Board of Trustees meeting scheduled

The final formal meeting of the WMU Board of Trustees for 2015 will be held at 11 a.m. Tuesday, Dec. 8, in 157-159 Bernhard Center. The agenda will be released shortly before the meeting.

Commencement ceremonies set

Three commencement ceremonies will be held Saturday, Dec. 19, in Miller Auditorium for groups of graduating students. The fall ceremonies are for: 9 a.m., colleges of Aviation, Education and Human Development, and Health and Human Services; 12:30 p.m., colleges of Fine Arts and Engineering and Applied Sciences, and Haworth College of Business; 4 p.m., College of Arts and Sciences and Extended University Programs.

Band to play at today’s Lions game

The 295-member Bronco Marching Band is in Detroit today to entertain more than 70,000 fans during halftime when the Detroit Lions take on the Green Bay Packers. The celebrated band was invited by the Lions administration to play at the nationally televised NFL matchup at Ford Field. Known as “The Sound of Western,” it is one of the nation’s premiere college marching bands.

Employee photo session is Dec. 4

Faculty and staff members as well as professionally active retirees are encouraged to have their official University photos taken between 9:30 a.m. and 4 p.m. Friday, Dec. 4, in Walwood Hall’s Heining Emeriti Lounge. No appointment is required. Employees may have electronic copies for personal use and request cropped photos for use in directory listings on wmich.edu. Photo files are not automatically sent. For more information, visit wmich.edu/universityrelations/photography or contact Sue Beougher at sue.beougher@wmich.edu or (269) 387-8402.

Kocher to be feted at all-employee event

The annual holiday reception for all faculty and staff members will take place from 2 to 4 p.m. Tuesday, Dec. 8, in the Bernhard Center Ballroom. The event is sponsored by the WMU Board of Trustees and President and Mrs. John M. Dunn. During the event, there will be a special tribute to Betty Kocher, longtime secretary to the Board of Trustees.

Time to exchange sick, annual leave

Staff Compensation System employees and Police Offices Association members may be eligible to exchange 25 hours of sick and annual leave for a $300 University contribution to their 403(b) tax-deferred savings plan. To qualify, they must have participated in the savings plan for the entire 2015 calendar year. Visit wmich.edu/hr/forms to download the 403(b) Sick/Annual Leave Exchange Authorization form, which must be returned to Human Resources in December.
Course evaluation participation focus of study

A pilot study aimed at boosting student participation rates in the University's online course evaluation system is set for the 2016 spring semester and will include evaluation of all courses at WMU.

The pilot study is one of two central tasks assigned to the University's Joint Committee on ICES system—Instructor and Course Evaluation—as a result of the 2014 contract negotiations between the University and the WMU chapter of the American Association of University Professors.

The joint committee's second task was to review and recommend practices that will boost student response rates for the current system. That task led to the determination that WMU's ICES is not capable of being upgraded to add features important to increasing student participation rates and must be replaced. Until a new online system is in place, the current system will be altered to accommodate the pilot study.

Right now, faculty members can opt out of having their courses evaluated, but during the spring pilot study, all courses will be evaluated. However, during the pilot study, faculty members will have the opportunity to have their evaluation results returned solely to them, and not also provided to department chairs or deans as is currently the case.

Faculty rights regarding use of course evaluation data are protected within the parameters of the pilot study. The joint committee will have aggregate data to review on whether or not the pilot study change increases student participation rates in the evaluation of courses.

There will also be a concerted effort to promote the importance of evaluating courses at WMU as well as to provide educational materials to faculty members to help them best work with ICES to secure the type of information that benefits them as instructors.

The joint committee on ICES was formed in October 2014 with equal representation from the Faculty Senate, WMU-AAUP and WMU chapter of the American Association of University Professors.

Collaboration subject of new book

James P. Cousins and Wilson J. Warren, history, have co-written a book with Gordon P. Andrews from Grand Valley State University titled “Collaboration and the Future of Education: Preserving the Right to Think and Teach Historically.” Published by Routledge and released in November, the book focuses on a decade-long collaboration among the WMU and GVSU history departments and Portage Central High School’s social studies department.

Educational reforms have encouraged the creation of efficiency models in pursuit of a unified way to teach. “Collaboration and the Future of Education” provides systematic models and examples of ways that history teachers can compete with and effectively halt this transformation. Relying on original research and a mature body of secondary literature on historical thinking, the book illuminates how collaboration can create real historical learning.

Honor society recognized with award

Anthony P. Helms, Lee Honors College, is the advisor for WMU’s Alpha Lambda Delta national honor society chapter, one of nine chapters nationwide to receive a 2014-15 Order of the Torch Award. The award was bestowed in recognition of the chapter’s continued excellence over the past year.

In addition, the chapter had three first-year students recognized with national scholarships, and in October, a WMU representative was part of a panel presentation at the National Leadership Workshop in Orlando, Florida.

WMU is one of just three schools to win the Order of the Torch in consecutive, eligible four-year increments of 2003 and 2003. In terms of the total chapters of ALD, WMU ranks in the top 1 percent in this category.

Anthropologist earns book award

Kristina Wirtz, anthropology, has received the 2015 Edward E. Sapir Book Prize from the Society for Linguistic Anthropology for “Performing Afro-Cuba: Image, Voice, Spectacle in the Making of Race and History.” Wirtz received the honor Nov. 21 during the American Anthropological Association’s Meetings in Denver.

Her book, published by the University of Chicago Press last year, analyzes a variety of performance and the ways they construct Cuban racial and historical imaginations, thereby narrating racial studies, performance studies, anthropology, and semiotics.

