From the Director’s Desk:

Thank you for all of your continued support of and engagement with the Lewis Walker Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnic Relations. We are able to thrive and be successful because of your courage and willingness to engage in thought provoking dialogues and be present to represent the diversity found within our communities. Programming and academic pursuits are at the heart of who we are as an Institute. We stand on the shoulders of our namesake, Dr. Lewis Walker, the first African-American tenured faculty member at Western Michigan University; Dr. Donald Cooney, Associate Director, faculty member in the School of Social Work, community organizer and activist; Dr. Ben Wilson, retired faculty emeritus in Africana Studies and co-author of the Black Eden: The Idlewild Community with Dr. Walker; Dr. Douglas Davidson, retired faculty emeritus in Sociology and former Institute Associate Director; and we must not forget Mimi Abdul (Tanya Bellamy), retired Administrative Assistant Senior and community organizer who is not only an alumna of Western Michigan University but was the primary driving force behind the restoration of the Africana Studies Major and subsequently the establishment of the Institute for Intercultural and Anthropological Studies. We are because they were—and countless others like them who were committed to the mission of the Lewis Walker Institute. We are committed to teaching, research, and service to promote: (a) understanding of race and ethnic relations, (b) appreciation of the diverse people of the US and other nations, and (c) more equitable and inclusive institutions. Our success is measured according to our ability to look back at our mission and affirm that our teaching, research, and service are consistent with those key areas. Please take a moment and review how we achieved our mission this year.

Dumela!

Dr. Luchara Wallace, Director
Appreciating Our Diversity, While Celebrating Our Shared Experiences

The 2022–2023 academic year was yet another success for the Lewis Walker Institute. This year we were able to celebrate the release of the second installment of the Black Panther Marvel Universe series, Wakanda Forever, by inviting esteemed cartoonist and storyteller Gabby Rivera to campus in October. We also partnered with the Kalamazoo Black Arts and Cultural Center to provide a series of cartoon workshops for the community as well as a red carpet film premiere of Wakanda Forever in November. We also highlighted the Black Panther and popular culture through a collaboration with the WMU Office of Faculty Development on a professional development session featuring Christopher “Mav” Maverick on how to incorporate science and popular culture in the classroom. Finally, we were able to spend a semester focusing on the science of Marvel and Wakanda during the WIRE Saturday Academy. Highlights from WIRE included students making their own vibranium-inspired rock candy!

On Making More Equitable and Inclusive Communities and Institutions

WIRE Youth Development Programs: Youth Juvenile Justice Fellows

Continuing our community-focused commitment to creating more inclusive and equitable institutions and communities, WIRE Youth Development Programs welcomed our second cohort of Youth Juvenile Justice Fellows. The Youth Juvenile Justice Fellows program is funded by a grant from the Public Welfare Foundation. They had an academic year-long experience...
where fellows developed advocacy skills as well as increased knowledge and understanding of relevant topics in juvenile justice and juvenile justice reform. One of our fellows was invited to be a part of the National Juvenile Justice Network and presented virtually to White House staff members. Our national representative also traveled to Washington DC as a part of a delegation to advocate for national juvenile justice reform.

Fellows also held their second annual day at the capitol in Lansing where they had the opportunity to meet with State Senator Sean McCann, as well as State Representative Julie Rogers. They also had a moment to briefly meet with State Representative Christine Morse. During the day at the capitol, Fellows participated in the filming of a documentary on the national work being done by juvenile justice focused organizations that are sponsored by the Public Welfare Foundation. The year capped off with a trip to visit Cafe Momentum in Pittsburgh, which just launched in March 2023. Cafe Momentum is a wrap-around workforce development program for youth who have been justice impacted. Fellows learned a great deal about the launch of such a program and would like to see it replicated here in the City of Kalamazoo to fill a void in the current juvenile justice system.
In April, the Youth Juvenile Justice Fellows held its very first annual Dine 4 Justice friend raising event, where we welcome esteemed author and motivational speaker Dr. Eric Thomas, also known as ET, to campus. The event was co-hosted by Kalamazoo BLOCKS Club. Dine 4 Justice will become an annual fundraising event to benefit the Youth Juvenile Justice Program and additional local initiatives that might emerge from the work and advocacy of the fellows. We are so grateful for the positive turnout and response to our programming this year and look forward to what will occur next in this area of advocacy and juvenile justice.

