Project Introduction:
As Mark Twain once said, “Get a bicycle. You will not regret it if you live.” Bike rental programs have been rapidly growing on college campuses across the United States, and Western Michigan University could be the newest addition to that list. It’s not a secret that Americans tend to live a more sedentary lifestyle than many other nations. One way for our society to change this is by promoting bicycle commuting on campus and within local communities.

The goal of this project was to determine the feasibility of Western Michigan University implementing a bike rental program on campus. In order to determine how successful the program can be, a best practice review of similar programs around the United States and Canada has been conducted.

When considering implementing a bike rental program, the procurement of bikes is typically the first question asked. In many cases, there are two main ways to acquire said bikes. The first is receiving donated bikes that have been clipped from bike racks on campus and throughout the city. These are known as gorilla bikes, and are typically painted a very visible color to let everyone know they are university property. The second way is to purchase new bikes from a local bike shop. This is the most expensive way to start a program, but also the most efficient in the long run, when done correctly.
Gorilla Bikes:
These are clipped from bike racks by local police, then donated to the program if the owner doesn’t claim them. This is how GVSU and the University of Western Ontario acquire their bikes. GVSU paints theirs bright blue with a white GVSU logo, while UW – Ontario paints their bikes purple. The bikes are painted odd, solid colors to distinguish themselves from other bikes on campus.

New Bikes:
New bikes can be bought in bulk from a local bike shop, along with any spare parts, usually resulting in a discount. Purchasing for a local bike shop supports a local business, and builds a relationship between the rental program and the local bike community. A close shop also means the mechanics on campus can consult the business and possible bring bikes in for repairs if necessary.

Recommendations:
WMU needs to implement a bike rental system, which would improve the overall health of the student body, as well as make a statement regarding sustainability.