



FALL 2022

# MAGAZINE



## Gift of giving

From the classroom to the community, Broncos are using their time and talents to give back. But it's what they're receiving in return that's creating a learning experience unlike any other.



## Back and bursting with Broncos

Students returned to classes this fall semester to find recent campus improvements and the beauty of fall color. Campus is bustling with one of the largest first-year classes in recent years following a record number of first-year applications for the second year in a row.





## Navigating a virtual world

August Bade, a kinetic imaging major, wears an Oculus 2 headset to navigate through classmate Kaylie Fortin's virtual reality project. Their class is focused on the development of creative thinking for communication and visual expression, incorporating four-dimensional problem-solving, conceptualization and implementation processes.

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Local elementary students are loving their libros nuevos—new books. These bilingual readers now have the tools they need to learn how to read thanks to alumna Zenia Gutierrez.

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## Faculty, staff celebrated at Fall Convocation

At the Fall Convocation celebration in September, the first in person since 2019, the University celebrated 15 of its finest for their exceptional work in and out of the classroom.

### Make a Difference Awards

- Tanya Bakija, coordinator of exhibitions for the Frostic School of Art
- Anetra Grice, STEM Talent Expansion Program (STEP) manager for the College of Engineering and Applied Sciences
- Thomas Howe, senior specialist and co-director of the Hydrogeology Field Course in the Department of Geological and Environmental Sciences
- Dawn Maynard, utility person with Valley Dining Services

### Global Engagement Award

- Dr. Gregory Veeck, professor emeritus of geography, environment and tourism

### Excellence in Diversity Awards

- Dr. Staci Perryman-Clark, director of the Institute for Intercultural and Anthropological Studies
- WMU Athletics Task Force
- WMU Professional Development Institute

### Emerging Scholar Awards

- Dr. Wendy Beane, associate professor of biological sciences
- Dr. Nicholas Hanson, associate professor of exercise science
- Dr. Charlie Kurth, professor of philosophy

### Distinguished Teaching Award

- Dr. Ann Veeck, professor of marketing

### Distinguished Service Awards

- Dr. Sarah Summy, professor and program coordinator for special education and literacy studies
- Kerrie Harvey, academic advising senior in Lee Honors College

### Distinguished Faculty Scholar Award

- Dr. Massood Atashbar, professor of electrical and computer engineering



## A legacy of generosity leads to naming School of Music

Celebrating the extraordinary generosity of former philanthropist and arts patron Irving S. Gilmore, the University is naming its school dedicated to educating its outstanding musicians the Irving S. Gilmore School of Music.

Daniel G. Guyette, dean of the College of Fine Arts, made the announcement to the campus community during its 50th anniversary celebration in October, stating the new name will begin being used officially in January.

A former business leader and concert-quality pianist, Gilmore died in 1986, leaving a legacy of charitable giving through the Irving S. Gilmore Foundation.

Here on campus, the Irving S. Gilmore Foundation has been enormously generous, granting more than \$30 million to Western since the mid-1980s. In the College of Fine Arts, past grants from the foundation include:

- \$2 million to help fund the Irving S. Gilmore Theatre Complex.
- \$4 million to create the Irving S. Gilmore Fine Arts Equipment Endowment.
- \$2 million in 2020 to support the University's new Virtual Imaging Technology Lab initiative and the signature dance studio to be located atop the renovated Dunbar Hall.

"In light of this legacy of philanthropy and Mr. Gilmore's devotion to music and the arts, recent conversations with members of the Irving S. Gilmore Foundation trustees have brought about an extraordinary opportunity," Guyette said at the celebration. "We thank Irving S. Gilmore and the Irving S. Gilmore Foundation for their profound leadership and generosity, which supports and enriches the cultural, social and economic life of greater Kalamazoo."

Western has offered music instruction since 1904. The first music majors and minors were offered in 1942, and the department became a school in 1980. Today, it offers a broad range of programs including 11 undergraduate degree, eight graduate degree and two certificate programs to nearly 440 registered students that prepare them for careers and further study in performance, research, music education, music therapy, composition and multimedia arts technology. ■

## Sky Broncos dominate regional competition to advance to nationals

Sweeping first place in both ground and flight events, the Sky Broncos precision flight team brought home top honors from the National Intercollegiate Flying Association (NIFA) Region III Safety and Flight Evaluation Conference (SAFECON) held Oct. 9 to 14 in Bowling Green, Ohio.

Capturing the lead at regionals, WMU aviators now qualify for the 2023 NIFA SAFECON nationals set to take place May 8 to 13, 2023, at Wittman Regional Airport in Oshkosh, Wisconsin.

Competing against the Sky Broncos were flight teams from Bowling Green State, Kent State, Ohio and Ohio State universities. Teams earn points for members who finish in the top 10 in a series of flight and ground events. Western's team accrued 249 points during the event. The second-place winner was Ohio State with 189 points.



"I am humbled to have coached such a sharp, talented group of young aviators," says Austin Barrett, head coach. "Their determination to better themselves and learn through teaching our younger members really shows looking at those results, and we will continue to let the scores speak for themselves going into nationals this spring."

He added a notable achievement was senior Kyle Albrecht, who again was chosen as the NIFA Region III Top Pilot, an honor he also took last year. Albrecht joins alumnus Jim Ray as the only pilots in the competition over the years to win the award in back-to-back years. Ray won the award in 2018 and 2019 while competing for WMU. ■

**The 2022-23 Sky Broncos team: Kyle Albrecht, Jessica Bernin, Morgan Carstensen, Evin Cooper, Brock Fransen, Nathan Gute, Evan Hoyle, Karsten Kotchenruther, Jerry Lucas, Nathan Merrill, Angelo Molina, Nicolas Olnhausen, Carter Peterson, Nino Serra and Daniel Souppa. Leading the team is Austin Barrett, head coach; Jack Skoczen, assistant coach; and Ryan Seiler, aviation master faculty specialist.**

## New cross-campus partnership aims to fill growing need for health administrators

A new, interdisciplinary collaboration will prepare graduates for high-demand jobs in health care. The undergraduate health administration program allows students to tap into the expertise of faculty in both the College of Health and Human Services and Haworth College of Business, as well as other units on campus.

"We're excited to offer this new opportunity to put Western students in a position to hit the ground running in a fast-growing field," says Dr. Jessica Cataldo, faculty specialist in the School of Interdisciplinary Health Programs and director of the new program.

The Bureau of Labor Statistics predicts 32% job growth for medical and health service managers by 2030. Graduates of Western's program will be well-prepared to meet the need for office administrators, compliance specialists, program coordinators and other leadership roles in a variety of settings, from hospitals to nursing care facilities, outpatient care centers, home health services, community relief services and much more.

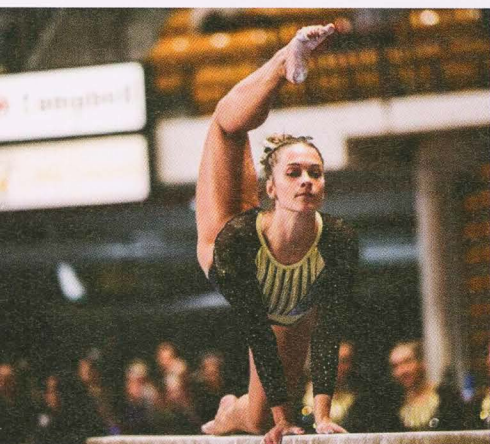
"The pandemic has shown us that effective and efficient administration is key in health care," adds Dr. Devrim Yaman, associate dean of undergraduate programs in the Haworth College of Business. "In these uncertain times, our new health administration degree is an opportunity for WMU to contribute to the health and well-being of the individuals in our community. The new degree will also enhance the career opportunities for our graduates."

In addition to interdisciplinary coursework, all students will complete an internship and have the opportunity to participate in a number of experiential-learning activities. Cataldo says the program's goal is to build and expand partnerships with the community.

"We're really looking to create opportunities to get students involved in our local community and, hopefully, to stay here and develop them into professionals within southwest Michigan as well," she says. ■



## ONWARD: Western provides personal branding support for student-athletes



Technology, education and resources are coming together to create opportunities for student-athletes to work toward their goals in their lives and careers through ONWARD, the WMU athletics program helping students move forward in the Name, Image and Likeness (NIL) space as they build their personal brand and maximize their opportunities.

**Branding:** A new app gives student-athletes access to photography, videos and other content they can use to build their brand on their own individual social media platforms.

**Education:** The new Broncos Empowered group will provide educational opportunities to cover areas like entrepreneurship, financial management, legal and contract education, and brand-building.

In partnership with the Haworth College of Business, a new one-credit spring course for student-athletes will be taught by Dr. JoAnn Atkin, associate professor of marketing, and will focus on



understanding branding, developing a personal brand and plan, and best-practice guidance for monetizing a brand.

**Community connections:** The Bronco Exchange will be a home for both local and national businesses to connect and engage with Bronco student-athletes, and it's a free service for student-athletes and the businesses who use it.

Broncos Empowered will focus on engaging with community members and former student-athletes to provide internship, mentorship and future employment for student-athletes.

**Policy and monitoring:** The newly created NIL Policy will allow Bronco student-athletes to enter into a contract or agreement and earn compensation for use of their Name, Image and Likeness. ■





Left to right, Daniel May, Jamauri Bogan and Greg Dobson, WMU Alumni Associate president, celebrate at the Southwest Michigan First Chamber event.

## Alumnus honored by Chamber for 'making our community stronger'

Real estate developer and alumnus Jamauri Bogan is the 2022 Chamber's Choice Alumnus of the Year, the inaugural recipient of the award established by the Southwest Michigan First Chamber aimed at acknowledging and celebrating business leaders who have made a significant impact on the community during the past year.

"Jamauri represents the best of our community. It's cool to see us rally around him, once as an athlete and now again as a business owner and Western graduate who decided to stay here and invest in making our community stronger," says Clarence Lloyd, Chamber director and partner at Southwest Michigan First, adding Bogan was nominated by members of the entire Kalamazoo County community.

