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Haworth College of Business

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February 2019 Newsletter

FEBRUARY 2019 NEWSLETTER



Sanford Center for Financial Planning and Wellness grand opening

In January, the college celebrated the grand opening of the Sanford Center for Financial Planning and Wellness. The center will address issues of financial literacy with students and members of the community.

[View the photo album.](#)



MBA program tops list for sustainability education

The Haworth College of Business was named to an elite list of the top 100 business schools that emphasize sustainability in their master of business administration programs by the Corporate Knights, a Toronto-based company that promotes socially and ecologically conscious business models.

[Read more about the recognition.](#)



Consumers Energy CEO to present at Distinguished Speaker Series

Patti Poppe, president and chief executive officer of CMS Energy and its principal subsidiary, Consumers Energy, will be featured as a speaker in Western Michigan University's Distinguished Speaker Series on Tuesday, Feb. 12, at 8 a.m.

[RSVP for the event.](#)



Crain's features student business accelerator

Starting Gate, along with student Desi Taylor, founder and CEO of Cluventure Travel, are featured in Crain's Detroit Business.

[Read more about the accelerator and Taylor's business.](#)



Student's personal experience sparks passion for health informatics

Senior Brandon Buxton had his college career disrupted after suffering from a health crisis. After needing to take some time off to recover and spending several weeks in the hospital, he realized that he wanted to make a difference in the healthcare industry.

[Read Buxton's story.](#)

MBA program tops list for sustainability education

CONTACT: SAMANTHA HOOKER
JANUARY 9, 2019 | WMU NEWS



The Haworth College of Business was ranked 67th overall.

KALAMAZOO, Mich.—Western Michigan University's Haworth College of Business was named to an elite list of the top 100 business schools that emphasize sustainability in their master of business administration programs. The Corporate Knights, a Toronto-based company that promotes socially and ecologically conscious business models, recognized WMU in its 16th Annual Better World MBA ranking.

The Haworth College of Business was ranked 67th overall, earning a place on the list ahead of Michigan State, Northwestern, Cornell, Columbia and Notre Dame universities. Additionally, WMU was recognized as one of the Top 40 North American universities.

"This recognition is a great honor for the college and for Western Michigan University," says **Dr. Steve Newell**, associate dean of operations and graduate programs for the Haworth College of Business. "We embrace the belief that sustainable and socially responsible economic practices are good for business and that top MBA programs have the obligation to teach and promote this philosophy."

BEST SCHOOLS PROFILED

The Corporate Knights based its selections on five categories, which it collected data on during the 2017-18 academic year. Rating categories are:

- Sustainable development-related research institutes and centers
- Percentage of core courses that integrate sustainable development
- Sustainable development-related faculty research and number of citations
- Faculty gender diversity
- Faculty racial diversity

ABOUT THE MBA PROGRAM

WMU's MBA program is designed with the full-time working professional in mind, which is reflected in course schedule, advising and other services. The faculty leading WMU's MBA program participate in the latest research in a variety of fields and bring valuable industry experience to the classroom. The Haworth College of Business has been recognized by several organizations as a premier location to earn a MBA and is among an elite group of fewer than 5 percent of business schools worldwide that are accredited at both the undergraduate and graduate levels by the AACSB International.

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

Distinguished Speaker Series RSVP



Patti Poppe, president and chief executive officer of CMS Energy and its principal subsidiary, Consumers Energy, will be featured as a speaker in Western Michigan University's Distinguished Speaker Series.

Poppe will speak at 8 a.m. Tuesday, Feb. 12, in Room 2000 of Schneider Hall. Her presentation, titled "Our Promise: The Triple Bottom Line," will be followed by a question-and-answer period. Registrations are requested to attend. The event is free and open to the public and being hosted

by the Haworth College of Business. Register below or contact WMU's Cyntia Dawson at cyntia.dawson@wmich.edu or (269) 387-5069. Free parking is available in Schneider Hall Lot 72R.

PATTI POPPE

As CEO of CMS Energy and Consumers Energy Corporation, Poppe has focused on connecting the company more closely with its customers and adapting lean operating system principles throughout the utility. Previously, she held a variety of automotive management positions and served as power plant director at Detroit Michigan based DTE Energy before returning to her hometown of Jackson to join Consumers Energy in 2011.

In 2016, Poppe was elected to her current position, leading Michigan's largest utility and the nation's fourth largest combination utility. Consumers Energy provides electricity and natural gas to 6.7 million of Michigan's 10 million Lower Peninsula residents.

After earning her bachelor's and master's degrees in industrial engineering from Purdue University, Poppe also earned a master's degree in management from the Stanford University Graduate School of Business.

Student business accelerator launches 'real-world escape room' for travelers

[TOM HENDERSON](#)

January 13, 2019 12:01 AM

- WMU founded Starting Gate in 2013 to support tech transfer and commercialize research
- Has since helped launch 80 companies, held more than 400 events and awarded \$50,000 in seed money
- Recent Starting Gate graduate Cluventure arranges surprise travel packages



Cluventure

Lori and Lee Taylor took a 10-day Cluventure to Athens, Greece.

