WMU International News Fall 2013

Haenicke Institute

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Focus on the

Western Michigan University
College of Arts and Sciences

WMU International News
The Diether H. Haenicke Institute for Global Education

Fall 2013 Issue

global engagement
community participation
sustainability
integrity
creativity and innovation
diversity
excellence
social responsibility
Dear Friends:

Welcome to the fall 2013 issue of WMU International News. With a few weeks behind me serving as Associate Provost of the Haenicke Institute for Global Education at Western Michigan University, I am still learning each day about new facets of the University’s global engagement efforts. Much of this important work is conceived and facilitated by WMU’s nine colleges. In this issue, we have focused on the broad range of international activity that comes out of the College of Arts and Sciences.

With over 5,000 undergraduate majors, more than 1,000 graduate students, and 26 departments or schools to choose from, the College of Arts and Sciences is the largest of WMU’s colleges and provides the backbone of our global engagement. College faculty are engaged in research across the globe and lead 13 of the University’s 25 short-term study abroad programs. Through its World Languages and Literatures and Spanish departments, the college supports language study for the entire campus. In other words, the college is a critical driver of internationalization at Western.

This issue of WMU International News features some of the College of Arts and Sciences faculty, staff and students who help fulfill this role. Read about Dr. Ann Miles, a sociology professor who conducts research on transnational migration and lupus in Ecuador; alumna Dr. Tugba Basaran, a lecturer in international relations at the Brussels School of International Studies; WMU’s Spanish language study abroad program for employees; Yuriko Ono, a star tennis player from Japan, and much more.

We appreciate your interest in Western Michigan University and welcome your comments about WMU International News.

Please write us at: wmu-international@wmich.edu

Best regards,
Wolfgang Schlör
Associate Provost
Diether H. Haenicke Institute for Global Education

We would love to hear about noteworthy accomplishments from our extremely talented WMU students, alumni and friends:

Share Your Story
Empowering global engagement across the arts and sciences

Employees abroad: Spanish immersion program expands understanding of international education

Excelling in public relations key goal for Chinese twinning student

WMU cultural anthropologist examines migration and lupus in Ecuador

Ambiguity of borders continues to intrigue alumna from Berlin

Visits to 35 countries complements global studies major

Veteran administrator tapped to lead University's international initiatives

Future Iraqi engineer discovers the world at WMU

WMU alumna coach points Japanese tennis player to Kalamazoo
When work got underway in 2011 on a new strategic plan for Western Michigan University’s College of Arts and Sciences it became apparent quite early that efforts to increase global engagement of the college’s faculty and students were well established and growing.

By far the largest college at the University, CAS serves thousands of students in majors across the entire campus, generates over half of WMU’s annual credit hours, and delivers the overwhelming majority of the general education curriculum; the college’s some 6,000 graduate and undergraduate student majors are enrolled in the 26 departments and schools that comprise it.

Dr. Alexander Enyedi has served as dean since July 2010 and led strategic planning efforts to align the college’s plan with the University’s Pillars of Excellence: Learner Centered, Discovery Driven and Globally Engaged.

“The college has always been globally engaged and is proud to be a leader across campus for internationalization,” said Enyedi, a WMU faculty member since 1993 in the Department of Biological Sciences. “What I discovered while working on areas of responsibilities for the college’s three associate deans is that there was a natural alignment to have each position support one of the strategic plan’s three pillars. We consider it a fundamental responsibility to help our students become globally engaged, which is why we work so hard to encourage them to travel and study abroad. This approach dovetails with the liberal arts core—it is a natural connection to our increased efforts to promote study abroad.”

In addition, CAS is committed to the internationalization of the curriculum for students on campus, including an emphasis on hiring globally-engaged faculty, and sponsoring webinars and panels on the subject. The college recognizes that while study abroad is critical, and often life-changing for those who participate, true internationalization requires a cultural transformation of the entire institution.

“We don’t just want to send students, faculty and staff abroad,” Enyedi said. “We want them to have a globally engaged experience right here as well.”

Enyedi, a native of Canada, has a first-hand understanding of the study abroad experience. After completing his bachelor’s and master’s degrees at Canada’s University of Guelph in 1981 and 1985, he moved to the United States and earned a doctoral degree from Pennsylvania State University in 1991.

“One of my earliest initiatives as dean was establishing a Dean’s Excellence Fund,” he said. “It supports an International Study Award to help qualified undergraduates include a global experience in their degree program.”

The awards may be used to study for a semester, an academic year, or in one of the college’s 11 short-term, faculty-led CAS summer programs (see list on next page). In 2012, the college received a donation to fund 26 scholarships of $1,000 each.

Upon completion of the study abroad program, students are required to submit a report about their experience. "I’ve received very powerful statements from students that reinforce the benefits of helping our students increase their global engagement in this way," said Enyedi.

Dr. Cathryn Bailey was appointed associate dean of CAS in 2011 and has been charged with overseeing and supporting the college’s global engagement efforts. She works closely with the college’s recently reinvigorated international committee, which includes 11 CAS faculty. The committee evaluates CAS programming related to global engagement, establishes the policy around scholarships, reviews applications, and advises the dean about other matters.