**WIRE Youth Development Programs: Summer Science and Math Camp and Saturday Academy**

**WIRE Saturday Academy by Dr. Denisha Griffey**
The WIRE Saturday Academy entered its 4th year with the 2022-2023 academic year. This year’s focus was introducing pop culture into the curriculum. The goal was to meet the students where they were in their learning and understanding by using their interest. So, what better way to do that than to capitalize off the success of Marvel. We began the year connecting the science and technology from the Black Panther movie in anticipation of the upcoming Black Panther: Wakanda Forever, to develop a curriculum that the participants would
enjoy. We started out the yearly program by creating Vibranium inspired rock candy and discussed the science around it, such as crystal formation. This introduced the scientific area of geology. Later, in the year we used the location of Wakanda to discuss the importance of longitude and latitude and how it is used in math, science and geography. The year ended with the annual student symposium, where the students' created posters and presented what they have learned throughout the year.

**Demographics**

During this program year, there were 27 registrants and 23 participants. The participant increase was double the amount from the previous year. 12 of the participants were new to the program.

**Assessment**

The assessment for this year showed that 3 or 13% of students were proficient in math. 30.4% were far below basic, 39.1% were below basic, and 17.4% were basic. This data allowed the WIRE team to accurately assess the students' needs. Being that most of the students were not on their grade level. The assessment showed that the students were struggling the most with the concepts of understanding math synonyms within word problems, order of operations, and the math concepts of using fractions. To combat this problem the WIRE team introduced different hands-on activities that included problem solving and the use of Cuisenaire rods. By the end of the program there was evidence of growth and understanding math concepts.

**WIRE Math and Science Camp**

*by Dr. Denisha Griffey*

This year WIRE Youth Development Programs celebrated 15 years since its start and 10 years of the Math and Science Camp. The theme for this year’s camp was **WIRE Celebrating 10 years of Math and Science, Elevating Youth to Expand Their Minds.** To commemorate 10 years of WIRE camp, a camp t-shirt was designed by WMU’s chapter of American
Institute of Graphic Arts’ (AIGA) chief coordinator Allison Bos. Ms. Bos did a wonderful job capturing the essence of our theme to incorporate the many topics covered throughout the program’s start.

Like previous years, the summer camp was held in July. We introduced several new STEM topics; geosciences, physics, astronomy, and artificial intelligence with ChatGPT. WIRE also collaborated with the Dorothy McGinnis Reading Center here on the campus of Western Michigan University under the direction of Dr. Elizabeth Isidro, to offer reading tutoring to nine of our participants.

One addition to the Summer Math and Science experience this year was the introduction of the WIRE Chess Club, taught by WMU senior, Mr. Alika Edmonds. Students had the chance to use their math skills like strategic thinking and solving mathematical problems. Overall is taught in addition to teaching the students patience. The WIRE Chess Club concluded with an inaugural chess tournament.

Demographics

Program Staff

This year we had 8 students on staff, 7 WMU students and 1 Central State University on staff, the most we have ever had. They included three doctoral students from Science Education, two master’s students from Data Science, three undergraduate students, from the areas of mechanical engineering, elementary education, and sociology. Of the 8 staff members, two of them returned from last summer. This was by far the most diverse staff the program has had since its start. Not only did the staff represent several disciplines, but they also hailed from various countries. The countries represented besides the United States, were Nigeria, Egypt, India, and Bangladesh. Four of the staff members helped in developing this summer’s curriculum which was developed into the WIRE Activities Notebook. The staff participated in 3rd annual WIRE training which allowed the staff to bond with each other and as well as teach their lessons to the team beforehand.
Participants

There were 42 participants for this year’s WIRE camp out of 56 registrants. With 40% of the participants being new to the summer program.

