sciences news*. 32.

[https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/cas\\_news/32](https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/cas_news/32)

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](mailto:wmu-scholarworks@wmich.edu).





WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY

# College of *Arts and Sciences*

e-News Issue 19: November 2014

## Upcoming CAS events



## Stay in touch!



## Update your information



Alumni Achievement  
Awards Reception  
honored 20  
CAS graduates



## CAS News

- ▶ Department of Geography office coordinator, Mary Lou Brooks one of WMU's top staffers

## FACULTY Features

- ▶ Philosophy professor, Dr. Timothy McGrew wins \$779,000 grant from John Templeton Foundation
- ▶ History professor, Dr. Sally Hadden presents Constitution Day at WMU

## ALUMNI Profiles

- ▶ Donald Southwell '73 named a 2014 WMU Distinguished Alumnus
- ▶ Scott Merlo '89 is new WMU police chief

## STUDENT Stories

- ▶ Ted Carter, two degrees, three majors in three years
- ▶ Kristen Canavan recalls French semester abroad



# University to honor its top four staffers for 2013-14

by Jeanne Baron  
September 30, 2014 | WMU News

KALAMAZOO, Mich.—Four staff members who have made exceptional contributions to Western Michigan University have been selected to receive the Annual **Make a Difference Award** during WMU's Academic Convocation at 2 p.m. Friday, Oct. 10.

The Make a Difference Award is a peer-to-peer program that recognizes WMU staff members for their accomplishments and daily investment of energy and creativity. Recipients of the program's annual award are selected from each academic year's semiannual award winners and represent that year's four most outstanding employees.

The recipients for 2013-14 are **Mary Lou Brooks, Elena Gaudio, Nancy T. Landsberger and James P. Oswalt.**

They will be recognized during WMU's annual Academic Convocation at **2 p.m. Friday, Oct. 10**, in the Dalton Center Recital Hall. The event also will feature WMU President **John M. Dunn's** State of the University address and presentation of four other prestigious campuswide honors: the Distinguished Faculty Scholar, Distinguished Service, Distinguished Teaching and Emerging Scholar awards.



Brooks

## Mary Lou Brooks

Brooks, who joined the staff in 1993, is office coordinator for the Department of Geography. She began her WMU career as a secretary in what is now the Academic Resource Center, then took a promotion in 1999 and moved to the Department of Blindness and Low Vision Studies, where she rose to become office coordinator. Brooks transferred to the Department of Special Education and Literacy Studies in 2006 and to the Department of Geography in 2007.

She earned unanimous praise for her thoughtful nature and selfless willingness to help others. "I have never failed to receive support, a shoulder to cry on or a laugh from Mary Lou," one graduate student nominating her wrote. "We call her our 'mom' away from home. She has provided me with advice, humor, chocolate, lunch and love for the past two years I have been here. She can solve almost any problem and will go out of her way to help you with yours."

Several nominators provided examples of how Brooks has gone above and beyond to help them or someone else. "She has, on many occasions, taken students to the emergency room, to a therapist or to a professor the student is afraid to talk with by himself/herself," one wrote. "She is selfless with her time and energy."

Many supporters also praised Brooks for her professional skills and the key role she plays in keeping the geography office running smoothly by providing everything from outstanding customer service to

innovative ways to cut costs. They also emphasized that she tirelessly promotes the University as well as her department.

But nominators continually returned to Brooks' genuine commitment to everyone she interacts with, whether assisting with activities on campus or in the local community. "She is an invaluable source of information and inspiration to her colleagues," one wrote, while another avowed that, "Mary Lou has made a difference in many people's lives, not just in the geography department."



Gaudio

### **Elena Gaudio**

Gaudio, who joined the staff in 1987, is executive assistant in the Office of the President. She began her WMU career as an executive secretary for collective bargaining and the University attorney. She took a clerical position in the Department of World Languages and Literatures in 1993, where she rose to office coordinator, then transferred to the Department of Spanish in 2003. Gaudio was named executive secretary in the president's office in 2006 and was promoted to her current post in 2010.

Time and again, nominators described her as a consummate professional who embodies efficiency and effectiveness. They emphasized that along with commanding impeccable skills, she is a doer who makes things happen through her incessant hard work and collaborative attitude.

