Historic gift news covered nationwide

Just moments after WMU President John M. Dunn made a March 22 announcement of an anonymous $100 million gift to support the new medical school, the news was circling the globe.

By day’s end, the story had appeared in some 160 news outlets, ranging from the “CBS Evening News” to the Wall St. Journal and Business Week. By week’s end, the number of local and national stories had soared past the 200 mark.

The official WMU news release was sent on the day of the announcement at 9:30 a.m. to reporters who were on standby to expect the story at such organizations as the Associated Press, the Detroit News and Free Press, Chronicle of Higher Education, Inside Higher Ed, and Bloomberg.

By 9:45, with the gift news conference just drawing to a close, the story was on the AP wire and over the next 45 minutes began appearing in the online editions of newspapers and TV stations in Chicago, Anchorage, Sacramento, Houston and Seattle.

Over the next few days, the story was tweeted by national bloggers. Among those forwarding the employer Twitter feeds was Paul Fine, former senior editor of the “Chronicle of Higher Education” section of the Chronicle of Higher Education. Fine tweeted the gift story with this message: “Another 9-figure gift for a Rustbelt public U. Guess there’s still money in the Midwest.”

Study shows much-praised charters not for everyone

A new report released March 31 by researchers in WMU’s College of Education and Human Development and Teachers College at Columbia University raises serious questions about the high attrition rate of students across the country who attend the nationally heralded charter school program known as KIPP—the Knowledge is Power Program.

The report, “What Makes KIPP Work? A Study of Student Characteristics, Attrition and School Finance,” also suggests that KIPP relies too heavily on a large infusion of dollars from private sources, which may make it hard to sustain the program over time. WMU’s Gary Miron, educational leadership, research and technology, is the report’s lead researcher.

KIPP operates 99 schools in 20 states and is renowned for its “no excuses method,” by which generally high-poverty students attend school for a longer day and year than public school students in more traditional school settings. It has been widely praised by both the Bush and Obama administrations as a model for a successful charter school and viewed by some as a possible management option for failing Detroit schools.

But little attention has been paid to the kinds of students entering KIPP schools, the characteristics of the large number of students that leave KIPP, and the number of dollars KIPP receives from school districts, state and federal government, and private sources.

“I am surprised that KIPP gets more money from the federal government especially because...

Just one week left to respond to Chronicle survey

With the Chronicle of Higher Education relying on feedback from faculty and staff to determine which of the nation’s schools are “America’s Great Colleges to Work For,” WMU employees have just one week left to make their views known.

An anonymous email survey was sent the week of March 21 to a random sample of employees—faculty, administrators, professional staff and hourly employees. Those surveyed have until April 15 to reply. At Western News press time, the overall response rate was 26 percent.

This is the third year the University has participated in the survey and the first year it has been able to include non-exempt, hourly employees in the survey.

“The standard survey includes faculty, administrators and professional staff at no cost,” says Felicia Crawford, director of human resources. “The decision was made to pay the additional fee to have all groups included for 2011, which we hope will result in more meaningful data about our campus. We’re really counting on people taking the time to thoughtfully provide us and the Chronicle with good and confidential feedback.”

The Chronicle’s Great Colleges to Work program recognizes small groups of colleges (based on enrollment size) for specific best practices and policies, such...
Bronco named national coach of year

Jeff Blashill, first-year head coach of the hockey team, has been named national coach of the year by two of the sport's leading publications. Inside College Hockey announced April 1 its pick of Blashill as National Coach of the Year. Four days earlier, he was named National Co-Coach of the Year by College Hockey News.

Blashill led a rejuvenated Bronco hockey program on its trip to the Central Collegiate Hockey Association Tournament championship game since 1986. WMU defeated regular-season champion Michigan in the semifinals and fell to Miami in the final game, but earned an at-large berth to the NCAA Tournament. A former assistant for stage and screen, Blashill came to WMU last April. He had spent the previous two years as head coach and general manager of the Indiana Ice of the United States Hockey League, the top U.S. juniors league.

Student wins Kennedy Center award

Mikal Hansen, a master's student studying playwriting and a graduate assistant in English, has earned the coveted National Association of Partners of American Theatre Annual Playwriting Excellence Award for her full-length play, "Viking-American."

The Kennedy Center award goes to a recipient to spend a week at the center in Washington, D.C., and a week at the University of Nevada at Las Vegas as part of an intensive program in writing for theater.

Hansen earned a bachelor's degree in creative writing at Denison University in 2009 and expects to graduate from WMU in 2011.

