Portage to benefit from state funds for geological survey

Area legislators and geoscientists gathered Sept. 29 in Portage to announce a $500,000 investment by the state of Michigan in the Michigan Geological Survey, which has been housed at WMU since 2011. The funds are part of the 2017 Michigan budget and will be used to map the subsurface of Michigan in a way that will dramatically enhance economic development and ensure that vital natural resources are analyzed, identified, and protected and used wisely.

State Rep. Brandt Iden, of Osthemo, left, played a key role in securing the state funding. Joining him for the Sept. 29 announcement was survey director John Yellich, right, and, from southwest Michigan, Sens. Margaret O’Brien and Tonya Schumacher and Reps. Al Pacholka and Jon Hoodley. “These bedrock valleys would be priority targets for future water supply wells for an expanding population,” says John Yellich, director of the Michigan Geological Survey. “Without this mapping, the valleys cannot be adequately protected by zoning from potential contaminants from such land use as storage facilities for fuel, agricultural chemicals and fertilizers, and industries that use toxic chemicals.”

The state funding will allow the survey to begin to take full advantage of its potential as both an environmental protection and economic development tool. With only 10 percent of the state subsurface mapped to date, Michigan is at an economic disadvantage and has fallen behind neighboring states. “The $500,000 appropriation awarded to Western Michigan University from the state budget will benefit our local community, our region and our state through the expansion of the Michigan Geological Survey,” said state Rep. Brandt Iden of Osthemo. “I believe that...
Universitywide, ethics-related book readings underway

Inclusion at WMU is talk topic
Terrell Strayhorn, professor of educational studies and director of the Center for Higher Education Enterprise at Ohio State University, will speak on “Success in College and Beyond” from 6 to 7:30 p.m. Wednesday, Oct. 19, in the Bernhard Center Ballroom. His presentation is part of the Real Talk Diversity Series and will provide a forum for discussing what belonging and inclusion mean at WMU. Strayhorn has been named one of the nation’s ‘Top 12 Diversity Scholars’ by Diverse Issues in Higher Education. He will engage participants about what it means to navigate a college campus landscape as part of the numerical minority and as part of the majority, and how each person can contribute to an environment that cultivates purpose and success for themselves and their peers. Visit wmich.edu/diversity/events for more details.

RSVP for Student Success Summit
Faculty and staff members are invited to attend the 2016 Student Success Summit featuring keynote speaker Terrell Strayhorn from Ohio State University. It is set for noon to 4:30 p.m. Wednesday, Oct. 19. RSVPs are required at wmich.edu/change/research/brocnosfrs/2016-student-success-summit.

Solve a mystery while networking
WMU faculty and staff members as well as students will receive a 10 percent discount to attend the “Night of Mystery” annual meeting and fundraiser being staged on campus by the West Michigan Chapter of the U.S. Green Building Council. The event is set for 6 to 9:30 p.m. Thursday, Oct. 20, in the Heritage Hall Ballroom. It will feature a plated dinner, cash bar and chance to solve a murder mystery while networking with green building experts. For more information, visit bit.ly/2kVYeg.

Annual graduate school fair slated
This year’s Graduate and Professional School Fair will take place from 3 to 6 p.m. Monday, Oct. 24, in the Bernhard Center Ballroom. The fair provides opportunities to explore options for advanced studies. Representatives from graduate and professional schools in Michigan and throughout the United States will be participating in the event.

Those seeking tips on how to apply to graduate, law or medical schools may attend one of three workshops set for 3 to 4 p.m. on the second floor of the Bernhard Center near the fair’s main exhibit hall. No registration is required to attend the workshops.

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AUTHOR’S poetry book is award finalist
Hedy Habra, Spanish, was one of five finalists in the poetry category of the 2016 International Book Awards announced this spring by bookvana.com. Awards were presented for titles published in 2014, 2015 and 2016. Bookvana.com covers books from all sections of the publishing industry—mainstream, independent and self-published. Habra was honored for “Under Brushstrokes,” her second poetry collection with Press 53. It is a collection of poems responding to more than 50 works of art that was published in 2015. An artist herself, Habra created the cover art for this collection. The cover design was created by Paul Sizer, Design Center.

