Distinguished Speaker Series RSVP

“What We All Want from Work"

Melissa Gray, B.S. ’96
Senior Director of Sustainability
Rackspace

Thursday, March 13, 2014
3:30 p.m.
Schneider Hall, Room 2000

As the senior director of sustainability for Rackspace, Melissa Gray’s responsibilities range from guiding the company’s global sustainability strategy and activities to acting as the executive sponsor for its LGBTQ+ employee resource group. Since joining Rackspace in October 2009, Gray’s roles have included the development of operational support systems and serving as the chief of staff to the company’s CEO, assisting in the development of Rackspace’s multi-year strategic plan.

Prior to her career at Rackspace, Gray earned her Bachelor of Science degree from WMU in 1996 and went on to work for a Fortune 10 company, helping to transform complex legacy businesses through innovation. With more than 15 years of business strategy and operations experience, Gray holds three software patents in the U.S. and Europe.

RSVP below or call (269) 387-5069 for more information.

Focus on Transfer Recruiting

Each year, universities put time and money into recruiting outstanding students; for most, it is a top priority. Vying for students to increase enrollment as state funding declines, colleges and universities are continuously looking at ways to improve recruiting efforts and retention. One way the Haworth College of Business is finding success is through efforts at building relationships with community colleges, which this year has paid off in increased transfer enrollments.

Historically competitors for first-year students, the college of business and many Michigan community colleges are now working together to simplify transfer enrollment and encourage dual-enrollment, making the transition from a community college to a 4-year institution seamless.
“Transfer articulation agreements between institutions are the most prevalent form of cooperation,” says Dr. Christina Stamper, associate dean of undergraduate programs in the college of business. “The university and community college agree about which courses—usually freshmen- and sophomore-level courses—are equivalent and can transfer from the community college to the university, to help the student earn a 4-year degree.” Recent reverse articulation agreements also facilitate students’ use of credits from WMU to complete an associate’s degree, even after transferring.

Stamper notes that articulation agreements are just one way to strengthen relations with community colleges. Recognizing a need for building deeper relationships, the college appointed a community college recruiter. That new community college recruiter, Paul Hildenbrand, earned a Make-a-Difference award from the University highlighting his successes at increasing transfer enrollment and developing relationships with community colleges during his first year in the position. This fall the college enrolled 350 transfer business students, an increase of 5.2%, a small but significant increase. Noting a decline in enrollment at Michigan community colleges and a continuing decline in the number of high school graduates in Michigan, Stamper says a dedicated advisor for this area was needed to remain competitive.

“Relationships with the community colleges extend to potential transfer students. I provide on-site advising at numerous colleges and help ensure a smooth transition,” says Hildenbrand. “Educating potential students on the transfer process helps alleviate many concerns. For example, the most common misconception involves registration. Community colleges typically require tuition payment within 48 hours of registration, so many transfer students do not register early enough at WMU to get their ideal schedule. Assuring them that payment is not due immediately and that WMU classes are never dropped because of non-payment, promotes earlier registration and a more satisfied customer.”

Hildenbrand has received positive feedback from his efforts, which includes meeting with hundreds of students around the state. He contacts each admitted student prior to visiting a community college, offering advising and providing transfer guides. “The community college administrators are glad that they have one person who they know students can contact any time,” says Hildenbrand.

While efforts at encouraging transfer enrollment continue, the college and the University are looking creatively at ways to attract more students, especially in light of the decreasing high school population in Michigan. In his State of the University address, John M. Dunn, president of WMU, said that the University is increasing its efforts in reaching out to non-resident students. Citing the relative ease with which a student can gain residency in Michigan after one year, Dunn says ”the initial sticker shock (of out-of-state costs) may be the obstacle and we have to look at that very thoughtfully and carefully.”

Dr. Kay Palan, dean, notes that the college of business is also working outside Michigan. “We have dedicated more resources not only to recruiting transfer students but also to recruiting first-year students and international students,” says Palan. “For the college, it is important that we have a talented and diverse student body. We must be attuned to changing demographics and innovative ways to connect with talented students, and we must consistently evaluate our efforts. Taking a strategic and future-oriented approach to recruitment ensures the vibrancy and health of the college, not just in this recruitment year but for years to come.”


By the numbers

- Of the 1,730 transfer students that enrolled at WMU, 70% are from Michigan community colleges with an average transfer GPA of 3.0.

- 326 students transferred into the Haworth College of Business in fall 2013. 64 of these were undecided of a specific business major. Hildebrand says he assists students in this area, sharing the college’s detailed information about coursework and careers with students he advises.

New center established to enhance supply chain education

by Ashlie Harper Perry
February 5, 2014 | WMU News

KALAMAZOO—A new center has been established as part of Western Michigan University's highly touted integrated supply management program that will enhance delivery of leading-edge education by providing practical solutions to industry problems.

The Western Michigan University Center for Integrated Supply Management will offer an array of student learning experiences focusing on hands-on education and innovative research, which will further strengthen student and business relationships and help establish the program as a thought leader in supply chain management. In addition, an executive education program will provide internal training to companies and managers who want to further the development of supply chain professionals.

In conjunction with the center, a new initiative—Bronco Force—will offer consulting services in supply chain to corporate clients. The program is designed to address difficulties supply chain managers face and, through faculty and student involvement, determine best methods to solve those problems in the workplace.

