Rethink Smart.

Western is becoming a destination for those who want to think differently about what it means to be smart.

It’s time to ...

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Redefining Success:
- Tasia Richardson: Mogul in the making
- Garrett Bazany: Purpose-filled pursuit
- Daniel Gayden: A vessel for justice
The Show Must Go On

WMU Theatre brought the Pulitzer Prize-winning musical “Sunday in the Park with George” to life this fall. Adapted to be an outdoor, socially distant production, the show delighted an audience that had not experienced live theatre for months.

See how students are adapting...
Safety first

With the ongoing pandemic, this academic year has been like none other, necessitating flexibility and resilience from the campus community. Through careful planning, WMU has continued to offer a high-quality academic experience, putting health and safety at the forefront. More information is available online at wmich.edu/alumni.
Initiatives aim to advance racial justice

The University has announced two major initiatives aimed at dismantling systemic racism and building upon a strong foundation of equity and inclusion. Mountaintop Initiatives is a $2 million investment to advance WMU’s charge toward racial justice. In addition, the newly formed Racial Justice Advisory Committee will lead efforts to address systemic racism and racial inequities on campus and identify actions to build a campuswide culture of change.

“It is a time for action—and that action must be fulsome and authentic in addressing both individual actions and the systems that perpetuate injustice,” says President Edward Montgomery. “The problems that we must address are deep-seated and some of the toughest facing humanity. They are the insidious inequities that hide in the shadows in practices and policies, culture and in our understanding of each other. That is the difficulty of our challenge.”

In WMU’s 2020-21 fiscal year budget, Montgomery called for a $2 million investment in the Mountaintop Initiatives: Continuing the Climb fund as a down payment pursuant to meaningful social change. “With these resources, we will continue our work in the spirit of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.’s address: ‘I’ve been to the Mountaintop.’ I will be seeking proposals from the entire community, especially the Racial Justice Advisory Committee, for investments and initiatives that advance racial justice at WMU,” says Montgomery. “This initial investment will fund efforts that will move us toward a campus rich in human diversity, strong in our desire to dismantle unjust and inequitable systems and united in an effort to demonstrate that hate and racism have no place among us.”

The Racial Justice Advisory Committee (RJAC) will identify issues of systemic racism and racial inequities at WMU and recommend actions the WMU community can take to create a culture of change. The committee is led by Dr. Candy McCorcle, vice president of diversity and inclusion. It is a broad collective of the campus community comprised of representatives from the Board of Trustees, the Office of the President, vice presidents, deans, student government, bargaining units, faculty, staff, students and alumni.

“The RJAC is not just making recommendations to administrators but looking at what we all can do to begin to change our campus,” says McCorkle. “The work we are engaging in will not be easy or fast, because it requires that we begin to identify the problems of the original systems and structures that have created disparities.”

The RJAC will provide a recommended list of actions for areas across campus, identify how research, teaching and engagement could promote inclusion at WMU and in the community, offer recommendations for accountability, and provide opportunities to shape change across a broad group of participants.

Dr. Alessander Danna-dos-Santos, left, distributes face shields at Pre-K International in Kalamazoo. He created and donated dozens of shields to give young students an added layer of protection.

Dozens of children entered the school year with an added layer of protection thanks to a partnership between WMU’s Laboratory for Advances in Rehabilitation Sciences and Synergy Applied Medical and Research Inc. Dr. Alessander Danna-dos-Santos spearheaded the project.

“Someone mentioned the low quality and relative high costs of children’s face shields,” says Danna-dos-Santos, an associate professor of physical therapy. “Having a health care background rooted in problem-based learning, I immediately started researching the issue. I came to the same conclusion that we could do better in quality and bring the costs down.”

A conversation with the owner of Pre-K International in Kalamazoo confirmed a need for more protection for kids on school buses in her district. So, Danna-dos-Santos hopped on his computer and began designing prototypes that could be used in addition to face masks to protect the eyes and the potential spread of infection. He worked on the project with Dr. Adriana Degani of WMU’s Unified Clinics and also enlisted the help of his own middle school-aged children to try out the face shields and ensure they fit properly.

“Dr. Danna-dos-Santos shows through his work how academia can impact our communities directly,” says Dr. Ron Cisler, dean of the College of Health and Human Services. “His innovative work on specialized materials and use of state-of-the-art printing technologies has produced a face shield that increases the likelihood of our children using protective equipment, assuring safety and engaging in interactive learning.”

This is one of several projects Danna-dos-Santos is involved with aimed at answering a need in the community. Others include developing a low-cost spirometer for monitoring COVID-19 recovery, identifying new algorithms for assessing higher risks of falling in older adults and developing new protocols for the assessment of long-term concussive events.

“I just like to help,” says Danna-dos-Santos. “I feel it is my duty as a public researcher to provide my expertise to those who need it.”

WMU honored with national diversity award

The University’s diversity, equity and inclusion programs have received acclaim from a national diversity magazine. WMU was one of 90 institutions from around the nation named an annual Higher Education Excellence in Diversity—HEED—honoree by INSIGHT Into Diversity magazine. The University was recognized for its efforts supporting diversity in higher education, an honor WMU has received each year since 2013.

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To help researchers now and in the future, curate state COVID-19 data is now openly available at the University Libraries, thanks to one of WMU’s own.

Information on statewide hospital occupancy and availability of personal protective equipment—PPE—is tracked on the Michigan.gov COVID-19 website, but it is not publicly archived. To preserve this historically relevant information, Daria Orlovskaya, data librarian and assistant professor in the University Libraries, captured and compiled the data in a downloadable file that allows users to view and analyze it more efficiently.

“I had already been tracking data released by the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services when the pandemic hit Michigan at the beginning of March and was struck by the changes in data reporting,” Orlovskaya says. “I knew that aggregating released data and preserving the original webpages would be important.”

Orlovskaya’s Michigan Hospital Tracking focuses on Michigan hospital occupancy and PPE availability. She began capturing the data on April 2 after identifying the need to preserve it for potential use during the crisis and future research opportunities.

She also developed Coronavirus Michigan COVID-19 Overview Tracking that aggregates demographic data of confirmed and potential COVID-19 cases in Michigan. Both data sets are free to access and download through GitHub.

NSF grant aids WMU in building foundation for safe, secure artificial intelligence

Self-driving vehicles. Smart digital personal assistants. Real-time multilingual translators. Artificial intelligence—AI—applications are all around us. A computer science faculty team is working to ensure AI isn’t hystcked or misused for nefarious reasons. Drs. Alisa Feng, Shamaei Bhattaharjee, Steve Carr and Aja Gupta received a nearly $300,000 grant from the National Science Foundation to create materials for teaching safe, secure and reliable artificial intelligence.

