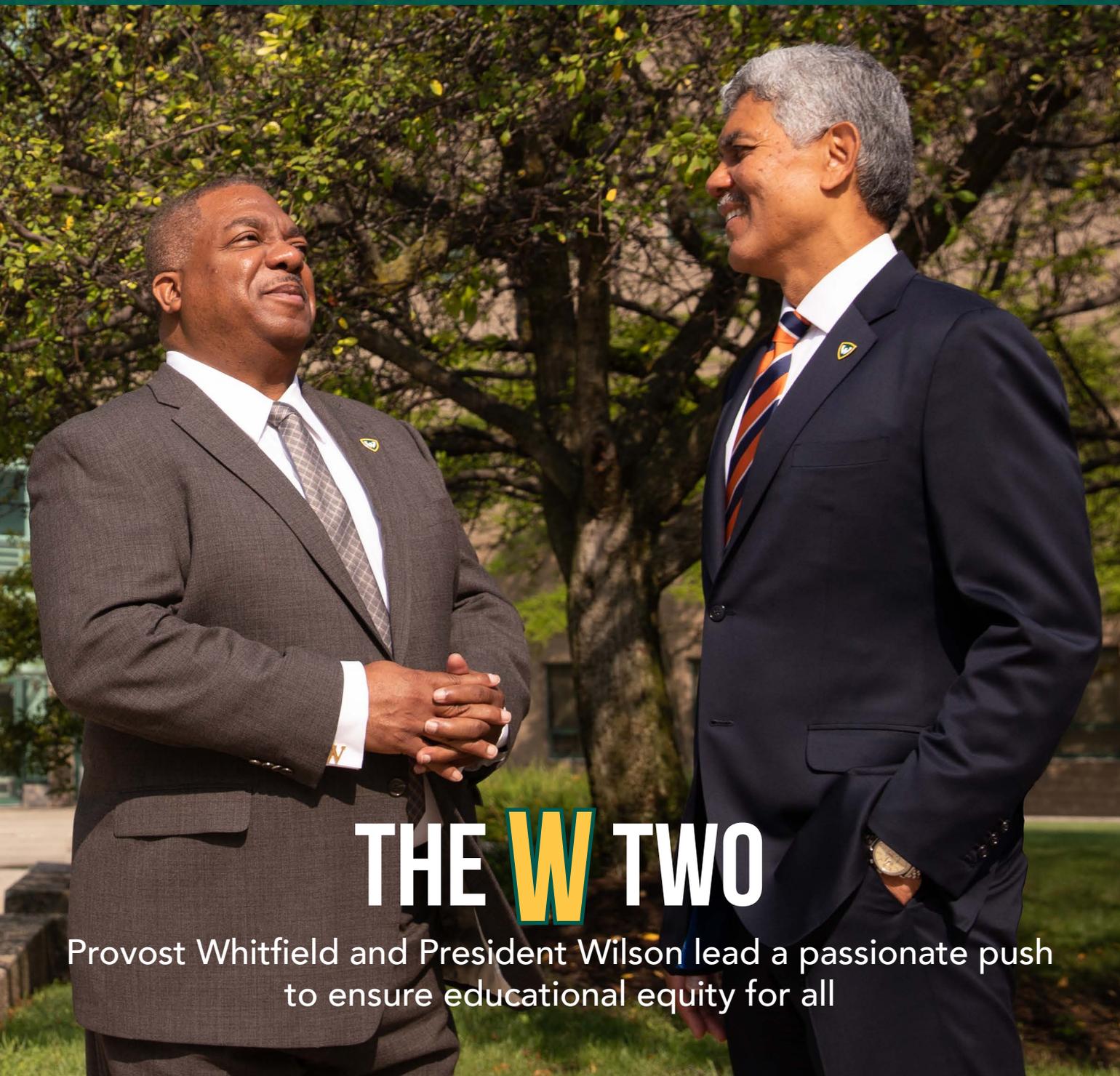


Fall 2018



WARRIORS

HIGHLIGHTING WAYNE STATE UNIVERSITY'S COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



THE **W** TWO

Provost Whitfield and President Wilson lead a passionate push to ensure educational equity for all

On the cover:

President M. Roy Wilson (right) and Provost Keith Whitfield are working together on student success.

