Scholarship supports program for foster-care youth

The members of one of the nation’s most underserved college-age populations will get help making their higher education dreams come true, thanks to a new scholarship and support initiative being launched at WMU this fall.

WMU’s Foster Youth and Higher Education Initiative is an effort being launched in coordination with the Michigan Campus Compact and the Michigan Department of Human Services.

The pilot program is designed to recruit and offer a support structure and financial aid to young people who have aged out of foster care and who qualify for admission or transfer to WMU. While the intent is to target Michigan’s foster care youth, the program is open to qualified students from any state.

The initiative will create a community of scholars among WMU students who grew up in foster care, such as three-time WMU alumnus John Seita, who has become one of the nation’s foremost experts on and advocates for foster youth.

Seita has published extensively on the topics of foster care and youth development and has a background that includes work with the W.K. Kellogg Foundation.

He was honored this month with the 2007 Ruth Massing Foster Care Alumni Award through the Casey Family programs—an offshoot of the Annie E. Casey Foundation. Only one foster care alumnus a year is selected in the United States.

The initiative also will attempt to fill...
Improving Teacher Quality involves an educator leading grant project

Marcia Fetters, who has dual appointments in teaching, learning, and educational studies as well as the Mallinson Institute for Science Education, is a principal investigator for "Alignment of Secondary Science Teacher Practice and Materials in the Battle Creek Michigan High School Science Education, a $205,000 grant from the U.S. Department of Education. The project is focusing on science teacher professional development for six Battle Creek-area schools.

The $205,000 grant through the Department of Education Title II program for Improving Teacher Quality involves an interdisciplinary team of WMU faculty members researching the promotion of best practices for test writing, homework construction, formative assessments, and supporting students in developing meta-cognitive skills. The project also is working to re-align Battle Creek regional curriculum with Michigan’s new High School Content Expectations.

Voice specialist earns fellowship

Micha Espinosa, theatre, was named a 2007 fellow by the Voice and Speech Trainers Association. The fellow program connects qualified VASTA representatives with institutions and organizations in need of workshops, master classes and symposia. The purpose is to provide expertise in specific areas that may not be available in a given institution or organization.

Espinosa joined the WMU faculty in 2003 and serves as director of voice and speech for the theatre department. She has taught voice, speech and movement workshops nationally and internationally as well as performed in film, television, commercials and regional theatre. A VASTA officer since 2000, she also is a certified yoga instructor and a trainer for the Fitzmaurice Voicework Teacher Certification Program.

International office seeks student orientation leaders

International Student Services and Affairs is recruiting students to serve as leaders for the University’s international student orientation program this coming fall. Current WMU students interested in becoming a cultural bridge and experiencing inter-cultural teamwork are encouraged to apply. Requirements are included in the application form posted at http://international.wmich.edu/content/view/1033/2.

Completed applications should be returned to the International office seeks student orientation leaders.

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Public radio’s Iraqi correspondent to speak
Deborah Amos, foreign correspondent for National Public Radio and ABC News, will give a public lecture at 6 p.m. Tuesday, Feb. 5, in Shaw Theatre.

Admission is $5 for the general public and free to students, faculty and staff of WMU and Davenport and Kalamazoo colleges. A valid ID from one of these schools is required.

Amos will speak on the U.S. conflict in Iraq in her presentation, “Iraq: No Exit in Sight.” Her visit is part of the World Affairs Council of Western Michigan’s Great Decisions Foreign Policy Lecture Series and is sponsored by the World Affairs Council, WMU’s Haenicke Institute for Global Education and Kalamazoo College.

Covering Iraq for NPR News, Amos file reports that can be heard on NPR’s “Morning Edition,” “All Things Considered” and “Weekend Edition.” She has returned to work with NPR after a decade in television news, including ABC’s “Nightline” and “World News Tonight” and the PBS programs “NOW with Bill Moyers” and “Frontline.”

Widey recognized for her coverage of the Gulf War in 1991, Amos has won several awards, including an Alfred I. duPont-Columbia Award and a Breakthrough Award. She spent 1991-92 as a Nieman Fellow at Harvard University, and she wrote the 1992 book “Lines in the Sand: Desert Storm and the Remaking of the Arab World.”

Her visit is the first of three programs in Kalamazoo sponsored by the World Affairs Council. Both of the other two events are panel discussions, “Putin’s Long Shadow: Russia’s Future” Tuesday, Feb. 19, in the Fetzer Center’s Kirsch Auditorium and “Philanthropy: Does This New Global Player have the Power to Make a Global Difference?” Tuesday, Feb. 26, in Kalamazoo College’s Stetson Chapel.

