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WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY

College of *Arts and Sciences*

e-News Issue 37: May 2016

Upcoming CAS events



Stay in touch!



Update your information



Koretsky set to take
WMU College of Arts
and Sciences reins



ARTS AND SCIENCES News

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- ▶ Model UN comes to WMU

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- ▶ Lynn Smith Houghton '78 and '80, history, recognized as 2016 YWCA Woman of Achievement



Photo credits: left: Ryan Sibert, upper right: Lynne Heasley lower right: Dionel Photography

2016 Faculty and Staff Awards



The College of Arts and Sciences is pleased to announce the recipients of the Staff Excellence Awards, Faculty Achievement Awards, and the Gender Scholar Award for 2015-16. This year we are recognizing 17 individuals for their exemplary contributions to the College of Arts and Sciences.

Each of these individuals were honored at a special awards ceremony and reception on April 19.

CAS faculty and staff play a critical role in the success of our departments, institutes, school and the college. We are very fortunate to have an incredible and dedicated group of faculty and staff in the College of Arts and Sciences. These awards recognize their great work and outstanding contributions over the past year.

Please join us in congratulating each of our deserving recipients!

[Program brochure](#)

Faculty Achievement Awards

Professional and Community Service:

Dr. Denise Keele, Department of Political Science and Environmental and Sustainability Studies

program

Ms. Marilyn Kritzman, School of Communication

Research and Creative Activity:

Dr. Jocelyn Steinke, School of Communication

Dr. Maarten Vonhof, Department of Biological Sciences and Environmental and Sustainability Studies program

Dr. Brian Wilson, Department of Comparative Religion

Teaching:

Dr. Julie Apker, School of Communication

Mr. Michael Braun, Department of Spanish

Dr. Chien-Juh Gu, Department of Sociology

Dr. Viviane Ruellot, Department of World Languages and Literatures

Part-time Instructor Excellence in Teaching:

Dr. Hedy Habra, Department of Spanish

Ms. Lis Torres, Department of Spanish

Global Engagement:

Dr. Stephen Covell, Department of Comparative Religion

Dr. Stephen Malcolm, Department of Biological Sciences

Staff Excellence Awards

Ms. Katie Easley, Program Manager of Student Success Services

Ms. Yumi Takahashi-Ede, Assistant Director for Undergraduate Advising

Mr. Benjamin Gaudio, Network Administrator, Department of Physics

Gender Scholar Award

The CAS Women's Caucus strives to promote an academic culture of inclusiveness for all people at Western Michigan University. The Gender Scholar Award is awarded to a CAS faculty member who demonstrates excellence in gender-related research and scholarly activities. Applicants are judged based on the overall quality of the work and contributions advancing knowledge in an area of research that has a gender focus. This year's Gender Scholar Award recipient is:

Dr. Tabassum Ruby, Department of Gender and Women's Studies

CAS staff members “make a difference” for WMU



Karen Steeno (fall 2015 Make a Difference Award recipient) and Lauren Carney

Lauren Carney, College of Arts and Sciences, and Kim Tembreull, psychology, were honored as outstanding employees during a reception for WMU’s spring 2016 Semiannual Make a Difference Award held on Tuesday, April 12 in the Bernhard Center. They were among 14 recipients of the award.

Lauren Carney is the academic advisor in the Global and International Studies Program where she received huge accolades from students. Here is what one of her nominators said of her:

“Lauren has done an exceptional job of advising undergraduates on building a path in their time at WMU that embodies the university’s pillars of global engagement, being driven by discovery and centering on learning. She has also encouraged them to think about their future goals and shaping their experience around building a background that would allow them to be competitive in pursuing those goals.”



President Dunn and Kim Tembreull

Kim Tembreull is an administrative assistant in the Department of Psychology. Here is what one of her nominators said of her:

“I am a new faculty member who just started in the fall of 2015. Kim has made my transition as seamless as possible. She facilitated renovation of my lab space and made sure it looked fantastic, got me all set up with my office and made sure my requested changes were completed as soon as possible. Everything she has done for me has been done with grace, positivity and fantastic efficiency.”

The Make a Difference Award Program is a campus-wide, peer-to-peer initiative that recognizes University staff members for their outstanding accomplishments and daily investment of energy and creativity. Only members of the non-faculty workforce of more than 1,800 people are eligible to receive the accolade.