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ABOUT THIS PUBLICATION

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As the publication devoted to covering Wayne State's community involvement, we encourage readers to share stories about the work the university does in and around Detroit.

Got an idea for *Warriors* magazine? Contact us at engaged@wayne.edu.

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WAYNE STATE
UNIVERSITY

Letter from the PRESIDENT

Welcome to the first issue of *Warriors* magazine, a celebration of Wayne State's rich, ongoing commitment to Detroit and the wonderfully diverse communities that breathe life into this city.

Wayne State has been adept at telling its story on a number of fronts, but we believe we can do an even better job of keeping Detroiters aware of how deeply embedded we are in the city. That's why you're reading this.

While we are headquartered in Midtown, our reach extends throughout all of Motown — from the riverfront and downtown to the neighborhoods on the city's east and west sides, to the suburban towns that sit beyond the city limits.

This diversity drives much of what we do.

The Wayne State campus may be our hub — but we are Warriors in the community too.

We've created this publication to let you know about the great things we're doing on campus and beyond. For 150 years, we've called Detroit home. We conduct research here. We volunteer here. We teach here. We learn here.

And through it all, as you'll see in the pages of this magazine, we remain Warrior Strong.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. Roy Wilson'.

President M. Roy Wilson





Wayne State University Associate Professor Jose Cuello amasses stunning collection of indigenous artwork



Walking into Wayne State University Associate Professor Jose Cuello's cramped office in the Faculty/Administration Building is akin to stepping into a museum.

To the left of his desk, a host of large and small wooden statues from assorted African nations rests on a bookshelf, carvings of elephants and giraffes and fish

rest on a bookshelf, carvings of elephants and giraffes and fish vying for space alongside stacks of educational DVDs. The walls are adorned with tribal masks. Headdresses decorated with cowrie shells and bright jewelry glint in the sunlight pouring in from a nearby window. Wooden renderings of potbellied goddesses sit scattered around, mingling with carved drums and statues of men smoking pipes, bejeweled gourds, and sculpted images of Buddha and dreadlocked Rastafarians. In all, more than 150 pieces sit inside Cuello's office.

The collection has allowed Cuello, who teaches courses on race as well as Latin American and European history, to transform his office into an extension of the classroom. He views lessons often taught through indigenous art, such as the need for people to be good stewards of nature, as essential.

"We have to have a reciprocal relationship with the earth; that's the way to survive," said Cuello.

A former director of the Center for Latino/a and Latin American Studies, where he still teaches, 71-year-old Cuello has been filling his office with art from indigenous cultures for a decade. Most of the art he has gathered hails from African and Asian nations, the Caribbean, and the Pacific Islands. And while the bulk of his collection is packed into his office on campus, he also keeps at home larger pieces that won't fit at WSU.

As varied as all of the artwork is, Cuello explained that the pieces' common thread is in their humanity.

"I believe our primary identity as individuals should be 'I am a human being' rather than 'I am an American or African American or I'm Latino,'" Cuello said. "Those are secondary identities. I think that a lot of confusion and conflict in the world results in the fact that we do not recognize that we are all one species."

"We all have, across the world and across time, the same emotions. We have all these dualities within us that define the human character."

Cuello has been teaching college for more than 30 years, starting in Wisconsin in 1983 before joining the Wayne State faculty six years later. A historian, he specializes in teaching about colonial Latin America.

Cuello, who immigrated to the U.S. from Mexico with his parents as a small child, also is inspired by his personal background and his own artistic inclinations. In addition to collecting art, Cuello is himself a painter, creating under the name of his company, Black-T Art. Assorted pieces he created are currently on display at the Garage Cultural, a Southwest Detroit community center.

