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WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY

College of *Arts and Sciences*

e-News Issue 35: March 2016

Upcoming CAS events



Stay in touch!



Update your information



NASA scientist
Colleen Mouw '00,
studies marine plants
and receives U.S.
presidential award



ARTS AND SCIENCES News

- ▶ Global collaborative research and teaching projects showcased at Asian forum
- ▶ Honors College Lyceum series on water continues
- ▶ STEM program excites Gobles High School science students

FACULTY Features

- ▶ Dr. Mariam Konaté, gender and women's studies and Africana studies, honored as co-facilitator for the 2014-15 Race, Power and Privilege learning community
- ▶ Dr. Charles Henderson, physics, appointed to National Academy of Sciences Committee
- ▶ Dr. Jana Schulman, English and Medieval Institute, receives \$180,000 NEH grant for summer institute

ALUMNI Profiles

- ▶ Joe Sobieralski MPA '12, tapped as new VP for Battle Creek Unlimited
- ▶ Oakland University names Bonnie Bochniak MPA '05, new state relations director

STUDENT Story

- ▶ Work ethic and drive is key to success for Elizabeth Blasko, senior, public relations

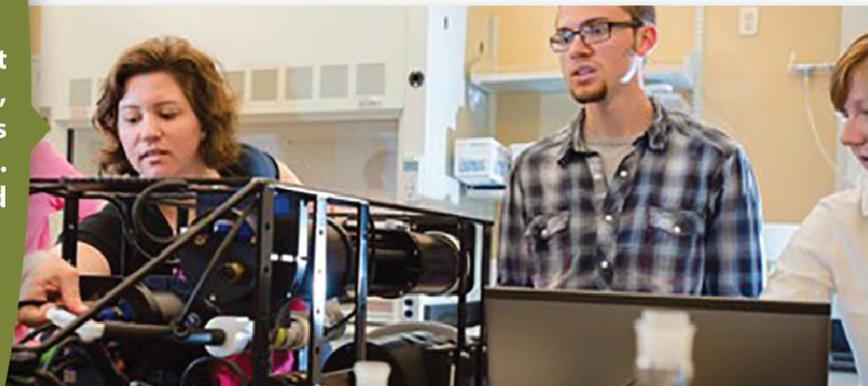


Photo courtesy of MLive

Asian Forum at WMU

International Conference

March 28 to 29, 2016

WMU Fetzer Center

- [Registration form](#)
- [Conference program](#)

**For WMU and Global Partners:
Enhancing and Expanding
Our Ties in Education and Research**

Purpose: To showcase current, collaborative research and teaching projects between Western Michigan University faculty, staff and their partners in Asia, and to highlight the role international partnerships play in advancing these projects through a multidisciplinary and multi-faceted conference. The conference sponsors invite paper and panel proposals from scholars and international education professionals to exchange ideas addressing contemporary challenges facing Asia and the world, and to explore ways to expand and strengthen our ties in education and research programs.



Format: The conference will feature paper presentations, panel discussions, and workshops. Proposals related to globalization, global governance and sustainable development are welcome. In addition, the conference sponsors invite proposals for exploring innovative ways to enhance existing educational cooperation, partnership, and research collaboration. Following the first day's presentations, the second day will offer conference participants opportunities to interact with relevant departments and campus units at WMU for further cooperation and collaboration, as well as to take a tour of Kalamazoo and its vicinity.

For more information, contact the conference facilitator:

Dr. Ying Zeng

WMU senior coordinator on Asia

hige-asia@wmich.edu

+1 (269) 387- 3840

Sponsored by the Diether H. Haenicke Institute for Global Education, Confucius Institute at WMU, Soga Japan Center and the Timothy Light Center for Chinese Studies.

