Local exec named to serve out trustee term

Lynn Chen-Zhang, a partner and chief operating officer with Zhang Financial in Portage, Michigan, has been named to the WMU Board of Trustees. Michigan Gov. Rick Snyder announced the appointment Feb. 2, subject to the advice and consent of the state Senate.

"I thank Lynn for her commitment to serve on this board, and I believe her experiences will help the University continue to succeed," Snyder said.

Chen-Zhang would serve through 2018, completing the eight-year term begun by Trustee Dana Debel, who resigned from the board last month. She is a certified financial planning practitioner and a certified public accountant who has been ranked as one of the nation’s top women financial advisors by Barron’s and the Financial Times.

A WMU alumna, Chen-Zhang serves as vice president of the WMU Foundation and sits on the foundation’s Board of Directors, Investment Committee and Committee on Directors. She is a longtime supporter of University Libraries, the Haworth College of Business, the Academically Talented Youth Program in the Lee Honors College, and many other campus programs and units.

Join Dunn on leg of five-day, 14-city farewell tour

WMU President John M. Dunn will spend five days covering 1,500 miles by bus Monday through Friday, Feb. 17-March 3, to say farewell to University supporters and shine a light on WMU’s current and emerging strengths.

Traveling across Michigan in a specially wrapped bus, John and Linda Dunn will stop in 13 Michigan cities for farewell events and conclude the tour in Chicago.

The president is scheduled to retire June 30. A series of alumni events and other activities around the nation start Sunday, Feb. 12, to celebrate his decade as president.

Among those that campus community members can participate in is the bus tour.

• Monday, Feb. 27, will include a morning reception at the WMU College of Aviation in Battle Creek, a luncheon reception at WMU Cooley Law School in Lansing and an evening celebration at the Amway Grand Plaza in Grand Rapids.

• Tuesday, Feb. 28, features a luncheon reception at Weber’s Inn in Ann Arbor and an evening reception at the Detroit Athletic Club.

• Wednesday, March 1, will feature a morning reception at the WMU Cooley

WMU’s supply chain program ranks No. 2 in world

The integrated supply chain management program recently ranked second on a list of the top 100 universities for supply chain talent produced by SCM World, a cross-industry learning community powered by the world’s most influential supply chain practitioners. The No. 2 ranking places WMU ahead of MIT, Harvard, Penn State, the University of Michigan and many other schools. Michigan State University came in first this year.

The ranking indicates that industry professionals see a degree from WMU as a marker of top supply chain talent.

"Those responding to the SCM World survey are industry professionals who value WMU’s connection with industry, curricular innovation and ability to prepare students to add immediate value to organizations in the ranking process. The results of the survey show that hands-on experience may often be the differentiator in program success. SCM World cites a recent survey about the ideal skill mix that supply chain professionals identified as needed for 2020 and beyond, which stated that communication, strategic thinking and change management were among desired skills. According to SCM World, skills such as those develop fastest in the world of work. “The ability to offer our students multiple experiences through projects, consulting and required internships allows them to gain experience in the areas that supply chain professionals most value,” says Robert Reck, marketing, and director of WMU’s Center for Integrated Supply Management.

“We work hard to stay close to industry, listen to the needs of employers and adapt our curriculum to reflect the realities in the field. This ranking shows that our efforts are recognized and appreciated by hiring managers.”

Obtain advice to improve surveys

Visit the Evaluation Center’s Survey Improvement Clinic for practical advice on improving short surveys. A table will be set up in conjunction with Spring Convocation from 8:30 a.m. to noon Friday, Feb. 17, in the Fetzer Center. Walk-ins are welcome, and 20-minute time slots can be reserved at lori.wingate@wmich.edu or (269) 387-5922.

WMU hosting Special Olympics finals

WMU is hosting the Special Olympics Michigan Unified Basketball State Finals Saturday, Feb. 25, in the Student Recreation Center. The event is being planned, staged and managed to support the Special Olympics athletes and more than 100 volunteers and fans that are expected to participate or attend.

