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Students bring the past to life: Hundreds of young history buffs once again descended on Western Michigan University’s campus for the annual History Day District 6 Competition March 3.

A group of WMU students led by philosophy professor Dr. Fritz Allhoff recently helped rural Alaskans do their taxes. This was the fourth year Allhoff has led a tax-assistance delegation to remote villages in western Alaska.

Dr. Jennifer Machiorlatti, professor of communication, is the co-producer of a film chosen for this year’s Grand Rapids Film Festival that took place April 13-15.
ALUMNI

Economics, an analyst and the FBI: Since earning her bachelor's degree in economics, Emily Hawrysz '09 has worked for the Federal Bureau of Investigation supporting its transnational organized crime program.

STUDENTS

Four WMU students, including physics major Andy Sylvain Hobelsberger, have been named University Innovation Fellows by Stanford University's Hasso Plattner Institute of Design.

Through her research project, "The Politics of Memory," public history major Suzanne Grimmer is discovering how nations with contentious pasts shape their cultural legacy.
Students bring the past to life during WMU History Day Competition

Hundreds of young history buffs once again descended on Western Michigan University’s campus for the annual History Day District 6 Competition, Saturday, March 3. Students in grades 4-12 gathered to test their knowledge around this year’s theme, “Conflict and Compromise,” while vying for a trip to College Park, Md., for the National History Day Competition.

Now in its fourth year of hosting the event, the WMU Department of History welcomed 229 competitors from elementary, middle and high schools across southwest Michigan. Each year, after selecting a historical topic that relates to the annual theme, students prepare for the event by conducting extensive research using libraries, archives, museums and oral history interviews.

They analyze and interpret their findings, draw conclusions about their topics’ significance in history, and create final projects in one of five categories: paper, exhibit, documentary, website or performance. The daylong event culminates with awards for the top contenders in various age groups for each category.

Including participants’ family members, about 600 people packed WMU’s Bernhard Center for this year’s competition.

“History Day is our biggest community outreach and recruiting event,” says Dr. Bill Warren, professor of history and department chair. “Faculty members serve as judges and many of the students are middle schoolers visiting WMU for the first time. They get to experience the excitement of competing on a college campus while learning about what it’s like to study history at the university level.”

History Day is organized by the Historical Society of Michigan, with participants competing in 11 districts of the state. Winners from the district competitions advance to the statewide Michigan History Day finals, which take place April 28 at Bay City Central High School. Those finalists then move on to compete in National History Day at the University of Maryland, June 10-14.
For more about History Day, contact the department at (269) 387-4650. Or, visit wmic.edu/history/events/historyday.

WMU group helps rural Alaskans do their taxes

CONTACT: JEANNE BARON
MARCH 27, 2018 | WMU NEWS

KALAMAZOO, Mich.—It took planes and snowmobiles to get there, but an intrepid group from Western Michigan University recently visited four rural Alaskan villages and prepared 300 tax returns for local residents.

The group, headed by Dr. Fritz Allhoff, professor of philosophy, included four WMU students from Michigan. This was the fourth year Allhoff has led a tax-assistance delegation to remote villages in western Alaska.

The students participating this year were:

- Kayla Combs, a senior from Three Rivers majoring in accountancy.
- Nick Labadie, a senior from Davison majoring in accountancy.
- Kayla Poole, a senior from Jackson majoring in aviation management and operations.
- Kaylee Ronn, a junior from Negaunee majoring in finance.

WMU's Department of Philosophy participates in the Internal Revenue Service's Volunteer Income Tax Assistance Program with help from the University's Haworth College of Business.

In 2018, the group from WMU spent five days working with 300 individuals and families in the villages of Kaltag, Koyuku, Napaskiak and Nulato. Numerous other volunteer groups worked with people in other locations around Alaska.
"Overall, the tax-assistance program services 150 native villages and does about 7,000 returns," Allhoff reports. "Those returns generate about $8 million in refunds for the villagers. Part of the point is that they get their withholdings back because their income is so low."

He adds that the tax preparations take place in rural, indigenous villages that can only be accessed by small planes and snowmobiles, or snow machines, as they're known throughout Alaska.

"It's certainly a great experience, but also an important service project that brings tax support to those in need and who lack resources," Allhoff says. "It's also a great opportunity for our students to go through pretty comprehensive training and to have a new experience."

In addition to support from WMU's Haworth College of Business and Department of Philosophy, the program is co-funded by the federal government, Alaska Business Development Center and various native corporations.

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

Film chosen for Grand Rapids festival screening

KALAMAZOO, Mich.—Western Michigan University's Dr. Jennifer Machiorlatti is the co-producer of a film chosen for this year's Grand Rapids Film Festival that will take place Friday through Sunday, April 13-15.

A screening of "Peace During War," a documentary about forgiveness and mentoring youth, will be part of a selection of Transformational Films that start screening at 7 p.m. Saturday at the Wealthy Theatre, 1130 Wealthy St. SE. Co-produced by Machiorlatti, professor of communication, and Yafinceio Harris and Michael Wilder, the film is a 16-minute documentary about two former gang members who not only found their way to forgive
each other, but then established Peace During War, a mentoring program for youth in Kalamazoo.

