Community to welcome med school dean

Hal B. Jenson, who was named last month as the founding dean for the WMU Medical School, will be formally welcomed to the Kalamazoo community today during a reception in downtown Kalamazoo.

Jenson and his family will be honored and introduced at an event set for 4:30 to 6 p.m. in the ballroom of the Radisson Plaza Hotel. WMU President John M. Dunn and Jenson will make brief remarks at 5:15 p.m. to a crowd that is expected to include members of the University and broader Kalamazoo communities as well as members of the area medical establishment.

The reception is open to the public.

Jenson’s appointment was announced Jan. 25. He was selected from among nearly 60 candidates whose credentials were considered by a community committee in the search for a founding dean of the medical school.

The school is a community partnership involving Borgess Health, Bronson Healthcare and the University.

Jenson is coming to Kalamazoo from Tufts University, where he served as professor of pediatrics and regional dean for the Western Campus of the Tufts School of Medicine. He is expected to begin his duties at WMU this spring.

Class registration begins for Lifelong Learning Academy

A sea of smiling faces greeted organizers of a Feb. 9 open house for WMU’s new Lifelong Learning Academy. More than 200 campus and community members attended the event, which resulted in 45 people registering that evening for the academy’s inaugural classes and another 65 registering as of early this week.

The academy offers low-cost educational programs to older Kalamazoo-area residents, although individuals of any age are welcome to participate. The first session runs from Monday, March 14, through Friday, April 8, and features 15 non-credit classes that meet once every two, three or four weeks.

All of the courses will take place between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. and last two hours.

“We’re tapping into an unmet community need,” says Ruth Heining, co-chair of the academy Advisory Board. “I hear people saying, ‘Just because I’m getting older doesn’t mean I’ve stopped learning. Life’s too short and too exciting not to keep exploring and finding new passions.’”

The Lifelong Learning Academy open house featured remarks by several people who have been instrumental in developing the academy. Representing WMU were John M. Dunn, president; Dawn Gaymer, leadership gift officer and professor of art at Kalamazoo College, which is a partner in the academy; and Heinig. Also addressing the crowd was Bernard Palchick, professor emeritus of education and design at WMU’s Western Michigan Center to employees and their immediate families as well as off-campus students.

Also, University community members are reminded they may get warm meals at WMU’s dining halls and other eateries by using cash or WMU Dining Dollars, and in a few cases, VISA or Mastercard.

Staff award nominations due Feb. 28

Nominations for the spring round of semiannual Make A Difference awards are due by Monday, Feb. 28. Make A Difference is a peer-to-peer program that recognizes WMU staff for their accomplishments and daily investment of energy and creativity.

Any WMU community member, including parents, may make a nomination. Visit www.wmich.edu/hr/make-a-difference for nomination forms and instructions.

Work-study paperwork coming due

Work-study recipients must have earnings charged to their work-study awards by Tuesday, March 1, or those awards will be canceled. Those who have hired a work-study recipient whose earnings will not be charged to work-study by that date should Contact Angela Madden at angela.madden@wmich.edu before March 1.

FYE facilitator applications sought

First-Year Experience Programs is accepting applications for paid First-Year Seminar facilitators to teach FYE 2100 this fall. The seminar helps new students transition to WMU. Up to 70 seminar sections will be offered. The deadline for faculty members, including instructors, to apply is Friday, March 18. Visit www.wmich.edu/provost for more information and an application.
Senior citizens getting ready for fun-filled prom night

Area senior citizens will be celebrating prom night for the 23rd consecutive year when they gather from 7 to 10 p.m. Thursday, March 8, in the Fetzer Center. The event is designed to gather input on the new facility from members of the campus and local communities as well as to provide information to the public about ongoing development activities.

