Access, community, opportunity and tenacity—introducing Western’s Empowering Futures Scholarships.
Pop-up percussion
A flash mob performance of "I've Got a Gal in Kalamazoo" from the Bronco Marching Band captures the attention of students as they make their way through Sangren Hall. Also on the playlist: the alma mater and fight song.
Take a breather
Busy students unwind and learn to calm their minds while taking care of their bodies during a yoga class for Fall Mental Health Week.
It’s a word that you’ll find used widely in ad campaigns and recruiting brochures. It can make you look for the fine print or wonder what the catch is. At Western, it’s more than a word—it’s a motivation for our work and a promise to our students. I hear it frequently when I meet with alumni who eagerly tell me how Western offered them opportunity they couldn’t find elsewhere or when students share their excitement about the future, thanks to the possibilities they’ve discovered with us.

Our focus on and success in providing opportunity inspired the donors who chose to establish the Empowering Futures Gift. Their awe-inspiring $550 million contribution announced this past summer was the largest donation for a public university in U.S. history. That generous gift is focused on enabling Western to offer opportunities that will remove barriers for generations of students who might have thought a college education was out of reach or those facing challenges that threaten to derail their dreams. The gift allows for a significant expansion of need-based financial assistance for tuition and housing as well as gap funding for degree completion. We’ll also elevate career exploration and development activities like internships, practicums and co-ops; bolster health and well-being support; and undergird it all with faculty committed to student success and creative scholarship.

Opportunity is what Western offered to Dr. Merze Tate when other universities would not. We named our new University College in honor of this first Black woman to earn a bachelor’s degree here. And I know the students who walk through the doors of Merze Tate College, like Dr. Tate herself, will find the guidance and range of new opportunities that will inspire them to discover their own purpose and set their own future course. Read more about the new Merze Tate College and how its career exploration, academic advising and full complement of services support student achievement.

It’s a great time to be at Western—a place that has long focused on student success as it takes its promise “so that all may learn” to a new level. That’s what’s so exciting about these forward-looking activities—we are building on the foundation that we’ve already established to envision a future that’s open to every student who wants the chance to discover their purpose and develop a vision for a rich and rewarding life journey. Fulfiling that promise takes a community that shares a common goal and is prepared to join with us to dream, plan and take action. And the best part? There is always room for people who want to be part of our work to expand on our promise of providing that opportunity.

I hope you’ll be among them.

Sincerely,
Edward Montgomery, Ph.D.
President
Nearly $2 million grant to boost interprofessional workforce development

Adolescent behavioral health needs are at an all-time high. Western is meeting the challenge by preparing the next generation of practitioners to meet those needs and represent the diverse communities in the region with a grant from the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA). Three faculty members, Drs. Bridget E. Weller, Carla Adkison-Johnson and Jennifer Harrison, received an award of $1.92 million to support the development of a culturally and linguistically responsive behavioral health workforce.

Kathy Beaugard
Director for Intercollegiate Athletics Kathy Beaugard has retired after 62 years with the University. A nationally known and respected leader in her field, Beaugard holds the record as the longest serving athletic director at a single institution and one of just nine female athletic directors among 150 Football Bowl Subdivision schools across the nation.

“It’s been an incredible honor to serve in this University community,” said Beaugard. “I’m so proud of what WMU Intercollegiate Athletics has achieved over the years—first and foremost, helping to coach and develop the most exceptional student-athletes in all of college sports.

“It’s difficult to step away from them, from my colleagues and what we’ve built together. But I’ve been blessed to have a wonderful career. I’m filled with gratitude for this chapter of my professional life comes to a close.”

Beaugard concluded her work in December.

“We are grateful for AD Beaugard’s many contributions to Western Michigan University over the past four decades, both on and off the field, including the memorable trip to the Cotton Bowl in 2017 and producing numerous All-Americans and capturing the NCAA Academic Champions Cup,” said President Edward Montgomery.

“We appreciate the significant contributions Drs. Bridget E. Weller, Carla Adkison-Johnson and Jennifer Harrison have made to the University over their years of service. Their work will have a lasting impact and will help support the mission of the University to provide access to high-quality education and prepare students for success, both in their careers and as leaders in their communities. The $1.92 million grant will help faculty members expand educational opportunities for thousands of children and their families. Drs. Patricia Reeves and Jaoping Shen were awarded the grant through the U.S. Department of Education’s Promise Neighborhoods Program. One of the largest federal grants in WMU history, it will fund the Grand Rapids South Promise Neighborhood Project.

“The College of Education and Human Development has been a key player in promoting learning in southwest Michigan for more than a century. This grant and the proposed project demonstrate our continuing commitment to the communities we serve,” said Dr. Ming L. Dejan, a professor in the College of Education and Human Development.

Western, along with a group of partners that include Baxter Community Center, Early Learning Neighborhood Collaborative, Grand Rapids Community College, Grand Valley State University, Grand Rapids Public Schools, Kent Intermediate School District and LINC UP, will create a complete continuum of ‘cradle-to-career’ solutions for both educational programs and family and community supports, with great schools at the center.

The five-year project, funded with a $29.5 million grant, will help nearly $2 million at WMU to do together. Our team looks forward to the opportunity to work with our partners on the proposed project and take us into new venues for the work of positive, transformative change in the pursuit of equity and excellence for all students and their educators,” explains Reeves, principal investigator on the grant and professor emeritus of educational leadership, research and technology.

The Principles, Practice and School Renewal Processes established in the HL project will be utilized in collaboration with district and community partners to establish the leadership capacity and learn a series of 14 solutions with fidelity and integrity to the students and families of the Grand Rapids Promise Neighborhood.

The neighborhood being served by the grant is located in the southeast quadrant of Grand Rapids, the second largest city in Michigan, and includes one high school and 12 feeder schools. Each year, about 5,500 children from birth to grade 12 are enrolled in the K-12 system.

The ultimate goal of this project is to not only improve the child and student outcomes in Southeast Grand Rapids but also to add to the body of evidence of methods that can be utilized in collaboration with in-kind and financial support to improve all impoverished communities as well as their schools, children and students.

“Children are the future of our society. Our team looks forward to working with partners in Grand Rapids to improve children’s outcomes there,” says Shen, co-investigator on the project and professor of educational leadership and policy analysis, measurement and research.
Biz park expands Western’s role advancing knowledge, economic development

Business Technology and Research (BTR) Park North, an expansion of the University’s long-established business park at the Parkview Campus, opened in September.

