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Stampede: E-newsletter for students

Western Michigan University

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## Stampede January 28, 2020

Western Michigan University

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# W STAMPIDE

## Graduate success reaches all-time high

College may be a place to go, but Broncos know that WMU is a place to become. A survey of 2018-19 graduates proves it—94% found a job or educational opportunity after graduation, and nearly all of them are working in a field related to their degree. That's the highest rate in the survey's ten-year history.



[How Broncos Become](#)

### **Be advised: WMU monitoring emergent coronavirus, CDC guidance**

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says the strain, which originated in China, is a serious public health threat. According to the CDC's assessment today: For the general American public, who are unlikely to be exposed to this virus, the immediate health risk from coronavirus is considered low. [Read More](#)

# Wellness matters

Student mental, physical and academic well-being are top priorities at WMU. As several Broncos share in this video of wellness stories, honing healthy habits here has lifelong benefits.



**Bronco pitch competition open to aspiring entrepreneurs**



**Team claims top spot in national digital marketing competition**



**Sustainability office awards \$41,000 in grants for green projects**

# Graduate success reaches all-time high at WMU

Contact: [Erin Flynn](#)

January 14, 2020



KALAMAZOO, Mich.—"Going to Western Michigan University and the experience I had with my fellow students and professors opened my eyes and my heart to the field of social work," says [Johnny Anderson III](#), who earned his bachelor's degree in 2019 and is now pursuing his master's in the same program while working his dream job at the Family Health Center in Kalamazoo.

College may be a place to go, but Western Michigan University students, faculty and staff know that WMU is a place to become. A [survey of 2018-19 graduates](#) offers proof: 94% found a job or education opportunity after graduation, and nearly all of them are working in a field related to their degree. That's the highest engagement rate in the ten-year history of the survey.

"When we say Western is a place to become, we mean it's a place to prepare for your future," says **President Edward Montgomery**. "These data indicate that we continue to be a leader in preparing students for jobs associated with their majors that pay well and give people incredible satisfaction."

Key data collected by the survey:

- 94% of WMU graduates are actively engaged in employment, military or volunteer service or furthering their education.
- The median salary for WMU graduates was \$45,000-\$50,000.
- Of those employed full time, 93% have a job related to their degree and 90% are satisfied with their job.
- 93% of all WMU graduates completed at least one experiential education activity.
  
- 90% said that their education and experience at WMU prepared them for their profession.
- 98% had at least one instructor who made them excited about learning.

## IMPACTFUL EXPERIENCES

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Eliza Foli holds a bird while doing field research.

While the statistics are impressive, numbers only tell part of the story.

"What's really important is the engagement of students while they are in school in experiential education," says **Dr. Ewa Urban**, who coordinates the [WMU Post-Graduation Activity Survey](#).

Urban compiled more than 100 success stories from WMU graduates, and she heard some common themes among them. Virtually all of them emphasized the value of completing an internship and professional networking while they were students. Many also highlighted research opportunities and mentor relationships that propelled them to professional success.

"I would not have known about the world of avian research if I had not gotten involved in the research labs of" **Dr. Sharon Gill** and **Dr. Maarten Vonhof**, says **Eliza Foli**, who majored in biological sciences at WMU and is now working as a seasonal avian ecologist at the University of Georgia.

"They taught me what truly goes into research as well as how to think critically during this process. Working in their labs was essential for me to find my place as a biology student and to open my eyes to what career opportunities I actually had," she says.

"It all starts with a broad range of experiences—from internships to extracurricular experiences that help shape you as a professional and a person and it is recognized by employers," Montgomery says. "Hats off to all of the faculty and staff in offices across the campus who help make this possible."

## CAREER FOCUS

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Johnny Anderson III is working for the Family Health Center while pursuing his master's degree.

WMU offers a number of opportunities for students to hone the skills they need to continue on their career path.

Career and Student Employment Services is piloting a new Career Readiness Certification Program for student employees. It gives students the opportunity to develop such competencies as communication, critical thinking and leadership, and teaches them how to articulate those skills to potential employers.

