Gov. Snyder praises WMU’s Seita program

In his Jan. 18 State of the State address, Michigan Gov. Rick Snyder singled out WMU’s Seita Scholars program for praise, triggering a round of applause in the Michigan House chamber at the state Capitol.

“I want to give special recognition to WMU, which is already providing support for 141 young adults in this age group through the Seita Scholars Program,” Snyder said.

Snyder tied his praise to recent moves to extend state support to age 21 for students who have aged out of the foster care system. He signed such a bill late last fall, and one of WMU’s Seita Scholars was invited to speak at that ceremony.

The University’s Foster Care Youth in Higher Education initiative, or Seita Scholars program as it’s commonly called, has become the largest and most comprehensive program of its kind in the nation. The program was founded in fall 2008. Yvonne Unrau, social work, has been serving as director of the program since then, but William C. “Chris” Harris replaced Unrau effective Jan. 6 after a nationwide search.

The program focuses on young people who have aged out of foster care and need the kind of support that families usually provide to be successful in college. It receives support from foundations, individuals and a variety of private sources.

Participants are called Seita Scholars in honor of alumnus John Seita, a former foster care youth who is now a leading U.S. advocate for foster care children. They receive full-tuition scholarships, a year-round campus home, and intense personal and academic support. This year, 141 students are part of the program, and some of the first freshmen who started with the program in 2008 will graduate.

Unrau has taken on the new role of creating a Center for Foster Youth and Higher Education. An information session was held Jan. 25 at the President’s Dining Room of the Bernhard Center. Guest speakers included four Seita Scholars as well as WMU’s immigration attorney from Miller Johnson Attorneys.

The center will work to strengthen sustainability-related research and teaching.

Still time to take sustainability survey

The faculty-only survey to help identify and prioritize support structures faculty members believe are necessary to foster the integration of sustainability across the academic enterprise may be taken until 5 p.m. Tuesday, Jan. 31. The survey also is intended to stimulate and support the creation of a universitywide learning community around sustainability-related research and teaching.

Event slated for international students

International students interested in learning more about U.S. employment regulations may attend an information session from noon to 2:30 p.m. Friday, Feb. 3, in the President’s Dining Room of the Bernhard Center. Guest speakers include an immigration attorney from Miller Johnson Attorneys and Counselors as well as WMU’s immigration officer and employer relations manager. RSVP by Feb. 2 by calling (269) 387-2745.

Trustees OK center, program changes

The WMU Board of Trustees Dec. 8 approved a center to further educational leadership and policy initiatives. The Center for Educational Leadership and Policy, set to officially open July 1, will be housed in the Drill Field Apartment Complex. The center is designed to strengthen the university’s reputation for providing leadership education and scholarship in the nation. The program in 2008 will graduate.

To address changes to the university’s residential college system, Trustees also signed off on the creation of a Center for Foster Youth and Higher Education.

Town hall meeting to focus on East Campus redevelopment

A campus town hall meeting to discuss the status of efforts aimed at redeveloping East Campus has been set for 9 to 10 a.m. Wednesday, Feb. 1, in the west lobby of Walwood Hall.

The public meeting is being organized by WMU’s Office of Community Outreach and the Western Student Association in coordination with Students for East Campus.

On hand to provide the latest information on the redevelopment effort will be Randy Doran, senior vice president at KDC Real Estate Development and Investments, which is the University’s private-sector development partner; Jan Van Der Kley, WMU vice president for business and finance; and Bob Miller, WMU associate vice president for community outreach.

During a speech in September, Miller announced the selection of KDC following a process that attracted proposals from firms around the nation. While no firm plans for the 35-acre site and five buildings were announced at that time, a number of possibilities for the adaptive reuse of the property were outlined. They included a boutique hotel, conference center, apartments, condos, offices, parking and a health center. During the announcement, early 2012 was identified as a possible timeframe for revealing more detailed information.

Cooley named interim education dean, academic searches launched

Van E. Cooley, chair of educational leadership, research and technology since 2006, will lead the College of Education and Human Development for the next year, while a national search is launched to find a new dean.