“As AI increasingly permeates every facet of our daily lives, we begin to observe reported cases of AI-related failures and misadventures,” says Carr. “We are now at a critical juncture when there is a critical need to implement the best practices and lessons learned from the pilot to craft blueprints for AI education and preserving the original webpages would be important.”

Increasing artificial intelligence literacy among students is paramount in helping them increase awareness of the potential use during the crisis and future research opportunities. She also developed Coronavirus Michigan COVID-19 Overview Tracking that aggregates demographic data of confirmed and potential COVID-19 cases in Michigan. Both data sets are free to access and download through GitHub.

Enslaved by a family member who trafficked her from the West African country of Togo to the United States as a child, Bella has worked to come by for Hounakey.

As a freshman in the Seita School of Business, Hounakey won first place in the country dedicated to rooting out exploitation. She also helped draft an executive order combating human trafficking and online child exploitation.

It is much bigger than myself. I find strength in knowing that the efforts I am part of will somewhat indirectly save lives,” says Hounakey, who aspires to one day become a member of Congress.

Mark Deloney, who serves as a Foundation Scholars advisor at WMU and helped create the Seita Scholars program, has no doubt she will see her ambitions realized.

“Bella has thrived after enduring almost unbearably hardship as a child and teenager. She demonstrates extraordinary resilience, courage, strength and skill. What sets her apart, however, is her incomparable compassion and kindness,” says Deloney, who first met Hounakey as a freshman in the Seita Scholars program and has grown close enough to give her a hug whenever she needs one.
Let’s expand what it means to be smart

When our Marketing and Strategic Communications team came to me with the concepts behind the Rethink Smart creative strategy, I must confess that it connected with me immediately. Not simply as the University president looking at the challenges our students face, but also as someone who walked in those same shoes when I began college many years ago with a love for college sports but without a clue of what would be my chosen major.

I knew I wanted to find a good job so I chose a major in the business school, but I was still searching for my purpose. My ‘why’ I considered less school or even changing my major to mining engineering, but eventually, I would have required me to add a year to my studies, a deal breaker for me and my parents.

I did not get excited about my future until I found my way into the honors economics program. I gained access to professors who mentioned me and shared their passion for the field and opened my eyes to the myriad professional opportunities it offered. This ignited my own interest, set me on a path to graduate school and ultimately the career path that I would pursue for the next 40 years.

My path and experience isn’t unique. In fact, it’s something that’s all too common. Despite that, my alma mater was not set up to accommodate it. To allow students opportunities to try and fail, to learn to adapt to change and prepare for an uncertain world were not part of the higher education plan, let alone its lexicon, in the 20th century.

We’re now past the early part of the 21st century. The world is vastly different than it was for my generation, and the needs of today’s college-age individuals are different than they were for many of us who finished school in the last century. Globalization and rapid technological change has laid bare the need to recalibrate the college experience and what we can offer prospective students who are preparing for a world that is not just different from the one that their parents faced but different from what they themselves expected just a year ago.

Western Michigan University is building on the strengths of what college contributes to the student’s experience—a strong academic base at a dynamic research university and all the best aspects of a residential college experience. What we are offering in addition to those attributes is the promise of giving students the space to find out about themselves, what drives them to get out of bed every day, to do more than what’s required and to push beyond what they thought was possible in pursuing their futures.

You may remember reading about our Think Big initiative in the fall/winter 2019-20 issue of the university magazine. Rethink Smart is the ongoing effort to further the development of an identity that could express what makes WMU distinctive from others in the higher education field.

Think Big showed us that by amplifying our strengths in academics, mental and physical well-being and career exploration, we had the potential to connect with 21st century college students and demonstrate that finding their path to success in the world didn’t mean relying on someone else’s definition of “smart.” From that, our team did the research and applied the creative energy to a strategy that calls on those considering college to Rethink Smart.

We’ve witnessed the talent of faculty members who are not simply leaders in their respective fields but are also committed to helping students pursue their interests. Like the economics professors in my past who regaled me with real-world applications for the concepts that had previously lain flat in textbooks, WMU’s faculty have a reputation for connecting subject matter with the possibilities and helping students see themselves in thriving future careers.

You’ll see that reflected in this issue when you read about the new Sleeping Giant Capital investment firm (on page 10), established by Drs. Doug Lapato and Derrick Motier in the Haworth College of Business, this new entity will bring businesses, MBA students and entrepreneurs together to establish a leadership pipeline to build continuity in enterprises that did not have a chain of succession. Together, the businesses and aspiring leaders will discover ways to thrive.

In addition to connecting students to academics that inspire them, we’re also helping them discover their abilities to recalibrate their goals when the world hands them inevitable setbacks. Physicist assistant student Garrett Bazany learned this about himself well before coming to Western. After a spinal column injury during his senior year left him paralyzed, he was determined to return to his active lifestyle. And when he set his sights on a career in health care, he found a fit in the WMU physician assistant program. He’s already envisioning a future where he’ll be an advocate for patients who face life-changing diagnoses.

There are but two of the many examples of how our University is demonstrating that we are preparing our students for vibrant, thriving futures.

We’re all facing challenges of some form on a daily basis. Those who will weather our current economic reality the best are those who know that a single setback doesn’t equal permanent disaster, and that building, or rebuilding, a future based on what we love to do is a recipe for success.

I am excited about the future for Western Michigan University, for what we represent to those who enrolled here and how we can demonstrate the possibilities to our prospective applicants through Rethink Smart. If you are an alumnus, I hope that it will inspire you to remember your time on campus and reflect on the great start that WMU gave you.

Sincerely,

Edward Montgomery, Ph.D.
President
Think Big leads to Rethink Smart

More than a year ago, WMU began an introspective process called Think Big to examine WMU’s distinctive strengths as an institution of higher learning and, most importantly, determine how best to further fortify those qualities to advance our students.

After extensive engagement with current students, alumni, faculty, staff and market research of prospective WMU applicants, we in the WMU’s identity as an institution that is highly responsive to student needs for purpose, well-being and career.

To that end, here are some of the strategies in the offing:

- Offering unrivaled flexibility for students to discover and align their purpose with career goals, including flexibility to change majors as their interests evolve.
- Strengthening and restructuring academic programs so that students follow their interests, abilities and experiences, they stay on track for timely graduation.
- Blurring the lines between school and work by engaging students in experience-based learning, including through internships, work by engaging students in experience-based learning, including through internships, and work by engaging students in experience-based learning, including through internships, and work by engaging students in experience-based learning, including through internships, and work by engaging students in experience-based learning, including through internships.
- Partnering with businesses, nonprofits and other organizations seeking to tap student talent. Every year, students, no matter their discipline, can have an applied experience for their resume.
- A renewed, more intensive focus on wellness—students’ mental, physical and academic well-being.
- Strengthening and restructuring academic advising so that as majors as their interests evolve.
- Creating numerous WMU enterprises that can have an applied experience for students, no matter their discipline, including through internships, and work by engaging students in experience-based learning, including through internships.
- Partnering with businesses, nonprofits and other organizations seeking to tap student talent.