Spring 2016 Lyceum Lecture Series

Spring 2016 Lyceum Lecture Series

Our Blue Marble - Water, Home, and humanity (part i)

Our Blue Marble launches the first of two Lee Honors College Lyceum lecture series exploring water. During spring and fall 2016, we will explore water, one of our most precious and also most vulnerable global natural resources, from multiple perspectives. Part I (spring 2016) will examine water issues in the Great Lakes region, with a special focus on Kalamazoo, and Part II (fall 2016) will broaden the perspective to consider global issues related to water.

All lectures are free and open to the community. Light refreshments provided. Lectures will be held Wednesdays from noon to 1 p.m. in the Lee Honors College lounge, unless otherwise noted. Lunch is not provided, but brown bag lunches are welcome.

January 13

"Pathways of Change: Natives, Newcomers, and the Waterways of Northeastern North America"

Dr. Jose Antonio Brandao, History

[Read](#) an article on this lecture by Olga Bonfiglio.

January 20

"'More Powerful than the Governor:' The Michigan Office of Drain Commissioner"

Dr. Denise Keele, Political Science and Environmental & Sustainability Studies, and Dr. Lynne Heasley, History and Environmental & Sustainability Studies, and Discussant Pat Crowley, Kalamazoo County Drain Commissioner

[Read](#) an article on this lecture by Olga Bonfiglio.

January 27

"A Transborder History of Controlling Water in the Great Lakes - St. Lawrence Basin"

Dr. Dan Mcfarlane, Environmental & Sustainability Studies

[Read](#) an article on this lecture by Olga Bonfiglio.

February 3

"The State of the Water State: Michigan Waters with a Focus on the Future of Agriculture"

James Clift, Policy Director, Michigan Environmental Council

[Read](#) an article on this lecture by Olga Bonfiglio.

February 10

"Urban Dead Seas: Road Deicers, Fertilizers and the Dynamics of Urban Lakes"

Dr. Carla Koretsky, Geosciences, and Environmental & Sustainability Studies

[Read](#) an article on this lecture by Olga Bonfiglio.

February 17

"Innovations in In-Situ Bioremediation of Organic Compounds"

Dr. Michael Barcelona, Chemistry

February 24

"Water Resources Engineering and Management in Michigan"

Ltc. Decker Hains, Ph.D., Civil Engineering

March 2

"Extraction of Toxic Inorganic Anion Contaminants from Aqueous Media by Nanojars"

Dr. Gellert Mezei, Chemistry

March 9

Spring Break - no lecture

March 16

"Recent Developments in Watershed Hydrological Research and Future Directions"

Dr. Chansheng He, Geography

March 23

"Environmental Effects and Recovery from a Major Diluted Bitumen (Tar Sands) Oil Spill into the Kalamazoo River, Michigan"

Dr. Stephen Hamilton, President, Kalamazoo River Watershed Council and Professor of Ecosystem Ecology and Biogeochemistry at MSU

An update on the condition of the Kalamazoo River following the 2010 Enbridge oil spill can be found [here](#).

March 30

"Reimagining the Freshwater Heart of North America"

Alison Swan, Environmental & Sustainability Studies

Alison will be presenting on two of her book projects - "Fresh Water: Women Writing on the Great Lakes" and "The Saugatuck Dunes," and the ways in which the literary and visual arts might help us reimagine our relationship with the Great Lakes and their shores. For more information, visit her [website](#).

[Poet Alison Swan](#) reimagines the freshwater heart of North America in a literary way

April 6

"Multimodal Trails on the Great Lakes"

Dr. Dave Lemberg, AICP, Geography

April 13

"Stormwater Management Has its Day: Examples from University Campus MS4 Permits"

Christe Alwin, Municipal Separate Storm Water Sewer System (MS4) Program Coordinator, Michigan Department of Environmental Quality

STEM outreach fosters science excitement, gives career direction

Elena Hines
College of Arts and Sciences Staff
Writer

“Discovery and detective work gets lost when we merely lecture on concepts and principles,” Dr. Wendy Beane, Western Michigan University assistant professor of biological sciences, says. “Getting hands-on is where the excitement is.” She and colleague Diana Blouin, WMU biological sciences undergraduate academic advisor, have started engaging high school students in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) projects as well as talking to them about how to pursue those fields in the future, if something sparks their interest.



