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October 2017 archived news items

Three professors to be honored with Distinguished Teaching Awards

CONTACT: MARK SCHWERIN

OCTOBER 4, 2017 | WMU NEWS

KALAMAZOO, Mich.—Western Michigan University will honor three faculty members for being exceptional educators and mentors and demonstrating outstanding dedication to their work.

Drs. Ariel Anderson, Louann Bierlein Palmer and Gwen Tarbox will be recognized as recipients of this year's Distinguished Teaching Awards during WMU's Academic Convocation at **11 a.m. Friday, Oct. 6**, on the second floor of the Bernhard Center. The annual event includes a State of the University address by **Dr. Edward Montgomery**, WMU's recently installed ninth president. In addition to the Distinguished Teaching Awards, the event will feature presentations of other campuswide awards honoring this year's Emerging Scholar and Distinguished Faculty Scholars as well as winners of the Distinguished Service and Make a Difference awards.

Initiated in 2006, the Distinguished Teaching Award is the highest honor given by the University to recognize faculty members for their work with students. Anderson, Bierlein Palmer and Tarbox join 25 other faculty members who have been honored since the start of the award program. A similar program, the WMU Alumni Association Teacher Excellence Award, was conducted between 1966 and 2001 and honored 131 faculty members.

ANDERSON



Anderson

Anderson, a professor of teaching, learning and educational studies, is an authority on early childhood education and socialization, and she coordinates WMU's Early Childhood Program in the College of Education and Human Development. She is a longtime researcher and author of dozens of articles and technical reports on topics that include the importance of play in children's lives, children's definition of reality and socialization into the student role.

Writing in support of her nomination, a former graduate assistant noted the long-lasting impact Anderson had on her. The nominator is now completing a doctoral degree in rehabilitation counselor education at Michigan State University, where Anderson earned her doctoral degree.

"What stands out when I think about Dr. Anderson's example as an educator is the importance of cultivating relationships, true student-teacher alliances, in helping students to not only master content, but also cultivate professional dispositions," she wrote. "Her keen ability to assess student strengths and address individual learning needs in classes that often exceeded 90 students was uncanny."

The nominator also lauded Anderson's ability to continually update and reinvent course content to keep up with the times.

"These efforts have not gone unrecognized by her students," she continued. "In fact, when I have an opportunity to visit with Dr. Anderson in Kalamazoo, it is not uncommon to encounter

graduates in the community who stop to thank her for being a memorable and influential part of their education. Although I was assigned to serve Dr. Anderson, it was truly she who served me."

Another former student, who first met Anderson while taking an early childhood education class, cited her ability to make students feel welcome, as well as her honesty, compassion and a zeal for life.

"You could tell how passionate Dr. Anderson was about her work," she said. "... I always looked forward to her course because each class was always different."

At times, Anderson would let students help steer the class's direction, she said.

"Dr. Anderson let her students gain insight on topics that are important and intriguing," she wrote. "Many times, her assignments had topics chosen by the students, giving us an opportunity to explore a topic of interest."

Anderson earned by doctoral and master's degrees from Michigan State University and a bachelor's degree from the University of Michigan. She worked at MSU as an instructor before joining the WMU faculty in 1986.

BIERLEIN PALMER



Bierlein Palmer

Bierlein Palmer, a professor of educational leadership, research and technology, has research interests in a broad array of K-12 and higher education reform and policy issues and has published research on such topics as charter school overseers. Students lauded her as both a teacher and advisor.

"Dr. Bierlein Palmer was instrumental in instructing, guiding and supporting me through coursework, my proposal, comprehensive exam and dissertation," wrote one former student, who had Bierlein Palmer as her doctoral committee chair. "I am still in awe of her ability to know just the right time and way to offer me encouragement or challenge me to go deeper. Dr. Bierlein Palmer's support prompted me to push myself to produce the best work I could. ... Somehow she made me feel like I was the only student she was teaching."

Another former student singled Bierlein Palmer out for her help in completing her dissertation as a dissertation committee member and then chair.

"She helped me stay focused on my work," she wrote. "On the day of my defense, I wasn't sure who was most proud. Louann or my husband. She helped me change my life for the better."