Visiting scholar to give two talks

Tapping into Resources for the Entrepreneur, a two-hour seminar, will take place in 157-158 Bernhard Auditorium. The talk will highlight the pragmatic benefits of democratic institutions as opposed to institutions that use other kinds of decision rules, such as markets and courts. In an earlier talk the same day, he will discuss his research during a colloquium titled “Studying the Impact of Supreme Court Decisions” at 3 p.m. in 3301 Friedmann Hall. The colloquium is aimed at faculty and graduate students in political science, but is open to all.

Date set for annual diversity lecture

This year’s Respecting Difference lecture will be presented at 1:30 p.m. Tuesday, March 29, and repeated at 9:30 a.m. Wednesday, March 30, in Chenery Auditorium. The lecture, “Challenges Are Inevitable. Defeat Is Optional,” focuses on the physically challenged.

Exchange

For rent—Marriott SurfWatch villa on Hilton Head Island Saturday to Saturday, April 2-9, during spring break for local public schools. Two bedrooms, $599 per week. Call (269) 808-1096 or (269) 375-5654.

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Black History Month talk is tonight

Molefi Kete Asante from Temple University will speak on “African American History in the Age of Obama” 6 to 7:30 p.m. today in 157-158 Bernhard Center in celebration of Black History Month. Asante founded the nation’s first doctoral program in African American studies at Temple.

Entrepreneurs focus of presentation

Tama Davis, director of the Michigan Small Business and Technology Development Center for Southwest Michigan, will speak at 8 a.m. Friday, Feb. 25, as part of the Kalamazoo Community Bank Breakfast Speaker Series. The talk, titled “Tapping Into Resources for the Entrepreneur,” will take place in the Dean’s Conference Room of Schneider Hall and is free. A continental breakfast begins the event at 7:30 a.m. Reservations are required by calling (269) 387-6059.

Archives facility meeting rescheduled

The public meeting on development of a new facility for WMU’s Archives and Regional History Collections that was canceled due to weather has been rescheduled for 5 to 7 p.m. Tuesday, March 8, in the Fetzer Center. The event is designed to gather input on the new facility from members of the campus and local communities as well as to provide information to the public about ongoing development activities.

Philosophy of pragmatism explored

The philosophy of pragmatism will be explored when visiting scholar Gregory J. Shepherd, dean of the Scripps College of Communication at Ohio University, lectures from noon to 1 p.m. Wednesday, March 9, in 1028 Brown Hall. Shepherd will discuss pragmatism as a distinctively American philosophy.

Visiting scholar to give two talks

Pragmatism and Democracy is the subject of a talk by visiting scholar Jack Knight from Duke University at 7 p.m. Wednesday, March 9, in the Fetzer Center’s Patney Auditorium. Knight will highlight the pragmatic benefits of democratic institutions as opposed to institutions that use other kinds of decision rules, such as markets and courts.

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Sustainability initiatives gain WMU recognition in many areas

The University’s stainless steel EcoMug is being highlighted by the National Wildlife Foundation as one of the top projects across the country that contribute to campus environmental sustainability.

The re-usable mug has been given to all new students since fall 2009 to reduce waste. It is featured along with a photo at www.nwf.org/Global-Warming/Campus-Solutions.aspx NWF’s Campus Ecology website. Clicking the link provides a list of about 85 projects from more than 60 colleges and universities nationwide included as Campus Sustainability Case Studies for 2010.

NWF’s Campus Ecology program published the sustainability case studies that highlight initiatives from WMU and other schools. The cases include job training to habitat restoration. The EcoMug is one of three projects from WMU on the list that also includes Student Employment Services; Joel Bookstore; Deveta R. Gardner, Career technology; and Nujurnor J. Park, information technology; Lisa K. Hotchkiss, residence life; Dennis W. Brooks, WMU 20 Years-- . Other institutions whose projects made the NWF list include George Washington University, Harvard, New York Institute of Technology, Michigan State University and the University of Michigan.

