

W Magazine

WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY



LEARNING THROUGH A LENS

Faculty, students
creatively adapt to
distance learning

READY TO SERVE

Despite mounting uncertainty, nursing students say they're ready to join the ranks of health care workers fighting COVID-19.

READ MORE ONLINE



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Given an inconceivable task and limited time to accomplish it, the WMU community is finding ways to thrive while teaching and learning from a distance.

At the center of the transition is WMUx, which was recently charged with delivering next-level learning opportunities on and off campus with emerging technology.

Patricia Villalobos Echeverría, professor and area coordinator of printmedia, records a video for her ART 5000: Machinations class.



DEAR FRIENDS,

The world is a vastly different place than it was when we issued the previous edition of the magazine. Things have changed in ways that most of us never expected. We've witnessed the frightening spread of a global pandemic that has affected nations around the world and touched our campus in the worst way, but at the same time, we've also beheld humanity and decency at their best.

I'm writing this message at a moment that can only be described in one word: uncertainty. Our state's residents are currently sheltering in place, businesses are closed, K-12 schools continue online and we hold our collective breath as we monitor the data and watch the viral spread. There's no denying that this is a troublesome time for all of us.

But at the same time, I'm heartened by the things that I see taking place across our University. From the response of our faculty members, who quickly shifted 5,000 course sections to distance education platforms this spring, to the creative and

caring students who used their tools and talents to help front-line workers in health care settings, Broncos are showing the grit, determination and adaptability that are most needed when the world doesn't make sense.

Rocked by calamity, tested by tragedy, through it all, the Western Michigan University family continues to display true humanity and courage. I hope that the stories you'll read throughout this issue will remind you of what's best and most enduring about our beloved University—its people.

Thank you for continuing to stand strong with us, for being part of our worldwide community and joining us in proving that no matter the obstacle, Broncos are prepared to go the distance.

Edward Montgomery, Ph.D.
President

WMU Signature awarded for outstanding innovation

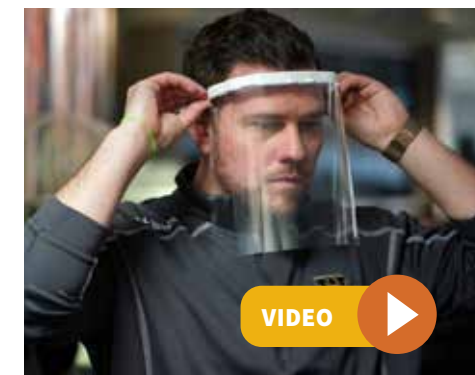
A unique program that highlights student experiences is garnering acclaim. WMU Signature received the Innovative Program award at the NASPA Region IV-East annual conference.

"WMU Signature is a way that we validate what students have been doing outside the classroom," says Dr. Evan Heiser, the program's director. "They're getting engaged, they're exploring their passions, and the really different thing is students have to do something unique to put their passion into action."

Students who complete WMU Signature receive a co-curricular designation on their diplomas signifying one of nine pathways they can choose to focus on: civic engagement, diversity and inclusion, entrepreneurship, global engagement, health and wellness, leadership, social justice, sustainability or teaching and student success. WMU is the only university in the nation offering the high-level student engagement endorsement.

"The idea is to help students stand out when they're applying for jobs or graduate school," Heiser says. "Getting engaged on campus helps to make students more successful. Helping students focus and find something they're passionate about will help them be more successful."

WMU 3D printers producing face shields and masks for health care workers



Western Michigan University's 3D printers aren't sitting idle during the pandemic. Instead, staff and professors from multiple campus departments are using them to produce personal protective equipment—specifically face shields—for health care workers who desperately need them. The equipment goes to the Sindecuse Health Center as part of the ongoing WMU effort to provide materials to help protect health workers and share WMU resources.

Sales win makes WMU most victorious university in national competition's history



Sarah Obermeyer and Ryan Demas competed in the State Farm Marketing and Sales Competition.

A team of two sales students competed in the State Farm Marketing and Sales Competition at the University of Central Missouri, during the fall semester, with one student taking top honors in the customer service role-play category. This victory brings WMU's student winnings to over \$40,000 in the past eight years of competition, making it the most successful university in the event's history.

Ryan Demas and Sarah Obermeyer competed in

three different rounds of competition, including: A marketing presentation answering the question, "How might a State Farm agent educate and promote a futuristic vision of mobile telematics technology while ensuring customer data privacy?"

A sales role-play, focused on how a State Farm agent could develop a relationship with a new client from an internet lead. The role-play began with an appointment-setting phone call where the agent's objective was to get

the prospect into their office to review options.

A customer service role-play based on the scenario of a current customer coming to their agent's office to pay their six-month auto insurance premium in full. The goal was for the agent to start a conversation about renters' insurance while processing the transaction.

Obermeyer clinched the win in the customer service role-play portion of the competition.

WMU professor unites health care heroes, Broadway stars to raise spirits and funds during pandemic



Jay Berkow



Broadway stars are bringing dramatic flair to honor frontline medical workers risking their lives to care for others during the pandemic. The Resilient Project, spearheaded by Jay Berkow, director of music theatre performance, unites a star-studded company of more than 60 performers with doctors and nurses from across the country. Participating from emergency rooms, critical care units and even their own living rooms, they join together to sing "Resilient," a song from a rock-opera he's been working on with composer/lyricist Dave Ogrin called "Mata Hari."

"Given the unprecedented impact of this crisis, which is still unfolding, our goal was to salute the true heroes who are at the forefront of the battle for human lives. The tireless health care professionals—doctors, nurses, hospital personnel—who are literally risking their lives every day to take care of all of us," says Berkow, who recruited WMU music theatre alumni Patrick Connaghan, Cassandra Sandberg and Todd Tucheck to participate in the project.

The video will benefit their colleagues through the American College of Physicians, Broadway Cares/Equity Fights AIDS' COVID-19 Emergency Assistance Fund and the Emergency Nurses Association.

Music students slide to the top in national trombone competition

It's not often a trombonist needs security clearance to perform. But Alyson Johnson and Alayna O'Connell got to shine in front of the field's top brass at the American Trombone Workshop's National Solo Competition, held at Fort Myer, Virginia.

The freshmen were two of three tenor trombone finalists selected for the elite competition—one of two major solo contests for students worldwide. To have one student chosen for the finals is high praise for a program, says



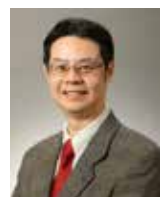
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Steve Wolfenbarger, professor of trombone. Two is virtually unheard of.

"This is huge. I think I can recall maybe one other time when there were students from the same university as finalists in another competition," says Wolfenbarger. "I'm incredibly proud. This will be something these students remember for the rest of their lives."

Will Ford, a 2018 graduate of WMU, was also a finalist in the Division III category of the competition.

Business professor earns second Fulbright award



Dr. Kuanchin

For an impressive second time, Dr. Kuanchin "KC" Chen, professor of business

information systems, co-director of the Center for Business Analytics and John W. Snyder faculty fellow at Western Michigan University, has earned a highly competitive Fulbright Specialist Award from the U.S. Department of State and the J. William Fulbright Foreign Scholarship Board.

Since the inception of the Fulbright Specialist Program in 2001, faculty from the Haworth College of Business have received this award three times in the business administration category. Chen received his first Fulbright award as an associate professor at the college in 2012.

With this award, Chen will complete a project at Warsaw University of Life Sciences in Poland that aims to exchange research experiences and establish partnerships benefiting participants, institutions and communities both in the U.S. and overseas through educational and training activities within business administration.



WMU launches online cybersecurity undergraduate degree

Beginning in fall 2020, WMU will offer a fully online Bachelor of Science in Cybersecurity that will benefit graduates and organizations in multiple ways. The four-year degree program is designed to help meet the increasing workforce demand for digital security specialists in areas ranging from government defense to supply chain operations.

The COVID-19 pandemic, which has increased the number of online users and exposed the safety vulnerability of software and videoconferencing platforms, is further fueling the need for specialists who know how to keep digital data and interactions secure.

Students in WMU's program will have the added advantage of acquiring invaluable skills that extend beyond the screen. Rather than developing curricula solely from a computer science perspective, WMU's interdisciplinary cybersecurity major also relies on the Haworth College of Business for a business viewpoint on cybersecurity.

"Security lies in this unique area where you have to understand the business side and the technical side" rather than one or the other, says Jason Johnson, lecturer in the College of Engineering and Applied Sciences.

The program is designed to be taken anywhere in the world, and to be expansive enough to train for a wide variety of cybersecurity positions that keep important online information and transactions secure.

Grants awarded for COVID-19 research projects

The University's Office of Research and Innovation has awarded five grants for research related to the COVID-19 pandemic. The projects cover health, politics, religion, education and language support.

"Our guiding principle was to advance excellence in the pursuit of knowledge and ideas to help tackle COVID-19-related issues," says Dr. Terri Goss Kinzy, vice president for research and innovation. "We think it's going to be a major contribution from Western Michigan University to the nation's response."

Totaling \$31,620, the grants are funded by the Meader Presidential Endowment—a fund specifically designated for promoting excellence at WMU. A committee selected the winning projects, looking for those that had a broad impact, were collaborative in nature and could begin immediately in a remote capacity.

"They leveraged a unique expertise of WMU and were different than what many other universities are doing in this crisis," Goss Kinzy says.

The awards are not designed to be an exhaustive list of pandemic-related research at the University, rather a spark to ignite new ideas.

Professor awarded for book that peels back the curtain on Fetzer's secret life



The Historical Society of Michigan awarded Brian C. Wilson, professor of comparative religion, with its highest honor—the State History Award—for his book, "John E. Fetzer and the Quest for the New Age," which follows the businessman's journey from Seventh-day Adventism to a quest for global spiritual transformation. It's Wilson's second such award, also winning in 2015 for his religious study of Dr. John Harvey Kellogg.

Wilson was able to get an intimate look at Fetzer's life through the Fetzer Memorial Trust, which originally commissioned him to write the introduction to an anthology. That led to a sabbatical and book project.

During the course of that year, he was able to read letters Fetzer wrote as a boy, see pamphlets he'd collected speaking out against Seventh-day Adventism, and read through the research he'd cultivated.



Uncharted Waters:

Campus community navigates unprecedented shift to distance learning

VIDEO



Jolin Cramer, bottom left, is one of several WMU dance students involved in Collective Groove, a communal video-dance project inspired by Mitchell Rose's "Exquisite Corps," which also includes students from Salve Regina University and Southern Methodist University. Monique Haley, assistant professor of dance, created the project alongside Brandi Coleman and Lindsay Guarino.



BRONCOS ARE ALWAYS READY FOR A CHALLENGE. THAT ABILITY TO ADAPT AND RISE ABOVE WAS GALVANIZED AS THE COVID-19 CRISIS SWEEPED THE GLOBE AND CAMPUSES CLEARED OUT TO MITIGATE THE SPREAD. FROM LECTURE HALLS TO LIVING ROOMS, THE MOVE TO DISTANCE EDUCATION CHANGED THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT AT WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY.