The finals are a collaborative effort among Special Olympics-Michigan, WMU’s University Recreation staff members and the Epsilon Alpha Chapter of Phi Epsilon Kappa.

Assessment-related deadlines reported

The University Assessment Steering Committee is accepting applications by Friday, Feb. 10, for its annual Assessment Excellence Individual and Unit awards. Details are available at wmich.edu/news/2017/02/5926.

In addition, the annual Assessment Conference will take place from 8 a.m. to 2:45 p.m. Friday, March 17, in the Fetzer Center. The conference is open to all of WMU’s graduate teaching assistants and part-time instructors as well as faculty and staff members. Those attending may come and go as their schedules dictate.

The registration deadline is Friday, March 10. For more information or to register, visit wmich.edu/assessment/resources.

More faculty-staff mixers coming up

A Gold Gathering faculty-staff mixer is set for 4 to 6 p.m. Friday, Feb. 17, in the Fetzer Center lobby. Complimentary light hors d’oeuvres and a cash bar will be available.

The Meemic Redman Agency is sponsoring the event. A lunch buffet is planned for Thursday, March 30. The semester’s final evening mixer is set for Thursday, April 20. For more information about Gold Gatherings, visit wmich.edu/provost/goldgatherings.

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Emeritus pens three-book fiction series

H. Byron Earhart, emeritus in comparative religion, is about to complete The Destiny Trinity, released by iCrew Digital Publishing. The series begins with 2016’s “No Pizza in Heaven.”

For three decades, it follows the diverging trajectories of identical twin sons who are separated from each other and their teenage mother at birth. The mother turns into an indifferent agnostic, one twin becomes a cool New Ager who develops a create-your-own-religion computer program. How they become reunited and reconcile their differences is at the heart of that detective family drama. Book Two of the trilogy, “Faith Finds Forgiveness,” came out earlier this year and Book Three, “Meeting the Devil,” is due to be released later this year.

Now retired and living in California, Earhart has returned to his early interest in creative writing. His academic publications are in the area of Asian religions, especially religion in Japan.

Researcher elected new AAAS Fellow

Michelle A. Komine, geoscientist, was recently elected a Fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science and will be recognized at an AAAS event Feb. 18. Komine is one of 391 association members from the 24 sections to receive the honor “because of their scientifically or socially distinguished efforts to advance science or its applications.” Several studies she has been involved with have implications for determining how high sea levels could rise as a result of human-induced sea-level change.

Komine conducts research in the field of geodynamics, with her current activities centering on global sea-level change and tectonics—the vertical motions that generate the large-scale structural features of the Earth.

Poet releases children’s collection


Ryampa is continuing a long tradition of poets forging links with precious stones and metals that began with Ovid, a Roman, and includes a strand of gems by the likes of Poe, De Vere, Yeats and Tennyson. “As a poet and amateur rock hound, I’ve been making connections between gemstones and poetry for decades,” Ryampa says. “And as someone who works with future educators, I’ve simultaneously been a long-time advocate of forging a relationship between science and the language arts. This book is the culmination of all those interests and beliefs.”
Safety communication changes enacted

A number of new safety tools recommended by a Safety Communications Committee created by President John M. Dunn were unveiled last month.

The campuswide committee was appointed after shootings in Kalamazoo on a single evening a year ago. The group worked to examine existing communication tools and potential additions that would allow the University to improve the way it advises students of imminent danger that is off campus but near campus borders.

Starting late in the fall semester, when Dunn received the committee’s report and recommendations, WMU has begun to enhance its communication system by:

• Purchasing new commercial software to continually scan social media and alert WMU officers to issues emerging outside their jurisdiction that are potentially important to ensure the safety of campus community members within a defined geographic boundary.

• Unveiling a safety information website at wmsaps.wmich.edu/safety-info.php that is a one-stop-destination for safety-related links and information, including links to campus safety services as well as area media’s breaking news alerts.

People without a Twitter account can register to have campus safety advisory tweets sent to their mobile phones via text message. Twitter users can adjust their settings to receive push notifications on their phones whenever @wmupublicsafety posts an alert.

For more information about safety communication enhancements, read the article at wmich.edu/news/2017/01/37740. The article provides a link to register to receive safety tweets.