In light of the key role faculty and staff play in supporting international students at WMU and the intrinsic benefits of studying abroad, an employee study abroad program was launched several years ago, “Spanish Language and Culture Experience for WMU Employees.” The program is a collaborative effort between the College of Arts and Sciences’ Department of Spanish, the International Education Council of the Faculty Senate and the Diether H. Haenicke Institute for Global Education. For the 2013 session, travel grants were awarded to 11 faculty and staff members.
A recently renovated CAS conference room with an international theme featuring photos of college faculty and students engaged in overseas learning and research is now in heavy use. The room also serves as the site for gatherings at which faculty focused on particular global regions from various disciplines across WMU can meet to foster new collaborations and partnerships.

“We are taking a leadership role on campus to recognize our internationally engaged faculty by making concerted efforts to bring together faculty conducting research in the same country or region,” Enyedi said. “These scholars represent many disciplines and are not always familiar with each other’s work. For our first two region-specific gatherings, we invited faculty working in China and Latin America. That sends a real clear message that the college supports global engagement.”

www.wmich.edu/arts-sciences

## College of Arts and Sciences faculty-led, short-term study abroad programs

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### Semester-long programs

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Employees abroad: Spanish immersion program expands understanding of international education

How does Western Michigan University help its faculty and staff understand the benefits and concerns of studying abroad? One way is by sending a group every summer to study Spanish in a short-term, faculty-led program.

In collaboration with WMU’s Department of Spanish, the College of Arts and Sciences and the International Education Council of the Faculty Senate, several years ago the Diether H. Haenicke Institute for Global Education established an international professional development workshop that has been offered in Mexico and in Spain, the “Spanish Language and Culture Experience for WMU Employees.” More than 40 employees have participated since the program was launched.

For the 2013 session held July 5 to 21, 2013, travel grants were awarded to 11 faculty and staff representing departments and offices across campus to receive 30 hours of instruction on Spanish language and culture at the University of Cantabria, located in the beautiful coastal city of Santander, Spain. In addition to the classroom instruction, participants went on cultural excursions designed to provide exposure to the deep historical journey that has helped Spain evolve into the diverse and rich country that exists today.

Participant Lauren Carney signed up for what would be her second trip to Spain; she visited for the first time as a student five years ago. She said the opportunity helped everyone on the trip to become more “bold and daring” in their work and better able to advise students about the great benefits of adding an overseas experience to their degree program.

“We bring back globally inspired ideas to the table that help the University to connect to the rest of the world,” said Carney, office associate in the College of Arts and Sciences. “Global engagement is contagious and continuous. My second visit to Spain showed me that the world is always changing—always inspiring new and innovative ways of approaching everyday life, and presenting new and innovative ways of understanding yourself and the world around you. When we return from an experience like this, the change doesn’t stay contained. It affects the people we live with, work with, or even see in passing, sometimes inspiring others to step outside the safety of the familiar and embark on a cultural experience of their own.”

The WMU employee group attended Spanish language classes from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. four days each week, and then traveled around Santander for cultural lessons in the evening and on weekends. Excursions included trips to Parliament, the Cabo Mayor Lighthouse, the Prehistory and Archaeology Museum of Cantabria, the Palacio de Magdelena and the Cathedral of Santander.

The group was also able to travel and interact with WMU undergraduate students majoring in Spanish who were studying abroad for the summer semester at the University of Cantabria. The combined WMU group traveled together to Potes-Picos de Europa, Santillana del Mar, the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao and the Burgos Cathedral.

The program’s faculty director is Dr. Mercedes Tasende, recipient of the College of Arts and Sciences 2012-2013 Global Engagement Achievement Award. In addition to leading the program, Tasende broadened her involvement by launching a research project on outcomes titled, “Moving Beyond Rhetoric: Internationalization Initiatives for Staff and Faculty.”

“After spending time with the faculty and staff who participated in the program, I am convinced that this two-week experience abroad has been a turning point in their lives,” Tasende said. “Their horizons have broadened, their vision of the world has changed, and they are now more engaged
than ever in the internationalization mission of the University. This program is, without a doubt, a great investment of energy and resources, as well as a step in the right direction towards the internationalization of the entire WMU campus.”

Joetta Carr, a professor in WMU’s gender and women’s studies program, was a second-time participant—she studied in Querétaro, Mexico on the 2009 employee program. She said both experiences have taught her to more fully enjoy life by being present in the moment.

“Traveling to Spain last summer gave me the opportunity to experience a rich and textured culture where antiquity and modernity co-exist,” Carr said. “To experience the beauty of the sea and the mountains, the vineyards and the countryside, the world-class museums and cuisine was spectacular. Our professor at the University of Cantabria was vibrant and created an exciting learning environment.”

Myla Edmond, the college’s marketing and communications director, has traveled abroad, but had never been to Spain. She said the employee program has enhanced her ability to promote the benefits of studying abroad to students, alumni and the community.

