



College of Education and Human Development Western Michigan University

OCTOBER 2019



SCHOOLCRAFT COMMUNITY SCHOOLS WALK TO WESTERN

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STUDENTS WORK WITH LOCAL YOUTH IN NEW PROGRAMS

Support and education for professionals who work with young people in programs outside of the classroom are growing, and Western Michigan University has responded by expanding its training and internships in this area. [READ MORE](#)



ARE YOU READY FOR GIVING DAY?

Save the date for WMU Giving Day on 10.9.19! You're already part of what makes WMU great, and during Giving Day 2019, you can do even more to help us elevate the University. All gifts, in any amount, make a difference and can be designated to more than 2,100 funds. Join the fun and get in on the excitement by stopping by a Giving Day Party in Kalamazoo, Grand Rapids, Detroit, or Dallas! [READ MORE](#)



PRESIDENT MONTGOMERY DELIVERS STATE OF THE UNIVERSITY ADDRESS

Montgomery spoke of the importance of building innovative academic and support programming for students, such as the University's initiative to revise the general studies curriculum—WMU Essential Studies. He also pointed to the development of a new college that offers an academic home with the necessary supports for new students and students who are transitioning between majors. [READ MORE](#)



TECHNOLOGY CREATES NEW LAYER OF SAFETY FOR PEOPLE WITH VISUAL IMPAIRMENTS

Dr. Pnina Ari-Gur, professor of mechanical and aerospace engineering, says a friend who is legally blind opened her eyes to some of the physical challenges people with visual impairments face every day. Generally armed with a cane to identify impending obstacles, Ari-Gur thought there must be a way to use technology to improve the experience. [READ MORE](#)



HAVE YOU HEARD? THE WMU ALUMNI ASSOCIATION IS BACK!

We have a whole new look, and it doesn't stop there - this is YOUR association and we are here for you. Moving forward, we want to be clear about who we are, what we do, and who we serve. We will continue to offer alumni events, benefits, and resources, but we are also working to elevate the experience for all alumni, friends, fans, and family of WMU. Learn more about the WMU Alumni Association's rebranding on their new website. [READ MORE](#)

**ELEVATE A STUDENT TODAY.
MAKE A GIFT. MAKE A DIFFERENCE.**

MAKE A GIFT

OCT
9

**GIVING DAY
2019**

Together we elevate on
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OCT
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**HOMECOMING AND
FAMILY WEEKEND**

Activities and fun for the
whole Bronco family

OCT
12

**HOMECOMING
STAMPEDE VILLAGE**

Join us for the biggest
tailgate event of the year

SCHOOLCRAFT COMMUNITY SCHOOLS WALK TO WESTERN

Submitted by Anonymous (not verified) on Thu, 09/26/2019 - 16:38

A team of educators from Schoolcraft Community schools completed a 15-mile “Walk to Western” in August to raise scholarship funds for the class of 2020. The walk began at Schoolcraft Community High School, passed through Kalamazoo Valley Community College and concluded at Western Michigan University’s Sangren Hall, the home of the College of Education and Human Development. The mileage of the walk signifies the 15-year journey a student takes from Pre-K to the start of their college career.



The walking team was greeted at Sangren Hall by the Schoolcraft marching band and staff from both Schoolcraft Community Schools and the College of Education and Human Development at WMU. Upon the group’s arrival, Dr. Ming Li, CEHD dean, announced the dedication of two scholarships for Schoolcraft seniors planning to major in education or human development at WMU.

“A big thank you to Western Michigan University and College of Education and Human Development for providing our team a warm welcome and supporting our efforts in helping students make post-secondary opportunities a reality”, said Dr. Rusty Stitt, Schoolcraft Community Schools superintendent and proud Bronco alumnus.

The goal for this year’s walk was to raise \$15,000, \$1,000 for every mile travelled. Donations were accepted through the end of August and raised a total of just over \$14,000.