Leaders celebrated the launch of BTR Park North in a joint ceremony with Ascension Borgess Cancer Center and no. 1 in innovation in Michigan. The cancer center is the first organization to locate within the BTR Park. The new park’s first tenant, Ascension Borgess Cancer Center, began welcoming patients in September. Lynn Chen-Zhang, chair of the WMU Board of Trustees, congratulated Ascension leaders:

“You have realized your goal of building a state-of-the-art cancer care center that will make a difference in countless residents’ lives and offer new opportunities for treatment and better outcomes for numerous individuals.”

Chen-Zhang said.

The new park is designed to continue the successful story of Western’s original BTR Park. The new development’s 265-acre forerunner is home to several dozen businesses pursuing life sciences, engineering, information technology and other fields. Over the past 20 years, the original BTR Park has attracted more than $150 million in investments, generated more than 1,400 jobs and has given rise to countless residents’ lives and offer new opportunities for treatment and better outcomes for numerous individuals.”

The road into the park, Robert Jones Way, pays homage to the late state senator. The senator was a driving force for the park’s development and helped to secure the necessary funding.

The new park’s first tenant, Ascension Borgess Cancer Center, began welcoming patients in September. Lynn Chen-Zhang, chair of the WMU Board of Trustees, congratulated Ascension leaders:

“You have realized your goal of building a state-of-the-art cancer care center that will make a difference in countless residents’ lives and offer new opportunities for treatment and better outcomes for numerous individuals.”

Chen-Zhang said.

The new park is designed to continue the successful story of Western’s original BTR Park. The new development’s 265-acre forerunner is home to several dozen businesses pursuing life sciences, engineering, information technology and other fields. Over the past 20 years, the original BTR Park has attracted more than $150 million in investments, generated more than 1,400 jobs and has given rise to numerous internships, co-ops and other experiential learning opportunities benefitting Western students.

Diana Sieger, B.A.’73, sociology; M.S.W.’78

Diana Sieger is president of the Grand Rapids Community Foundation, where she is responsible for its leadership, management, strategic planning and development. Under her skillful direction, the foundation has experienced tremendous growth and support from a variety of individuals and organizations in the community. Growing assets from $15 million to $155 million. Among her many accolades, she has received the 2014 Athena Award from the Grand Rapids Area Chamber of Commerce, was named one of the 50 Most Influential Women in West Michigan six times by the Grand Rapids Business Journal and was named one of Crain’s Detroit 100 Most Influential Women in Michigan. Sieger has been recognized with honorary doctorates of humane letters from Aquinas College and Grand Valley State University.

Daniel Witt, B.B.A.’83, public administration; MBA’84

Daniel Witt is president and director of the International Tax and Investment Center, which he helped found in 1993. The nonprofit research and education organization based in Washington, D.C., promotes tax reform and public-private initiatives to improve the climate in transitioning and developing countries. Witt has traveled extensively as a Rotary International Foundation Fellow, speaking about international tax and trade policy, and he has served as a visiting economist with the New Zealand Institute of Economic Research and Victoria University of Wellington. Witt was elected an honorary professor of economics of the Kazakh State Academy of Management in 1999, and in 2014, the President of Kazakhstan presented him with the Order of Dostyk (Friendship), the highest honor bestowed to a foreigner.

Charles Zhang, M.A.’91, economics

Charles Zhang is founder and CEO of Zhang Financial in Portage, Michigan, with more than $4.5 billion in assets under his management. Zhang Financial works with high-net-worth clients focusing on the preservation of wealth, investment growth and maintenance of income during retirement years. Of his many accolades, he was ranked No. 1 in the nation on Barron’s list of the Top 100 Independent Advisors in 2021, named the No. 1 Financial Advisor in Michigan by Barron’s for nine years in a row and has been ranked No. 6 in the nation on Forbes’ list of America’s Top Wealth Advisors. He is the highest ranked National Association of Personal Financial Advisors’ registered fee-only financial advisor and the highest ranked independent advisor on both lists. Zhang also holds an MBA from Northwestern University and an Executive Education from Harvard Business School.
The University in December announced the first initiatives made possible by the historic Empowering Futures Gift—a $550 million contribution to the WMU Foundation over 10 years—which will support not only tuition-free education but also provide low-cost housing, a new innovative Living Learning Community, internship stipends to foster career development and graduation scholarships. All told, the initiatives will create 1,350 new scholarships for incoming and current Broncos during the first year alone.

"In this rapidly changing world, a college education is more important than ever. But the cost of that education has shifted from the public to the student, putting it increasingly out of reach for too many," Western Michigan University is closing that gap by taking a holistic view of student success," says WMU President Edward Montgomery.

"The University is building an ecosystem of financial aid and programmatic support designed to meet students where they are and support them in their ambitions.

EMPOWERING ACCESS

The first step toward upward mobility is getting a seat at the table. The new Bronco Promise will provide a tuition-free Western education for up to five years for first-year students who come from Michigan families earning an adjusted gross income of $50,000 or less who have net assets under $50,000.

"Western is committed to opening the doors to higher education for all students who have the talent and determination to succeed," Montgomery says.

The University anticipates awarding these scholarships to 340 students in the 2022-23 academic year and a projected 600 students each year after. The Bronco Promise is an excellent example of how the Empowering Futures Gift is extending the capacity of the University to graduate students in a changing world. It expands upon federal Pell support to cover the cost of tuition. In students' first two years, the first $1,200 of the Broncos Promise support will be funded by the gift. The balance for the entirety of the five-year scholarships will be funded by institutional aid dollars.

EMPOWERING COMMUNITY

Tuition isn’t the only obstacle to college entry and completion. Even with very low or no tuition costs, living expenses can also keep a student from enrolling on a college degree. In addition, studies show students who live on campus perform better academically and have higher retention rates than their off-campus peers, but not every student or family can afford the cost that comes with it. The Empowering Futures Gift will provide up to $6,000 in housing and dining scholarships to 110 incoming students for their first year and offer holistic support through the Bronco Learning Community experience in the form of a new Living Learning Community.

While these communities located inside on-campus residences are popular and successful, they are most often built around a major. Statistics show, however, that college students change majors three times on average. The University’s newest Living Learning Community option will be responsive to students who are still exploring upon arrival or who may wish to build community around a cause, such as social justice, or a competency, like leadership. The new community will give students the chance to discover their interests while they explore careers, get involved in campus life and hone their study skills. Students will be encouraged to embrace the full campus experience—inside and outside the classroom—as they build an exciting and inspiring future.

Students who attend Kalamazoo Public Schools or have a Detroit or Grand Rapids school address will get preference for the need-based scholarships, but all Michigan residents are eligible to apply. Applications are due Feb. 15, 2022, and decisions will be released in March.

EMPOWERING TENACITY

Students who succeed in the classroom sometimes run into unexpected obstacles that threaten to derail their college journey, an accident, job loss, medical bills—they can all become financial barriers to finishing a degree as they approach commencement.

