1-11-2016

President's Perspective for Jan. 11, 2016

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Dear Colleagues:

Welcome back for the start of the spring 2016 semester. A lot has happened over the past month, and we're poised to launch a semester full of accomplishment and celebration.

FOOTBALL SEASON ENDS IN SPECTACULAR FASHION

As you undoubtedly know, our football Broncos distinguished themselves in postseason play by winning the Popeyes Bahamas Bowl on Dec. 24. It was the first Bronco bowl win in WMU history.

Linda and I were fortunate to be able to be there and see our student-athletes and intercollegiate athletics personnel handle the pressures and opportunities of the event in a way that should make the entire University proud. They represented the University well both on and off the field. The 45-31 win against Middle Tennessee State and the team's season performance were impressive.

Just as important a reason to celebrate these student athletes is the scholastic record of success our Bronco team has accrued. This year's team boasts four players with GPAs of 3.62 or higher who have been named to the MAC Distinguished Scholar Athlete team. They are among 12 named to the 2015 All-Academic MAC Team.

WMU SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA HITS A HIGH NOTE
December closed on a truly high note when we learned the Western Michigan University Symphony Orchestra was named to the No. 3 spot nationally in the 2015 American Prize competition's college/university orchestra division.

The WMU orchestra is under the direction of Bruce Uchimura. The WMU group placed third in its division, with the Baylor University Symphonic Orchestra capturing first place, and the Peabody Conservatory of Music Symphony Orchestra placing second.

Other schools providing this year's stiff competition were Florida State, Cornell, Utah State and Georgia Tech universities as well as the College of William and Mary.

NEW POST-GRAD SUCCESS DATA AVAILABLE

Just as the fall semester ended, Career and Student Employment Services completed and rolled out its annual post-graduate success data, and the results are once again positive. Thanks to the efforts of Associate Director Ewa Urban, who has been building the strength of this tool, the response rate for the 2014-15 year soared to 75 percent—3,929 students. The previous year's response rate was 68.5 percent.

You'll want to check out the very specific results from your own academic area. You should know the top-line takeaways are:

- 88 percent of WMU graduates were actively engaged—employed or in grad school—within three months of graduation.
- Median salary of those employed full time was $40,000 to $45,000.
- 93 percent of those young alumni were satisfied with their jobs, and 87 percent had jobs related to the degrees they earned.

You may see positive post-grad figures for other institutions, but you should look carefully at the methodology and timing being used. You will not find many instances of such comprehensive, timely and institutionwide data anywhere else. Thank you for all that you do to make our graduates so successful.

NEW CARNEGIE CLASSIFICATIONS REAFFIRM WMU'S STATUS

With the start of the new year, the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching released for public review the 2015 update of its classification system. Once again, our University has been recognized as being among the upper level of research universities in the state and nation.
Changes to the Carnegie categories include a new "Doctoral Universities" basic classification that breaks institutions into groups according to their research output. Our new classification is "Doctoral Universities: Higher Research Activity."

The category is the second highest research university designation and is consistent with WMU's classification in the previous system of "Research University, High Research Activity."

Following a comment period, the new system will be implemented. We will need to be looking carefully at the language we use to describe our University and be ready to change to the new nomenclature.

**STRATEGIC PLANNING WILL TAKE CENTER STAGE**

The three-year period covered by our first strategic plan has ended, and work is underway across the campus to continue and transition to a five-year version of that plan. In the weeks leading up to the end of the fall semester, nearly 1,500 of you took the time and effort to provide feedback by taking a survey and letting us know which planning goals and objectives you are most interested in seeing continued or amended.

During the coming weeks, there will be additional opportunities to provide input, so please take advantage of those chances to add your wise counsel to the effort. We expect to have a newly refined plan ready to present to trustees in March.

**EVENTS TO WATCH FOR THIS SEMESTER**

This will be a semester full of celebration—and some of those events begin immediately.

Our annual celebration of the life and legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. is already underway. The first official event took place in December. The majority of events are scheduled for this week and next, culminating in a full day of opportunities on Monday, Jan. 18. On that day—the official observance of Dr. King's birthday—there will be a communitywide day of service, a march, a community convocation and a downtown celebration. Be sure to pick one or more ways to mark this important annual celebration.
• For the first time ever, WMU will hold a formal **Spring Convocation** on Friday, Feb. 5. The event is designed to honor students, faculty and staff members; celebrate research and promote a sense of community. Spring Convocation will include activities on Thursday, Feb. 4, and on Friday, Feb. 5, leading up to the actual campuswide gathering. Convocation will close with a Friday with Friends. Mark your calendars now.

• One of our signature centers—**the Center for the Study of Ethics in Society**—will mark its 30th anniversary of service to this University community in early March. A semester-long speaker series has been set up, and the major anniversary event will be a national conference that focuses on "Bioethics: Preparing for the Unknown." The conference will include a tribute to Dr. Michael S. Pritchard, who founded the WMU center in 1985 and who will retire this summer.

• And finally, during spring commencement, we'll celebrate the success of graduate education at WMU. Among the doctoral awardees that day will be a student who has earned the **3,000th doctoral degree** awarded by Western Michigan University. That's a benchmark event that really speaks for itself.

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**FACULTY AND STUDENT ACCOLADES**

The work of our scholars goes on nonstop every day of the year, and we continually learn of faculty and student accolades—even over holiday breaks. Here are just a few examples of new accolades from the end of the fall semester and the 2015 holiday closure.

**Ploeger**

Just after learning about the WMU Symphony Orchestra’s American Prize placement, we learned that one of our individual music majors was honored by the same organization for his work as a student composer. **Zachary Ploeger**, who studies trumpet and composition in our School of Music, earned an **honorable mention in the American Prize Chamber Music Composition-Student Division**. Zach also recently was named a finalist in Minnesota Public Radio's young composers’ contest.

**Drs. Amy Wagenfeld and Diane Powers Dirette**

Two members of our occupational therapy faculty are being acknowledged with a top honor by one of their discipline's professional organizations. Drs. **Diane Powers Dirette**, a WMU professor of occupational therapy, and **Amy Wagenfeld**, who begins her duties at WMU this semester as an assistant professor of occupational therapy, will both be inducted into the Roster of Fellows of the American Occupational Therapy Association at its annual conference in April 2016 in Chicago.
A WMU advertising and promotion student is one of only 50 students nationwide selected by the American Advertising Federation to participate in the organization’s Most Promising Multicultural Students Program for 2016. **Carlos Pinon**, of Coldwater, is the recipient of the annual, nationwide award for college seniors with both exceptional academic and professional achievements. Pinon is the first student from WMU to receive this recognition and will represent the University at the program in New York City in February.

I look forward to a semester of sharing celebrations with you and having the chance to congratulate our students and faculty members for their honors. Thank you for all you do every day to make our University one that adds value to the many constituents we serve.

Continuing best,

John M. Dunn
President