In all ways.

Pursuing your Purpose

The great beauty of Think Big was the process was not an exercise in self-interrogation, but rather in self- examination and in all ways.

WMU is proud to prepare students from around the globe for a life well-lived by helping them to pursue, thrive and prosper in their everyday living.

That’s smart.

PURSUE

Pursuing your purpose and seeing possibility, it’s knowing your why and striving to achieve it always, and in all ways.

PREPARED FOR OPPORTUNITY

Career preparation can come from anywhere—even on a rugby team. Engineering student and rugby player Joseph Backe cultivated his skills in math and science courses in high school, taking every available class related to engineering. He also competed in rugby when it came time to look at colleges, Backe scheduled for a place where he could continue to develop both of his passions. He found that home at WMU, winning a prestigious Medallion Scholarship. The relationships he’s built, both in the classroom and on the rugby pitch, are helping him reach his goals.

“I never thought rugby would help me in engineering, but one of my coaches on the team actually got me my internship,” says Backe, who has spent summers working at Edgewater Automation. And the best part? He led WMU’s rugby team to its first-ever win in the MAC Championship.

“I went on college visits before Western, but as soon as I came here, I knew this is where I wanted to be. It’s a big school but not too big, and it just feels like you have a better opportunity to succeed and thrive in this environment.”

On the following pages, read more stories of students embodying what Rethink Smart means, demonstrating that WMU is not just a place to go to college, it’s a place to create a life well-lived.

Proper Preparing yourself for every opportunity, combining knowledge with wisdom to achieve greatness in every moment throughout your career.

Pursuing your purpose and seeing possibility, it’s knowing your why and striving to achieve it always, and in all ways.

Pursuing your purpose and seeing possibility, it’s knowing your why and striving to achieve it always, and in all ways.

Pursuing your purpose and seeing possibility, it’s knowing your why and striving to achieve it always, and in all ways.

Thrive

Preparing to overcome setbacks in a changing world. It means a happier life by focusing on personal wellness and a life well-lived.

Prosper

Preparing for every opportunity, combining knowledge with wisdom to achieve greatness in every moment throughout your career.

“Western has pushed me to challenge myself. I honestly don’t think I would’ve had as much courage as I did with Eunique Kisses if I weren’t attending Western.”

Student leader by day, business mogul by night

Smart

That’s identifying a need, figuring out how to fill it yourself and then turning it into a burgeoning business—while still balancing school and a full-time job.

To say Tasia Richardson is busy is an understatement. The senior criminal justice major from Battle Creek, Michigan, is a factory worker and WMU student ambassador by day and lip gloss mogul by night.

“Coffee is my best friend,” she laughs. “Most nights I’m falling asleep making the lip gloss, but it’s worth it.”

Her business venture, Eunique Kisses—a play on her middle name, Eunique—is a passion project that grew out of necessity. A self-described “gritty girl,” she had trouble finding lip gloss that stayed on all day and didn’t dry out her lips. So, she decided to make it herself.

“The process of getting my business up and running started with doing a lot of research on things that are good on lips, benefits from certain ingredients, and also how main focus was marketing.”

Despite a few bumps in the beginning of her journey—including launching a business during a pandemic—Richardson kept at it and pushed on toward her dream. On a typical day over the summer, she would work in the factory at Kellogg’s from 7 a.m. to 3 p.m., take an hour break and then work until about midnight at her parents’ house perfecting and packaging her lip gloss recipes, developing marketing strategies and handling sales. Now that fall semester is underway, she continue growing Eunique Kisses from her apartment while also introducing prospective students to the WMU campus as a student ambassador and tour guide.

“Helping students decide what college they’ll go to, that’s a big decision to make that determines your future. So, to be a part of that decision-making, that’s really big,” says Richardson, who is happy to share her own Bronco success story. “WMU set me up for life by making me believe in myself. The school cares about every student and will do whatever they can to make you succeed.”

Richardson’s full tuition is covered as a Future Force scholar. The program, in partnership with the Southwestern Michigan Urban League, offers a full scholarship to Battle Creek high school students who complete an intensive four-year program that focuses on building college readiness, developing leadership skills and volunteering in the community while also excelling in the classroom.

“Western has pushed me to challenge myself. I honestly don’t think I would’ve had as much courage as I did with Eunique Kisses if I weren’t attending Western,” says Richardson, who aspires to use her sign language minor and become an interpreter after graduation while continuing to grow Eunique Kisses. “I’m proud to be a Bronco. I love that because we inspire each other, we motivate each other, and the atmosphere is unmatched.”

Student leader by day, business mogul by night

“Western has pushed me to challenge myself. I honestly don’t think I would’ve had as much courage as I did with Eunique Kisses if I weren’t attending Western.”

Tasia Richardson
Garrett Bazany

“I want to be the front line advocating what’s possible in the wheelchair, break societal norms, prove that you can do anything and be on the front line of patient care to give people with a life-changing injury or diagnosis a spark of hope. I want to be on the front line of patient care, to give people with a life-changing injury or diagnosis a spark of hope.”

Bazany spent six weeks in a rehabilitation facility doing full-time therapy and, miraculously, was able to join his classmates when the school year started back up in the fall. Unable to compete on the cross country team, he made physical therapy his new after-school sport. Six months after his injury, when he was cleared for more rigorous physical activity, he tried water skiing. Six months later, he tried snow skiing. He became stronger and learned how to adapt outdoor sports and other activities he loved to work with his physical limitations. Soon, his wheelchair became a vehicle for new adventures.

“I was almost a blessing and a curse,” he says. “It’s given me a purpose. I can use what I’ve experienced to make a difference in other people’s lives.”

LIFE-CHANGING MOMENT

An active teenager, Bazany was practicing flips on a trampoline in May 2010, the end of his freshman year in high school, when he came up short and landed on his head. He couldn’t move his legs. In a haze, he managed to pull himself to the edge, stabilize his neck between the springs of the trampoline and call 9-1-1.

“I remember thinking, ‘My life’s over now. Everything I like to do is done. What am I going to do now?’”

Amid the fear and doubt, though, says of hope appeared. In fact, Bazany had already been told many odds. Doctors told him the location of his spinal fracture should have paralyzed him from the neck down, meaning his injury or diagnosis a spark of hope. Bazany says. “I want) to show them that the world isn’t over and guide them in recognizing the potential of their futures.”

Smart is the pursuits of purpose that drive the best for others to make. It’s digging deep when you feel lost and finding strength in your own story.

