Memorandum of Understanding

Western Michigan University and the City of Kalamazoo

Western Michigan University (WMU) has a long history of providing research and service responsive to the needs of the communities it serves. None are more critical for the future of our local community and its residents than those addressed by the Shared Prosperity Kalamazoo (SPK) initiative of the City of Kalamazoo (City).

Through Shared Prosperity Kalamazoo, the City has a unique opportunity to dramatically reduce the prevalence of persistent poverty, create more equal opportunity for its children and produce more broadly shared prosperity for all. The campaign also provides a unique opportunity for WMU’s faculty, students and staff to engage in community-based research, service and service learning in support of SPK, and to make Kalamazoo a national model of civic transformation.

The success of Shared Prosperity Kalamazoo requires achieving collective impact that aligns the substantial work already being done in our community to enhance youth development, education, economic development and family security. Thus, the work of WMU faculty, students and staff in support of SPK should also be aligned with the initiative’s goals and implementation strategies.

Because of its extensive involvement in the development and ongoing implementation of Shared Prosperity Kalamazoo, the Western Michigan University Lewis Walker Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnic Relations (Walker Institute) will be primarily responsible for connecting the scholarly work of WMU faculty and students with the goals and strategies of SPK.

Specifically, the Walker Institute will:

a) keep the University community informed about the Shared Prosperity Kalamazoo initiative in general, and SPK-related research, service and service learning opportunities;
b) coordinate with the WMU Office of Community Outreach, the Shared Gold plan for civic engagement, and with other entities and individuals across the University already engaged in community-based research and service;

c) facilitate the active involvement of WMU faculty, staff and students in the work of SPK through existing initiatives such as:

   i. the WMU Signature Program, which encourages students to explore and develop their interests through out-of-class learning experiences;
   ii. the development of topic-specific work groups related to SPK goals and strategies,
   iii. grant writing, and;
   iv. other organizational strategies to be developed.

d) sponsor speakers, educational forums and participation in Shared Prosperity Kalamazoo-related events that promote the alignment of WMU scholarly efforts in support of SPK.

Date: July 9, 2018

Edward Montgomery
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Bobby J. Hopewell
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Timothy Ready
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