“I developed connections with WMU faculty and staff members whom I typically don’t work with, and that has proven to be beneficial,” Edmond said. “I have also been able to fulfill a goal of incorporating language into my travels to expand my understanding of culture immersion. Having to depend on the Spanish I learned in the classroom in real scenarios for two weeks allowed me to extend my comfort zone and increase confidence in my ability to communicate.”

The 2013 employee abroad group also included Patricia Burgwald, University Libraries; Charlotte Giscombe, Center for Academic Success Programs; Nancy Hock, Occupational Therapy; Peggy Miller, Human Resources; Joan Morin, University Libraries; Bruce Naftel, Gwen Frostic School of Art; Cris Obreiter, Department of Military Science and Leadership; and Linda Reeser, School of Social Work. The 2014 session of the Spanish Language and Culture Experience for WMU Employees will be held July 11 to 27 in Santander, Spain, at the Universidad de Cantabria.

www.wmich.edu/studyabroad
Dr. Mercedes Tasende, faculty director of the WMU Spanish Language and Culture Experience for WMU Employees program is examining the impact and outcomes of employee participation in this program.

This study intends to measure the intercultural competence and the foreign language competence of the participants before leaving for Spain, and approximately 10 months after returning.

While student mobility has long been the major focus of interest in the internationalization efforts of most higher learning institutions, one of the most important aspects of internationalization concerns the mobility of faculty and staff. Since faculty and staff play crucial roles in the process of comprehensive internationalization, an institution cannot internationalize without their active participation.

The Spanish Language and Culture Experience for WMU Employees program represents a successful initiative and, as such, it provides a model for other institutions that are involved in the internationalization process. The potential benefits from this research are numerous:

- It will measure the progress in the intercultural sensitivity and competence of the participants before and after they participate in the program.
- It may provide a better understanding of the impact and validity of small-scale initiatives, such as the “Spanish Language and Culture Experience for WMU Employees,” in the internationalization process of higher learning institutions.
- Conclusions from this research could lead to improvements in the methods used for teaching intercultural aspects.
- Results can show how to further develop one’s intercultural competence.

Tasende’s co-collaborator for this research project is Brett Berquist, executive director, Office of Study Abroad, Michigan State University.
Yanli Cui is determined to be widely successful in public relations and has traveled far to achieve that goal—from Liu Jia Xia, China, to Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, to Kalamazoo, Michigan—to study in Western Michigan University’s School of Communication.

Cui transferred to WMU in August 2013 to complete a four-year degree program she began two years ago at Sunway University in Kuala Lumpur through a unique “twinning” partnership with Western Michigan University launched in 1987, the American Degree Transfer Program. WMU offers twinning, or transnational education programs as they are also known, through six overseas partnerships. Twinning students take the first two years of their course work for selected WMU degrees in their home countries, and then transfer to WMU to complete their junior and senior years. Graduates of the Sunway/WMU twinning program are awarded degrees from both institutions.

“I want to be an excellent public relations professional—it’s my dream,” Cui said. “I am here to better myself and I plan to participate in a lot of professional and cultural activities.”

Cui is enrolled for 13 credit hours for the fall semester and says she loves her classes and living on campus in Fox Hall. She has made use of various campus resources in an effort to successfully transition into her junior year of studies as easily as possible. She said she has found the library and computer labs to be particularly great resources.

Cui grew up in the small town of Liu Jia Xia in China. She chose to complete her college studies in Malaysia and America to experience a way of life that greatly differed from the one she has always known.

“I chose to come to America because of the chance to live in a very different culture,” she said. “The differences are especially apparent in the educational setting. Academia in America is much more serious than it is in Malaysia. American students are more open with their thoughts in the classroom. Instead of focusing on the group mindset, students in the United States value individualism and personal achievement. There is more discussion and creative freedom in the classroom here.”

The comprehensive orientation Cui received through WMU’s International Student Orientation and Registration Program before classes started in early September was very beneficial in helping her adjust to life in a new country. The program covers all the basic student information, as well as provides an introduction to local culture and the region surrounding Kalamazoo. Cui said she especially enjoys the overall friendly atmosphere she encounters daily on campus.

“I like that absolute strangers will greet one another in passing, whereas in Asia culture it isn’t very often that two people who are not familiar with one another will speak directly to each other,” she said. “The university looks gorgeous under the blue sky with fluffy clouds, and the students are bursting with energy. The short time I have been here has not been enough for me to find out all the unique things about Kalamazoo, but I believe there are many special things out there for me to discover and explore. Being here makes me view the world with a sense of gratitude.”

The quest for self-improvement that has drawn Cui to WMU will no doubt someday give her an advantage in the work force. She plans to return to China after graduation, where she says there are many opportunities for graduates of media, public relations and communication programs. Cui is very enthused about utilizing the knowledge and skills she has gained at Sunway and WMU with her dual-degree in hand. “I plan to work for a while and then consider going back to school for a master’s degree,” she said.

Staying in touch with family, whom she misses greatly, is fairly easy for Cui via the telephone and by video chats online and she is confident that studying abroad will help her chart a path to explore the world on her own that will lead to a successful career.