“To me it isn’t enough to just create for self-fulfillment, but it is our obligation as artists to depict the society around us,” says Daniel Gayden, a senior jazz studies student. First exposed to jazz by his grandparents, Gayden always appreciated the art form, but it wasn’t until he took a mandatory class in high school that he saw it as an actual career path. Today, making music is as much of a Gayden’s life as eating and sleeping. It’s an outlet for his emotions and, as he’s grown as an artist, it’s become a platform to increase awareness and push for change. But it took some introspection to bring that passion to the surface. Gayden chose WMU because of its world-class jazz studies program. Coming from a performing arts high school in Chicago, Gayden says he’s learned a lot of things, “I had the experience of going to New Orleans about a week before everything shut down for the pandemic, and I went to three slave plantations,” he says. “It was very intense and very emotional. Most of those slaves didn’t get to live a legacy. They weren’t seen as someone whose life was worth remembering.”

A private person, Gayden wouldn’t describe himself as an activist in the typical sense of the world. But he does have a passion for using his art as activism and giving a voice to those in his community who don’t have the opportunity to be heard. With the support and guidance of Hall and his other professors, Gayden says he’s learned valuable lessons about making the transition from a student to a professional musician.

“I had the platform, I want to say something that’s going to leave an impact for people who feel like me.”

“I have the platform, I want to say something for people who feel like me,” he says. “I hope my legacy is someone who tries to use what I did to make a difference in our society, in my community. I want to be remembered for using any ability that I have to make a change and to help people’s lives.”

Black men begin to notice they’re treated differently than their friends who don’t look like them. The third movement expresses the love between Black men and women, be it mother and son or husband and wife. The suite culminates in a fourth movement about the legacy of a Black man and figuring out what is that. It’s had the experience of going to New Orleans about a week before everything shut down for the pandemic, and I went to three slave plantations,” he says. “It was very intense and very emotional. Most of those slaves didn’t get to live a legacy. They weren’t seen as someone whose life was worth remembering.”
Shining light on the future of disinfection

In the midst of a global pandemic, WMU is at the forefront of cutting-edge disinfection innovation aimed at making the places we work, learn and live safer. International product development firm Tekna tapped the University to pilot its new AvaUV devices, which use ultraviolet—UVC—light to kill pathogens on professional tools and everyday personal devices.

UV technology works by generating concentrated UVC light in a highly reflective, contained space that can penetrate hard-to-clean surfaces. It’s the kind of tool Pete Strazdas, WMU’s associate vice president for facilities management, was eager to add to his team’s arsenal.

“We were looking at every facility application to make our campus safer, and the AvaUV product was unique,” he says, adding that it was important for the University to utilize multiple approaches to sanitizing in addition to frequent surface cleaning. “A big problem is, how do you handle items that people bring into buildings that are frequently touched, such as keys, phones, cards and books? UV technology is a great application to solve that.”

While thinking globally, it was important to the company to act locally in the development process.

“As CEO of Tekna and alumni of WMU, it is especially rewarding to have the opportunity to partner with WMU through the first comprehensive site installation,” says Kris Eager, who founded the company in 1988 with wife and fellow alum, Claire, the company’s chief administrative officer. “WMU’s participation and commitment to a comprehensive safety program for its students, faculty and guests is just another reason we are proud to be Broncos.”

WMU industrial design alumnus Adam Dudycha played a part in designing, building and coding electronics for the portfolio of devices. They range from small, table-top units called the Capsule that can disinfect small personal items in just 30 seconds to two larger locker-sized containers called the Cube and Cube 2 that can disinfect larger equipment in two minutes.

“It has been a unique test of Tekna’s abilities and talent, and I am proud to be part of something that can bring comfort and ease concerns during these difficult times we are in now,” he says.

For the pilot, AvaUV devices have been placed in various areas across the WMU campus including Valley Dining Center, Waldo Library, Floyd Hall and the College of Health and Human Services. Tekna will collect information about how each device is used in order to help with future product development.

“I could see the learnings and momentum we gain with Western, tailoring and working together to find a better solution for taking care of students on campus, and that could start to trickle out to other schools in Michigan and beyond, which is really exciting to me,” says Bryce Porte, industrial design manager. “We’re getting a chance to learn side by side with the University.”

The pilot has turned parts of campus into a living-learning lab, giving students a front-row seat to the development of emerging technology with the added benefit of enhanced cleaning measures to mitigate risk during the pandemic. It’s the latest in a number of investments Tekna has made in WMU.

“Our community means a lot. Western Michigan University means a lot. And supporting that, whether it’s through curriculum development or donating our time and effort to support students, all of that has culminated into great relationships in several parts of the University,” says Rozewicz, who is also president of the advisory board for WMU’s Richmond Institute for Design and Innovation. “What a great opportunity here locally to celebrate great innovation, great product design with a great University and great community partner. I don’t think we’d have it any other way.”

It’s going to actually help rid bacteria and pathogens that could be harmful, says Rob Hicks, senior lead designer. “We look at Western as such a great partner for us. It’s wonderful that they’ve opened their doors to bring us in and run this pilot. We’d love to do more of this in the future.”

The technology works by generating concentrated UVC light in a highly reflective, contained space that can penetrate hard-to-clean surfaces. It’s the kind of tool Pete Strazdas, WMU’s associate vice president for facilities management, was eager to add to his team’s arsenal.

“We were looking at every facility application to make our campus safer, and the AvaUV product was unique,” he says, adding that it was important for the University to utilize multiple approaches to sanitizing in addition to frequent surface cleaning. “A big problem is, how do you handle items that people bring into buildings that are frequently touched, such as keys, phones, cards and books? UV technology is a great application to solve that.”

While thinking globally, it was important to the company to act locally in the development process.

“As CEO of Tekna and alumni of WMU, it is especially rewarding to have the opportunity to partner with WMU through the first comprehensive site installation,” says Kris Eager, who founded the company in 1988 with wife and fellow alum, Claire, the company’s chief administrative officer. “WMU’s participation and commitment to a comprehensive safety program for its students, faculty and guests is just another reason we are proud to be Broncos.”

AN INNOVATIVE PURSUIT

Early on in the fight against COVID-19, like many companies, Tekna began looking for avenues to use its expertise to give back to the community.

“We’re very excited because we have a differentiated product that is really going to help people. At the end of the day, that’s what this is about. It’s about mitigating risk and cutting the chain of events where people are carrying pathogens with them every day,” says Mika Rozewicz, Tekna vice president.

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Sky’s the limit

One of the College of Aviation’s brand-new Piper Seminole aircraft flies over Main Campus as fall colors begin to dot the landscape.
When it rains, it stalls:
WMU team steering research on weather-related impacts to autonomous vehicle technology

Dr. Zach Asher, assistant professor of mechanical and aerospace engineering and director of WMU’s Energy Efficient and Autonomous Vehicles Lab, and doctoral student Nick Cobenville were awarded a grant from the Michigan Translational Research and Commercialization—MTRAC—Innovation Hub for Advanced Transportation. The grant will help bolster research for a new business venture they’ve launched through WMU called Revision Autonomy.