In the event’s inaugural year in 2018, Dr. Stitt walked and rode 50 miles in the Schoolcraft community to help raise over \$11,000. Last year, 11 students received scholarship funds from the efforts of the walk-a-thon. The money was used to build the scholarship fund and was given to Schoolcraft students as scholarships for university or trade schools. The College of Education and Human Development is proud to support Schoolcraft Community Schools’ local initiative toward college access and success.

STUDENTS WORK WITH LOCAL YOUTH IN NEW PROGRAMS

Submitted by Anonymous (not verified) on Fri, 09/20/2019 - 16:48



Support and education for professionals who work with young people in programs outside of the classroom are growing, and Western Michigan University has responded by expanding its training and internships in this area.

The College of Education and Human Development added two degrees in 2019 to build its academic offerings, as well as community-based professional opportunities, helping its students become leaders in youth and community development.

Students seeking roles in afterschool, community service and youth activism programs; public and private human services organizations and agencies; and alternative education are benefitting from WMU's response to this quickly professionalizing field.

"Investment in youth requires an intentional investment in adult youth development professionals, particularly given the complex issues facing youth and communities," says Dr. Karen Blaisure, WMU professor of family and consumer science.

"Good intentions are good, but we need more when working with youth."

A master's degree and graduate certificate in youth and community development were added to the current bachelor's degree and Ph.D. programs available at WMU.

"We're very excited to expand our options in youth and community development at WMU, because Kalamazoo has a strong tradition in promoting work in this area. We hope these new academic programs will help further that effort," says Dr. Jeffrey Jones, associate professor of secondary education and

coordinator of the Ph.D. program. "We see this work as an act of social justice and strive to elevate youth assets within our community.

"Our vision was to create programs for all levels of those who want to work with youth—a bachelor's degree for those who want to work with youth but not as a teacher, a master's degree for those who want to run those programs, and a Ph.D. for students who want to pursue scholarship in those areas. The graduate certificate can support those people already working with youth."

Student internship opportunities, such as with the Kalamazoo Youth Development, or KYD, Network, further their knowledge and skills.

According to Hannah Hultink, a youth and community development major who is expected to graduate in December 2019, the internship was as impactful for her as it was for the young people and families involved.

During spring 2018, she assisted with external observations of KYD Network's partner groups to help them grow and improve. That experience turned into a paid position working as the advisor of the Kalamazoo County Youth Cabinet, a youth advisory council that KYD Network sponsors.

"In this role, I get the best of both worlds—working with youth directly and with KYD Network supporting other programs," says Hultink.

She has met with the KCYC, a group of 14-to-21-year-olds from around Kalamazoo County, several times a month as a group and with each member one-on-one.

Originally a sports journalism major at Michigan State University, Hultink transferred to WMU after working at a youth summer camp and learning about the WMU's Department of Family and Consumer Sciences. When she reached out to the department to learn more, she discovered the new youth and community development major. She was drawn to the opportunity to work with children outside of school and develop relationships with them.

"If you're considering working with kids and having that connection and relationship with kids, this is the way to go," says Hultink. "The programs for these kids are so important. If you love kids in any form, you should consider youth and community development."

"The internships and community partnerships are invaluable. Interning in the out-of-school time sector offers students access to role models and gives them experience and insight they need to develop quality programming, engage youth as leaders in the community, promote social emotional learning, connect with families, and build an inclusive and equitable community," adds Blaisure. "Students also take core classes with faculty who have or are working in youth development."

For example, Dr. Meg Blinkiewicz, director of KYD Network and a WMU alumna, teaches the course in curriculum and assessment in youth development. Students who study with Blinkiewicz experience firsthand how quality youth development programs are developed and sustained.

For WMU student Sonia Kevnick of Lake Orion, that meant serving as a mentor for Kalamazoo high school students through Great Lakes PeaceJam, a foundation developing engaged youth leaders in their communities.

This involved working with young people on service-learning projects such as discussing racism, understanding its effects on communities, and participating in day-long events to build awareness.