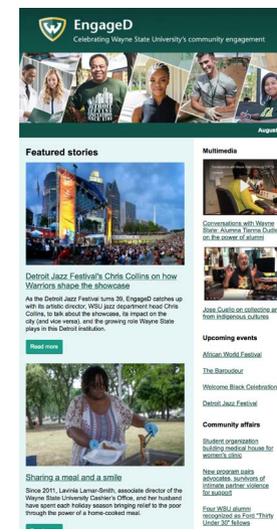
Of the pieces he buys for his collection, Cuello said he has purchased most in the Detroit area, with the majority coming from flea markets. But while finding the art at great value isn't difficult, Cuello said that determining the history of a piece isn't always so simple. He often has to use a piece's designs and images to trace its tribal origin, relying on a number of books to identify symbolic figures and mythologies.

In doing so, he has plenty to share in terms of how select cultures and subcultures express themselves artistically. By way of example, he pointed to a Chinese drum that showed two fish swimming in opposite directions. He said the fish is a traditionally sacred animal that represents prosperity to

Continued on page 18

NEWS BRIEFS

Wayne State launches community engagement newsletter



In April, WSU launched EngageD, an e-newsletter dedicated to highlighting the breadth of the university's work — from public service to research — in and around Detroit.

Published every other month, the newsletter is designed to augment the university's promotional storytelling through a variety of digital, print and broadcast formats.

Issues have included stories such as a look at the home-cooked charity of Lavinia Lamar-Smith and her husband, who feed Detroit's homeless each Christmas.

To view archived issues of EngageD and subscribe, visit newsroom.wayne.edu/community/engaged.

President announces Warrior 150 Challenge to mark university sesquicentennial



To commemorate 150 years of academic and research excellence in Detroit, President M. Roy Wilson announced the launch of a university-wide initiative as a testament to our unwavering sense of social responsibility and commitment to the community.

This initiative, known as the Warrior 150 Challenge, is designed to engage and activate all students, faculty and staff in meaningful community service across metro Detroit, with the goal of completing 150,000 volunteer hours in 2018.

Wayne State University is using the Helper Helper mobile app to coordinate the effort and help participants log their service hours.

Helper Helper can be downloaded from the iTunes store for Apple devices and from Google Play for Android devices.

University kicks off debt-forgiveness program



Wayne State recently launched the Warrior Way Back program, a novel approach to re-engage students who left the university with debt and without a degree.

The Warrior Way Back program offers former students with an outstanding balance of less than \$1,500 a chance to re-enroll and "learn" away their past debt to earn a college degree. Warrior Way Back students will reduce their past-due balances by one-third at the end of each successfully completed semester until the debt is eliminated.

"This innovative approach exemplifies Wayne State's role as a leader in college access," said WSU Provost Keith Whitfield. "No other school offers the level of support that we provide to students on the scale at which we do."

School of Medicine vice dean addresses ongoing health disparities in updated Kerner report

In the half-century since unrest rocked Detroit in 1967, disparities in health and health care services between black and white Americans have actually widened, according to findings presented recently by Herbert Smitherman Jr., M.D., M.P.H., vice dean of Diversity and Community Affairs at the Wayne State University School of Medicine, as part of an update of the original Kerner Commission report.

The findings from the update, including Dr. Smitherman's research, were released earlier this year at two Washington, D.C., events.

The report, "Healing Our Divided Society: Investing in America Fifty Years After the Kerner Report," examines what has happened since 1967 in our schools, our neighborhoods, our prisons, our health care system and our nation, and what work remains to be done to end inequities throughout the United States.



ERASING EDUCATIONAL INEQUITY

How Wayne State's data-driven approach to student success is boosting African American achievement

As WSU Senior Associate Provost for Student Success Monica Brockmeyer recalls, newly arrived President M. Roy Wilson hadn't even settled into his office chair before one of Wayne State's most pressing concerns — ensuring equitable achievement outcomes for students of color — landed on his desk.

Fortunately, thanks to Brockmeyer and many others who'd been toiling to address the issue, those concerns also came with a solid plan of action.