"I am pleasantly surprised by the efforts of the College of Fine Arts and their commitment to giving us the best possible education they can," says Jolin Cramer, who completed her bachelor's degree in dance in April. "As students who are privileged with great studio spaces, virtual dance classes can be difficult, but we found a new way to normalize the circumstance and 'crank our personal volume' during a time of uncertainty."

Dance is about conveying and evoking emotion through movement. Cramer had plenty of inspiration with the changes in response to the pandemic.

"Personally, my biggest challenge is dealing with the grief of leaving my senior year behind," she says. "It was hard to process being a production major with no more productions, a dancer with no more performances and a student with no more warm-ups, naps in the student lounge or improv jams with my friends." Cramer had to come to terms with the fact the end of her college career would look a little different than she planned.

"My graduation dress came in the mail the day commencement was postponed—that hit hard. I was sad for a while and everything felt like a simulation, but then I got inspired. Inspired by my friends, faculty and people from all over the world who I have never met."

While classes changed through distance learning, Cramer found comfort in sharing space with her classmates—even if that space was on a computer screen. Her classes met three times a day, and students would push their furniture aside or find a spot in the basement to dance in unison. The sessions quickly became her favorite moments of the day.

One class even had a virtual birthday party for a professor.



Lucinda Stinson, part-time instructor in the College of Health and Human Services.

Cramer and other students each held a candle and sang happy birthday, blowing out the flames in unison. Those classmates became her family, and WMU, says Cramer, became home.

"I have always been of the mindset that this is something much bigger than all of us," she says. "I am not surprised by the constant support, uplifting messages and desire to help from the community. It's overwhelming in the best way to know that we are all in this together."

ENGINEERING SUCCESS

Learning via Webex meeting isn't rocket science. If it was, though, Grace Dybing says her aerospace engineering instructors would have passed with flying colors.

"I think that they have done a great job with getting their classes online, and now when I put on my headphones it's just like being in the classroom," she says, adding professors have been able to keep the classes active by using chat functions.

"My project-based classes changed a bit more, and anything that was supposed to be a group presentation has become more challenging. But my professors have lots of ideas on how to make it" Dybing, who graduated in April, found software which allowed her and her senior design project partner to control their lab computer remotely. She also learned some new skills to help record lessons for the labs she ran as a teaching assistant.

"Learning how to edit the videos has definitely made me think creatively and in different ways than I'm used to," she says, joking that she could fall back on a career as a Youtuber.

Dybing admits being nervous when she first heard about the shift to distance education, but she's discovered the silver lining in new opportunities—like being able to go back and listen to lectures after class because they're recorded now.

"I think the faculty are working really hard to give us the best education they can, and it shows," says Dybing.

It's not surprising the WMU community stepped up to adapt to this challenge. That, she says, is what Broncos do.

"They stick together in herds and put up a strong fight when threatened. I think our professors in particular, but also our maintenance and custodial staff, Dining Services and Residence Life, are doing a great job of getting us through this."

LEADING FROM BEHIND (THE COMPUTER SCREEN)

For Lucinda Stinson, a part-time instructor in the College of Health and Human Services, moving from in-person classes to distance learning in a matter of days seemed daunting at first.

"There was a wide range of emotions, running from fear to confidence that I can do this," says Stinson, who spent the weekend learning and preparing. "It really took a mental adjustment for me, because I'm a people person. I'm not overly computer savvy, but I know that I can figure it out." WMUx—the evolution of Extended University Programs—spearheaded a campuswide

effort to make the shift as smooth as possible, working around the clock to ease the transition for virtual classroom veterans and rookies alike. The program's software engineers, design specialists, internet technology experts and the like managed to ramp up support services and structures within just a few days.

Instructors were offered assistance with online teaching fundamentals and delivery options during the transition. Stinson took advantage of the help available to learn about using Webex. She says staff at the faculty technology center walked her through the steps and she was able to pick things up quickly. Plus, she had her daughter on standby if there was something she didn't understand.

"She's a millennial," laughs Stinson, admitting that sometimes learning new technology can be a challenge. But she points out, she does have an advantage. "As a health care professional—I've been doing this for over 40 years—you always have to think on your feet. So, I can always go from Plan A to Plan B to Plan C very quickly."

Her flexibility and commitment to taking on the new challenge is something Dr. Edwin Martini, associate provost of WMUx, has seen from faculty members across campus.

"At the end of the day, we're all in this together. Students are learning new tools, as well," he says. "Our staff worked long hours, into the night and throughout the weekend, to make sure that we could support our instructors and our students during this challenging time." Martini says while his team braced for hiccups along the way, WMUx met an unprecedented challenge.

Behind the scenes, staff orchestrated a remarkable effort that included things like:

- The instructional design team constantly fielding classes and emails from instructors;



Provost Jennifer Bott and WMUx Associate Provost Edwin Martini talk to faculty on campus about how to approach distance education.

PREPARING FOR THE FUTURE

Formerly Extended University Programs, WMUx's new name also comes with a heightened purpose to focus on human-centered solutions. Its full visual identity and name will be introduced everywhere next fall. The department, which has existed since the early 20th century as an "ideas incubator," will continue to operate on the third floor of Ellsworth Hall on WMU's Main Campus. Meanwhile, it will eventually resume conducting a "listening" campaign to solicit wish-list concepts for how it can deliver next-level learning opportunities on and off campus with emerging technology, such as augmented reality and noteworthy pedagogical approaches.

Eventually, some of the concepts will be put into motion to benefit people such as Osher Lifelong Learning Institute participants, dual-enrollment students who are earning college credit while in high school, regional nonprofit workers, long-time professors and traditional students.

The unit's new name is in keeping with its tradition of offering extended learning, represents the next stages of education and serves as a creative capacity multiplier for programs and people across campus. Its "human-centered" focus relies on empathy, ideation and experimentation as those pertain to outcomes rather than capabilities.

"This entire transformation from EUP to WMUx represents a significant investment in the core academic mission of the University," says Dr. Jennifer Bott, provost and vice president for academic affairs. ■

- The communications team writing new technical training and posting that content online;
- Regional staff from locations like Traverse City and Macomb County staffing the live chat feature to provide quick responses to student and faculty inquiries; and
- Academic support staff from across campus providing virtual tutoring, coaching and advising.

As for students, in collaboration with the Office of Information Technology, WMUx designed, built and launched an Elearning student support site in about 36 hours that offers a wealth of general and detailed resources about many distance learning tools.

Simply put, without WMUx, learning at WMU would not have continued spring semester.



An award-winning author and illustrator team from Southwest Michigan, David Small and Sarah Stewart, visit the Zhang Legacy Collections Center.



University Libraries acquires David Small and Sarah Stewart archive

The University Libraries has acquired the complete working archive of author and illustrator, David Small, and author, Sarah Stewart. Residents of Southwest Michigan, Small and Stewart have created a respected body of work, collaborating on six books, including “The Gardener,” a Caldecott Honor book. Small’s biographical graphic novel,

“Stitches,” was listed as one of *Publisher’s Weekly’s* best books of 2009, a finalist for the 2009 National Book Award for Young People’s Literature and a 2010 Alex Awards recipient.

The Small-Stewart collection includes drafts and original art, unpublished works, notebooks, sketchbooks, correspondence and journals. Portions of the collection will debut in fall 2020

with a series of exhibits and lectures. Due to its size and complexity, the collection will become available as materials are cataloged and prepared for public use.

It was acquired to enhance learning and research on campus.

“The Libraries should invest in material that offers unique

opportunities and access for our students and faculty. Our undergraduates and graduates will be able to conduct research using original, unstudied material, and this collection may attract additional national and international attention to our Libraries,” said Dr. Susan Steuer, WMU professor and rare book librarian. ■

JOHNNY ANDERSON III

B.S. '19

Life has a way of coming full circle. For Johnny Anderson III, it happens multiple times a week. The WMU graduate student is an advocate for homeless individuals, helping connect them to health care, housing and other essential services in the community.

"The thing I love doing most is helping people; making that connection with them," says Anderson, community outreach coordinator for the Family Health Center in Kalamazoo, who splits his time between the office and the field, looking for people in need.

It wasn't that long ago that he was in their shoes. In 2015, he found himself homeless and hungry for a new start after quitting his job at a factory. So, Anderson enrolled in classes at WMU. His passion for connecting with others led him to social work—a program in which he found supportive mentors who propelled him down the path toward his career goals.

Anderson also gleaned professional experience through internships and other experiential learning opportunities—something that helped him get a job directly after graduation.

"I never would have imagined I would have the opportunities or be in the place that I'm working right now," says Anderson, who is now pursuing his master's degree in social work at WMU.

The COVID-19 pandemic has only made his job more important—and more difficult. His clients have expanded beyond the homeless community to anyone who needs help. With resources scarce and many agencies scaling back services, finding immediate assistance for individuals can be challenging. Still, there's a silver lining.

"I have been able to increase connection with community leaders and agencies I did not interact with prior to the pandemic," he says.



WESTERN
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Alumni Profiles



DR. DWEEOBOTE BRAHMA

Ph.D. '19

As child in Kolkata, India, Dr. Dweepobotee Brahma witnessed poverty firsthand.

"I was lucky, I grew up in a metropolitan city," she says. "But even within the city, there were pockets of poverty, poor people who lived in slums. So, I had seen it all around me, and I wanted to work toward something that would improve the quality of life of those people."

Driven to help end that suffering, Brahma is now working with various ministries in India to assess and address public health schemes and other development issues. As an associate fellow at the Brookings Institution India Center—a world renowned policy think tank—she has the opportunity to make a real impact.

"I love it. I get to work with the ministry, working hand in hand with

the policymakers," says Brahma, who earned her Ph.D. in applied economics from WMU in 2019. "You get to influence policy, you get to see policy making up close and provide your input. It's very exciting."

It's an opportunity made possible, she says, by the support she received from the Department of Economics.

"The department focuses on doing applied, real-world applications in terms of your research, as opposed to theoretical research that is the focus in many other departments," says Brahma, whose dissertation research included topics such as infant health, vaccination and malnutrition. "Being equipped in a skillset that is more policy relevant, or more industry relevant, makes you eligible for jobs in nonacademic settings, as well." ■

HUNTER DAVIDSON

B.A. '19

Feeding the growing number of Michiganders in need during the COVID-19 crisis is no small task. 2nd Lt. Hunter Davidson and his team of Michigan National Guard soldiers are up to the challenge. Initially scheduled for annual training in Morocco, the global pandemic shifted their plans.

