



WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY

WESTERN NEWS

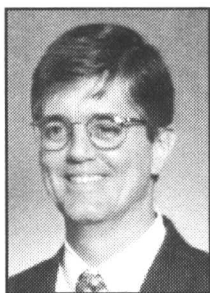
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July 13, 2000

Pedestrian mobility focus of new blind rehabilitation research

A \$4 million, five-year federal grant to a research project based at WMU will fund a multidisciplinary effort aimed at finding solutions to mobility challenges facing people who are blind and visually impaired—challenges that are cropping up more and more in today's complex pedestrian environments.



Long

The project, titled "Blind Pedestrians' Access to Complex Intersections," is funded by the National Eye Institute, part of the National Institutes of Health. It was proposed and is being coordinated by the Department of Blind Rehabilitation and the College of Health and Human Services. The effort pairs WMU researchers with teams of engineers, orientation and mobility instructors, highway safety researchers and experimental psychologists at four partner institutions—Boston College, Vanderbilt University, the Maryland School for the Blind and the University of North Carolina's Highway Safety Research Center.

The total grant amount is \$4,047,834, which will be awarded over the five-year

period. The first year's award is expected to be \$850,037. Grant funds will be shared among the participating institutions.

"This is a very substantial award and a very exciting opportunity for us," says Richard Long, blind rehabilitation and director of the project. "The size and scope of the partnership and the substantial expertise of our collaborators will allow us to make significant progress in improving the pedestrian environment for persons who are blind and visually impaired."

Also playing key roles in the effort will be David Guth and Paul Ponchillia, both blind rehabilitation, and John W. Gesink, electrical and computer engineering.

"Probably the greatest strength of this project is that it involves a multidisciplinary approach," says William Wiener, chairperson of blind rehabilitation. "It is not just one department at Western Michigan University. It is a team of departments at a number of universities all working together."

"Through collaboration, the universities can do much more than on their own," Wiener says, "and the institutions involved are leading the way in their respective fields of expertise." For example, Wiener notes the Highway Safety Research Center at the University of North Carolina is among the top research centers for highway safety in the United States.

The institutions involved will bring their combined resources to bear on issues of increasing concern to blind individuals, orientation and mobility instructors, and transportation officials. For example, the increasing sophistication of traffic control devices and intersection designs is making city streets more challenging and potentially more risky for some people with visual impairments.

"The pedestrian travel environment has been getting much more complex in recent

(Continued on page two)

Voices from WMU writing project on radio nationwide

"I am from the sound of church bells that roll through a sleepy town..."

"I live next to the tracks. The train comes by every couple of hours. I never hear it..."

"My roots are deep and secure..."

Describing the places and lives they know, the voices of a number of young writers and teachers from Southwest Michigan will be heard across the country this summer through a special program released by the National Writing Project to radio stations around the nation.

The writers from Southwest Michigan are part of WMU's Third Coast Writing Project, directed by Ellen Brinkley, English.

"Rural Voices Radio: Writing about the Places We Call Home" features six half-hour programs of students and teachers from six states reading their original poems and essays about life in rural commu-



Brinkley

Grants top \$39 million as fiscal year nears end

More than \$5.5 million in grants, including 13 from the Michigan Space Grant Consortium, were received by the University in the months of April and May, according to a report presented to the Board of Trustees June 23.

The grant total for April and May reached \$5,518,269, pushing the total of grants received since the July 1, 1999 start of the last fiscal year to \$39,654,277.

Of the more than 70 grants awarded to WMU during this period, nearly three-

quarters were for new projects and included awards from the National Science Foundation, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, and the U.S. Department of Energy.