In addition, WMU will launch a national search in the coming weeks for an associate provost to guide the Haenicke Institute for Global Education. The person selected for that newly created position will replace Donald McCloud, dean of the Haenicke Institute, who is finishing his five-year appointment in that position.

Cooley’s appointment, made pending approval of the WMU Board of Trustees, is effective Jan. 1. He will guide the college while the University searches for a new dean to replace John Wheeler, who resigned last fall to accept a new position at East Tennessee State University. In addition, Katharine E. Cummings, associate dean of the college who had previously announced her return to the faculty, has agreed to stay on for another year in her current post.
Some 175 employers expected at 2012 Career Fair

Preparation events will begin soon for WMU’s 34th annual Career Fair, set for 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 16, in the Bernhard Center Ballroom.

Organized by the University’s Career and Student Employment Services, the event is expected to attract some 175 employers and 3,000 job seekers. Although open to the public, it is tailored to WMU students and alumni. Visit www.wmich.edu/career and click Calendar for a full list of employers.

Employers are recruiting for interns and college graduates. Some may conduct first-round interviews with selected candidates Friday, Feb. 17. Many employers will ask qualified candidates to complete an online employment application in lieu of submitting a paper resume.

Prior to the Career Fair, WMU students may visit www.wmich.edu/career to access various preparation events and services, including:

- Every day—Resume critiquing (a schedule is posted under Spring Advising Schedule).
- Feb. 3—Workshop on U.S. Employment Regulations for International Students.
- Feb. 10—Practice Interview Day (advance sign-up and BroncoJOBS account required; login to your BroncoJOBS account, then click on Practice Interview Day under One-Click Searches to sign up for an interview time slot).

Reception

Bruce Haigh, history, will be honoured for his more than 41 years of service during a retirement reception from 4 to 6 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 2, in the Oaklands. Visit www.wmich.edu/history to share a reminiscence.

Jobs

Current job opportunities at WMU are announced daily on the Human Resources Web site at www.wmich.edu/hr/careers-at-wmu.html. Please note that applications must be submitted online by the stated deadline. Complete application procedures are included with each posting.
Late-night bus service tested

A student-government initiative is allowing WMU students to “test drive” late-night bus service between the main campus and several Kalamazoo community locations. Late night service on four Metro Transit community routes began Jan. 9 and will run Monday through Thursday each week through March 1 to determine if there is sufficient student ridership to continue.

Rides on the four lines will cost $1.50 in exact change after 10 p.m. The lines will dramatically extend the hours students can use the bus service to travel back and forth between campus and off-campus sites.

The four routes with expanded hours and the times of their last arrivals on campus are:

- West Michigan #3 Route, 12:55 a.m.
- Lovell Street #16 Route, 11:57 p.m.
- Solon/Kendall #21 Route, 12:30 a.m.
- Lafayette Street #22 Route, 12:12 a.m.

The expanded hours are for Metro Transit lines only and do not include Bronco Transit routes. Visit www.broncotransit.com/late-night for complete schedules.

University trustees approve retirements of five faculty, 11 staff members

The retirements of five faculty members and 11 staff members were approved by the WMU Board of Trustees at its Dec. 8 meeting. Trustees also signed off on four resignations, one promotion and two changes in departmental affiliations for faculty members.

All of the retiring faculty members have been granted emeritus status. Their names, positions, years of continuous service and effective dates of retirement are:

- Thomas C. Bailey (change in retirement date only), English, 41 years, effective Dec. 31, 2011; Suzanne Hedstrom (change in retirement date only), counselor education and counseling psychology, 23 years, effective June 30; Charles E. Hines Jr. (change in retirement date only), accountancy, 35 years, effective Aug. 31; Elizabeth A. Hoger, business information systems, 23 years, effective April 30, 2017; and John F. Nielsen, social work, 16 years, effective Dec. 31.