"Way back in about 2012, Phyllis Vroom, who had served as an interim provost and deputy president and had also been the dean of our School of Social Work — she was the highest-ranking African American woman I'd ever met at the university — put together a team and charged us to make a report called the GRAD report, which stood for Greater Retention and Achievement through Diversity," said Brockmeyer, one of several administrators who made up the Retention Advisory Committee that compiled the report. "There was me and Henry Robinson, who runs our Federal TRIO office. We had someone from the Center for Latino/a and Latin American Studies and the head of our Office of Equal Opportunity at the time. It was a small group but we made a broad suite of recommendations, including a recommendation for a chief diversity officer and an Office of Multicultural Student Engagement. We made recommendations for shoring up and sustaining existing programs across the campus, for faculty involvement and so on.

"We finished our report and delivered it to the board before President Wilson even started. It was before his first day."

At 67 pages, the report was extensive, loaded with research, analysis and wide-ranging insights into diversity problems that have vexed universities nationwide seemingly forever. Nevertheless, by the time Wilson did arrive for his first day on the job, Brockmeyer remembers, he had consumed the report from cover to cover.

"None of us knew him so I was really impressed by the fact that he had read the whole thing on Day Zero," said Brockmeyer. "He had read the whole thing and addressed it immediately — and he was very serious. Very serious, very thoughtful and very determined. It was like night and day to have him come here. That felt great."

After many years of searching for a comprehensive strategy to close racial gaps in classroom success, retention and graduation, the university had found not only its plan but, as reflected by Wilson's attitude, the ironclad institutional will to see it through.



The equalizers:

Armed with new data, university leaders have placed an increased emphasis on student support services — prompting some impressive gains in the classroom.

(From left: Marquita Chamblee, Monica Brockmeyer, Michelle Bruner, Kenya Swanson and Leonard Savala)

**Well connected:**

The Network, a learning community aimed at young male students, has offered participants mentorship and support, both socially and academically.

Thus, with the GRAD report as a guiding light, the president and the advisory committee set about implementing many of its recommendations — and while the effort is still in its infancy, there’s no question that the early results of Wayne State’s commitment to achieving educational equity among disadvantaged students and students of color have been equal parts impressive and inspiring.

In recent years, Wayne State has hired more administrators devoted to fostering not just a multicultural student body but a campus climate conducive to that diversity. The university has developed an overarching initiative, dubbed the Warrior Vision and Impact Program — or Warrior VIP — that offers students coming to Wayne State through standard admission channels a suite of wraparound services designed to help negotiate the academic, social and financial challenges of college. The renewed focus on student achievement and belonging has spawned learning communities such as RISE and the Network, staff-led student support groups devoted to a more personalized, intimate approach to advising and mentoring students of color. (RISE is devoted to female students, the Network to male.) And in taking up these and other programs, Wilson, Brockmeyer and other key leaders — such as Provost Keith Whitfield, Associate Vice President for Enrollment Management Dawn Medley, and Marquita Chamblee, the chief diversity officer hired as part of the GRAD report recommendations — have worked to supercharge the

university’s efforts to not only foster greater diversity on campus but to ensure that students of color and other traditionally underrepresented and disadvantaged students learn, thrive and graduate at the same rates as their most successful peers.

In the time since, Wayne State has witnessed a series of successes — some spurred directly by this new push, some enhanced by it — that herald a notable albeit nascent boost in achievement for students of color overall and African American students in particular. For instance, the six-year graduation rate of African American students has jumped 13 percentage points to 20 percent in the last six years, a statistic that has earned national recognition. Additionally, the graduation rate for first-generation students overall — many of whom are students of color — is up 18 percent. Moreover, the graduation rate for students who receive Pell Grants — a group that also includes numerous underrepresented groups — is up 15 percent in just three years.

“We are moving the needle forward in creating a 21st century university that has a more active campus life, academic programs that engage students, the support students need to excel, and opportunities that lead to great jobs after graduation,” said Whitfield. “There are even more exciting things coming to the university in the next few years. We really are a destination for students who want to use college to create a great career path.”