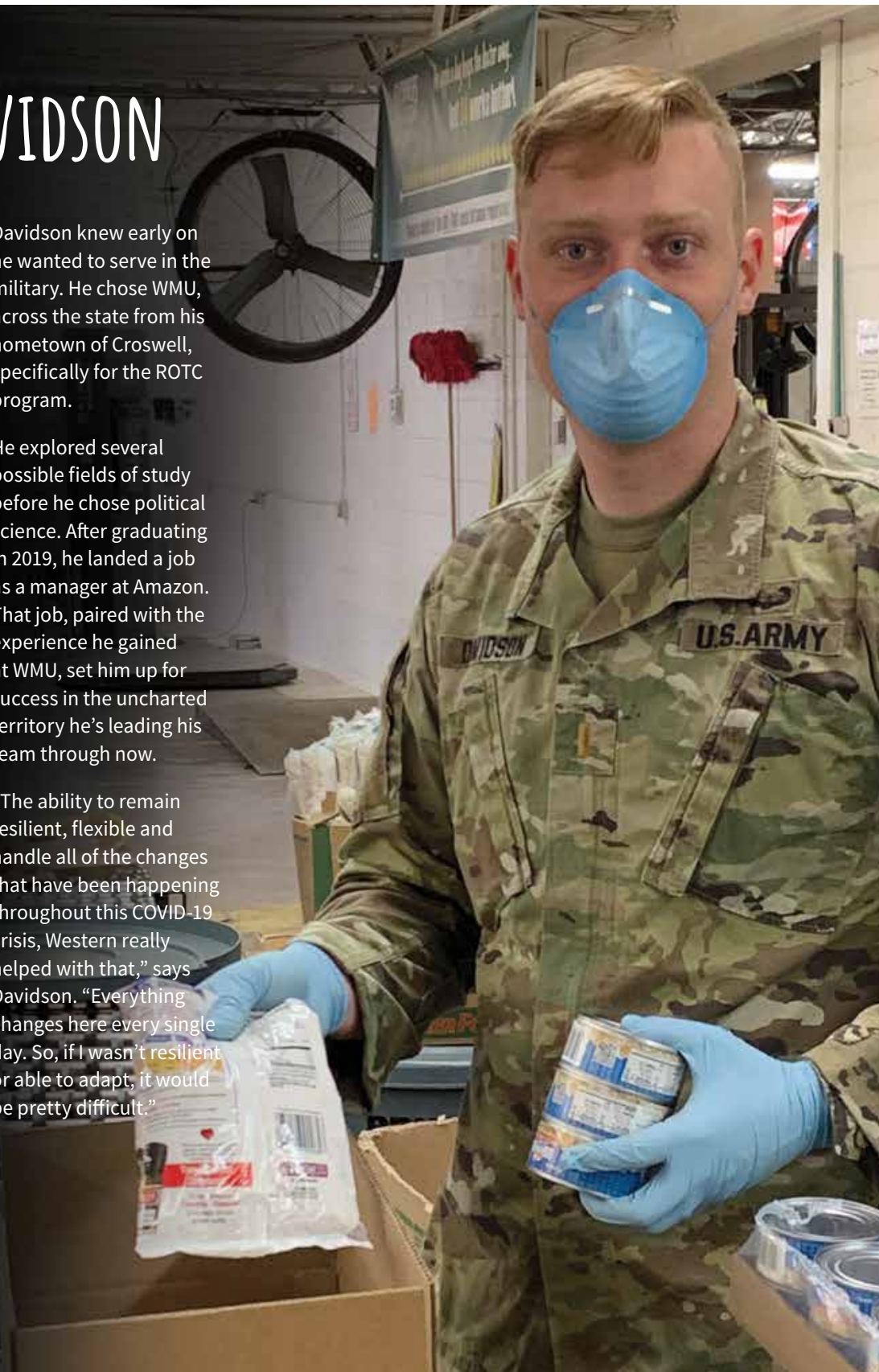
His team from the 1433rd Engineer Company began work at the Feeding America West Michigan Food Bank in Comstock Park in late March. They packed emergency boxes full of food for smaller food pantries to distribute to families. The team was later deployed to Pontiac to assemble boxes for senior citizens. Davidson estimates they helped distribute more than 400,000 pounds of food for thousands of people in need.

"Part of the reason we joined the guard was to be able to give back to our neighbors. We are also civilians ourselves most of the time, so being able to serve our communities is really important."

Davidson knew early on he wanted to serve in the military. He chose WMU, across the state from his hometown of Croswell, specifically for the ROTC program.

He explored several possible fields of study before he chose political science. After graduating in 2019, he landed a job as a manager at Amazon. That job, paired with the experience he gained at WMU, set him up for success in the uncharted territory he's leading his team through now.

"The ability to remain resilient, flexible and handle all of the changes that have been happening throughout this COVID-19 crisis, Western really helped with that," says Davidson. "Everything changes here every single day. So, if I wasn't resilient or able to adapt, it would be pretty difficult."



RAEGAN DELMONICO

B.S. '19

No bones about it, Raegan Delmonico loves archaeology.

"You can read a lot about different archaeological techniques as much as you want, but you won't truly understand that until you get out and do your field school and really put your hands in the ground."

The alumna cut her teeth as an undergraduate student at the Fort St. Joseph Archaeological Project's field school in Niles, Michigan, unearthing centuries-old artifacts.

"I took introduction to anthropology with Dr. Michael Nassaney," says Delmonico. "He got me involved with the project, and there was no turning back. I got the bug."

The rest is history—which, coincidentally, is the major Delmonico originally thought she'd pursue when she first came to Western. She switched her major to anthropology in her fourth year after taking Nassaney's class.

"Dr. Nassaney really took me under his wing. He kept pushing me to apply to the field school and stay involved with the project."

It's an experience that sets many WMU graduates apart from colleagues in the field, and one that has helped Delmonico earn jobs at multiple archaeological sites after graduation.

"Getting the experience at Fort St. Joseph was amazing. Being able to do my field school there and then come back as a lab coordinator is an amazing resume builder," says Delmonico. "People can't believe I coordinated the lab as an undergraduate." ■



JOSEPH SÁNCHEZ

B.S. '20

While his wings were clipped graduating with a degree in aviation management and operations amid a global pandemic where airlines are suffering, Joseph Sánchez didn't find himself down on his luck.

The first-generation college graduate says connections while he was student body president for the Western Student Association helped him understand "although I was in the field of aviation, I could still pursue other career goals that are of interest to me."

Those goals led him to grocery giant Meijer, where Sánchez had interned his junior

year. Now in the middle of a pandemic, he's secured a full-time team leader position at the Plainfield, Illinois, store, playing off his business skills forged even during his aviation courses at WMU.

"While retail is completely different from aviation, it's still related to business. I chose the aviation management major because I also really enjoy general business," he says. "Leading others and working with a team is what I like the most. It isn't just work to me, but more about helping others develop skills, gaining management experience and learning how great teamwork impacts results."

Overseeing a team of around 25 workers, Sánchez is now tasked with keeping the store running smoothly amid social-distancing rules and concerns about food shortages.

"In a time like this, where a lot of our communities and businesses are being impacted by the pandemic, we must challenge ourselves to do what we can for our families and ourselves," he says. "I am truly thankful and hope that years from now I can help Broncos reach their dreams, too." ■

J. GABRIEL WARE

B.A. '16, M.A. '18

Coronavirus concerns. Battening down for blizzards. A Hollywood heavyweight headed to trial. J. Gabriel Ware's workdays are never dull. The two-time WMU alumnus works on the assignment desk at ABC News, covering breaking news stories from across the country.

"It's kind of overwhelming at first because it's a big network," says Ware, who was hired in 2019 after a successful internship.

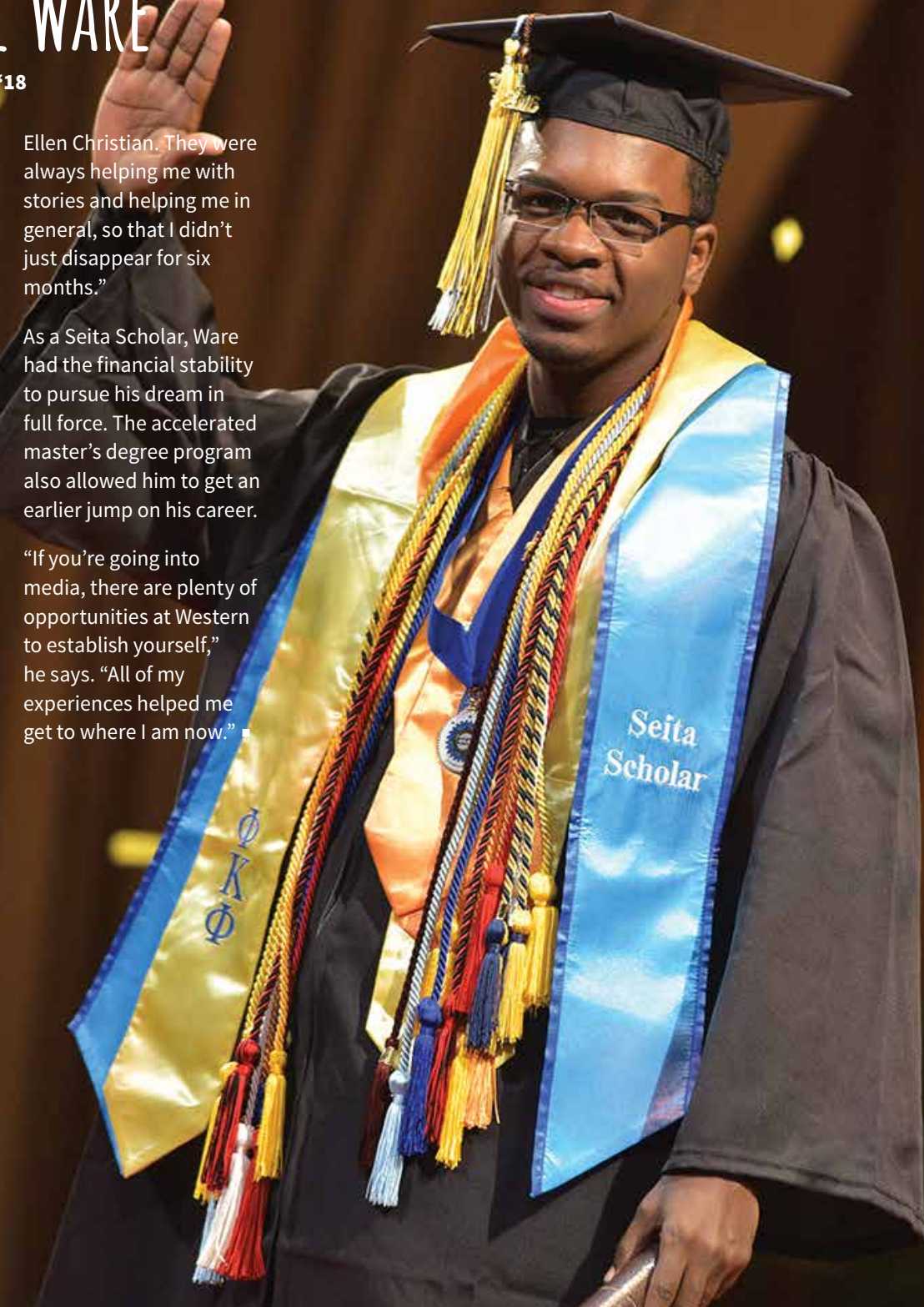
The Detroit native's success is the result of years of hard work and focus, honing his craft and exploring all aspects of media as a student at WMU—with the support of a number of professors along the way.