Up to 15 staffers may be selected in each of two semiannual award periods. This year, 14 staffers were selected. Semiannual winners receive a before-tax prize of \$300. They are selected by a committee comprised of their peers.

Recipients of each year's fall and spring semiannual award are eligible to receive one of four annual Make a Difference Awards that carry a before-tax prize of \$1,200.

First Annual High School Model UN Conference Held at WMU



Seventy-six students from nine high schools in Michigan and Indiana participated in WMU

The global and international studies program and Western's student Model UN Club held their First Annual High School Model UN Conference at Western in late April. Over seventy high school students from nine high schools in Michigan and Indiana participated in the event.; "I am thrilled to introduce this terrific program to our university", declared Dr. Kenneth Steuer, faculty with the global and international studies program.

Students competed in three committees during the conference: a Security Council simulation addressing the nuclear crisis in the Ukraine; a General Assembly Third Committee simulation debating intellectual property rights and access to pharmaceuticals and genetically-modified organisms; and a General Assembly Fourth Committee which negotiated political boundaries over the Spratly Islands, a disputed set of islands in the South China Sea.

The high school students served as delegates of individual countries in each committee and drafted and approved resolutions designed to address these current issues.

Student members of the WMU Model UN Club served as chairs to oversee the diplomatic process. For two days, the delegates wrestled with these real world issues and strove to find potential solutions to these global problems. “We really saw some creativity and innovate solutions coming from the high school students”, observed judge Joyce Busch, who is director of Veteran Affairs at the university.

WMU faculty and staff served as judges and rated the performance of the delegates during the conference. "This is a terrific way for high school students to learn more about Western," said Dr. Susan Pozo, Department of Economics who served as a judge for one of the committees. "It's also really impressive to see these high school students engage with global issues".

While attending the conference, high school student delegates had a chance to experience the campus at Western. They ate meals at Bigelow Dining Hall, the Study Abroad office boasted its offerings of international programs, and the Admissions Office arranged tours of campus.

The global and international studies program and the student Model UN Club plan to expand the conference next spring, and look forward to again collaborating with the UN Association of Kalamazoo. “This event showcases what global engagement at Western is all about”, exclaimed Dr. Laura Hastings, director of the program.

Communication prof receives Professor of the Year award

by Cara Barnes
April 11, 2016 | WMU News

LANSING, Mich.—Western Michigan University Professor **Sue Ellen Christian** has been recognized as one of the state's three recipients of the Michigan Distinguished Professor of the Year award, which recognizes the outstanding contributions and dedication exhibited by the faculty from Michigan's 15 public universities to the education of undergraduate students.

The Academic Affairs Officers of the Michigan Association of State Universities will recognize the nominees and recipients of this annual award during a Friday, April 15, luncheon held at the Lansing Center. The other two winners are University of Michigan Professor Brian Coppola and Grand Valley State University Professor Matthew Boelkins.

Sue Ellen Christian



Christian is a professor of communication with a dual appointment in the School of Communication and Department of Gender and Women's Studies at WMU. She earned a B.A. in English from Hope College and an M.A. in Journalism from the University of Michigan.

She has received many awards and grants since arriving at WMU in 2001, including the College of Arts and Sciences Faculty Achievement in Teaching Award in 2009 and the WMU Distinguished Teaching Award in 2014. She has used many of these grants to support taking her students into local high schools and the community for experiential learning about journalism, multimedia, diversity and bias, and she advises students through journalism internships and the Student Media Group board.

"Professor Christian demonstrates a commitment to her discipline which extends well beyond the role of instructor and greatly benefits the Kalamazoo community and Western Michigan University," says **Timothy J. Greene**, WMU provost and vice president for academic affairs.

Her book, "Overcoming Bias: A Journalist's Guide to Culture and Context" is used in newsrooms and classrooms as a guide to addressing implicit biases in news practice. Christian continues to serve as an active journalist, writing news and opinion pieces for outlets locally and nationally. Her previous staff positions as a reporter include The Detroit News, Los Angeles Times and the Chicago Tribune. She has been vital in updating the undergraduate journalism curriculum at WMU since her arrival in 2001 and has developed a new course titled "Global Media Literacy," available to students across campus through the general education program.