“I’m sure my stop at WMU is the beginning of an incredible, lifelong journey,” she said.
Touching saltwater marks at the waterline of a cargo ship in Lake Michigan when she was just nine years old planted the question in the mind of Dr. Ann Miles: Where has this ship been?

“I went to work one morning with my father, a marine surveyor at the Port of Chicago,” said Miles, a professor in Western Michigan University’s Department of Sociology. “He boarded the ships right before they were set to sail and inspected the cargo. I remember climbing up the gangway, which was made of rope—it was a well-made rope, but you had to hang on. It was an Italian ship, and I remember seeing on the hull of the ship these salt marks, then putting my hand on the salt marks and wondering: Where has this ship been? At that moment, I realized that there was a lot more about the world I wanted to explore.”

For nearly 20 years now, Miles has been teaching at WMU and spending summers conducting field research in South America. She works primarily in the southern Ecuadorian highland city of Cuenca. Her first and longest project involves documenting the changing lives of families who first came to the city as rural-to-urban migrants, and who then engaged in transnational migration to the United States. More recently, Miles has developed a second area of focus in conducting an ethnographic investigation of the experiences of urban Ecuadorian women suffering from the chronic illness, lupus. The WMU College of Arts and Sciences recognized her scholarly work in 2012, when Miles received the college’s Gender Scholar Award.

The youthful passion for world travel that was sparked by visiting that Italian cargo ship increased while Miles attended the University of Chicago, where she was inspired in a freshman-year general education class by an African studies professor trained in anthropology. One day, she saw a flier on campus promoting a volunteer program in Africa titled, “Crossroads Africa,” which was a summer volunteer program for American college students to participate in community development projects. Miles’ interest was piqued, but she was concerned that she was too working class and not sophisticated enough to become a world-traveling anthropologist.

“I remember showing the flier to my college roommate, Lindsey, and telling her that I really would love to do this program,” Miles said. “Lindsey replied: ‘So why don’t you do it?’ I said, ‘Well Lindsey, people like me don’t do things like that…it is too exciting…it is too big.’ She looked at me and laughed, and said, ‘Of course you can do it if you want to!’ Simple as that encouragement was, it was really formative. I am still in touch with Lindsey and I thank her all the time for telling me that.”

Miles earned the money for the trip by washing dishes in her dorm cafeteria (the worst job she said she ever had) and she also received a generous donation from the Chamber of Commerce in her hometown of Calumet City, Ill. The volunteer experience in Africa forced her to mature rapidly and dispelled the somewhat ivory tower view of anthropology and culture she had developed in the classroom before she planted her feet on the ground. “When I saw the lived reality of poverty in West Africa, there was a disjuncture there for me, and I couldn’t put those two things, academic anthropology and people’s real lives, together very well,” she said.

After completing a bachelor’s degree in anthropology, Miles pursued opportunities that delivered “hands on” practical experiences. She earned a master’s degree in public health at Columbia University, which enabled her to work in international development. After graduating from Columbia, she
Miles has visited Cuenca, Ecuador, where she did her original dissertation work 14 times since 1994. She has formed very strong bonds with two Cuencan families—one in particular that became the basis for her 2004 book, “From Cuenca to Queens: An Anthropological Story of Transnational Migration.” The book chronicles a young man’s migration to the United States at the age of 19, and the challenges he experienced adjusting to life in a radically different culture.

“That book kind of wrote itself because I had known the family for 12 years,” she said. “They were very comfortable telling me their story. I wanted to write the book because I thought transnational migration had become very political. One of the goals of this book was to show the structural reasons why people leave, and it’s not an easy story: it is a story that dates back to colonialism and that continues today in global inequality and everyday privilege by elites. The idea was to help people understand migration through the perspective of an individual family—through the lived experiences of it. When you go somewhere to have a better life, you leave a tremendous amount of things behind, and that’s not easy to do.”

As she was finishing up that book, the mother of the family she was profiling suddenly became very ill. After months of doctor’s visits and testing, the mother was diagnosed with lupus, an autoimmune disease in which the body’s immune system becomes hyperactive and attacks normal, healthy tissue, resulting in symptoms such as inflammation and damage to joints, skin, kidneys, blood, the heart and lungs.

“The mother had access to cash, but only a third-grade education,” Miles said. “Lupus is a pretty complicated illness to manage, and I began wondering how she was going to make it. The mother’s struggle ultimately led me to my next book, “Living with Lupus: Women and Chronic Illness in Ecuador,” in which I looked at the cultural dynamics of women suffering with lupus to learn how they understand living with a chronic illness in a place where, until recently, people often died from the disease. Today, women with lupus in Ecuador are better able to make this transition to living with a chronic illness—something that might not have been possible from as little as five to ten years ago.”

Miles said survival statistics for lupus victims, even in the United States over the last 20 years, have improved greatly. The lupus research also allowed Miles to get a close look at Ecuador’s health care system.

