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WMU welcomes 60 Dominican Republic students

An open-ended agreement signed Jan. 23 is bringing scores of students from the Dominican Republic to Western Michigan University.

A delegation of University representatives led by President John M. Dunn traveled to the Dominican Republic for the signing ceremony. Ligia Amada Melo de Cardona, secretary of state for higher education, science and technology, signed the pact on behalf of the Caribbean nation.

"This is a significant partnership with a country that has made a nationwide commitment to higher education," says WMU President John M. Dunn. "Our program mix, our Midwest location and our focus on student success and service fit the needs the Dominican Republic identified for its next generation of leaders. We're looking forward to a strong relationship that will grow over the next several years."

Accompanying Dunn to the Dominican Republic were Juan M. Tavares, senior international student admissions counselor and a key architect of the WMU-D.R. scholarship agreement, and Donald G. McCloud, dean of the Haenicke Institute for Global Education, which spearheads the University's internationalization efforts.

At left: Gabriela Martinez Arias, 19, from Santo Domingo, is taking CELCIS business English classes and plans to major in economics. "The WMU campus is well organized and has everything we need," Arias said.

While in the Dominican Republic, members of the campus delegation met with government officials, WMU alumni and parents of currently enrolled students. They also conferred with the chief executive officers of several large American companies that do business in the country and plan to hire many of the Dominican scholarship students once they graduate.
The WMU-D.R. agreement is based on an ongoing initiative called the Dominican Scholars Program, which was launched in 1996 by Dominican President Leonel Fernandez Reyna.

Fernandez lived in the United States for several years and attended grade school in inner city New York. He aims to eventually help some 10,000 of his academically talented countrymen obtain post-secondary degrees by providing comprehensive government scholarships that cover everything from tuition and housing to meals and computers.

The only caveats are that the students must live in on-campus housing and return to the Dominican Republic after they finish their studies. Large groups of Dominican students already are enrolled at the City University of New York, Farmingdale University and Utah State University.

At right: Jose Vasquez Javier, 18, of Santo Domingo, plans to study industrial engineering at WMU. "WMU's campus is amazing--there are so many opportunities here," Javier said. "Coming from a warm climate, the cold takes getting used to, but we like the winter here!"

"The Dominican educational system doesn't have as many high-quality programs as we do in specialized fields like engineering, technology and business," says Tavares, a naturalized U.S. citizen and D.R. native. "Sending students here is all about improving the economy for years to come. U.S.-educated students will bring new skills and new ideas into the work force."

McCloud says WMU's new partnership with the Dominican Republic grew out of connections made last year after Tavares recruited six undergraduate Dominican students, and some of their parents accompanied them to campus in August.

"The parents were so taken with the Haenicke Institute's orientation program for international students that they thought some of their country's national scholarship students should come here too. They told their government that, and a draft agreement was set up," McCloud explains. "WMU in terms of international education is focused and well structured, so it's ahead of the game. We're unified and have less bureaucracy. The Haenicke Institute houses all of the University's major international offices and initiatives. Officials can get together immediately, so we can move more quickly than other universities."

Plans called for the scholarship agreement to be in place at the start of this semester, but the pact took a little longer than expected to execute. Now that it has been finalized, WMU officials predict that 30 to 60 more undergraduates will enroll this coming fall. As many as 200 D.R. students, including many graduate students, could be enrolling annually within a few years.
Tavares says the influx of new students benefits WMU by boosting enrollment, further diversifying the student body and adding to the number of international alumni, only a few of whom are Dominican.

Meanwhile, he says the Dominican Republic wanted to partner with a Midwestern school and saw several advantages to choosing WMU.

"A major benefit is the Haenicke Institute's rare ability, and willingness, to process all of the incoming students' paperwork, including sensitive U.S. immigration documents. Usually, the Dominicans have to hire consultants to do this," Tavares says. "We also have a strong academic community and focus here, but we aren't overwhelmingly big. In addition, they found our residence halls appealing, and they view the American Midwest and Kalamazoo as being a safe place to send their students."

McCloud adds that the national D.R. scholarship program is notable not only because of the comprehensive funding assistance it provides, but also because of the unusual way the country's secretary of education is implementing the program.