The retiring staff members are: Barbara J. Alexander, teacher certification, 11 years, effective Oct. 15, 2011; John M. Barney, maintenance services, 23 years, effective Sept. 30, 2011; Mary J. Deverynay, Unified Clinics, 14 years, effective Dec. 31, 2011; James B. Dexheimer, University Libraries, 19 years, effective Dec. 12, 2011; Pamela J. Emery, University Libraries, 19 years, effective Dec. 12, 2011; and Elaine L. Phillips, from family and consumer sciences to physician assistant education, 23 years, effective Nov. 4, 2011; and John J. Wheeler, dean of the College of Education and Human Development, effective Dec. 31, 2011.

The promoted staff member is: Stacey R. Fitzsimmons, to assistant director and holistic health, effective Dec. 26, 2011.

The resigning faculty members are: Allison L. Baer, special education and literacy studies, effective Dec. 31, 2011; Daniel W. Briggs, mathematics, effective Dec. 31, 2011; James L. Schulte, WMU-Grand Rapids, 17 years, effective Jan. 3; J. Daniel Short, building support and custodial services, 15 years, effective Dec. 11, 2011; and Alicia J. Yeagley, College of Arts and Sciences, 33 years, effective Dec. 31, 2011.

The promoting staff member is: Stacey R. Fitzsimmons, to assistant professor of management, effective Aug. 22, 2011. The changes in department affiliation are: Mariam K. Deme, from Africana studies to management, effective Nov. 4, 2011; and John J. Wheeler, dean of the College of Education and Human Development, effective Dec. 31, 2011.

The partnership between WMU and GSU has been working with Georgia State since the inception of a center there, but the initiative will now become a collaboration between the two schools. Some 6.5 million children live in homes maintained by grandparents and relatives other than parents, and this number is increasing.

The retirement of William A. Fochtman is a logical collaboration that will combine strengths inherent in programs developed by each university. WMU’s Second Time Around program has a strong footing in curriculum planning and assessment, and has developed resources to serve custodial grandparents, the children in their care, and professionals working with these family members. GSU’s Project Healthy Grandparents has focused on physical and mental health of grandparent caregivers.

Who’s Who nominations sought

Faculty and staff members are invited to nominate deserving students for inclusion in Who’s Who Among Students in American Universities and Colleges.

Nominations are being accepted through Friday, Feb. 10. Visit www.rso.wmich.edu to obtain a nomination form.

New center offers grandparents support

WMU and Georgia State University are collaborating partners in a new center that focuses on informing professionals, decision makers and the general public about the unique challenges, needs and strengths of many custodial grandparent families.

During their Dec. 8 meeting, University trustees approved creation of the center, which will be housed in the College of Education and Human Development. Directors include Linda Dannison, WMU chair of family and consumer sciences; Andrea Smith, WMU professor of teaching, learning and educational studies; and Deborah Whaley, GSU associate professor of social work.

Originally established by GSU in 2001, the National Research Center for Grandparents Raising Grandchildren promotes best practices in the kinship care field by linking researchers and field-based professionals.

Obituaries

More complete obituaries are available for these WMU employees by visiting www.wmich.edu/news and clicking Obituaries.

James B. Dexheimer, of Kalamazoo, died at home Jan. 2. He was 60. Dexheimer joined the WMU staff in 1986 and retired in 1998 as a hall custodian. Obituaries may be made to the Baptist Church of Kalamazoo at a later date. Keep visiting www.dutcherfh.com.

Franklin G. “Greg” Fisk, emeritus in science studies, died Dec. 28. He was 80. Fisk joined the faculty in 1969 and taught half-time in the School of General Studies and half-time in the College of Education. He retired in 1997 as a professor after 28 years of service to WMU.

A memorial service will be held in the First Baptist Church of Kalamazoo at a later date. Visit www.avinkcremation.com to make a memorial guestbook entry. Donations may be made to the Greg Fisk Music Fund.

John A. Fochtman died Dec. 13 at his home in Petoskey, Mich. He was 74. Fochtman, a physician, joined the St. Simons Health Center staff in 1978 and retired in 1992 after 14 years of service to WMU.