Another former student noted Bierlein Palmer's assistance as a teacher, advisor and dissertation chair and helping her complete her dissertation in record time.

"I met Dr. Bierlein Palmer in 2008 when I first joined the program, and I immediately knew she would be the best person to guide me through my Ph.D. program," she wrote. "I greatly benefited from her unrelenting commitment to student success. ... She was always honest and thoughtful with her feedback and provided productive advice and solutions. The dynamic pace at which I worked with her during my program kept me motivated and engaged in the process of learning."

Bierlein Palmer earned a doctoral degree from Northern Arizona University, a master's degree from the University of Arizona and a bachelor's degree from Michigan State University. In addition to teaching, she serves as a graduate college faculty fellow.

TARBOX



Tarbox

Tarbox, a professor of English, is an authority on children's literature and culture, women's literature and African American literature. Her classroom and research endeavors focus on fictional communities in film and literature and their effects on girls' culture and development.

A graduate student, who has worked with Tarbox since 2010 as both a master's and doctoral student, praised Tarbox for her advice and counsel.

"Dr. Tarbox's mentorship, advising and guidance have had a profound impact on my career, and among Ph.D. programs I was accepted to, I chose WMU specifically for Dr. Tarbox's high level of expertise and her reputation for excellence in our field. Her dedication as a mentor is exemplified by her commitment to modeling exceptional teaching, research and service in the field of children's literature and comics studies."

Another doctoral student spoke highly of Tarbox's dedication.

"Based on my work with Dr. Tarbox over the past four years, I fully believe that she exemplifies the ideals that we admire most in great teachers—most notably her consistent commitment to student success both inside and outside the classroom," he wrote. "... However, it is her dedication to student success outside the classroom that truly sets her apart."

Another nominator met Tarbox at the Children's Literature Association Conference in 2012 as a recent graduate student from outside the United States, eager to connect with those who could help him break into children's literature as a field of study.

"Dr. Tarbox was one of the first people to take the time to sit down with me and talk about my work in a critical and constructive manner, giving me an opportunity to grow and connect with the children's literature community" he wrote. "... Dr. Tarbox's willingness to spend so much time and energy working with a Canadian scholar, who is unaffiliated with WMU, speaks to her vision for scholarship beyond her own classroom and research."

Tarbox earned doctoral and master's degrees from Purdue University, a master's degree from the University of London and a bachelor's degree from the University of Michigan-Flint. She served as an assistant professor at California State University, a graduate instructor at Purdue University and a researcher at Bain and Co. Inc. before joining the WMU faculty in 1999.

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Chemistry associate professor to receive Emerging Scholar Award

CONTACT: DEANNE PUCA

OCTOBER 4, 2017 | WMU NEWS



Mezei

KALAMAZOO, Mich.—A Western Michigan University associate professor who is leading research to study new methods for purifying water will be honored by Western Michigan University as an emerging scholar during a campuswide awards ceremony **Friday, Oct. 6.**

Dr. Gellert Mezei will be presented the 2017 Emerging Scholar Award during WMU's academic convocation ceremonies at **11 a.m.** in the Bernhard Center. The event will feature WMU **President Edward Montgomery's** State of the University address as well as the presentation of four other sets of campuswide awards honoring Distinguished Faculty Scholars, Distinguished Teaching Award recipients, those being honored with Distinguished Service Awards and those receiving Make a Difference Awards.

EMERGING SCHOLAR AWARD

The Emerging Scholar Award program was launched late in 2006 to acknowledge the accomplishments of WMU faculty members who are among the rising stars in U.S. higher

education. It is designed to celebrate the contributions of faculty who are in the first decade of their careers at WMU and who, by virtue of their contributions to scholarship or creative activity, have achieved national recognition and demonstrated outstanding promise to achieve renown in their continuing work. The award goes to scholars nominated for consideration through a campuswide selection process and carries a \$2,000 cash prize.

MEZEI

Mezei, a faculty member since 2007, has developed a novel class of compounds called "nanojars," doing research that could potentially assist in purifying water.