"It doesn't dictate which programs students can enroll in and it targets the country's best students, whether or not they're in public or private schools. This means a wide range of students are coming to WMU, not just the most affluent or those in only a few disciplines. It also means students are more likely to go into fields they have a passion for," McCloud says. "The whole idea is for students to become the best they can be and then bring back both their expertise and their passion. Frankly, that's a very enlightened view from a senior education official in a government bureaucracy. It's really exciting to support the scholarship because the philosophy behind it makes so much sense."

For more information about the WMU-D.R. scholarship agreement, contact Juan Tavares at juan.tavares@wmich.edu or (269) 387-5879.

Media contact: Jeanne Baron, (269) 387-8400, jeanne.baron@wmich.edu
The campus community and area residents will have a chance to learn about other countries as well as sample exotic cuisines during Western Michigan University's 19th annual International Festival planned for 4 p.m. to 8 p.m. March 16 in the Bernhard Center's East Ballroom.

Admission is free to the event, which will feature 15 WMU international student groups, representing countries on five continents, manning display tables where they'll serve homeland foods for a nominal fee. Native dance performances and fashion shows will be ongoing on the main stage throughout the festival.

The International Festival is a global open house that attracts about 3,000 students and community members each year. It allows participants to "travel" around the world in a single evening while gaining an appreciation for WMU's cultural diversity. WMU's student body includes 1,094 international students representing 87 countries.

"International Festival is a great chance to get out and experience a world of cultures in one place," said Jordan Hochstetler, programming chair of International Festival. "Hundreds of students have worked for months to prepare performances, food, fashion, and displays that showcase the many cultures represented at WMU and in the Kalamazoo community."

The university also supports a wide variety of international student groups. Among those participating in International Festival 2008 are the Muslim
Student Association, Latino Student Alliance, Chinese Student Association, Russian Club and African Students Association.

The International Programs Council and Campus Activities Board organize the festival, which is sponsored by the Haenicke Institute for Global Education, Division of Student Affairs, University Cultural Events Committee, Graduate Student Advisory Committee and the Western Student Association.

For more information, contact Jordan Hochstetler at jordan.w.hochstetler@wmich.edu or at (269) 387-5872. Visit the festival on the Web at: www.wmich.edu/oiss/if

**Participating Student Groups**

African Student Association  
Association of Chinese Students  
Egyptian Student Association  
WMU Hillel  
Indian Student Association  
Japan Club  
Latino Student Alliance  
Malaysian Student Association  
Muslim Student Association  
Saudi Student Association  
Society for Central Asian Studies  
Taiwanese Student Association  
Thai Student Association  
TRIO Student Success Program  
Russian Club
Ugly Sweaters Ice Capades

The WMU International Programs Council hosted its annual Ice Capades event at Lawson Arena on Saturday, Feb. 2. The theme this year was, "Ugly Sweaters," which included a contest to name the ugliest sweater worn by a skater.

The International Programs Council (IPC) meets weekly and includes international and domestic students interested in meeting and experiencing different cultures. IPC’s Ice Capades was voted Best New Event by the campus community in 2001 and has been hosted by IPC every year since.

Ice Capades is a great opportunity for students to meet one another, while experiencing something new for many – ice skating," said Stephen Wood, international programming intern at the Haenicke Institute. "This is the first opportunity for many international students to experience winter activities they would not otherwise have the chance to try at home."

The 2008 Ugly Sweaters Ice Capades attracted more than 200 participants, who skated to music played by a disc jockey. Prizes were awarded to those students selected by judges for wearing the ugliest sweater they could find in their closets. The event was free, with a $1 charge to rent skates.

Here’s what some of the students who participated had to say about the event:

"I liked seeing familiar faces, the relaxed atmosphere and that students from all over the world had a great time together on the ice."