"Working at the *Western Herald* helped me get an internship at *Encore* magazine," says Ware, who also completed internships at WMUK radio and *Yes! Magazine* in Seattle. "When I was at *Yes!*, I was always in contact with Dr. Leigh Ford and professor Sue

Ellen Christian. They were always helping me with stories and helping me in general, so that I didn't just disappear for six months."

As a Seita Scholar, Ware had the financial stability to pursue his dream in full force. The accelerated master's degree program also allowed him to get an earlier jump on his career.

"If you're going into media, there are plenty of opportunities at Western to establish yourself," he says. "All of my experiences helped me get to where I am now."



Product design students envisioning future of mobility with Eaton partnership

Flying cars. Automated supply systems coordinating robot deliveries. Undersea living and civilian space exploration. The mobility solutions of tomorrow are being dreamed up today at Western Michigan University.

Through a partnership with Eaton Corp., the first cohort of product design students—now in their third year in the Richmond Institute for Design and Innovation—is envisioning what the world might look like in 50 years.

“The students are learning how to use ‘design fiction’ to spur present-day innovation,” says Michael Elwell, director of the Richmond Institute. “The result is transformative, disruptive design solutions instead of the incremental change we typically see in industry.”

In this “special topics” course, students are creating future transportation scenarios for the year 2070, considering what role Eaton might play in that world, and then developing products for those scenarios.

“I love the early stages of the design process when I get to sketch out as many ideas as possible before settling on one that will do the job in the most efficient and elegant way possible,” says Nick Koch, who is designing a helmet that pilots of on-demand flying car services might wear.

“This helmet will allow the user to have an unseen full connection to the aircraft they are piloting,” displaying aeronautics, trip and aircraft information, pilot health and passenger status information, he says.

Classmate David Bulley is focusing on transportation related to orders and deliveries, focusing on automated systems.

“I’m working on the idea of magnetic propulsion for land-based vehicles and hover flying for personal transportation,” he says. “Each storage cube will be its own robot that can move itself from different points and even stack itself on other cubes for transportation.”

THE FUTURE OF DESIGN

The course is the first of six that Eaton has committed to being involved in, putting students in the driver’s seat on projects involving such topics as transportation, electrification and sustainability. Eaton engineers and designers will interact with students throughout the courses, offering project critiques and guidance.

“It’s important to Eaton that we help grow a design program like the Richmond Institute for Design and Innovation has, so that this community can grow in its foundation of having good, strong design opportunities,” says Phil Goodwin, a user experience designer at Eaton who joined the Institute’s industry advisory board and

has been working with the product design students.

The project reflects Eaton’s long-term intent to support WMU and the Richmond Institute as a foundational partner.

“Part of our responsibility as an organization is to make our community stronger,” adds Andrea Russell, human resources director at Eaton. “We’re lucky to have a large university with great programs that we can work with.”

The relationship is mutually beneficial. Students have a tremendous opportunity to work on real-world projects and get mentorship and guidance both during their college career and after graduation. There’s knowledge transfer in both directions.

“The students benefit from feedback from industry professionals and get to list the experience on their resumé,” says Elwell, noting that there’s extra motivation in working with a corporate sponsor because there’s a possibility the student’s work could actually go into production.

The opportunity, Bulley says, is invaluable to his own career aspirations.

“WMU teaches us the skills, but also puts us in front of the people we will be working for. Networking is the best asset of this program.”



From top: Student Aisha Thaj, assistant professor Sunki Hong, Eaton user experience designer Phil Goodwin and Eaton engineering manager Michael Preston

THE NEXT STEP

In fall 2020, a new course will be introduced in the Richmond Institute, opening up the product design experience to students across the University.

“We will build smart, interdisciplinary teams of students based upon the needs of our corporate partners. These students will apply design thinking methodologies to real-world problems, while learning how to collaborate with students from other disciplines—a skill crucial to the workplace.”

An example might be pairing a design student with an engineering student and an occupational therapy student to help create a prototype for a rehabilitation device. The teams will have the opportunity to gain resumé-building experience in the field and in the institute’s world-class facilities.

“Combining fine arts, engineering and business, (the Richmond Institute) takes a step into the future where few other universities have had the vision or courage to go,” says Linda Morgan Demmer, who—along with her husband, Bill—donated \$900,000 to create the DREAM Lab, which includes state-of-the-art machining and design capabilities for rapid prototyping.

“This program is designed to develop graduates who will enter the job market with a broad educational view and with talents that will be highly sought after by employers.”

“Being part of the first class of this new program has been a life-changing experience,” says Koch. “With every project, we are challenged to do something new and figure it out as we go along. It will make a positive impact on all of our careers as it forces us to develop a strong work ethic and be resilient workers.” ■



VIDEO



For the birds: Avian adventures at Asylum Lake Preserve

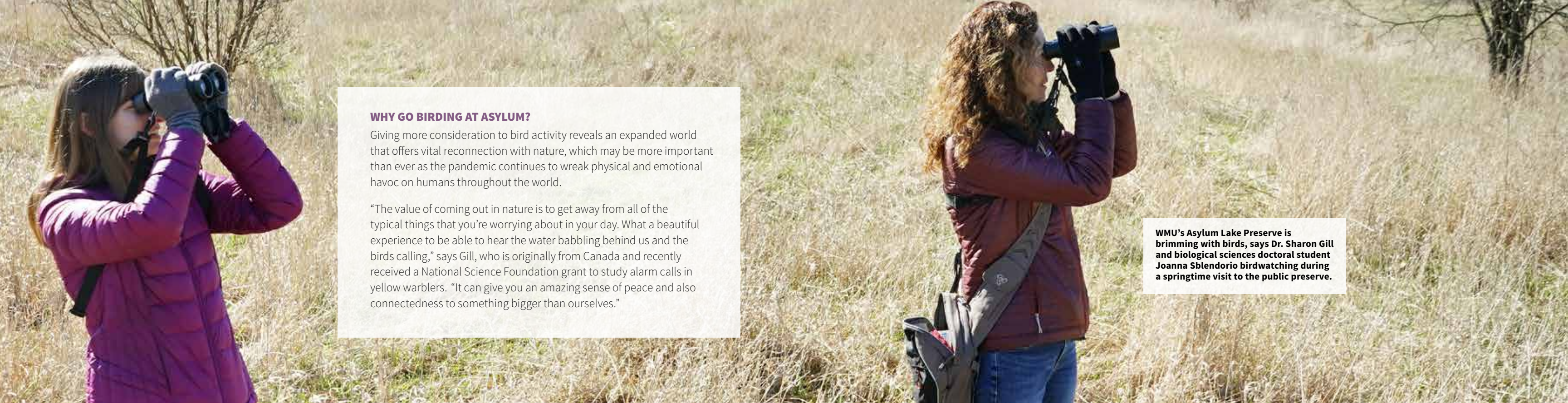
Oblivious to the COVID-19 pandemic, a white sandhill crane that sailed overhead, while a male mallard meandered downstream. Within WMU's 274-acre Asylum Lake Preserve on a mild spring morning in April, several bird species were observed building nests, flying, paddling, eating and calling to one another and even battling, in some cases.

Birdwatching at the preserve, which offers a publicly-accessible visual and symphonic feast, remains an easy, free, soothing and educational option amidst social distancing mandates and closures that have altered life as we knew it.

No birding experience? No problem. This inspiring hobby only requires a sense of adventure, a fondness for fresh air and the ability to quietly observe.

Dr. Sharon Gill, associate professor of biological sciences, and Joanna Sblendorio, a doctoral student studying bird behavior, recently provided basic birding lessons at the preserve, located in Oshtemo Township and bordered by Drake Road and Parkview Avenue. Here's what they shared:

Here you go: Tree swallows battling over bluebird box territory at Asylum Lake Preserve, which is always brimming with wildlife activity.



WHY GO BIRDING AT ASYLUM?

Giving more consideration to bird activity reveals an expanded world that offers vital reconnection with nature, which may be more important than ever as the pandemic continues to wreak physical and emotional havoc on humans throughout the world.

“The value of coming out in nature is to get away from all of the typical things that you’re worrying about in your day. What a beautiful experience to be able to hear the water babbling behind us and the birds calling,” says Gill, who is originally from Canada and recently received a National Science Foundation grant to study alarm calls in yellow warblers. “It can give you an amazing sense of peace and also connectedness to something bigger than ourselves.”

WMU’s Asylum Lake Preserve is brimming with birds, says Dr. Sharon Gill and biological sciences doctoral student Joanna Sblendorio birdwatching during a springtime visit to the public preserve.

Asylum Lake Preserve and the adjoining property lie in the west fork of the Portage Creek Watershed. The land was ensured when WMU constructed its nearby College of Engineering Parkview Campus. An online [story map](#) offers a self-guided introduction to the preserve and its history.

The preserve serves as a research area for academic disciplines such as geology, hydrogeology and environmental studies, but it is a particularly wonderful place for birdwatching, Gill says.

Asylum “does offer a really nice set of features and different natural areas. So, we can go to Big Asylum Lake and

Little Asylum Lake,” says Gill. “We can walk through the forest and engage with the organisms here. And then there’s also the prairie. We have three important types of ecosystems in the area, making it a really nice place to walk and experience nature.”

ADVICE FOR NOVICES

About 450 bird species call Michigan home, according to the Michigan Bird Records Committee’s January 2020 list. Right now, many species that departed for the winter are migrating back to the area, which offers birders plenty of interesting activity.

Experienced birdwatchers enjoy grabbing their binoculars, identifying as many species as they can and perhaps conducting counts, “but if you don’t have that bird knowledge, you can still experience the joy

of birds just by walking here and listening,” says Gill. “If you’re listening here, there are blackbirds calling, there’s robins singing, there’s woodpeckers, the red-wing blackbird. All of those things you can listen to. You don’t have to name them to get the joy out of experiencing them. You could become somebody who’s really active and knows their birds, but if you’re not one of those people right now, certainly don’t let that stop you from enjoying birds because you have all you need to enjoy them: your ears and your eyes.”

The best times to birdwatch, according to Sblendorio, are at dawn and dusk.

“The dawn chorus is just spectacular, right when the sun comes up,” Sblendorio says.

Wearing colors that blend with the scenery are advisable, but not nearly as important as quiet observation—no sudden movements and full concentration.

“Birdwatching is an activity in mindfulness,” says Sblendorio, a New Jersey native who became captivated with birds while helping a master’s student study them on a military base. “You’ll see flashes of color, the rustle of leaves. It’s an opportunity to appreciate the world.”

Some birds, such as chickadees, are loud. Cranes are graceful. Fox sparrows “have a really cute whistle,” Sblendorio claims. She calls warblers “little forest gems” that range in hues from yellow to blue to rusty red.

Certain species have been passing through the area this spring, while others will plan to stay for the duration of summer.

During their recent lake preserve visit, Gill and Sblendorio were entertained by a bluebird couple creating a nest in a box built by people for that purpose. Their task wasn’t easy. While the female deposited beakfuls of grass into the box, her mate was busy fending off swallows, which were also diving to gulp the first flying insects of the season.