"By being a mentor, it allowed me to see how much work goes into making a positive program for youth but also allowing the program to teach youth on how they can make changes in the world around them and see those ideas applied," says Kevnick, a youth and community development major at WMU.

She adds that she wants to continue being a youth mentor in some capacity after graduation, and that WMU's program has been the "missing piece" for students, such as herself, who already know or are thinking that they want to work with youth.

"Different Western college professors and outside organizations have been collaborating to provide classes and materials that allow students to look into the multiple avenues in youth and community development through different lenses and backgrounds," Kevnick says. "It allows for a student to network and have professors and instructors who have lived and worked in the field."

On a national scale, there has been a focus on increasing education for youth and community development professionals as those programs and needs have grown, adds WMU's Jones.

"Children and youth spend so much time in these programs, and there is a push to build their resources," he says, adding Kalamazoo County has over 50 youth-serving locations. "Over time, we hope as we start bringing in students from across southwest Michigan and nearby states, we can partner with groups in other areas."

Learn more about WMU's youth and community development programs online.

Days **05** Hours **09** Mins **59**



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Questions? Check out our [FAQ page](#), or contact us at (269) 387-8700

Montgomery delivers his third State of the University address

Contact: Laura Probyn

September 20, 2019

- Watch President Montgomery's [State of the University address](#) .
- Watch the full [Fall Convocation 2019](#) ceremony .
- Read the [full text](#) of President Montgomery's State of the University address.

KALAMAZOO, Mich.—During his third State of the University address, Western Michigan University **President Edward Montgomery** thanked faculty and staff for their dedication and challenged them to continue elevating the institution as a school of choice for 21st century learners.



President Montgomery delivered his third State of the University address to an audience of hundreds of faculty and staff.

As part of WMU's Fall Convocation, an annual event that also features [a faculty and staff awards ceremony](#), Montgomery presented the wide-ranging speech **Friday, Sept. 20**.

"At WMU, we meet students where they are, regardless of their circumstances, and add value to their lives. From our Medallion Scholars to those with more humble high school records, we make an impact. And you know what? You are really good at it. Yes, you are," he said to an audience of hundreds of faculty and staff.

Montgomery spoke of the importance of building innovative academic and support programming for students, such as the University's initiative to revise the general studies curriculum—WMU Essential Studies. He also pointed to the development of a new college that offers an academic home with the necessary supports for new students, exploring students and students who are transitioning between majors.

And citing a widely referenced report suggesting that 85% of the jobs that will exist in 2030 have yet to be invented, the president also stressed the need to help students develop the essential ability to adapt in a changing world while also helping prepare them for today's workforce.

As part of WMU's efforts to be a school of choice, Montgomery said that construction projects in the Hilltop Village neighborhood in the southern portion of Main Campus are designed to attract students while improving environmental sustainability and containing energy and maintenance costs. The Arcadia Flats residences that are currently under construction open next fall, while a formal groundbreaking recently took place for a new student center and dining facility.

Montgomery also thanked WMU faculty and staff for taking part in a recent employee engagement survey and for contributing their ideas to an effort that will identify and amplify what makes the University distinctive and unique.

For more WMU News, arts and events, visit [WMU News](#) online.

Technology creates new layer of safety for people with visual impairments

Contact: Erin Flynn

September 23, 2019

Read more stories about Bronco innovation in the [summer 2019 issue of W Magazine](#).

KALAMAZOO, Mich.—An experience with a friend is fueling technological advancement in an engineering lab at Western Michigan University.

Dr. Pnina Ari-Gur, professor of mechanical and aerospace engineering, says a friend who is legally blind opened her eyes to some of the physical challenges people with visual impairments face every day. Generally armed with a cane to identify impending obstacles, Ari-Gur thought there must be a way to use technology to improve the experience.



Dr. Pnina Ari-Gur, right, explains the technology included in the vest alongside Jacob Peterson.