The Empowering Futures Gift will support 500 upper-level students each year with a need-based award up to $10,000 that can be applied to tuition and fees. It will double the number of graduation scholarships currently offered at Western.

"The University remains fully aware that a holistic approach requires financial assistance and more. There is no one-size-fits-all solution," Montgomery says. "Students need support. They need guidance. They need the University to join them on their journey. And Western is committed to rising to that challenge."

Western expects to announce innovative new programmatic support in early 2022 that will act in tandem with these new financial aid opportunities to help all Broncos thrive on the path to a degree and a meaningful career.
Empowering Futures:
‘So that all may learn’

The $550 million Empowering Futures Gift allows Western to build on and extend areas of strength. With a holistic philosophy in mind, new programs will focus on three areas of student need: academic success, resilience and belonging. It will create a new student experience that will not only fortify proven programs but also extend support to many more students with the ultimate goal of helping more students access college and graduate.

Jessica Cortes grew up in a rural town in Van Buren County, Michigan. Her parents immigrated there to give their children a better life, working on farms to make ends meet. She remembers going into the fields where her mother spent long hours picking fruit.

“I did one day of work, and she said, ‘This is why I don’t want you to do it; this is what we live through on a daily basis, and I would not want you to. That’s why you need to go to college,” Cortes recounts.

She had the potential but lacked the financial means to fulfill that dream. Then a call from Mark Delorey, director of Western’s V Foundation Scholars program, gave her a way to change the trajectory of her life. The program provides a $64,000, full-tuition scholarship to students who have demonstrated resilience and outstanding academic performance in the face of adversity.

“I don’t think I would have ever gone to college” without the scholarship, says Cortes, who will graduate next spring with a bachelor’s degree in social work.

But it’s more than the money: the guidance the program offers—from mentorship to community and mental health support—helped Cortes to grow personally and academically. Bolstered by the College Assistance Migrant Program (CAMP), which helps students with migrant and seasonal farming backgrounds make the transition to college and offers financial assistance, career development opportunities and academic
support. Cortes became a confident leader with the tools she needs to take her career goals to the next level.

Programs like Foundation Scholars, CAMP, and many others at WMU have demonstrated success in helping marginalized students stay on the path to graduation and advance social mobility.

The Empowering Futures Gift—a 10-year, $350 million donation by anonymous alumni—is a transformational investment that will allow Western to build on these types of support services and create even more opportunities for Western students for generations to come.

**Empowering Impact**

At its heart, the gift is intended to focus on diversity, equity and inclusion, breaking down barriers to systemic injustice and leveling the playing field so that traditionally historically underrepresented populations have the opportunity to thrive.

“If you look at the things our donors are investing in, it’s programmatic support for students who may not have seen themselves in college, helping them access the University and supporting them all the way through to graduation. Because they know that’s that attainment that changes an entire family’s possibility,” says Dr. Jennifer Bott, provost and vice president for academic affairs.

“It advances the narrative, especially living in Kalamazoo where we spent so much time talking about access to college and the Kalamazoo Promise, and I think that’s incredible,” adds Dr. Ed Martin, associate provost of WMU and dean of Merze Tate College. “But if we don’t talk about the completion agenda on that—not just the first generation to attend but the first generation to graduate from college and the ripple effect that can have within a family, within a neighborhood, within a community—we’re missing a key piece.”

The donors designated $200 million of the gift for WMU; $50 million for Bronco Athletics and $100 million for another donor, Styrker M.D. School of Medicine. It will fund scholarships, advance medical education and research, support faculty excellence, enhance athletic competitiveness and make possible numerous student-centered initiatives.

“I’ve always thought that university is the best time of your life. To go from where I’ve been to now finally go to Western Michigan University and live on campus just can’t be more amazing. It feels like I have so much support, and I’m home again.”

—Zahidullah Najafi, a first-year student and recipient of a Medallion Scholarship. Western’s most prestigious merit-based scholarship. Najafi came to the University after years in refugee camps.

“Western won me over because there are so many different programs to choose from. I’ve chosen public health as my major, but I’m interested in so many things and I don’t want to get trapped if I find something else that interests me. Western has a lot of other majors.”

—Sierra Ward, a fourth-generation Bronco and first-year student who has already traveled the world.

“This gift will allow us to live our mission, that all may learn. And it helps us in that components of the gift will expose students to their passions,” says Bott. “Our purpose is defined not just by what we believe but by the experiences that construct us. This gift allows us to create experiences for all of our students, not just for the students who can afford it.”

Bott and other University administration are examining existing programs, reviewing data, and planning financial and programmatic support that will invest the Empowering Futures funds in a way that has the greatest impact on ensuring students reach graduation. Implementation, which will begin in the fall, will focus on four areas.

• Educational access and retention: A significant expansion of need-based financial assistance with tuition, room and board, and degree-completion support.
• Purpose and passion: Paid experiential learning for students who rely on jobs to fund their education, as well as new support staff to guide students in their pursuit of a meaningful career.
• Well-being: New professional and technical support to improve mental health and help students develop healthy lifestyles.
• Transformational excellence: Hiring new faculty to enhance the diversity of the faculty and advance interdisciplinary education and research.

With the gift in mind, the University will build on and extend areas of strength, not replace or duplicate them.

“We have a lot of really strong programs, and they all tend to have a couple of key features in common. One of those key features is dedication to enhancing the diversity of the academic issues, not just the class scheduling, but the whole student,” Bott says.

With a holistic philosophy in mind, University leaders have prioritized three areas of need which students must have fulfilled to succeed in college: academic success, resilience and belonging. The team knows that each student is unique and arrives at college with their own strengths and needs. When needs are fulfilled, students tend to succeed and graduate. So, the team is building programming that can offer tailored support when, where and how it is needed.

“It’s a more holistic approach to student success,” adds Martini. “Just as students can’t thrive academically if they’re not sure how they’re going to pay their tuition bill or how they’re going to pay their housing bill that month, they also can’t thrive if they’re not in a good headspace to succeed or are struggling with anxiety we know many students have been feeling—even before the pandemic.”

Programs like the Foundation Scholars, Seita Scholars and TRiO fulfill many but not all student needs. The new student experience created by the gift will not only fill gaps in existing programs but also extend academic, resilience and support to many more students. Ultimately, the goal of the gift is to provide the support necessary to not only advance Western’s access mission but also to help more students earn diplomas.

**EMPOWERING FUTURE LEADERS**

“Every single day I’m at Western, there’s an impact that someone makes on my life.”

Cortes says “I don’t know what life would be without the Foundation Scholarship. I don’t know if I would be the same person that I am today or the leader I am today.”

And through the guidance and growing of WMU CAMP staff, Cortes realized she is in a position to make a powerful difference to those around her.