"Professor Christian represents the very best of teaching, innovation and dedication to student success," says Dr. **Daniel J. Hurley**, CEO of the Michigan Association of State Universities. "With her real-world experience and involvement with students, she symbolizes excellence in higher education for which Michigan's public universities are globally renowned."

Michigan Association of State Universities

The Michigan Association of State Universities serves as the coordinating board for Michigan's 15 public universities, providing advocacy and fostering policy to maximize the collective value these institutions provide in serving the public interest and the State of Michigan.

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

Historical novelist snags Light Center research grant

by Margaret von Steinen
April 20, 2016 | WMU News

KALAMAZOO, Mich.—**Dr. Victor Xiong** is the recipient of the fifth annual Timothy Light Center for Chinese Studies Research grant. He will receive \$3,000 to support three projects currently underway.

Xiong, a Western Michigan University professor of history, will use the award to promote a recently authored historical novel, to publish a monograph and to help cover production costs of a forthcoming historical novel.

About the projects

Xiong will launch a marketing campaign to promote his 2014 historical novel, "Heavenly Khan: A Biography of Emperor Tang Taizong (Li Shimin)," published by Airiti Press in 2014. According to the San Francisco Review of Books, the story is "a new historical legend to stand alongside Alexander the Great and Napoleon." Midwest Book Review refers to the author as "an exceptional and impressive novelist of the first order." A Chinese version of the novel will be published by Xiamen University Press.

The award also will be used to support the publication of the Chinese translation of Xiong's monograph, "Emperor Yang of the Sui Dynasty," published by SUNY Press in 2006. In this book, Xiong offers a nuanced, impartial study of this controversial figure.

The balance of the award will be used to help Xiong cover publication costs for his forthcoming historical novel, "From Common to Emperor," which is about the life and times of Liu Bang, the first commoner emperor in Chinese history and the founder of the Han dynasty.

Light Center grants

Light Center Research grants are awarded annually and provide support to WMU faculty members for research and creative activities that support the study of Greater China.

For more information, visit the Light Center website at wmich.edu/chinesestudiescenter.

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

WMU student wins honorable mention for documentary

by Mark Schwerin
April 5, 2016 | WMU News

KALAMAZOO, Mich.—A Western Michigan University student in the School of Communication has received an honorable mention in a highly competitive, nationwide competition.

Tirrea Billings, of Saginaw, a senior in the film, video and media studies program, won the award in the 2016 Broadcast Education Association Festival of Media Arts in the Student Documentary category. A record number of 1,538 total submissions were received this year for the entire competition. As an award winner, she is invited to take part in the BEA 2016 Annual Convention April 18 in Las Vegas, Nevada, and will receive an honorary plaque.

"This is a national competition which is very, very competitive," says **Dr. Jennifer Machiorlatti**, professor of communication in the film, video and media studies program, who has worked closely with Billings. "She earned this award for a really wonderful documentary."



About The Project

Billings' film is titled "Painting Dreams: The Story of Johnson Simon." It tells the story of an inspirational, kind-hearted, motivated WMU student who does not look at his cerebral palsy as a setback, but, rather, as a reason to be even more dedicated in pursuing his dreams. It recounts Simon's journey from a youngster relegated to special education classes to a successful college student and gifted painter, who graduated from WMU in December 2015.

The documentary actually began as an assignment in an English class, Thought and Writing. Students were asked to undertake a project, but could choose the genre. Billings chose documentary.

Billings had met Simon in a Bible study group called Collegiate, Black and Christian. She



became familiar with his inspirational story and had been impressed with his perseverance and positive attitude in the face of monumental obstacles as well as his use of art to overcome them.

"When I was thinking about what I wanted to do my documentary on, Johnson instantly popped up in my head," she says. "It was definitely an emotional experience, going into more detail about his life and how hard it was for him growing up."

Simon grew up in West Palm Beach, Florida, and his school lacked the accommodations needed for a student like him. He was placed in special education classes and basically forgotten about, even though there is nothing lacking in his intelligence. It wasn't until he was allowed to go to a special art school his senior year that he blossomed as a student and artist.

'Never Give Up'

The documentary gives Simon the opportunity to convey his message to "never, never give up," shows him at work on his art and interviews University staff and students about what an inspiration he has been to them.

Billings took the original 30-minute documentary she created for her English class and, under Machiorlatti's guiding hand, honed it into a powerful, 10-minute short documentary.