As one nominator summed it up, "Elena is the perfect example of what it means to be the best of the best. Every task she performs is done expertly. She is prepared in every circumstance, thinking about what will be needed. She leads the office with true humility and grace. Even when the stress level becomes elevated, Elena is a role model of how to project a positive attitude in every situation."

Several nominators noted that Gaudio has the complicated job of working with all of WMU's many constituents and at all hours of the day and night. "Her ability to navigate challenges with creativity and customer appeal is unsurpassed," one co-worker wrote, while another reported that, "Elena is a wise counselor, a standard bearer of integrity and professional excellence, and is as highly respected as anyone on this campus."

Gaudio also was lauded for her determined work behind the scenes to assist students as well as for being an outstanding ambassador for WMU and "a Bronco through and through." She not only attends art exhibitions, concerts and athletic games, but also volunteers to work many events and encourages others to become involved in the life of the University.



Landsberger

### **Nancy T. Landsberger**

Landsberger joined the staff in 2002 and is office coordinator for the Department of Civil and Construction Engineering in the College of Engineering and Applied Sciences. She began her WMU career as a parking clerk in the Department of Public Safety and moved to the Department of Accountancy in 2005 to take a promotion to office assistant. Landsberger was promoted to finance assistant in Extended University Programs a year later and to her current post in 2009.

Students and colleagues uniformly commended her for her generous spirit and going above and beyond to aid those she encounters, from campus visitors who are lost and phone callers who reach her office in error to students struggling with big as well as small problems.

Summing Landsberger up, one co-worker wrote that "Nancy is a shining star at the College of Engineering and Applied Sciences. She is a great ambassador for WMU with her warmth, guidance and assistance to all she comes in contact with." Another nominator put it even more succinctly, writing that, "She is the most helpful, friendly, outgoing person I know and always willing to help in any situation."

Landsberger also was lauded by many nominators for her competence and work ethic. One of her supporters was doubly impressed because his nominee's department offers the third largest civil and construction engineering program in Michigan and is one of WMU's most active research units. "She comes to the department first and leaves very late," that supporter commented. "Not only does she do her work to her utmost capacity, she helps everyone in the department...as well as visitors."

Several of Landsberger's nominators cited her for her ceaseless efforts to help the University and everyone associated with it succeed. "She feels personally responsible for everyone's success on campus, and if there is ever a failure, she is searching for ways to improve," one nominator wrote.

Meanwhile, one part-time instructor noted that, "So many logistical things have to happen to make a class go well." "She helps me with the ones I need help with, and she takes the time to teach me the things I can do on my own—which lets me be self-sufficient and frees her up to work miracles for everyone else."



Oswalt

### **James P. Oswald**

Oswalt, who joined the staff in 2009, is a millwright/maintenance mechanic in the maintenance services area of Facilities Management. He initially was assigned to the University's East Campus and in 2010 was assigned to the main campus.

Oswalt's nominators consistently recognized him for his professionalism and work ethic. "His daily work is done with an integrity few possess," one wrote. "He works hard and believes in an honest day's work for his pay, and he does the job with an amazing attitude. He is always upbeat and positive."

Describing Oswald as a preventative maintenance mechanic, one of his former supervisors went on to praise him for working day in and day out behind the scenes to take care of problems before they become bigger problems. "He works hard and is very dedicated to his job," that nominator wrote, adding that, "He is a very patient teacher and mentor to others in the shop and across campus."

Nominators not only characterized Oswald as someone who goes the extra mile to do a good job for the University, but also as someone and would give the shirt off his back for a person in need.

"James is an incredibly kind and hardworking employee who always gives his all to everything he does. His dedication to his job and his co-workers is unswerving," a co-worker wrote. "His intelligence and supreme ability to do an outstanding job is only a small representation of his many great traits. Above all else, James is an amazing person who is always willing to lend a hand and support his co-workers, friends, family and complete strangers."

Another of his nominators emphasized how unusual Oswald's character is in today's technological age of instant information and instant messaging. "Patience and common courtesy are not so common anymore—unless you are with this employee," the nominator wrote. "His patience is almost limitless, and it is in his nature to open doors, to allow others to go ahead or to share a kind word or a helping hand. It isn't something he thinks about as out of the ordinary because it is part of who he is."