“The guidance let me know I have a voice and I have the ability to do what I set my mind to do. To do the things I really want, “ says Cortes, who wants to be a school social worker. “There are struggles my parents and a lot of people coming from low-income communities went through, I just want to be able to help my community by creating myself, coming back to my community and helping out.”

Dr. Zon Fisher wants to give back as well. He’ll graduate in the spring and has plans to be a nursing home administrator. He also wants to pursue a graduate degree in social work. Those are goals that seemed far out of reach when he first started his higher education journey as a first-generation college student who didn’t know how to navigate the landscape.

“I needed somebody to help guide me through that,” says Fisher, a Detroit native. Nathifa Sligh, director of the TRiO Student Success Program, helped him apply for scholarships and find ways to cut costs. TRiO is a federally funded program built to help first-generation, income-eligible students with academic needs achieve their personal and educational goals.

“TRiO was very important because it got me involved. TRiO helped me with my leadership skills. It helped me figure out my strengths and what my weaknesses are so I could work on them. It’s just important to work on for [first-generation students] to have,” Fisher says.

Sigh and Candace Faispenham Bracey, TRiO program service specialist, were there for him to lean on and “grow as a leader, as a student, as an adult,” which he says was important to his college career.

Fisher’s and Cortes’ stories are testaments to Western’s commitment to helping students reach their full potential on a path to a life well-lived. And with the help of the Empowering Futures Gift, the University will be able to broaden opportunities for even more Broncos. Bott says.

“Through the hard work of our faculty and staff we produce students who can achieve not just financially—which is obviously really important—but they also become really powerful citizens and vocal leaders in business and the community.”

“I’m proud of what Western has done and is doing to not only help students who aspire to earn a degree achieve those aspirations but also provide a wonderful support system once on campus.”

—Tennie Jackson, 2020 graduate and Seita Scholar, a WMU-based program that provides scholarship funding and an array of support to former foster youth.
There have been a few new additions to the dinosaur park behind Lee Honors College near Rood Hall. More to be excited about—an even bigger dino is on the way!
We’re transforming campus to meet the needs of today’s students. The favorite parts of campus remain but we’ve added a few new additions. Here’s a glimpse of life at Western in 2021-22—and what’s ahead.

Valley Dining Center, which was completed in 2016, is feeding hungry students seven days a week.

The curtain wall on the new student center and dining facility is complete. The gold panels are designed to look like Michigan tree foliage and help shade the building. When light shines in, it feels like you’re in a forest.

Work on the inside of the new student center and dining facility is coming along too. It’s expected to open in time for fall classes in 2022.

This is the first full academic year open for Arcadia Flats, which offers five different housing styles for upper-level and graduate students—from loft and studio apartments to multiple-roommate flats.

Work is underway at Dunbar Hall to reimagine learning for students by fall 2023. Renovations include reconfiguring classroom layouts, creating more student workspaces and making major technology upgrades.

Western opened the Business Technology and Research Park North this fall with its first tenant. Ascension Borgess Cancer Center.

A dinosaur park, dreamed up by the Department of Geological and Environmental Sciences, is drawing enthusiasts to campus to see creatures from the Triassic, Jurassic and Cretaceous periods.

This is the first full academic year open for Arcadia Flats, which offers five different housing styles for upper-level and graduate students—from loft and studio apartments to multiple-roommate flats.

Work is underway at Dunbar Hall to reimagine learning for students by fall 2023. Renovations include reconfiguring classroom layouts, creating more student workspaces and making major technology upgrades.

Western opened the Business Technology and Research Park North this fall with its first tenant. Ascension Borgess Cancer Center.

Nothing like the sun shining over the Chemistry Building on a hot day.

Demolition began in summer 2021 on the Board of Trustees Plaza, which was originally designed in 1964. The facelift includes a new granite waterfall and more room for walking safety and accessibility.

Above: The Haworth College of Business is bustling with students looking to explore all Western has to offer for budding professionals.

Left: The new Aviation Education Center on the Battle Creek campus was built with aviation in mind in the architecture and design details. It also boasts first-of-its-kind training opportunities and expands the number of students the program can accommodate.

Pictoresque greenery around the pond in front of Sangren Hall.

It’s a true campus favorite, Miller Plaza Fountain.

A dinosaur park, dreamed up by the Department of Geological and Environmental Sciences, is drawing enthusiasts to campus to see creatures from the Triassic, Jurassic and Cretaceous periods.
Always dream bigger:
Introducing Merze Tate College

Dr. Merze Tate saw boundless possibilities in a world where the odds were stacked against her; she refused to sit in the mold society created for her and instead set out to conquer her dreams and explore the world. Western is honoring Tate’s legacy by naming the academic home for exploratory majors after the inspirational alumna who was a scholar, world traveler, journalist, author and disarmament specialist who advised world leaders.

"The path that Merze Tate has paved for my community and the girls of the Merze Tate Explorers leaves me speechless! To be attending Western Michigan University as the first former president of Teachers College (then Western State Teachers College) and to have an academic college named after her at a predominantly white institution.

"While we are excited to name the college after her, we are also humbled. And we take seriously the responsibility of honoring her legacy by creating the conditions in which all students, particularly those from historically underserved groups, can thrive," says Dr. Ed Martin, associate provost of WMU and dean of Merze Tate College.

Merze Tate College will serve as a guidepost for students as they chart their own path to success, affirming the University’s core mission: "So that all may learn." It is a centralized network of support services, units and departments that exist to help Broncos envision their future, embrace their potential, thrive in all dimensions of their well-being and discover their purpose.

In addition to serving as the hub for functionally centralized academic advising, the college will serve as home to students in the Exploratory Advising and University Studies programs, as well as a variety of student support units including the Office of Student Transitions, WMU Signature, Center for Academic Success Programs, Student Success Services, Career and Student Employment Services, Collegiate Pathways and WMU Essential Studies.

"Western Michigan University was the beneficiary of the bravery, leadership, and example of Dr. Tate. Naming University College in honor of this trailblazer is a fitting tribute to her legacy, service and advocacy—particularly for students of color," says Dr. Devera Gardner, associate dean of Merze Tate College. "We hope to continue to live up to the ideas Dr. Tate embodied through the work of the college in the delivery of the important services we provide our students."

About one in 10 first- and second-year students at Western are undecided on their major, and more than 2,000 students change majors every year. Merze Tate College sets Western apart from many institutions by offering programs and services that seek to empower these students by normalizing the process of asking for help. This is based on evidence that first-generation students and other historically underserved students can be reluctant to seek out support as they navigate the higher education landscape.

Dr. Tate was a bold and courageous trailblazer who explored the world with passion and purpose. That’s the same spirit of type we encourage in our students in Merze Tate College," says Dr. Jennifer Bott, provost and vice president for academic affairs. "By providing integrated, holistic approaches to student success, we are building a new road map that guides students in charting their own path."