The office also just launched a student strengths-based mentor program. It helps students identify their career strengths and connects them with a mentor in the field to identify jobs where they might excel.

"We are equipping students for life, because they have that self-knowledge and the experiences" to put them on the path to success, says Urban.

The comprehensive report, featuring easily searchable data, is available online at <https://wmich.edu/career/planning>. The report breaks down success rates based on college and major, highlights the top employers hiring WMU graduates in each field and offers median salary ranges. It also details student involvement in experiential learning as well as the impact academic and professional relationships had on their Western experience.

# WMU monitoring emergent coronavirus, CDC guidance

WMU is monitoring public health concerns prompted by an emergent coronavirus that originated in China and that also is behind a small number of cases of illness in the U.S. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says this strain is a very serious public health threat. According to the CDC's assessment today, "for the general American public, who are unlikely to be exposed to this virus, the immediate health risk from 2019-nCoV is considered low." Because it is flu and respiratory disease season, officials advise getting vaccinated for flu and using everyday preventive actions to stop the spread of germs, and taking flu antivirals, if prescribed. The CDC also issued a Level 3 travel warning: Avoid all nonessential travel to China. For more information, visit [cdc.gov/coronavirus](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus).

# Bronco pitch competition open to aspiring entrepreneurs



Posted by Erin Flynn on January 13, 2020

Calling all innovators and entrepreneurs! Applications are being accepted for the annual [K.C. O'Shaughnessy Competition and Showcase](#). The event—set for Friday, Feb. 21 from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. in Schneider Hall— gives aspiring entrepreneurs a stage to present a three-minute pitch about an innovative business idea for an audience of potential investors. In addition to sharpening their pitching skills, \$5,000 in cash prizes is up for grabs.



Soma used her prize money to advertise her business.

Rose Soma, a fashion design and development major who won the top prize last year, says she initially decided to do the competition for extra credit in a class.



"I figured I'd give it a shot," she says. "I ended up working extremely hard on the pitch, practiced for hours and actually really enjoyed the process—despite the nerves!"



Soma designs a shirt.

Soma's pitch involved her upcycled shirts business, where she applies creative approach to sustainability. She turns discarded clothing—which would otherwise end up in a landfill—into new, patchwork fabric and then uses it to design new garments.

She invested the \$2,300 in prize money she won in to advertise her clothing and build up her online following.

"We hope that this process of coming up with an idea, communicating its value and the problem it solves will be a significant experience for WMU entrepreneurs," says Lara Hobson, director of operations for [Starting Gate](#) and instructor in the Department of Management.

Soma says she'd recommend the competition to all students, regardless of their entrepreneurial interests.

"The pitch competition did provide valuable feedback on my business ideas, which was extremely helpful, but it also helped me become a more confident public speaker," Soma says. "I got some really good practice with writing and presenting a business pitch, which will definitely help in other areas of my education."

The keynote speaker at this year's event is Carrie Jones-Barber, an alumna of Haworth College of Business and CEO of Dawn Food Products. This year's competition also includes a high school competition, with prizes in the form of gift cards.

[Students should apply](#) by midnight on Sunday, Feb. 9, to be considered for the showcase.

# WMU students claim top spot in national digital marketing competition

Contact: [Samantha Hooker](#)

January 7, 2020



(Left to right) WMU students Lexi Payne, Parker Hurley and Liz Volante

KALAMAZOO, Mich.— A team of students from Western Michigan University's Haworth College of Business placed first in a digital marketing case competition and also claimed a category award for Best Research. The event featured more than 50 teams from colleges nationwide and was hosted by Purdue University Northwest.

WMU's student team was composed of senior **Lexi Payne**, junior **Liz Volante** and senior **Parker Hurley**, all [digital marketing and eCommerce](#) majors. **Dr. Scott Cowley**, assistant professor of marketing, coached the team to victory.