Working with a 2014 National Science Foundation grant for \$284,833, Mezei's team has shown that nanojars can reduce levels of arsenic and chromate from water to those acceptable to the Environmental Protection Agency.

He has had his work not only published in several peer-reviewed journals, but also featured on the cover of prestigious journals such as "Chemical Communications," "Chemistry — A European Journal," "Dalton Transactions" and "Green Chemistry."

Mezei has been a mentor and supervisor for numerous graduate and undergraduate students and worked with the American Chemical Society's Project SEED for economically disadvantaged high school students. He also has assisted with the Science Olympiad, organized activities for "Chemistry Day at the Museum" in Kalamazoo and participated in WMU student orientation and advising events. He has been an active member of the American Chemical Society since 2000.

He has received numerous awards at WMU, including the 2012 Arts and Sciences Teaching and Research Award; 2012 and 2016 Discovery and Dissemination Awards; 2008, 2010 and 2017 Faculty Research and Creative Activities Awards; and a 2010 Impacting Communities by Advancing Chemistry Award.

He earned his bachelor's and master's degrees in chemistry from Babes-Bolyai University in Romania and a Ph.D. from the University of Puerto Rico.

Mezei's work was recognized by fellow scientists around the globe who recommended him for the Emerging Scholar Award. His "creative approach to a stunning range of research problems has led to significant advancements in scientific knowledge as well as to practical applications in different fields of chemistry..." said a professor of chemistry at another university who is a Nobel Laureate in chemistry.

A colleague in WMU's chemistry department praised Mezei not only for his impact in the field, but "societal applications, such as water treatment around nuclear wastes, new synthetic methodologies for pharmaceuticals and highly effective catalysts." In addition, as a contributor the past eight years to Chemistry Day, he "was able to show the power of science to young children with his chemiluminescence and volcano demonstrations."

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Professors get \$2.6 million to train English as second language learners

CONTACT: MARK SCHWERIN
OCTOBER 6, 2017 | WMU NEWS



Protacio

KALAMAZOO, Mich.—In response to the exploding number of English language learners in Michigan, the U.S. Department of Education's Office of English Language Acquisition has awarded a \$2.6 million grant to a team of Western Michigan University professors to boost professional development efforts for teachers working with English learners.

WMU is the only university in Michigan among this year's awardees to obtain funding.

ABOUT THE PROJECT



Piazza

Drs. Selena Protacio and **Susan Piazza**, associate professor and professor, respectively, and **Virginia David** and **Hsiao-Chin Kuo**, assistant professors, all in the Department of Special Education and Literacy Studies, will use the five-year training grant to undertake the ELATE program, English Learners and Teacher Education. The effort will provide a rigorous and comprehensive professional development program for both pre-service and in-service teachers. WMU pre-service teachers who have an interest in earning their ESL endorsement can apply to be part of the pre-service cohort wherein they would take three out of seven courses in the program. The classes would be paid for by the grant.

Meanwhile, WMU has partnered with six local education agencies, which have high needs in terms of educators with an expertise in working with English learners. Project ELATE will provide substantial financial support for these in-service teachers as they work toward earning the English as a second language endorsement. In addition, other activities of Project ELATE include hosting an annual ESL conference as well as a Family and Community Engagement Symposium.

A PIVOTAL EFFORT



David

"Being awarded this National Professional Development grant will allow us to increase the number of teachers with an English as Second Language endorsement in the state, and particularly in southwest Michigan," says Protacio, the project's principal investigator. "This is pivotal in addressing the shortage of ESL-endorsed teachers in the state."

The English learners those trained professionals go on to teach will benefit in the end, she notes.

"Our hope is that through our grant project, we ultimately will be able to help improve the educational experiences of the increasing number of English learners in the state," Protacio says.



Kuo

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WMU researchers get \$12.5 million grant for school leadership renewal

CONTACT: CHERYL ROLAND
OCTOBER 10, 2017 | WMU NEWS



Reeves



Shen

KALAMAZOO, Mich.—Two longtime school leadership researchers at Western Michigan University will use **one of the largest single grants ever awarded to the University** for a three-year effort aimed at intense school leadership development in high-poverty schools across West Michigan.