The largest grant received was the previously announced award of more than \$1.9 million from Varatech Inc. to Mitchel J. Keil, industrial and manufacturing engineering, and David M. Lyth, industrial and manufacturing engineering. The grant will

(Continued on page four)

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Retirements of 21 faculty and staff members approved by trustees

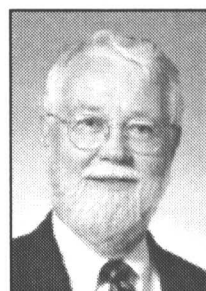
The retirements of 12 faculty members and nine staff members were approved by the Board of Trustees at its June 23 meeting. Trustees also accepted the resignations of seven faculty members.

All of the faculty members who are retiring are doing so with emeriti status. Their names, years of continuous service and effective dates of retirement are: Norman E. Carlson, English, 38 years, effective April 30, 2001; Phillip P. Caruso, economics, 34 years, effective April 30, 2001; Joe R. Chapel, teaching, learning and leadership, 34 years, effective June 11, 2000; David J. Cowden, teaching, learning and leadership, 31-1/2 years, effective Dec. 30, 2000; Kenneth A. Dahlberg, political science, 35 years, effective April 30, 2001; Salim E. Harik, economics, 25 years, effective April 30, 2001; George W. Hobbs, health, physical education and recreation, 35-1/2 years, effective Dec. 31, 2000; James A. Howell, chemistry, 36-1/2 years, effective Jan. 1, 2001; Ahmad D. Issa, finance and commercial law, 26-1/2 years, effective Dec. 31, 2002; Frank R. Jamison, instructional media, 33 years, effective April 30, 2001; Beatrice Sichel, libraries, 27-1/2 years, effective May 31, 2001; and Robert L. Whaley, music, 35 years, effective Aug. 31, 2001.

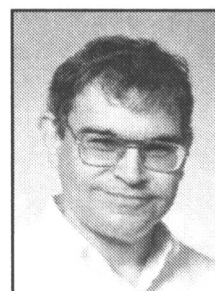
The staff members retiring are: Michael J. Aloisio, Advancement Services, 11 years, effective May 26, 2000; Lois Carl, Kercher Center for Social Research, 26 years, ef-

fective May 31, 2000; Mary Krohn, Davis Dining Service, 12 years, effective Aug. 31, 2000; Franklin McKenzie, Power Plant, 23-1/2 years, effective Aug. 31, 2000; Carl D. Neff, Power Plant, 26 years, effective May 31, 2000; Adelaida G. Nicholson, Sindecuse Health Center, 22 years, effective June 16, 2000; Sandra Rice, military science, 13-1/2 years, effective May 31, 2000; Richard H. Wadsworth, Power Plant, 24 years, effective Aug. 31, 2000; and James M. Whippo, Power Plant, 24-1/2 years, effective June 30, 2000.

The faculty members resigning are: Judith M. Arnold, Waldo Library, effective May 15; Scott H. Kollins, psychology, effective Aug. 11; Joanne Lasker, speech pathology and audiology, effective June 11; Thomas Legg, history, effective Aug. 6; Robert I. Moss, health, physical education and recreation,



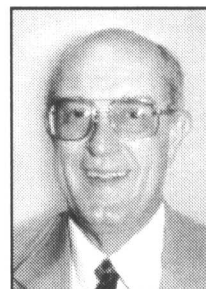
Carlson



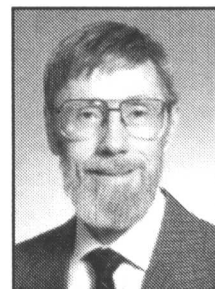
Caruso



Chapel



Cowden



Dahlberg



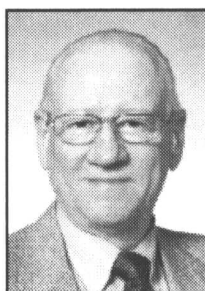
Harik



Hobbs



Issa



Jamison

effective Aug. 15; Hung-Lian Tang, business information systems, effective June 30; and Candis H. Warner, speech pathology and audiology, effective June 11.

Pedestrian mobility *(Continued from page one)*

years," Wiener says. "Traffic signals used to be timed, so that you always had 25 or 30 seconds to complete a street crossing. Those fixed-timed signals are going the way of the dinosaur."