"A cane really only detects obstacles on the ground," says Ari-Gur. "But what if there is a low-hanging branch in front of them? There are many areas a cane does not cover."

The physical stress of constantly carrying and sweeping a cane can also take a toll on the person using it. In conversations with clinicians at the Battle Creek Veterans Affairs Medical Center,

Ari-Gur learned that people with blindness and visual impairments sometimes develop carpal tunnel syndrome.

To make the experience easier, Ari-Gur came up with the concept for a smart white cane: wearable technology that removes the physical demand by detecting obstacles within a certain radius. It would come in the form of a light-weight vest.

She secured funding to start the project through WMU's Faculty Research and Creative Activities Award as well as a donation from **Lawrence and Carrolyn Kopka**, whose son, David (BS '89), is one of Ari-Gur's former students.

HOW IT WORKS



Ari-Gur, left, and Justin Rittenhouse, right, explain to WMU student Taylor Arndt how the vest might work.

Many drivers are familiar with the high-pitched beeps that sound if you're too close to another vehicle. Ari-Gur's virtual white cane works in a similar fashion but takes the concept a step further with audio messages.

Justin Rittenhouse, a mechanical engineering Ph.D. candidate, began developing the basic code to get the sensors in the vest to interact with a mobile application.

"I wanted to take on the project because I've never made a phone app and was curious how to do that," says Rittenhouse, who earned both his bachelor's and master's degrees in aerospace engineering at WMU. "Also, I enjoy helping people. In fact almost all of the research I've done has been geared toward helping people in some way."

Two students from the Kalamazoo Area Math and Science Center (KAMSC) built on Rittenhouse's work, spending a semester writing code to upgrade the vest from two sensors to six and implementing verbal commands.

"Sensors are put inside so when it detects an object around you it can tell you where it is and how far away it is in the app's audio board," says **Anna Puca**, a student at Loy Norrix High School in Kalamazoo.

Puca and Portage Central High School student **Julia Strauss** worked in collaboration with a group of WMU students, under the guidance of Ari-Gur. Their work earned them the top prize at the Southwest Michigan Science and Engineering Fair and qualified them for participation in the Intel International Science and Engineering Fair—the world's largest international pre-college science competition—where they won the Joining Forces for the Community Award, presented by GoDaddy.

Riley Zenas and **Jacob Peterson**, both mechanical engineering majors, were part of a team of WMU students tasked with designing the vest and developing power sources for the technology.



Anna Puca, left, and Julia Strauss, right, worked on code to upgrade the vest

"Creating something that could potentially change somebody's life feels very fulfilling," Zenas says. "Lowering the risk of carpal tunnel and just the physical stress of using a cane is something that is very important to the people who use it. That makes it very important to me that we do a good job in its construction so that it may be used daily by those who need it."

The project focuses on harnessing the power from sustainable sources. Solar panels on the shoulders of the vest serve as the primary energy source. Getting those panels onto the vest required some research outside of Peterson's expertise.

"My fiancée taught me how to sew," says Peterson. "She's a dance instructor and often has to fix costumes for students."

Knowing that sunshine is sometimes hard to come by in Michigan, the students also worked on a secondary source of energy. They developed a shoe insert that can generate an electrical charge