“I like to think that some of it is attributable to the work we began when we began to envision what is now The Network,” said Chamblee. “That initiative is just beginning to bear the kind of fruit we believe is possible for our students. And RISE has become a very

positive addition to this work providing mentoring and networking opportunities for women of color... Learning communities like The Network and RISE — as well as other initiatives such as programs offered through the Center for Latino/a and Latin American Studies — provide opportunities for deep and close connection to important cultural communities and create a greater sense of belonging for our students. It says to them, ‘You belong here. We are here for you. We are committed to your success.’”

At the nucleus of the effort to improve student outcomes sits Warrior VIP, the sprawling learning community around which the smaller student groups, wraparound support services and other support programs revolve like so many electrons. Overseen by Warrior VIP Program Coordinator Kenya Swanson and Michelle Bruner, director of Wayne State’s Academic Success Center, the Vision and Impact Program serves as the gateway for many incoming freshmen and offers perhaps one of the best chances to ensure student success. (While the program is open to any incoming student and does boast diverse participants, 68 percent of the students currently signed up for Warrior VIP are black.)

“We created the Warrior Vision and Impact Program as a coalition of many learning communities,” explained Bruner. “So, within the coalition, there are not only other learning communities that support populations of students very similar to the population we wanted to be very intentional about supporting, but it also includes all of the resources. Making sure that students have access to career services, making sure that they have financial literacy and study skills, tutoring — all of these are a part of that student experience, to make sure that they are establishing the goals that they have set for themselves and that we are helping them to accomplish those goals. Warrior VIP really is about individual community so that

The six-year graduation rate of African American students has jumped 13 percentage points to 20 percent in the last six years, a statistic that has also earned national recognition. Additionally, the graduation rate for first-generation students overall — many of whom are students of color — is up 18 percent.

students can focus on whatever their unique interests are. We are making sure that we are providing them with all of those resources.”

Swanson describes the program more succinctly. “Warrior VIP,” she explained, “is like a learning community on steroids.”

As with other initiatives, Warrior VIP evolved from scrutiny of data. As Brockmeyer and others pored over the student information they’d been gathering since the GRAD report, they began to make some critical realizations. For instance, looking over years of data from the university’s freshman College Student Inventory survey, they

VIP MVPs:

Swanson, Brockmeyer and Bruner head up the Warrior Vision and Impact Program at the center of the renewed focus on student success.



discovered that black students were much more receptive to accepting academic assistance than most of their peers. The same held true when it came to black students and financial and institutional assistance.

"This is what really kind of got us going with VIP," Brockmeyer said of the data. "We could look at this and say black and Latino students are asking us for our help, and we are not seeing them in our doors. We knew it wasn't them; it was us. This data point was galvanizing for me and my team."

Warrior VIP also has become something of the connective tissue for disparate support programs and units within the university, including initiatives like the Office of Federal TRIO and the Academic Pathways to Excellence (APEX) program. "What's been really nice about the coalition is that each of those programs existed prior to development of VIP, so we really were able to leverage the smartest practices from each of those as we were developing the Vision and Impact Program," said Bruner.

Added Brockmeyer: "It really helped move me forward to VIP to see that these programs we had all over the campus were serving students in small ways that were isolated. In some cases, they'd have the students and didn't have everything they needed. By pulling them into the coalition, we could support them and extend their relationships. So if you know a student and that student will accept advice from you or believes you when you say that it's good to go to tutoring or whatever it is, then that's the most powerful thing we have for change on this campus. That's the starting point, the rationale, for VIP."

And the impact is clear. A recent study compared three groups of incoming black students with no previous college experience: those who received support from Warrior VIP specifically, those who got support from other groups in the coalition, and those who received

no support group help whatsoever. The study found that Wayne State students engaged specifically with Warrior VIP — who met with advisors, peer mentors and tutors — earned an average GPA of 2.84 in their first year, compared to the average 2.3 GPA for those uninvolved with any university support program.

"That's important to note because the more touch points a student has with an academic advisor or any person on campus who can help them to feel connected," said Swanson, "the greater chance that they are going to stay at the university. Whether it's a connection with an academic advisor, myself, a study skills coach or a learning specialist, all of those touch points help a student to feel like, 'I have people in my corner.'"

The successes have only engendered more confidence in the stepped-up effort to improve student achievement, leading university officials to envision an even more expansive role for the initiative.