Wiener says that with the advent of signals activated by vehicle sensors and pedestrian call buttons at intersections, a number of new devices and systems have been developed that allow pedestrians who are blind to activate signals.

"We're going to be experimenting with all of those systems and working to improve them," Wiener says.

In addition to vehicle-activated signals, other challenges abound in the complex traffic landscape, say Wiener and Long.

"The environment is changing in ways that are not always friendly to people who are blind," Long says. "So we proposed a bioengineering research partnership to identify problems and to address them from a multidisciplinary perspective."

An example of such a multidisciplinary approach is a gyroscope-based training device designed by Gesink and Guth. The device, worn by the user, provides precise verbal feedback about an individual's trajectory while he or she is walking. It shows promise as a tool for improving blind people's ability to walk in a straight line.

The grant includes funds for engineering development and field testing of the "anti-veering training device."

WESTERN NEWS

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Deadline: Items to be considered for publication should be submitted to the Office of University Relations by 5 p.m. Friday the week preceding the publication date. Spring and summer 2000 publication dates are: May 4, May 18, June 1, June 15, June 29, July 13, July 27 and Aug. 10. Items may be submitted by mail, fax (387-8422) or e-mail (cheryl.roland@wmich.edu).

Offices that receive too many copies — or too few copies — are asked to call 387-8400. WMU is an equal opportunity/employer/affirmative action institution.



WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY

Service

The following employees are recognized for 30, 20, 15, 10 and five years of service to the University during July.

30 years—Doug O. Blowers, physical plant-building maintenance services; and Edward L. Hixson, physical plant-building maintenance services.

20 years—Jahan G. Aghdai, foreign languages and literature; Jerald W. Kuss, public safety; and Lawrence J. Link, art.

15 years—Daniel M. Bracken, instructional technology services; Michele Johnson, plant accounting; Marilyn J. Shriver, continuing education; and Donald E. Thompson, vice president for research and dean of the Graduate College.

10 years—William Arbogast, Sindecuse Health Center; Mark Jenness, science studies; Peter M. Judd, social work; and Rose M. Thomas, University budgets.

Five years—Patricia Anne Coristine, Career and Student Employment Services; George Fierro, College of Aviation; Richard Haynes, physical plant-building maintenance services; Robin Hook, intercollegiate athletics; and Joseph Kretovics, teaching, learning and leadership.

Voices from WMU *(Continued from page one)*

nities. One of those segments, "Digging in the Root Cellar: Uncovering the Stories of Southwestern Michigan," focuses exclusively on writings by students and teachers from schools such as Gull Lake Middle School and area schools in the communities of Gobles and Fennville.

"Rural Voices Radio" is the culminating project of the NWP's Rural Voices Country Schools initiative. Funded by the Annenberg Rural School & Community Trust, the initiative began in 1997 and charged writing teachers at six NWP sites to creatively document life in rural communities through their classroom activities. Those six sites include one each in Arizona, Louisiana, Nebraska, Pennsylvania and Washington as well as the Third Coast Writing Project, which is based at WMU.

Radio producer Deborah Begel, known for her National Public Radio programs "Selected Shorts" and "Fresh Air," produced the program, with the six sites coordinating local recording efforts. Students submitted writings developed in the classroom and team members and the program's

producers selected which submissions would be recorded.

The program's three-CD set has already received high praise from broadcasters, including commentator Studs Terkel and PBS host and producer Bill Moyers. It has been distributed to those public radio stations nationwide that have requested it.

WMU's WMUK-FM(102.1) began airing Rural Voices Radio segments July 12, during its "Afternoon Edition" program. The station will air a different segment of the program at 4:15 p.m. on each of the next five Wednesdays, with the Southwest Michigan segment airing July 26.

Brinkley says that the Rural Voices Radio project succeeds in more than just recording snippets of rural life.

"It presents such a sense of what students and teachers can do and demonstrates how good public education still is," she says. "In a time when public education is under fire, people need to know that wonderful things happen in public schools and that teacher leadership is truly the way to lasting school reform."

