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## College of Arts and Sciences E-News Issue 30: October 2015

College of Arts and Sciences

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WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY

# College of *Arts and Sciences*

e-News Issue 30: October 2015

## Upcoming CAS events



## Stay in touch!



## Update your information



Michigan Lt. Gov.  
Brian Calley visits  
WECAN, WMU's  
Evaluation Center  
for Autism and  
Neurodevelopmental  
disorder



## CAS News

- ▶ WMU and WMU-Cooley Innocence Project garner \$418,000 grant
- ▶ WMU, Wayne State team up to improve health of state's foster youths

## FACULTY Features

- ▶ Dr. Andre Venter, chemistry, awarded an NSF grant for chemical measurement and imaging
- ▶ Dr. Brian Wilson, comparative religion, winner of the 2015 State History award for "Dr. John Harvey Kellogg and the religion of biological living"
- ▶ Four College of Arts and Sciences faculty and staff honored at the 2015 Academic Convocation

## ALUMNI Profiles

- ▶ The College of Arts and Sciences will honor 21 outstanding alumni at the 2015 Alumni Achievement Awards on October 23
- ▶ School of Public Affairs and Administration's Blaine Wing '00 hired as Rochester's new city manager
- ▶ Dr. Elizabeth Warburton awarded Fulbright Postdoctoral Fellowship to Israel



# WMU-Cooley Law School Receives \$418,000 Grant

Olga Bonfiglio  
College of Arts and Sciences Writer

WMU-Cooley Law School has received a grant of \$418,000 from the U.S. Department of Justice to help defray costs for running the WMU-Cooley Law School Innocence Project.

The grant, “Postconviction Testing of DNA Evidence to Exonerate the Innocent in Michigan,” will help defray the costs associated with post-conviction case review, evidence location and DNA testing where the results may show actual innocence of convicted felons in Michigan.

In 2001, the WMU-CLSIP was specifically established to review cases under Michigan’s post-conviction DNA testing law, MCL 770.16. It is the only Michigan DNA project of its kind. The DNA statute provides a remedy for those wrongfully convicted incarcerated persons who are innocent of the charged offense and whose innocence can be established by DNA testing of the biological evidence collected at the time of the offense.

“This grant allows our undergraduate students to use their education to engage in their community while promoting social justice,” said Principal Investigator Ashlyn Kuersten, associate professor of gender and women’s studies at WMU. “I cannot imagine a better way for WMU students from diverse backgrounds and majors to connect their knowledge with experience.”

The project is a teaching clinic that trains law students and undergraduate students to screen cases of wrongful conviction. Establishing the existence of evidence can be extremely difficult because of the age of the case and because of the disarray of many of the property rooms of local law enforcement agencies.

The project is part of the Innocence Network, which has been credited with the release of over 329 wrongfully accused prisoners mainly through the use of DNA testing. In its short life, the project has exonerated three individuals.

Undergraduate students at WMU can take a course in the spring that will allow them to understand the factors common in wrongful convictions, such as police and prosecutorial misconduct, plea bargaining, eyewitness misidentification, false confessions, the use of jailhouse informants, unreliable forensic evidence and, particularly, ineffective assistance of counsel. Part of their course work will require them to screen applications to prepare them to intern for the actual Innocence Project where they will work with law students in reviewing case files, conducting interviews, analyzing cases and representing innocent clients in court. They will also assist assigned attorneys with research and pleadings for post-conviction proceedings.

Since its inception in 2001, the project has screened over 5,300 cases and the requested funding for investigators, experts and testing is critically important to support its current case review and the expected increase in cases resulting from the referral of approximately 200 cases from the New York Innocence Project who will no longer be taking Michigan cases.

"The grant will help us continue the important work of exonerating innocent Michigan citizens and train students in best practices," said Co-investigator Dr. Marla Mitchell-Cichon, who is also director of the Cooley Innocence Project at the WMU-Cooley Law School.

The grant allows the project to hire a full-time attorney and part-time file clerk. It also mutually benefits undergraduate students and law school students by allowing them to understand the challenges faced by the criminal justice system in Michigan.

Kuersten has been a faculty member at WMU since 1997, first with the Department of Political Science and, since 2013, in the Department of Gender and Women's Studies. Her research focuses on the role of race and gender in constitutional law.

Mitchell-Cichon has been teaching at the WMU-Cooley Law School since 1995. Her research focuses on the areas of criminal law, elder law, ethics, and clinical teaching.

Dr. Mark Hurwitz, professor of political science, is also a co-investigator for the project. He focuses his research on judicial politics in federal and state courts, judicial behavior and judicial selection and diversity, and is editor of Justice System Journal.