Blouin had connections in Gobles, which is a Project Lead The Way school currently offering three biomedical courses (principles of biomedical sciences, human body systems, and medical interventions) in a state-of-the-art lab. STEM instructor Bob Lisowski wanted someone to speak to his classes; Beane was willing to talk, but thought the students might rather work with animals like she does (since she studies regenerative mechanisms of planarian flatworms)

So on Dec. 8, the trio conducted a pilot study involving four separate STEM classes combined into three separate presentations/lab practicums. Eighty-five students participated in a 25-minute science lecture, a 10-minute biological sciences career information session including handouts, and 30-40 minutes of practical (hands-on) experience. The lab focused on stem cell and regeneration experiments, which examined planarian flatworm regrowth following microsurgery performed by the students. In addition, students were able to manipulate the regeneration process and then follow regeneration (post-visit) over the next two weeks.

“The students were so excited, they were taking pictures with their phones,” Blouin said.

Beane added, “it was awesome!” The work the Gobles pupils did is the same type of research Beane is already doing in her own lab — STEM research on stem cells. As Blouin put it, “when she says ‘real and practical,’ she means ‘real and practical!’”

The sessions were extremely well received. “Western Michigan’s research on stem cells captivated my students,” Lisowski said. “The presentation and hands-on activity with flatworms really opened their eyes to the value of biomedical science research. Some of them are now excited about entering WMU to take part in such valuable research.”

That's where Blouin's efforts come in. "I can really speak to people entering STEM majors at a university—hopefully our university," she said. One student upon which the project definitely made an impact was senior Emily Bolhuis. "I didn't think that I wanted to go to Western before," she said. "But after their visit to my class and seeing what kind of research is done at Western, I knew that WMU was the school for me."

Blouin tries to help students connect with the proper majors and education. "They can see something done but have no clue how to get there," she said. "Putting a face to it really helped student connect the experience with research at Western." As a result of the visit, students can contact Blouin earlier, get their questions answered and find out about options for majors that will help them pursue their goals. She distributed flyers about biology and biomedical sciences, and what students can do with each major.

"What made (the project) work so well is that it wasn't just me and the instructor talking about science without the practical aspect," Beane said. "It was really the combination of the commitment of the local institution to follow up, engaging in the practicum, and Diana giving them information on how to get into our program." She added, "it allows (students) to connect with professors and graduate advisors on a personal level," making the college experience "less scary." The pair plans to make this activity an annual event at Gobles, but would like to expand to other schools as funding is available.

Beane believes that as a nation, we don't do a good enough job exposing kids to the most interesting part of science. "Their exposure is from TV — seeing in one hour what would take weeks in real life, and finding the criminal," she said. "There's trial, error, observation and detective work...you don't know what the answer is going to be." This is what she hopes to engage students with; hopes they get a feel for what it's about.

The United States Department of Education also places a high priority on STEM. "The United States has developed as a global leader, in large part, through the genius and hard work of its scientists, engineers, and innovators," it says on its website, www.ed.gov/stem. "In a world that's becoming increasingly complex, where success is driven not only by what you know, but by what you can do with what you know, it's more important than ever for our youth to be equipped with the knowledge and skills to solve tough problems, gather and evaluate evidence, and make sense of information. These are the types of skills that students learn by studying science, technology, engineering and math."

Few American students pursue expertise in these fields, however, and there is an inadequate pipeline of teachers skilled in those subjects. As a result, President Barack Obama has set a priority of increasing the number of students and teachers who are proficient in these fields.

The department projects that between 2010 and 2020, there will be increases of 14 percent in mathematics jobs, 22 percent in computer systems analyst jobs, 32 percent in systems software developer jobs, 36 percent in medical scientist jobs and 62 percent in biomedical engineer jobs.