-Peter Schwartz - Germany, Senior, Business Engineering Major
"Somewhere in the ice ring of craziness and ugliness of this year’s Ice Capades, my cold was replaced with all the laughter and fun."
- Mai Nguyen - Vietnam, MBA Marketing

"It was an activity with loads of fun, which I believe was a great experience for everyone, skating with locals and international students. Yes, some had unwanted falls, but it was a very joyful night, a night to be remembered!"
- Wei-Jun Young – Malaysia, Public Relations Major, Senior

"I really enjoyed the Ice Capades, and I’m wondering why IPC doesn’t do it more often – it’s so popular! There were a lot of people, bunch of fun, good music, and some awesome falls, anyway it was a highlight of my week."
- Magda Wisniewska – Poland, Sophomore

"I think IPC Ice Capades was a huge success. I was glad to see so many people there even though some of them couldn’t skate, but they had the guts to try and after all the point was that everybody had fun."
- Jyrki Kauppinen – Finland, Sophomore, Physical Education Major

Bi-cultural upbringing complements study abroad work

Western Michigan University Study Abroad Coordinator Gabriela “Gaby” Peschiera-Carl was issued her first passport well before she was out of diapers to take a trip to her paternal homeland, Peru, when she was just two months old.

Gaby and her husband, Joe, at Machu Picchu

Her parents immigrated to the United States in the late 1970s, but maintained close ties to their ancestral roots through annual trips to Peru to visit family. Born in Kalamazoo, Gaby hasn’t always lived in the area, but she returned to attend Kalamazoo College to earn a bachelor’s in 2003 in psychology, Spanish and Latin American Studies. During her junior year in college, Gaby studied abroad in Valparaiso, Chile, which, she says, “absolutely transformed my life” and sparked her interest in international education.

Gaby stepped into a full-time study abroad coordinator position at the Haenicke Institute in September 2006, following three years of service at the Center for International Programs at Kalamazoo College. Her bi-cultural background and overseas experience made her a near-perfect candidate to become a coordinator and assist college students in gaining a first-hand international perspective by studying abroad.
“I have always considered myself Hispanic,” Gaby said. “Although I never lived in Peru for more than a month at a time, the Latin American culture infused my childhood. One example revolves around meals. My mother would cook with typical ingredients from the Peruvian cuisine, such as aji (Peruvian yellow pepper), cilantro, and manjar blanco (also known as dulce de leche). Dinner was always a family affair; my siblings and I were almost always present at mealtimes, and we could not leave the dinner table until every person seated was finished. Now that I have my own family I try very hard to continue this tradition, as I still believe mealtimes are the most important time in the day to spend with family.”

Gaby remains very connected to her Latin American heritage, as both of her parents have retired to Latin America: her father returned to Peru, and her mother and step-father recently moved to Guadalajara, México. Gaby is now pregnant with her first child, a daughter due in mid-March, who made her first trip to Peru, in utero, in December. Gaby and her husband, Joe, both love to travel overseas and look forward to raising their daughter as a world traveler.

Gaby is currently working on a master’s degree at WMU in socio-cultural studies and educational thought. She said traveling overseas as a child and her Spanish-language skills made her eager to study abroad in college and prompted her decision to seek a career in international education.
“Before I studied abroad, I had no idea what I wanted to do after I graduated from Kalamazoo College,” she said. “Although I have always been interested in the Latin American culture, I did not realize the extent of my interest until I studied in Chile. The food, music, and people were all fascinating to me, and I found that I wanted to see other students experience this same fascination with another culture. Studying abroad is like a roller coaster ride; the students’ emotions range from anticipation/excitement to fear/nervousness throughout the entire process. I love to witness the emotional challenges students encounter when abroad, and how much they have grown as individuals upon their return. There is nothing more rewarding in this job than seeing a student who has returned to campus and hearing their life-changing stories.”

For more information about the more than 60 study abroad programs offered by WMU through the Haenicke Institute, visit the Study Abroad Web site at: www.wmich.edu/studyabroad

**CELCIS veteran named interim director**

Studying foreign languages, cooking ethnic foods, and traveling abroad are just a few of the personal interests of Joel Boyd, Jr., who was recently named interim director of Western Michigan University’s Career English Language Center for International Students.

Boyd is a veteran of the CELCIS program, having notched a dozen years of teaching English as a Second Language at WMU. He replaces Robert Dlouhy, who has returned to the CELCIS faculty as a master faculty specialist.

The CELCIS office provides English training for international students who need to increase their English language reading and writing skills to enter a university degree program.
“My job is to make sure we offer the highest quality program possible,” Boyd said. “I work closely with all faculty and monitor the students’ progress to ensure they are advancing in their skills. As a language specialist, I find the most rewarding aspect of teaching English to speakers of other languages is when I see the sparkle of understanding in their eyes as they acquire new features of English.”