CONSERVATION

Another good reason to take up birdwatching: Species throughout the world are in rapid decline, Gill points out. According to a September 2019 article in Science Magazine, the Western Hemisphere has lost more than one in four



birds during the past 50 years. Cornell University researchers calculated North America is home to nearly 3 billion fewer birds today compared to 1970. Even traditionally common species such as Baltimore orioles and barn swallows are seeing drastic population decreases.

The causes are many. Some of them include climate change, reduction in habitat due to human activity, skyscrapers, pesticide use and outdoor cats.

Gill and Sblendorio’s research and field studies partly focus on the effects of human-generated

noise, which can negatively affect bird migration and breeding.

Ducks and waterfowl are seeing less of a decline because of concerted conservation efforts, even those meant to support hunting, Gill says.

“When we invest in conservation, we make a difference,” says Gill. “There’s an inherent value in nature, and other organisms have a right to be here just like we do.”

RESOURCES

For those interested in buying their first set of binoculars for bird watching, Sblendorio suggests a seven or eight magnification.

Bird identification books are also there for the buying, but there are also several websites and mobile applications to use.

Sblendorio and Gill suggest visiting “All About Birds” by Cornell University, and the Merlin Bird ID app that’s affiliated with Cornell.

The National Audubon Society is the country’s bird authority. Its site includes compelling stories, news and conservation tips.

Practical bird conservation activities are detailed at 3BillionBirds.org. The site lists ways anyone can help reduce the rate of bird decline, such as modifying windows to be less reflective, growing native plants, keeping cats indoors, drinking coffee that’s cultivation-friendly to birds and reducing plastic use. ■



WMU alumni Josh and Tim Carpenter are first officers with United Airlines.

Student aviation opportunities take off with launch of Aviate partnership



Since he was 5-years old, Josh Carpenter's head has been in the clouds. His first ride on an airplane had him hooked.

"We were always interested in things with motors and things that went fast," says his twin brother, Tim, who also caught the bug. The siblings followed their aviation aspirations from their hometown of Commerce, Michigan, to WMU.

"It was awesome," says Josh. "I always had a study partner and a friend, along with some sibling rivalry."

Graduating in 2013, the brothers followed similar career paths—both eventually landing at United Airlines, where they are first officers.

A new partnership between WMU's College of Aviation and United will put students on a faster track to follow in their footsteps. The Aviate program offers applicants a new altitude of opportunity with the fastest path to a career with a major airline in the country. It's a path that remains steady despite the emergence of the COVID-19 crisis. Industry experts anticipate the pandemic-related decline in passenger air travel will eventually turn around, and students who apply for Aviate will be uniquely positioned to fill a need for more pilots when they complete the program in four to five years.

"For current and prospective students, there is still no better time than now to be considering a career in aviation," says Tom Thinnies, recruitment and outreach manager for the College of Aviation. "While the COVID-19 situation will slow the industry down for a little bit, the industry will come back."

The passenger travel slowdown has another unexpected benefit: it could bolster training in the prospective pilot ranks.

"While the industry has postponed some of the new hire classes over the next few months, we anticipate having an increase in certified flight instructors, which may help us address some of the training backlog," Thinnies says.

CREATING OPPORTUNITIES

Students accepted into the Aviate program are required to get experience teaching as a certified flight instructor at WMU. Once they accumulate the minimum flight hours to earn their restricted airline transport pilot's license, they'll fly for a United Express Aviate partner. After successfully completing at least 2,000 flight hours and 24 months with that partner carrier, pilots will be able to transition to United as a first officer.

WMU is one of just four collegiate programs chosen by United to participate in Aviate.

"We think it's a top-notch school," says Capt. Curtis Brunjes, managing director of pilot strategy at United. "We think that the curriculum, the standard and the program at Western Michigan University generates the top talent."

Student aviators at Western are able to train on some of the most advanced aircraft in collegiate aviation, something Josh Carpenter says led to a "very seamless" transition to his career as an airline pilot. His brother, Tim, adds that the crew environment training in WMU's curriculum "replicates exactly what we do at the airlines."

"So, when you get to the airlines, you know how to study the material, you know how the basic flow of a flight deck and how to set it up, and those things combined will put you well ahead of others who don't attend a program such as this," he says.

The preparation is one of the many reasons WMU lands among the top three aviation schools in the nation.

"Students know that if they really want a job, if they really want to be feet first into this industry, this is the place to come," says U.S. Rep. Fred Upton. "The proof's in the pudding. United recognized it—we all have." ■



Community Collaborations

1.34M
SERVICE
HOURS

EARN WMU
COVETED
CARNEGIE
RECOGNITION

ONE OF
119
INSTITUTIONS
IN THE
COUNTRY

AWARDED
THE
DESIGNATION
IN 2020

Building homes, visiting with terminally ill children, and testing for ground contaminants are just some of the ways that the Western Michigan University community, in partnership with outside entities, makes a distinctly positive difference, as its recent Carnegie Community Engagement Classification proves. In recognition of 1.34 million hours served on campus and throughout the world, and for the second consecutive time, WMU received the 2020 classification, which recognizes higher education institutions across the country for their outstanding institutional commitment to transformative collaboration locally and beyond.

Only 359 colleges and universities maintain the classification, an elective endeavor that requires institutions to voluntarily submit information describing the impact of their community engagement initiatives, ranging from class projects that address local needs to engaged research that maintains national or international reach.

WMU was one of 119 institutions in the country to be awarded the designation in the 2020 cycle, one of only 13 doctoral-granting universities with a “high research activity” classification to receive this recognition, and one of 11 in Michigan to be named.

The University’s application documented that, in one year’s time, its faculty, students and staff partnered with over 1,500 unique community organizations

and offered 333 credit-bearing, community-based learning courses representing more than 75% of its academic units and programs.

WMU’s selection means the institution’s dedication to dynamic and noteworthy community engagement runs through its mission, culture, leadership, allocations and practices, says Kara Wood, associate vice president for community partnerships and co-chair of the University’s Civic Action Planning Team. It also illustrates the University’s commitment to working with others on critical societal issues such as poverty, racial equity, access to affordable health care and the environment.

“WMU has a long history of public service and community partnership, including experiential learning opportunities that allow faculty and students to apply their work and produce useful solutions for business, government and nonprofit agencies,” Wood says.

The University’s reciprocal community engagement practices with public and private entities are longstanding, widespread and diverse, as its Community Engagement Geo-Map shows.

For the next classification process, “Our goal is to increase the strength, impact, and sustainability of our partnerships, all the while contributing to our students’ educational experience and effecting positive societal change,” says Wood. ■



Western Michigan University emphasizes service-oriented learning. Here, students perform painting prep work for a local community project.

ARRAY OF OPPORTUNITIES

- Hydrogeology field courses focused on hazardous man-made chemicals known by the acronym PFAS.
- WIRE Youth Development Programs. These free offerings have benefited more than 1,000 youth between the ages of 7 and 13.
- Southwest Michigan Children’s Trauma Assessment Center.
- The Kalamazoo Literacy Council hosts an annual Adult Literacy Research and Training Symposium at WMU, which has impacted nearly 875 adult learners and has improved instructional capabilities of almost 300 volunteers.



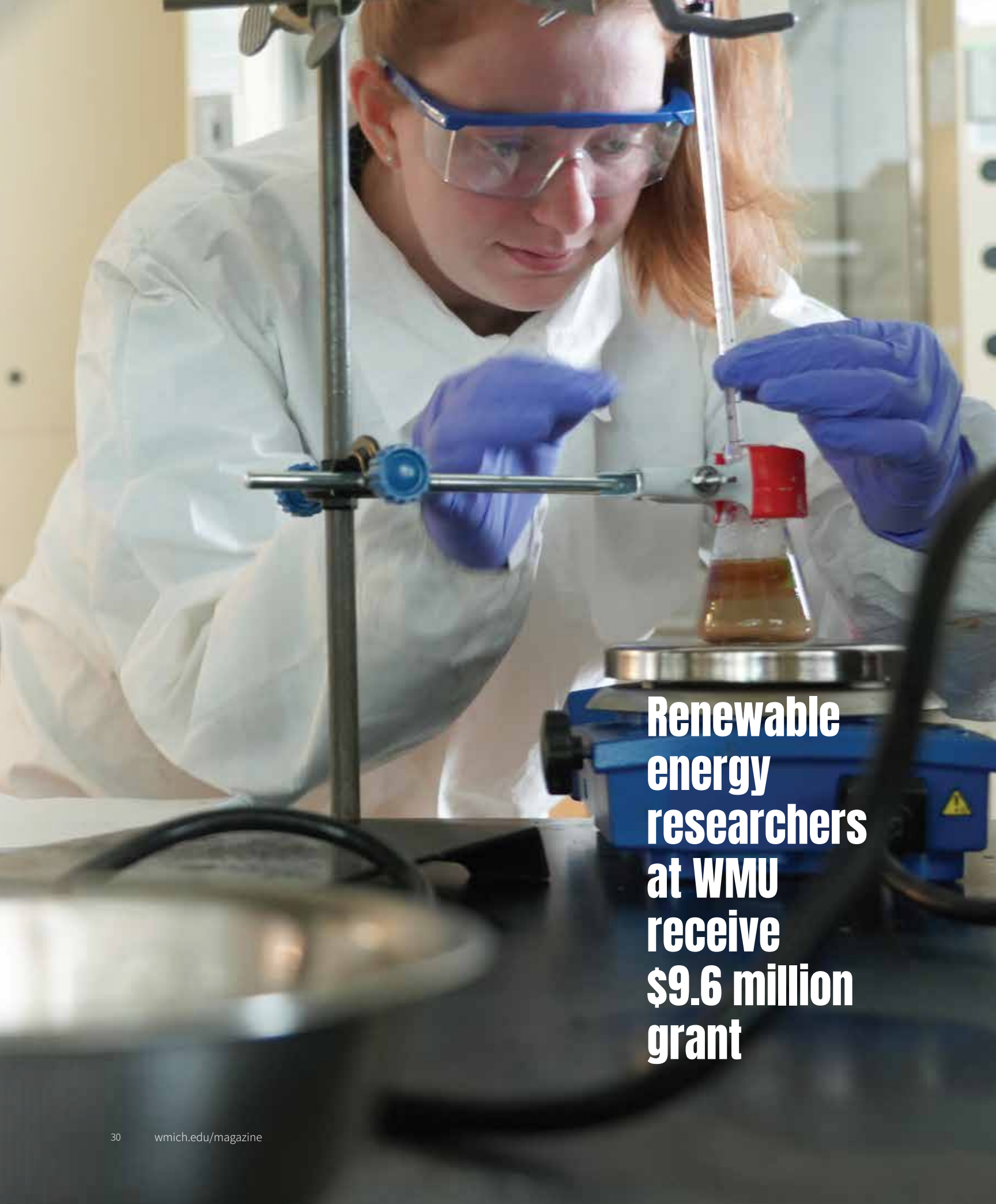
Carbon Criminals, Climate Crimes

(Rutgers University Press, 2020)