President Obama has articulated a clear priority for STEM education: within a decade, American students must "move from the middle to the top of the pack in science and math." The

Committee on STEM Education (CoSTEM) is facilitating a cohesive national strategy to increase the impact of federal investments in the areas of improving STEM instruction in preschool through 12th grade, increasing and sustaining public youth engagement with STEM, improving the STEM experience for undergraduate students, better serving groups historically underrepresented in STEM fields, and designing graduate education for tomorrow's STEM workforce.

WMU awards recognize diversity and inclusion efforts

by Deanne Puca
February 4, 2016 | WMU News

KALAMAZOO, Mich.—Western Michigan University will recognize campus efforts toward promoting diversity and inclusion by honoring two individuals and three organizations at the University's first Spring Convocation at **3:30 p.m. Friday, Feb. 5**, in the Fetzer Center.

The Office of Diversity and Inclusion will recognize its honorees for two Excellence in Diversity Awards: a Trailblazers for Diversity Award and a Rising Star in Diversity Award. Also at that event, Extended University Programs will honor, [as previously announced](#), two faculty members with Innovative Teaching Awards.

Excellence in Diversity Award recipients will receive this distinguished Universitywide honor for exemplifying outstanding efforts in diversity and inclusion work. This year's recipients are the College of Aviation and two employees—**Jeff Carr** and **Mariam Konaté**—who created a campus learning community that explores diversity issues.

College of Aviation

The College of Aviation at WMU has been focused on diversity and inclusion for 20 years. Starting with a W.K. Kellogg Foundation grant in 1995 focused on bringing women and minorities into the field of aviation, it has continued to strive toward diversity and inclusion.

Specifically, it has developed a Diversity and Inclusion Committee with the vision to be consistently described by students, staff and faculty as a college that embraces and celebrates diversity and is inclusive of all people, experiences and ideas. Committee members include faculty, staff and students. Each year the group selects areas to focus on for outreach and education. In 2013-14, the committee produced a newsletter for faculty, staff and students that highlighted where WMU students come from, the experiences that they have had both growing up and at college, and articles from faculty and staff. In 2014-15, it focused on the "climate" of the college, trying to better understand how the environment feels to those in traditional minority positions. Currently, the committee is focused on developing an action activity for all students in AVS 1200 to begin the discussion of race, gender, privilege, diversity and inclusion.

Also during 2014, the college participated in self-awareness research to better understand the welcoming and inclusive climate of the aviation program. It received internal funding from the Office of Diversity and Inclusion.

The college's committee has supported the formation of the Organization of Black Aerospace Professionals Student Chapter at WMU, and the active involvement of the national organization. This organization is tasked with reaching out to elementary students and inspiring careers in aviation, while retaining a diverse student body in the College of Aviation at WMU.

Jeff Carr and Mariam Konaté

Jeff Carr, manager of maintenance services in the Department of Facilities Management, and Mariam Konaté, associate professor of gender and women's studies and Africana studies, are being honored as the co-facilitators for the 2014-15 Race, Power and Privilege learning community.

Through their co-facilitation of the learning community, Carr and Konaté created a safe space for those less knowledgeable about a shared and inclusive understanding of diversity, multiculturalism, institutional bias and affirmative action to learn, grow and become agents for change. They researched diversity efforts at other campuses by visiting two exemplary programs in the greater Chicago area to meet with their leaders.

They developed, in partnership with the Multi-cultural Mindedness Tactical Action Committee, a project to help inform and educate the First-Year Experience instructors by purchasing copies of Allan Johnson's "Privilege, Power and Difference" to supplement their race unit in the FYE courses. In addition, the group presented an interactive workshop for the FYE instructors based on Johnson's text.

Carr also was instrumental during the past year in the creation of the Campus Climate for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Tactical Action Community anti-bullying policy and procedures. He conducted exhaustive research of other model policies and actively participated in what was essentially taken up by senior leadership for refinement and potential adoption by the WMU Board of Trustees.