Chemist’s research bearing fruit
Gellert Mezei, chemistry, continues to make progress on his long-standing research related to “nanojars.” In 2002, he helped discover these 2-nanometer-wide compounds that have a cavity inside and look like a jar. Within the cavity, nanojars can encapsulate ions, including some toxic ions, so they could possibly be used to purify water. Mezei and his team have shown that nanojars can reduce levels of arsenic and chromate in water to those acceptable to the Environmental Protection Agency.

The project lay dormant for almost 10 years, but Mezei revived it a few years ago and in 2014, received a $284,833 National Science Foundation grant to further study nanojars. In addition, he has filed one related patent and eventually hopes to commercialize a process for sequestering toxic ions from water.

Earlier this year, Mezei had his research not only published in Chemistry: A European Journal but also highlighted on its front cover. In addition, more results have been published in Chemical Communications and Dalton Transactions.

Cooley director to lead Michigan bar
Lawrence P. Nolan, vice chair of the WMU-Cooley Law School Board of Directors, was sworn in Sept. 22 as the 82nd president of the State Bar of Michigan. Nolan, of Easton Rapids, Michigan, is the founder and president of Nolan, Thomsen & Villas.

He has served on the SBM Board of Commissioners since 2006, and is a past SBM commissioner, secretary, vice president and president-elect.

In his new role, he is charged with leading the organization’s 45,000 members. He will help improve the administration of justice, promote the legal profession and build public understanding of the legal system.

Nolan has been a member of the Cooley board since 1983, and while serving as its chair in 2013-14, was instrumental in the development of the formal affiliation between WMU and the law school. He is an alumnus of both institutions.
Fall 2016 enrollment is up in some areas, down slightly overall

The University is seeing increases in its honors student population and increased minority enrollment this fall, despite a slight dip in its overall student numbers.

WMU’s official overall student enrollment for fall 2016 is 23,252, a 1.3 percent decrease over the number of students tallied in fall 2015. Graduate enrollment decreased at the master’s level, but remained stable at the doctoral level and increased at the specialist level, for a 1 percent decrease overall in the number of graduate students.

Minority student enrollment continued a trend of previous years, growing by 2 percent compared to last fall’s total. Over the past five years, total minority enrollment has increased by nearly 11 percent, with increases in all categories except native Hawaiian/Pacific islanders. Total minority enrollment this fall stands at 5,147—22 percent of total enrollment.

Additional highlights of this fall’s enrollment numbers include the following:

- Lee Honors College enrollment increased by 1 percent to 1,779. At 418, the college’s incoming freshman class is the largest in WMU history, continuing a trend that has seen growth in the college by nearly 8 percent over the past four years alone.
- The number of doctoral students remains the same FLSA status. Impacted employees will have the same job code/job title) should have the exempt personnel to nonexempt/hourly employees will experience a salary increase, while others will be changed from salaried/employees themselves. The Oct. 18 sessions will detail the number of tickets to see the Oct. 18 opening night will be entered into a drawing to win a pair of tickets to see the Oct. 18 opening night performance of Book of Mormon at Miller Auditorium.

WMUK sets Oct. 8 as start of fall 2016 pledge drive

WMUK’s annual Fall Membership Drive will begin Saturday, Oct. 8. Licensed to WMU, WMUK 102.1 FM is celebrating 65 years of broadcasting service to southwest Michigan in 2016. Part of the station’s legacy includes being one of the founding member stations of National Public Radio, which began service in 1971. WMUK has set a pledge goal of $175,000 during the weeklong fall campaign. Listener contributions to WMUK financially support the production of local news and arts content, as well as help the station to purchase popular NPR programs such as “Morning Edition” and “All Things Considered.”

“I think most people would agree that this has been a rather extraordinary election year, with critical local and statewide seats at stake, as well as a presidential election unlike any we’ve ever seen,” says Stephen Williams, WMUK general manager.