Western Michigan University launched the Starting Gate, a student business accelerator, in 2013, when the school began to seriously address how to support the transfer of technology from university labs to the marketplace and help commercialize the aspirations of other would-be entrepreneurs on campus.

Since then, it has helped launch 80 companies, held more than 400 events, awarded \$50,000 in seed money and seen its companies get \$380,000 in grants and file 10 patent applications.

The Starting Gate is located in 1,000 square feet in the Park Trades Center Building in downtown Kalamazoo and is operated by the Haworth College of Business Center for Entrepreneurship and Innovation in partnership with WMU's Office of Community Outreach.

Acceptance to the accelerator is available to all WMU students through a competitive application process. Students need to demonstrate a promising idea for a product or service that can be launched quickly. Fifteen student companies go through the program each year, from October through March.

The accelerator is open 24 hours per day, with mentors, faculty members and successful entrepreneurs helping define markets and refine the business model through what are called update nights. Experts are also available to offer legal advice and introduction to would-be investors.

At the end of those six months, companies participate in Demo Day, making brief pitches to an audience of potential investors.

ADVERTISING

[inRead invented by Teads](#)

Companies that Starting Gate has helped launch range from the highest of high tech — like SafeSense Technologies LLC, which makes flexible sensors for sports helmets that measure the impact of major and minor collisions — to playful customer services companies like Cluventure Travel LLC, which arranges surprising vacation experiences that require participants to solve a series of clues.



SafeSense was one of the first companies the Starting Gate helped. It has gone on to get \$650,000 in grants and has a partnership with Xenith Inc., a helmet maker in Detroit that Dan Gilbert has invested in. Cluventure is a recent Starting Gate graduate.

Last March, Cluventure won the first-place prize of \$2,000 at Western's sixth annual K.C. O'Shaughnessy Business Pitch Competition and Showcase held on campus March 23. More than 25 companies made three-minute pitches for a total of \$5,000 in prize money.

In May, Cluventure was named by Starting Gate as winner of the first annual \$5,000 Wendell Christoff Award, an award named for an alumnus of WMU who got his degree in business administration in 1968. He is CEO and president of Litehouse Inc., a Lowell, Mich., maker of salad dressings and

sauces that *Entrepreneur* magazine has named as a Top 100 privately held company.

Cluventure founder and CEO Desi Taylor has graduated from the Starting Gate program but not yet from WMU, where she is a senior majoring in Spanish. But Cluventure is going strong, arranging vacations and generating revenue, and Taylor says the business, which she promotes as a travel agency with a twist, will be her full-time focus.

"After I graduate in April, I will put my heart and soul into this. It's what I'm passionate about," she said. "We recently launched a corporate section on our website. The agenda for 2019 is finalizing our corporate retreat pitch. We've done one corporate retreat so far."

Cluventure aims to combine mystery, unplanned adventure and travel to create an interactive vacation experience. Each trip is customized following interviews to determine a customer's likes and dislikes. Cluventure arranges transportation, lodging and activities, nearly all of which is a mystery to vacationers until they get where they are going.

Upon arrival, travelers must solve a series of clues to find out what activities have been planned.

So far, Taylor has booked 87 trips for individuals, including international trips to Aruba, Greece and Costa Rica.

She is the only official employee, but has 11 part-time subcontractors on her team, helping with customer interviews and trip arrangements.



Born out of grief

Taylor is older than the average senior at 27, having combined school with life as a musician, first in Denver and then in Kalamazoo, playing guitar and piano, singing, negotiating contracts and managing bands. She took the fall semester of 2018 off to concentrate on Cluventure, then it was back to school for her last two classes.

"I'm not in her demographic but it's something I really like," said Lara Hobson, director of operations at the Starting Gate, of Cluventure's business model. "It's generated so much business. Of all the students I've worked with, Desi is the most open minded and appreciative. She's motivated and ambitious, and she's done a lot of research to see if people want this. And it seems they do."

Taylor said Cluventure grew out of a trip she planned for herself and her significant other in 2013. Each had had close friends die, and they needed something to break the depressing spell. Taylor said she came up with the idea of planning a three-week trip that would require her partner to solve clues to figure out the next item on the agenda.

"I told her, 'We need a road trip, and I'm going to surprise you,'" recounted Taylor. A big surprise was visiting the Modern Love Omaha restaurant in Omaha, Neb., run by her partner's favorite chef, Isa Chandra Moskowitz.

When they got back, "People said, 'Wow, that looks like so much fun. I wish someone would plan something like that for me,'" said Taylor.

Taylor filed the paperwork to form her company in August 2016.

The Starting Gate connection was happenstance. In October 2017, she was cat-sitting for a friend and saw a flier for the student accelerator sitting on a table. "I applied the last day possible and got in, and it changed everything. It gave me formal training," she said.

Suzanne McCloskey is one of Cluventure's very satisfied customers. McCloskey, an IT specialist at Consumers Energy in Jackson, visited Cluventure's booth at an annual fair of women business owners hosted by Consumers hosts for women who own businesses that might be of interest to Consumers' employees.