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Staffer among first to be certified

Cari Robertson, Sindecuse Health Center, is among the first group nationwide to earn certification as a Master Certified Health Education Specialist. The newly created voluntary certification signifies that Robertson has met the national standards for individual health education practitioners.

Those standards include advanced-level knowledge and skills and a commitment to the advancement of the health education profession and continued professional development.

Robertson joined Sindecuse in 2006 as WMU's director of health promotion and education. She is a member of the American College Health Association and its Health Promotion Section. She also is a member of numerous University committees and chairs such groups as the Alcohol Risk Reduction Advisory Board, Western Employee Wellness Committee and Health Education Quality Improvement Subcommittee.

Around campus and beyond

Final spring employee mixer slated

All faculty and staff are invited to the final Fridays with Friends mixer of spring semester from 4 to 6 p.m. Friday, April 8, in the atrium of the Gilmore Theatre Complex. Complimentary light hors doeuvres and cash bar will be available.

Events planned for Earth Fest

WMU is celebrating Earth Fest with a week of largely student-sponsored events beginning Friday, April 8. Keep visiting WMU News at www.wmich.edu/news for stories about some of the planned events, most of which will be listed on that website’s Events Calendar.

Wounded Warrior 5K is Saturday

Runners, walkers and spectators of every age are invited to take part in the Wounded Warrior 5K race Saturday, April 9. The non-certified course winds through East Campus. Packet pickup and late registration begins at 7 a.m., and the race starts at 9 a.m. Registration is $15. Proceeds benefit the Wounded Warrior Project, a non-profit organization that provides care directly to wounded veterans and their families. To register, visit www.wmuwoundedwarrior.com or call (269) 235-2789.

Chemistry Research Day slated

Chemistry Research Day will be held from 2 to 5 p.m. Friday, April 15, in the Chemistry Building. The keynote talk will be given by R. Graham Cooks of the Department of Chemistry of the University of Michigan, who will speak on "Open Secrets: Everyday Magic in Early Modern England." The keynote talk will be open to the public, and the race will take place from 5 to 9 p.m. in 1301 Wood Hall and around the campus.

Author to discuss new book

WMU alumnus Richard Njus is returning to his alma mater to discuss his new book from 4 to 6 p.m. Tuesday, April 19, in the Fetzer Center's Kirsch Auditorium. Njus is the author of "Touching Hearts, Educating Minds."

Arbor Day celebration planned

The 2011 Arbor Day celebration will be held at 10:30 a.m. Friday, April 22, on the Parkview Campus by the electric-vehicle charging station in front of the College of Engineering and Applied Sciences Building.

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Hansen earned a bachelor's degree in creative writing at Denison University in 2009 and expects to graduate from WMU in 2011. After graduating, she plans to move to Chicago and perhaps teach while writing plays for theaters.

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WMUK fund drive starts soon

WMUK's public radio station, WMUK, is partnering with Ministry with Community and the Kalamazoo Foundation in its spring fund drive, which begins Saturday, April 9. The effort will raise funds for WMUK programs while assisting those suffering from homelessness, poverty and mental illness in the Kalamazoo area. The foundation will make a gift to Ministry with Community equal to 10 percent of dollars pledged or donated to WMUK before or during the station's on-air spring campaign up to the first $150,000 raised by WMUK.

All fund drive donations go to WMUK. All contributions from the foundation to the ministry are separate gifts over and above WMUK spring campaign dollars. The on-air portion of the spring drive runs through Friday, April 15. Pre-drive contributions may be made online at www.wmuk.org or by mail. WMUK's Web ticker will feature up-to-date results of the station's fundraising effort throughout the drive.

WMU blood drive honors No. 1 Bronco hockey fan

The student organization Tsai Lun is joining with the WMU College of Engineering and Applied Sciences to stage a blood drive in honor of Gideon Schripsema, whose special connection to the Bronco hockey team has generated headlines. The blood drive is set for 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Friday, April 8, in C-126 of the Engineering and Applied Sciences Building on WMU's Parkview Campus. Free parking is available in Lot P2 on the east side of the building.

Schripsema, who attended his first game when he was 2 years old and whose entire family is composed of Bronco hockey fans, was diagnosed with leukemia when he was 3. Three days later, it was his big brother Brody's fifth birthday and the party would have to take place at the hospital.

The Bronco hockey team showed up at the hospital for the party, forging a special relationship between Schripsema and his family. That relationship has spawned numerous news reports, a well-watched YouTube video and even a ride on the Zamboni at Joe Louis Arena for Brody prior to a Broncos playoff game.

Graduate and faculty research showcased at 2011 poster day

Graduate students and faculty members will showcase their scholarly work Friday, April 15, in the Fetzer Center as part of the fifth annual WMU Research and Creative Activities Poster Day. The free public event includes poster presentations of research from 9 to 11 a.m.