"I see Warrior VIP, moving forward, as huge, as way bigger than just a program," explained Brockmeyer. "I see it as a nucleus for cultural change across the campus. My vision is that through bringing those coalition organizations together and getting them talking to each other, the organizations can have enhanced administrative visibility; enhanced support from me. When the coalitions were scattered across campus, it was really, really hard to do that. Nobody knew about each other. By bringing people together, I wanted to amplify the support that people had and connect them to other resources, make it easier to see where students were falling through the cracks and not falling through the cracks, and make a rich network of relationships so that a student comes into the campus through, say, our Michigan GEAR UP program, I don't want those students to fall through the cracks."

Climate changers: Chamblee (left) works closely with Savala, director of the Office of Multicultural Student Engagement, to foster an inclusive campus atmosphere that promotes educational equity for all students.



"We are moving the needle forward in creating a 21st century university that has a more active campus life, academic programs that engage students, the support students need to excel and opportunities that lead to great jobs after graduation. There are even more



exciting things coming to the university in the next few years. We really are a destination for students who want to use college to create a great career path."

— Provost Keith Whitfield

"We have got to have relationships. The way I see it, especially for black students but eventually for all students, is not to just send a student over to this program or that one but to let the student know, 'You're in my care so I'm going to deliver you to the next person you can trust,' to make sure that we don't drop any students. That's how I see Warrior VIP: making this mesh of care, starting with our students who need that the most. But I also see it as a core for transformation of the whole university — that eventually it's the whole student experience that is that caring and relational." 

SUPPORT GROUPS

A few of the units that serve as pillars of the university's campaign to cultivate greater diversity and ensure academic equity:

Academic Pathways to Excellence (APEX) Scholars: APEX Scholars provides an academic bridge for the successful transition from high school to undergraduate studies at Wayne State University. The program supports students in strengthening their cognitive abilities, cultivating a thirst for knowledge and developing a disciplined approach to learning.

Academic Success Center: The ASC's mission is to ensure that all Wayne State University students become self-determined and motivated learners through instruction and services that support the development of skills and habits to achieve academic excellence.

The Network: The Network is a learning community for young men that aims to support their academic experience through mentoring, brotherhood and the teaching of life skills outside the classroom.

Office of Diversity and Inclusion: ODI is a unique resource dedicated to supporting students, faculty and the entire university community. Home to the Office of Multicultural Student Engagement, this group is focused on sustaining Wayne State's inclusive campus and can provide assistance with a number of issues.

Office of Multicultural Student Engagement: OMSE seeks to cultivate a safe campus environment that values, promotes and celebrates identities among all students who engage with its office, while offering initiatives that positively impact retention and graduation rates of students who arrive at WSU underrepresented and at risk.

RISE: RISE is a learning community and safe space for self-identified women of color to gather for continued growth and celebration.

Warrior VIP: The Warrior Vision and Impact Program is a comprehensive student support program and learning community. Warrior VIP invites incoming students to join the learning community to support their engagement with the university, development of leadership skills and accomplishment of academic goals. Through a first-year seminar, mentoring relationships and a variety of campus resources, Warrior VIP students are part of a community of learners who thrive intellectually and personally.

CHAMPS IS HERE

Wayne State's CHAMPS program nurtures college students grappling with the foster care system



Airika Buford and Markita Terry

It was 20 years ago that Wayne State University senior Markita Terry last saw her biological mother.

Although a drug addiction had forced the woman to surrender custody of Markita, she had stayed in contact with her baby girl as best she could — through spot visits and brief meet-ups.

“I had been placed in a foster home when I was 4 after my mom got into a fight with a woman we were living with,” recalled Markita. “The police had been called and they took my mom to jail. They took me to an agency, then to an emergency foster home.

“They told me I’d only be there for 72 hours, until my mom got out of jail. I wound up staying for the next four years.”

The first year was rough, but Markita found joy and solace in weekly opportunities to meet up with her mom at a Detroit social services center. Whatever her struggles, Markita’s mom always kept their dates.