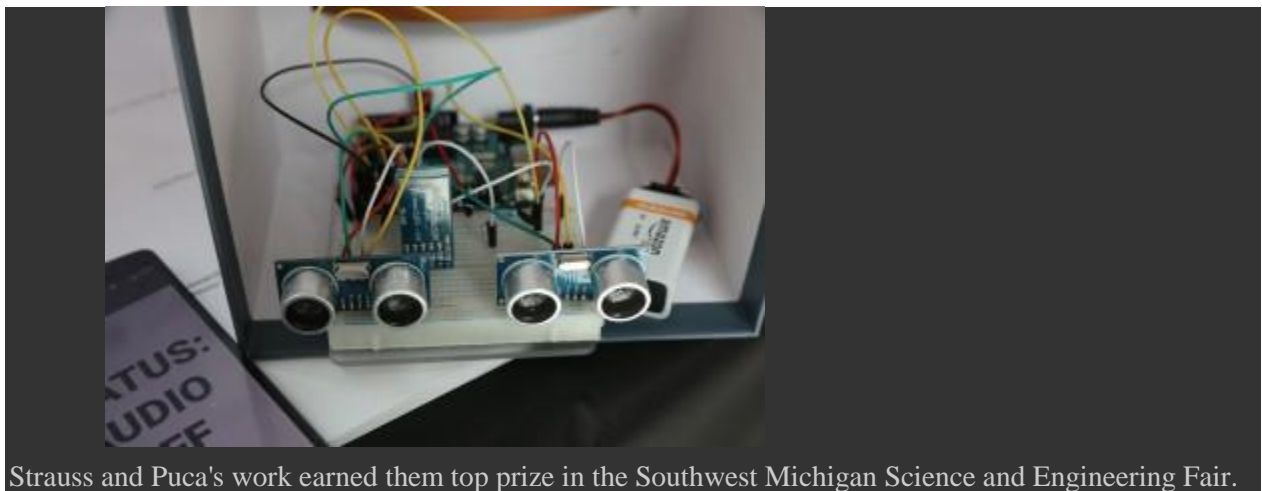
when a person walks. This piezoelectric material may be used to charge back-up batteries for the vest.

"Working on a project with real-world application is a great experience because it provides a sense of need and purpose for potential users," Peterson says. "This helps with transitioning to designing products in our careers after college."

The project also offered the budding mechanical engineers a chance to diversify.

"It's very important for students today not to be locked into one discipline, but to have interdisciplinary skills. A mechanical engineering student should learn electrical engineering and programming for instance," says Ari-Gur. "We try and get as much of a complete experience as possible."

SHAPING THE FUTURE



Strauss and Puca's work earned them top prize in the Southwest Michigan Science and Engineering Fair.

KAMSC works with several WMU faculty members to connect high school students to meaningful research projects, like programming the virtual white cane.

Strauss says her experience with this project opened her eyes to the technology available to students in WMU's College of Engineering and Applied Sciences.

"I want to continue doing research in college," says Strauss. "I think this has been a really good experience."

She and Puca also see the value in working on something that could make a difference in someone's life.

"I've seen people that have dealt with medical issues growing up and I've seen that technology can fix that," says Puca. "So knowing technology can help, I want to work on assisting people in need."

The project's success also validates the work they've been doing in the classroom.

"I truly believe that someday this wearable white cane will be able to help so many people all over the world," Strauss says. "I also liked seeing how coding—something I'm learning in school—can be utilized in the real world to make a difference in people's lives."

ADVANCEMENTS ON THE HORIZON

The smart white cane is still a work in progress. Ari-Gur says this basic model could serve a need in places like India where there is a large population of visually impaired individuals and the vest could be produced at a low cost.

She sees potential for the concept to be advanced for more high-tech markets.

"I'd like to eventually incorporate smart fabrics for the vest," says Ari-Gur. Smart textiles have digital components within the fabric. This would make the vest more lightweight and wearable but could also considerably raise the cost.

Ari-Gur is currently exploring other funding options to continue her research.

For more WMU news, arts and events, visit [WMU News](#) online.

WHY DID WE REBRAND?

The WMU Alumni Association unveiled a comprehensive rebranding in September 2019, complete with a new website. MyWMU may be gone, but it is still *your* WMU! We have a whole new look, and it doesn't stop there - this is *YOUR* association and we are here for you. Read on below and check out the video for more on the efforts.