## WMU wins \$779,072 grant, partners with Oxford in Web project

by Mark Schwerin

September 17, 2014 | WMU News

KALAMAZOO, Mich.—Western Michigan University has been awarded a \$779,072 grant by the **John Templeton Foundation** to assemble a digital library and interactive web portal of historical religious philosophical writings in partnership with **University of Oxford**, the oldest and one of the most prestigious universities in the English-speaking world.

Also joining the project is **Texas A&M University**, which will handle much of the digitization of historical philosophical materials. The John Templeton Foundation, a philanthropic organization working as a catalyst for discoveries relating to the big questions of human purpose and ultimate reality, is appropriating a little more than \$2.3 million to the project altogether.

The project is essentially the brainchild of **Dr. Timothy McGrew**, WMU professor of philosophy, who will work closely with Oxford's Bodleian Library to access philosophic religious writings from about the late 1600s through the early 20th century. The Bodleian Library is one of the oldest libraries in Europe and in Britain is second in size only to the British Library with more than 11 million items.



Photo of a Greek Orthodox Bible.

### The project

A key element of the project is not just the digitization of records, but the linking of writings with other writings that influenced them or they were responding to, placing them in their proper historical context, McGrew says. People involved in the project have referred to it as "uploading Tim's brain."

"There are some issues that are always interesting, always sort of hot-button issues--existence of god, miracles--that's always going to get people going from one side or another," McGrew says. "What the Templeton Foundation said was, 'Look, what's the current state of discussion on this, professionally speaking, and what could be done to make it better, more interesting and more available to people?'"

McGrew was among a group of researchers summoned to Oxford a little more than a year ago. It was there that McGrew floated the idea of unearthing philosophical and religious writings that have not been refuted, but have long since been forgotten, leaving gaps in the historical record.

"We've got people like Richard Dawkins talking with no sense of history at all," he says, "and making mistakes that could be corrected if we went back and looked at the history of the discussion."

Thanks to Google Books and Microsoft's Internet archives, researchers have a better idea of what's out there, McGrew says. The trouble is finding writings of interest from among the hundreds of millions of manuscripts.

"How do you find the 5,000 or 2,000 resources you really need?" McGrew says. "Where's that needle in the haystack?"

For quite a number of years, McGrew has been searching those out, combing archives and libraries, obtaining copies through interlibrary loan, scanning writings and amassing a database. The database includes all sides of a given issue, so that the writings of Christian theologians are included along with skeptics, atheists, deists and others.

McGrew noticed webs of interconnectedness within the religious writings, so that one author was responding to, refuting or was being influenced by another.

"What I said to Templeton was, you should make this conversation something that's available and can be mapped and traced by people who have just a personal interest in it or a scholarly interest in it," McGrew says. "And they bit."

## **Indispensable resource**

The grant will fund the three-year, online digital humanities project, paying for a visiting assistant professor for two years, one-quarter of the cost of a sabbatical year for McGrew, as well as hiring a graduate assistant and research assistant. McGrew has worked at WMU for 19 years and never put in for a sabbatical until now. It is hoped the database will be up and running in time for McGrew to use it as a tool in a class for religious and philosophy scholars that he will teach next summer.

"If we do this right, no one will be able to do scholarship on this issue without using our tool ever again, because the interconnections will be mapped out so thoroughly," McGrew says. "Not that we're going to replace what other people have done, but we're going to supplement it in a way that it will become indispensable and could become a model for digital humanities projects."

McGrew says researchers investigating a particular topic will be able to conduct searches and from there be able to navigate straight to the particular page they are looking for.

"So you don't have to go for an interlibrary loan or hope that Google Books has it," McGrew says. "We're going to have them all, straight from the Bodleian Library at Oxford... We're providing the background, the context, and a way of very intuitively maneuvering through this, so you can find what you need and discover what you didn't even know was there."

# **Constitution Day at WMU**

DJ DeLong  
Creative writing and history major  
College of Arts and Sciences, Marketing and Communications student employee

On September 17, the nation celebrated Constitution Day. As part of the celebration, all federally funded universities and colleges are required to present a lecture in honor of the holiday and in recognition of the formation and signing of the U.S. Constitution in 1787. This year, Western Michigan University had the pleasure of having history professor Sally Hadden present. However, Hadden had a

different plan for the lecture. Rather than speak about the U.S. Constitution, she decided to focus on a smaller scale looking at the state constitutions that followed the signing of the national one in 1787 to 1800.