A \$12.5 million award from the U.S. Department of Education will fund the High-Impact Leadership for School Renewal Project, led by **Dr. Patricia Reeves**, associate professor, and **Dr. Jianping Shen**, the John E. Sandberg Professor of Education and the Gwen Frostic Endowed Chair, in WMU's Department of Educational Leadership, Research and Technology. The project focuses on two major outcomes—developing a strong pool of practicing school leaders and improving student achievement.

Working with a pool of elementary schools in 20 West Michigan counties, the project will support teams of school principals and teacher leaders by:

- Providing intense professional development and support, and money for renewal projects for teams of leaders in 75 schools that are implementing a set of new literacy essentials.
- Placing a trained team of school renewal coaches in each project school.
- Providing a lower level of professional development support and funding for leaders in an additional 75 schools.
- Applying a set of proven school leadership practices for school renewal and sustainable implementation.

The project is a collaborative effort involving WMU and two statewide initiatives called the Reading Now Network and the General Education Leadership Network. Patricia Reeves, the project director, says the initiative began among a group of West Michigan school superintendents determined to improve student reading levels by working together to build a school leadership model around the practices they saw in use at high-performing schools.

"Initiatives that build from the ground up, like this one, are so precious," says Reeves. "They can ultimately lead to real change, and our job is to provide the support necessary to make this enormously ambitious project work and keep a complex range of moving parts in sync."

The schools selected to take part in the effort will be from a 190-school pool in Regions 3 and 7 of the Michigan Association of School Administrators. Region 3 includes Allegan, Barry, Ionia, Kent, Lake, Mason, Mecosta, Montcalm, Muskegon, Newaygo, Oceana, Osceola and Ottawa

counties. MASA's Region 7 includes Berrien, Branch, Calhoun, Cass, Kalamazoo, St Joseph and Van Buren counties.

Reeves says the initiative grew out of work that began among school superintendents in Region 3 who formed the Reading Now Network to achieve equity of opportunity for all students regardless of school, family or community circumstances. The superintendents identified five schools that were outperforming expectations based on their demographics and deployed a team to conduct case studies on the leadership practices found at those schools. To complement and extend their findings, the Reading Now Network leadership endorsed the General Education Leadership Network Literacy Essentials developed by a group of literacy specialists. As a result of the Reading Now Network's efforts, more than 95 percent of the school districts in Regions 3 and 7 have made a commitment to the Reading Now Network findings and the GELN Literacy Essentials.

"With this grant, we will focus on turning that commitment into deep implementation and results," says Reeves.

Each of the 75 high-need schools selected will receive professional development for the principal and a team of three teachers who may be future principals. The school team will be assigned a team of coaches who will work with them over a 30-month period. Each of the schools selected also will receive \$20,000 over the 30-month period for school renewal efforts.

WMU will provide project management and coordinate all the training, development and support work by coaches and conduct data collection and analysis. University researchers will be tracking the schools for progress in seven areas of school leadership considered critical for school renewal. They include such qualities as commitment to school renewal and data-informed decision-making.

"Building on the work previously funded by three school leadership grants and two Wallace Foundation grants," says project co-director Shen, "this project will continue to develop and validate the renewal model, as opposed to the reform model, for school improvement."

In addition to the 75 schools selected for the initial three years of the funded period, a control group of another 75 schools will receive a less-intense level of leadership development support and \$4,000 each during the last six months of the grant for school renewal work. Reeves says if the project is funded for a fourth and fifth year, those 75 control-group schools also will receive the same full leadership development treatment as the initial group.

"We're hoping to see impressive enough results in student achievement in the initial three years that we will be funded for two additional years," she notes.

The project will be led by Reeves and her WMU colleague Jianping Shen as well as two educators from Ottawa County—**Dr. Kyle Mayer**, assistant superintendent for instructional services with the Ottawa Area Intermediate School District, and **Douglas Greer**, director of school improvement with the OAISD.