“There’s a lot to be done here. There are lots of different types of weather,” says Asher. “You can have extremely dark conditions, which are challenging for driver assistance and autonomous systems. You can have heavy snow cover, light snow or actual snowing conditions. You have rain, heavy rain, fog. Each of these may result in a little bit of nuance. On top of that, we have all these different types of vehicles and levels of autonomy, so we’ve really got our hands full here.”

Asher and Cobenville plan to use the MTRAC funding to develop basic software that informs technology on how to drive in bad weather. They’ll collect data from a vehicle outfitted with a camera and sensors.

Once the video frames are received from the camera, we are basically applying various machine learning and computer vision techniques to process the image, which provides a safe, drivable region for the vehicle to traverse,” says Cobenville. The team expects to have a viable product to debut in August 2021.

Their research is among a select group of projects identified by the organization that aim to address future or poorly met market needs, offering ways to increase the efficiency, safety and sustainability of moving people and goods. Through MTRAC, each team of researchers receives mentorship support to help move their projects toward commercialization.
“These projects have the potential to solve some challenging issues, and we look forward to seeing how the funding and mentorship help them complete their milestones in the coming year,” says Denise Graves, university relations director at the Michigan Economic Development Corporation.

**FINDING A NEED**

Asher and Cobenville’s business journey began in early 2019 when WMU was tapped by the Michigan Department of Transportation to develop and pilot two autonomous electric shuttles on campus for students with disabilities.

“I think Nick was initially shocked. At the time, he was working on some of the details with the autonomous system and came to find out that even if there are a little bit of weather issues—something minor as slight rain—basically the whole pilot would completely shut down,” Asher says. “At the same time, there was a lot of research going on over at the American Center for Mobility talking about the need for weather research for autonomous vehicles. And I think Nick and I were both very inspired to try and pursue this.”

The wheels began turning, and the team started laying the groundwork for Reunion Autonomy. They secured a grant through WMU’s technology development fund and also enrolled in the Introduction to Customer Discovery—ICD—training program, which offers guidance to entrepreneurs as they begin to explore target markets and customers.

“From the ICD program, I began to gather the business perspective and realized it doesn’t matter how awesome a solution you develop. It only matters if others are interested in buying that solution,” says Cobenville. “I’ve also learned to communicate with experts in the industry, like program managers, engineers, directors and at some amazing top companies, like NVIDIA, Honda, Toyota and some great automotive start-ups.”

Through interviews with 30 people in the industry, the team was able to learn more about the needs of potential customers and gaps in the market. Now Asher and Cobenville are taking part in the National Science Foundation’s Innovation Corps program, which takes the discovery process to the next level.

**NAVIGATING THE UNKNOWN**

In terms of the natural progression of autonomous technology, Asher believes there’s a reason weather conditions haven’t been a major focus of researchers so far.

“There are so many things to do for automating aspects of driving around the city, on the highway, etc. That makes it the most sense to most companies to start with the easiest possible weather conditions and get a system working from there before moving to different weather conditions,” he says. Because of this, a majority of testing currently underway is happening in places like California and Arizona where clear skies and sunshine are plentiful.

It’s created a clear lane for innovators like Asher and Cobenville to shift their research to other crucial safety areas that aren’t getting as much attention. Plus, it gives them a chance to bring their own personal experience to the table.

“As someone who’s lived in a climate that has snow every winter my whole life, I like winter sports,” says Asher. “But, being out and active during the winter is always a little bit risky. If there’s a lot of snow on the ground, there’s ice, and it’s not necessarily fun to navigate. Having a system to help ensure safety when traveling in some of these conditions, I think, is a really big deal.”

West Michigan’s dynamic weather patterns make Kalamazoo a prime location for testing and developing technology able to navigate everything from rain and fog to snow and ice. The proximity to several automotive engineering research and design companies also provides an ideal launching point for Reunion Autonomy.

The shift to distance education amid the COVID-19 pandemic hasn’t slowed their progress. Cobenville is able to collect data from home in suburban Chicago using a vehicle the team acquired that’s outfitted with a number of sensors. He’s even able to simulate snowy conditions during the summer months with the help of unmapped gravel gravel.

**GROWING TALENT AT WMU**

Asher and Cobenville hope to tap into the unique talent base at WMU if their business continues to expand. The University was among the first in the world to offer autonomous vehicle classes to undergraduate students.

“The program that we have here at Western is very unique, because we are giving students an unorthodox experience to learn the fundamental engineering concepts for every part of the autonomous vehicle system,” Asher says. “Every student here learns every system.”

**IN-PERSON LEARNING OPTIONS**

In-person learning courses meet physically in classrooms, laboratories or other instructional spaces on scheduled meeting days and times. Students are offered hands-on or participatory learning in a physical format that requires wearing a mask and interacting with social distancing measures in place.

Hybrid learning courses meet both in-person and through virtual delivery with 51% or more of the instruction occurring through distance education, either asynchronously or synchronously.

Asynchronous content delivery takes place virtually without any scheduled meetings, whereas synchronous content delivery takes place virtually with scheduled meetings. The hybrid format is used when some of the course delivery requires hands-on or participatory learning scenarios in a physical format.

**Distance education has both asynchronous and fully synchronous learning options as well as partially synchronous learning. While there are no in-person sessions, instructors can offer flexible schedules to meet coursework and student needs. Partially synchronous learning allows instructors to incorporate periodic synchronous virtual sessions when the subject matter requires real-time demonstration, collaboration or interaction.**

As we’ve navigated this unprecedented period, WMU students, faculty, staff and leaders have remained flexible in responding to this novel coronavirus to ensure we are balancing educational excellence with health and safety realities.
Starting a new life in a new country with a language you don’t understand is difficult enough as an adult. Making that transition as a child in a pandemic, when a mysterious disease abruptly shut down what little normality you’ve become accustomed to, is beyond challenging.

“A lot of schools were unprepared to address online teaching in general but even more so for English learners,” says Dr. Selena Prestacio, associate professor of literacy studies. “I thought about this very vulnerable population and considered, ‘How can we use this opportunity to help teachers assist English learners during this time?’”

She spoke with two graduate students in the Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages—TESOL—master’s program to get a better understanding of students’ needs. Laura Frantz and Austin Szafranski both work with children in a rural school district in southwest Michigan who are considered newcomers, meaning they’ve been in the country a year or less and are still building English proficiency. Both said they wished they could read aloud to their students, but connecting was a challenge because many did not have internet access or computers to facilitate lessons.

“I thought, ‘Okay, if you really want to do read-alouds and have input, why don’t we use voice recorders?’ It’s low-tech. It could be more affordable,” and, she says, it could also supplement paper packets, the students and their families would probably have difficulty reading. “This way, they could provide that audio support for students and also have students listening to English.”