“In the United States, if you’ve got money and you’ve got good health insurance, you get good health care,” she said. “The same is true in Ecuador, but where the systems differ is that poor Ecuadorians also have access to health care. They can walk into any public clinic or hospital and see a doctor for free, and it’s more than likely that certain tests will be free, and some medications. But the health care system in Ecuador also fails where our health care system fails; it doesn’t do enough for the urban poor, and rural residents, in Ecuador this is often indigenous populations, have little access to care. The public health care system in Ecuador remains challenged and overburdened with too many patients to serve.”

In the classroom, Miles aims to shake things up a bit for her students, spinning off from a quote by the infamous anthropologist, Margaret Mead, who once said, “The job of the anthropologist is to make the familiar strange, and the strange familiar.”

“I strongly believe in critical thinking and in asking hard questions—my mission is to make people want to ask questions about their world and to expand their points of view,” said Miles, recalling a related incident. “Recently, a young student came into my office after one of my classes and said that she had never thought about the world in this way before. I could not have been happier.”
As a resident of Berlin when the wall came down in 1989, Western Michigan University alumna Dr. Tugba Basaran has witnessed the impact of shifting borders and has dedicated her career to fostering international cooperation and development.

Now a lecturer at the University of Kent’s Brussels School of International Studies, Basaran is a regularly invited expert to speak on issues related to security, development and borders. Apart from her academic work, Basaran has 10 years of professional experience in international cooperation and development, and has worked for international organizations, research institutes, and as an international project manager in Latin America, the Caribbean, Southeast Europe and Asia.

Rewind to November 1989 in West Berlin when Basaran was in high school and the Berlin Wall came down. She recalled what the climate was like a few days before the big event. “Nobody really knew what was going on—we were expecting something to happen at that time, but we weren’t expecting the wall to come down,” Basaran said.

“Everybody came to West Berlin (from East Berlin), the streets were filled—it was a huge celebration that lasted for days, though it took a while for what was really happening to sink in. Then, the next morning I went to school and there was a French exam—the teacher didn’t even cancel it.”

In 1991, Basaran enrolled in Freie Universität Berlin, where she would study until earning a master’s degree in 1996. Midway through her degree program, she took a leap and applied for a scholarship exchange program offered by Freie Universität Berlin, which had partnerships with 17 institutions in the United States, including one with WMU.

“WMU was next to Stanford, on the same list; I applied to WMU, got accepted and moved to Kalamazoo in fall 1993,” said Basaran, who majored in political science. “I got lucky, and it was a fantastic opportunity. The professors were highly committed to their craft and reached out to students. The classes I had were very interesting and challenging academically. I was impressed by the commitment of the professors to make us think, but also to motivate us.”

Basaran spent one year studying at WMU and remembers how well the faculty cared for her as a foreigner living in the U.S.; she said that made her feel extremely welcome. “I had multiple invitations from my professors to join their families for Thanksgiving and for Christmas,” she said. “They weren’t just taking care of me in the classroom, but they were also taking care of me outside of the classroom by integrating me into the festive seasons. It was just amazing!”

Though her time at WMU was short, Basaran made a positive impression on her professors, especially Dr. Jim Butterfield, professor and director of graduate studies in...
the Department of Political Science. “Tugba was a very active and lively participant in the seminar she took with me,” said Butterfield, who had Basaran as a student in his variable topics course focused on the themes of nationalism and ethnicity. “Due to her international background, she was very sensitive to issues of identity and difference. I’ve followed her career in the interim and we even met once when we were both in Prague to catch up. We still communicate after all this time and I’m very pleased to see her thrive as a scholar and teacher.”

Basaran returned to Freie Universität Berlin in 1994, and another incredible opportunity presented itself: a chance to serve as an intern at the United Nations in New York. After she completed her master’s degree she worked in micro-finance in El Salvador, Bosnia, Kosovo, Haiti and the Philippines. “I learned a lot about different countries, cultures, situations, how people behave and how economies function,” she said. “In particular, I learned how informal economies in a post-conflict environment support development, which is something that you can’t find easily in text books.”

Sometimes this work involved standing with one foot on each side of a border, as was the case when Basaran helped launch an independent micro-finance bank in the divided city of Mitrovica, catering to both Kosovo Albanians and Kosovo Serbs. It was the only institution in the country that served both sides of the conflict from one location with one united work force. “Doing something like that, you learn a lot about society and how it functions,” said Basaran, who jumped at the chance to assist in the rebuilding of a war-torn region. “Everybody knew there was a conflict so they wouldn’t cross the bridge, but they would come to the bank on top of the bridge. You’re limited in how much you can learn visiting a country as a tourist; things are just not the same unless you actually live in that particular country.”

While working in Kosovo in 2000, Basaran met her husband, David Kruijff, a native of the Netherlands, who was also working in micro finance. She followed up that work by returning to school at the University of Cambridge in the United Kingdom to earn a Ph.D. in international studies, which she achieved in 2008. She was hired shortly thereafter for her current position as an assistant professor at the University of Kent. “It’s nice to be able to share with my students my practical experience, as well as my research,” said Basaran. “I want them to think critically, to question what we take for granted and to find their own position. I have found that the more you learn about different countries and different cultures, the more you get interested, and the more you want to venture out there, explore, and see for yourself.”