This inspiring story is an example of how working together can change the lives of at-risk youth, and inspire all youth to stay motivated, get an education and strive to be allies rather than enemies.

Funded by the Fetzer Institute in partnership with the FORUM of Greater Kalamazoo, and with additional support from WMU, the film is one of 38 to be exhibited on two screens that day from noon to 11 p.m. All time blocks will have filmmakers present for question-and-answer sessions. Harris and Wilder will be at their session. Tickets are $5 per block of films.

For more information, contact Machiorlatti at jennifer.machiorlatti@wmich.edu.

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

Economics, an analyst and the FBI

“Be open to out-of-the-box opportunities” is something Emily Hawrysz ’09 says to college students thinking about their future careers. It’s advice she herself once followed as a student at Western, and she’s never looked back.

In the nine years since earning her bachelor’s degree in economics, Hawrysz has worked for the Federal Bureau of Investigation in Washington, DC. She is currently a management and program analyst, working with the bureau’s criminal investigative division.

Hawrysz supports the FBI’s transnational organized crime program, which targets groups in the Eastern hemisphere of the world. She is part of a team that combats labor racketeering and internet sportsbook gambling, especially among Italian, Russian, Asian, African and Middle Eastern organized crime groups. “The bureau definitely keeps me busy and on my toes,” she says, “but it has also given me more opportunities than I ever could have imagined.”

Hawrysz compares her role to a business analyst, examining the bureau’s processes and procedures, looking at where there are deficiencies and offering solutions. “We have hundreds of task forces and thousands of agencies that we work with all across the country,” she says. “We’re looking at, basically, how we can do business better.”

CONNECTING ECONOMICS AND CRIME

Though working for the FBI may seem like an unconventional path for an economics major, Hawrysz says her career is a prime example of how “universally applicable” the field can be.
“My degree in economics has definitely laid the groundwork for the critical and analytical thinking skills that are required for this job,” she says.

Hawrysz, who also minored in Spanish at Western, found herself connecting the concepts of economics and crime while working on her Lee Honors College thesis. With Dr. Michael Ryan, professor of economics, as her committee chair, she produced a literature review thesis on money laundering in Latin America and its economic impact. “Dr. Ryan was a big influence on me,” she says. “He taught my first econ class, microeconomics, which sparked my interest in the field. It just kind of clicked for me.”

During her junior year of college, Hawrysz came across an opportunity to apply for an internship with the FBI. “I grew up in a law enforcement home in the Chicago area, and at that point in my education I was trying to figure out the best way to apply the degree I was earning from Western,” she says. "I wasn’t really sure that I wanted to go into the private sector, and once I got into the FBI I thought it would be a good fit for me long term."

SUPPORTING THE MISSION

Hawrysz began her internship in DC the summer before her senior year and was able to transfer to the bureau’s Kalamazoo field office while completing her degree. “I got offered a full-time position contingent upon my graduation from Western and the rest is history,” she says.

She started with the bureau’s information technology branch before moving to the criminal investigative division. In this role, she led a team responsible for examining the funds allocated for information systems and applications. When the US was facing its budget sequestration in 2013, Hawrysz’s team worked to identify spending cuts so the bureau could avoid employee furloughs. “The goal was to keep our employees doing the work and supporting the mission,” she says. “We all play a role in making sure the FBI’s mission gets accomplished. That’s what drives me.”

Today, life on the job is anything but typical for Hawrysz. “Every day is different, which is what’s so great about the FBI,” she says. “It always depends on what comes through the door, but at headquarters there are times when you’re in the weeds analyzing data, developing methodologies or looking at projects. Then there are times when I find myself briefing out my results and recommendations to senior leaders in the bureau, and having them agree to take action. It’s exciting when you get to see the results of your work directly impact how we do business at the FBI.”

Hawrysz plans to have a lasting career with the bureau, exploring new opportunities along the way. “I’m a management and program analyst now, but that’s just one of several different jobs
we have at the FBI,” she says. “I’d like to stay with the bureau long term and there are lots of opportunities for me to do that and not get bored.”

No matter what role she may find herself in, Hawrysz has discovered that working for the US government is well suited for the analytically minded. “The federal government’s budget is about $4.1 trillion in fiscal year 2018. When you put that in the context of a private business or the more traditional economic fields people go into, that’s a lot of money that should be getting spent efficiently and effectively,” she says. “The FBI was not on my radar before my internship. I would encourage anyone in the economics field to consider it as a career option.”

For more information about the Department of Economics at Western Michigan University, visit wmich.edu/economics. To learn more about careers with the FBI, visit FBIjobs.gov.

Stanford design school names four WMU students innovation fellows

contact: Cheryl Roland
March 26, 2018 | WMU News

KALAMAZOO, Mich.—Four Western Michigan University students are among students from nine nations who have been named University Innovation Fellows by Stanford University's Hasso Plattner Institute of Design.

The four are among 258 students from 64 higher education institutions selected for the program, which is designed to empower students to become agents of change on their own campuses and ensure their peers gain the knowledge, skills and attitudes required to compete and make an impact on the economy of the future.