REEVES

Reeves specializes in educational leadership and evaluation, measurement and research. She is co-author of School ADvance, one of two research-based performance evaluation systems for school leaders validated by the Michigan Council for Educator Effectiveness and adopted by more than 80 percent of Michigan school districts. Her research interests include school district and superintendent leadership, the development and credentialing of school leaders, educator performance assessment and evaluation, and education policy. Before joining the WMU faculty, Reeves held several positions, from teacher to superintendent, in the Vicksburg Community Schools.

SHEN

Shen, a 2017 WMU Distinguished Grant Awardee and co-director of the project, has led numerous large research projects focused on such topics as principal leadership, school renewal, data-informed decision-making, teacher retention and attrition, alternative certification, and systemic change.

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13th International Conference on the Arts in Society, Emily Carr University of Art + Design | Oct. 11

Arts in Society invites proposals for paper presentations, workshops/interactive sessions, posters/exhibits, virtual lightning talks, virtual posters, or colloquia due Nov. 27, 2018.

Candidates for the position of vice president for research at WMU

Contact: [Cheryl P Roland](#)

Oct. 16, 2017

Kalamazoo, MI—Four candidates for the position of vice president for research at Western Michigan University will make public presentations on campus during the final two weeks in October.

Presentations by these candidates have been scheduled for these days and dates and in these locations. All presentations are from 1:30 to 3 p.m.



Dr. Sherine Obare

Wednesday, **Oct. 18**, Fetzer Center's Putney Auditorium, [Dr. Sherine Obare](#), WMU interim vice president for research and professor of chemistry. Obare has been a WMU faculty member since 2004. An internationally recognized researcher in the areas of nanoscale materials for drug delivery, environmental remediation and alternative energy, she has attracted more than \$4.5 million in external funding and has been the recipient of a National Science Foundation CAREER award, as well as a number of other awards and fellowships. In 2013, she was named one of Michigan's top 25 professors. Obare earned a bachelor's degree from West Virginia State University and a doctoral degree from the University of South Carolina. She did post-doctoral work at Johns Hopkins University.



Dr. Richard Inouye

Tuesday, **Oct. 24**, Fetzer Center's Putney Auditorium, **Dr. Richard Inouye**, associate vice president for research and associate dean of the Graduate School at Utah State University. Inouye has been at USU since 2013. Before that, he served as a program officer in the Division of Environmental Biology at the National Science Foundation for seven years. He also held a faculty position at Idaho State University where his research focused on plant ecology, plant-animal interactions and water quality. He was a principal or co-principal investigator on more than \$8 million in research funding. Inouye earned a bachelor's degree from Reed College and a doctoral degree from the University of Arizona before doing post-doctoral work at the University of Minnesota.



Dr. Terri Goss Kinzy

Thursday, **Oct. 26**, Rooms 157-159 of the Bernhard Center, **Dr. Terri Goss Kinzy**, vice president for research at Rutgers University and professor of biochemistry and molecular biology and pediatrics. Kinzy joined Rutgers' Robert Wood Johnson Medical School faculty in 1995. In addition to her faculty role, she leads Rutgers' campuswide research efforts. Internationally known for her work in the area of gene expression, she has served as director of the

RWJMS/Rutgers/Princeton University M.D./Ph.D. program, executive director of the medical school's DNA Core Facility and senior associate dean of its Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences and Research. Kinzy earned a bachelor's degree from the University of Akron and a doctoral degree from Case Western University before doing post-doctoral work at Carnegie Mellon University.



Dr. Kent Keyser

Tuesday, **Oct. 31**, Fetzer Center's Putney Auditorium, **Dr. Kent Keyser**, associate vice president for research and professor of vision sciences at the University of Alabama at Birmingham. Keyser earned a bachelor's degree from Oberlin College and a doctoral degree from Stony Brook University. He was a staff fellow at the National Institutes of Health for two years before returning to Stony Brook and then moving to the University of California-San Diego, where he was an associate research neuroscientist. In 1996, he moved to UAB, where he founded and directed the High Resolution Imaging Facility and served as director of the University-Wide Vision Science Research Center before taking on his current role. His research and teaching activities have been funded by the NIH, NSF and private foundations.

The successful candidate will replace **Dr. Daniel Litynski**, who returned to the engineering faculty last summer after serving for seven years as vice president for research.