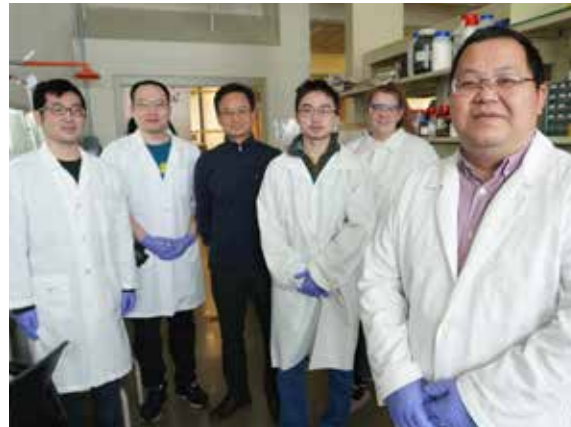


Kramer

This new book by Dr. Ron Kramer, professor of sociology, analyzes the looming threats posed by climate change from a criminological perspective. It advances the field of green criminology through an examination of the criminal nature of catastrophic environmental harms resulting from the release of greenhouse gases. The book describes and explains what corporations in the fossil fuel industry, the U.S. government, and the international political community did, or failed to do, in relation to global warming. “Carbon Criminals, Climate Crimes” integrates research and theory from a wide variety of disciplines to analyze four specific state-corporate “climate crimes”: continued extraction of fossil fuels and rising carbon emissions; political omission (failure) related to the mitigation of these emissions; socially organized climate change denial; and climate crimes of empire, which include militaristic forms of adaptation to climate disruption. The final chapter reviews policies that could mitigate greenhouse gas emissions, adapt to a warming world, and achieve climate justice. ■



Renewable energy researchers at WMU receive \$9.6 million grant



Dr. Qingliu Li, right, assistant professor and project lead for the Enabling Enhanced Electrode Architecture through Printing Technique project, with student research assistants.

Ever wish your cellphone battery lasted longer, or your laptop took less time to recharge? There's an excellent chance that such improvements are eminent thanks to federally funded research being spearheaded at WMU.

A nearly \$9.6 million grant recently received from the U.S. Department of Energy's Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy is supercharging ongoing lithium-ion battery research led by the College of Engineering and Applied Sciences and corporate partners. The scientific breakthroughs supported by this funding are expected to enhance crucial environmental sustainability efforts pertaining to energy efficiency and resources consumption.

Titled Enabling Advanced Electrode Architecture through Printing Technique, the three-year project is being spearheaded by Dr. Qingliu Wu, an assistant professor in WMU's Department of Chemical and Paper Engineering. As principal investigator, Wu is leading the project team of scientists and engineers in seeking ways to create more cost-effective, fast-charging and high-energy lithium-ion batteries for use in electric vehicles and other consumer products such as drones and portable devices.

The low-cost printing method used for electrode fabrication will potentially increase energy density without sacrificing battery life. Lithium-ion batteries, such as those in cell phones, that now take up to three hours to charge would take only 10 minutes or less with such next-generation technology.

Wu has assembled a multidisciplinary team within WMU to work with: Argonne National Laboratory; WMU's partners Northeastern University, Brown University and University of North Carolina Charlotte; SafeSense Technologies LLC, a technology start-up launched by WMU and spun off as an independent company; and Boston, Massachusetts-based Nanoramic Laboratories to provide solutions to

global energy concerns and address national priorities of the Department of Energy. "This research is designed to also engage Western Michigan University students and allow them to contribute now and become the next generation of leaders in this field," says Dr. Terri Goss Kinzy, vice president for research and innovation at WMU.

Contributing to the research at WMU will be Ph.D. students Guanyi Wang, Jie Ziong and Jian Yang; undergraduate students Lindsay Gubow, Bharat Goel and JustOne M. Crosby; and professors Dr. Kecheng Li, Dr. Paul D. Fleming, Dr. Alexandra Pekarovicova and Dr. Massood Atashbar.

Wu says he is grateful to have received the grant and for the support of various partners and colleagues who also helped earn the award.

"I am excited that we can have more students at WMU involved in our research on lithium-ion batteries," says Wu. "As you know, lithium-ion batteries could store significant amount of energy from solar and wind power, making possible a fossil fuel-free society."

The state-of-the-art printing technology being developed for this project could potentially reduce environmental pollution and result in cheaper batteries for customers, Wu says. WMU's longstanding reputation for discovery and forward-thinking scientific development is exemplified within its College of Engineering and Applied Sciences, where its numerous programs produce practical improvements and problem-solving leaders who are committed to improving lives. ■

In summer 2019, Andy Dominianni spent eight solitary weeks at his family's cottage in upstate Michigan, but not for a relaxing hiatus. Instead, the evening anchor for WWMT-TV Newschannel 3 in Kalamazoo was determined to find his voice again. The singular, distinctive auidial source that his livelihood depends on had rebelled against him out of the blue the previous year, thereby jeopardizing his career.



"It was horrifying," Dominianni says. "It was easily the worst thing that's ever happened to me."

The problem began in August 2017 while shooting footage for a piece on the 50th anniversary of the Detroit race riots. His stand-up, which typically took only one or two takes for this seasoned news professional to nail, instead took 11 takes. His voice kept breaking. Every third word came out as air without sound.

Amid a series of false starts with specialists who weren't a good fit for him, Dominianni met Heidi Douglas-Vogley, a master faculty specialist in WMU's Department of Speech, Language and Hearing Sciences. Her vocal assistance and emotional support, he says, made possible his recovery.

DREAD AND DIAGNOSIS

Dominianni says he pursued a TV news anchor career because of the varied learning opportunities and chances to meet fascinating people. An internship at ABC News during his college years inspired him, and one of the smallest TV markets at the time in the United States – Alpena, Michigan – gave him his start.

"It's a very fun job," says Dominianni. "It's a public platform, so it's a front-row seat. I get to see everything as it's happening, and I get to interview the people who are making it happen. So, I get to really make a difference."

Following his fateful Detroit assignment, Dominianni says he feared the worst. Was it lung cancer? Extensive imaging concluded it wasn't. Was it a vocal cord nodule? An upper endoscopy, which necessitated Dominianni being

Andy Dominianni, evening anchor for WWMT-TV Newschannel 3 in Kalamazoo, reviewing the script prior to delivering a live newscast.

Figures of speech:

Instructor helps Kalamazoo TV anchor recover his voice





Heidi Douglas-Vogley, a master faculty specialist in Western Michigan University's Department of Speech, Language and Hearing Sciences in the studio with news anchor Andy Dominianni, in background. Douglas-Vogley worked with Dominianni at the studio and in her clinical office to help him recover his voice.

on camera in a far different way, negated that theory, too. An out-of-town ear, nose and throat doctor misdiagnosed him. A local specialist with a less-than-pleasant bedside manner increased his anxiety and consequently worsened his symptoms, he says.

"In the meantime, I was not able to do my job very well," Dominianni explains. "Going on live TV was difficult. I was so anxious about my voice failing, and that anxiety made my condition worse. There were nights where I just couldn't eke out the words."

Viewers noticed. So did his bosses. He tried everything he could think of, and lots of methods that were suggested to him, but no amount of hot tea brought his voice back to its easygoing and unbreakable normalcy.

Three occurrences gave Dominianni his biggest breaks: connecting with Douglas-Vogley, whom an acquaintance of his recommended; reaching out to retired American public radio star Diane Rehm, who has also had vocal difficulties; and finally receiving an accurate diagnosis.

Douglas-Vogley, a tearful Dominianni says, "couldn't have been nicer. She couldn't have been more understanding. She said 'I know what you've been going through. I had a similar speech problem myself.' Come and see me." Her compassion, he says, contrasted with the frustration, fear and alienation

he was feeling at that time and provided a foundation for healing.

"EVERYBODY WAS TRYING TO BE HELPFUL, BUT NOBODY KNEW WHAT I WAS GOING THROUGH. AND HEIDI DID. HEIDI KNEW," SAYS DOMINIANNI.

Douglas-Vogley has extensive experience with diagnosing and therapeutically treating a variety of vocal problems. She teaches speech-language pathology and privately practices, and she has worked at WMU for 27 years. Previously, she served as a senior speech-language pathologist for Bronson Methodist Hospital in Kalamazoo.

Meanwhile, Rehm suggested there may be something more at play than muscle tension dysphonia, which was Dominianni's original, inaccurate diagnosis.

As he continued to seek medical help, Dominianni ultimately returned close to where his problems suddenly began. A Channel 3 viewer, as well as another local otolaryngologist, recommended he see Dr. Adam Rubin, in St. Clair Shores, north of Detroit. The laryngologist, whose office walls are adorned with autographed photos of world-famous singers and other vocal performers he has successfully treated, finally

provided an accurate diagnosis for the Kalamazoo news anchor: abductor spasmodic dysphonia.

ROAD TO RECOVERY

Dominianni has one of the rarest of rare vocal afflictions. Spasmodic dysphonia is a neurological disorder that affects about one out of every 100,000 people; far fewer have ABSD, the affliction as it pertains to the abductor variety. The voice muscles in the larynx, or voice box, are targeted, according to the National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders. Instead of producing a continuous air stream that vibrates the cords for sound production, the cords involuntarily spasm, which causes voice breaks and a strained tone.

Ironically, Dominianni also then developed a compensatory muscle tension dysphonia because of the unnatural physical methods he was using to keep his voice from breaking and straining. MTD causes vocal quality changes, discomfort in the neck or throat, voice fatigue and other speaking problems, according to Weill Cornell Medicine's Sean Parker Institute for the Voice.

"I was recruiting other muscles to force sound out however I could," Dominianni explains. "I did everything but stand on my head to make sound come out. I remember tensing all the muscles in my stomach, my legs, certainly my neck to just

eke it out. So, the one problem caused the other."

"The larynx for all of us is an emotional thermostat," Douglas-Vogley explains. "Anytime we have stresses and tensions, they can zap us laryngeally and people can lose their voice. Some people get migraine headaches, some people get upset stomachs, and some people develop varying levels of laryngeal dysfunction."

Douglas-Vogley and a graduate student initially visited Dominianni on set to watch him work and provided him with vocal training on WMU's campus to help ease the self-imposed strain on his vocal cords. But because the news never stops, his phrenetic schedule didn't make it easy to squeeze in sessions.

"THROUGHOUT THIS PROCESS, WHENEVER HE WAS ON AIR, I DID MY BEST TO WATCH HIM WHEN I COULD AND SENT HIM REAL-TIME TEXT MESSAGES ABOUT WHAT HE NEEDED TO DO TO FIX HIS VOICE ON THE SPOT," DOUGLAS-VOGLEY SAYS.

In person, traditional vocal training continued, and "we also addressed the whole notion of stress management and relaxation as it impacts laryngeal function," she notes. The pair concentrated on specific sounds that gave

Dominianni the most difficulty; two of those were words that begin with the letters ‘h’ and ‘a,’ which meant that his signature evening newscast greeting and his own name were nearly impossible to utter. Proper coordination of breathing with voice production was essential. Also used was “straw phonation,” a strategy that keeps the throat, voice and larynx more open.