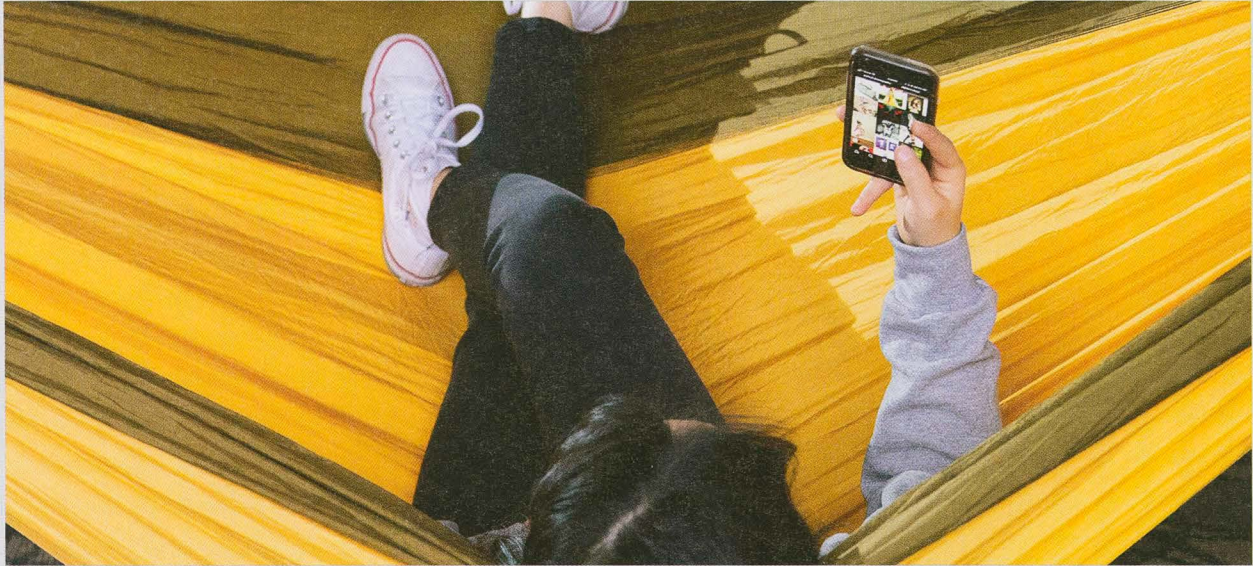
Bogan, CEO of Bogan Development, launched the real estate development company in 2020, which is focused on tackling the needs of moderate- to low-income communities through mixed-income developments. This year, Bogan Developments will be breaking ground on a 14-unit project with child care offered in partnership with the YMCA of Greater Kalamazoo.

"I am humbled to be a recipient of a Chamber Choice Award. But the award means more coming from Western Michigan University's Alumni Association. My experience at Western Michigan academically, athletically and socially has been crucial in my personal development," he says.

"I love the Kalamazoo community! Kalamazoo's heart for serving and giving makes it unique. Being a part of this community made me realize that we are all better when we put others first. In all my pursuits, I aim to remain outward-focused, ensuring I serve this elite community."

Bogan earned a Bachelor of Business Administration degree in personal financial planning in 2017 and a Master in Business Administration degree from Western in 2019.

A former Bronco running-back standout, he joined fellow Western alumni and award finalists Daniel May, BBA '14, owner of Dabney and Co. cocktail lounge, and Adam McFarlin, MM '08, owner of Kalamazoo Candle, as contenders for the award's inaugural year. ■



## University launches 24/7 year-round mental health support for students

Taking its well-being support to the next level, Western is offering a new platform to give students free, immediate access to teletherapy services in partnership with Uwill. The program meets students where they are—allowing them to access support any time of day, any day of the week—and tailors the experience to the individual based on their unique needs and preferences.

"Student well-being in all its dimensions is our top priority at Western," says President Edward Montgomery. "Asking for help is a sign of wisdom and nothing could be more appropriate in a learning environment. We are here to support students so they can be their best selves."

The University launched the partnership in response to a need identified by students, faculty and staff for after-hours access to mental health professionals for health crises and other concerns. The service is also available to enrolled students no matter their location—whether a student is on campus, working remotely or studying abroad.

"We know many college students struggle with their mental health. A study recently reported by the Mayo Clinic found that 1 in 3 students experienced significant depression and anxiety. This study reflects a larger body of research that points to considerable need in this population," says Dr. Reetha Raveendran, associate vice president for student affairs and dean of students.

"At Western, we're pleased to offer an additional support that helps address that need and, very importantly, is directly responsive to what our students have asked for."

Access to help is quick and easy with Uwill. Enrolled students can register and create a profile to find personalized support based on availability, issue, gender, language, ethnicity and other preferences and schedule an appointment with a licensed counselor of their choosing. Many students have their first session within hours of completing their profile. A mental health crisis hotline also is available for students in immediate need.

"Uwill, along with on-campus resources, provides an additional access point for students to explore wellness strategies to help better cope during difficult times. As a result, students should experience greater satisfaction with their lives and a greater level of success," says Dr. Brian Fuller, director of Counseling Services at Western's Sindecuse Health Center.

Uwill supplements Western's robust array of well-being resources for students, which also includes YOU at Western, WellTrack, Sindecuse, Counseling Services, Office of Health Promotion and Education, the Mind Spa and Student Recreation Center.

"It is important to focus on your mental, emotional and physical health; focusing on just one could negatively impact another. At Western, we strive to give students the tools and resources they need to thrive—academically, personally and professionally," Fuller says.



## Dear friends and colleagues,

At Western, we are proud to take a whole-person approach to higher education. We prepare students to achieve career success over a lifetime by helping them discover and use their purpose and talents in the workplace. But we don't stop there.

As part of equipping students to pursue a life well lived, we also help them apply their talents and sense of purpose to volunteer efforts, service-learning initiatives and other civic engagement activities that help round them out as people and meet the needs of our communities. Our students do this remarkably well and to an extraordinary degree. They get involved in myriad causes and activities, from getting out the vote to tutoring schoolchildren to cleaning up the environment to fighting poverty to advancing social justice to working to improve neighborhoods and many other efforts.

In 2019, in the University's most recent official accounting for the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, we demonstrated that students, faculty and staff contributed 1.34 million hours of service in one year toward community engagement. Using Michigan's 2019 volunteer equivalency hourly rate of \$25.79, that equates to a \$34.5 million investment in serving the people in our region. And even after the emergence of COVID-19 when the ensuing pandemic greatly limited in-person interaction, Broncos still found ways to lift communities and causes—with about 90,000 hours in service-learning initiatives alone, by one estimate.

The notional dollar amount and actual hours of service are impressive numbers. They help illustrate the magnitude and depth of our community's capacity to care for others. The full value of service, however, is in many ways immeasurable but nonetheless profound.

As one of our graduates shared, "Through service learning, I've become aware of the potential impact and influence I have on those around me and how much of an impact community members have on me just by being 'in the moment' and engaging with them. This idea has become a large part of career development for me."

That experience speaks to the beauty and value of holistic development. Guided by our community's belief in the power of service to others, our students recognize in themselves the power to make a difference, not just in one part of life but across multiple dimensions. When they graduate, they are ready to add value in jobs and work environments wherever they go. They also are prepared to contribute in other ways that make communities stronger. Using their gifts and talents, they make a difference. This edition of the *W Magazine* highlights some of the ways Broncos serve in professional capacities and more broadly as citizens in their communities. Their stories inspire and they make us proud. ■

Sincerely,

Edward Montgomery, PhD  
President

# An 'open heart' opens the mind

**Students find value in giving and receiving through service learning**

“They often leave feeling like they did a good thing, but they didn’t do it to or for others; they did it with them. They’re learning about themselves. They’re learning about their own values. They oftentimes come face to face with biases they didn’t realize they had and confront stereotypes.”

—Shawn Tenney

**K**indness, bravery and leadership—at Spring Valley Elementary School in Kalamazoo, students are on the lookout for ways to show they are good citizens. You might ask what’s motivating this good behavior? Pride—and a trip to the school store stocked with all the goodies you can imagine.

Before the pandemic, you could walk the halls of the school during lunchtime and find culture in every crevice. You’d hear students practicing Spanish in one room, a group of kids learning new dance moves in another and a group giving life to color through art. Kids were also receiving tutoring and mentoring as well as participating in after-school clubs. All of these extracurricular projects were designed and taught by service-learning students from Western.

“All of these things were so awesome—and then COVID hit and we couldn’t have students in the schools,” says Shawn Tenney, director of Service Learning.

Wasting no time, Broncos got to work to find ways to keep their projects afloat. They partnered with the nonprofit Communities in Schools to help with the store at Spring Valley Elementary to begin enlisting donations from across Western’s campus. Students also reached out to businesses in the Kalamazoo community, many of which they hoped to work for after graduation. The items they collected ranged from typical school supplies like notebooks, backpacks, fuzzy pencils, colored pencils and books to board games, water coolers and even a T-shirt signed by Western’s tennis team.

The only way for elementary students to cash in: Do good deeds.

“It’s been such a wonderful thing,” Tenney says, describing it as a project with mutual benefits. “Our students learned about networking. ... The little kids got to practice budgeting and math skills while having fun shopping. They get to get things that they need and want that they wouldn’t otherwise have access to.

“Not only did it encourage them but it also brought them back to school and gave them a reason to come back to school—when a lot of kids after COVID weren’t very motivated to come back,” she adds.

This is just one of dozens of examples of service learning underway at Western. Students are also providing tech support to older adults at Heritage Community senior living residence, crafting the stories of veteran volunteers and firefighters at the Air Zoo and Oshtemo Township Fire Department, writing grant proposals for farmers and community organizations, installing doorbell cameras for residents in urban neighborhoods alongside Building Blocks of Kalamazoo and digging through history at the Fort St. Joseph Archaeological Project.

“We are out there to meet with people, see what the needs are that we might be able to fill, but we’re also learning from them,” Tenney says, noting that service learning isn’t synonymous with community volunteering.