The naming decision adds another milestone to Tate’s extensive list of barrier-breaking accomplishments, which include being the first Black woman to earn a bachelor’s degree from Western (then Western State Teachers College). She will become one of the few Black women to have an academic college named after her at a predominantly white institution.

However, her incredible thirst for knowledge and becoming a valiant educator of her class wasn’t enough for the University of Michigan, which denied her admission when the school learned the color of her skin. When then-WMU President Dr. Dwight Valdo heard what happened, he immediately accepted Tate and provided her a scholarship. She went on to graduate in three years with a degree in education, becoming the first Black woman to receive a bachelor’s degree from the institution in 1927.

Despite her exemplary academic record, every Michigan school district she applied to refused to hire a Black teacher. Valdo and other Western faculty members made calls to districts across the Midwest on her behalf, and she soon became the first history teacher at Crispus Attucks High School in Indianapolis—a school created in 1927 by the Ku Klux Klan to keep Black students segregated.

Intent on expanding opportunities for her students, Tate created a travel club to bring history and civics lessons to life with field trips across the country.

"If I can educate myself and educate others to have careers and skills that the world will need, then that is the ultimate civil rights movement," Tate went on to earn bachelor’s and doctoral degrees in international relations from Oxford University—the first African American to do so—and became the first Black woman to earn a doctoral degree in government and international relations at Harvard University’s Radcliffe College in 1941. She was one of the first two women to join the Department of History at Howard University as a professor, where she spent three decades before retiring in 1986.

After a lifetime of learning and exploring, Tate donated more than $1 million to Western and has a Medallion Scholarship named for her. And now, a college will be dedicated to her legacy.
As the aviation industry prepares for takeoff after a pandemic pause, Western’s new, innovative facility puts the University at the head of the pack to meet the growing demand. "This is a pretty momentous occasion and opportunity for Western Michigan University," says Tom Thinnes, recruitment and outreach manager for the College of Aviation. "It really resonates for the quality of the program, and this new building truly elevates us to the stature of how the industry already recognizes us."

"If you talk to some of our graduates who are now flying for the airlines, they’re gushing about how great this is," adds Capt. Dave Powell, who recently retired as dean of the College of Aviation. "Everything here is state of the art. We’re delivering the most sophisticated flight training of any program in America."

The new facility was built with aviation in mind, including in the architecture and design details. "We don’t have hallways; we have concourses. We have classrooms, but you could also consider those gate areas," Thinnes says. The light fixtures are shaped like propellers, and windows stretching from floor to ceiling wrap around the building, giving prime views of planes taking off and landing on the airstrip outside.

"It’s fun and it really engages students to get excited for our future," says Coldagelli, who grew up in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. "Being a Western student—it’s being a Bronco—a awesome, taking classes is great, doing flight training is really exciting, but honestly all of this is to prepare me for the future, which I know now is really going to be exciting."

There are plenty of upgrades that come along with the new facility to help students better prepare for the industry. Students now have access to 11 classrooms, six advanced flight simulators, larger gathering areas for events like career fairs and networking, and 25 pilot briefing rooms. A new paint lab will take the aviation technical operations program to an elite level, making it one of just a few in the country where students can experience the entire process of painting an aircraft.

"It’s going to give our students a technical advantage and a competitive edge. They’ll be able to go out and get a job," says Thinnes, adding all of Western’s programs far exceed industry minimum requirements.

"Western brings all the top resources available right now. We’re advancing with technology because technology is always changing," says Luis Jaime, an aviation maintenance technology student from suburban Chicago. "I’m excited to experience the new building."
Saving limbs and lives

Diabetes is a national concern, affecting more than one in 3 Americans. Among the many health challenges it causes, the disease can put patients at risk for dangerous foot ulcers and lower limb amputations. But innovative research at Western could be a game changer, accelerating healing and saving limbs and lives.

“When people with diabetes develop a wound or ulcer on the bottom of their foot, it may become chronic and they are slow to heal,” says Dr. Daryl Lawson, associate professor of physical therapy, who has access to a specialized wound care center. “A barrier for many people living in remote and rural areas. So I thought, if we could develop something where we can monitor and treat people with diabetes and chronic, non-healing ulcers, we can prevent amputations and heal the wounds.”

Lawson saw the impact of amputations firsthand as a practicing physical therapist for many years. An amputation can medically stabilize a person with diabetes and a non-healing wound, physically and emotionally. But it comes with consequences. “If you take the leg, you’ll take away the function for the rest of their life,” says Lawson. “The more involved I was, the more I saw that we can medically stabilize a lot of people, but it really changes their whole life, both physically and mentally, when you take that reason for being away.”

A dream decades in the making is now nearing the finish line for Lawson, who worked with Dr. Christopher Arena, associate professor of biomedical engineering at Virginia Tech, to invent Sensore. A boot that not only offloads pressure on diabetic foot ulcers but also delivers a combination of heat and electrical stimulation to increase blood flow and dramatically speed up the healing process. The results so far are remarkable. Initial research at Western shows Sensore’s combination of heat and electrical stimulation increased blood perfusion at the foot in people with diabetes more than 100%. “The purpose was to combine both of those elements to treat people at home or an assisted nursing facility and be able to monitor people to make sure they never get to the point of amputation,” says Lawson. Through the support of Western Biosciences Research and Commercialization Center andentrepreneurial connections, the duo helped launch a company, Adlore, Inc., to take their invention from concept to viable product.

The SenLore team is working with Tekna, a product development company founded by Western alumni Dr. Binu Narakathu, to produce the first-generation boot. A development company co-founded by Western alumni Kris and Claire Eager, and SafeSense Technologies, a sensor and commercialization phase. If all goes as planned, SenLore could be available to treat non-healing wounds through targeted oxygen delivery—an innovation hailed as a world-changer by Smithsonian Magazine.

“I have a passion for creating something that may have a positive impact on someone’s life,” Atashbar says, expressing his excitement to work with Lawson on the project. “Any serious project that can have an impact needs to be interdisciplinary, being involved with different disciplines to learn what problems we have and what we can do together.” He says, “I enjoy collaboration. I enjoy interdisciplinary forms of science and anything biomedical related, and my students are learning a lot, too.”

Atashbar and his graduate students are engineering technology to monitor blood flow and other cardiovascular metrics and integrate the data with a smartphone application. It involves creating flexible, screen-printed sensors and electrodes—a novel idea in itself—that will be integrated in the boot’s insole. When finished, the app will connect to the boot through Wi-Fi, alerting clinicians and patients to any changes in metrics immediately.