When asked what made her choose this topic, Hadden explained, "State constitutions are often overlooked, and treated as secondary to the national constitution. They deserve greater attention since they reveal the priorities of state lawmakers and had potentially a much bigger impact locally than the national constitution did in ordinary people's lives." During the lecture, Hadden identified that the state constitutions influenced one another more so than the U.S. Constitution, meaning that when drafting a new state's constitution or revising one, lawmakers did not look for reference from the national document, but at other states that had already developed their own constitution.

Hadden's goal was to enhance the audience's knowledge and understanding of state constitutions predominantly during the 1790s. She indicated the important ways the constitutions influenced the development of new constitutions written in that time period. The development of the national document is a day to remember, however, Hadden has shown that there is more to the topic and research that is presented for most Constitution Day lectures. The presentations themselves allow a larger range of students and those of the surrounding community to learn about and experience a part of the nation's history that is vital to everyday lives. "I'd like to believe that Constitution Day lectures," Hadden stated, "like most lectures on campus, enrich the intellectual environment of the university and provide more stimulus to the overall intellectual project we're all engaged in: learning more about all topics."

## Donald Southwell, 2014 Distinguished Alumnus

Posted on Thursday, October 16, 2014



The 51st Distinguished Alumni Awards reception will take place over Homecoming Weekend on Friday, October 24. This year, three alumni who have reached a high level of distinction in their professional lives will be honored with the University's most prestigious award for alumni.

One of this year's honorees is Donald G. Southwell (BA '73) of Wayne, Ill., chairman of the board of Kemper Corp. (former Unitrin), one of the nation's leading financial services providers specializing in insurance for families and small businesses. He has been the director of the company since 2002, has served as Chairman of the Board since 2010, and has served as President and CEO since 2006.

Mr. Southwell will be returning to campus during Homecoming weekend to accept his award. In preparation for his visit, Mr. Southwell had some words of advice for current students and recent graduates

“Find something you like to do and do it well. Earning more than you make is the best job security. If you increase your contributions, the pay will follow.”

Southwell previously served as President of Prudential Insurance & Financial Services and Chairman of the Prudential Property and Casualty Company.

In 2009, Southwell received the Department of Mathematics Outstanding Alumni Award. He has been a member of the WMU President’s Society, a Fellow of the Society of Actuaries, a Chartered Life Underwriter, and a Chartered Property and Casualty Underwriter. He is also a loyal supporter of the Grand Traverse Regional Land Conservancy. Southwell holds a Bachelor of Art in Mathematics from WMU and was a member of the Lee Honors College.

In celebration of 2014 Distinguished Alumni Award reception, MyWMU.com is featuring each honoree. To view the Q&A from Wendell Christoff (BS ’68), [click here](#). Daniel J. Martin (BA ’76) will be featured next week. In the meantime, [click here to learn more about the Distinguished Alumni Award](#).

## WMU taps alum, former K'zoo Public Safety officer as next police chief

by Mark Schwerin  
September 30, 2014 | WMU News



Photo of the WMU police station

KALAMAZOO, Mich.--A Western Michigan University graduate and longtime former officer with the Kalamazoo Department of Public Safety is WMU's new top law enforcement official.

**Scott R. Merlo**, who most recently served as a lieutenant for two years with the police department at Grand Rapids Community College, began his first day at his new WMU post

on **Monday, Sept. 29**. His appointment was approved by the WMU Board of Trustees at its Sept. 30 meeting.

### Scott R. Merlo

Merlo graduated from WMU in 1989 with a Bachelor of Science degree in criminal justice and political science. He began his KDPS duties as a public safety officer in the Operations Division in 1990 and went on to win several departmental awards for excellence, merit and life saving. He served as a detective in the Criminal Investigation Division from 1995 to 1999 and a sergeant and detective sergeant from 1999 to 2006, when he was promoted to lieutenant. He also served as an executive lieutenant and acting captain from 2007 until April 2012, when he started the job at GRCC.

As a GRCC lieutenant, Merlo was responsible for the supervision of 10 campus police officers and a sergeant and the day-to-day operations of the department. He reviewed criminal cases and

investigative actions, worked with officers and citizens to identify campus problems and concerns and assisted with maintaining campus crime statistics, reporting directly to the chief of campus police.

Merlo replaces Robert Brown, who is on a one-year leave of absence and plans to retire in January, 2015. Blaine Kalafut has been serving as interim chief during the search for Brown's replacement.