Prestacio applied for a COVID-19 Response Grant from WMU’s Office of Research and Innovation to fund a design-based research study focused on bridging the technology gap between English learners in rural areas and their teachers by utilizing voice recorders to deliver lessons.

GETTING TO WORK

Through the grant, Frantz and Szafranski purchased several dozen voice recorders so they could record lessons for their students. They coordinated weekly dropoff and pickup times with families and started seeing the benefits shortly after the program started.

Frantz and Szafranski noticed significant increases in homework completion rates among their students once they began delivering voice recorders.

“I sent home a little calendar with daily assignments that they were supposed to do in addition to the recordings, and I would ask them to find some sight words in a book and then write them in a sentence,” says Frantz. “And they would come back with a whole sheet of sight words that they wrote. Some of them really took it upon themselves to learn all summer long.”

The unintended consequences of the project were even more encouraging. In addition to students developing their English skills, parents were also building their own comprehension.

“It was something that not only the students were excited about but entire families were excited about,” Prestacio says. “It was also a good way to foster improved family-school partnerships.”

“I have worked extremely hard trying to build family relationships over the last six years of working here,” says Frantz, who became an important lifeline for families over the course of the project as they were trying to navigate the pandemic and understand the rapid changes in the school system because of COVID-19. “I looked at this as a great opportunity. It’s really hard to build those relationships usually.”

LESSONS FOR THE FUTURE

The initial success of the program has already led to its expansion within the district, with two additional ESL teachers being provided voice recorders through the COVID-19 grant. Prestacio, Frantz and Szafranski hope it doesn’t stop there, especially given the hybrid format that their district is using to start off the school year.

“We’re hoping to share this with other teachers so that they can use this as a model, perhaps,” Prestacio says, noting that voice recorders could be an important tool for many districts even after the pandemic is over when language and technology barriers remain.

“It’s thinking outside the box about, how can we help these kids?” adds Szafranski. “Realizing that sometimes there are simple answers for complex issues.”

The new coronavirus created crises and sent every sector into panic mode. It’s important in situations like this, says Frantz, to make sure the most vulnerable don’t get lost in the shuffle.

“I know that teachers are overwhelmed right now with everything going on. So, it’s easy to think of the majority or what will work for most of these students. But we need to remember that these are kids’ lives and we can’t just forget about them or put them on the back burner. There are resources and there are ways that we can advocate for our kids and their family to give them a good, positive experience.”

While providing a valuable service to young English learners, Szafranski and Frantz are also gaining valuable professional experience. The grad students’ work with these younger pupils also is a reflection of WMU’s motto: So That All May Learn.

“We have been so blessed to have been given this opportunity to support both our newcomers and their families during this pandemic,” Frantz says, “It has been extremely rewarding to put into practice the skills and ideas that we have learned about in our coursework and see the instant benefits. We are truly thankful for this knowledge and the funding which allowed us the ability to reach all of our students.”
The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated underlying trends in business and society. It seems like everyone is thinking about the future and asking the same question, “What’s next?”

The Center for Principled Leadership and Business Strategy is part of the Haworth College of Business’ vision for what is next. The center provides immersive learning experiences at the undergraduate and graduate levels that blur the lines between education and professional business experience, connecting WMU with the West Michigan business community.

Serving as co-directors of the center are associate professors of management, Drs. Doug Lepisto and Derrick McIver, whose passion is creating competitive advantage for students, companies and WMU that focus on purpose and profit. “The center and the leadership and business strategy program strive to provide the best experiential learning for business students in the country,” says McIver.

“Traditional notions of shareholder-only business models are becoming obsolete. And traditional notions of higher education are becoming obsolete. We aspire to set a new standard for business education,” Launches in 2019 with a $6.5 million investment from the Haworth family, Greenleaf Trust, Chairman William D. Johnston, the Menard family and the Charles Koch Foundation, the center teaches students that purpose and profit can be powerfully linked through the actions and strategies of leaders. “A business’ significant economic impact is transformational when paired with wide, positive community impact,” says Lepisto. “That is why the center fills a critical need—it teaches the concept.”

**PROJECTS THAT PERFORM**

The linchpin of the center is “learning by doing.” The innovative consulting projects designed for leadership and business strategy students highlight how the center achieves big wins for students and the community.

“The leadership and business strategy courses are unlike any others’ to be taken in college,” says senior Logan Mulholland. “Previously, I would have never considered myself a strong leader, but by working on real problems for real businesses, I was faced with team conflict, ambiguity and fast-paced changes. I have not only learned how to effectively lead a team in-person and online but also what my leadership style is. I am now more confident in myself as a student, leader and future business professional.”

Helping to build that confidence are executives like Kevin Carmody, a WMU alumnus and senior partner at Carmody, a WMU alumnus and senior partner at McKinsey & Company who has been coaching students in the program.

“It has been a terrific experience to mentor these talented students. What impresses me is their intellectual curiosity, personal drive and commitment to helping companies tackle some of their most complex problems. This program connects students with senior executives to help them grow and thrive in a rapidly changing world.”

**BRONCONESS**

Students created a purpose-driven wine brand in partnership with Tremonti Vinyard in Chile, analyzing whether a philanthropic enterprise model could apply to the wine category. To date, the wine, which is offered in stores such as Meijer, Harding’s and Trader Joe’s, has raised more than $25,000 for student scholarships and is operated by a student team.

**REVOLUTION FARMS**

Students worked with Revolution Farms to aid the community, focused indoor farming company in determining market size, offerings and opportunities for expansion. Traveling throughout the Midwest, students collected customer data and made critical recommendations for the organization’s future.

**ACCESS TO A CAPITAL**

**CONSULTING**

A large-scale consulting project, alongside faculty, solve problems for senior leadership teams.

**PERSONAL EXECUTIVE COACHING**

For students.

**A COURSE**

On small business acquisition.

**INVESTMENT FUND/ACQUIRE AND OPERATE WEST MICHIGAN COMPANIES**

**EVENTS AND A PODCAST**

About leading profitable businesses that make contributions to stakeholders and society.

**RESEARCH**

On topics such as leadership strategy, meaningful work and leading with purpose.

**THE JUNGLE**

The center established THE JUNGLE podcast, seeing a need for thought leadership as organizations approached the COVID-19 crisis. The guests include Fortune 500 executives, government officials and entrepreneurs.

**SLEEPING GIANT CAPITAL**

New fund aims to raise $50M to acquire small businesses

A private investment firm with ties to WMU’s Haworth College of Business announced a $50 million investment fund to generate economic, social and educational returns in West Michigan by acquiring small businesses.

Managed by Drs. Doug Lepisto and Derrick McIver, Sleeping Giant Capital will pursue at least two acquisitions per year with 80% of acquisitions located within West Michigan.

The transition of ownership requires a pipeline of talented future owner-operators. To address this, the Center for Principled Leadership and Business Strategy offers a training program that is open to MBA students as well as experienced professionals.

