The holiday season has the power to be magical, and not because of brightly wrapped packages. The true magic of the holiday season is in watching people come together to brighten the lives of others.

At the Seita Scholars Program, we are fortunate to receive this magic throughout the year, as the volunteers and mentors who work with our program devote time, energy and resources to supporting Seita Scholars from the moment they set foot on our campus.

This generosity is particularly evident during the holiday season, and we want to take a moment and give thanks for the magical sense of holiday that our volunteers and mentors provide through a variety of events during the holidays.

**Finals Week Celebration**

Each year, Seita Scholars have the opportunity to kick off the holiday season (and Final Exam Week) with a wonderful celebration. Always one of the best attended events of the academic year, the Finals Week Celebration boasts delicious food, gifts, music and games that Scholars look forward to for the entire year.

This event would not be possible without the support of several key volunteer groups including:

- WMU knitters from Accounting Services who donate hand knit hats and scarves.
- SWELL who provide gift bags and gifts for the children of Seita Scholars.
- The Kalamazoo Knitter’s Guild who knit an assortment of hats, blankets, scarves, and bags for students.
- St. Catherine of Sienna Parish, who come together to provide food and gifts for students.
- Second Reformed Church, who provide gift bags and raffle gifts for students to take home.

Our students report leaving this event each year feeling warm (with new hats and scarves), full (of great food) and like part of a wonderful community. From our students and staff, thank you to all of the volunteers and groups who make this event possible!

**AFSCME Holiday Dinner**

Another group that supports Seita Scholars throughout the year is our local AFSCME union. Volunteers from AFSCME help students move into their campus apartments and residence halls at the beginning of the semester, and out of them (as needed) for the holiday break.

Each year, on the Tuesday after Final Exam Week,
AFSCME volunteers work to prepare a beautiful holiday dinner for the Seita Scholars who are still on campus for the holidays. Volunteers get special permission to open one of the closed dining halls and spend the day decorating and cooking a wonderful holiday meal.

This dinner provides a beautiful sense of community, bringing together those Scholars who are still on campus during Winter Break.

AFSCME volunteers also collect gifts for the children of Seita Scholars, which both the children and their Scholar parents are so grateful for!

On behalf of the Seita Scholars, their children and the staff, thank you AFSCME for all you do throughout the year!

**Holiday Meals and Gift Cards**

As the University closes for Winter Break, and staff head home to spend the holidays with family, the Seita Scholars Program is not forgotten.

This year, the PSSO donated over 30 gift cards to support Scholars throughout the holidays, which will make wonderful gifts and support Scholars in times of need—thank you so much!

Also, as in years past, our volunteers have rallied to provide hot meals to the Scholars who remain on campus, as the dining halls close for the duration of Winter Break.

Again this year, we have volunteers bringing in delicious meals which will sustain the Scholars through the month of December and into early January. Thank you to everyone who is donating a meal and everyone who offered—we could not support the Seita Scholars without you!

To each and every volunteer and mentor who has contributed to the Seita Scholars Program throughout this year and in years past, please know how much your support means to us.

Your impact on this program, and the lives of the students, is profound. It makes our students feel valued and welcomed by the Kalamazoo and WMU community—and we hope that you all know how much we appreciate

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**Photos from Holiday Festivities**

[Images of holiday festivities]
On Sunday, November 17, approximately 20 Volunteer Career Mentors and Mentees gathered at Pinz Bowling Alley for the second Career Mentor/Mentee Bowling afternoon.

The Volunteer Career Mentor Program links Seita Scholars with professionals working in fields that the students hope to enter after graduation. Events like the Mentor/Mentee Bowling provide matched pairs with an opportunity to relax, socialize and get to know one another.

Mentors and mentees alike identified that the event was a “great time” and noted that it was “nice to hear from other pairs about what they are doing together.”

Moving forward, mentors and mentees will have the opportunity to connect at a variety of activities, ideas for which were generated during the event.

The Seita Scholars Program is still seeking additional Volunteer Career Mentors to be matched with first-year students, as well as returning students.

Prospective mentors must hold a Bachelor’s degree and be currently employed in their field. They must be willing to commit to mentoring a student for one academic year, and be in contact with their mentee for four hours per month. Mentors must also complete a 2 hour training and pass a background check. For more information, please contact Kirk Reber at kirk.reber@wmich.edu.

Throughout the year, Seita Scholars have the opportunity to work with a volunteer financial planner to complete semester, annual and long-term budgets.

For the Spring 2014 semester, our volunteer financial planner will be unavailable. As a result the Seita Scholars Program is seeking a volunteer financial planner to work one-on-one with students one or two days per week to create budgets.

It is important that this person have a background in finances, and be able to navigate the University financial aid system in order to assist students in creating their budgets. We would also ask that they be able to commit one or two days per week for the duration of the semester.

Templates for student budgets have already been created and customized for the Seita Scholars Program and are available for use; the volunteer financial planner works with students to fill in the budget and learn to budget on their own.

If you are interested and able to donate your time, please contact Kirk Reber at kirk.reber@wmich.edu or (269) 387-8381.

As we begin the Spring 2014 semester, students will be replenishing their supplies to start a new semester. High demand items are:

- Full sized toothpaste
- Laundry detergent (high demand item)
- Cleaning supplies
- Paper towel and toilet paper

In addition, as the weather turns colder, new, warm weather clothes are always in demand. Hats, scarves, mittens, jackets and warm socks fly off our shelves and into student’s homes.

Thank you in advance for supporting our Scholars!
December 2013
- Sunday, December 8 — Finals Week Celebration
- Monday, December 8—Friday, December 13 — Finals Week
- Friday, December 13 — Move Day
- Tuesday, December 17 — AFSCME Holiday Dinner
- Wednesday, December 18 — 2nd Annual Chicago Trip
- Friday, December 20 — White Elephant Gift Exchange @ Director’s House
- Sunday, December 22 — Holiday Movie Night
- Tuesday, December 24 — Seita Holiday Brunch
- Thursday, December 26 — Game Night Competition
- Sunday, December 29 — Snow Competition
- Monday, December 30 — Yoga and iRest w/Dr. Yvonne
- Tuesday, December 31 — New Year’s Fest

January 2014
- TBD — Volunteer Career Mentor Training
- Friday, January 3 — Moving Day and Art Hop
- Monday, January 6 — Classes begin at 8a.m.
- Monday, January 20 — MLK Day (no classes)
- Wednesday, January 29 — Seita Town Hall Meeting

February 2014
- Friday, February 28 — Spirit Day

March 2014
- Monday, March 3—Friday, March 7 — Spring Break
- Monday, March 10 — Classes resume

April 2014
- Wednesday, April 9 — Seita Town Hall Meeting
- Monday, April 21—Friday, April 25 — Finals Week