“That kind of comprehensive coverage by our staff is an absolutely fundamental part of WMUK’s public service to our community, but it is also the most resource-intensive… which is why we truly rely on listener contributions to maintain this public trust.”

Contributors to WMUK’s fall campaign will be entered into a drawing to win a pair of tickets to see the Oct. 18 opening night performance of Book of Mormon at Miller Auditorium.

To make a financial gift to WMUK and for more details, visit wmuk.org.

Impact of federal FLSA changes subject of employee meetings

Changes to the Fair Labor Standards Act, their impact on employment at WMU and what WMU is doing to ensure it is in compliance by Dec. 1 will be discussed at two Tuesday, Oct. 18, town hall meetings.

The presentations will cover identical content and take place at 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. in the Fetzer Center’s Kirsch Auditorium. Each presentation also will be livestreamed.

They are designed to inform the campus community of the legal review performed for WMU by the law firm Warner Norcross & Judd LLP and the steps WMU needs to take to be in compliance with the new federal regulations by the Dec. 1 effective date.

The FLSA changes mean that some WMU employees will experience a salary increase, while others will be changed from salaried/employees eligible for overtime, based on WMU business needs and budget impact.

The Oct. 18 sessions will detail the number of employees impacted and the University’s guiding principle in making its decisions—that all employees doing the same job (i.e. same job code/job title) should have the same FLSA status. Impacted employees will be formally notified Wednesday, Oct. 19.

Informational training sessions on the FLSA’s wage and hour requirements will be held at 10 a.m. and 1:30 p.m. Oct. 24 and 27, and at 10 a.m. and 3 p.m. Oct. 25. The training sessions will be open to the campus community and targeted toward managers, supervisors, timekeepers and nonexempt employees themselves.

For more details, visit wmich.edu/hr/FLSacompliance.

Obituaries

Mary Cain, emerita in education and professional development, died Oct. 1 in Kalamazoo. She was 91. Cain joined the faculty in 1961 and retired in 1991 after 30 years of service.

Cain’s Visitation is taking place from 3 to 5 p.m. today at Langeland Memorial Chapel, 622 S. Burdick St. in Kalamazoo. A funeral service is set for Friday, Oct. 7, at Oakwood Cemetery in Grand Ledge, Michigan. A memorial service for Cain is planned for early spring 2017.

Russell P. Griggs, a former construction supervisor in landscape services, died Aug. 13. He was 81. Griggs joined the staff in 1958 and retired in 1997 after 39 years of service.

Frank R. Olenchak, emeritus in education and professional development, died Aug. 24. He was 88. Olenchak joined the faculty in 1966 and retired in 1984 after more than 17 years of service.

Kay A. Shearer, a former Mallinson Institute office coordinator, died Sept. 27. She was 71. Shearer joined the staff in 1986 and retired in 2005 after almost 19 years of service.

Margaret J. Watson, a former Media Laboratory supervisor for University Libraries and classroom technology consultant for information technology, died Sept. 26. She was 61. Watson joined the staff in 1981 and retired in 2015 after more than 33 years of service.
Get in step this fall with Western Walks program

Getting in step with fall is easy for WMU employees who decide to take part in the Western Walks program offered through Western Wellness.

Western Walks is a program that encourages employees to walk on campus, build champions, and continue through Nov. 17. Led by wellness employees who decide to take part in the University’s wellness program, the program fosters a culture of walking on campus and build camaraderie.

Group walks for people of all ability levels start at four locations across campus and continue through Nov. 17. Led by wellness champions, they are designed to foster a culture of walking on campus and build camaraderie and support.

Starting locations and days and times of walks are:
- noon Tuesdays, Ellsworth Hall (west entrance); 2 p.m. Tuesdays, College of Health and Human Services (main entrance);
- 9 a.m. Wednesdays, Bistro 3; Davis Hall (loading dock); and noon Thursdays, Fountain Plaza.

No registration is required. People can put on their walking shoes and just stroll over to the location of their choice.

Direct questions to Katie Alkema at (269) 979-5167 or kalkema@holtynhpc.com.

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BTR Park’s Phase II garners federal grant

one parcel either fully developed or under contract for future development.