Konaté actively pursued reinstatement of the Africana Studies program at WMU. She is also working with the Lee Honors College to help improve diversity and inclusion in its curriculum.

Trailblazers for Diversity Award

The Trailblazers for Diversity Award is bestowed upon those who incorporate diversity efforts and accomplishments into work on campus and show a commitment to further develop sustainable action to affect positive change. The **LGBT Student Advisory Council** is this year's winner.

The LGBT Student Advisory Council includes up to 15 students who meet every two weeks with leaders from campus departments and organizations to advocate for lesbian, bisexual, gay and transgender-inclusive practices and policies at WMU.

Over the past two years, the LGBT Student Advisory Council has successfully advocated for the development and implementation of the Student Preferred Name Policy, which was adopted by the University in spring 2015 and implemented fall 2015, and Spectrum House, an LGBT living learning community that will be launched in fall 2016.

For the Student Preferred Name Policy, the council sought to address barriers for students to be recognized by a name different from their legal name on class rosters, identification cards and email addresses. In December 2013, the council met with senior administrators from academic affairs, student affairs and diversity and inclusion to advocate for a preferred-name policy to better support transgender and gender non-conforming students. Council members participated in the Preferred Name Task Force, helped to draft the Preferred Name Policy, and participated in focus groups to inform the preferred name policy development process.

The council is also supporting efforts to recruit, retain, and graduate a diverse student body and promote a diverse workforce at all levels. For the past two years, it voiced the need for more inclusive on-campus housing options. Together with the staff from Residence Life, the Student Advisory Council advocated for the creation of an LGBT and ally learning community, Spectrum House, where students of diverse gender identities/expressions and sexual orientations, including allies, will live and learn together in an inclusive and supportive community.

Rising Star in Diversity Award

The Rising Star in Diversity Award is an honor for those who are new contributors toward enhancing the environment of inclusion at WMU and have made significant progress in this area. The **Sindecuse Diversity and Inclusion Committee** is this year's winner.

The Diversity and Inclusion Committee at Sindecuse Health Center has assessed and improved the environment, the processes, and the professional development of employees at the health center. Formed in spring 2014, the committee has accelerated the health center's adoption of inclusive practices, identified physical challenges and put a focus on staff development. The committee is composed of employees from all functional areas of the health center, as well as students from the Student Health Advisory Council. The committee is led by **Sarah Good, LPC**, counseling specialist.

Shortly after the committee formed, diversity and inclusion grant opportunities were made available. In 2014, the committee secured two grants from the WMU Office of Diversity and Inclusion. The first, a \$3,000 grant, was to conduct an assessment of the environment at the health center in relation to diversity and inclusion, including accessibility. The second, a grant for implementation of the assessment findings, was awarded for up to \$15,000.

Staff education is a priority of the committee, and members have recommended multi-faceted efforts to improve staff understanding and skills, including completing an Intercultural

Development Inventory in 2015, participating in a group feedback session, creating a professional development opportunities calendar for 2015-16, monthly Lunch and Learn events, a half-day of training per academic year, campus and community activities and weekly departmental meetings to discuss upcoming diversity and inclusion initiatives, an additional employee performance review requirement regarding diversity and inclusion, the purchase of resources for a Diversity Resource Library accessible to employees, and creation of a Book Club and lending library for employees to learn together on topics related to diversity and healthcare.

Further improvements to health center forms and patient interaction were made as a result of committee efforts.

Spring Convocation

"Spring Convocation: Recognition of Discovery, Diversity and Global Engagement" events will take place **Thursday and Friday, Feb. 4-5**. Thursday will feature "Share the Story: Scholar Talks" from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. in the Fetzer Center. Friday activities will start at 9 a.m. in the Fetzer Center and include events from Extended University Programs, Haenicke Institute for Global Education, Office of Diversity and Inclusion and Office of Vice President for Research. They include professional development workshops, Distinguished and Emerging Scholar talks, a recognition luncheon, Research and Dessert, and convocation and awards, followed by a Fridays with Friends gathering.