The inaugural Purdue Northwest Digital Marketing Competition gave students the opportunity to create a digital marketing campaign for Harbour Trust Investment Management Company. Participating teams received the case details in August outlining the campaign challenge—creating a digital-first strategy that would result in \$1 million of new revenue for the company.

"For most of us, the investment management industry was completely foreign, so the team had about two months to dig into regulatory constraints and investor behaviors and trends, all in the context of the client's unique circumstances," explains Cowley. "The biggest challenge was compressing all of that into an eight-minute pitch video to get to finals."

The team's pitch cemented its place as one of five teams invited to the final round of the competition.

"We recommended the company update their website, advertise on social platforms and use a referral campaign, along with creating new digital content, such as blogs, articles and a newsletter," says Hurley. "I'm glad that our recommendations led to a win, which will help bring

more recognition to the digital marketing and eCommerce major at Western, because it truly is a fantastic program."



Cowley works with Payne, Hurley and Volante in class.

After landing in the finals, WMU's team members pitched their idea directly to the senior leadership of Harbour Trust. Cowley's students appreciated the real-world experience.

"This competition helped prepare me for life after college by allowing me to learn the ins and outs of a comprehensive digital strategy," says Payne. "No matter what I am working on, I will always be able to apply the methodology and way of thinking."

Cowley is optimistic that this is just the beginning for his students.

"WMU is one of the only schools in the country offering a digital marketing undergraduate degree. This is our third appearance in the finals of a national competition this year alone and the first national win for our students.," he says.

He praises the students' dedication and application of solid marketing fundamentals as the key to their success, adding, "They took everything we teach in our core digital marketing classes and adapted, organized and prioritized those strategies to align with the client's objective at every step."

Volante valued the networking experience that the competition provided, and the project also validated her choice of major.

"I was able to meet professionals in fields I'm interested in pursuing after graduation. Many of the judges said we were always welcome at their companies, which is great to hear," she says. "Being able to work on a project similar to one I might do after graduation gave me insights on what my career would look like, and I feel assured that I am on the right path."

# WMU students awarded more than \$40,000 toward sustainability projects

Contact: [Justin Gish](#)

January 13, 2020

KALAMAZOO, Mich.—Thirteen Western Michigan University students received grants totaling more than \$40,000 from the University to fund their programs, projects and research activities related to sustainability and environmental issues. Awardees of the Student Sustainability Grants were notified this past December by the Office for Sustainability, in collaboration with the Western Student Association and the Office of Student Engagement, of the grants totaling \$41,236.70. They were chosen by a committee of students appointed by the WSA, under the direction of undergraduate **Tyler Signorella**, the WSA's sustainability chair.

## AWARDEES' NAMES AND PROJECT TITLES

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- **Johnny Anderson III** and **Anjeliaca Rhan**: Reduce, Reuse, Recycle Regalia Sustainability Initiative
- **Aida Amirul**: Compostable Single-Use Dining Plates Alternative for Weekly Alternative Student Luncheon
- **Fayza Khandoker** and **Emily Sue Nottingham**: Reprocessing of Plastic Film
- **Alyse Lange** and **Emma Tervonen**: Products for Menstrual Sustainability
- **Aurora Mokris**: Evaluating Microbial Communities in Compost
- **Neha Sawant** and **Cornellius Marcello**: Modified Crab Shell Bioabsorbent for Heavy Metal Remediation of Drinking Water
- **Brandilyn Wilson**: Planting Trees to Promote Environmental Sustainability and Cultural Prosperity
- **Sarina Routowicz** and **Jacob Lockwood**: Sustainability Through Digitalization at the Student Recreation Center

The Office for Sustainability awards a total of \$100,000 in grants to students every year, with \$50,000 offered each fall and spring semester. Applications for the Spring 2020 allocations cycle are due **Thursday, Feb. 27, by 11:59 p.m.**

[More information](#) is available through the Office for Sustainability. Students interested in applying for the next round of allocations should email Justin Gish at [justin.gish@wmich.edu](mailto:justin.gish@wmich.edu).