In the five years Basaran has been at the University of Kent, she has authored a book, “Security, Law, and Borders” (Routledge 2010) and published various articles. She also organized the European International Studies Association’s Ph.D. summer schools and various workshops. Basaran is the director of postgraduate research (responsible for doctoral students), director of the M.A. in international development and a fellow at university research centers in Brussels and Paris. Additionally, she is a member of the editorial board for the journal, “Cultures & Conflicts.”
Senior, majoring in global and international studies with geographic, economic and Spanish emphasis

**Anticipated graduation:** Summer 2014

**Hometown:** Leland, Michigan. Growing up, Akasha lived each winter in Paia, Maui, where her father and 4 brothers still live.

**What do you enjoy about majoring in global and international studies?**

The global studies major allows me space to breathe. GIS gives me the foundation I need, while allowing me to explore my passions. Encompassing geography and environmental studies, sprinkled with economics and Spanish, the major gives me the tools I need to become a “global citizen.” Something I find unique about this major is that from the very beginning the classes you take serve only to inspire you to pursue the path of greatest interest.

**What are your future goals?**

After a Turks and Caicos study abroad program this spring, my short-term goals are to take a year off, then begin graduate school in 2015. For this gap year, I am looking to gain more experience for my deepest passion—the marine world. I would like to work with an NGO committed to marine conservation and education, particularly in a Third World country. I am open to live anywhere outside the United States. I love countries with spice and a harsh sense of reality, those commonly referred to as LDC’s or least developed countries, namely those in Africa, Asia, and South America.

Afterward, I hope to go to graduate school and study marine conservation and biodiversity management. Eventually I would like to start my own NGO to help educate people living in small island developing states on how to coexist with the amazing environment that surrounds them. I will accomplish this through my own education on sustainable practices. The GIS degree I will earn from WMU will have served as a stepping-stone on my path to better the world. WMU has given me the fundamental tools and has prepared me for graduate school.
How did you spend summer 2013?
I was an intern in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia for three months working for the Institute for Sustainable Development, a small grassroots organization that works towards educating farming communities and schools on sustainable ways in which to live by creating environmentally conscientious, income-generating activities. Halfway through my internship, a fellow intern from Brazil and I traveled by bus from Kenya to Tanzania and then to the island of Zanzibar. After this trip I went back to Ethiopia for the remainder of my internship.

After Ethiopia, I traveled to Istanbul for two weeks, where I met my best friend, Sara O’Leary, a nursing student at WMU. I then traveled to Argentina for six weeks for an intensive Spanish course at the University of Belgrano. Now I am back at WMU working on my capstone GIS course until I study abroad in Turks and Caicos in spring 2014.” I am especially excited for this opportunity because I do not have an extensive biology background and this course will further improve these skills. Typical days include: surveying sites (scuba diving), reef monitoring, coral bleaching assessments and much more.

When did you become interested in traveling?
I grew up in a family where traveling was routine. There were no boundaries when it came to where we would go. My father is one of the most amazing people I know and has always said that traveling is an educational experience in and of itself. He shared his love for other cultures with me and my brothers and always pushed us to see the world from different angles. I have been fortunate to see the world from 30-plus angles; each new one leaves me more speechless than the last. When I was 16, I started to venture out on my own, traveling to Guatemala for three weeks to work with a non-profit organization focused on helping children from the city dump called Safe Passage. The years after have been nothing but extraordinary, with special attention to summer 2013.

How many countries have you visited? What do you love most about traveling?
Visiting Turkey marked my 35th country. Traveling around the world opens not only your eyes, but also pulls at who you are as a person. You see things that you would have never dreamed of as being someone else’s reality. You eat things you thought only to be a joke. Lastly, you meet people who truly touch you in ways you can only experience when you are out of your comfort zone. There are so many things about other cultures that I believed to be weird that I learned about from books and media, but until you experience it firsthand there is no room for judgment.
Dr. Wolfgang Schlör, a 20-year administrator in international higher education, assumed leadership of Western Michigan University’s Diether H. Haenicke Institute for Global Education as associate provost on Oct. 1, 2013.

Previously, Schlör served from 2007 to 2013 at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, most recently for four years as interim associate provost for international affairs. Prior to that, he was the associate director, then interim director of the University Center for International Studies at the University of Pittsburgh. He replaces Dr. Bassam Harik, who served in the position on an interim basis since mid-2012.

“We’re delighted to have found someone with the depth and breadth of experience in international higher education that Dr. Schlör brings to this position,” said WMU Provost Timothy J. Greene in announcing the appointment. “Our commitment to and strong track record in global engagement makes this a critical position, and I’m confident that Dr. Schlör will be an enormous asset as we move forward.”

Schlör holds a Ph.D. in political science from Freie Universität Berlin. In the years after receiving his doctorate, he researched and published widely on the topics of German and United States security policies, transatlantic relations, and conventional arms control. More recently, he has been involved in international education research, including leading a federally funded national survey of institutional practices on underrepresented groups in international education. He commented on the ways in which his research background has served him well on the administrative side of academia.

