Two calls for proposals announced

Those wishing to give presentations during the Teaching With Technology Symposium have until Friday, Oct. 30, to submit their proposals. The annual symposium, which will be held Wednesday, Feb. 10, provides an opportunity for faculty members and graduate teaching assistants to showcase their use of technology.

Visit wmich.edu/facultydevelopment for submission details about either call for proposals or to register for an upcoming Cool Tools session. Sessions are scheduled for Friday, Oct. 30; Monday, Nov. 16; Wednesday, Nov. 18; and Thursday, Nov. 19.

Time to help recognize WMU staffers

Nominations for the spring semiannual Make a Difference awards are due Saturday, Oct. 31. The awards recognize staff members for their daily investment of energy and creativity. Visit wmich.edu/makedefadifference for more information, including guidelines and the nomination form.

PSSO annual fundraiser underway

The Professional Support Staff Organization is selling popcorn from Kalamazoo Kettle Corn as part of its annual fundraiser. Orders are due by 4 p.m. Monday, Nov. 23. Proceeds support PSSO, which is able to provide assistance for PSSO members and their dependents. Visit wmich.edu/pssoholidayfundraiser to make an order.

Faculty scholar nominations sought

Nominations are due no later than Friday, Feb. 12, for the Distinguished Faculty Scholar Award, the highest honor WMU bestows on its faculty members. The award is based on outstanding professional achievements. It recognizes those whose work is widely known beyond campus and constitutes a significant body of achievement, a substantial amount of which has been accomplished while a WMU faculty member.

Current, continuing board-appointed and ship members for PSSO and their dependents. Visit wmich.edu/makeadifference for details.

Renew parking permits by Oct. 31

Employees can register for their 2015-16 parking permits through Saturday, Oct. 31, online through GoWMU or by visiting wmich.edu/parking. Renewals also can be made in person at Parking Services.

Heritage Hall grand opening details set

The community values that gave birth to WMU will take center stage Friday, Oct. 23, as the Kalamazoo and University communities gather to formally reopen Heritage Hall.

An outdoor ribbon-cutting ceremony at 2 p.m. will mark the return to service of the building as home to the University’s Alumni Center and Office of Development and Alumni Relations.

The event will focus on the role of values and heritage in creating WMU. It will feature remarks by Richard G. Haworth, chairman emeritus of Haworth Inc. and a WMU trustee emeritus, whose family and company made a major in-kind gift to furnish the newly renovated facility.

Also speaking at the ceremony will be WMU President John M. Dunn, Jennifer Brinn Lentner, president of the WMU Alumni Association; and James S. Thomas, WMU vice president for development and alumni relations.

Numerous events scheduled to honor veterans

Students and employees will be engaging in a weeklong celebration of Veterans Day, which is officially observed Wednesday, Nov. 11.

Past WMU hosted events have included a luncheon for veterans. (Photo by Mike Lanka)

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Fall programs highlight tuition-related employee benefits

Informational sessions being held this semester will help WMU employees and their eligible children take advantage of the University’s tuition-related benefits, which include a new benefit launching this fall.

Brown-bag sessions for employees who are considering enrolling at WMU are set for noon to 1 p.m. Thursday, Oct. 29; Wednesday, Nov. 11; and Wednesday, Dec. 9, in the President’s Dining Room of the Bernhard Center.

They will include presentations by Human Resources, the Office of Admissions, the Graduate College, Extended University Programs, the Office of Student Financial Aid and Scholarships, the Center for Academic Support Programs, and the University Studies degree-completion program.

Sessions for employees’ children who are considering enrolling at WMU are set for 8:30 a.m. Friday, Nov. 13 and Dec. 4, in the President’s Dining Room of the Bernhard Center. Students and parents are welcome to attend these sessions, which are being held just before regularly scheduled admissions office open houses.

The prospective students and their parents who attend will be able to obtain information about the tuition-related benefits open to employees as well as about getting admitted to the University. Immediately afterward, they will be able to attend the admissions open house. For details about the open houses, visit wmich.edu/admissions/openhouse.

Future dates for both types of programs have also been set and can be found, along with more information about tuition-related benefits for employees, at wmich.edu/admissions/guest/employees. WMU departments that would like this information presented to their staff directly should contact Scott Hennessy at scott.hennessy@wmich.edu or (269) 387-2017.

Retirement reception

Paula Armstrong, speech pathology and audiology, will be honored for 30 years of service to the University during a retirement reception from 1 to 3 p.m. today in 4010 Health and Human Services Building.