Billings graduates this fall and hopes to work as a production assistant, probably in Chicago or New York, and also has applied for an internship at the TV Academy in Los Angeles. Ultimately, she hopes to create and direct her own documentary films.

As a WMU student, she has worked as an intern with the Public Media Network in downtown Kalamazoo and with Bronco Productions, shooting Bronco sporting events. She now works as an employee for Bronco Productions, mainly filming soccer games and doing instant replay for basketball games. She also is interning as a production assistant for ImageStream-Creative Communications in Portage.

Her time at WMU has given her ample opportunity to pursue her ambitions, and she credits Machiorlatti with shepherding her along the way.

"I asked her for guidance and advice, and she's been a big help," she says. "She always critiques my work. She's definitely my favorite professor and biggest mentor."

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

Doug Clifford '16 political science, interns for 60th District Service Office

Olga Bonfiglio
College of Arts and Sciences staff writer

Doug Clifford has not only been working on his political science major and criminology minor, he interned at the 60th District Service Office of State Representative Jon Hoadley over the spring semester.

The internship was arranged through the Department of Political Science.



“The internship was great and the Edie Trent, the legislative aide there, was amazing,” said Clifford. “She really helped me learn a lot—even with my resumé. I improved my communication skills by working with constituents who had a variety of problems. I directed them to resources where they could get help.”

Besides learning the ropes of constituent service, Clifford has visited with several individuals and agencies within the criminal justice community in Kalamazoo. He especially enjoyed a “ride-along” day with the Kalamazoo Department of Public Safety. He was also the guest of Sheriff Richard Fuller for a tour of the Kalamazoo County Correctional Facility, the Kalamazoo Probation Enhancement Program and a court hearing.

Clifford started at WMU when he was 21 after spending some time at Niagara University near Niagara Falls, NY, where he also played hockey. His parents are WMU alumni, so it was a natural choice for him to come to Kalamazoo.

“Western gave me a great education,” he said. “I started out in criminal justice because I had always wanted to be a cop. However, I switched to political science because I might go into law or maybe get a master’s degree in public administration.”

Clifford is a native of Woodhaven in Detroit’s Downriver area. He is an avid hockey player and fan, but he enjoys outdoor sports and hopes to combine his love of the outdoors with a career as a conservation officer.

ARC students hold panel discussion on Syrian refugees in crisis

Olga Bonfiglio

College of Arts and Sciences staff writer

On Thursday, April 21, the [Advocates for Refugees in Crisis](#) and the [WMU Model United Nations Club](#) held a panel discussion on the Syrian refugee crisis.

The speakers included **Ramea Almubarack**, a multi-talented graduate student in chemical engineering and anti-Islamophobia advocate, who spoke about her family's experience in Syria during and before the civil war; and **Susan Reed**, managing staff attorney from the Michigan Immigrant Rights Center, who spoke on the issue of refugee resettlement from a legal perspective.

Ramea Almubarack was born in Syria to a Jordanian father and a Syrian-Palestinian mother. She spoke about her memories of Syria where she grew up. She used to spend much time with her family, which included over 100 aunts, uncles and cousins. Her family was rich, but now because of the war, they have lost everything and are scattered all over Europe. She doesn't even have photographs of her family.

One day, someone showed her a photo of her uncle on Facebook, but she didn't recognize him because he was so thin.

One of her aunts escaped to Germany by walking there. Many times she had to hide in the forest to avoid people stopping her. Now that she is there, she knows she is being tracked. Ramea communicates with her mother by Skype, who mostly cries during their conversations.

"It's tough to be isolated here in Kalamazoo where I have exams—and know that people, my family, are suffering and dying," said Ramea who is working on her graduate degree in chemical engineering.

Electricity in Syria is down to two hours a day, she said, and there is misery everywhere.

Two years ago she found out that her grandfather wanted to tell her something before he died, but she was in America, and he was in Syria. He died before she could see him; he had no medicine to help him.

"He wanted me to be a successful woman," she said. "He wanted me to tell others that people are all the same and that they must give to others. So this is my motivation: to live his words."