The student population was just as diverse as the staff. We had students from various backgrounds, including the Philippines and Nigeria, representing 7% each.

Assessments

Of the 42 participants 39 took the math assessment. 12.8% were proficient, 15.4% were basic on level, 33.3% were below basic, and 38.5% were far below basic. This information allowed the WIRE team to tailor their math and science activities to help combat the deficiencies. The WIRE was unable to conduct a final assessment before the program concluded.

Field Trips and Symposium

This year the WIRE participants went on two field trips; the Kalamazoo Valley Museum and Michigan’s Adventure. At the museum the students participated in a science demonstration Cooking a Comet and a planetarium show, both related to the topics that were covered in the camp. The WIRE summer camp concluded with the Annual WIRE Symposium.
The WIRE Summer Science and Math Camp and Saturday Academy are funded by a grant from the Stryker Johnston Foundation.

Increasing Understanding of Race and Ethnic Relations
We were fortunate to partner with multiple units across campus to welcome several influential speakers and experiences to WMU. Our commitment to partnership and collaboration continued throughout the academic year where we co-sponsored multiple events and programs across campus. In November, we had the opportunity to welcome Olympic legend, Billy Mills, who won the 10000 m at the 1964 Olympics. We had the distinct honor to co-sponsor An Evening with Billy Mills with the Native American Affairs Council and Native American Student Organization at WMU.

In January, we co-sponsored the Teach-In and our MLK lecture with the Office of Diversity and Inclusion and the Department of Athletics. The Teach-In The Fierce Urgency of Now brought in diverse voices from across campus, with a special highlight being the annual student-led panel. The annual MLK lecture featured An Evening with Jemele Hill, renowned journalist and author, facilitated by Dr. Mark Orbe, Professor of Communications. The keynote conversation boasted over 1500 attendees for this reimagined MLK Day event.
During Black History Month, we had the opportunity to co-sponsor a production of *The Meeting* with the Office of the Vice President for Diversity and Inclusion. *The Meeting* is a one-act play imagining a conversation between Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X. Written by playwright Jeff Stetson and performed by local talents Sid Ellis and Von Washington, Jr.

For Women’s History Month and because Dr. Khalilah Comacho Ali is so amazing, the Lewis Walker Institute along with our partners at Miller Auditorium welcomed a special conversation with Dr. Khalilah Comacho Ali facilitated by Dr. Khalid El Hakim. Dr. Ali was the first wife of famous boxer Muhammad Ali. That was an inspirational night filled with history, laughter, and honest conversation.

**Final Thoughts**
Reflecting on the last year continues to remind us of what we have accomplished and how much more we have to do in order to continue achieving our Mission. Just as the work done on campus and in the community have had a significant impact, the Minor in Race and Ethnic Relations continues to have a direct impact on WMU students along their academic journey. With the introduction of the new budget model, the Minor in Race and Ethnic Relations transitioned over to the Department of Intercultural and Anthropological Studies, with program consultation and direction remaining in the Institute. For the first time, the Lewis Walker Institute hosted a Study in the States course entitled: Idlewild: The Emergence, Decline, and Revitalization of the Historic African-American Lake Community Known as the Black Eden. HNRS 2900/LWIR 3500 was taught May 1-7 in Idlewild, MI. The course was an overwhelming success and has led to a plethora of new opportunities for the Lewis Walker Institute to fulfill its mission by teaching, researching, and serving our campus and communities to promote: (a) understanding of race and ethnic relations, (b) appreciation of the diverse people of the US and other nations, and (c) more equitable and inclusive
institutions. The staff and I continue to be overwhelmed by the support and response to the work and programs of Lewis Walker Institute. Thank you! We look forward to seeing what the 2023-2024 academic year holds!