Jobs

Current job opportunities at WMU are announced daily on the Human Resources website at wmich.edu/hr/jobs. Please note that applications must be submitted online by the stated deadline. Complete application procedures are included with each posting.

Professor’s second book published

Marlene Bres, emerita in family and consumer sciences, has co-authored a second volume studying sacred historical artifacts.

The book, “Treasures of Faith: Sacred Relics and Artifacts from the Armenian Churches of Istanbul,” is a study Bres conducted in collaboration with Ronald Marchese from the University of Minnesota at Duluth.

It represents years of investigation into objects that have not been written about before. The duo’s first volume, “Splendor & Pageantry: Textile Treasures From the Armenian Orthodox Churches of Istanbul,” was published in 2011 and won the prestigious R.L. Shepp Book Award from the Textile Society of America in 2012. Both books are excellent references for art, religious and textile historians, as well as Armenian scholars and those interested in minority populations during the Ottoman Empire.

Chef brings home the bacon

Tom Giles, Dining Services, won a silver medal at the American Culinary Competition hosted by the Michigan Restaurant Association Oct. 13 in Novi. The show was sanctioned by the American Culinary Federation and Michigan’s Chef’s Challenge.

Giles prepared a colorful cold food display for the event. He is a member of the Great Lakes Regional Culinary Team and is preparing to compete in the Culinary Olympics in Erfurt, Germany, in fall 2016.

Giles came to WMU in August and has worked at Bronson Healthcare Group, Meijer Corp., Premiere Food service, and the Opryland Hotel in Nashville, Tennessee. He was a member of the culinary team that represented Michigan at the 2014 Culinary World Cup in Luxembourg, and he has won numerous awards.

Physicist elected APS Fellow

Thomas Gorczyca, physics, has been elected a Fellow of the American Physical Society. Gorczyca was nominated for “advancing our fundamental understanding in the photoionization, spectra, and opacities of atomic ions in astrophysical plasmas.”

He was nominated by APS’ Division of Atomic, Molecular & Optical Physics. Fellowship is a distinct honor signifying recognition by one’s professional peers. This recognition is exceptional contributions to the physics enterprise, such as outstanding physics research, important applications of physics, leadership in or service to physics, or significant contributions to physics education.

Gorczyca is a professor with expertise in atomic and molecular physics.

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Western News
Volume 42 Number 4

EDITORS: Jeanne Baron. CONTRIBUTORS: Cara Barnes, Paula M. Davis, Daniel Fina, Cheryl D. Holland and Mark E. Edwards. DISTRIBUTION AND MAILING: Teresa Varela.

WESTERN NEWS USPS 362-210 is published by the Office of University Relations, Walwood Hall, Western Michigan University, 1903 W. Michigan Ave., Kalamazoo, MI 49008-5433, every other week during the fall and spring semesters and Summer sessions. Periodicals postage paid at Kalamazoo, (USPS 362-210) is published by the Office of University Relations, Walwood Hall, Western Michigan University, 1903 W. Michigan Ave., Kalamazoo, MI 49008-5433, every other week during the fall and spring

DEADLINE: Items to be considered for publication should be submitted to the Office of University Relations by 5 p.m. Friday the week preceding publication. Publication dates for the fall semester are Sept. 10 and 24; Oct. 8 and 22; Nov. 9 and 19, and Dec. 3. Items may be submitted to Jeanne Baron via email, jeanne.baron@wmich.edu, or fax (269) 387-4343. Drop box: 1903 W. Michigan Ave., Kalamazoo, MI 49008-5433. Telephone: (269) 387-4343, or fax (269) 387-4822.

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WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY
Longtime student affairs official new dean of students

Suzie Nagel, associate dean of students, was named dean of students, effective Aug. 4.

Nagel replaces Diane Anderson, who remains WMU’s vice president for student services. “Since 2010, Dr. Nagel has served as associate vice president for student affairs and has been a tireless advocate for students,” says Anderson. “She has extraordinary insight and compassion and addresses each student concern with the utmost care and professionalism. We are so pleased she now carries the title most closely aligned with the work she has been doing for many years.”

She earned a bachelor’s degree from Valparaiso University, a master’s degree from Miami University and a doctoral degree in higher education leadership from WMU.

Robotic ‘temp worker’ will soon be roaming corridors in Waldo Library

A telepresence robot is putting in an appearance at Waldo Library for a few hours every weekend, but soon will be roaming the facility’s corridors during weekdays.