WELCOME TO THE NEW WMU ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

- *WHAT ARE THE PRIMARY ASPECTS OF THE REBRANDING?*

- A new name – WMU Alumni Association (from MyWMU)
 - A new website – You’re already here, but if you didn’t notice, it’s WMUalumni.org
 - A new visual identity (i.e., wordmark and logos)
 - A refined purpose: We want you in the club.
-

- ***WHY ARE WE CHANGING OUR NAME?***

The primary reasons for the name change are as follows:

- We want to put the most important aspects of who we are first (place and people). Our WMU experience is what binds us.
 - We want to communicate through our name that we are inclusive – we welcome *all* alumni and donors to WMU.
 - The name change enables us to leverage the brand equity associated with WMU and with what most alumni perceive our name to be (and thus how alumni search for us online).
-

- ***ARE YOU GOING TO CHARGE MEMBER DUES OR FEES TO BE PART OF THE ALUMNI ASSOCIATION?***

Eww. Gross. No. Never again. This is a free club. You're a Bronco, so you can sign up for free.

- ***HOW WILL WE BE KNOWN?***

As the “WMU Alumni Association” or “alumni association” on second reference. As you can see above, we’re using the university’s primary “W” logo with the “Alumni Association” word mark. This will be used as our logo and social media icons, but not in written communications.

- ***WHY MAKE THE CHANGE NOW?***

Not only do these names align us with industry standards, they better communicate who we serve as an organization. Use of “alumni association” garners a feeling of being a part of something bigger than yourself, and we're eager to welcome many of our “lost” alumni back into our WMU community.

“MyWMU” had great intentions, but we're comfortable calling it a failed experiment in 2019. When established in 2011, MyWMU was the name selected to refer to the group of people associated with WMU who were not students, faculty, or staff. Roughly a year later, membership dues were eliminated from the Alumni Association and messaging and communication began to stop using the term “alumni association.” Efforts were made to inform our community of the name change, however, eight years later, we continue to have several issues:

- “MyWMU” does not directly communicate who we are as an alumni organization, it doesn’t speak to who our audience is, and many alumni do not directly identify with it -- Alumni seeking an association have trouble finding us, and they aren’t exactly sure they found us once they have.
 - Many people on and off campus continue to refer to us as the Alumni Association.
-

- ***WHAT IS “NEW” ABOUT THE NEW WEBSITE?***

The new website is fully optimized and with new features that allow for cleaner, more comprehensive search functionality for groups and events, laid out in a cohesive, transparent structure that’s more intuitive for users. Among the upgrades:

- The new site will have functions and links throughout that will allow you to go to points of similar interest, so no page will be a dead end.

-
- The new website features a live feed page to collect news and stories written by and for the WMU Alumni Association and also from WMU's colleges and main marketing department.
 - Social media feeds are incorporated into the homepage to create a better interplay between the website and the @WMUalumni social media channels.
 - The event calendar will be more robust, making it easier to find events of interest and events near you, and it will be simpler for alumni leaders to submit event information for publication.
 - Coming soon: we're developing an online community just for our alumni. Along with giveaways and earlybird registration, you'll have a chance to network and meet the professional staff working for you. We'll keep you updated when we get it rolled out.
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- *HOW WILL THESE CHANGES IMPACT OUR SOCIAL MEDIA CHANNELS?*

As part of the new visual identity, we will have new social media icons and banners for the public-facing WMU Alumni Association Facebook page, and for Twitter and Instagram. The channels themselves will be largely unchanged in terms of content, and we'll be working with your feedback to promote the types of stories you'd like to see.

- *WHAT IS THE IMPACT OF THE NEW VISUAL IDENTITY?*

In addition to creating a greater sense of consistency within and among the WMU Alumni Association and our partners, the new visual identity (wordmark, logo, and visual identity toolkits) brings us in line with the established Western Michigan University identity. This associates us more directly with WMU, thus creating a greater sense of connection, and allows us to draw on the strength of what it means to be a Bronco.

- *WHAT IF I'D RATHER WATCH A VIDEO THAN READ ALL OF THIS?*

Did you know that WMU has had some form of an Alumni Association, on and off, since 1925? Read about the history of the association [here](#).