Integrated supply management program

Ranked No. 12 in undergraduate supply chain education, WMU's ISM program has been recognized nationally by several organizations and publications for its leadership in preparing students for careers in supply chain management. WMU's curriculum combines engineering, information technology, supply chain and business education to prepare graduates for challenging and high-paying careers.

"Our ISM academic program is already recognized nationally as one of the premier programs in the country, but we're not content with that," says Dr. Kay Palan, dean of the Haworth College of Business, which houses the ISM program. "We also want to be recognized nationally as a trailblazer in supply chain management. To that end, establishing a center allows us to better integrate resources across multiple departments, develop industry partnerships, pursue funded research and develop opportunities for our students."
Kenneth Perry, B.B.A.’08—Crucial Decisions

By Jessica Sliver, communication intern

Interning for Whirlpool Corporation, prior to graduation, was one of the best choices Kenneth Perry, B.B.A.’08, made while at WMU. After the completion of his internship with the home appliance giant, Perry was offered a full-time position in Whirlpool’s leadership development program where he was able to see several different aspects of supply chain management early in his career.

“This has given me a solid foundation to understand the impact of the decisions I make across the entire supply chain,” says Perry.

Those crucial decisions have been the right ones. As the senior global commodity buyer for Whirlpool, he is now responsible for managing and negotiating motors for laundry in North America and leading the strategic direction of laundry motors globally.

During his academic experience at WMU, Perry was able to learn about supply chain management and manufacturing processes while learning in-depth business skills that directly correlate with his career. “The knowledge gained gave me a huge advantage in every role I’ve been in thus far.”

For Perry, finding success in his career is a limitless pursuit. “To me, success in this role would be driving product leadership in the marketplace by delivering the best quality and best cost to the consumer and continuing to push the limit within the company,” he says.

Perry’s favorite professor in the college of business is Dr. Bret Wagner, associate professor of management. “He was one of the teachers who went above and beyond his job scope to help me professionally and academically during my undergraduate education,” he says. “Dr. Wagner is someone that I still keep in contact with today.”

As a Bronco and successful business professional, giving advice is all part of the job for Perry. “Don’t be afraid of failure. Just make sure you learn from it and continue to challenge the status quo.”

Perry is on the Whirlpool team that recruits at the WMU ISM Career Night and Career Fair. Supporting the college of business is important for Perry, especially because the recruiting team at Whirlpool includes a number of WMU alumni.
Food marketing program earns category management certification

Western Michigan University’s food and consumer package goods marketing program has earned certification for its category management coursework from the national Category Management Association.

This certification, awarded to the WMU program in January, signifies that the program offers coursework that meets stringent qualifications for preparing students for certification as category analysts. In some cases, students with applicable work experience may also apply for certification at the category manager level.

“This certification provides employers assurances that the students they hire from our program have met the industry standards set for an analyst position in category management. Our students will be in a position to make an immediate impact in industry upon graduation,” says Dr. Frank Gambino, director of the food and consumer package goods marketing program.

Category management focuses on retailing and purchasing data to analyze groups of products purchased by a business organization or sold by a retailer. To earn certification, the coursework must include proficiency in industry knowledge, category management history and process, pricing analysis, promotion analysis, assortment analysis, spreadsheet development, presentation development, syndicated scanner data methodologies, consumer panel data applications, retailer point of sale data analysis, space planning software and relational databases.

By taking the required curriculum, students prepare themselves during their undergraduate studies for certification at the category analyst level. WMU students can now distinguish themselves from graduates at other universities when vying for top jobs in category management.

One of the premier programs in the United States, the WMU program offers students a four-year business degree specializing in food and consumer package goods marketing. The program is one of just two university programs to have achieved certification from the Category Management Association for curriculum.

Lindsay (French) Brandon—Sparking Creativity

By Jessica Sliver, communications intern

Gaining experience in the advertising scene prior to graduation gave Lindsay (French) Brandon, B.B.A.’05, the jumpstart she needed to enter the world of advertising. Brandon first was able to secure an internship with a local advertising firm during her last semester of college. One opportunity after another led to Brandon’s current role as the director of marketing at Michigan Hearing LLC.
For Brandon, this position stands out from all other positions because of the many roles that are incorporated into the duties of the director of marketing. She is responsible for implementing and launching marketing for 27 offices statewide, while at the same time marketing the continual education on hearing aids and their positive benefits for those with hearing loss. Her responsibilities range from measuring monthly and quarterly statistics and building brand reputation and awareness to coordinating communication between marketing pieces and offices all over the state. Even though the multiple roles of the position can be challenging for Brandon, the outcome is worth it.

“It is very rewarding when I can show that my work and progress show profit for the company and also help in educating more people about this growing health concern,” says Brandon.

The Haworth College of Business supplied many opportunities for Brandon to gain real-world knowledge within her major and left her with more than just a diploma. The combined experience as a member of WMU’s AdClub, the business fraternity Phi Chi Theta and class projects has helped guide her through challenges she experiences in each of her job roles.

“The college truly builds its education around real-world experiences,” says Brandon.

One of Brandon’s favorite courses, creative strategy, offered many necessary skills that she uses on a daily basis. The class showed her the process of developing an invention and was the “it” factor that made her conclude marketing and advertising was the right career path to pursue. Her work at the college of business also taught Brandon the imperative skill of teamwork. Within her job, Brandon encourages viewpoints from all of the departments in Michigan Hearing LLC.

“When you get a group of creative, motivated people together to build an idea or concept, you can’t help but to feel inspired by one another. We all have a spark of creativity within us,” she says.