“It’s very much a collaborative effort; mutual benefit is the key to service learning,” she says. “The students are very much involved in finding out what the problems are as well as partnering with community members and organizations to create solutions. ... They practice the actual skills for their careers.”

“The value of experiential education is really second to none,” says Evan Heiser, senior director of career and experiential education. He says service-learning projects and the WMU Signature program can really enhance career skill development early on. “It’s taking everything students are doing inside the classroom and the learning that they’ve done outside the classroom and putting it into real-world action and solving real problems. The best ones are those that are working with community.”

**“(Service learning) is the best opportunity I took advantage of while at WMU. Never before have I been in a class where I truly had to apply everything I had learned in all my courses to problem-solve,” says one alumnus in her reflection. “I learned about leadership in the real world and became aware of skills I didn’t realize I had.”**

Service learning at Western requires a minimum of 15 hours of service each semester, but Tenney says it can involve much more time depending on the project. She estimates students are spending nearly 90,000 hours on service learning in a year. They can participate through registering for academic courses or by joining the Community Engagement Scholars Program, which encourages Broncos to partner with community organizations to expand community-engaged learning opportunities for all Western students.

Tenney says instruction that students receive before the project paired with a reflection after the work creates a more dynamic experience and allows for more personal and professional growth.

“Through service learning, I’ve become aware of the potential impact and influence I have on those around me, and how much of an impact community members have on me just by being ‘in the moment’ and engaging with them. This idea has become a large part of career development for me,” says another alumnus in their reflection.

**“They often leave feeling like they did a good thing, but they didn’t do it to or for others; they did it with them,” Tenney says. “They’re learning about themselves. They’re learning about their own values. They oftentimes come face to face with biases they didn’t realize they had and confront stereotypes.”**

While students are benefiting from the experiential-learning opportunity, Tenney says the community will see the benefits of their work for generations to come. She emphasizes student involvement in these programs benefits the whole city by increasing job-ready candidates, improving adult and child literacy, increasing safety and improving mental health for all ages.

“There’s no way that we don’t help,” she says. “We support the community, and the community supports our students.” ■



# Barrier-breaking book program offers new chapter for parents of nonnative English speakers



Zenia Gutierrez, BA '12, MA '22, reads a book to students from the bilingual library at Bloomingdale Elementary School northwest of Kalamazoo.

**B**ooks offer a portal to fantastical worlds and new adventures, allowing children to not only exercise their imagination but also learn, build their vocabulary and bond with parents who read to them. But that opportunity is often lost in translation for the families of nonnative English speakers.

It's a reality teacher Zenia Gutierrez heard loud and clear from parents of her third graders at Bloomingdale Elementary in rural Van Buren County, Michigan.

"These students are among our most vulnerable populations due to the language barrier. They come from unique backgrounds. Their parents work hard to provide for their families and want to provide a good education for their children."

She began surveying the parents as part of a family engagement project in her master's program for Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) at Western.

"They said they were lacking books at home to read to their children, which reminded me of my childhood experience and not having those available when I was growing up," says

Gutierrez, who moved to the United States from a remote village in Mexico when she was in first grade. "Not understanding not only the language but the culture was very difficult."

Gutierrez decided to try out a pilot program, using money from a grant Western received from the U.S. Department of Education's Office of English Language Acquisition to purchase bilingual books that six of her students could take home and read with their parents. The books told stories in both English and Spanish.

It didn't take long for Gutierrez to witness the impact of the project. One boy's face was full of pride when he told her his father had been reading to him at night. Another parent mentioned this is the first time she had ever been able to read a book to her 10-year-old child.

"How a simple change made such a big difference is unbelievable," Gutierrez says. She knew the program couldn't stop there and got to work on a pitch to take the program districtwide. Her presentation tugged at the heartstrings of now-retired superintendent Deb Paquette.

**"In my mind, I was having flashbacks of laying in bed reading with my son and thinking, 'I can't imagine not being able to do that.' It literally brought tears to my eyes," Paquette says.**

With Paquette's support, Gutierrez officially launched Breaking Barriers with Bilingual Books, expanding access to more than 150 families in the district's two elementary schools in the 2021-22 academic year. Now after accepting a position as an English Learner and migrant education teacher in Van Buren Intermediate School District, she's talking with other school districts in the area about instituting the program.

"It started with six students, now four school districts—I have to take it one step at a time, but my lifelong goal is to get the books where they are needed," she says. "The lack of bilingual books is a

problem that exists throughout our entire nation, and if there isn't a voice in other states, I want to be that voice."

## NEWFOUND PRIDE

Gutierrez started a fundraising webpage to begin raising money to expand the reach of the program. Her hope is to get enough to start small bilingual libraries at several schools, which districts could bolster with outside funding over time. As the impact of her work grows, so does the praise she's received from community members.

"It does make me proud. But to me, more than anything, this is something that's long overdue. I feel like it's my duty," says Gutierrez, remembering the challenges she faced as a young girl trying to learn in a classroom and within a culture she didn't quite understand. "It makes me feel like I'm helping close the gap that is very much there in education."

The project has also helped her find a new sense of pride in her heritage—something she struggled with even into her adult life. "(Growing up) I always felt that my culture, my language was less than. It wasn't until I took graduate classes with Dr. Selena Protacio that I realized (being bilingual) was a blessing and not something for me to feel like a second-class citizen. I felt more proud of being bilingual after taking that class," she says.

"We really try to emphasize in the program that multilingualism is an asset," says Protacio, interim chair of special education and literacy studies at Western. "We want to embrace all of the languages and the cultures that students bring to the classroom. And I think Zenia's project really shows this. And it goes beyond the students to their families and acknowledging the literacy skills that families have in other languages."

Protacio says Gutierrez's success shows the impact of supporting educational programming in traditionally underserved populations.

"It's a testament to how important it is to get students from diverse backgrounds into teaching," she says, noting Western is doing its part to expand its capacity to train ESL teachers.

"This fall, we launched our brand-new elementary education and TESOL undergrad program. This would allow students of this program to graduate with a preK-3 initial teaching endorsement and a K-12 ESL endorsement, which is a critical shortage in our state as well as across the nation," Protacio says.

The University also recently received a new \$2.96 million grant from the Department of Education's Office of Language Acquisition, which will provide financial assistance in terms of books and endorsement fees for 75 in-service and 60 pre-service teachers over the next five years. The previous grant, which helped fund Gutierrez's pilot project, supported 166 in-service and 22 pre-service teachers in Western's program over a five-year period.

## A FULL CIRCLE MOMENT

Breaking Barriers with Bilingual Books is more than a passion project for Gutierrez; it's a chance to give back to the community where she grew up. It was in classrooms in the Bloomingdale Public School District where the spark for education first ignited.

"Going into teaching has been ingrained in me since I was little. Because once I came to the United States and I became familiar with the language, (teachers) would put other ESL students next to me so I could do the translating and help them with their homework," she says. "I've been training for this since I could start speaking English!"

The encouragement she received from her high school Spanish teacher and counselor gave her the confidence to pursue higher education.

"I guess they saw in me a brightness that I didn't see in myself," says Gutierrez, who began the process of applying to colleges. "I got a full-ride scholarship to Western Michigan University, and that's when my life really changed. Education changed and shaped my life."

Gutierrez found support in the TRIO Student Success Program, which helps first-generation, income-eligible students make the transition to college through academic, financial and career assistance.

"It really helped me as a student, because they would check on you and see how you're doing, how your grades were," she remembers. "On top of providing that support, if there were any personal things I was going through, (my mentor) would always give me great advice. I felt that TRIO made a big difference."

After working three jobs in high school to support herself and help her family, Gutierrez says Western put her on the path to a better future.

"It was like winning the lottery," she says, having earned a bachelor's degree in Spanish in 2012—the first person in her family to do so. "Walking in the line (at commencement), I was in disbelief that I had made it through. I graduated; I had a degree. I had made something out of myself and I was about to start my dream job as a teacher."

Returning to earn her master's degree in TESOL, which she completed in spring 2022, Gutierrez is now able to pay that jackpot forward, creating new avenues of opportunity for families just like hers.

"I'm going to continue to be that voice," she says. "These kids depend on us to provide these resources so they have an equitable education just like their peers. And their parents deserve the same rights ... and resources where they are able to also be part of their education at home." ■





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Alumni Profile

# Lucas-Perry makes declaration in Broadway debut: She's here to stay

Photo courtesy: Valerie Terranova

**Gracing a Broadway stage is a bucket-list accomplishment for many actors, and debuting in a lead role is rare. Crystal Lucas-Perry, BA '10, is taking that accomplishment up a notch, starring in two Broadway productions within a month—first as John Adams in a groundbreaking reboot of the Tony Award-winning musical "1776" and then reprising her Lucille Lortel Award-winning role as Passenger 5 when hit comedy "Ain't No Mo'" made its debut Broadway run beginning Nov. 9.**

"Being part of one amazing show is such an honor; being a part of two is a dream come true!" she says. But this dream scenario is no surprise; exceeding expectations and breaking barriers is in her DNA. "I come from a family of game-changers and history-makers. My grandfather, William 'Bill' Lucas, was the first Black sheriff of Wayne County in the state of Michigan."

As a Black woman leading the all female, transgender and nonbinary cast of the "1776" revival—a production detailing the events leading up to the signing of the Declaration of Independence—Lucas-Perry seizes the opportunity to examine the pivotal moment in American history through the lens of someone who would never have been allowed in the room.

"I'm very aware that this is a monumental moment for American theatre, because the show has continuously been done in certain ways. So for it to be cracked open is pretty exciting," she says. "Hopefully it allows people to find places and opportunities where they see themselves in the piece."

Lucas-Perry finds validation in an exchange Adams has with Edward Rutledge, who wants to uphold slavery.

"Rutledge says, 'Are you calling Black slaves Americans?' And as a Black woman in this show, I get to say every night, 'Yes. And they're people, and they're here,'" she says. "I can't echo enough the fact that we all have a place and a space, even when it feels like there hasn't been room for those voices to come through."