McIver points to preserving a business legacy as key for those looking for a successor, with continued investment in the company, community and employees being foremost in a seller’s mind.

“These initiatives create life-changing opportunities,” says Lepisto. “We want to show that there is a meaningful, viable career path that is different from climbing a corporate ladder or starting a new company.”
Ergonomics: MAKING ‘WORK FROM HOME’ WORK FOR YOU

OVERTURNED LAUNDRY BASKETS DO NOT MAKE FOR IDEAL DESKS. HOWEVER, LIKE YOUR LIGHTS AND Darks on Wash Day, Work and Home Life Became Difficult to Separate When the Unfolding Pandemic Forced Businesses and Schools to Shut Down In-Person Operations. In the Absence of a Dedicated Home Office, Many of Us Grabbed What We Could and Set Up MakaSHift Workstations at the Kitchen Table or SideA the Lawn Chair Up to a Work Bench for Some Video Conferencing Privacy.

But “making do” for a couple of weeks turned into several months. Some of us might not go back to the office until next year, or even at all, as a growing number of companies choose to continue remote work indefinitely. That means if you’re still operating at a temporary work setup, the aches and pains of improper posture and repetitive movements are likely creeping in. And your employer could be feeling the pain, too.

“When we are uncomfortable when we’re working, we’re not as productive,” says Dr. Debra Lindstrom, a professor of occupational therapy who specializes in ergonomics, or the study of how we work. “And that discomfort, if it continues without us doing something about it, may actually cause some long-term problems.”

NECK NEUTRALITY
Maintaining a neutral posture that supports the natural curves of your spine is critical to avoiding injury. This means sitting up straight, relaxing your shoulders and looking straight ahead, and making sure that your chair and desk are positioned so that your elbows are bent at about a 90 to 110-degree angle. Your forearms, wrists and hands should be in a straight line, and your feet should be planted squarely on the floor. How you get to that neutral position—whether it’s buying a fancy office chair, using a balance ball or just adding a lumbar cushion to a kitchen seat—is up to you.

“I really recommend people pay attention to when they feel comfortable. When you’re uncomfortable, make a change,” says Lindstrom, emphasizing the need to pay attention and be creative with what you have around rather than ignoring discomfort. “People may take ibuprofen or Tylenol instead of paying attention to the positions they need to change.”

Movement is another key to maintaining a healthy work environment. Sitting too long and standing too long can both be detrimental. Ideally, you should sit for no more than 20 minutes at a time before taking a break. Some researchers suggest that we should also not stand in the same position for more than about 10 minutes at a time to avoid musculoskeletal problems or increased cardiac risk. Whether standing or sitting, change it up frequently to help to keep blood flowing and reduce stress on joints. “We have to think about our own body and the work that we’re currently doing,” Lindstrom says.

COMMON MISTAKES
Poor ergonomics contribute to a number of neck, wrist and back injuries over time, but there are simple adjustments you can make to your workspace in the short term to ease the strain on your body—and your wallet—in the long term.

Computer monitor position is key. You should position yourself about an arm’s length away, looking at the top third of your screen. Risers or even a stack of books can be used to elevate your monitor or laptop to an appropriate level. Computer glasses are also a good investment if you find yourself constantly leaning forward to read what’s on your screen or tilting your head up or down to bypass bifocals or progressive lenses.

“It’s also critical to have an external keyboard so that you’re not hunched over,” Lindstrom says, adding that what we think of as wrist supports should really be used to support the padded part of the palm in order to maintain a neutral position while typing and avoid putting pressure on the carpal tunnel.

“Problems with the carpal tunnel can occur when the wrists are heavy on the desk or keyboard, very flexed or very extended.” In addition to an external keyboard, she recommends laptop users also invest in a mouse rather than relying on the touchpad.

“You’re really using a lot of isometric contraction with that finger to control a touchpad, no matter how light you think you are moving your finger,” says Lindstrom, which can lead to overuse injuries. Becoming ambidextrous with your mouse use will also ease some of the isolated strain on your muscles.

Whether working from home, the office or the back patio, the most important factor in maintaining a healthy and productive workspace is movement.

“AlliK”: “It’s really moving more so we hurt less.”

Scrolling through emails might be easier to complete while standing than writing a manuscript, for instance.

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“AlliK”: “It’s really moving more so we hurt less.”

Scrolling through emails might be easier to complete while standing than writing a manuscript, for instance.
After earning her bachelor’s degree in 2016 and her master’s at Columbia University, WMU alumna Erin Beal was set to begin her career in rhetoric and writing, working for the University’s regional location in Grand Rapids and planning to continue her graduate work. One year later at age 30, she was diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder and pursued a much different path to understanding her own condition and helping others with ASD reach their full potential.

She used her personal experience as well as what she’s learned earning a master’s in Developmental Disabilities at Teachers College, Columbia University, and working as a wellness staff member and personal trainer at the YMCA’s of Greater Grand Rapids and Kalamazoo to thrive in her new goal—opening a one-on-one “Autistic sanctuary” for young people and adults in Portage, Michigan. The Autism Wellness Center of Southwest Michigan accepted up to 20 registrants when it opened in September. Her goal is not to try to “fix” people’s behaviors but to help those with ASD achieve a greater sense of well-being.

“I focus on strength, balance and mobility training, helping individuals discover how they can best take care of themselves during their life span. It’s not a one-size-fits-all approach. It’s personal training for each individual in an environment that provides the best outcome,” says Beal.

To accomplish this, she transformed an 1,800-square-foot space in a building at a busy intersection into a tranquil setting, using acoustic panels, sound-blocking curtains and natural and LED lighting. The six-week, in-person training program and three-week, follow-up remote sessions are catered to each specific client.

“I’m not interested in changing a person’s behavior so they seem less Autistic,” Beal explains. “I am about serving individuals as they are without trying to fix them. My goal is to find out what’s important to them and how I can help develop those qualities.

First-hand experience, along with my education in autism studies and work in fitness instruction, have given me a unique expert approach that I’m excited and honored to be able to share with the greater Kalamazoo community,” she adds. Although her career path took a turn when she received her own diagnosis, Beal says her Bachelor of Arts in Rhetoric and Writing Studies from WMU has helped her pursue her new career in organizing her business plan and getting the word out.

“I never stopped using the skills that I learned in my undergraduate education. Being a strong writer and having analytical skills give you a distinct advantage in virtually every way,” says Beal.

Although the mission of the Autism Wellness Center of Southwest Michigan is to provide evidence-based services, Beal says her greater goal is Autism advocacy and acceptance.

“Is exercise a science-based way to reduce unwanted symptoms like anxiety and insomnia? Yes. Is lifting weights fun? Yes. But personal training is the medium through which I want to spread my message of self-acceptance and public accommodations for people with disabilities.”