Service

The following faculty and staff members are recognized for 30, 20, 15 and 10 years of service during April:

30 Years—James W. Sloane, Finance; John F. Ebert, Facilities Management-landscapes; Jack J. Hopper, Chemistry; Keith B. Anderegg, English; Elizabeth McGraw, Cultural Affairs;
25 Years—Richard W. Flores Sr., Business; Richard B. Evangelista, Philosophy; William J. Mergenthaler, Economics; and Betsy A. Ralph, Multicultural Services.

10 Years—Kim Brown, Facilities Management-landscapes; Alison K. Chodlak, Counseling Education and Counseling Psychology; Jennifer A. DeHaan, College of Health and Human Services; Diane D. DeZoete, Dining Services-Bernhard Center; Robert H. McDonough, Extended University Programs-Grand Rapids; and Michelle L. Phelps, Dining Services-Bernhard Center.

Obituaries

Marie Irene (Stickle) Delahousaye of Yelm, Wash., died March 24. She was 93. Delahousaye joined the WMU staff in 1965 and retired as a secretary in what was the general business law department in 1980 after 15 years of service to the University.

Richard W. Flores Sr. of Plainwell, Mich., died Dec. 26, 2010. He was 83. Flores retired as a technical associate with the Paper Pilot Plant in 1993 after 10 years of service to WMU.

Edward Galligan of Kalamazoo died March 29. He was 85. Galligan joined the WMU faculty in 1958 and retired as a professor emeritus in English in 1989 after 30 years of service to the University. He chaired his department from 1985 until his retirement.

Doris Luke of Santa Clara, Calif., died March 15. She was 99. Duke retired as a mail clerk in 1976 after 10 years of service to WMU.
Study shows much-praised charters not for everyone

KIPP has limited special education services which are subsidized with federal dollars, Miron says. "Charter schools traditionally receive less money because they provide fewer services like special education and vocational training. That is why it's surprising that KIPP receives more money than all of our comparison groups from public sources."

None of the 12 KIPP districts reported any private revenues in the national school district finance dataset; however, a separate analysis of these districts’ 990 tax forms for 2008 revealed large sums of private contributions. The report’s authors say KIPP’s claims of improving test results of the students who attend charter schools is not supported by rigorous and well-documented studies.

"KIPP has been lauded as a successful private operator of public schools, but this is not the case," Miron says. "Charter schools traditionally receive less money because they provide fewer services like special education and vocational training. That is why it's surprising that KIPP receives more money than all of our comparison groups from public sources."

Just one week left to respond

As compensation and benefits, faculty-administration relations, and confidence in senior leadership. The Chronicle bases its assessments on a random survey of full-time faculty, administrators and professional staff as well as an institutional audit that captures demographics and workplace policies and practices.

In 2009, the first year the University participated in the Chronicle initiative, WMU was named one of the top-10 large colleges in the nation in five separate categories.

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New Frostic fellows announced

Five students have been named the fall 2010 recipients of Gwen Frostic Doctoral Fellowships. They are Michelle Barger of Kalamazoo, geosciences; J. Adam Bennett of Gastonia, N.C., psychology; Michael Buchalski of Stevensville, Mich., biological sciences; Katherine Ellison of Freeland, Mich., history; and Travis Hayden of Portage, Mich., geosciences.

Frostic Doctoral Fellowships are given twice annually by WMU’s Graduate College. They are made possible by an endowment from the estate of the late poet, artist and naturalist Gwen Frostic, a 1929 WMU alumnus.

The competitive fellowships range from $1,000 to $4,000 and assist doctoral students in all fields with dissertation expenses, including tuition, fees, materials, and travel.

Finals Finish shines the light on WMU students

Help is being sought to stage the annual Finals Finish from 6 to 10:30 p.m. Tuesday, April 26. A campus tradition, Finals Finish promotes student success by making spring finals week less stressful. This year’s theme is “Your future’s so bright, you gotta wear shades.” The Student Recreation Center will again be the main venue, offering study space, fitness classes, massages, competitive and non-competitive games, live DJ music, prize drawings and food.

Members of the campus and local communities assist in staging the event. Volunteers are needed to work a 2-1/2-hour shift from 5:45 to 8:15 p.m. or 8 to 10:30 p.m. All volunteers receive a T-shirt and are assigned to the Student Recreation Center, where they greet and serve students, make sure the study area is clean, organize and distribute snacks, help supervise games and other activities.

Visit www.wmich.edu/finalsfinish to volunteer or obtain more information.