"Scott Merlo brings many important credentials to his new role. He's a WMU alumnus with long and deep connections to our University and the community, and he enjoyed a successful 22-year career with the Kalamazoo Department of Public Safety," says Jan Van Der Kley, vice president for business and finance, who oversees the University's public safety unit. "He has extensive experience in a variety of policing specialty areas, and he has the respect of community leaders and his law enforcement colleagues. It's a great fit."

## Student Feature: Ted Carter

DJ DeLong

Creative writing and history major

College of Arts and Sciences, Marketing and Communications student employee



Western Michigan University has been rated one of the top 100 schools in the nation for the second year in a row according to Washington Monthly. The educational programs and faculty stand out among other universities. A large part of what makes WMU so special are the outstanding students enrolled here. One particular student, Theodore Carter, has stood out to the faculty and staff of the College of Arts and Sciences. Carter will graduate with two bachelor's degrees after just three years.

In December, Carter will earn a Bachelor of Science degree in applied mathematics and physics, as well as a Bachelor of Science degree in chemistry with a minor in biology. His outstanding academic career started before he even became a student at WMU. Carter arrived at WMU with nearly 50 credits transferred from scoring high enough on his Advanced Placement tests while he was in high school. These transferred credits went toward Carter's General Education courses and introductory major courses, allowing him to dive right into the more advanced and upper level courses.

Carter averaged 20-24 credits a semester. In order to handle such an intense workload Carter explained the need to be organized. With the amount of credits he takes, he understands more than most the importance of organization simply at the scheduling process. He states, "Know what you need to do and get it done." Carter does ensure that he gives himself a break. "I take Fridays off no matter what," Carter explains. After spending approximately 100 hours a week on schoolwork alone, he needs at least one day off. He says that during his free time he likes to swim and go sailing.

When asked why he pushed himself so much in his academic career, Carter said that he is trying to see the breaking point for himself. This is influenced by his decision to join the Navy SEAL Program after graduating from WMU. It has been a dream since he was young and that drive to see how far he can go is present in both his academic and career focuses. After his time being a Navy SEAL and returning to civilian life, he says he would like to return to college and get his master's and Ph.D. in

both physics and applied mathematics. His advice to current and prospective students is, "If you have the means, just try adding one more class. People can do more if they are willing to aspire to it."

## Student Recalls French Semester Abroad

DJ DeLong

Creative writing and history major

College of Arts and Sciences, Marketing and Communication student employee

One of the many opportunities offered to students at Western Michigan University is the chance to study abroad. With over 90 study abroad programs available in more than 40 countries, there is a learning experience for anyone. However, tuition costs are enough to worry about and adding on travel expenses would stress any student. The College of Arts and Sciences tries to ease this burden



by offering the CAS International Study Scholarship. This scholarship offers up to \$1000 for any College of Arts and Sciences student to spend a semester abroad and is based on need and merit.

Senior Kristen Canavan was the recipient of a CAS International Study Scholarship in the spring of 2014. As she finishes her studies here at WMU (double major in Global International Studies and French, along with a minor in Political Science) she has been able to reflect on her study abroad experience in Besançon, France, a city similar in size to Kalamazoo. While there, she encountered a large Maghreb (an eclectic mixture of Berber/Amazigh, Arab and French cultures) and Turkish population and lived with an Algerian host family. A large majority of her fellow students in France were from Malaysia, Saudi Arabia and Libya.

After a rough start to her trip, which included three different flight cancellations, lost baggage, cancellation fees and visa complications, Canavan enjoyed a memorable experience learning all about the Maghreb culture in France. She observed many different facets of everyday Muslim life during her time spent there. Canavan stated: "While walking around Besançon, it was not uncommon to see a halal corner store market, a kebab stand with a sign in Arabic, or occasionally, a man with a zebibah (prayer mark) on his forehead." She had never experienced any of that before in the United States. When asked about how much it meant to receive the CAS International Study Scholarship, Canavan said, "Without the CAS Scholarship and others, I definitely would not have been able to go to France and have the experience that I did."

Canavan explains that being in France exposed and taught her a lot about the real world and overall broadened her mind. She advised that students who wish to pursue a study abroad trip to "force yourself to step out of your comfort zone and try new things: new food, new movies, new music, new anything. Ask questions. Absorb your surroundings. Be adventurous. That's how I learned some of the most interesting and valuable things during my trip."