Lucas-Perry, center, led the cast of "1776" as John Adams. Photo courtesy: Joan Marcus

Her voice is being heard loud and clear as the production opened in October to rave reviews, including high praise from Supreme Court Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson, a trailblazing figure in her own right.

"She was definitely one of my inspirations throughout this process, so to have her there in the flesh and to have her be able to celebrate opening night was probably one of the highlights of my career," says Lucas-Perry. Jackson met her backstage on the first night of her show's pre-Broadway run at the American Repertory Theater in Cambridge, Massachusetts. "Having her as part of this journey just brings things completely full circle and couldn't be more right."

Lucas-Perry had another full-circle moment in New York when Dr. Joan Herrington, chair of Western's Department of Theatre, whom Lucas-Perry describes as her "rock," attended the Broadway show during opening week. Lucas-Perry describes her time at Western as instrumental in building a strong artistic foundation, remembering the moment she walked into the Gilmore Theatre Complex to audition for the theatre program nearly two decades ago.

"I already felt like I was in a professional space. I was already in a dedicated space for art to take place and for growth to occur; I could just feel it. It was the energy; it was speaking with the faculty. I was able to connect with so many people that I hold dear today," says Lucas-Perry, who received the Early Career Award as one of the College of Fine Arts' 2021 Distinguished Alumni. "The fact that I'm still in contact with all of these professors, that our relationships have continued, speaks to the fact that I did make the right choice, and I felt it all those years ago."

She appreciates Western's holistic approach to training, allowing her to gain experience in theatre productions and musicals as well as emphasizing continued growth and development.

**"I always felt so supported from the second I was (at Western) to not just be an actor but a complete artist," Lucas-Perry says. "It wasn't about just throwing you into the industry and saying, 'Good luck.' They also prepare you for the next phase of your artistic education, which was really important to me."**

Now as she performs in her second Broadway production in "Ain't No Mo'"—another role examining the Black experience in America and challenging the status quo—Lucas-Perry is intent on making an impact and giving historically marginalized communities a voice through her work.

**"I've always been focused on finding my power. And within that, one of the things was finding the role that I wanted to make sure that I set foot on that Broadway stage with. And this is that," she says.**

"It means a lot. And it also is just further validation of the fact that not only do I deserve to be here, but this is the natural trajectory for me. I've been working in this industry for a while and have loved live theater and had the opportunity to work on so many wonderful projects and with so many wonderful people. So it just feels like the natural next step. And to experience that already is just giving me goosebumps, because I recognize what an opportunity and how fortunate I am to be able to be blessed with such a moment." ■



**Dr. Wendy Beane and Liz Ratashak feature their summer research on genetic indicators of planarian behavior as part of the BIORETS program.**

**Dr. Wendy Beane, professor of biological sciences and an Emerging Scholar Award recipient, is no stranger to scientific outreach, but her most recent experience with the University's Biological Sciences Research Experiences for Teachers Sites (BIORETS) program reinforced the importance of bridging science and community.**

"Growing up, I'd never been approached with fun science, and it wasn't until I got to college that I had science teachers who were passionate and engaged," says Beane, who majored in English in college. "It was because of this outreach at the college level that I came to realize that science is really cool. And I think it's these kinds of experiences that give you the chance to do things you wouldn't think you'd like."

Beane's lab is already well-known for its outreach efforts, which have included bringing neuroregeneration practicums to local high schools, leading an effort to establish an internationally recognized quantum biology community in the U.S. and establishing QBite, a national trainee exchange program based at Western that exposes graduate students to various quantum biology disciplines.



# Bridging science

Beane carried that same sense of connection to "BIORETS: biology of plants, animals, microorganisms and their environments," a National Science Foundation-funded program at Western that brought together eight biological sciences faculty and nine local science teachers for seven weeks of authentic research and professional development.

The ultimate goal of the program is to provide "teachers research and education opportunities that can enhance their classroom teaching and entice students to

join biological fields," according to Dr. Yan Lu, associate professor of biological sciences and director of the program.

"For our typical high school outreach, instead of just bringing a set program, we work with the instructor of the classes to tailor the program to the needs of individual classes and what the instructor's objectives are," says Beane. "I thought it would be an awesome opportunity to actually interact more with the instructors themselves through this program, and it was just an entirely delightful experience from start to finish."



During the BIORETS program, teachers Liz Ratashak and Jennifer Lacy, from Lakeview Middle School, had the opportunity to learn from WMU faculty and explore campus labs and spaces like Finch Greenhouse in Wood Hall.

being about science research itself, I was interested in learning new things.”

Ratashak was immersed in real-world, active research for seven weeks, examining the effects of a few specific genes on planarian behavior. Beane described the data collection as “the most productive seven weeks of the lab’s entire life,” and she hopes to publish a paper on the findings alongside Ratashak after some additional data collection.

Beyond providing an invaluable research experience, there is an entrenched commitment as part of the BIORETS program to transfer the experience into the curriculum for their classrooms, with the ultimate goal of engaging young students in STEM subjects.

“This experience was not just bringing someone in, mentoring and then letting them go. It was actually a chance for both of us to learn equally,” says Beane. “Being able to learn about the constraints and curriculum science teachers have to work with makes it easier to provide an experience that is sustainable and can be translated to the classroom.”

Together, Beane and Ratashak worked together to develop a stream of curriculum about “Pluripotency in Planaria” that will be implemented in a ninth-grade biology class later this school year. Beane expects to join Ratashak in her classroom for the weeklong lesson plan to “be able to see how it works practically.”

“I think (BIORETS) has fostered some better partnerships between our area high schools and the University. It let (area schools) know that we are interested in helping with their enrichment and their classrooms, and that we are here as a resource,” says Beane. “And I feel better able to provide meaningful outreach and really build relationships in the community.”

The BIORETS program, which is funded through 2025, was complemented with faculty research seminars, professional development workshops, demonstrations of hands-on laboratory teaching modules, lunch-time discussions on research and curricular development, written curricular materials, poster presentations on research and curricular development, and fall semester classroom visits. ■

# and community

Teachers were paired with one of eight faculty mentors, each focusing on a different aspect of the overarching theme of how biological entities interact with one another and their environment. One group explored how microorganisms receive and respond to environmental cues while another considered how animals interact with their environment by investigating fish morphology and migration. Across a variety of biological sciences areas, each lab gave teachers a distinct experience.

In Beane’s lab, Vicksburg High School science teacher Liz Ratashak joined in building upon Beane’s research on regeneration utilizing planarians, which have a huge stem cell population and are very easy to control, in order to discover what makes them able to regenerate.

“I had been in a research experience for teachers program before, and I really learned and grew a lot as a professional during that program focused on science education,” says Ratashak. “With (the BIORETS) program

# *Fast-tracking* dreams into reality

Urban Teacher Residency Program a 'blessing'  
for one of cohort's first graduates





Alumna Koretta King-Jackson found her passion in teaching and looks forward to seeing the smiling faces in her kindergarten class at the Discovery Enrichment Center in Benton Harbor Area Schools.

## Koretta King-Jackson knew she had a passion for teaching when she occasionally stepped in to be a substitute at her local public elementary and charter schools.

"My heart was in it; I wanted to do it very badly, but I didn't have the right credentials at the time," she says.

When she landed a long-term substitute teaching position, she decided she wanted to change her career for good.

Securing a spot in Western's inaugural Urban Teacher Residency Program helped her earn a master's degree in elementary education this past summer. The program—a partnership between the University, Kalamazoo Public Schools and Benton Harbor Area Schools—offers financial and academic support for district employees like paraprofessionals, bus drivers, food service staff and custodians to earn their teacher certification while they continue working, developing a pipeline to fill the dire need for quality instructors in high-need areas.

Now a kindergarten teacher at the Discovery Enrichment Center in Benton Harbor, Michigan, King-Jackson says she achieved her dream job thanks to the support she received from Western.

"It was a lot of work; I would aim to be done at my job (at the school) at 4 p.m., and class started at 5 p.m. It's a fast track, but I didn't hesitate because I really wanted this," King-Jackson says. "It's a blessing. I encourage anyone who wants to be in education to go through this program."

"Western's instructors were so patient, outgoing and willing to help. They appreciated and understood that we were in the classroom but working, also. They were flexible and committed to helping me succeed."

King-Jackson was part of the first cohort of 25 students to graduate this summer from the Urban Teacher Residency Program, which carries a goal to increase the number of certified teachers in high-need areas by at least 90 and increase the three-year retention of certified teachers. Funded by a five-year, \$4.9 million U.S. Department of Education grant, the program has also added an 18-month program for 15 select special education students to meet the high demand. This is in addition to the 12-month elementary education program now in its second year.

The program uses a teacher residency model that includes a clinical experience paired with the required coursework for certification. Students receive intensive coaching and feedback in their cohorts as they apply what they're learning in the classroom. By design, the program mitigates some of the barriers that impede qualified candidates from pursuing a teaching career.

Students who recently completed the first year of the program said the experience was "intense but definitely worth it," says Dr. Regena Fails Nelson, program director. This cycle, preparation for the Michigan Test for Teacher Certification will begin four months earlier to give students even more time to study the material, she adds.

"There is an adjustment for students as far as time management, but we've found a model that works for students who go through this program while working full time at a job," Nelson says. "The response the first year has been very positive, with students saying it provides them a path they need to move from support positions to full-time teaching."

For King-Jackson, her hard work was rewarded as soon as she returned to the Discovery Enrichment Center this fall—this time as a certified teacher.

"One of the administrators came right up to me and said how happy she was to see my smiling face in the building again. You know she appreciates that we went through the program and were willing to do the work," she says. "I'm sure every teacher needs to hear that." ■

# Education meets innovation

Interior design students envision  
accessible future for teen living  
with rare progressive disease



Donovan Lassig uses a four-wheeler to navigate outside his home and get from his garage to his room on the second floor.





Students bonded with Donovan through multiple site visits to determine his needs for his next home.