Unlike most people, who take their ability to speak for granted, Dominianni must now consciously think about how he breathes and uses muscles in order to use and protect his voice. He has adopted the professional singer’s technique of breathing diaphragmatically and intentionally avoids quick catch breaths and chest and shoulder raising while he’s speaking (on air and otherwise) to maintain a normal, continuous tonal flow.

From a medical standpoint, Dominianni was prescribed oral medication to help ease the MTD, and Botox to address the ABSD component. The Botox injections he receives approximately every three months are “as fun as they sound,” he says.

“They numb your larynx with this awful medicine that makes you feel like you’re drowning,” Dominianni says. “In about 20 seconds, you think you’re dying even though you know you’re not. And then they shoot Botox all the way through your Adam’s apple into the back of your neck where the thyroarytenoid

muscle lives. That paralyzes the muscle,” which then prevents the vocal cords from spasming, he explains.

RESETTING EVERYTHING

The medical interventions were essential, but after more than a year of straining his body to try to force his voice to work, Dominianni says he had to relearn how to talk and safely project his voice for work purposes. This last piece of the puzzle, he says, involved time, perseverance, some unorthodox vocal methods and isolation at the remote family cottage. The time alone, he says, enabled him to set aside everyday responsibilities and distractions that would’ve encroached on his vocal retraining.

Armed with an extensive homework list of daily vocal exercises and a stack of books that he’d always wanted to read, he voluntarily sequestered himself from everyone, including his wife and children, for nearly two months to recover. For eight hours each day, he concentrated on this goal.

The books, he says, were less for enjoyment and more for vocal therapy. Rather than reading them, he hummed through the tomes to retrain his voice to properly use air flow. Two nonfiction works—one about the U.S.S. Indianapolis and another about the mafia—served Dominianni’s vocal purposes. He may be the only person who has spent a

summer humming through gripping narratives about the ship that transported parts of the world’s first nuclear bomb for detonation in Hiroshima and about organized crime.

Dominianni also used this time to improve his diet, and adopt other healthier lifestyle changes.

“I kind of just decided I was going to hit reset on everything,” he says.

Dominianni also knew this was his last chance to keep his job. If his recovery wasn’t markedly noticeable, if his voice continued to falter, he was certain he would be reassigned to a different position or dismissed. Therefore, for the last two weeks of his 10-week work leave, he returned to Douglas-Vogley, who went with him to the set to practice in his natural work environment.

Douglas-Vogley also recruited a handful of graduate students to help with a specific advocacy project for Dominianni, which compiled vocal improvement proof.

“I asked his employer to forward several clips over a span of about six months to me so that my graduate students could listen to him, analyze and assess,” Douglas-Vogley says. “We were then able to send them a graphic picture of the measurable progress that he actually had achieved.” The students thought the project was “fun and exciting,” she says, and were glad they could

help someone and appreciative of the experiential learning opportunity.

The university setting, Douglas-Vogley points out, paved the way for a more pliable approach to Dominianni’s treatment.

“The advantages of us being able to work with him are, we have the flexibility to spend a little more time, to be a little more creative, to be able to call in outside resources and to not feel the pressure that I think we might feel if we were working within the rigid confines of a non-university based outpatient center,” Douglas-Vogley says.

“And, we were able to have the advantage of being able to see him live, doing his job,” and “give him some direct, relevant feedback related to what he’s doing,” she says.

Also helping matters was that Dominianni was “a wonderfully compliant client” who “was a delight to work with,” Douglas-Vogley says. “He’s an appreciative, kind person.”

The time off, the exercises and the intensive speech therapy that Douglas-Vogley provided worked.

“I still have to do some vocal function drills every day, neck stretches and things that just kind of relax these muscles because they tend to tense up, but I would say that my voice is almost perfect,” says Dominianni.



WMU speech therapist and professor Heidi Douglas-Vogley works with news anchor for WWMT-TV Channel 3 Andy Dominianni in the Unified Clinics at WMU. Andy’s diagnosis of Spasmodic Dysphonia is one of many disorders that receive treatment through the Voice, Swallowing, Respiration and Resonance Clinical Laboratory.

SPEAKING OF PROGNOSIS

Although obviously treatable, ABSD is not curable. Dominianni will have to receive treatment for the remainder of his life to keep speaking.

Other difficulties remain. For many ABSD sufferers, including Dominianni, mundane acts such as talking on the phone and ordering at a drive-through window are impossible; he

resorted to texting and emailing friends and family during his long stay at the cabin.

A bout of influenza physically set him back and was emotionally more taxing on him than it otherwise would’ve been.

At one point, Dominianni, at Douglas-Vogley’s suggestion, decided to publicly detail some of his vocal challenges for viewers. The explanation helped both them and him close the divide, and it provided

a platform for people to offer support and encouragement.

“I’ll never stop being grateful to her,” Dominianni says of Douglas-Vogley. “There was no magic pill, but because she was nice and understanding, I wanted to get better for her.”

“I think that’s why any of us get into this field. We hope that we can make a measurable difference in somebody’s life,” says Douglas-Vogley. “I feel like

Western Michigan University allows me the opportunity to be able to make those impacts in people’s lives.”

With the support network he’s cultivated and with the concession he’s willing to make, Dominianni is hopeful that he can remain as a news anchor for several years.

“Where do I go from here? I’m not going anywhere,” he says. “I’m staying right here and doing what I want to do.” ■



TABOO TOPICS COURSE USES DIALOGUE TO BREAK THROUGH BARRIERS

HOW DO SUBJECTS SUCH AS SEX, RELGION AND SUICIDE RELATE TO RESPECTFUL DISCOURSE? AS STUDENTS IN DR. MARK ORBE'S COMMUNICATING ABOUT TABOO TOPICS COURSE DISCOVER, THESE SEEMINGLY DISPARATE CONCEPTS BECOME INTERDEPENDENT WHEN IT COMES TO THE DEEPEST OF DIALOGUE-BASED DISCOVERIES. IN THE PROCESS, STUDENTS AND THE INSTRUCTOR OPEN THEMSELVES UP TO TRANSFORMATIVE EXPERIENCES THAT INCREASE THEIR COMPASSION LEVEL WHEN IT COMES TO VIEWPOINTS THEY VEHEMENTLY OPPOSE.



Dr. Mark Orbe

Such nontraditional learning, which requires non-judgmental expression, strong curiosity and a willingness to be vulnerable, can be tinged with discomfort, confusion, hilarity and significant personal

connection, sometimes all within the same class session. People laugh, cry, blush and get angry. Disruption is the norm. Confessions are common.

Orbe refers to the classroom for this course as “the brave space rather than the safe space.” The timid or stubborn need not apply, yet anyone can use and benefit from these practical lessons.

The current pandemic and its accompanying socioeconomic, health and political rifts, Orbe says, are now lending even more relevance to the necessity for respectful dialogue that addresses subjects typically not discussed. Measures meant to decrease COVID-19's spread, such as social distancing and quarantining, are profoundly influencing interaction and even heightening the taboo nature of certain topics.

On one hand, “seclusion and silence are the enemies of engaging taboo topics in meaningful ways,” says Orbe. Some are loath to express disagreement with those they're stuck at home with. The occasional insistence to accentuate the positives and ignore the negatives, or to embrace the Westernized masculine notion to never show weakness, also contributes to power struggles, he says.

On the other hand, some are opening up more within the digital realm than they normally would in person. Orbe describes one transformative online group interaction with men from different parts of the country in which they discussed a member's recent suicide.

“I have had several similar interactions where people have broken the taboos around discussions related to death, mental health and emotional vulnerability,” Orbe says. “In this regard, the pandemic has seemed to bring people closer together and facilitated an openness with others that wasn't always there. Death has a way of doing that.”

Communicating About Taboo Topics has a similar effect.

“This class is about mutual understanding” that's not predicated upon persuasion; one can comprehend a particular stance without agreeing with it, Orbe says. His mantra and greeting, which helps set the proper tone, is “dumela.” Derived from Botswana and South Africa, it means: “I believe in you, I affirm you, and I see great potential in you.”

The course is also about attaining learner-centered empowerment, as inspired by the late Brazilian educator Paulo Friere's critical pedagogy advocacy. Questioning authority, established beliefs and the status quo are course imperatives. Why do U.S. Americans avoid discussing the active stages of death? Why are miscarriages kept secret? Course participants dive into such turbulent conversation waters, which lays the foundation for having healthy discussions

outside of class; in other words, Orbe's students leave his course knowing how to talk about politics, abortion and the Second Amendment without getting into a shouting match.

To achieve “dialogic moments” with shared meaning, listening and silence are just as important as questioning, Orbe explains.

“How can we use communication in a powerfully affirmative way and not in a Machiavellian way where you're trying to dominate others?” he asks.

This embrace of respectful and productive dialogue also meshes with WMU's spring semester series called “We Talk: Embracing Free Speech and Civil Discourse,” an inclusive effort targeted toward helping us realize our similarities while appreciating our differences.

Years ago, Orbe noticed a glaring gap in communication course content—the toughest subjects pertaining to subjects such as race, sex and spirituality profoundly impact people, but they're not addressed in classrooms. So, he designed Taboo Topics from scratch, and has taught it every fall for the past 11 years.

Orbe's work has since inspired similar classes offered at Indiana University and the University of Alabama, and it has captured national recognition. In summer 2018, the National Communication Association (the largest organization in the discipline) selected him to lead a weeklong teaching workshop on Communicating About Taboo Topics to faculty members from across the country.

“Our world is increasingly diverse on so many different levels, and unless we're teaching the skills on how to understand, we're never going to have communication, which requires sustained shared meaning. We're never going to have intercultural communication,” says Orbe, whose intersectional interests in communication, culture, race and qualitative research and

pedagogy have resulted in hundreds of articles, chapters, books and presentations.

Many Taboo Topics veterans say their course experiences changed them for the better and provided them with some of their most valuable college takeaways.

“This was the top course that transformed my thinking, that I can easily draw from in everyday life,” says alumnus Jonathan Pulley, who serves as a W.K. Kellogg Foundation Racial Equity Program officer. “One thing I drew from this class is, I can be who I am, but I honor and respect people with different experiences who believe differently.”

“Family secrets, race, faith and religion, death, interracial romantic relationships, kinks/sex/masturbation and fear were just a few of the topics we discussed,” says alumna Hailey Mangrum, who is now the assistant director of leadership development for fraternity and sorority life at Virginia Tech. She now knows how to “set up a space for dialogue... engage people from opposite ends of the spectrum and help folks understand the negotiations we make every day based on the intersections of our identity,” she says.

Claire Hernandez, a senior who took the course in fall 2019, focused her final project on an impromptu conversation she had with a friend who admitted she was contemplating suicide. Hernandez used her listening, empathetic and critical thinking skills she'd gleaned from Taboo Topics to ensure her friend felt safe, supported and heard.

As for Orbe, he says he hopes to teach Taboo Topics as long as he can remain a student-teacher who is learning along with his pupils.

“Dare I say, if we give students the opportunity to teach us, they will teach us. I'm not the only teacher,” says Orbe. “There's a certain cultural humility that has to come in here from everyone. All of us has something to learn.” ■

Thomas Hutchison, BS '67, was appointed executive director of Genesee County Habitat for Humanity in Flint, Michigan.