“In the long run, a patient can be home; they don’t need to go to see a doctor or physical therapist to constantly update their progress.” Atashbar says, “If we have feedback in terms of the level of oxygen that is being generated, the doctor can create a new dose and it can be applied or downloaded on the smartphone of the patient and at their convenience.”

The SenLore technology is unlike anything available on the market right now. Lawson and his physical therapy students have completed a pilot project confirming the boot’s healing properties. The next phase of the project will involve clinical trials to collect more data from patients with the ultimate goal of submitting successful results to the FDA for approval and generating funding to move into the commercialization phase. If all goes as planned, Senlore could be available to diabetes patients in 2022.

José Rodríguez-Labra, who is pursuing a master’s in electrical engineering, displays an insole fitted with sensors developed in the Center for Advanced Smart Sensors and Structures.
Sweet sounds of Western

Rattling silverware, clanking cups and the pitter-patter of water splashing off plates isn’t exactly music to the ears, but it’s a sink-side symphony Abondance Kibadi hasn’t always had the luxury of hearing. He’s experienced it all now at his Dining Services job after receiving some new high-tech hearing aids.

“They make me feel confident,” says Kibadi, a student from the Democratic Republic of Congo with plans to study biomedical sciences and follow in his father’s footsteps as a surgeon. His hearing loss has been present since he was a child, but a collaborative effort between Western’s Unified Clinics, the Sindecuse Health Center, the Student Academy of Audiology and hearing solutions company Phonak has given him new hope for success. “I am able to hear and understand conversations more clearly, and I am more independent in helping me to hear myself. It’s really changed my life.”

Growing up, Kibadi struggled to hear teachers and was often accused of not paying attention in class. In reality, he couldn’t hear the directions he was being given. But it wasn’t until he traveled to the United States to pursue his studies that his hearing was finally enforced. It wasn’t until he traveled to the United States to pursue his studies that his hearing was finally enforced. It wasn’t until he traveled to the United States to pursue his studies that his hearing was finally enforced.

Finding support

Abondance Kibadi

Kibadi was 15 years old when he complained to his mother about the ringing in his ears, likely caused by premature birth or a cranial birth defect. “I was in eighth grade when my own hearing test revealed hearing loss,” he says. When he arrived at Western, he began working with Dr. Alyssa Eminhizer, hearing clinic director and professor of audiology in the Department of Speech, Language and Hearing Sciences.

Kibadi was referred to the Department of Speech, Language and Hearing Sciences and to the Graduate Program in Audiology in the College of Education. When he arrived at Western, he began working with Dr. Alyssa Eminhizer, hearing clinic director and professor of audiology in the Department of Speech, Language and Hearing Sciences.

Kibadi’s hearing loss was confirmed, and a diagnosis of sensorineural hearing loss was made. “The hearing aids Kibadi eventually received were too expensive and they’re not going to be affordable for everyone,” Eminhizer says.

Western’s audiology program is unique in that it provides clinical experience to graduate students from the start. Some of those students have been working with Kibadi in the clinic, performing basic audiologic care for patients who have hearing loss. “They make me feel confident,” says Kibadi, a student from the Democratic Republic of Congo with plans to study biomedical sciences and follow in his father’s footsteps as a surgeon.

He is so graceful in how he has navigated his hearing loss identification and adjustment to life with hearing aids,” says Eminhizer. “When working with Abondance, I feel a sense of hope for the world. He is so kind and honest—that’s a rare thing nowadays.”

However, Kibadi had a high school student from the Democratic Republic of Congo with plans to study biomedical sciences and follow in his father’s footsteps as a surgeon. His hearing loss has been present since he was a child, but a collaborative effort between Western’s Unified Clinics, the Sindecuse Health Center, the Student Academy of Audiology and hearing solutions company Phonak has given him new hope for success.

“Western’s audiology program is unique in that it provides clinical experience to graduate students from the start,” Eminhizer says. “Some of those students have been working with Kibadi in the clinic, performing basic audiologic care for patients who have hearing loss. They make me feel confident,” says Kibadi, a student from the Democratic Republic of Congo with plans to study biomedical sciences and follow in his father’s footsteps as a surgeon.

When he arrived at Western, he began working with Dr. Alyssa Eminhizer, hearing clinic director and professor of audiology in the Department of Speech, Language and Hearing Sciences.

Kibadi was 15 years old when he complained to his mother about the ringing in his ears, likely caused by premature birth or a cranial birth defect. “I was in eighth grade when my own hearing test revealed hearing loss,” he says. When he arrived at Western, he began working with Dr. Alyssa Eminhizer, hearing clinic director and professor of audiology in the Department of Speech, Language and Hearing Sciences.

Kibadi was referred to the Department of Speech, Language and Hearing Sciences and to the Graduate Program in Audiology in the College of Education. When he arrived at Western, he began working with Dr. Alyssa Eminhizer, hearing clinic director and professor of audiology in the Department of Speech, Language and Hearing Sciences.

Kibadi’s hearing loss was confirmed, and a diagnosis of sensorineural hearing loss was made. “The hearing aids Kibadi eventually received were too expensive and they’re not going to be affordable for everyone,” Eminhizer says.

Western’s audiology program is unique in that it provides clinical experience to graduate students from the start. Some of those students have been working with Kibadi in the clinic, performing basic audiologic care for patients who have hearing loss. “They make me feel confident,” says Kibadi, a student from the Democratic Republic of Congo with plans to study biomedical sciences and follow in his father’s footsteps as a surgeon.

He is so graceful in how he has navigated his hearing loss identification and adjustment to life with hearing aids,” says Eminhizer. “When working with Abondance, I feel a sense of hope for the world. He is so kind and honest—that’s a rare thing nowadays.”

However, Kibadi had a high school student from the Democratic Republic of Congo with plans to study biomedical sciences and follow in his father’s footsteps as a surgeon. His hearing loss has been present since he was a child, but a collaborative effort between Western’s Unified Clinics, the Sindecuse Health Center, the Student Academy of Audiology and hearing solutions company Phonak has given him new hope for success.

“Western’s audiology program is unique in that it provides clinical experience to graduate students from the start,” Eminhizer says. “Some of those students have been working with Kibadi in the clinic, performing basic audiologic care for patients who have hearing loss. They make me feel confident,” says Kibadi, a student from the Democratic Republic of Congo with plans to study biomedical sciences and follow in his father’s footsteps as a surgeon.

When he arrived at Western, he began working with Dr. Alyssa Eminhizer, hearing clinic director and professor of audiology in the Department of Speech, Language and Hearing Sciences.

Kibadi was 15 years old when he complained to his mother about the ringing in his ears, likely caused by premature birth or a cranial birth defect. “I was in eighth grade when my own hearing test revealed hearing loss,” he says. When he arrived at Western, he began working with Dr. Alyssa Eminhizer, hearing clinic director and professor of audiology in the Department of Speech, Language and Hearing Sciences.