WMU-Cooley Law School has five campuses, offering Juris Doctor and Master of Laws degrees.

## WMU, Wayne State team up to improve health of state's foster youths

BY MARK SCHWERIN  
JULY 3, 2015 | WMU NEWS

KALAMAZOO, Mich.—In keeping with its widely known efforts to help youths both in and out of foster care, Western Michigan University is partnering with Wayne State University to improve the health of Michigan's foster youths.

With the help of a \$75,000 grant from Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan Foundation, an interdisciplinary research team from the two universities will determine whether Michigan's foster youth are receiving adequate preventive, dental and prenatal health care services. The project is being led by **Dr. Angelique Day**, a graduate of the WMU Interdisciplinary Health

Sciences Program and now WSU assistant professor, national foster care expert and director of Wayne State University's Transition to Independence Program for foster youth support.

Day will collaborate with **Dr. Amy Curtis**, an epidemiologist and WMU professor of physician assistant, **Dr. Rajib Paul**, WMU associate professor of statistics, **Dr. Kathleen Baker**, WMU associate professor of geography, and graduate students from both universities to analyze Medicaid and foster youth casework data in order to track county-by-county utilization.

## ABOUT THE STUDY

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The study builds upon WSU-funded research conducted last year by Day and Curtis to gauge adherence to a requirement imposed in 2010 when Michigan converted most foster youth health care administration from a fee-for-service model to a managed care system. That requirement is that youth entering the system have a well visit within 30 days. The interdisciplinary expansion of that work will examine data before, during and after that conversion from 2009 through 2012 to determine whether foster youth ages 14-21 are receiving annual well visits, examine the frequency of foster youth dental visits and the nature of dental diagnoses, and assess receipt of prenatal care among pregnant foster youth.

As many as 95 percent of foster care youth have at least one physical health condition and more than 50 percent experience two or more, due in large part to childhood abuse and neglect. Access to health care services is critically important to this population to improve health outcomes, which contribute to improved educational and social outcomes and prevent problems in later life.

# State of the University address, awards to highlight 2015 Convocation

BY CHERYL ROLAND  
SEPTEMBER 28, 2015 | WMU NEWS

KALAMAZOO, Mich.—Members of the Western Michigan University community will gather **Friday, Oct. 2**, for the University's formal annual Academic Convocation that will honor standout faculty and staff members and provide a platform for WMU's president to preview the University's direction for the future.



President Dunn speaks at the 2014 Convocation.

The event is set for **2 p.m.** in the Dalton Center Recital Hall. It will feature **President John M. Dunn's** annual State of the University address as well as a series of awards honoring faculty and staff achievements and service. The convocation is traditionally held during the opening weeks of fall semester and is designed as a signature event to welcome faculty, staff and students back to campus.

The traditional gathering to honor accomplishment and focus on the new academic year is free and open to the public. A reception, which also doubles as a campuswide gathering for employees called Fridays With Friends, will be held immediately following the convocation in the adjacent Richmond Center for Visual Arts.

## FACULTY AND STAFF AWARDS

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During the convocation, awards will be presented to 10 members of the WMU faculty and staff for their outstanding service and achievement. They will be honored as recipients of major annual awards in five categories:

- Distinguished Service Award, for faculty and staff members who have provided exceptional service to the University and its faculty, students and community.
- Distinguished Teaching Award, for faculty members who are exceptional educators and mentors and have demonstrated outstanding dedication.
- Emerging Faculty Scholars, honoring early-career faculty members who have demonstrated the promise to achieve national and international renown.
- Make a Difference Award, for staff members who reach far beyond their assigned duties to make WMU an even better place to work and study.
- Distinguished Faculty Scholar, which recognizes outstanding academic or artistic achievement within the larger national and international academic communities.

## 2015 Alumni Achievement Awards



On Friday, Oct. 23, the College of Arts and Sciences will host an Alumni Achievement Award Reception for outstanding contributions made by 21 influential alumni.

[View biographies](#)

**Dr. Jeffrey J. Richner `71, `73**, Archeologist (Retired), Midwest Archeological Center  
National Park Service  
Department of Anthropology

**Ms. Ellen Knuth `08**, Marketing Director, Panrimo  
Global and International Studies and Department of World Languages and Literatures

**Dr. Chad Schafer `95**, Associate Professor, Department of Statistics, Carnegie Mellon  
University  
Department of Statistics

**Dr. James Olson, `84**, Member, Clinical Research Division, Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research  
Center  
Department of Biological Sciences

**Dr. Brendan P. Kelly `97**, Assistant Professor, Division of Pediatric Cardiology, Kaiser  
Permanente  
Physician, Oregon Health Science University and Northwest Kaiser Permanente  
Department of Chemistry