The Sapir prize goes to a book that makes the most significant contribution to the understanding of language in society, or in the ways in which language mediates historical or contemporary sociocultural processes.

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New student pay schedule becomes effective Jan. 1; certain forms due Dec. 9

A new, simplified pay schedule for students will go into effect at WMU Jan. 1 to coincide with this year’s incremental increase in Michigan’s minimum wage.

The new schedule has three basic levels and three steps within each level. In addition, it includes an SEQ level, which replaces the existing Q level for highly skilled positions that require a pay rate that is above the highest rate available through the pay schedule’s basic levels.

Under the new system, Student Employee Level 1, Step 1—SE1.1—will be set at the state minimum wage of $8.50 per hour. Positions falling below that will automatically be adjusted to the new minimum, as students cannot be paid less than minimum wage starting Jan. 1.

WMU units employing students do not need to submit a transaction form to effect the change to the new pay structure with its new rates. However, employers wanting other changes in the Jan. 1 pay rate must submit a transaction form to Human Resources no later than Wednesday, Dec. 9—the W26 pay period.

Student employers were able to check the new rates through the Kronos Timekeepers Dec. 9 deadline is missed, pay decreases cannot be retroactive. So if the Dec. 9 deadline is missed, pay decreases will become effective with the next payroll.

Michigan’s Workforce Opportunity Wage Act, passed in 2014, called for gradual increases in the state’s $7.40 minimum hourly wage as follows: $8.15, Sept. 1, 2014; $8.50, Jan. 1, 2016; $8.90, Jan. 1, 2017; and $9.25, Jan. 1, 2018. To see the pay rates that will be in effect through 2018, visit the Career and Student Employment Services website at wmich.edu/career/campus/payrates.

Direct questions about student pay rates or levels to Career and Student Employment Services at wmich.edu/career, broncojobs@wmich.edu or (269) 387-2745. Direct questions about student online form processing to Human Resources at wmich.edu/hr, hrbris@wmich.edu or (269) 387-3620.

Student dancers to perform

The annual Fall Showcase, a free concert of dances choreographed and performed by WMU dance students is set for 7 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 12, in the Dalcroze Center Recital Hall’s Dance Studio B, 3. Seating is limited.
On Campus with Linda Dillon

Linda Dillon started her career with WMU almost 10 years ago as a financial assistant in the College of Aviation, and she quickly realized her ambition was to work more with people.

Now as an administrative assistant, she helps with operations, administrative duties, and sets up meetings with students and instructors in addition to supporting the executive director of flight operations and other staff members at the college.

Her caring personality has helped her grow into her role as “the WMU mom” for the campus community.

She also organizes the college’s bi-weekly safety committee meetings, works closely with the chief flight instructor and helps issue student grades.

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Ethics center sponsors contest for ‘Star Wars’ fans

The Center for the Study of Ethics in Society is probing the outer reaches of the galaxy by holding a contest to find out the ethical lessons people have learned from the “Star Wars” action films.

The center’s contest is titled “The Most Important Thing I Learned about Ethics from ‘Star Wars.’” The contest asks area residents far and wide to write about their favorite ethical take-away from the famous film and book series.

Those wishing to enter are asked to post their answers on the center’s Facebook page by Monday, Dec. 7, and could win a 1996 Kenner Tusken Raider action figure in the original box.

The winner will be announced Friday, Dec. 11, a week in advance of the general opening of the latest film, “The Force Awakens,” set to hit theatres Friday, Dec. 18.

Entrants should limit their posts to 100 words and may include a photo. Entries will be judged based on originality and depth. Selected posts will be featured on the ethics center’s website at wmic.edu/ethics.

To post an entry, visit facebook.com/wmichethics. Organizers say, “May the force be with you.”

NeoVent duo wins new innovation prize

Barnett and John’s invention, NeoVent, which has now earned five national innovation prizes, is a respiratory support mechanism designed to treat critically ill infants, particularly those who live in underdeveloped parts of the world.

NeoVent converts a low-tech respiratory device into one that provides the additional benefit of a ventilator, but at much less cost.

The invention could help thousands of babies in underdeveloped parts of the world.

Earlier this year, Barnett and John were named winners of the Lemelson-MIT National Collegiate Student Prize Competition; Brian Patrick Thomas Entrepreneurial Spirit Award at WMU; 2015 James Dyson Award, U.S. Division; and 2015 Biomedical Engineering Society competition for undergraduate biomedical and bioengineering students.

A critical part of the team was Peter Gustafson, mechanical and aerospace engineering, who has been the team’s advisor for more than two years.

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Input sought for strategic plan

Beginning with the spring semester, WMU’s one-time application fee will be waived for eligible employees who take undergraduate or graduate courses for academic credit under the University’s tuition discount program.

The waiver will occur automatically if employees enter EM190316 on their online admissions application. That code should be entered in the Event Code/Application Fee Waiver box in the “Additional Student Information” section of the graduate application and in the Fee Waiver Code box in the “Additional Information” section of the undergraduate application.

For tuition benefits details, visit wmich.edu/admissions/guest/employees.

New education benefit offered

For more information about the survey results, a draft revised plan will be shared with students and employees in January. The campus community will have an opportunity to provide additional input through March.

A final plan is expected to be sent in late March to the WMU Board of Trustees.

For more information about the survey or strategic planning at WMU, visit the strategic planning website at wmich.edu/strategic or contact Jody Brylinsky at jody.brylinsky@wmich.edu or (269) 387-2314.

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