Wallace funding, statewide cooperation to make data a usable tool for K-12 schools

A new grant from the Wallace Foundation to WMU will support the development of education leaders in urban school districts to use data effectively to identify and implement teaching strategies that lead to improved student performance.

"Having access to sound information and knowing how to use it to improve student achievement is central to education reform in Michigan," says Jianping Shen, teaching, learning and leadership and the project's co-director. "If our children are going to be successful, we need to ensure that we develop the ability of our district and school leaders to be good consumers of data and help them use the information to drive changes in instruction that lead to student achievement."

WMU will lead a statewide coalition of educators to develop a new system to assist school leaders, who are often overwhelmed by massive amounts of data, in using data as a tool to make instructional decisions that lead to improved student performance. The coalition includes the governor's office, the state Board of Education, the Legislature, major education organizations and other universities.

The project will begin in public school districts in Detroit, Flint, Benton Harbor and Lansing. Administrators and teachers in those districts will help develop a model that can be used statewide.

The initial year's $425,000 grant is renewable for each of two additional years for a total of up to $1.275 million, based on evidence of sufficient progress. The effort is funded as part of the New York-based Wallace Foundation's education leadership initiative, which aims to strengthen leadership policies and practices at the state, district and school levels toward the goal of improving student achievement.

The grant will be used to train district and school leaders to interpret and utilize student achievement data to determine how changes in instruction will lead to the improved performance of all students. By using data as a compass to guide instruction in the classroom, school and district leaders will be better able to ensure that the resources being invested in schools is spent wisely and effectively and targets the specific needs of students. What is learned in the project will be disseminated via state-level policies, professional development activities of educational organizations and the educational leadership programs in three participating universities.

"Leadership is the most important factor after teaching in whether schools succeed in raising student achievement," says M. Christine DeVita, president of the New York-based Wallace Foundation. "The partnership between Wallace and states such as Michigan that we are funding will, we believe, yield innovative approaches to new policies and practices to improve student achievement. By joining forces,

UPS goes the extra mile and delivers aviation training tool

Global package-delivery giant UPS is putting a piece of equipment to work to make sure the next generation of aviation professionals has hands-on experience in how to maintain the engine systems that are the backbone of its service network.

The Atlanta-based corporation is donating a JT9D aircraft engine to WMU's College of Aviation for use in the college's maintenance technology program. The massive engine will be used to familiarize students with the engine systems and components typical of large aircraft engines.

"We're proud to support the University in educating tomorrow's maintenance professionals," said UPS Airlines spokesman Mark Giuffre in describing the company's decision to make the gift.
Campus welcomes new faculty members

Frederick Burbach, art, comes to WMU from Denver, where, from 2002-04, he was the principal with his own firm, which was a strategic brand and design development company. Prior to that, he was design director with the communication agency Genesis Inc. A graphic design specialist, he lived in Basel and Zurich, Switzerland, for almost two decades, working on such accounts as PepsiAmericas and Swisscom. He earned his BFA from the Basel School of Design in 1984 and a bachelor’s degree from Indiana University in 1977.

Melinda Koelling, mathematics, comes to WMU from New York University’s Center for Neural Science, where she was a post-doctoral fellow for two years. Prior to that, she held a post-doctoral position at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, conducting research in computational neuroscience. Koelling’s focus at WMU is in undergraduate mathematics, has been involved in enrichment programs for both junior high and high school students in Illinois and Michigan. She earned a bachelor’s degree from the University of Chicago in 1995 and a doctoral degree from the University of Michigan in 2001.

Carolyn Pavlik, dance, comes to WMU from the University of Washington-Seattle, where she was a graduate teaching assistant in the dance program for two years. She also has taught at Austin (Texas) Community College and at the University of Texas-Austin and has performed and toured internationally. Nationally certified in massage therapy and Polestar Pilates, Pavlik’s research specialty is site-specific dance in the United States. She earned a bachelor’s degree in dance from the University of Texas-Austin in 1989 and an MFA in dance from the University of Washington-Seattle in 2004.

Slobodan Urdarevik, industrial and manufacturing engineering, first taught part-time at WMU in 2003-04. He came to WMU from Humber College of Applied Art and Technology in Toronto, where he had been a faculty member since 1993. Prior to that, he worked in industry with steel companies in Ontario. An engineering graphics specialist, Urdarevik earned both his bachelor’s and master’s degrees in mechanical engineering in 1983 and 1986, respectively, from the University of Skopje in Macedonia.

Limited tickets available for Jan. 25 Detroit Tigers luncheon

Area baseball enthusiasts will be able to hang out with some of their favorite Detroit Tigers during a luncheon from 11:30 a.m. to 1:15 p.m. Tuesday, Jan. 25, at the Fetter Center.

Members of the public as well as WMU faculty, staff and students are invited to attend the event, at which several Tigers players, coaches and executives will discuss the upcoming season and mingle with fans. Seating is limited so those wishing to attend are encouraged to purchase their tickets without delay while supplies last.

