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President's Perspective (Sept. 2016)

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President's Perspective: Sept. 6, 2016

Dear Colleagues:

Welcome back for the 2016-17 academic year. We're off and running—literally. I can't remember ever seeing a school year start at the pace of this one. I take that as a sign of all we need to accomplish this year and the power of the opportunities we face.

This fall will be time full of change and growth. We've already celebrated the opening of the **Valley Dining Center**, a game changer for student living as well as a facility available to serve the whole campus and guests in the community. Be sure to plan a breakfast or lunch meeting at the center and take advantage of its nine micro-restaurants.



Pastaria is located in the new Valley Dining Center

And just 10 days ago, we celebrated the 50th anniversary of one of the University's most celebrated academic programs—the Department of Psychology's behavior analysis program. Across the nation, WMU-trained professionals in that discipline continue to change lives.

Our fall athletic teams are already off to a strong start, with competitions around the country. And, of course, the Bronco football team's win over Northwestern was special.

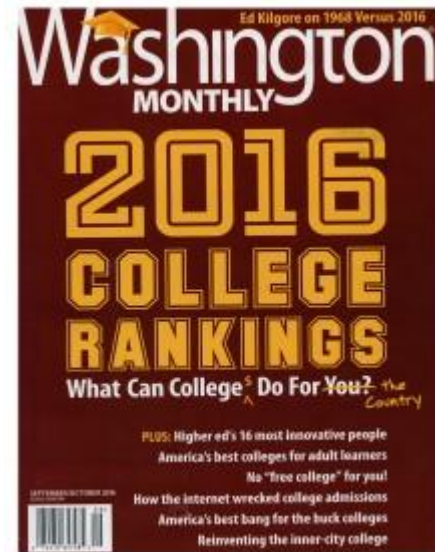
This week, we welcome a new trustee, appointed by the governor to serve through 2020. William F. Pickard of Bloomfield Hills is an alumnus with a long record of involvement with his alma mater and strong ties to higher education.

In the next few weeks alone, we'll come together repeatedly to celebrate:

- This Saturday's traditional CommUniverCity celebration for the whole community;
- The formal opening Friday, Sept. 16, of the new Solar Garden near Floyd Hall on the Parkview Campus;
- The opening of the Kalamazoo Autism Center Sept. 17 that will bring WMU's behavior analysis expertise to work on behalf of up to 40 clients at a time; and
- A new twist on our annual academic convocation Friday, Sept. 30, that will take place in the Bernhard Center and include a day of surrounding activities.

Washington Monthly

We go into the fall semester with positive reinforcement for the qualities that best describe WMU. On Aug. 29, Washington Monthly magazine released its latest round of rankings of colleges that make a difference for the nation. Our University came in at No. 64 among 303 national universities assessed. Each was measured for its ability to provide access and social mobility, provide cutting-edge research and educate the next generation of Ph.D.s., and demonstrate its commitment to community service. We were No. 26 in the nation for performance on student earnings 10 years after enrolling and No. 33, nationally, for community service.



Strategic Plan: The Gold Standard 2020

The qualities that put us so high in the Washington Monthly rankings are among those we have identified for ourselves as those we embrace in our strategic planning process. We begin this fall with the second iteration of our University's strategic plan firmly in place. The elements of the plan were settled on last spring, but over the summer, additional work and analysis has refined the path forward by setting priority strategies for achieving the plan's five overarching goals. In the coming weeks, you will see additional communication detailing that work and helping to provide more direction for individual units to develop their own, tailored plans for moving forward.

Convocation

As I referenced earlier, we've decided to recast fall convocation. We'll have a full day of activities planned for **Friday, Sept. 30**. The event will be held in the Bernhard Center, and the award ceremony and State of the University address will be at mid-day and followed by a picnic lunch on the Sangren pedestrian mall. Teaching with Technology, Assessment in Action, and Teaching and Learning-sessions will be held before and after convocation and the luncheon.

Please mark your calendars now to hold as much of that day as you can. Events will run from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Heritage Hall Governor's Award

Work on landscaping around our Heritage Hall Alumni Center continued over the summer, and I invite you to familiarize yourself with the Propsect Hill amenities, take a walk around the grounds and enjoy the view. We continue to be enormously proud of the effort and care that went into the Heritage Hall renovation. In August, we learned that the project—that took the building from the least energy efficient building on campus to one of the most efficient in all of Southwest Michigan—has won the the 2016 Governor's Energy Excellence Award in the public projects category. I think it's the first of many such honors that wonderful facility will see.



National accolades for WMU community members

Throughout the summer, members of our campus and extended University community have received accolades of enormous import. Our faculty research and scholarship has shown up everywhere from the pages of the Washington Post (Dr. Kevin Corder) to the The Royal Society of Chemistry's journal Chemistry World (Dr. Yirong Mo).

I would be remiss if I did not note two extraordinary awards made in just the past month.



During early August in Denver, **Dr. Alan Poling**, longtime professor of psychology, was lauded by the American Psychological Association with its International Humanitarian Award for his work in using behavior analysis techniques to assist in the training of African giant pouched rats to pinpoint buried land mines and identify tuberculosis in laboratory samples.

Just days later in San Francisco, alumnus and Trustee Emeritus **Dennis W. Archer** won the American Bar Association's 2016 ABA Medal. Given for outstanding service to the law and legal profession, the medal is regarded as the association's most prestigious award. Previous recipients include U.S. Supreme Court justices Oliver Wendell Holmes, Thurgood Marshall, and Sandra Day O'Connor.



New alums who were student standouts return to campus

Two very recent alumni are among our most celebrated young alums. They'll be back on campus next week to give us an update on their accomplishments that continued after their 2015 graduation. **Stephen John** and **Joseph Barnett**, inventors of NeoVent, will speak at 8 a.m. Friday, Sept. 16, in 2150 Schneider Hall. The event is free and open to the public. The duo invented their low-cost medical device to help preterm babies with underdeveloped lungs survive in underserved parts of the world. They have won seven major national young inventors awards—five of them while still undergrads here.

Thank you for all you do every day to make our University one that produces people who make the kind of contributions noted above. What you do every day will pay dividends for decades and generations to come. Welcome back to a new year of with all the potential to continue that kind of generational impact.

Continuing best,

John M. Dunn, President