A plea for help on the NextDoor app has opened the door to new career opportunities for Western students and new hope for a family responding to a rare disease diagnosis.

"It gives me goosebumps to think that something I do before I even enter the field could help change a family's life," says Carolyn Hoezee, a third-year interior design student from Byron Center, Michigan. Alongside her classmates, she's found purpose in putting her education into practice.

Now 18 years old, Donovan Lassig has been through a lot in his young life. At the age of 2, he was diagnosed with cerebral palsy (CP). He endured a number of major surgeries and therapies to address his symptoms, but instead of stabilizing, his ability to walk only worsened when he became a teenager.

"He went from walking with crutches around our home, up and down stairs ... to within about 12 to 16 months losing his ability to walk freely," his mother, Bridget Lassig, BS '97, says. "We went exploring and took him to multiple highly regarded medical facilities for opinions. We landed at Boston Children's Hospital, and they knew rather quickly that he didn't actually have CP."

In reality, Donovan has a disorder called hereditary spastic paraplegia (HSP). The big difference is while CP is static, HSP is progressive. Puberty accelerated the degeneration of the motor neurons controlling the movement of his legs. Eventually, he will lose the ability to walk.

"(The diagnosis) was kind of terrifying," he says.

The rapid change in his condition has left Donovan isolated. Because getting around is increasingly difficult, he is mainly confined to his bedroom on the second floor.

"We accommodate him by putting hand grabs everywhere, because he's a teenager who doesn't want to use equipment in his 'free zone.' So every step he takes, there is a grasping point," Bridget Lassig says.

"To leave our house, whether he's going to school or an appointment or whatever, he rides a four-wheeler. Our house is built into a hill, and our second floor has a deck. So he can get out to the deck, and get on the four-wheeler, and ride it to the garage and get in the car. That's how we function right now."

## A TURNING POINT

Bridget Lassig knew in order for Donovan to thrive, her family needed to move. But finding an accessible home on the market proved nearly impossible. In an act of desperation, she turned to the NextDoor app hoping someone might know of a home for sale or a potential buyer for her own so her family could start building a house that meets Donovan's rapidly changing needs.



**Students developed design plans and presented them to the Lassig family.**

Kim Buchholz, director of Western's interior design program, saw a learning opportunity for students in her Residential Architectural Design (RAD) Studio when Lassig's post appeared in her feed.

"I connected with her ... and asked if she'd be willing to share her story with the students, because in this course, we really look at what's causing people to live in different scenarios and more social-based residential design. In previous studios, students have done low-income housing for elderly community members in Allegan County ... and they've also designed refugee housing."

Lassig welcomed the chance to explore possibilities for her family's future home design as well as raise awareness about HSP and housing challenges facing people with disabilities. In spring 2022, Buchholz's class got to work.

"They interviewed us very thoroughly. They got to see the space, see how Donovan functions; he met them in the driveway on the quad and showed them how he gets into

the house," Bridget Lassig says. "They just did a wonderful job."

Students also completed a site analysis on a plot of land in Kent County in West Michigan that a farmer has agreed to sell the Lassig family.

"They looked at the climate, how the sun interacts with the site, what the views are, everything down to the soil composition so we can better understand the foundation and what crops (Donovan) could grow on the land," Buchholz says.

"Something that really made me emotional was ... they get to eat family meals maybe two times a year, like Thanksgiving and Christmas," Hoezee says. "Family is really important to me, so I really wanted my design to focus on unity and ease of movement throughout the home and a central area where everybody could spend time together."

Ultimately, the Lassigs received 20 unique design plans. Each highlighted different aspects of interviews and research

conducted by the students. Some focused on sustainability while others homed in on design features that could make the home feel less clinical without losing function—something Bridget Lassig says is noticeably lacking in many accessible homes today.

"The most common things are adding a ramp, widening doorways, modifying the bathtub ... adding handrails," she says. "The (students') design elements did all those things, but they also looked at the quality of life. A lot of their design elements considered how to make this the healthiest space for Donovan and for the family. And that's something I have not really seen in all of my research."

Lassig was so impressed she shared the designs with Disability Advocates of Kent County. The organization featured Western's interior design students in a showcase of young professionals making an impact.

"I don't think we could have done a project like this with just any firm. It's the fresh ideas; it's that they're seeing things through

a young person's eyes and they're coming up with creative ideas. They don't know the boundaries," she says. "I think if we went to someone in the industry and said, 'I want to design this cabinet this way,' people would naturally say, 'No, you can't do that. You've got to do it another way.'"

The project also gave Donovan a chance to interact with other young adults—something he has been missing since his condition began limiting his mobility.

"It was a very positive experience. Oftentimes as a society, we just base things on looks or appearances. We see a wheelchair, we hear a difference in speech patterns, and we assume differences in cognitive capacity. And that's really not the case," Bridget Lassig says. "There are some differences, like maybe the response times are a little bit slower, but cognition is not impaired. And the students came in and asked him questions, and the more questions he got asked, the brighter he got. The more information he gave. He had them laughing. Kim told me he had one of them crying, and that's so powerful for him."

## IMPACTFUL EXPERIENCE

The next step for the Lassig family is finding a buyer for their house so they can make the students' designs a reality.

"Selling is challenging and building costs are still outpacing sales. However, we are studying each of the designs to select the elements and aspects so we are ready as soon as they can break ground," Bridget Lassig says. "We can't wait to have all the students back to the new house to see the outcomes of their work. As long as they want to stay engaged, we want them to be part of this process until they get to see the results."

While it may take time to see their visions become reality, the project has already made a lasting impact on the students involved.

**"It gives me goosebumps to think that something I do before I even enter the field could help change a family's life."**

—Carolynn Hoezee



"The thing that I'm taking away is just how important empathy is in the design process," says Megan Clark, a third-year interior design student from Chelsea, Michigan. "If you design with empathy first, I feel like everything else just falls into line."

"It gave me some perspective on just how critical interior design and architecture is in society today. We have a huge issue with a lack of affordable housing and accessible housing, and it really needs to be addressed," adds Carlee Castle, a third-year interior design student from Muskegon, Michigan.

"The way we build houses in the U.S. does not cater to how people age ... and it's not practical for anyone of any ability to live in their house long term. I think this project taught me that there are so many things we can do in residential spaces and commercial spaces to provide that which is really lacking right now."

It's also given Hoezee a potential new career path.

"It definitely confirmed my love for universal design and that I want to incorporate it into every space I do. A lot of times, people with disabilities are just kind of pushed to the side," she says. "It's our job as designers to make sure everybody who is in a space feels comfortable and welcome. It makes me want to start my own firm one day that focuses on specifically helping other firms or people become more aware of universal design."

Through Donovan's diagnosis, Bridget Lassig has connected with a network of families around the world navigating similar challenges. She plans to compile all of the designs developed by Western students and share them with those families who are also struggling to find accessible spaces.

"Every step of this journey, our philosophy is, 'I'm on a ride, and there's a purpose or something's happening for a reason.' And

to have it come full circle with Western is pretty cool." ■



# Get moving, gamers!

**“Get off the couch and get active”**—it’s not the typical advice an esports gamer would expect to hear to enhance their skill, but new research shows physical activity can help players improve their response speed and accuracy. Gaming is no longer considered just a sedentary activity. Studies show those who are in better shape are sharper mentally and have more success in competitive esports.



**Hanson**

exercise physiology, MS '18 in exercise physiology and sports medicine, studied the reaction time of 27 gamers and measured their physical fitness including flexibility, muscular strength and endurance, body composition and cardiorespiratory fitness. They found a significant relationship between a person’s cardiorespiratory fitness and their reaction time.

“The greater aerobic fitness you have, the better cognitive performance you’ll see,” Hanson explains. “People are

Dr. Nicholas Hanson, associate professor of exercise science and 2022 Emerging Scholar Award recipient, and Western graduate Dr. Rachel Dykstra, PhD '21 in

realizing if you are taking your esports competition seriously, you should be fit physically.”

As the popularity of esports has grown, so has the time gamers have invested in training. It’s often many hours per day sitting in front of a screen, he adds. To gain a competitive edge, gamers should go for a jog or ride a bike to improve their mental processing speed and accuracy.

“The stereotype is that these are people who are sitting on the couch or in a chair all day, but physical fitness is just as important in esports as it is for any other sport,” Hanson says.

An avid runner, Hanson’s passion for fitness has fueled his research since joining Western’s faculty in 2014, primarily focusing on how the human body responds to aerobic endurance training from the perspectives of exercise physiology, brain activity and psychology.

He admits he is not a gamer, though he is intrigued by the proliferation of esports and its implications on health.

“Back when I was a kid, gaming was by yourself or with a friend. Now with the internet, it’s a completely different world. You can be connected all over the world with hundreds of millions of people,” he says.

The implications of his research are significant not only in the growing field of esports but also for remote operators of drones for the military, he adds. Unmanned aircraft operators are tasked with making quick decisions and evaluating risks in relation to rewards, similar to skills honed in esports.

Hanson plans to apply for a grant from the Department of Defense to continue his research in this area.

# Climate crisis causes crescendo of catastrophe

An ancient river dries up, unearthing a historic artifact submerged for centuries. Don't expect Indiana Jones to swing in with his whip to prevent it from falling into the hands of nefarious actors. This very real scenario is playing out around the world. In a Czech town near Germany's border, stone carvings dating back to the 1600s emerged as severe drought evaporated the Elbe River. In Serbia, the Danube's waters receded to reveal Nazi warships sunken in World War II.

"It's very strange, but it's a great time to be an archaeologist or a forensic anthropologist," says Dr. Lisa DeChano-Cook, professor in the Department of Geography, Environment and Tourism. It's also ominous and indicative of a more dire dilemma: Weather extremes are impacting humans at an increasingly continuous clip as climate change intensifies.

"The Colorado River used to flow all the way to the Pacific Ocean. It doesn't even hit Yuma, Arizona, anymore. And Lake Mead, with the Hoover Dam, is drying up," she says. "We're in a land of extremes at this point because of what we've done to our climate, and now we're seeing the effects of it."