Kibadi’s hearing loss was confirmed, and a diagnosis of sensorineural hearing loss was made. “The hearing aids Kibadi eventually received were too expensive and they’re not going to be affordable for everyone,” Eminhizer says. 

Western’s audiology program is unique in that it provides clinical experience to graduate students from the start. Some of those students have been working with Kibadi in the clinic, performing basic audiologic care for patients who have hearing loss. “They make me feel confident,” says Kibadi, a student from the Democratic Republic of Congo with plans to study biomedical sciences and follow in his father’s footsteps as a surgeon. His hearing loss has been present since he was a child, but a collaborative effort between Western’s Unified Clinics, the Sindecuse Health Center, the Student Academy of Audiology and hearing solutions company Phonak has given him new hope for success.

“They make me feel confident,” says Kibadi, a student from the Democratic Republic of Congo with plans to study biomedical sciences and follow in his father’s footsteps as a surgeon. His hearing loss has been present since he was a child, but a collaborative effort between Western’s Unified Clinics, the Sindecuse Health Center, the Student Academy of Audiology and hearing solutions company Phonak has given him new hope for success. “I am able to hear and understand conversations more clearly, and I am more independent in helping me to hear myself. It’s really changed my life.”

Growing up, Kibadi struggled to hear teachers and was often accused of not paying attention in class. In reality, he couldn’t hear the directions he was being given. But it wasn’t until he traveled to the United States to pursue his studies that his hearing was finally enforced. It wasn’t until he traveled to the United States to pursue his studies that his hearing was finally enforced.

Finding support

Abondance Kibadi

Kibadi was 15 years old when he complained to his mother about the ringing in his ears, likely caused by premature birth or a cranial birth defect. “I was in eighth grade when my own hearing test revealed hearing loss,” he says. When he arrived at Western, he began working with Dr. Alyssa Eminhizer, hearing clinic director and professor of audiology in the Department of Speech, Language and Hearing Sciences.

Kibadi’s hearing loss was confirmed, and a diagnosis of sensorineural hearing loss was made. “The hearing aids Kibadi eventually received were too expensive and they’re not going to be affordable for everyone,” Eminhizer says. 

Western’s audiology program is unique in that it provides clinical experience to graduate students from the start. Some of those students have been working with Kibadi in the clinic, performing basic audiologic care for patients who have hearing loss. “They make me feel confident,” says Kibadi, a student from the Democratic Republic of Congo with plans to study biomedical sciences and follow in his father’s footsteps as a surgeon. His hearing loss has been present since he was a child, but a collaborative effort between Western’s Unified Clinics, the Sindecuse Health Center, the Student Academy of Audiology and hearing solutions company Phonak has given him new hope for success. “I am able to hear and understand conversations more clearly, and I am more independent in helping me to hear myself. It’s really changed my life.”

Growing up, Kibadi struggled to hear teachers and was often accused of not paying attention in class. In reality, he couldn’t hear the directions he was being given. But it wasn’t until he traveled to the United States to pursue his studies that his condition was diagnosed. He was not able to hear what my CELCIS instructor at WMU was saying in class, and
It was a way to connect with his passion when theaters around the globe went dark during the pandemic. A year and a half later, musical theater performance student Henry Lee’s unique Lego hobby took center stage in New York City.

The junior’s miniature Broadway set replicas were on display this fall in the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts in Lincoln Center. ‘Brick by Brick. Putting it Together: The Lego by Lego

His intricate and innovative work began with some of his favorite set designs with a heavy dose of his idol, Hal Prince. They won him fans around the globe, including some of the families of the original set designers.

“I think, especially during the pandemic, people felt like they could experience these pieces of art, especially those who had seen the productions. They could relive it, even though the whole industry was down,” says Lee. “It just reminds me of why we create art.”

The designs also caught the eye of Doug Beadle, curator of the New York Public Library’s Billy Rose Theatre Division, who had created an exhibition dedicated to Prince. That connection eventually led to Lee’s miniatures finding a home in the library. He flew to New York to deliver the pieces, which were on display near the front of the facility for everyone to see.

(“Being there) was a surreal experience,” adds Lee. “It’s very much an honor to have my work be displayed alongside all of Hal Prince’s legacy. It’s incredibly special to me. I really hope this does him proud.”

His work won’t stop with the Big Apple show. Theater educators have also reached out to Lee about using his designs as a platform for their classes to explore theater in the digital age. There’s even talk of collaborating with 3D animators to bring Lee’s creations to life with “Lego Movie”-style productions.

“It’s just so cool that my work can be used as a way to not only expand the boundaries of what theater artists can do,” he says, but also...to create new work that can be at the forefront of bringing theater community and the performing arts community together in celebration of Hal Prince but also theater and musical theater in general,” Lee says.

About BMU

Lee says, “It’s really an honor to share their work.”

His work earned him fans around the globe, thousands of bricks on a college student’s budget. Feeling the weight of isolation, he decided to create a social media account to share his work with members of various theater communities he belonged to: Lego Broadway Sets was born.

“I thought it would be a great way to bring the Lego community and the theater and performing arts community together in celebration of Hal Prince but also theater and musical theater in general,” Lee says.

His intricate and innovative work began with some of his favorite set designs with a heavy dose of his idol, Hal Prince. They won him fans around the globe, including some of the families of the original set designers.

“I think, especially during the pandemic, people felt like they could experience these pieces of art, especially those who had seen the productions. They could relive it, even though the whole industry was down,” says Lee. “It just reminds me of why we create art.”


The exhibit is the culmination of a creative endeavor Lee began early on in the pandemic while home in Vancouver, British Columbia, searching for a way to express his love for theater and fill his newfound time in the absence of physical theater productions. Having loved Lego growing up, he turned to designing his favorite iconic Broadway pieces in brick form.

“I just wanted to use my skill set with Lego and set design and building to share my love and pure awe of the work of these designers,” he says. “It’s really a great way to share their work.”

Lee taught himself how to build designs virtually with a computer program—much more realistic than buyingPh.D. candidate Brooke Bugs conceived an idea to create a nontraditional practice with customized care offered at locations where patients feel the most comfortable—over coffee, at the yoga studio, in the conference room, walking in the woods as well as with text and virtual sessions.

Her practice, BLND (pronounced ‘blend’), is a tailored therapy experience featuring a blend of different offerings, theories and approaches to therapy, including for couples and families, addiction and recovery services, eye movement desensitization and reprocessing (EMDR), reunification, sport and performance, and intensive outpatient.

Therapists also work with corporations and schools on wellness initiatives for their staff and students.