Jobs

The following list of vacancies is currently being posted through the Job Opportunity Program by employment services in the Department of Human Resources. Interested benefits-eligible employees should submit a job opportunity transfer application during the posting period, and may contact an employment services staff member for assistance in securing these positions.

S-01 and S-02 clerical positions are not required to be posted. For persons interested in faculty positions, there are openings in selected fields. A letter of application should be submitted to the appropriate dean or chairperson.

(R) **Secretary II**, S-05, Mechanical and Aeronautical Engineering, 00/01-1429, 7/11-7/17/00

(R) **Research Associate** (Term ends 6/30/01; FTE .50, 20 hours per week), P-04, Science Studies, 00/01-1432, 7/11-7/17/00

(N) **Instructor** (Term ends 8/5/01; academic year), I-40, Mathematics and Statistics, 00/01-1433, 7/11-7/17/00

(N) **Instructor** (Term ends 8/5/01; academic year), I-40, Mathematics and Statistics, 00/01-1434, 7/11-7/17/00

N=New

R=Replacement

Training sessions for new performance management system now under way

All employees who will be covered under the new performance management system (those employees currently covered under University Classification and Compensation System) and their supervisors should plan to attend

one training session for the new system. Fliers were distributed through campus mail to these employees

last week, providing registration information and listing the 42 available sessions being held through August 11.

Training is essential, and attendance will be taken. By obtaining a thorough understanding of the new system, each employee and supervisor will be able to use the system to its fullest potential. And, because pay increases under the new compensation system will be af-

fectured to a much larger extent by employee performance, each employee should have a keen and personal interest in understanding the new performance management system.

Each session is limited to 25 partici-

pants and several sessions have already been filled to capacity. Be sure to respond with your first and second

choices for sessions, and we'll confirm your reservation. If you did not receive a flier, check our Web site at <www.wmich.edu/hr/Comp2000/Comp2000.html> for a complete list of sessions and registration information—listed under "What's new the week of July 3." Or call Carrie in Human Resources at 7-3625 to have a copy of the flier sent to you by campus mail.

COMP2000

WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY

Compensation 2000 is the University's project to design and implement new compensation and performance management systems for clerical, technical, professional and administrative staff. Towers Perrin is the firm providing professional consulting services to human resources for the project.

Grants *(Continued from page one)*

provide WMU students with 100 seats of Sigmund software, a program that allows engineers to anticipate variations in CAD drawings that could result in manufacturing problems.

Keil was also the recipient of a second software grant. Microsolid Solutions Inc. awarded Keil and Murari J. Shah, industrial and manufacturing engineering, \$170,550 to establish a campus computer lab utilizing Solidworks mechanical design software.

The University was the recipient of numerous federal grants, including a National Science Foundation award of \$316,343 to Elise deDoncker, computer science, and Ajay Gupta, chairperson of computer science, to enhance the capabilities of a parallel integration software package currently available over the Internet.

Other NSF grants awarded to WMU include \$122,264 to Lisa Paulius, physics, for her work with high-temperature superconductors; \$70,000 to Marc W. Perkovic, chemistry, to continue development of molecules that indicate the presence of environmental contaminants through luminescence; \$50,126 to Susan R. Stapleton, chemistry, and Stephen B. Malcolm, bio-

logical sciences, to conduct the second year of a program that gives research opportunities to undergraduate students; and \$40,970 to Ikhlas Abdel-Qader, electrical and computer engineering, and Hossein Mousavinezhad, chairperson of electrical and computer engineering, to establish a digital signal processing laboratory for undergraduate instruction.

