BRCC’s new executive director brings more than 25 years of biotech experience to job

An executive with more than 25 years of experience managing both established life science firms and biotech startups has signed on to lead the University’s Biosciences Research and Commercialization Center.

Charles F. Nawrot, will leave his position as chief executive officer of Theractye Inc. of Irvine, Calif., to become the executive director of the BRCC.

His appointment is effective Oct. 11.

“I’m particularly pleased that Chuck has agreed to join the BRCC early in its existence,” says Don Farber, founding principal of the Aycock Group LLC and chairperson of the BRCC Governing Board of Directors. “Chuck shares the same vision of the BRCC as the governing board and everyone involved in the center’s founding. He brings to Kalamazoo a wealth of relevant experience and knowledge that will serve us well for years to come.”

Nawrot established Theractye, a cell therapy firm, in 1999 with $2 million of private investment capital. Under his leadership, the company has developed research collaborations with more than 30 potential business partners. Theractye is Nawrot’s second life sciences startup.

From 1987 to 1989, he was CEO of Tektagen Inc., a pharmaceutical testing facility he co-founded.

His industry leadership positions also include research and management posts with Abbott Laboratories in Chicago; Cooper Biomedical Inc. and Centocor Inc. in Malvern, Pa.; and Baxter Healthcare Corp. in Deerfield, Ill., where he served for six years as vice president for business development in the immunotherapy division. He also spent four years as a biotech consultant, advising companies in the areas of technology assessment, business planning and early-stage financing.

Nawrot earned a bachelor’s degree in chemistry from St. Mary’s College in Winona, Minn., in 1965 and a doctoral degree in biochemistry from Northwestern University in 1969.

“Our search committee set some very high standards for whomsoever we hired as the executive director of the BRCC,” says Jack Luderer, WMU vice president for research who took part in the search. “We wanted an exemplary Ph.D. or M.D. scientist with management experience who had worked in both large pharmaceutical operations like Pfizer, as well as small start-up companies. The BRCC requires this breadth of experience, and it’s not easy to find. We interviewed more than 40 applicants from around the country and quite honestly, Dr. Nawrot was our first choice. We were able to get him out of California just in time for winter in Kalamazoo.”

The search committee was led by Terry Verbet, associate dean of the Haworth College of Business. In addition to Luderer, members of the committee included Parfet; Robert Gadwood, CEO of Kalexyn Inc.; Douglas Morton, CEO of the Southwest Michigan Innovation Center, and Alexander Eneyd, chairperson of biological sciences.

Emeriti Council to focus on University/corporate ties

The complex relationships between America’s corporations and U.S. universities will be the focus when WMU’s Emeriti Council sponsors a forum on the topic Thursday and Friday, Nov. 11 and 12.

The event is intended for all members of the WMU and the Kalamazoo Department of Public Safety will engage in a full-scale emergency exercise between 8 a.m. and noon Tuesday, Nov. 9. The exercise will be based around Vandercook Hall on the East Campus, and several emergency and public safety vehicles will be at the scene. For more than six months, representatives from offices across the campus and KDPs have been planning the mock disaster, which involves a fictional explosion, fire and multiple casualties.

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Engineering facility rakes in West Michigan building awards

The Parkview Campus complex housing the College of Engineering and Applied Sciences was a big winner when the West Michigan chapter of Associated builders and Contractors met in Grand Rapids Oct. 19 for its annual construction awards program.

The building, which opened in fall 2003, won the top award for Special Projects Under $100 million, with judges calling it "a showcase project" and noting outstanding standing attention to detail, "evident throughout every space of this large project." Individual parts of the construction project also won top awards in these categories: Electrical Over $2 million, Mechanical-Over $10 million and Interior Finishing-over $500,000.

The Christman Co. of Lansing, Mich., was general contractor for the project, and Harley-Ellis of Detroit was the architect of record. WMU's campus architect, Evie Asken, was on hand to accept the awards on behalf of the University.

The 343,000-square-foot, two-story building is home to some 3,000 students in 18 baccalaureate, 11 master's and five doctoral programs.
Westside storage. Large Faculty-owned roomy
WESTERN NEWS OCTOBER 28, 2004 conference, right, and Don Parfet, chairperson of the BRCC board and head of the Apjohn Group.

The check represents the first return on the state's $10 million investment in the Oct. 26 meeting of the governing board of the Biosciences Research and Commercialization Center. The check represents the first return on the state’s $10 million investment in the center, which was started last year. Looking on were Jack Luderer, vice president for research; right; and Don Parfet, chairperson of the BRCC board and head of the Apjohn Group.

(PhotobyCherylRoland)

King committee soliciting proposals for 2005 events
The Martin Luther King Jr. Day Committee is accepting proposals for activities that will be held during King Week 2005. The events, which will take place Jan. 18-21, should be relevant to this year’s theme, “Integrating our Past with Present: Impacting our Future.” Guidelines and an application form for the sponsored activities, which are eligible for limited financial assistance, are being distributed campuswide.