Erin Beal

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Alumnae leaders recognized for achievement, courage

Kathy Beauregard, MA ’81, and Denise Crawford, BS ’93, MSW ’00, were two of three distinguished recipients of Michigan Women Forward’s 2020 Women of Achievement and Courage Award. Beauregard, WMU director of athletics, and Crawford, president and CEO of Family Settlements, a Detroit social services organization, were honored as part of the organization’s annual fundraiser to support programs for women and girls in the state.

“Women Forward is a community development organization whose mission is to expand economic opportunity, empower the next generation and celebrate and honor the accomplishments of Michigan women. The organization’s vision is to create an inclusive economy for the state of Michigan so that all women and girls can reach their full potential,” says Beauregard.

“Equity is a priority that needs to be continued, that needs to be pursued, that needs passion, and we have to keep our doors open and make sure that we’re making a difference all around us,” she says.

Crawford has led the Family Health Center since 2009, expanding the center’s ability to deliver quality health care to underserved populations in the greater Kalamazoo area. Prior to joining the center, she was director of physician services and ambulatory care at Borgess Health Memorial Hospital and served in a number of roles for Borgess Health.

“We have the opportunity today to focus and invest in another person’s life, and that can have some pretty amazing outcomes,” Crawford says. “We are called today, more than ever before, to focus on what is possible and what is worthy. We absolutely must turn our attention toward solutions and success.”

Beauregard, BS ’81, MSW ’00, is one of the NCAA’s 130 Football Bowl Subdivision schools.

Andrew W. Boswe, BA ’81, is the penultimate, seeking autographs at the Breaking Bad series finale in 1980.

Ben Gougeon, BA ’61, became the new artistic director for the Swenarton Junior Theatre in Cleveland, Ohio, this fall.

Sadie Hooten, BA ’10, joined the labor and employment practice of Crowell and Moring in Washington, D.C., as a partner.

Mike George Grant, Jr., PhD ’92, has been named chancellor of Pennsylvania State University Altoona campus.

Pamela Greider, BS ’84, moved into the position of permanent South Bend Symphony music director after serving as interim four months for the southwest Michigan city.

Classnotes

Send submissions to: deanne.puca@wmich.edu. Include your name (first, middle, last, maiden, degree(s), year(s) graduated) and a daytime phone number by which we can reach you. We will publish photos as space permits.

Kathy Beauregard

Denise Crawford

Andrew W. Boswe

Ben Gougeon

Sadie Hooten

Mike George Grant, Jr.

Pamela Greider

Joshua Merchant, PhD ’14, is chief of staff for Oakland University President Ora Hirsch Pines in Rochester, Michigan.

Anna B. Dövivir, MA ’31, a third-grade teacher at Utica Elementary, was elected to the Michigan Education and Service Board by the Rotary Club of South Haven, Michigan.

Gabriella Tackett, BS ’16, was named administrator at the Jackson Family Home in Jackson, Michigan, a home for abused and neglected youth.

Victor Perez, BBA ’20, joined Greenleaf Trust as an associate participant services administrator.
In Memoriam

BBA '62, BS '49, April 17, 2020,
Lambert BS '49, July 28, 2020,
Trenton, MI

Alfred Edward Foster 
BA '48, Aug. 22, 2020,
Kalamazoo, MI

John B. Buckhout 
BS '37, TC '37, MA '57,
Boyce TC '44, March 11, 2020,
Evansville, IN

Janet Joyce (Smith) Aagaard 
BA '55, March 3, 2020,
Caledonia, MI

Mary Therese Matuzak 
BS '53, July 31, 2020,
Warren John Mayer 
BS '58, April 28, 2020,
Rapids, MI

Elizabeth J. Lacey 
BS '61, May 28, 2020,
Sandra Joan Kasenow 
BA '62, April 2, 2020,
Xenia, OH

Linda Godfrey 
BS '64, June 9, 2020, St. 
Stahle 
BS '64, March 28, 2020,
Marshall, MI

Valdris Nodievs 
BS '64, Aug. 17, 2020, Grand 
Stahle 
BS '64, March 28, 2020,
Marshall, MI

Richard Ellis Wylie 
BS '67, Aug. 17, 2020, Grand 
Stahle 
BS '64, March 28, 2020,
Marshall, MI

Sherry A. Barnhill 
BA '70, March 19, 2020,
Wayland, MA

Phyllis Mason (Smith) 
BS '70, Aug. 11, 2020,
Charleston, VA

Joyce Helen (Smith) 
BS '70, Aug. 11, 2020,
Charleston, VA

Mary Alice (Mason) 
Kalamazoo, MI

Marjorie Ruth (Little) 
BS '57, April 25, 2020, Mt 
Julian A. Visser 
BS '59, June 13, 2020, South 
Sandra Lee (Stover) 
BA '67, June 9, 2020, Canaveral, FL

Jonathan W. Spieles 
BS '69, Aug. 2, 2020,
Corvallis, OR

Heidi R. Morin 
BS '70, June 7, 2020,
Corvallis, OR

Michelle F. Macek 
BS '70, June 7, 2020,
Corvallis, OR

Merri French 
BS '70, June 7, 2020,
Corvallis, OR

Brenda L. Byrd 
BS '70, June 7, 2020,
Corvallis, OR

Hilary S. Eklebo 
BS '70, June 7, 2020,
Corvallis, OR

Andrew E. Chandler 
BS '70, June 7, 2020,
Corvallis, OR

Susan M. Fritts 
BS '70, June 7, 2020,
Corvallis, OR

Teresa Ann (Tomalek) 
BS '70, March 28, 2020,
Las Vegas, NV

Edward Victor Schten 
BA '58, April 29, 2020, 
Kalamazoo, MI

Mary A. (Hartman) 
Fowler BS '57, May 4, 2020, 
Kalamazoo, MI

C. William Hanich 
BA '57, June 5, 2020, 
Kalamazoo, MI

Dolores Balch 
BS '57, April 11, 2020,
Kalamazoo, MI

Paula Zae (Geeting) 
BS '68, April 5, 2020,
Palm Beach, FL

James Alden Westgate 
BS '69, Aug. 2, 2020,
Corvallis, OR

Larry E. Kimball 
BS '67, Aug. 17, 2020, Grand 
Valdris Nodievs 
BS '64, Aug. 17, 2020, Grand 
Valdris Nodievs 
BS '64, Aug. 17, 2020, Grand 
Valdris Nodievs 
BS '64, Aug. 17, 2020, Grand 
Valdris Nodievs 
BS '64, Aug. 17, 2020, Grand
Broncos are resilient! While the pandemic delayed the start of football, the WMU Alumni Association reimagined homecoming week with a nod to past traditions: a campus car parade. The event kicked off with a performance from the Bronco Marching Band followed by a celebrity panel, including President Edward Montgomery, Kari Montgomery and distinguished alumni, judging decked-out cars and spirit zones set up by WMU organizations and departments along the way.