



SUSTAINABLE FASHION STARTUP WINS WMU'S BUSINESS PITCH COMPETITION

Rose Soma, a junior from Traverse City, majoring in fashion design and development, claimed the top spot after making a pitch for her company Rose Soma: Up-Cycled Shirts. Soma's company addresses the issue of the nearly 16 million tons of textile waste generated annually. The company's shirts are created using discarded textiles, which are cut up and reassembled, making each piece unique.



"Winning the pitch competition was unexpected," says Soma. "It's easy to have doubts as an entrepreneur and winning was encouraging and motivating. This summer I will be working strictly on my business, focusing on growth. Once I get my Etsy shop stocked with all new shirts and stickers, I'm planning on doing a marketing push using the funds from the pitch competition." [Click for more >>](#)

OTHER STORIES



PROFESSOR SERVES ON GRANT FOR CANE DESIGN

Dr. Sangwoo Lee will help conduct a three dimensional motion analysis.

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DIRECTOR OF ADVISING RECEIVES AWARD

Christine Robinson is the recipient of state Academic Advising Administrator Award.

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PROFESSOR SERVING ON COUNSELING BOARD

Dr. Stephen E. Craig will serve on the Michigan Board of Counseling.

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PROFESSOR EARNS SCHOLAR AWARD FOR RESEARCH

Dr. Regina Garza Mitchell is the recipient of the 2019 Emerging Scholar Award.

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UPCOMING EVENTS

06.07.19 OUTSTANDING ALUMNI AWARD NOMINATIONS CLOSE

07.10.19 GOLDEN APPLE AND KEYSTONE AWARD NOMINATIONS CLOSE



Editors: Tyler Sonnenberg-Ward,
Nicole Leffler and Val Horwath
wmich.edu/education



Fashion startup focused on sustainability wins WMU's business pitch competition

CONTACT: SAMANTHA HOOKER

MARCH 4, 2019 | WMU NEWS



WMU junior Rose Soma pitched her idea for a company that makes shirts from discarded textiles.

KALAMAZOO, Mich. — A clothing company focused on sustainable fashion won first place at Western Michigan University's seventh annual K.C. O'Shaughnessy Business Pitch Competition and Showcase held on campus **Feb. 15**.

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WMU's pitch competition serves as a test run for student entrepreneurs wanting to present their original business ideas to potential investors. During the event, participants compete for cash prizes while obtaining valuable feedback about what it would take to launch their innovative ideas. This year featured a high school division for the first time with eight student teams from local schools competing.

2019 TOP FINISHERS

Four companies won prizes totaling \$5,000 during this year's competition.

First place and a \$2,000 prize as well as the People's Choice Award and an additional \$300 prize went to Rose Soma: Up-Cycled Shirts, pitched by Soma.

Second place and a \$1,400 prize went to Gel Sleeves, a company pitched by junior **Conor Mulhearn**, an industrial and entrepreneurial engineering major from Jackson. His partners, sophomore **Megan Gesler**, from New Hudson, sophomore **Anthony Mastro**, from Oak Lawn, Illinois, and sophomore **Valentina Sanchez Briend**, from Argentina, are industrial and entrepreneurial engineering majors. The team hopes to enter the growing senior care market with their customizable arm and hand wraps which contain protective gel pockets for individuals who bruise easily due to the use of blood thinners.

Third place and an \$800 prize went to Rocket Race, a company pitched by sophomore **Benjamin Buell**, an industrial and entrepreneurial engineering major from Vicksburg. His partners, first year student **Robert Doran**, from Davisburg, and sophomore **Noah Franchak**, from White Lake, are also industrial and entrepreneurial engineering majors. Rocket Race appeals to the growing population of skateboarders. The company's stainless steel wheel bearing design eliminates rust and moisture damage preserving speed and greater bearing longevity.

Fourth place and a \$500 prize went to T-Tek, a company pitched by senior **Cortney York**, an industrial and entrepreneurial engineering major from Warren. Her partner, junior **Jasmine Fails**, is also an industrial and entrepreneurial engineer major from Westland. T-Tek hopes to cater to the food industry with a customizable trashcan that would eliminate issues caused by overloaded trash bags and leakage using a portable sensor and built-in springs.

ABOUT THE COMPETITION

More than 31 individuals and teams participated in the 2019 K.C. O'Shaughnessy Business Pitch Competition, which honors student innovation and entrepreneurial spirit at WMU. Three-minute pitches for companies were evaluated during progressive rounds by panels of judges representing business community members and WMU faculty. Six companies made it to the final round.

"The pitch competition has continued to grow. We were excited to include the high school division this year alongside our talented WMU students," says **Robert Landeros**, chair of the Department of Management. "The presentations were incredibly strong, and it is a great opportunity to connect to entrepreneurs in our community."

The Department of Management in WMU's Haworth College of Business organizes and hosts the competition. More information, including videos of recent competition winners, is available [online](#).

Professor serves as Co-PI on grant awarding \$432,166 to study better long cane design and biomechanics for blind cane users

Feb. 26, 2019

KALAMAZOO, Mich.— In an extension of previous research which yielded better long cane designs and new individualized cane-use biomechanic techniques for blind cane users, the grant will test the new design and practice in a real-world setting.