Boyd has a wide range of interests in linguistics, though he said working with grammar and pronunciation are preference areas in which he has extensive experience.

“In addition, I am interested in sociolinguistics, including dialects and African-American Vernacular English,” he said. “Foreign languages intrigue me and I have studied French, German, Spanish and Chinese. I have also picked up a few words of Italian, Japanese, Malay and Thai during my travels.”

When asked what he is most passionate about in his personal life, Boyd admits he’s most interested in the arts—a passion he can easily satisfy in Kalamazoo.

“Kalamazoo is such a wonderful place for the arts,” he said. “I appreciate dance, opera, plays, painting, sculpture, musicals and other forms of visual and performance arts. I like to travel and learn about new cultures. I also love to cook interesting food.”

For more information about WMU’s CELCIS program, call (269) 387-4800, or visit the CELCIS Web site at: http://international.wmich.edu/content/section/8/246/
**Winter fun in West Michigan**

If you're from the tropics, yet pine for the chance to sled down a snow-covered hill or ice skate on an outdoor rink, Kalamazoo and neighboring Portage offer these winter sports at no-cost or low-cost parks and venues.

Experiencing Michigan's snowy winters is a big draw for international students and some of the area's best sledding hills are on or within a mile or so of WMU's campus. Your equipment need not be fancy; Area stores sell plastic sleds for less than $10 and a winter jacket, boots, a hat and gloves are the only additional equipment required. Students also slide on large sheets of plastic and cardboard.

One of the most popular free, close-to-campus sledding hills is behind Woods Lake Elementary School at 3215 Oakland Drive. Markin Glen Park, north of campus, is a county park that has good sledding hills and charges just $5 per carload for entry.

Tobogganing is one of the most exciting winter sports, and Echo Valley Winter Sports Park in Kalamazoo is the place to go for the best. Toboggans are free, and the eight toboggan runs provide thrills with speeds up to 60 miles per hour. Inner-tubing hills appeal to a different type of adventurer. The 43,000-square-foot outdoor ice skating rink is a favorite of many.

Millennium Park in Portage, a few miles of south of campus accessible by public bus, is the home of an outdoor refrigerated ice rink that provides good ice for skaters’ enjoyment. Open skating, skate rentals and introductory skating classes draw many each season.
Evaluation alumnae wins AEA Guttentag Award

Congratulations to Dr. Liliana Rodriguez, WMU alumnae of evaluation, measurement and research and board president of the American Evaluation Association, for receiving the AEA Marcia Guttentag Award. The award is presented to a promising new evaluator during the first five years after completion of his or her master's or doctoral degree and whose work is consistent with the AEA Guiding Principles for Evaluators.

"It is an honor to be recognized by as prestigious an organization as the American Evaluation Association for my accomplishments in the field," said Rodriguez, who earned her Ph.D. at WMU in 2002. "I came away from the experience with a heightened sense of purpose and dedication to my colleagues and my students."

Rodriguez, a native Venezuelan, is now a faculty member in the Department of Educational Measurement and Research at the University of South Florida. She is the author of the book Collaborative Evaluations: A Step-by-Step Model for the Evaluator, and her work history includes evaluations/metaevaluations in multi-national corporations and capacity-building projects in Latin America, the Philippines, and the United States.

A member of several professional associations, Rodriguez currently serves as the board of directors' chair at the Evaluation Capacity Development Group and as the program chair of the Collaboration, Participatory, and Empowerment Evaluation Topical Interest Group at the American Evaluation Association.

Rodriguez’s expertise with leadership, metaevaluation, multi-cultural and collaborative evaluation capacity building, project management, organizational engineering, and training have been noted by her mentors and colleagues as her strongest professional contributions.

WMU's Interdisciplinary Ph.D. in Evaluation program (IDPE) has been named as one of the top ten doctoral programs in Educational Evaluation and Research, according to the Academic Analytics Faculty Scholarly Productivity (FSP) Index, which includes faculty productivity factors such as publications (book and journal articles), citations to publications, research funding, and awards and honors.

Additional evaluation-related news and events can be found on The Evaluation Center's Web site.