While it's not uncommon to hear about natural disasters from time to time, it's the magnitude and frequency of extreme weather events that we should all be taking note of, DeChano-Cook says. Prescribed burns in April in drought-parched New Mexico grew out of control into the largest wildfire in state history. Record-breaking summer heat in the United Kingdom caused roads, runways and railways to buckle. But it's important to remember that climate change is much more than global warming.

"When we're talking about global warming, we're only talking about the temperature going up. When we're talking about global climate change, we're talking about the temperature going up and all the impacts that has, such as sea levels rising, melting of glaciers, acidification of the oceans and so on. Global warming is just a piece of global climate change. People use them interchangeably—and that's not correct."

The warming air also intensifies precipitation, because warmer air holds moisture better than cooler air. It's contributing to widespread, disastrous flooding all across the Northern Hemisphere. In perhaps the most extreme scenario to date, weeks of torrential rains paired with glacial melting left more than a third of Pakistan under water in August.

"For 40 days and 40 nights, a biblical flood poured down, smashing centuries of weather records, challenging everything we knew about disaster and how to manage it," Pakistan's Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif told the United Nations General Assembly.

A similar story, on a smaller scale, is playing out in several areas across the United States. In September, Hurricane Ian roared ashore in Florida as one of the most powerful storms to hit the state in decades, devastating infrastructure and sparking a 500-year flood event. In July and August, areas of Kentucky, Missouri, Illinois and even Death Valley in eastern California—the hottest and driest place in North America—saw 1,000-year rain events.

"The storm systems that we're getting are producing these floods in different areas where a system wouldn't normally have

done that," DeChano-Cook says.

In addition to the immediate threat to life, these extreme weather events come at an increasing cost. Cargo ships can't navigate rivers that have dried up, sending supply chains into chaos; floods and droughts are decimating agriculture; clean drinking-water sources are evaporating; and supercharged typhoons and hurricanes are turning neighborhoods into piles of wood splinters and concrete dust.

The National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration records what it refers to as billion-dollar weather and climate disasters. In 2021, 20 events—ranging from severe weather to wildfires to drought—caused more than \$152 billion in damages. The increase in severity is apparent when comparing averages over decades: In the 1980s, the U.S. recorded about 3 billion-dollar events per year; the average jumped to 5.5 annually in the 1990s; there were nearly 7 events per year in the 2000s; and the number nearly doubled to about 14 billion-dollar disasters in the 2010s.

It's a pattern, says DeChano-Cook, that reflects a dire escalation in the Earth's climate cycles due to carbon emissions and other human activity.

"Without some strict guidance from governments across the world, it's not going to get better fast," she says, acknowledging the United Nations Paris Climate Agreement as a start. "We've gone through global warming; we've gone through global cooling. Now we're on this trajectory of warming where we're going up and up and up and up and up. And there's going to come a point of no return if something doesn't happen drastically fairly soon." ■

## Queer Voices in Hip Hop: Cultures, Communities and Contemporary Performance

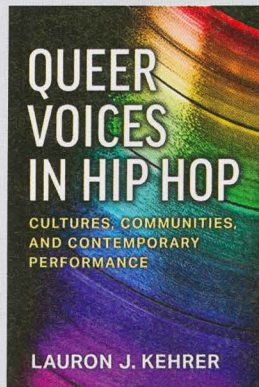


Kehrer

**Dr. Lauron Kehrer, assistant professor  
of ethnomusicology and musicology**

Long before Lil Nas X, LGBTQ+ artists made hip-hop music—they just weren't donning hot pink Versace cowboy outfits and rapping about riding down an "Old Town Road" on primetime television. Dr. Lauron Kehrer, assistant professor of ethnomusicology and musicology, explores the impact queer and transgender emcees and artists have had in their debut book, "Queer Voices in Hip Hop: Cultures, Communities and Contemporary Performance."

"We're having this mainstream conversation about queer rappers as if they've appeared out of nowhere and they couldn't exist before," says Kehrer, acknowledging the swift trajectory of LGBTQ+ culture being accepted widely in America. "Like so much queer history, it's been largely under-discussed, so it's important to shed light on that so we can better understand our present moment and what's happening in the genre."



**University of  
Michigan Press**

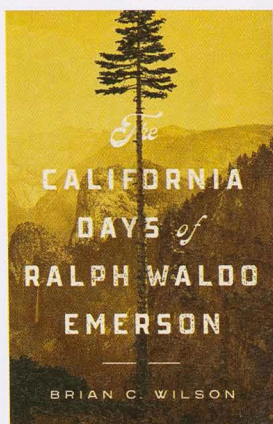
The culmination of more than 10 years of work, the book delves into the roots of hip-hop, wading through long-held stereotypes of misogyny and homophobia to expose a richer lineage of queer Black and Latinx music-making practices and spaces as well as reclaim the work as essential to hip-hop history. Ballroom culture, in particular, has inspired pop culture from voguing dance trends to Beyoncé's music to "RuPaul's Drag Race."

"They're not newly emerging phenomenons. They have a longer history, and they can be connected to Black queer musical practices in American history," Kehrer says.

While a milestone in its own right, the publishing of "Queer Voices in Hip Hop" represents much more to Kehrer, a first-generation college student.

"To finish a PhD and land a tenure-track job and write a whole book feels like a culmination, in some ways, of a lot of things I wasn't sure I'd ever be able to do. So I'm very excited about it."

Kehrer's book was released Nov. 2. A free, open-access online version will also be made available thanks to funding from the Society of American Music and American Musicological Society.

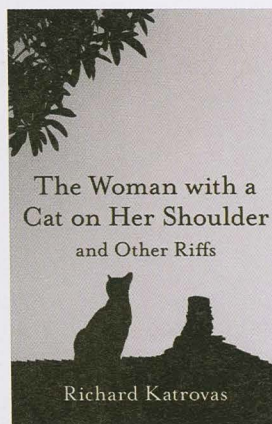


University of  
Massachusetts Press

## The California Days of Ralph Waldo Emerson

**By Dr. Brian C. Wilson, professor  
of comparative religion**

Featured in "The New York Review of Books," "The California Days of Ralph Waldo Emerson" maps the public story of Emerson and his companions' travels onto the private story of Emerson's final years, as aphasia set in and increasingly robbed him of his words. Engaging and compelling, this travelogue makes it clear that Emerson was still capable of wonder, surprise and friendship, debunking the presumed darkness of his last decade.

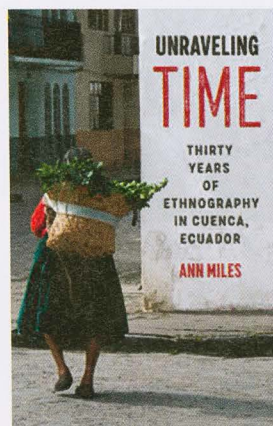


Carnegie Mellon  
University Press

## The Woman with the Cat on her Shoulder

**By Richard Katrovas, professor of  
English**

"The Woman with a Cat on Her Shoulder" is a gathering of "punk formalist" lyrics that collectively are a meditation not on mortality so much as on the terror of extinction, how that terror is the reservoir of love. Katrovas declaims from the margins of faith, the cliff edge of doubt, seeking to measure the conductivity of private troubles to public issues. Katrovas' "riffs" are verse essays jotted in the antechambers of nightmares and erotic dreams. The book is scheduled for release on Nov. 22, 2022.

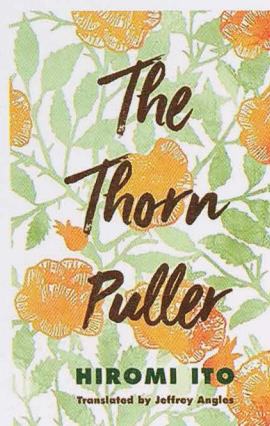


University of Texas  
Press

## Unraveling Time: Thirty Years of Ethnography in Cuenca, Ecuador

**By Dr. Ann Miles, professor of  
sociology**

Miles has been chronicling life in the Ecuadorian city of Cuenca for more than 30 years. "Unraveling Time" traces the enduring consequences of political and social movements, transnational migration and economic development in the major Latin American city. Practicing what she calls an ethnography of accrual, Miles takes a long view, where decades of seemingly disparate experiences coalesce into cultural transformation. Her approach not only reveals what change has meant in Cuenca but also serves as a reflection on ethnography itself. The book is scheduled for release on Dec. 20, 2022.



Stone Bridge Press

## The Thorn Puller

**Translated by Dr. Jeffrey Angles,  
professor of Japanese**

A prominent translator of Japanese literature, Angles has helped award-winning author Hiromi Ito translate one of her works into English for the first time. "The Thorn Puller" explores the absurdities, complexities and challenges experienced by a woman caring for her two families: her husband and daughters in California and her aging parents in Japan. As the narrator shuttles back and forth between these two starkly different cultures, she creates a powerful and entertaining narrative about what it means to live and die in a globalized society. The book is scheduled for release on Dec. 13, 2022.

# Why I Give:

## David Lyth





**M**anaging people, money and projects. That's how Dr. David Lyth, MS '79, professor emeritus of engineering, sums up what he taught for 33 years. His favorite thing about teaching was watching the light bulb go off for his students.

"I was impressed by their practicality, hands-on attitude and work ethic," he says. "They were personable, good communicators and always able to complete a task—sometimes in a very innovative way."

Engineers are typically recognized for things like designing and building structures, working to preserve the environment or striving to advance biomedicine. But who's responsible for the accounting, staffing, organization and marketing?

The answer: engineering managers.

"Engineering management teaches future engineers how to 'speak business,'" Lyth says of the

program that combines math, chemistry, physics, electronics, computers, technical subjects related to manufacturing systems, accounting and pairs it with communication, team building and the importance of human dimension in the workplace.

Together with Dr. Larry Mallak, professor of industrial and entrepreneurial engineering and engineering management, Lyth helped Western's graduate program become one of only six certified globally by the American Society for Engineering Management.