**Mr. Thomas P. Englert `76**, Former CEO (Retired), Discount Tire Company, Inc.  
School of Communication

**Mr. Bill Monroe `63**, Vice President, Human Resources (Retired), W.R. Grace and Company  
Department of Economics

**Mr. Jeff W. Huebner `82**, Independent Art Writer, Journalist and Author  
Department of English

**Ms. Michele Richards `98**, Natural Resources Manager, Michigan Army National Guard  
Department of Environmental and Sustainability Studies

**Rep. Kristy Pagan `04**, State Representative, 21st District, Michigan House of Representatives  
Department of Gender and Women's Studies

**Mr. James McManus `92**, Planning Director, Barry County, Michigan  
Instructor, Western Michigan University  
Department of Geography

**Dr. Brian R. Shaw `73**, Dean, Anthony G. Oettinger School of Science and Technology  
Intelligence  
Department of Geosciences

**Dr. Michael Adas, `65**, Abraham E. Voorhees, Professor of History and Board of Governors  
Chair Emeritus, Rutgers University  
Department of History

**Ms. Valerie A. Long `89, `04**, Biology Teacher, Loy Norrix High School, Kalamazoo, Michigan  
The Mallinson Institute for Science Education

**Ms. Marci Tuzinsky `96**, Dean, Community High School, Ann Arbor Public Schools  
Department of Mathematics

**Mr. David J. Paul `89, `92**, Instructor, Western Michigan University  
Department of Philosophy

**Dr. Vladislav Malyshkin `97**, Senior Scientist, A.F. Ioffe Physical-Technical Institute  
Department of Physics

**Mr. James S. Brady `66**, Senior Council, Office Managing Member, Dykema Gossett PLLC  
Department of Political Science

**Dr. Shezeen Oah `89, `90**, Professor, Department of Psychology, Chung-Ang University  
Department of Psychology

**Ms. Amy Ostrander `06**, Associate Technical Advisor, Food and Nutrition Security, Project  
Concern International  
School of Public Affairs and Administration

**Mr. Greg Sumner `97**, Flight Officer, United Airlines  
Department of Spanish



# Rochester hires new city manager

<http://www.candgnews.com/news/rochester-hires-new-city-manager-86709>

## Dr. Elizabeth Warburton Receives Fulbright Postdoctoral Fellowship to Israel

Olga Bonfiglio  
College of Arts and Sciences Writer

Dr. Elizabeth Warburton is packing her bags to head to Israel for a 20-month stint as a Fulbright Postdoctoral Fellow at Ben Gurion University of the Negev in Israel. She will work with Professor Boris Krasnov, a leading international expert in parasitology.

Warburton will study the fitness costs of parasitism in *Meriones crassus*, a desert rodent, which is native to the area. Fitness refers to the natural selection of traits that impact future generations of species.

“This is an amazing opportunity to work with Professor Krasnov,” said Warburton. “I’m also excited to explore a new part of the world with its different landscape and culture. I like new experiences.”

Warburton, 35, has been researching the ecology of host-parasite interactions since she was an undergraduate biology student at St. Mary’s College of Notre Dame. There she researched the relationship between parasites that have left eggs in the soil and earthworms that move those eggs through the soil.

She initially became interested in parasitology through frequent visits to her mother’s family’s farm in Indiana and during a part-time job at a veterinary clinic near South Bend, Indiana. The vet clinic led her to take a course in parasitology at St. Mary’s and introduced her to a “whole new world.”

“People don’t think about parasites or their impact on the Earth and in animals and human beings,” she said. “They can affect the immune response in mammals and even modulate allergic and autoimmune responses.

Warburton wrote her senior thesis on parasitology, which led her to Emporia State University in Kansas, where she earned her Master of Science degree in biological science. She studied parasite evolution in free-living roundworms and their likelihood of adapting to the parasitic

lifestyle. After working for a time at MPI Research in Mattawan, she developed contacts at WMU and subsequently became a doctoral student in biological science. She has been working with WMU Biological Sciences Professor Maarten Vonhof to research how and why parasites are distributed in the manner that they are around the world and why certain hosts are more likely to be infected than others.

Warburton became acquainted with Professor Krasnov's work while she was researching her dissertation. She contacted him to sponsor her application for the Fulbright—and he heartily agreed.

Warburton has received accolades from the American Society of Parasitologists, the American Society of Mammalogists, the Southwestern Association of Parasitologists and the Annual Midwestern Conference of Parasitologists. She has received awards for outstanding research at Emporia State and WMU. Her recent publication includes an article in *Oikos* on the patterns of parasite community dissimilarity, which examines the significant role of land use and lack of distance-decay in a bat-helminth system.