“I could have stayed on the scholarly track, but at some point I had the opportunity to try out academic administration and project management, and I discovered that I was an effective manager and that I really liked that kind of work,” Schlör said. “My academic background gave me credibility as an administrator. I understand the challenges that faculty and students face and I have a heightened sensitivity and insight into the way faculty think and look at issues. However, I still have scholarly interests. I love learning and I am engaged with ongoing debates within academia. I believe I relate to faculty better than if I had just had an administrative career.”

Schlör’s first non-academic job related directly to his academic background as the director and principal investigator for the International Affairs Network at the University of Pittsburgh. He helped create and develop graduate programs for international affairs in Central and Eastern Europe, including curriculum and faculty training.

“That project gave me many opportunities to work with international partners and curricula,” he said. “Many of the responsibilities I had in that job helped me to transition into my next administrative position at the university as the associate director of the University Center for International Studies, and in my later work at Illinois.”

Schlör’s accomplishments at the University of Illinois included establishing a new Office of Illinois Strategic International Partnerships to solidify campus efforts to create intentional institutional partnerships around the globe; initiating a robust program of international alumni outreach to help raise funds for international education; enhancing engagement with the interna-
Schlör also wants to identify new ways to strengthen the University’s English as a Second Language already successful program (CELCIS) and become a trusted partner for the international efforts of WMU’s colleges.

“My goal is to create opportunities for every single student at Western to have some kind of global experience, whether it is studying a different language, having a meaningful interaction with an international student, or studying abroad,” he said. “We will continue to work hard to help more students participate in study abroad, but this experience is not the only way to internationalize an education.”

A native of Germany, Schlör grew up near a large U.S. military base and had American families for neighbors, providing him with an early introduction to U.S. culture. His first contact with its system of higher education occurred as an exchange student at Duke University. “Soon after I started my university studies I assumed I would study abroad at some point,” he said. “I considered several countries, but I learned that Freie Universität Berlin had several strong exchange programs in the United States. The year abroad was an experience that changed my life.”

Schlör’s wife, Laura Hastings, has accepted a faculty position in WMU’s Department of Political Science beginning in spring semester 2014. Previously, Hastings served as interim director of global studies and LAS International Programming, and as a lecturer in the Department of Political Science at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. The couple met at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, where Schlör served as a visiting scholar while Hastings was a graduate student. “We were both mobile for a number of years, and Laura had also studied in Germany, so we could have ended up on either side of the Atlantic,” he said. “When Laura accepted a position at the University of Pittsburgh, I followed.”

Following 15 years of living in western Pennsylvania, Schlör and Hastings spent six years in Illinois and welcomed the chance to stay in the Midwest while seeking out new career opportunities. They look forward to welcoming their two college-age sons, Conrad and Leonard, to their new home over the holiday break in December, and gardening in their new yard and exploring area bike paths when spring arrives.

“Laura and I have come to love the community,” Schlör said. “The people we have met have been very friendly and hospitable, and the region has a wonderful landscape. We are especially impressed by the civic engagement—there is so much going on, and we love the arts. That was a factor that helped us make the decision to move here.”
Future Iraqi engineer discovers the world at WMU
by Linda Hanes

For Ali Neamah, a native of Dhi-qar, Iraq, Western Michigan University has offered more than just a place to learn English and eventually earn a master’s degree in chemical engineering: it has become a place to thrive.

Though he spends many hours in the classroom and studying in WMU’s English as a Second Language Program, CELCIS—Center for English Language and Culture for International Students—Neamah said that his work here is easy compared to the life he knew in Iraq studying for his bachelor’s degree.

“Living and studying in Iraq, some things were uncertain,” said Neamah, who earned his bachelor’s degree in chemical engineering at the Technical Engineering College in Basra. “We had leaks in some of our labs, and the classes were taught in British-style English. That made things difficult when I came to America because the spelling of words and pronunciations were different, and some people could not understand me when speaking English for the first six months. Because I graduated at the top of my class in Iraq, my government gave me a scholarship to study abroad for three years—one year to learn American English and two years to study for my master’s degree.”

Neamah chose the United States as his study abroad destination because he believed it was, by far, the best place in the world to receive an education. He was attracted to WMU and Kalamazoo because of the sizeable Arabic community in the area. While adjusting to life in Michigan, he has tapped into the Arabic community to assist him in getting to know and understand American culture, and to help him with everyday things, like grocery shopping. But he also benefited from the new friends he has made among WMU’s richly diverse student body.

“I have met many students at WMU from several countries and we exchange information about our home cultures,” he said. “I had stereotypes about people from some cultures, as did some of the friends I have made. By getting to know each other we have changed those perceptions. I thought Americans would be aggressive. In actuality, I found them to be kind and outgoing, especially the people on campus. I have also visited Chicago, New York City, Washington, D.C. and other places, but I have found that people are the friendliest in Michigan.”

Motivated to complete his program within the time allotted time by his scholarship, Neamah, who arrived at WMU in January 2013, takes the maximum classes allowed each semester. Unlike attending college in Iraq where classes are offered only from December to July, he can take classes at WMU year-round.