Grants received from the U.S. Department of Education will fund new and existing programs targeted at children with disabilities or visual impairments. Annette C. Skellenger, blind rehabilitation, was awarded \$290,673 to develop a certification program for teachers of children with visual impairments. A computer-aided approach to improve the oral and written language skills of first-, second- and third-graders with disabilities that is directed by Nickola W. Nelson, speech pathology and audiology, received \$149,984 in additional funding. Paul E. Ponchillia, blind rehabilitation, was awarded \$146,900 for the national implementation of sports education camps for youths with visual impairments, using a model of such camps established at WMU.

A number of grants were also awarded

by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to WMU to continue existing projects. Sandra O. Glista, speech pathology and audiology, and Dr. Maija Petersons, family and consumer sciences, were awarded \$141,056 to continue to train health students in the skills needed to treat the elderly, especially in underserved rural areas and multicultural populations. James VanRhee, chairperson of physician assistant, was awarded \$134,738 to continue his development of a problem-based learning track in the physician assistant curriculum, while Cindee Peterson, chairperson of occupational therapy, and Richard G. Cooper, occupational therapy, received \$117,334 to continue their work of preparing occupational therapists to work in school-based health centers.

The following were among other grants received by the University during the months of April and May.

- A \$202,688 award to James R. Sanders, the Evaluation Center, from Battle Creek Public Schools will be used to evaluate the implementation of the first two years of a Technology Innovation Challenge Grant at the Battle Creek area schools.

- Subra Murali, chemistry, received multiple grants, including a U.S. Department of Energy award for \$145,000 for the first phase of a three-year, \$380,000 grant to develop a method to separate metal ions from nuclear waste in an effort to find new ways to dispose of the waste. In addition, Murali received \$90,000 from the Foundation for International Non-governmental Development of Space to develop technology that will enable astronauts to extract precious metals from asteroids while in space, and \$50,000 from the PG Foundation for the first phase of a multi-year grant to develop a method to separate toxic and beneficial molecules in pharmaceuticals.

- A \$114,422 grant from the Michigan Department of Education to Robert A. Laing, mathematics and statistics; Ruth Ann Meyer, mathematics and statistics; and Mark Jenness, science studies; will be used to train teachers in a new middle school math curriculum as part of the NSF-supported Middle School Mathematics Reform Project.

- A \$165,000 grant from the Michigan Department of Transportation to James E. Crehan, professor of aviation sciences, will allow WMU to continue to provide airport management and administrative services at the Romeo Airport in Southeast Michigan.

Calendar

The master calendar maintained by the Office of University Relations for use in Western News is available through WMU's home page on the World Wide Web. Select WMU News and then look for Calendar of Events. You can also link directly to the calendar at <www.wmich.edu/wmu/news/events>.

Thursday, July 13

Performance, SEMINAR 2000 summer music camp for high school students, faculty and guest artist concert, soprano Karen Wicklund, guest artists baritone Bruce Cain and pianist John Goodwin perform Gian Carlo Menotti's "The Telephone," Dalton Center Multi-Media Room, 7:30 p.m.

Friday, July 14

*Film showing (through July 16), Jim Jarmusch's "Ghost Dog: The Way of the Samurai," Campus Cinema, Oakland Recital Hall: Friday and Saturday, July 14 and 15, 7 and 9:30 p.m.; Sunday, July 16, 2:30 and 5 p.m.

Sunday, July 16

Recital, honors recital by outstanding SEMINAR 2000 soloists, Dalton Center Recital Hall, 4 p.m.

Monday, July 17

Performance, SEMINAR 2000 "There's No Place Like Home" concert, the Western Brass Quintet, Dalton Center Recital Hall, 7:30 p.m.

Thursday, July 20

Recital, pianists and organists from SEMINAR 2000, Dalton Center Recital Hall, 7 p.m.

Friday, July 21

Performances, ensembles from SEMINAR 2000, including brass, woodwind, choirs, percussion, jazz and vocal groups, Miller Auditorium, 7:30 p.m.

Saturday, July 22

Concerts, SEMINAR 2000, five simultaneous chamber music concerts, Dalton Center, 10:30 a.m.; final concert, bands, choir and orchestra, Miller Auditorium, 1:30 p.m.

*Admission charged