Even in his retirement, his enthusiasm for the field is unmistakable. It's so palpable that he established a scholarship specific to his and his late wife Joyce's commitment to students majoring in engineering management at Western.

## FOR A SHARED LOVE OF GIVING

While Lyth's passion for engineering management runs deep, it pales in comparison to his love for Joyce Caylor. He met his future bride while they were undergraduate students at Michigan Technological University.



**The Lyths spent many spring breaks in Kailua Kona, Hawaii, and developed deep friendships there.**

"In 1968, there were about 4,500 men and 300 women at Michigan Tech," he says. "Joyce was talking to my roommate, and I wanted to meet her. So, I just walked up and inserted myself into their conversation."

After graduating, David married Joyce in 1973. He earned his Master of Science in business from Western in 1979 and then a doctorate from Michigan State University. The happy couple went on to lead successful careers and enjoy a life filled with family, friends and traveling.

"Joyce was a first-generation college student and studied accounting at a time when most women went to college to study either teaching or nursing," he says. "She made her own way in the world."

Lyth had worked as a quality engineer in Kalamazoo before changing gears and began teaching in 1978. Eventually, the Lyths found their way back to WMU.

Diagnosed with brain cancer in 2009, Joyce courageously battled the disease for five years. Before she passed away in 2014, the Lyths set up the Joyce Caylor Lyth Memorial Endowed Scholarship at Michigan Tech, a fund dedicated to female first-generation college students from the Upper Peninsula who study accounting. For Broncos, David also arranged the Dr. David and Joyce Lyth

Engineering Management Scholarship endowment fund with a bequest to WMU. When realized, this endowment will continue in perpetuity, supporting ongoing scholarships and professional activities for students as well as faculty research.

"Throughout her career and life, Joyce mentored those around her. She was always looking to help others develop their capabilities and grow professionally," Lyth says. "My hope is that I can not only help ease the burden of the cost for higher education but also inspire other faculty at WMU to give back."

In 2022, he accelerated the impact of his endowment by making a donation to begin funding scholarships during his lifetime.

"He wanted the chance to build a rapport with the students who receive his scholarship here at WMU," says Jennifer Yelovina, senior director of gift planning for the WMU Foundation. "This is a great example of how someone can make a promise to provide future support and see the impact that their bequest will have for generations to come."

A legacy Lyth believes can pave the way to the future.

"My goal with the bequest is to be an advocate for this important discipline, Western's program and the undergraduate and graduate students who choose to pursue a degree in engineering management." ■

**Tom Althuis**, BS '63, MA '65, of Groton, Connecticut, was listed in the Marquis 2021 75th edition of Who's Who in America. Althuis retired as director of science policy from Pfizer Inc.



Austry

**Jerry Austry**, BBA '64, is the author of the memoir "The Hogan Edge: How the Hogan Company Found and Lost Their Edge" (Fulton Books 2022). The book chronicles the ups and downs of the iconic golf company and how Austry had an indelible impact.

**Mike Williams**, BBA '78, of Wheaton, Illinois, was elected vice president of the Waubensee Community College Foundation board.



Bogren

**Michael S. Bogren**, BA '79, a partner at Plunkett Cooney in Grand Rapids, was named one of the law firm's Best Lawyers in Michigan.

**Randy L. Utting**, BBA, '81, a former WMU Alumni Association board member and treasurer, has retired as chief financial officer at Fleetwood Group in Holland, Michigan, after 10 years.

**Julie Harris**, BS '86, chief administrative officer and global head of operations, asset and wealth management for JPMorgan Chase, was named to the 2022 Power Women List by Politics NY, a local daily news site covering the elected officials and government that serves New York.



Corl

**Christina L. Corl**, BS '91, a partner at Plunkett Cooney in Columbus, Ohio, was named one of the law firm's Best Lawyers in Ohio.



Krisan

**Shana Krisan**, BS '92, is the new chief marketing officer at Goldfish Swim School, a leading learn-to-swim facility with more than 133 schools in North America.

**Laurie Ann (Gracer) Wittbrodt**, BBA '93, of Hudsonville, Michigan, defended her Ed.D. from Alverno College on how an effective crisis response plan impacted traditional new student enrollment. She is currently the vice president of partnerships at Synergis Education.

**Thomas Hunter**, BS '96, was appointed assistant city manager of Pflugerville, Texas.



Knapp

**Alan Knapp**, BA '98, was named to the board of directors of the Government Relations Association in Washington, DC, a professional association representing those in the government relations, public affairs, lobbying and advocacy industry.

**Travis Hampton**, BBA '00, was appointed a member of the board of directors for Southern Michigan Bancorp Inc. in Coldwater.

**Tracy Hall**, BA '02, MA '10, was appointed executive director of OutFront Kalamazoo.

**Mike Sheldon**, BA '02, was named CEO for the Arizona State Hospital in Phoenix. He will also serve as deputy director of the Arizona Department of Health Services.

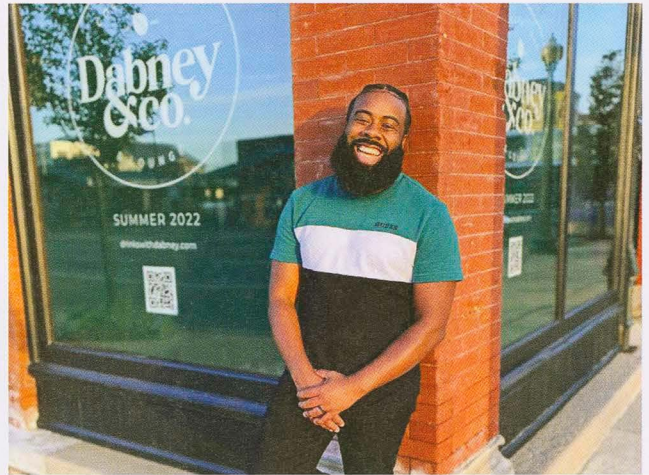
**George Grant Jr.**, PhD '02, was appointed president of Saginaw Valley State University in University Center, Michigan.

**Nicholas W. Angel**, BA '03, was appointed principal of Chelsea (Michigan) High School.

**Kasey Cooper**, BA '07, was named defense and aerospace vice president at Domo Tactical Communications in Pinellas Park, Florida.

**Brian Hanna**, BA '09, was named acting executive director of Michigan's Cannabis Regulatory Agency by Gov. Gretchen Whitmer.

**Dave Stefanich**, MA '10, is the new principal of Harbor Lights Middle Schools for West Ottawa (Michigan) Public Schools.



## Raising the bar on entrepreneurship

Daniel May, BBA '14, recently opened cocktail lounge and bar Dabney & Co. in downtown Kalamazoo.

"It started as an idea on a piece of paper four years ago," he says. "This establishment is going to offer a new breadth of food and entertainment. It's going to breathe new life into the city and that brings me a lot of joy."

Located at the corner of Rose Street and Kalamazoo Avenue, Dabney & Co. pays homage to pioneering Black mixologists and features craft cocktails, live soul, disco and funk music on the weekends as well as soul food classics served in tapas form. May named the bar in honor of John Dabney, an enslaved individual known for his take on the Mint Julep that eventually earned him enough money to buy his and his wife's freedom. Aply, the motto for Dabney & Co. is "Liberation Through Spirits."

Since graduating with a degree in management, finance and economics from Western, the Cleveland native has also developed experience management company Public Skool, which specializes in creating events, marketing and consulting that emphasize inclusivity.

Now in his early 30s, May says he understands that the ability to lead stems from having greater life experience.

"My father once told me that if you're an entrepreneur and don't have an answer to what you'd do with \$100,000, then you haven't done your homework," he says. "Entrepreneurship is a lifelong journey."

"There will be highs and lows," he adds, "but you have to trust there will be a light at the end of the tunnel." ■

**Send submissions to:** [deanne.puca@wmich.edu](mailto:deanne.puca@wmich.edu). Include your name (first, middle, last, maiden), degree(s), year(s) graduated and a daytime phone number by which we can reach you. We will publish photos as space permits.