L. Graham Ward, '68, director of the Center for the Study and Resolution of Conflict at the WMU-Cooley Law School, was voted by the faculty as recipient of the Frederick Griffith III award, Adjunct Professor of the Year, 2019-20.

Dave Custer, BA '69, CEO and founder of Custer Inc., received the American Association of Community Colleges' 2020 Outstanding Alumni Award.

Dennis M. Nally, BBA '74, is independent director of Amerisource Bergen Corporation in Valley Forge, Pennsylvania.

Frank Calvaruso, BS '76, is the national sales manager for StrategyShares ETFs in Ponte Verda Beach, Florida.



Prawdzik

Steven M. Prawdzik, BBA '77, MBA '81, is the host of The Sports Project radio show on WYGR 94.9/99.5 FM in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Fred Smith, BS '78, of Stevensville, Michigan, was recognized by the National Federation of State High School Associations during the 50th National Athletic Directors Conference in December 2019. Retiring in 2017, Smith worked a total of 38 years as a teacher, coach and administrator for St. Joseph Lake Michigan Catholic Schools, Comstock Public Schools, Buchanan Community Schools and Benton Harbor Area Schools.

Ron Bailey, BSE '80, is global vice president of sales and marketing for SmartPlug Systems in Seattle, Washington.

Phyllis Goetz (Kurtz), BS '81, was promoted to president of Kimball, a furniture manufacturer based out of Jasper, Indiana.



Courts

Craig R. Courts, BBA '83, MBA '91, is the new president of Glacier Hills senior community in Ann Arbor, Michigan, and vice president of the Ann Arbor region for Trinity Health Senior Communities.

David A. Miller, BS '84, is the National Discovery market leader for architectural firm BSA Life Structures in Overland Park, Kansas.

Scott Leighton, BBA '87, joined Houston, Texas-based US LED as president.

Mary DeBoer, BA '89, was appointed by Indiana Gov. Eric J. Holcomb to the Porter County Circuit Court.

Brian Allen, BA '90, is vice president of sales and marketing for XACT Robotics in Hingham, Massachusetts.

Brian Janssen, BS '90, is business banking manager at TCF National Bank, supporting western Michigan for the Detroit-based financial institution.

David de Velder, BS '90, joined Wolverine Building Group of Kentwood, Michigan, as project manager.

Jeri Meola, MA '90, founder of EGL ACE Research, was recognized in the Minnesota Women Business Owners Hall of Fame. The program, led by the Minnesota Chapter of the National Association of Women Business Owners, honors the state's most successful female entrepreneurs.

David Anderson, BBA '91, was elected mayor of the city of Kalamazoo.



Corl

Christina L. Corl, BS '91, a partner with Plunkett Cooney, was elected chair of the Columbus (Ohio) Bar Association's Judicial Screening Committee for a one-year term ending Jan. 1, 2021.

John Ambrose, BS '92, was named director of undergraduate admissions for Michigan State University in East Lansing, Michigan.

Ray Zilke, BBA '93, leads the newly created health care financial services division for Crestmark financial services company in Franklin, Tennessee.

Anthony Paul Davis, BS '93, is director of the Department of Parks and Recreation for the city of Marathon, Florida.

Abby Reeg, MA '93, began her role as director of advancement for Exalta Health in Grand Rapids, Michigan, a nonprofit that provides healthcare to uninsured, underinsured and underserved families.

Rosemary Anger, BS '94, MA '03, earned a Michigan Master Assessing Officer designation from the Michigan State Tax Commission. She is a property specialist with the Michigan Department of Treasury.

Robert Herrera, MA '94, EdD '10, has started as superintendent for Farmington (Michigan) Public Schools.

Aimee Guthat, BA '95, joined national workplace law firm Jackson Lewis P.C. as a principal in Detroit.

Tracy Liz Miller, BFA '95, is director of education for Saratoga Shakespeare Company in Saratoga Springs, New York.

Brad Misner, BS '95, was hired as community development director of Benicia, California.

Paula Fender, MBA '95, is president and CEO of Centier Bank in Merrillville, Indiana.

Angelica Grindle, MA '96, PhD '02, joined DEKRA Organizational Safety and Reliability in Oxnard, California, as vice president of client engagement.

Shannon Anderson Alt, BA '97, is vice president, general counsel and corporate secretary for Amerisure Mutual Insurance Company in Farmington Hills, Michigan.

Jason Keiswetter, BBA '98, was promoted to president of Petoskey (Michigan) Plastics.

Andrew Brown, BBA '99, was named assistance finance director for the Village of Tinley Park, Illinois.

Dan Crabtree, BBA '99, was appointed vice president of global supply chain for Meritor Inc. in Troy, Michigan, a global supplier of drivetrain, mobility braking and aftermarket solutions for commercial vehicle and industrial markets.

Kyle Gernhofer, BS '00, had his software company, DenScore Inc., recently chosen as one of eight insurance technology companies to participate in the 2020 Global Insurance Accelerator cohort, a 100-day mentor-driven business accelerator program intended to foster innovation.

Brad Haverkamp, MBA '00, Chemical Bank's lakeshore community president, was added as a board member for Community Action House in Holland, Michigan.

Angela King, BA '01, is program coordinator for Glen Oaks Community College's partnership agricultural programs with Michigan State University Institute of Agricultural Technology.

Derik Rynearson, BBA '01, MS '07, is a partner at accounting firm Beene Garter in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Shane Rodgers, BBA '02, MS '02, was named vice president of finance and accounting for eye care company Blue Sky Vision in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Troy Butler, MBA '06, is director of business development at law firm Thacker Sleight in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Caitlin Lester-Sams, BFA '07, appeared as Mrs. Bucket, Charlie Bucket's mother, in the Broadway-touring musical production of Roald Dahl's "Charlie and the Chocolate Factory" at the Detroit Opera House.

Dana Stachowiak, BS '03, was appointed director of the Women's Studies and Resource Center at the University of North Carolina-Wilmington.

Cherise Brandell, PhD '03, is director of library and community services for the city of Sunnysvale, California.

Bob Bales, BA '04, principal of McDougle Middle School, was named the 2019-20 Principal of the Year for the Chapel Hill-Carrboro City Schools (North Carolina) district.

Brad Bergmooser, BA '04, is chief executive officer of Financial Plus Credit Union in Flint, Michigan.

Scott W. Malott, BBA '04, a lawyer with Plunkett Cooney in Bloomfield Hills, Michigan, was named as a "Rising Star" in Michigan Super Lawyers & Rising Stars, published by Thomson Reuters.

Andrew Martin, BBA '05, joined the Citizens National Bank financial services team as a financial services officer, responsible for expanding investment management services in northern Michigan.

Derek Barker, BS '05, is seeing patients as a physician at Podiatry Associates of Bluffton (South Carolina).

Shaun Houck, BSE '06, director of operations for OCG Operations, was inducted into the Hall of Fame for Lakeland High School (Michigan).

Brittany Karnes, BS '10, of Allen Park, Michigan, has written "A Hunter's Fate," the first in a science fiction trilogy written under the name B. K. Rae.

Westin Brake, BBA '12, joined Bridge Bank in the Silicon Valley, California, region as a portfolio manager in its equity fund resources group.

Leadriane Roby, PhD '12, was selected as superintendent of Grand Rapids (Michigan) Public Schools.

Bella Hounakey, BA '15, MSW '18, was appointed by President Donald Trump to the U.S. Advisory Council on Human Trafficking for a two-year term.

Molly (McCallister) MacGirr, BA '15, is director of marketing and communications at TraverseConnect, the parent organization of the Traverse City (Michigan) Area Chamber of Commerce.

Brandon Krieg, PhD '15, assistant professor of English for Kutztown (Pennsylvania) University, published his third award-winning collection of poetry, "Magnifier," this past December. "Magnifier," published by the Center for Literary Publishing at Colorado State University, is the winner of the 2019 Colorado Prize for Poetry.

Alexis Lenderman, BA '19, BBA '19, was awarded two grants totaling \$3,250 from the Business Development Fund from the city of Kalamazoo for her scholarship business, The Scholarship Expert.

Melanie Hight, BS '19, a flight instructor with OpenAir, was one of four recipients of a 2020 Leadership Scholarship from the National Business Aviation Association's Business Aviation Management Committee.

Randy Gist, BM '09, on alto saxophone, and **Blake Cross**, BM '15, on tenor saxophone, played in a set with the Jonas Brothers at the 62nd annual Grammy Awards.

Shawntes Gary, BS '09, opened FitStop24 Old 20 West in Elkhart, Indiana, a 24-hour fitness franchise.

Jerusa Carvajal-Villamar, MA '09, PhD '17, assistant professor of Spanish at Ouachita Baptist University, presented a paper at the biennial meeting of the Society for the Amazonian and Andean Studies, hosted by the University of Alabama.

Adam Clay, PhD '09, was appointed director of the Center for Writers, the center for graduate study of creative writing within the School of Humanities at the University of Southern Mississippi.

Stephanie Hampton, BA '10, MA '14, a teacher at Kalamazoo Public Schools' Maple Street Magnet School, was named the state's top English teacher by the Michigan Council of Teachers of English.

Dashuna Robinson, BA '10, was appointed as trustee to the Benton Harbor (Michigan) Area Schools Board of Education.

John Harshbarger, BS '10, senior firefighter for the Farmington Hills (Michigan) Fire Department, was selected 2018 Firefighter of the Year by the Farmington/Farmington Hills Optimist Club.

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50 Most Influential Women in West Michigan for 2020



Lynn L. Chen-Zhang

Regional business publication *Grand Rapids Business Journal* named six WMU alumni as "50 Most Influential Women in West Michigan" for 2020.

These honorees were profiled in the 50 Most Influential Magazine supplement, published in the *Grand Rapids Business Journal* for a recognition event March 4. The biannual event drew 850 people in 2018.

WMU Honorees

- **Lynn L. Chen-Zhang**, MSA '91, member of the WMU Board of Trustees, certified financial planner and certified public accountant, as well as partner, chief operating officer and chief compliance officer with Zhang Financial. She also is vice president of the WMU Foundation Board.
- **Amanda Fielder**, BA '02, partner with Grand Rapids, Michigan-based law firm Warner Norcross and Judd.
- **Birgit Klohs**, BBA '83, president and chief executive officer of The Right Place Inc., the regional economic development organization for western Michigan. She also is a past chair of the WMU Board of Trustees.
- **Michelle LaJoye-Young**, MPA '92, Kent County sheriff since November 2018.
- **Wendy Sellers**, BS '92, MA '03, consultant, author, speaker and owner of The HR Lady consultant firm.
- **Diana R. Sieger**, BS '73, MSW '78, president of the Grand Rapids Community Foundation who has held numerous other leadership positions in the Grand Rapids area.

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.



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BRONCOS' BEST

Music theatre performance graduate Kobe Brown shined on stage at WMU. Now, he's ready for the next act in his career—taking his talents to Tokyo Disneyland.

VIDEO