Last year, the event was held in August. There, McCloskey visited Cluventure's booth, until then unaware of the company.

"Cluventure immediately caught my attention. It was a real-world escape room. You're trying to solve puzzles to find your destinations, and I love solving puzzles. I was immediately hooked," she said. "It was the gamification of travel. And I loved the idea that I didn't have to plan anything."

She and her husband, Alex Butterfield, decided to give Cluventure a short trial before committing to a long vacation to distant places.

They did an interview with the Cluventure and then settled on a two-day overnight trip somewhere near Jackson. "We told them we like unique things, stuff you wouldn't find on a Chamber of Commerce website," said McCloskey.

In November, after solving several clues, they ended up at Kara's Kottages, an upscale B&B in Kalamazoo. A clue there led them to the nearby Kalamazoo Mall, the key word being paraffin. At the mall, they found a candle shop, went in and asked if anyone there knew if they were supposed to be there. They were. It was, it turned out, time to make candles. In the hour it took for the candles to set, they dined at Principle Food & Drink on comfort food with bespoke cocktails, which they loved.

The next day came their final clue, a street address. When they got there, it was a neighborhood home, no sign out front, no indication it was a business. They walked to the door, were invited in by the couple that lived there and found out they were about to make mozzarella cheese, ricotta cheese and homemade pasta.

"I couldn't think of anything better than that," said McCloskey. "I definitely want to try an international destination, now."

Costs for trips vary, but the Cluventure website lists baseline figures, which don't include food or drink.

For domestic travels, costs range from \$300 per person for an overnight stay to \$4,500 per person for a 10-day trip. Costs for international trips range from \$2,625 to \$7,000 per person.

There are higher-priced luxury trips for both domestic and international travel.

From a health crisis to a career in healthcare—Brandon Buxton on turning problems into his passion



When Brandon Buxton, a senior studying health informatics and information management, began his WMU career, he planned on majoring in integrated supply management. However, after he experienced a severe health crisis, he found his passion in the healthcare sector. Being in the hospital for weeks at a time exposed him to the problems and opportunities that exist in healthcare. His field of study health informatics and information management works to bridge the gap between clinical, business, and technical parties and ensure the safety, security and efficiency of electronic health systems. He took an experience that was negative for him and used it as motivation to help change and improve the systems that are in place today. He discusses how the Haworth College of Business, and his minors in accountancy and business analytics are helping prepare him for his career in healthcare.

Why health informatics?

The healthcare sector is rapidly developing and adapting technologies and systems. This growth offers an excellent opportunity for advancement and allows me to participate in the development of still-novel systems. I'm very excited to see how technology, particularly analytics, revolutionizes patient care. We are finding that algorithms can help identify, predict, and diagnose in ways that previously took rounds of specialists and expensive tests. This realization is leading to a democratization of healthcare and offers the possibility of seriously improving the health of our nation within the next few decades. While this is still a long way off, I am excited to be a participant in the grassroots of this technology.

How the Haworth College of Business helps

The Haworth College of Business has given me fundamental business knowledge that allows me to be an asset to the company I work for, working in different functional areas with varying responsibilities. I frequently use the knowledge gained in my business analytics courses in my job as an information technology co-op for Bronson Healthcare Group to resolve technical issues for end users, like doctors and nurses. After spending a lot of time at Bronson as a patient and being exposed to their working environment and culture, I was drawn to the idea of working for

the company. Bronson is devoted to patient health and safety, and it is great to see the level of dedication that people put into their work and how seriously they take it each and every day. The professors and classes at the Haworth College of Business have prepared me to work well in such an environment.

His role at Bronson Healthcare Group

Bronson IT co-ops have multiple rotations in different areas of IT, so I have had the benefit of working in many different functions with varying responsibilities. I started in the customer support center, where I answered calls to resolve technical issues for the hospital. I also worked in asset management, giving me more experience on the hardware side of IT. Now, I work as an application analyst for inpatient orders and clinical documentation teams, helping to build the electronic medical record for each patient's care.

The most important thing I have learned during my co-op is how essential it is for teams to work well together. Teams that cooperate and help each other thrive are a joy to work with, while teams that dislike and compete with each other flounder. This is true for any application, whether in school or in the professional world. Strong teams and relationships are always critical to success.

What makes his college experience unique?

After facing considerable health challenges, I had to take incompletes in my courses for the spring 2017 semester, but I did not allow that to discourage me from achieving my goals. I was able to complete those courses by the end of that summer. For students who experience similar difficulties, it's important to know that it is still possible to succeed. Success is often closer than it appears, even when countless obstacles stand in your way.

His plans for the future

I plan to explore every opportunity available to me, including remaining in the professional world as well as pursuing graduate education. I think it is important to remember to not let your career prospects be limited by your major—so I will consider any opportunity that presents itself. I hope to continue to work in the healthcare sector, though I am not exactly sure what role I will be in. I do know I want to continue to impact patient care and make a difference in the lives of those touched by information systems each day.