# In Memoriam

**Gwendolyn (Russell) Tulk**, BA '39, MA '67, Sept. 5, 2022, Kalamazoo, MI

**Marie B. Dame**, BS '46, July 6, 2022, Kalamazoo, MI

**Virginia (Nickon) Benio**, BS '48, Aug. 30, 2022, Adrian, MI

**Mary Louise Rooney**, BS '48, Aug. 27, 2022, Kalamazoo, MI

**Donna M. Brown**, SC '49, MA '71, July 29, 2022, Grand Rapids, MI

**Barbara Louise (Hintz) Dugan**, BS '50, Aug. 13, 2022, Manchester, NH

**Jane S. (Matthews) Santman**, BS '50, Aug. 19, 2022, Grand Rapids, MI

**Robert W. Rue**, BS '53, June 19, 2022, Bolingbrook, IL

**James C. Christensen**, BS '55, Aug. 21, 2022, Springfield, MI

**Web Hagadone**, BS '56, July 17, 2022, Mooresville, IN

**Patricia R. (Rollyson) Shumar**, BS '56, July 13, 2022, Kalamazoo, MI

**Harry James Keats Jr.**, BA '57, June 27, 2022, Arlington, VA

**Barbara B. (Barnes) Reed**, BA '57, July 26, 2022, Kalamazoo, MI

**Norman Eugene Slack**, BS '57, MA '58, June 27, 2022, Kalamazoo, MI

**Maxine M. Johnson**, BS '58, Aug. 19, 2019, Champaign, IL

**Frank A. Karwoski**, BS '58, Sept. 4, 2022, Gaylord, MI

**Norris Leroy Mead**, BBA '58, July 29, 2022, Venice, FL

**Gene Thomas Miller**, BS '58, Aug. 28, 2022, Chelsea, MI

**Karlyn J. (Zick) Sisson**, BS '58, CT '65, Aug. 30, 2022, Holland, MI

**Joyce Carol (Morrow) Treece**, BA '58, July 19, 2022, Kalamazoo, MI

**Charles Matthew Lewis**, BA '59, Sp. '33, June 21, 2022, Hernando, FL

**Charles Gerald Panzer**, BA '59, June 26, 2022, Mundelein, IL

**R. John Strolle**, BS '60, Sept. 14, 2022, East Lansing, MI

**Mary Ann (Williams) Trainor**, BA '60, Aug. 3, 2022, Ann Arbor, MI

**Thomas J. Ghysels**, BA '61, Aug. 21, 2022, Whittier, CA

**Kathryn Sue Kolster**, BA '61, Aug. 18, 2022, Avon, IN

**Ivan Wayne Wetters**, BS '61, July 25, 2022, Hanover, MI

**Jill Marie Misner**, BA '62, Aug. 12, 2022, Grand Haven, MI

**Gary Stephen Smith**, BS '62, MA '66, July 23, 2022, South Haven, MI

**Jean Eleanor (Smith) Rowland**, MA '62, Aug. 9, 2022, Savoy, IL

**Carl L. Hausermann**, BA '63, June 22, 2022, Grand Rapids, MI

**Sharon (Bridgman) Mazurek**, BA '63, July 20, 2022, Grosse Pointe Woods, MI

**John Morris Booden**, BBA '63, Sept. 4, 2022, Kalamazoo, MI

**Douglas Emerson**, BBA '63, July 30, 2022, Greenville, NC

**Rodger Henry Pruis**, BS '63, Aug. 10, 2022, Kalamazoo, MI

**Bonnie Mae Garrison**, SC '63, Aug. 27, 2022, Muskegon, MI

**Joseph A. Abid**, BBA '64, Aug. 25, 2022, East Grand Rapids, MI

**Elaine M. Dubman**, BA '64, July 23, 2022, Hilton, NY

**Thomas Lee Noffsinger**, BA '64, Aug. 8, 2022, Grand Rapids, MI

**Gene O. Shank**, BA '64, June 21, 2022, Ludington, MI

**William Dean Walters Jr.**, BA '64, July 14, 2022, Bloomington, IL

**Kenneth John Rysenga**, BBA '64, MBA '70, June 26, 2022, Kalamazoo, MI

**Myrl W. Patton**, BS '64, July 18, 2022, Toledo, OH

**John Edward Ripmaster**, BS '64, MA '65, Aug. 14, 2022, Kalamazoo, MI

**Jack Benard DeVries**, BBA '65, MBA '69, Aug. 3, 2022, Kalamazoo, MI

**Harrie Lee Volkors**, BBA '65, Sept. 6, 2022, Vicksburg, MI

**Earl Thomas Hyde**, BM '65, MA '72, July 24, 2022, Kalamazoo, MI

**Richard Ralph Preston**, BS '65, Aug. 3, 2022, Monterey, CA

**Morgan Richard Tatrow**, BS '65, July 3, 2022, Garden, MI

**Richard Duane Slagell**, MA '65, Aug. 1, 2022, Richland, MI

**William John Goodes**, BS '66, Sept. 1, 2022, Paso Robles, CA

**Carol Imogene (Maxwell) Collins**, MA '69, Sept. 16, 2022, Portage, MI

**James Nastold**, BS '66, MA '70, July 19, 2022, Ludington, MI

**Ann Louise Schroeder**, BS '66, Sept. 9, 2022, Benton Township, MI

**Elizabeth L. (Csekei) Hughes**, BA '67, Aug. 16, 2022, Alpena, MI

**Jacob T. Kroon**, BBA '67, Aug. 26, 2022, Grand Rapids, MI

**Richard Jack Gilchrist**, BS '67, July 7, 2022, Tulsa, OK

**James L. Hock**, BS '67, Aug. 26, 2022, Kalamazoo, MI

**Adele Ranee (Yurick) Stile**, BS '67, Sept. 11, 2022, Murrysville, PA

**Frank Charles Janca**, BA '68, MA '72, June 29, 2022, Decatur, MI

**Stephen Alan Wappes**, BS '68, June 21, 2022, LaGrange, IN

**James F. Stegall**, MA '68, June 21, 2022, Bridgeport, TX

**Daniel E. Cook**, BA '69, Aug. 15, 2022, Kalamazoo, MI

**Francis Edward Pike**, BA '69, Sept. 5, 2022, Beaver Island, MI

**Thomas P. West**, BA '69, July 4, 2022, Harbor Springs, MI

**David Duane Dexter**, BS '69, Sept. 8, 2022, Jackson, MI

**Joan Alice McCabe**, MA '69, Aug. 30, 2022, Kalamazoo, MI

**Sheila Ann Lane**, BS '70, June 27, 2022, Bangor, MI

**Richard Edward Pahl**, BS '70, MSW '98, July 14, 2022, Lawrence, MI

**James Cecil Wyrick**, BS '70, Aug. 20, 2022, Kalamazoo, MI

**Robert Wesley Bossemeyer**, MBA '70, July 8, 2022, Grand Rapids, MI

**Duane Franklin Miller**, BBA '71, June 20, 2022, Flint, MI

**Michael Arthur Dunlap**, BS '71, Aug. 18, 2022, Holland, MI

**David Allan Smith**, BS '71, MA '76, Aug. 30, 2022, Schoolcraft, MI

**Richard E. Vander Weele**, BS '71, MSW '75, Aug. 8, 2022, Galesburg, MI

**Virginia Ann Wierenga**, BS '71, Sept. 1, 2022, Holland, MI

**James Richard Slater**, BBA '72, Sept. 3, 2022, Delta, MI

**Judson Marc VanderWal**, PhD '72, Sept. 4, 2022, Grand Rapids, MI

**Michael N. Fitzgerald Jr.**, MBA '73, Aug. 21, 2022, Mexico

**Robert M. Heavenrich Jr.**, MA '73, July 12, 2022, Ann Arbor, MI

**Janice Lou DeWey**, BS '74, MA '94, June 18, 2022, Sand Lake, MI

**Phyllis Irene Harris**, BA '74, July 26, 2022, Kalamazoo, MI

**Stephen R. Parson**, EdD '74, Aug. 2, 2022, Bluffton, SC

**Michael Anne Nic**, MA '74, Aug. 3, 2022, Grand Rapids, MI

**Maureen L. Boyd**, CT '75, Sept. 5, 2022, Highland, MI

**James Leonard Brzezinski**, BS '76, July 10, 2022, Adrian, MI

**Leonard Robert Gruntman**, BS '76, March 29, 2022, Bloomington, IN

**Clayton Paul Jackson II**, MA '77, June 25, 2022, Wayland, MI

**David Paul Heath**, BA '79, Aug. 14, 2022, East Wenatchee, WA

**Gordon James Kosch**, BBA '80, Aug. 5, 2022, Oakland Township, MI

**Brenda Marie (Young) Carlson**, BS '82, Aug. 1, 2022, Indianapolis, IN

**Paul Victor Engelmann**, BS '82, MA '84, EdD '88, July 5, 2022, Plainwell, MI

**Paula Marie Mielke**, BS '84, MA '93, Aug. 22, 2022, South Haven, MI

**Rachel A. H. (Hannahs) Riddiford**, BS '84, July 3, 2022, Dayton, OH

**Judy Ellery (McHugh) Geary**, MBA '85, June 19, 2022, Richland, MI

**Brian Charles Smith**, BBA '86, July 22, 2022, Simpsonville, SC

**Kathleen Ann (Murray) Weber**, BBA '87, June 30, 2022, Portage, MI

**Kalvin Edward Kalkowski**, BS '88, MS '97, Aug. 23, 2022, Plainwell, MI

**Laura Jean (Peters) Boyd**, MA '88, July 8, 2022, Kalamazoo, MI

**Nora Lee (Trice) Curtis**, BS '89, MA '92, Aug. 14, 2022, Kalamazoo, MI

**David Edward Gregg**, BBA '90, July 22, 2022, Royal Oak, MI

**Teresa Rose Foley**, MA '90, PhD '96, Aug. 20, 2022, Grand Rapids, MI

**Gloria Patricia (Rohr) Culp**, BA '93, Aug. 18, 2022, Richland, MI

**Sharon Ann Cipriano-Galbreath**, MA '93, Aug. 29, 2022, Parchment, MI

**Patrick John Witri**, MA '94, Sept. 9, 2022, Grand Rapids, MI

**Gary Hubbard**, BBA '95, Sept. 14, 2022, Lakewood, MN

**Judith Ann Rice**, BS '95, June 18, 2022, Grand Rapids, MI

**Teresa Rose Foley**, PhD '96, MA '90, Aug. 20, 2022, Grand Rapids, MI

**Derek Allen Nestich**, BS '97, Aug. 1, 2022, Sister Lakes, MI

**Mark Crean Hotop**, BA '99, July 13, 2022, Golden, CO

**Karen Lee Guiney**, BBA '99, Aug. 10, 2022, Big Rapids, MI

**Amy M. (Roe) Chichester**, MS '01, Aug. 12, 2022, Athens, MI

**Kimberly Ellen (Montgomery) Wicks-Barker**, MA '02, Aug. 21, 2022, Dowagiac, MI

**Marcia L. Weller Weinhold**, PhD '03, Aug. 3, 2022, Angola, IN

**John Joseph Bibbler**, BS '12, Aug. 19, 2022, Grand Rapids, MI

**Nicholas Alexander Probol**, BS '13, Sept. 4, 2022, Grand Rapids, MI

## Emeriti

**Kuriakose K. Athappilly**, professor emeritus of business information systems, Sept. 29, 2022, India

**George T. Beech**, professor emeritus of history, June 26, 2022, Kalamazoo, MI

**Ming Li**, dean emeritus of the College of Education and Human Development, Aug. 4, 2022, Portage, MI

**Jules Rossman**, associate professor emeritus of communication, July 31, 2022, Scottsdale, AZ

# Bronco Bash

If you didn't get a popcorn bucket, did you even go to Bronco Bash? Thousands of students, employees and community members enjoyed an in-person return of the Western tradition to kick off the academic year.