Learner support program self-study reports available for review by faculty, staff

A campuswide observation team has launched Phase II of the Learner Support Program Review and Planning cycle.

Starting Jan. 19, the LSPRP Observation Team began a peer review of the self-study reports submitted from the 117 programs identified as focusing on learner support. Faculty and staff members may review the reports through a secure site by selecting Program Review SharePoint Gateway at wmich.edu/effectiveness/program/support. The LSPRP cycle is the second round of the University’s ongoing integrated program review and planning process. It focuses on learner support units, which primarily offer programs that contribute to the learning, growth and development of learners outside of traditional curricular instruction. The self-study reports now under review were the culmination of Phase I of this cycle, which began July 15, 2016, and ended in December.

In Phase II, observation team subgroups will complete their review of the reports by 5 p.m. Tuesday, Feb. 28, and give next-level reviewers a list of the programs’ overall strengths and key areas for development. Those next-level supervisors, such as directors and managers of the units offering the programs, will review the reports as well as the observation team’s feedback and provide recommendations to their units’ senior leaders sometime in April.

Lastly, senior leaders will review all feedback and provide recommendations to their units by Friday, June 30—the end of the academic year—so appropriate planning can begin.

The Learner Support Program Review and Planning cycle includes a third phase that focuses on planning, decision-making and implementation.

Phase III is expected to begin Saturday, July 1, and be ongoing. It will allow senior leaders to review the information that has been reported and apply it to decision-making in their respective areas.

For more information about Learner Support Program Review and Planning or the integrated program review and planning process, visit institutional effectiveness at wmich.edu/effectiveness/program.

Obituary—wmich.edu/news/obituaries

Chrysa Richards, a secretary for Student Activities and Leadership Programs and the Center for Teaching and Learning, died Jan. 8. She was 58. Richards joined the staff in 1987 and left in 1998 after almost 11 years of service. Memorial services will be scheduled at a later date.

Campagne kickoff scheduled

Development and alumni relations will kick off this year’s BroncoStrong campus campaign with an event from 4 to 6 p.m. Friday, Feb. 10, in the Heritage Hall Ballroom.

The event will feature complimentary appetizers, an open bar and prize drawings. Departments and offices with the highest participation rate at the end of the Feb. 13 through April 7 active phase will be awarded money for the designation of their choice.

To register, go to mywmu.com/campuskickoff.

Kareem Abdul-Jabbar to visit campus for book read event

Retired professional basketball star Kareem Abdul-Jabbar will visit WMU one day after a discussion of Chapter 1 of his book, “Writings on the Wall: Searching for a New Equality” at the 2017 Western News Conference. Abdul-Jabbar will give a free talk from 7 to 9 p.m. Tuesday, March 14, in Miller Auditorium as part of the Kalamazoo Public Library’s 2016–17 Reading Together program.

KFL and several WMU entities are sponsoring the chapter discussion from 7:30 to 9 p.m. Monday, March 13, in the Heritage Hall Ballroom.

The chapter is a collection of essays on the country’s seemingly irreconcilable partisan divide, both racial and political; parenthood; and the author’s own experiences as an athlete, an African-American and a Muslim.

Multiple copies of Abdul-Jabbar’s book are on seven-day reserve at the Waldo Library circulation desk. To RSVP for the March 14 talk or learn about all related local events, visit kfl.gov/reading-together/2017/.
Financing Community Colleges

If you see something on your WMU account that you don’t understand, who do you call? Typically, you’ll call Michelle Loedeman, director of collections in accounts receivable, because the accounts receivable office sends out billings and the collections unit makes sure they’re paid.

The four-person unit works with students across campus as well as faculty and staff members and retirees. It’s responsible for hearing tuition appeals, collecting Perkins loan payments, and ensuring that billings on all University accounts are accurate, understood and up to date.

“Whenever I was growing up, collections definitely isn’t anything I thought would be in my job title,” Loedeman quips. “But really, I don’t have the type of job where you’re demanding money from anyone. It’s more like being a financial literacy advisor. I help people research what it is that they owe and try to resolve whatever issues they have.”