The robot is being tested for its potential use as a way for library patrons and staff members to communicate with one another when they are not in close physical proximity. Patrons can learn more about the robot and even take it for a test drive from 1 to 3 p.m. weekdays so library officials and staff members can explore its potential uses. Librarians will use a video-capable computer to project their image and voice to the bot. Patrons, in turn, will project their image and voice to the bot. Patrons, in turn, will project their image and voice to the bot.

“Telepresence robots are beginning to show up in organizational and educational settings. These robots can help facilitate social interaction when there is physical distance between people,” says Dr. Autumn Edwards, communication, who leads CSRL. “Libraries are large, intricate and sometimes intimidating spaces in which having easy access to assistance may really benefit users. We’ll be watching how our ‘roaming librarians’ and users of the library are able to navigate their interactions with one another.”

At some point this fall, the robot will begin “working” on weekdays so library officials and staff members can explore its potential uses. Librarians will use a video-capable computer to project their image and voice to the bot. Patrons, in turn, will project their image and voice to the librarians via the bot.

“We’re still researching and want see how our users react and engage with the robot,” says May Chang, University Libraries. “Some students have already reported that they find the robot a fun way to interact and particularly helpful when they just have simple questions.”
On Campus with Lu DeBoef

As an environmental specialist at WMU, Lu DeBoef has the opportunity to work with just about everyone on campus, assuring facilities, grounds and construction projects comply with federal and state environmental guidelines.

“We’re a pretty tight-knit group and get along extremely well,” DeBoef says of the five-person staff in the Office of Environmental Health and Safety. “We help each other. Someone will jump in if a colleague needs it. We care about the University, and we are all here to help.”

Her job supporting environmental compliance at WMU covers a wide net, including submitting required reports, training staff members and students, and managing project compliance.

“We make sure the University is following the rules handling biomedical waste, hazardous waste and universal waste,” DeBoef says. “In the end, it’s still Western’s waste. We are still responsible for it even if a contractor dumps it somewhere.”

Another large part of her responsibilities involves erosion and storm water management, areas in which the University is seen as on the forefront. Public and private companies and organizations visit WMU regularly to tour projects related to storm water management practices, and soil and erosion control measures. Some have even used WMU as a training ground.

“The key is keeping Western’s [environmental] footprint the same or better when planning projects. Sometimes, I have to make decisions that are unpopular,” DeBoef says. “It might set back the project a bit, but it’s protecting the University. My job is to make sure we stay in compliance, we preserve what we can environmentally, and we make it better than it was.”

While training the campus community, she makes the connection that everyone is responsible for handling waste that can affect the environment, from a large construction project to disposing of chemicals and everyday items at home.

DeBoef joined WMU in 2010 in her current position after working at Pfizer Inc. She started her career with the Illinois EPA and has been in the environmental compliance profession for over 30 years, working in the areas of air, hazardous waste and water compliance. Originally from Muskegon, she and her husband, Mik, live in Kalamazoo and have five children, one of whom is a senior at WMU. DeBoef enjoys spending time with her children, especially impromptu family dinners when schedules spontaneously align. She keeps active biking, standup paddle boarding, swimming and walking her chocolate-colored Labrador Retriever.

Benefits open enrollment underway for health benefits, FSAs

The open enrollment period for 2016 health care benefits and flexible spending accounts, or FSAs, begins Monday, Oct. 26, and continues through 5 p.m. Friday, Nov. 20.

Open enrollment for health care benefits is available for WMU benefits-eligible non-bargaining employees, retirees and employees who are members of the American Association of University Professors; American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees; Michigan State Employees Association; and Police Officers Association.

During open enrollment, employees and retirees have the option of adding eligible dependents to their health care coverage. Elections made now are effective Jan. 1.

If no action is taken, benefit elections rollover to 2016, except for FSAs. Employees who choose to contribute to an FSA in 2016 must re-enroll or re-entrail.

Those who complete WMU’s wellness program requirements by the end of 2015 receive the wellness incentive for all of 2016. Visit wmich.edu/hr/openenrollment to review materials sent to employees and retirees or access the necessary enrollment forms.

Numerous events scheduled

WMUK launches fall fund drive

WMUK’s public radio station WMUK kicked off its annual fall campaign Oct. 17, and hopes to cut on-air pledging in half.

WMUK will again feature a shortened pledge drive format designed to raise all of the dollars needed in half the live on-air pledge hours.

Membership contributions and additional gifts directly support local program production and to purchase national programs.

WMUK encourages members to support the programs they value by sending in their gifts, contributing online at wmuk.org or calling in a pledge during the live portion of the pledge campaign.

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