Additional funding to begin the expansion project will come from Oshtemo Township, the University and, it is hoped, from success with additional grant programs.

The planning process for Phase II at the Colony Farm Orchard property began last fall and included:
- formation of an external advisory committee that included a variety of community stakeholders,
- selection of award-winning design firms Fishbeck, Thompson, Carr & Huber and O’Boyle, Cowell, Bladock & Associates to design Phase II, and
- a series of public input sessions held in Oshtemo to encourage the public to provide feedback at each step along the way until a final design plan was developed and publicly unveiled in June.

The original BTR Park was developed as a partnership between the city of Kalamazoo and WMU. The two companies hired to do the design work for Phase II also developed the site plan for the park’s Phase I. That development has been repeatedly honored for its environmentally sensitive design.

While just across the street from the original park’s boundaries, the Colony Farm Orchard property is located within the boundaries of Oshtemo Township and will be developed as a partnership between that government entity and the University.

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Portage and geological survey

This is an investment in Michigan’s future and an opportunity to obtain vital data on our state’s natural resources that will aid in the conservation of such viable assets and prioritize future planning for strategic development to grow our economy safely, create jobs and ensure energy independence.”

Since the state designated WMU as the survey’s home in 2011, the University’s Department of Geosciences and its extensive research capabilities and geologic resources have been integral to the survey’s work. For more about the survey, visit wmich.edu/geologysurvey and for more about WMU geosciences, visit wmich.edu/geology.

On Campus with Linda Poquette

“Thers a lot more to running a university than you can imagine,” says Linda Poquette, executive assistant in the Office of the Vice President for Business and Finance. “It just amazes me everything the people in this office do and how much I’ve learned.”

Poquette notes that the vice presidential area is responsible for accounts receivable, payroll and a host of other financial services; supervises key functional units such as Logistical Services, Human Resources, the Department of Public Safety, Facilities Management and Auxiliary Enterprises; and works closely with outreach-focused entities such as the Business Technology and Research Park. The business and finance office also bridges both the nonacademic and academic strategic plan of the University.

A legal secretary before coming to WMU, Poquette has held her current job for the past five years. She came to the University’s alumni relations office in 1990, worked in the administrative offices at Bronson Methodist Hospital from 1992 to 1996, then returned to alumni relations. She says in some ways, what she’s doing now is like coming full circle because she not only works with WMU’s legal affairs staff, but also serves as recording secretary for the new medical school’s Finance Committee.

Poquette ensures that University contracts are properly reviewed by Legal Affairs and Risk Management before they go to her office’s vice president or associate vice president for their review and signature. Plus, she maintains the schedules for both of those administrators, a critical activity as time-sensitive items are frequently brought to the office.

Importantly, she also fields both on- and off-campus calls, assisting employees and students as well as campus vendors and business partners. Additionally, Poquette serves on the Staff Compensation Committee and is the recording secretary for the Campus Planning and Finance Council, which reports to the Faculty Senate.

“Honestly, it has been so nice working here. It will be hard to retire,” she says. “I see how hard these people work. We’re really busy, and everybody helps each other out.

And it’s good to see the students, too, because the students are really what it’s all about.”

Poquette and her husband, Jim, live in Kalamazoo and have two sons, two stepdaughters and six grandchildren. She earned a bachelor’s degree from WMU 13 years ago while working full-time and now one of her grandchildren is a WMU freshman. She enjoys visiting family members as well as gardening, reading, sewing and crocheting.

WMU’s first Universitywide military scholarship available

The Office of Military and Veterans Affairs is taking applications through Saturday, April 1, for the Veterans and Dependents Scholarship, a need-based award.

It will be available to those currently serving, those who have served and military dependents. Unlike other military scholarships, there are no requirements or restrictions regarding major, minor or branch of service.

Students awarded the scholarship will be notified by May 1. For eligibility criteria and application information, visit wmich.edu/westernwarrior.

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Geology

For more about the survey, visit wmich.edu/geologysurvey and for more about WMU geosciences, visit wmich.edu/geology.

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