Once he has completed his master’s degree at WMU, Neamah will return to Iraq to serve his country for six years—twice the amount of time he has been given to complete his studies at WMU. If he graduates with honors, as he hopes to do, his payback service to Iraq will be reduced to one year, after which he will be eligible to return to the U.S. to study for his Ph.D. “I am so grateful for the opportunity Iraq has given to me and will happily return there to serve my country, as I promised,” he said.

To further expand his horizons, Neamah would like to increase his cultural and linguistic knowledge by moving in and living with a student who is not of Arabic descent. With his WMU master’s degree in hand, he hopes to apply to the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in Cambridge to earn his doctoral degree.

Once he has the title, Dr., preceding his name, Neamah said he will be available to work in Iraq if there is need for a person with his research background; he is also interested in working in the United States.

An active participant in the many social activities planned by the CELCIS office, Neamah has become a welcome ambassador for incoming ESL students, helping to ease their transition to campus life and introducing them to American culture. “Kalamazoo is an especially great place for Arabic students,” he says. “The large Arabic community in Michigan makes it easy to regularly enjoy some of our home culture, like food.”

Neamah is in his final CELCIS course and will enter the University’s chemical engineering program in January 2014. He has been recognized for his academic achievements in CELCIS, as well as for perfect attendance, and is often asked to help Americans learn about Iraqi culture.

“The CELCIS program and teachers have helped me learn American-style English and the university skills I will need for my master’s program,” Neamah said. “The activities have helped me to experience American culture, which can vary from state to state—even the accents can be different a little bit. I have visited an Amish community in Indiana, where people live without electricity and wear simple clothes, and also big cities, like Manhattan. The activities planned by the CELCIS office have provided a great opportunity to communicate with American people and share our cultures. I have also met people on campus from all over the world.”
Yuriko Ono, a freshman from Gifu, Japan, on Western Michigan University’s tennis team, got a good tip on where to attend college from her coach at Van Der Meer Tennis Academy about a great, tennis-loving town with a world-class university.

Ono’s coach at the South Carolina academy, Yumi Matsuto, is also from Japan and is a WMU alumna. As high school graduation was looming on Ono’s horizon, Matsuto suggested that Ono look into enrolling at her alma mater for college. Ono agreed, so Matsuto called WMU’s women’s tennis coach, Betsy Kuhle, to make a recommendation. Ono followed up by sending Coach Kuhle a video of her match play, and was then invited to visit WMU in October 2012. She entered WMU as a freshman in fall 2013.

Ono has been playing tennis for more than half her life—12 years. She first came to the United States six years ago on a training trip with a Japanese team. That trip inspired Ono to eventually leave her homeland and move to the U.S., mainly because the Japanese academic system is quite rigorous, which did not leave Ono with much time to practice her tennis skills. She realized that moving to the U.S. would provide a good opportunity to both play tennis and study. Three years ago, with minimal English language skills, Ono bravely trekked across the globe to enroll at Heritage Academy High School in South Carolina and to begin training at the Van Der Meer Tennis Academy.

“School is very different in America,” said Ono, who is majoring in WMU’s exercise science program. “In the U.S. we begin studying for the new year in September; in Japan, the new year of study starts in April, and the summer break is shorter by about a month. In the U.S., students ask the teachers more questions and more actively participate in class. I really like the environment here. Kalamazoo is not like a big, big city. It’s kind of like where I’m from in Japan.”

With her first semester of college well underway, Ono has worked hard to find balance between attending classes, studying for a 14-credit-hour load, and her responsibilities as a student athlete. She discovered that it is easiest for her to finish all of her homework before the team meets for three-hour practices each day, except Sunday. Her schedule will likely not slow down anytime soon, as the tennis season doesn’t end until April.

“I was ready for the challenge and I am optimistic about my opportunities to succeed at Western,” she said. “It’s fun to play on the team. Before I came to the U.S., I had never played on a team; I played as an individual. I like it so far. There is more pressure, but if I win it’s more rewarding.”

Ono enjoys life in America and has adjusted well to the many cultural differences between life in the U.S. and life in Japan. She admits that it took a while to understand that she could wear her shoes into American’s homes, because that is something she would never do in Japan. Adjusting norms for bathing, hugging and ordering American-sized portions of food were also required.

“In Japan, we usually take a hot bath every night, not just shower,” said Ono, who visits Japan about once a year. “I had to get used to hugging people here, too. At first I thought it was weird and awkward because we don’t hug in Japan; even girls and boys don’t often hug each other. Also, the food portions are very big here. When I go to a fast-food restaurant I’m always surprised to see that the small portion here is like a large in Japan.”

For now, Ono is focused on the current season and she hopes to eventually capture enough tournament wins to qualify to compete in the NCAA championship games. When she gets a little spare time, she enjoys practicing yoga. All the exercise she gets helps her stay fit despite how much she eats at WMU’s student cafes. “The cafeterias are too good,” she said. “I go there probably about five times a day, at least.”
We welcome your inquiries!

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