Influenza on the rise at WMU
Seasonal influenza has officially arrived at WMU.

Sindicuse Health Center clinicians are seeing an influx of students with influenza, and this influx is being seen earlier this year compared to previous years.

Students, faculty and staff who are experiencing fever, chills, coughing, headache, sore throat and muscle aches would benefit by seeking medical attention early in the illness, as treatment with antiviral medication is available within the first 72 hours of the illness.

For those who miss the 72 hour window, drinking plenty of fluids to prevent dehydration, using acetaminophen or ibuprofen to reduce fever and muscle aches, and avoiding smoking or alcohol are important steps to take for recovery.

There is still time to receive flu vaccine through Sindicuse. Those interested may call or walk in for a nurse appointment to be vaccinated. Go to www.sindicuse.com for more information.

Student award named for retiree: appreciation week slated
Belleville came to WMU in 1967 and retired in 1993 as director of the Student Employment Referal Service, which he founded as a unit within what is now Career and Student Employment Services.

CSES encourages all faculty and staff members to submit nominations for the supervisor and student employee of the year awards as well as to thank student workers in some way during Student Employee Appreciation Week.

Go to www.broncojobs.wmich.edu and click on “Nominate” for deadlines and other details concerning the week.

Short-term study abroad options abound for faculty, staff
WMU’s offering 26 short-term study abroad programs this summer.

Most programs have a Friday, Feb. 15, application and are open to non-WMU students as well as adults who aren’t in college but are interested in traveling and learning.

The programs, offered through the University’s Haenicke Institute for Global Education, are convenient options for people who can’t spend a long period overseas but want to immerse themselves in another country's language and culture.

They include the Grand Tour of Europe and study abroad programs in a broad range of disciplines or qualify for general education credit. A few offer scholarship opportunities.

For more information go online to www.wmich.edu/studyabroad or contact the study abroad office.
Most people who've been to a WMU hockey game in Lawson Arena know Gary Custer. They just don't realize it. Custer operates the contraption that smooths the ice between periods—in WMU's case, an Olympia resurfacer rather than the better known Zamboni.

"I don't think I've missed any games," he says. "I even have my own kind of cheering section, especially now that I'm back to throwing candy to the students."

Custer serves as the general maintenance person for Lawson, which is part of Auxiliary Services and as a self-supporting unit, is open year round to students and community members. He does basic maintenance on WMU’s two ice resurfacers, cleans and shaves down the ice as necessary, and mends the bleachers as well as the rink’s flooring and protective glass wall.

A certified ice technician II, Custer has completed enough specialized courses to also be certified by the National Hockey League. The designation, which took five years to obtain, means he’s skilled at making and maintaining ice for rinks such as Lawson and building in all the requisite lines, logos and advertisements.

“I have the ‘coolest’ job on earth. I take pride and ownership in my work. I can’t skate the way the boys do, but I can give them the best surface possible to skate on,” Custer says, noting that keeping Lawson one of the best rinks around is no easy task because it’s connected to Gable Natatorium.

“There’s a lot to think about in terms of temperature and humidity because you have the artic on one side and the tropics on the other. And whether we’re repairing the resurfacer or shutting the entire facility down for a complete overhaul, it takes a lot of people behind the scenes, especially in the physical plant.”

Custer came to WMU in 1989 as a custodian and was temporarily assigned to Lawson in 1995. A few weeks later, he was asked to stay on. He saw the job as a career move and liked tending the ice, so he decided to stay.

Once hockey season is over, the Portage resident goes back to a 40-hour work week, just in time for him and his wife, Judy, to climb on their motorcycles and indulge their passion for social riding and traveling.

Scholarship support for foster care

Faculty, staff members leading two Reading Together events

Four WMU faculty and staff members will be featured in two of the programs slated for this year’s Reading Together Series, which focuses on Barbara Kingsolver’s novel “Animal Dreams.”

Both of the programs are panel discussions and free and open to the public.

Stephen Cameron, geography, and Michael Millar, Spanish, will speak on noon Friday, Jan. 25, in the central Kalamazoo Public Library branch on events in Nicaragua as they are portrayed in Kingsolver’s novel. Their talk will address U.S. foreign policy and humanitarian involvement in Latin America and Central America during the 20th century.

Miranda Howard and James Dexheimer, University Libraries, will lead a discussion on the novel from noon to 1 p.m. Wednesday, Feb. 6, in WMU’s Stewart Tower, which is attached to Walsko Library. Their themes will center on family, caring for aging loved ones, community, the environment and Hispanic culture.