Ramea's passion involves bringing people from different cultures together by using traditional food, clothes, music and dancing. Last spring, she created the exhibit, "Through Your Eyes," at the College of Fine Arts, which featured photographs of women wearing the hijab. It was a way

of encouraging people to share the beauty of their own culture with others. Additionally, Ramea has volunteered for Kalamazoo Colleagues International as an interpreter. She is currently visiting churches, synagogues and other places of worship to confront Islamophobia.

Susan Reed pointed out that the definition of a refugee is a matter of international law, which resulted from the horror of not protecting Jewish refugees fleeing Hitler's genocide during World War II, she said. In the United States, refugee status was not codified until 1980.

In order to be identified as refugees or asylees, they must prove they are unable to return to their country because of a well-founded fear of persecution based on one of five protected categories including race, religion, national origin, political opinion and membership in a particular social group. The last basis is constantly evolving, however. For example, in 1994, a case was decided where gays and lesbians would be considered in some countries part of a particular social group with a well-founded fear of persecution. Then, because of the civil war in Syria, many Syrians also meet the legal definition of refugees for a variety of the possible reasons.

"Asylum seekers get into this country by showing up at our front door—a port of entry," said Reed. "Although this is not illegal, they will be detained. They then must prove that they meet the legal definition of a refugee in a complex legal process."

Those who are actually admitted to the U.S. as refugees go through a more complicated process abroad, but they have a clear legal immigration status and a path to U.S. citizenship. First, they must be identified outside the United States and brought in from a refugee camp or another location abroad by the U.S. working in partnership with another international partner such as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

Potential refugees then go through a 13-step process, the highest level of security of any group seeking entry into the U.S. that involves referral, clearance, in-person interviews with the refugees and others connected to them, medical screening and matching families with agencies. For this last part, various non-profit agencies engage in a bidding process to handle the refugees' cases. This involves cultural orientation, security clearances and placement for housing, education, medical care and the like.

Reed gave a more in-depth explanation of refugee policy and Governor Snyder's role in tripping off other governors' rush to restrict Syrian and Iraqi resettlement. To get the details on this issue, view her [blog](#), Michigan Immigrant Rights Center.

Susan is a managing staff attorney from the Michigan Immigrant Rights Center whose work alleviates pressures created by global crises and promotes a more welcoming community in Michigan. She is a graduate of the University of Minnesota Law School and Marquette University. She has practiced immigration and immigrant rights law since 2003 and has served as a staff attorney at Farmworker Legal Services of Michigan and as a regional attorney for Justice for Our Neighbors, the immigration legal services program of the United Methodist Committee on Relief. In 2013, Susan was appointed by the Michigan Supreme Court to the Foreign Language Board of Review to serve as a committee member of the Court's Limited

English Proficiency Implementation Advisory Committee. She is also a member of the Detroit City Council Immigration Task Force.

Advocates for Refugees in Crisis is a registered student organization dedicated to assisting, advocating and help the resettlement efforts for displaced persons in southwestern Michigan.

Founded in 2015, the ARC initially arose out of the current Syrian Civil War that started back in 2011, but it serves a far broader cause. As its name suggests, ARC is a WMU student group that is dedicated to helping the wide array of problems that arise from global crises involving displaced citizens, especially refugees. As of this year, its goals include resettling of a few Syrian families into the greater Kalamazoo region and providing support and aid to them for the multitude of needs that arise from global resettlement. ARC's other goals include fundraising, awareness, dialogue, political reform and research.

ARC began meeting during the fall semester 2015 to discuss ways in which Kalamazoo citizens might support refugees coming into Michigan. In particular, they were looking for what resources existed in town in order to facilitate local resettlement initiatives. They partnered with services like Bethany Christian Services and others in this process.

ARC has volunteered in a few different capacities for Bethany Christian Services of Grand Rapids, which began in 1944 as an agency that provided adoption, foster care and pregnancy counseling. More recently it has assisted refugees and immigrants resettling in the United States.

For example, in April, a group of ARC members helped clean and provide maintenance fixes to a downtown home as preparation for the "Grouphome" that will house up to 12 Muslim orphaned boys from countries such as Iraq and Afghanistan.

In March, ARC volunteers helped move out furniture from one house to furnish a Congolese family's new home. [The Western Herald covered that event.](#)

ARC meets every Monday at 7 p.m. in the Bernhard Center Faculty Dining Room (Room 19) and it welcomes all people who are interested in refugees. For more information, contact ARC on Facebook or at arcwesternmichigan@gmail.com.