Whether or not they are seeking funding, departments, programs and organizations are encouraged to submit their plans by 5 p.m. Friday, Nov. 12, for inclusion in the 2005 King Week schedule of events.

For information, contact Inke Way, social work, vice-mailer@inke.way@wmich.edu or by calling 7-3195.

Nominations due Oct. 31 for Make a Difference awards
Nominations for the fall round of WMU’s new semiannual Make a Difference awards are due by Oct. 31. Make a Difference is a campuswide peer-to-peer program that recognizes WMU staff for their accomplishments and daily investment of energy and creativity.

More information and nomination forms are available online at <www.wmich.edu/makeadifference>. Nominations may be submitted through campus mail to Mail Stop Code 5216 or by e-mail to <Make-A-Difference@wmich.edu>.

FAR RENT—Westside storage. Large two-car garage, which would be ideal for cars, boats, etc. $135.00 a month. Call 383-2128.

FOR RENT—Faculty-owned roomy townhouse in Saugatuck with Nantucket decor. Walk out the back steps down to the water’s edge. Fireplace, two bedrooms, sofabed in great room, 2 1/2 baths, sleeps six. Watch the sunset from the private double decks, stroll the nearby beaches, dine or Christmas shop in downtown Saugatuck or Douglas. Serene setting. Weekend rentals. Online pictures and rates available upon request. Call 375-7953.

FOR SALE—A-frame duplex on Gull Lake channel. Upper unit, two bedrooms, 1 1/2 baths. Neutral colors. Boat slip, extra storage in pole barn. One year lease. References and security deposit required. $750 a month plus utilities. Call Anne at 7-3854 or 629-5150 after 5:30 p.m.

FOR SALE—1998 Mitsubishi Montero 4x4 SUV, $6,999. Call 7-8828.
On Campus with Shellie Bosma

Distinguished Faculty Scholar nominations due

The Distinguished Faculty Scholar Committee is seeking nominations for the 2004-05 Distinguished Faculty Scholar Award.

The deadline for nomination is Friday, Jan. 21. Up to three awards may be made each year. Those selected during this cycle will be honored at a ceremony in late 2005 or early 2006. Each winner will receive a $2,000 honorarium that becomes part of the recipient's base salary, a plaque and an opportunity to present a lecture, exhibition or performance for the WMU community.

All current, continuing board-appointed persons with faculty rank are eligible, but they must have at least seven academic years of service to WMU. The awards are based on outstanding professional achievements. The accomplishments may be artistic, historical, literary, philosophical, scientific or technical. Wide recognition beyond WMU is essential.

Guidelines and nomination forms are being distributed on campus. For more information, contact Ernst A. Breisach, history, 7-4590 or <ernst.breisach@wmich.edu>.

Emeriti council forum

A panel discussion on Nov. 4 at WMU, two days after the referendum, will explore whether voters did the right thing as well as the meaning and consequences of the decision. Panelists will include the Rev. Jill McAllister of People’s Church of Kalamazoo; John Clark, political science; and a third panelist to be announced. Joseph Ellin, professor emeritus of philosophy, will serve as moderator.

Sponsored by the WMU Center for the Study of Ethics in Society, the presentation is set for 7:30 p.m. Thursday, Nov. 4, in the Bernhard Center’s Brown and Gold Room. For more information, call the center at 7-4397 or e-mail the center at: <ethicscenter@wmich.edu>.

Bluegrass music for a cause

Bluegrass music and a good cause will intertwine on Wednesday, Nov. 10, when the Department of Blindness and Low Vision Studies stages a fundraiser at Kraftbrau Brewery, 402 E. Kalamazoo Ave.

The event will feature Lare Williams, director of the Department of Blindness and Low Vision Studies, and the New Direction Bluegrass Band. Doors open at 6:30 p.m. The cost of attending is a $7 donation for adults and free for children under age 12. Children under 18 must be accompanied by an adult.

For more information, call the department at 7-3455.

Gay marriage is focus of post-election ethics discussion

On Nov. 2, Michigan voters will decide whether to amend the Michigan Constitution to prohibit gay marriage.

A panel discussion on Nov. 4 at WMU, two days after the referendum, will explore whether voters did the right thing as well as the meaning and consequences of the decision. Panelists will include the Rev. Jill McAllister of People’s Church of Kalamazoo; John Clark, political science; and a third panelist to be announced. Joseph Ellin, professor emeritus of philosophy, will serve as moderator.

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Emergency drill

Pat Holton, environmental health and safety, has served as the University’s emergency coordinator since 2002, and she regularly convenes a campuswide team that is responsible for designing a response plan flexible enough to respond to any level of emergency or critical incident.

Holton says the interaction of people charged with leading response teams on campus has been a huge benefit to WMU.

“We all tend to work in our own silos,” she says. “This has given us a chance to get to know the people we’ll need to rely on in a real emergency. A drill like this lets us practice what we’ve planned and uncover the weaknesses in our plans.”

Previous campus drills have been “tabletop” or functional drills with emergency scenarios that are played out in a common setting and in a compressed time frame.