If someone is feeling overwhelmed as a result of COVID and needs someone to talk to, we can bring them as much support as we can,” says Lee.

“Sweeney Todd” and “Phantom of the Opera.” Lee calls his creations “Broadway Set Miniatures of Henry Lee” features Lee’s original set designers.

“It’s just so cool that my work can be used as a way to not only expand the boundaries of what theater artists can do,” he says, but also...to create new work that can be at the forefront of bringing theater community and the performing arts community together in celebration of Hal Prince but also theater and musical theater in general,” Lee says.

About BMU

Lee says, “It’s really an honor to share their work.”

His work earned him fans around the globe, thousands of bricks on a college student’s budget. Feeling the weight of isolation, he decided to create a social media account to share his work with members of various theater communities he belonged to: Lego Broadway Sets was born.

“I thought it would be a great way to bring the Lego community and the theater and performing arts community together in celebration of Hal Prince but also theater and musical theater in general,” Lee says.

His intricate and innovative work began with some of his favorite set designs with a heavy dose of his idol, Hal Prince. They won him fans around the globe, including some of the families of the original set designers.

“I think, especially during the pandemic, people felt like they could experience these pieces of art, especially those who had seen the productions. They could relive it, even though the whole industry was down,” says Lee. “It just reminds me of why we create art.”

The designs also caught the eye of Doug Beadle, curator of the New York Public Library’s Billy Rose Theatre Division, who had created an exhibition dedicated to Prince. That connection eventually led to Lee’s miniatures finding a home in the library. He flew to New York to deliver the pieces, which were on display near the front of the facility for everyone to see.

(“Being there) was a surreal experience,” adds Lee. “It’s very much an honor to have my work be displayed alongside all of Hal Prince’s legacy. It’s incredibly special to me. I really hope this does him proud.”

His work won’t stop with the Big Apple show. Theater educators have also reached out to Lee about using his designs as a platform for their classes to explore theater in the digital age. There’s even talk of collaborating with 3D animators to bring Lee’s creations to life with “Lego Movie”-style productions.

“It’s just so cool that my work can be used as a way to not only expand the boundaries of what theater artists can do,” he says, but also...to create new work that can be at the forefront of bringing theater community and the performing arts community together in celebration of Hal Prince but also theater and musical theater in general,” Lee says.

His intricate and innovative work began with some of his favorite set designs with a heavy dose of his idol, Hal Prince. They won him fans around the globe, including some of the families of the original set designers.

“I think, especially during the pandemic, people felt like they could experience these pieces of art, especially those who had seen the productions. They could relive it, even though the whole industry was down,” says Lee. “It just reminds me of why we create art.”

The designs also caught the eye of Doug Beadle, curator of the New York Public Library’s Billy Rose Theatre Division, who had created an exhibition dedicated to Prince. That connection eventually led to Lee’s miniatures finding a home in the library. He flew to New York to deliver the pieces, which were on display near the front of the facility for everyone to see.

(“Being there) was a surreal experience,” adds Lee. “It’s very much an honor to have my work be displayed alongside all of Hal Prince’s legacy. It’s incredibly special to me. I really hope this does him proud.”

His work won’t stop with the Big Apple show. Theater educators have also reached out to Lee about using his designs as a platform for their classes to explore theater in the digital age. There’s even talk of collaborating with 3D animators to bring Lee’s creations to life with “Lego Movie”-style productions.

“It’s just so cool that my work can be used as a way to not only expand the boundaries of what theater artists can do,” he says, but also...to create new work that can be at the forefront of the development and continued creation of new pieces and art in times to come. 


The exhibit is the culmination of a creative endeavor Lee began early on in the pandemic while home in Vancouver, British Columbia, searching for a way to express his love for theater and fill his newfound time in the absence of physical theater productions. Having loved Lego growing up, he turned to designing his favorite iconic Broadway pieces in brick form.

“I just wanted to use my skill set with Lego and set design and building to share my love and pure awe of the work of these designers,” he says. “It’s really a great way to share their work.”

Lee taught himself how to build designs virtually with a computer program—much more realistic than buying

It’s just so cool that my work can be used as a way to not only expand the boundaries of what theater artists can do,” he says, but also...to create new work that can be at the forefront of the development and continued creation of new pieces and art in times to come. 


The exhibit is the culmination of a creative endeavor Lee began early on in the pandemic while home in Vancouver, British Columbia, searching for a way to express his love for theater and fill his newfound time in the absence of physical theater productions. Having loved Lego growing up, he turned to designing his favorite iconic Broadway pieces in brick form.

“I just wanted to use my skill set with Lego and set design and building to share my love and pure awe of the work of these designers,” he says. “It’s really a great way to share their work.”

Lee taught himself how to build designs virtually with a computer program—much more realistic than buying

It’s just so cool that my work can be used as a way to not only expand the boundaries of what theater artists can do,” he says, but also...to create new work that can be at the forefront of the development and continued creation of new pieces and art in times to come.
Lavonne L. Lomstok, BS '87, is a professor at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, and serves as an associate professor of Information and Library Science at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.

Nancy E. Hunsaker, BS '81, is a professor at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, and serves as an associate professor of Information and Library Science at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.

Sara L. Egan, BS '82, is a professor at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, and serves as an associate professor of Information and Library Science at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.

Laurie L. Lomstok, BS '87, is a professor at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, and serves as an associate professor of Information and Library Science at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.

Sara L. Egan, BS '82, is a professor at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, and serves as an associate professor of Information and Library Science at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.

Laurie L. Lomstok, BS '87, is a professor at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, and serves as an associate professor of Information and Library Science at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.

Sara L. Egan, BS '82, is a professor at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, and serves as an associate professor of Information and Library Science at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.

Laurie L. Lomstok, BS '87, is a professor at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, and serves as an associate professor of Information and Library Science at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.

Sara L. Egan, BS '82, is a professor at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, and serves as an associate professor of Information and Library Science at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.

Laurie L. Lomstok, BS '87, is a professor at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, and serves as an associate professor of Information and Library Science at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.

Sara L. Egan, BS '82, is a professor at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, and serves as an associate professor of Information and Library Science at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.

Laurie L. Lomstok, BS '87, is a professor at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, and serves as an associate professor of Information and Library Science at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.

Sara L. Egan, BS '82, is a professor at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, and serves as an associate professor of Information and Library Science at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.

Laurie L. Lomstok, BS '87, is a professor at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, and serves as an associate professor of Information and Library Science at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.

Sara L. Egan, BS '82, is a professor at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, and serves as an associate professor of Information and Library Science at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.

Laurie L. Lomstok, BS '87, is a professor at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, and serves as an associate professor of Information and Library Science at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.

Sara L. Egan, BS '82, is a professor at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, and serves as an associate professor of Information and Library Science at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.