Visit www.stonefuneralhomeinc.com to make a memorial guestbook entry. Donations may be made to the Friendship Center in Petoskey.

Sally L. Stickan died Dec. 7. She was 79. Stickan, of Portage, Mich., joined the staff in 1986 and retired in 1998 as a hall assignment clerk in residence life after 12 years of service to WMU.

A memorial service will be held in the Dutcher-Kolcz Funeral Home in Bronson, Mich., at a later date. Keep visiting www.winkelfuneralhome.com to make a memorial guestbook entry. Donations may be made to the American Cancer Society, Disabled Veterans of America, hospice or any other organization of choice.

Loulou M. Stratton died Dec. 31 in Kalamazoo. She was 88. Stratton joined the staff in 1961 and retired in 1984 as a secretary in Dining Services after more than 20 years of service to WMU.

Visit www.winkelfuneralhome.com to make a memorial guestbook entry. Donations may be made to the American Heart Association, the Kalamazoo Nature Center or the Northwest United Methodist Church.
Semiannual staff award nominations due Feb. 28

Nominations for the spring round of WMU’s semiannual Make a Difference awards are due by Tuesday, Feb. 28.

Make a Difference is a campuswide peer-to-peer program that recognizes WMU staff for their accomplishments and daily investment of energy and creativity. It features semiannual and annual awards available to Staff Compensation System, AFSCME, MSEA and POA employees who provide exceptional services to the University.

Every fall and spring, semiannual awards are presented to a maximum of 15 people. Those selected for the accolade receive a before-tax prize of $300 and a certificate; are recognized at a special reception; and may be nominated for one of four annual Make a Difference awards that includes a before-tax prize of $1,200.

Semiannual award recipients may win multiple times, but are limited to one semiannual award per academic year. Visit www.wmich.edu/hr/make-a-difference for nomination instructions and forms.

Gov. Snyder praises Seita Scholars program

Education Studies at WMU and implementing teaching and research initiatives that will complement the Seita Scholars effort.

The teaching component will begin with a new three-year, $1 million project funded largely by the Kresge Foundation that will allow WMU to build a consortium of Michigan colleges and universities and support organizations to promote higher education opportunities for foster youth.

The statewide effort will reach out to foster youth beginning at age 12 and include a youth-friendly website that provides college resources for those currently in foster care.

Harris is ideally suited to lead the Seita Scholars program and brings a unique blend of qualities and personal experiences to the director’s post.

He has worked with Vanguard, Fitzer and most recently Stryker Medical, where he was a senior project manager. He also had a highly successful nine-year stint in the U.S. Air Force, including two years in the Air Force Academy’s admissions office.

Harris grew up without his biological father, was sexually abused during his formative years and entered a state-run independent living program at age 16. Persevering, he went on to earn a bachelor’s and master’s degree.

He has raised two children from foster care and is currently raising two more. Harris has been actively involved in WMU’s foster youth program since its inception as a career mentor, is a board member for the Boys & Girls Club of Greater Kalamazoo, and has served as a volunteer for a foster-youth support program at Michigan State University.

Dozens of local internships up for grabs starting in April

Students have a chance to earn a minimum of $8,000 in wages, scholarship funds and other compensation by participating in the Monroe-Brown Internship Program.

The program provides career experience for certain full-time college students at several Michigan schools, as well as funding support for their studies. Some 43 positions are available at 33 Kalamazoo-area companies.

The deadline to apply for an internship is March 15. Each participating company chooses their interns using their own hiring methods and criteria.

Lynn Kelly-Albertson, executive director of WMU’s Career and Student Employment Services, notes that all of this year’s internships are posted online on WMU’s BroncoJOBS website.

“But what we really want students to know is that they can come to our office and have their resumes reviewed before they apply for a Monroe-Brown internship,” Kelly-Albertson says. “These positions are highly competitive. The better the resume, the better the chance of landing an interview and an internship.”

For more information or to apply for an internship, visit BroncoJOBS at www.wmich.edu/career or visit the internship website at www.southwestmichiganfirst.com and select Monroe-Brown Internship Program under the Talent tab.