The visit is being sponsored by the WMU Alumni Association as part of the Tigers organization’s annual Winter Caravan, which gives fans in Michigan; Ohio; and Ontario, Canada; a chance to interact with some of the biggest names in Tigers baseball. Several children from the Kalamazoo Boys and Girls Club also will be in attendance as guests of the alumni association.

Current plans call for the main luncheon speaker to be Lance Parrish, who caught for the Detroit Tigers from 1977 to 1986 and has been the club’s bullpen coach since 2003. Although subject to change, several other Tigers personnel are scheduled to participate in the luncheon. Tickets cost $5 for WMU students, $10 for WMU Alumni Association members and $15 for all other attendees. To order tickets, call 7-8779.

Litynski heads technical group

Daniel M. Litynski, electrical and computer engineering, is the new president of the Education Society of the Institute of Electrical and Electronic Engineers. Litynski, who is currently serving as a program director in the Division of Undergraduate Education at the National Science Foundation in Washington, D.C., assumed the presidency Jan. 1. He was elected for the post at the IEEE Education Society’s recent annual meeting in Savannah, Ga.

IEEE is an international technical professional association with more than 360,000 members in 175 countries. Its Education Society includes academic administrators and faculty as well as governmental and industrial leaders in the field of science and engineering education.

Curwen twice draws kudos

David Curwen, dance, has been named president-elect of CORPS de Ballet International and will serve a two-year term before taking over presidency of the organization for an additional two years. Curwen’s selection for the role took place at the organization’s annual meeting at Columbia College in Charleston, S.C., last year.

CORPS is a professional organization dedicated to the development, exploration and advancement of ballet in higher education. CORPS stands for Council of Organized Researchers for Pedagogical Studies.

In addition, Curwen’s choreographed piece “Clear Day” was ranked third in the list of six finalists for the Maggie Alessee New Choreography Award after a statewide adjudication. The award is named for a Detroit-area choreographer.

Lyth tapped to edit journal

David Lyth, industrial and manufacturing engineering, has been named the editor of Quality Engineering, a quarterly journal devoted to quality problems and solutions.

Lyth, who has served on the editorial board of the journal since its inception, replaces Frank Kaplan, the founding editor. Quality Engineering is published by the American Society for Quality Control, regularly features about a dozen articles and two columns—one by the editor. Lyth will be responsible forpreviewing approximately 15 to 20 manuscripts to determine those that will be sent on to the editorial board for further review.
The following employees are recognized for celebrating 40, 35, 30, 25, 20, 15, 10 and five years of service to the University during January.

40 years—John S. Carr, WMU Bookstore.
35 years—Kai M. Chapman, Development Office, and Gerald T. Nowak, University Counseling and Testing Center.
30 years—Ronald G. Canard, physical plant-maintenance services.
25 years—LuAnn Bigelow, accountancy; Barbara S. Liggett, public affairs and administration; Darla J. Manion, physical plant-building custodial and support services; Miguel A. Ramirez, Division of Multicultural Affairs; Thomas K. Randsell, logistical services; Marilyn K. Rowe, College of Arts and Sciences; and Dawn M. Southworth, student financial aid and scholarships.
20 years—Sharon L. Carlson, Archives and Regional History Collections; Polly R. Graham, physical plant-maintenance services; Timothy Mader, physical plant-building custodial and support services.

Nominations sought for top student employee, supervisor

Nominations are being sought for two awards associated with WMU’s annual observance of Student Employment Appreciation Week, which will take place Monday through Friday, Feb. 14 through 18.
The Student Employment Services sponsors the week each February. Now in its 19th year, the observance is a time to recognize the hard work and contributions that student employees make to WMU. It also is an opportunity to showcase an outstanding student employee and student supervisor.
The theme for this year’s week is “It’s Your Time To Shine.” A highlight of the week-long celebration will be a recognition reception featuring 2005’s Student Employee of the Year and Supervisor of the Year. The reception will take place from 3 to 5 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 17, in the West Ballroom of the Bernhard Center. All nominees and nominators for this year’s awards are invited to attend.

Awards nominations are being accepted through Friday, Feb. 11. Online nomination forms are available at the <http://www.broncosjobs.wmich.edu> Web site.
On Campus with Rita Keller

As office coordinator for Student Activities and Leadership Programs, Rita Keller puts her managerial skills to the test every day while providing administrative support to SALP staff and office operations.

Her duties include managing budgets and procurement cards, approving posters for student organizations, supervising student employees, overseeing the photocopying operation, and assisting with major events. She also works with numerous on- and off-campus offices when issuing WMU’s Outdoor Space Permit, which allows student organizations to stage outdoor fund-raisers, information tables and marches.

Keller came to the University in 1991 from the Maple Hill Mall, where she had been office manager. “I’ve been at WMU 14 years in the same job and I love it because I get to work directly with students,” she says.

“We are to us. With the recent tsunami, people in places like Taiwan and India are also suffering. I’m open to whatever I’m supposed to do now and just asking "how can I help?"