Student issues usually relate to trying to get “holds” removed. Depending on the situation, Loedeman may arrange a special payment plan, provide options for seeking scholarships or financial aid, or in cases of hardship, connect students with the ombudsman.

“It’s all about registration and enrollment and then, hopefully, graduation,” she says. “But sometimes I have to have that hard conversation about not getting yourself into a position that you can never get out of—that whole financial literacy thing.”

When working with employees and retirees, Loedeman usually deals with payment plan issues, such as when retirees pay their health insurance premiums on a quarterly schedule or employees use the payroll deduction plan or receive the tuition discount on classes they take.

“There isn’t any call that we would take and say: ‘It’s not my job.’ Just pick up the phone and call us,” she says. “We have a great team here in accounts receivable. We can’t make every customer happy, but we do our best to make sure that we’ve done everything we can.”

In 1999, Loedeman came to WMU as a temporary employee in cashiering. She was hired full time in accounts receivable in 2000 and subsequently promoted to her current post. She chairs the Administrative Professional Association’s Special Events Committee and is president-elect of the Michigan Association of Student Financial Services Administrators.

Loedeman and her husband, Frank, reside at Eagle Lake in Kalamazoo. She earned a bachelor’s degree from WMU in 2014, has a son and stepson who are WMU alumni, and has a daughter pursuing a degree here. Three of the blended family’s five children have married during the past year. “I almost feel like I’ve become a wedding planner,” she says, adding that in her free time, she loves to relax by gardening and reading.

On Campus

Join Dunn on farewell tour

Auburn Hills campus, a luncheon at Flint Golf Course, and a dinner reception for the Saginaw, Midland and Bay City area slated for the Frankenmuth Brewery.

• Thursday, March 2, begins with a luncheon reception at Traverse City’s Park Place Hotel and concludes with an evening reception at the Shoreline Inn & Conference Center in Muskegon.

• Friday, March 3, starts with a morning reception at the WMU Stryker School of Medicine in Kalamazoo, continues on to a luncheon reception at the WMU Southwest campus in Benton Harbor and concludes with an evening reception at the University Club in Chicago.

The bus tour is being coordinated by development and alumni relations. Anyone interested in attending an event on the tour can go to the Dunn Farewell Tour site at mywmu.com/dunnfarewell for details and to reserve a spot. The per-person cost to attend a reception is: morning, $15; luncheon, $25; and evening, $30 to $55.

The tour site includes details on how to make a gift to a special fundraising effort to benefit four causes of particular interest to John and Linda Dunn—the Student Emergency Fund, Seita Scholars program, Bronco Marching Band and University Art Collection. The WMU Foundation board recently created a $230,000 fund to match gifts made to the four funds. Gifts to the four in honor of Dunn will be matched 1-to-1 until the foundation fund is exhausted.

Future events to mark the Dunn presidency include a Friday, April 7, campuswide celebration at Miller Auditorium and a May gala at the WMU Stryker School of Medicine as well as a number of celebratory events planned for smaller campus and community groups.

Dunn is closing out a transformational decade during which he has touched every part of the University. At the request of the WMU Board of Trustees, he has agreed to serve for a year as president emeritus following his retirement. In that capacity, he will undertake assignments requested by the trustees and the new president.

Gold Company, GCII present special annual show

Gold Company and GCII are back and bigger than ever in their new show, “Royally Dunn.”

They will present some of music royalty’s greatest hits with a special nod of thanks to retiring WMU President John M. Dunn. “Royally Dunn” will feature the music, comedy, choreography and showmanship of Gold Company and GCII during performances at 2 and 8 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 11, in Miller Auditorium.

Experience the songs of Michael Jackson, Aretha Franklin, Elvis Presley and more.

The two highly regarded ensembles will be joined by Grammy-nominated Gold Company alumnus Jeremy Fox and the University Symphony Orchestra. Tickets may be purchased at millerauditorium.com. WMU faculty and staff members will get a 15 percent discount, and due to a fund established by the president’s office, WMU students get a 50 percent discount on most show tickets.