For more information about the schedule and convocation events, visit wmich.edu/research.

For more news, arts and events, visit wmich.edu/news.

Dr. Charles Henderson appointed to National Academy of Sciences Committee

Olga Bonfiglio
College of Arts and Sciences Staff Writer

Dr. Charles Henderson, physics, was appointed as a member of the National Academy of Sciences Committee on [Developing Indicators for Undergraduate STEM Education](#).

He is currently professor of physics education research holding a joint appointment in the Department of Physics and the Mallinson Institute for Science Education at Western Michigan University. He is the co-founder and co-director of the WMU Center for Research on Instructional Change in Postsecondary Education and the senior editor for the Physical Review Special Topics–Physics Education Research.

Prior to WMU, he taught physics courses at Macalester College and at Anoka- Ramsey Community College. He also was a high school physics and chemistry teacher at the International School of Minnesota for two years.

His current research studies the teaching and learning of physics with a focus on the development of theories and strategies for promoting change in the teaching of STEM subjects. These include issues related to the diffusion and adoption of research-based instructional strategies.

Henderson has numerous service and professional recognitions including: member of the National Research Council Committee on Undergraduate Physics Education Research and Implementation, editor of the Physics Education Research Section of the American Journal of Physics (2008-12), president of the Michigan section of the American Association of Physics Teachers (2008-09), chair of the American Association of Physics Teachers Committee on Research in Physics Education, and a member of the Physics Content Advisory Committee for the Michigan Test for Teacher Certification.

Henderson received a B.A. in mathematics and physics from Macalester College, an M.S. in physics and a Ph.D. in physics education from the University of Minnesota.

Medieval Institute wins \$180,000 NEH grant for summer institute

Olga Bonfiglio

College of Arts and Sciences staff writer

Dr. Jana K. Schulman, professor of English and Director of the [Medieval Institute](#), has received an \$180,000 award from the National Endowment of the Humanities.

“Teaching **Beowulf** in the Context of Old Norse-Icelandic Literature” is one of the Summer Seminar and Institute Awards for College and University Teachers Grants. It will take place in Kalamazoo in summer 2016.

“The grant projects represent the very best of humanities scholarship and programming,” said [NEH Chairman William Adams](#). “NEH is proud to support programs that illuminate the great ideas and events of our past, broaden access to our nation’s many cultural resources, and open up for us new ways of understanding the world in which we live.”

National Endowment for the Humanities Summer Institutes are two to five week projects to which interested college and university faculty members from all over the USA may apply.

[In her four week institute](#), Schulman, together with guest lecturers in the fields of medieval archaeology, folklore and oral tradition, **Beowulf**, Old Norse-Icelandic literature, and Scandinavian and Anglo-Saxon religions, will engage twenty-five summer scholars with more detailed background information about the culture, religions, and history of Anglo-Saxon England and medieval Iceland. Faculty will provide

them with a greater and synergetic awareness of and appreciation for the literature of Anglo-Saxon England and medieval Iceland.

The institute is the first NEH Summer Institute to be held in Kalamazoo since Dr. Paul Szarmach, former director of the Medieval Institute, directed one in 1999 on Anglo-Saxon England.

“These NEH grants are great opportunities for Western Michigan University to affirm its commitment to the humanities and demonstrate its support for faculty members across the country engaged in such important liberal arts traditions and transmission,” said Keith Hearit, dean of the WMU College of Arts and Sciences. “Hosting such an institute is an honor for WMU and represents the very best of humanities scholarship and programming.”

Southwest Michigan has much to be proud of since Schulman is one of only four recipients in Michigan of this NEH grant for this year; the other three are at Calvin College, Ferris University, and Grand Valley State University.