WMU's 2018 University Innovation Fellows, who have just returned from a March 15-19 meetup in Silicon Valley, are:

- Andy Sylvain Hobelsberger, a physics major from Elschbach, Germany, who graduated from Grandville High School.
- Megan Nicole Miller, a double major in marketing and management from Lake Orion.
- Saleh A. Mohamed, a mechanical engineering major originally from Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, who now lives in Grand Rapids.
- Daniel Paul Mozel, an engineering design technology major from Fergus, Ontario, who graduated from Milford High School.
Fellows are sponsored by faculty and administrators as individuals or teams of students, and selected through an application process each year. Following acceptance into the program, schools fund the students to go through six weeks of online training and travel to the University Innovation Fellows Silicon Valley Meetup. Throughout the year, fellows take part in events and conferences and have opportunities to learn from one another, Stanford mentors and leaders in academia and industry.

"We believe students can help accelerate the pace of change in higher education," says Humera Fasihuddin, co-director of the University Innovation Fellows program. "They have creative ideas and are very resourceful. With proper training and mentorship, they are initiating positive lasting changes at their schools and making a difference in the lives of their peers."

Applicants were asked to set their innovation priorities and goals for their first year as part of the program. The WMU students laid out a plan to make the campus culture more entrepreneurial. Their goals include supporting and growing the Innovation Club and making more campus lab space available for student innovation, encouraging more interdisciplinary teamwork across the campus, and focusing on innovation within established companies rather than just startups. The team also wants to focus on informing students about opportunities already available to them.

The WMU University Innovation Fellows produced a "pitch video" as part of the application process. That video can be viewed at youtube.com/watch?v=Wu9ascKu2oI. The Silicon Valley Meetup the students attended in March brought them together with some fellows trained in spring 2018. During this gathering, fellows took part in immersive experiences at Stanford's design school and at Google. They also worked with leaders in education and industry, and they participated in experiential workshops and exercises focused on such topics as movement building, innovation spaces, the design of learning experiences and new models for change in higher education.
This is the second year WMU has had multiple students selected for the program. The University's 2017 fellows, Nathan Lawarre, a computer engineering major, and Jill Puckett, an advertising and promotion major, were selected to be among 24 earlier fellows charged with being event leaders for the March 15-19 event in Silicon Valley. They gave presentations on their own UIF work to all attendees, modeling for the new fellows the kind of impact they can have at their own schools. Additionally, they led and mentored teams of fellows from different areas of the world.

Field notes: An undergraduate on the path to discovery discusses her research

Senior public history major Suzanne Grimmer earned a Lee Honors College Research and Creative Activities Scholarship for her project, “The Politics of Memory: Interpreting Nazi History in Modern Germany for a Global Audience.”

She conducted research in Poland last year, visiting Auschwitz-Birkenau and the Warsaw Ghetto to see how sites like these are preserved and interpreted for the modern world. She has also completed two internships at the National World War II Museum in New Orleans, where she administered surveys on wartime documents and artifacts.

Here, Grimmer discusses her work in understanding how nations with contentious histories address their roles as perpetrators, bystanders and victims – and ultimately, how ownership of past atrocities can shape cultural heritage, memory and legacy.

Q: What have you discovered from researching the politics of memory?

A: I’ve discovered that the narratives of various Nazi historical sites have changed over time due to the influence of special interest groups and shifting government bodies. While changes to narratives can be a good thing (especially when these changes occur to correct falsehoods), they can affect how different generations understand and remember their own history.

Q: How would you describe your research?
A: My research investigates the transition of former Nazi sites of violence in Germany into heritage sites, which are landscapes and structures of historical and cultural significance. This study analyzes how wartime sites of atrocity in Germany have been used since World War II as tools for remembrance, reconciliation and image recovery through a system of preservation, interpretation and memorialization. I’m also looking at postwar tourism’s role in shaping national and global memory by evaluating a select group of Nazi and Holocaust memorials, monuments and sites in Germany, and through one-on-one interviews with site directors, curators and visitors.

Q: How do you conduct your research?

A: The two core aspects of my research include 1) analyzing secondary sources to see who has written about the subject so far, what questions they’ve asked and answered, and how my research can contribute to the subject, and 2) conducting field research at the sites to analyze how they are physically preserved and presented to the public, and how visitors interpret their narratives.

Q: What interests you most about your research topic?

A: What interests me most about how we understand and present difficult histories to a modern audience is how nations with contentious histories address their roles as perpetrators, bystanders and victims. And, how responsible ownership of past atrocities can shape cultural heritage, memory and legacy. Germany is an excellent model for this, as the wartime sites preserved throughout the country since the 1950s offer crucial evidence of how visitors of different backgrounds bear witness to and comprehend the hard truths of traumatic history.

Q: What are the intended outcomes of your research? How can your work be applied to solving real-world problems?

A: My hope is that in analyzing Nazi sites of violence, this research will provide cultural heritage and museum professionals with guidelines for facilitating honest and responsible interpretation of U.S. heritage spaces with contentious histories, specifically those relating to Native American and African American history.