ABOUT THE GRANT



Dr. Sangwoo Lee

Dr. Sangwoo Lee, assistant professor in the Department of Human Performance and Health Education, will serve as Co-PI alongside **Dr. Dae Shik Kim**, associate professor in the Department of Blindness and Low Vision Studies at Western Michigan University. The project, entitled, “Better Long Cane Design and Biomechanics for Blind Cane Users,” is funded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services through a National Institutes of Health grant. The aim of the research is to increase reliable detection and avoidance of walking path hazards and thus reduce the incidence of falls, which can lead to lower mortality, a decreased number of emergency room visits and hospital admissions, and an improved quality of life. The grant seeks

to determine the factors that affect the reliable detection of hazards such as sudden changes in walking-surface texture, drop-offs and obstacles in real-world settings.

As Co-PI, Dr. Lee is in charge of two areas. First, he is responsible for measuring and analyzing forearm muscle fatigue using a wireless electromyography (EMG) system. Second, he will help conduct a three-dimensional (3D) motion analysis, the data from which will be integrated with the forearm muscle fatigue data. Combining a 3D motion analysis that captures the movements of cane and hand with an EMG that measures the electric properties of the forearm muscles is expected to provide better insight into how blind individuals experience forearm muscle fatigue while walking for a prolonged duration with a cane and how the fatigued forearm muscles change the biomechanics of cane and hand.

ABOUT DR. SANGWOO LEE

Dr. Sangwoo Lee has been an assistant professor of exercise science at Western Michigan University since 2015 where he has twice received the Most Valuable Professor Award. He has co-authored fourteen articles and one book, given nineteen presentations and fourteen poster presentations during his academic career. His research interests include biomechanics of resistance exercise. He holds certification as a Sports Performance Coach for USA Olympic Weightlifting.

CEHD advising director receives 2019 Michigan Academic Advising Association award and publishes article



Christine Robinson

March 15, 2019

KALAMAZOO, Mich.—**Christine Robinson**, director of undergraduate admissions and advising in the College of Education and Human Development (CEHD) at Western Michigan University, is the recipient of the 2019 Michigan Academic Advising Association (MIACADA) Academic Advising Administrator Award. The 2019 Academic Advising Awards are presented to individuals and institutions within Michigan who are making significant contributions to the improvement of academic advising.

Robinson is receiving the award for her strong leadership, dedication to staff and students, and demonstrated record of success as an academic advising administrator. Support for her nomination included personal stories of Robinson's impact on staff and students. The award was presented at the MIACADA Region Five Conference held March 13-15 at the Renaissance Center in Detroit, Michigan.

Robinson also recently published an article in Academic Advising Today, NACADA: The Global Community for Academic Advising's electronic publication. Her article, [The Power of Story to Engage, Advise, and Connect](#), which encourages advisors to challenge their biases that may act as barriers to connecting with students, is another example of her commitment to providing quality advising and her dedication to the profession of advising and the academic success of all students.

Robinson came to CEHD in 2017 after working as an advisor and assistant director of retention in the Haworth College of Business at WMU.

The [MIACADA](#) is an organization of professionals from colleges and universities concerned with the intellectual, personal and career or vocational advising needs of students within the state of Michigan. The [NACADA](#) is an international association that is committed to the success of students at colleges and universities around the globe.

Craig appointed to Michigan Board of Counseling

CONTACT: JEANNE BARON
APRIL 5, 2019 | WMU NEWS



Dr. Stephen E. Craig

KALAMAZOO—Dr. Stephen E. Craig, of Grand Rapids, professor of counselor education and counseling psychology at Western Michigan University, is serving on the Michigan Board of Counseling. Craig was appointed by former Gov. Rick Snyder.

The board has both regulatory and disciplinary responsibility to oversee the practice of more than 9,000 professional counselors in Michigan. It consists of 11 voting members: six professional counselors, one mental health professional and four public members.

Craig was appointed as a professional member to fill a vacancy on the counseling board, pending approval by the state Senate. Now that his appointment has been approved, he will serve the remainder of a four-year term that expires **June 30, 2021**.

A WMU faculty member since 1999, Craig serves as director of the counselor education program for WMU and is a professional counselor for River City Psychological Services in Grand Rapids.

He earned a bachelor's degree from Texas Tech University, master's degree from Texas A&M University at Commerce and doctoral degree from the University of North Texas.

Education Leadership, Research and Technology professor receives emerging scholar award for community college research

April 15, 2019



Dr. Regina Garza Mitchell

KALAMAZOO, Mich.—**Dr. Regina Garza Mitchell**, associate professor of educational leadership in higher education in the College of Education and Human Development at Western Michigan University, is the recipient of the 2019 Barbara K. Townsend Emerging Scholar Award. She received the award Friday, March 29 at the 61st annual conference of the Council for the Study of Community Colleges (CSCC), a national organization of researchers and community college practitioners who further scholarship on community colleges. The award is given to recognize a new scholar for outstanding theoretical and/or applied research that contributes to the professional body of knowledge about community college; demonstrated

excellence in teaching, advising and/or mentoring; and, integration of knowledge to teaching and service.

Garza Mitchell's research focuses on organizational change, leadership and technology, primarily in a community college context. She is particularly interested in online technical education, leadership and community college mission and is currently planning a study on community college trustees. She has published work in *Community College Review*, *Community College Journal of Research and Practice*, and *New Directions for Community Colleges* and is the associate editor of *Community College Review*.