In addition, WMU was lauded as a campus trendsetter in a groundbreaking national report released Feb. 9 that outlines how colleges around the nation are saving millions in operating funds by using innovative green financing models. Successful methods pioneered at WMU were outlined in “Greening the Bottom Line: The Trend toward Green Revolving Funds on Campus.” Released at www.westernmich.edu/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=QbACE9%

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An evolving partnership between the College of Aviation and the nation’s first charter high school for young aviators was celebrated Feb. 10, when the college donated a flight simulator to the West Michigan Aviation Academy.

“This is about our organizations’ commitment to one another to support and welcome young people into aviation,” says Capt. Dave Powell, dean of the aviation college. “We’d like to see WMAA graduates at WMU a few years from now, and we’re looking forward to working with them as they grow into aviation professionals in the future.”

The WMAA is America’s only public aviation charter high school. It opened last fall and is located at the Gerald R. Ford International Airport in Grand Rapids, Mich. West Michigan businessman Dick DeVos is president of the school’s board of education.

The flight simulator is one of two that WMU decided to dedicate to student outreach. Last fall, the college upgraded its simulation technology to match the sophisticated avionics in its fleet of 26 Cirrus aircraft used by the college for flight training.

While the bulk of WMU’s flight simulation technology now features the new avionics, two of the college’s original simulators remain at the level more commonly used in collegiate aviation. One will go to the academy, and WMU aviation officials will use the other for a mobile classroom that will travel to schools around the region, helping students explore the potential of science and technology careers.

Applications for Passau faculty exchange due March 16

WMU and the University of Passau are inviting their faculty members to apply for a short-term faculty exchange this summer.

The WMU applicant selected will spend one month in May or June as a visiting professor at Passau, one of the newest German universities in the lovely region of Bavaria. During that time, the WMU faculty member will have ample opportunity for research and interaction with Passau faculty, and will most likely be invited to give one or two lectures on an area of their expertise.

Interested applicants should submit a brief letter of interest, including a proposed list of topics they might like to speak on, and a curriculum vitae by Wednesday, March 16.

Samer Shammas has a head for figures, a must when you’re charged with keeping a watchful eye over the finances of a large, highly visible area of the University.

As the Haenicke Institute’s senior operations manager for financial operations, Shammas is responsible for managing the budgets of the institute and its individual units, plus nine endowment funds, the International Education Faculty Development Fund and the President’s as well as the Dean’s Study Abroad scholarships. He also deals with financial matters associated with such institute functions as staff travel, international student immigration and admissions, study abroad, and certain overseas faculty research projects.

“I was looking for a different job, but in 2005 I noticed a senior budget analyst posting in Western News. It seemed to fit me perfectly, although I had no ‘junior’ and still don’t,” he says with a chuckle. “It was meant to happen. I saw the posting on a Friday, applied on Monday, interviewed on Wednesday and was offered the job on Friday.”

Shammas, who immigrated to the United States from Lebanon with his entrepreneurial parents in 1981, graduated from Portage (Mich.) Central High School at 16 and majored in accounting at WMU. He spent a few years managing pizza franchises before returning and finishing his bachelor’s degree 1992 and joining WMU’s staff. Shammas managed the Lawson Arena Pro Shop until 1998, when his event activities were moved to the WMU Bookstore and he became the bookstore’s supply and event sales manager.

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As the Haenicke Institute has grown, so has Shammas’ decision-making and financial-management roles, and in 2009, he was promoted to his current post.

“Technology makes it possible to get work done 24/7. I can reply to faculty and staff members worldwide, day or night, so they don’t have to worry. It really isn’t stressful when you enjoy what you’re doing,” he says. “I honestly enjoy interacting with students, faculty and institute employees. The real challenge is finding the time to get everything done. You work all day, eat at your desk, then before you know it, it’s five o’clock.”

Shammas’ spare time is even more limited these days, as he’s pursuing a master’s degree in accountancy. But he still finds time to share board games, movies and visits to parks with his wife and three daughters. The Texas Township resident also likes to play auto racing video games and watch NASCAR racing.