Until one day, she didn’t.

“One day I saw her, and the next day was a family fun fair,” recalled Markita. “I remember asking her if she’d be at the fair tomorrow. She was like, ‘Yeah, I’m going to be there.’ So I went to the fair with the people in the foster home, and I remember sitting in this metal folding chair, waiting at the front gate of the fair for my mom to come. And she never came. To this day, it hurts like hell.”

And with that, young Markita Terry — whose father had moved to California with her brothers several months before — lost her last tie to her biological family and

tumbled headlong into the state foster care system for more than a decade.

But despite spending her adolescence and turbulent teen years bouncing between multiple foster homes, dealing at times with instability, neglect and even abuse, she has soldiered on. Through it all — the loss of her mom, the birth of her own daughter, a brief move to Los Angeles to reunite with her father and siblings — the irrepressible communications major still found herself walking across the stage at the Wayne State graduation ceremony at Ford Field in May. This summer, Markita traveled to Italy through a WSU Study Abroad program.

While her success in Wayne State’s College of Fine, Performing and Communication Arts is unquestionably a testament to her personal perseverance, Markita will be the first to admit that she couldn’t have made it through on her own. For all of her determination, Markita got a big helping hand, much of it from the Champions Aspiring to Make Pathways to Success program, or CHAMPS, a cutting-edge Wayne State effort to ferry students who’ve gone through foster care through college and to graduation. (The name of the program was formally changed from TIP, or Transition to Independence Program, over the summer.)

Airika Buford, the communications and outreach coordinator for CHAMPS, was perhaps the most instrumental university staffer in Markita’s orbit, and their relationship illustrates just how deeply the program embeds itself in students’ lives. Hired into the School of Social Work not long after Markita enrolled at Wayne State, Buford formed a fast bond with the then-sophomore.

“There was an immediate connection,” said Buford. “I loved her bubbly personality. I admired the fact that she’s a single mom and was trying to pursue her degree at the time. Any way that I could, either within the program or by reaching out to community resources, I tried to make sure I found additional support for her. I tried to communicate with her whenever she came in to the office just to find out how she was doing. Those are things I would do with all of our students — but there was just something different there. Markita has a personality that you

can’t help but to love. Despite whatever is going on with her, she’s always wearing a smile. I just took a liking to her and just tried to make sure I looked out for her.”

10% of foster children enroll in college

only **3%** ever earn a degree

In fact, CHAMPS has been looking out for students like Markita since its inception.

Run out of an unassuming office on the first floor of 5425 Woodward Ave., which sits adjacent to the Wayne State School of Social Work, the CHAMPS program has over its six-year existence become something of a safe haven for numerous Wayne State students who, like Markita, are healing from the struggles of turbulent upbringings in the state foster care system. Overseen largely by Judith Wineman, a lecturer in the School of Social Work, and Buford, CHAMPS furnishes a slew of wraparound services designed to help buoy students above the financial instability, housing insecurity and deeply rooted social challenges that confront almost all of them.

CHAMPS students receive up to \$5,000 in financial assistance each year, with every student receiving some level of funding. Students are also eligible for tutoring, career mentoring, life-skills training and help managing their foster-care cases. CHAMPS offers counseling for troubled students. The program has even allocated a small pool of money for student emergency funds, enabling CHAMPS a degree of flexibility to address specific student issues as they arise.

“CHAMPS tries to fill in the gaps and meet the needs of our students,” explained Buford. “Any services that our students need, our program either creates or partners with other programs or service providers to ensure that processes are as streamlined and effective as possible. Our students face enough challenges. We want to reduce those challenges, not compound them.”

The program was started in 2012 in response to a growing body of research that showed that foster children in Michigan had almost no chance to make it to, or through, college. Studies done in the past six years show that about 10 percent of foster children enroll in college — with only about 3 percent ever earning a degree.

Worse, figures show that 60 percent of foster children who don’t attend college wind up sentenced to jail time, 40 percent experience either housing instability or outright

homelessness, and less than half land employment.

CHAMPS has been fighting against those trends since its inception, waging its battle by working with large groups of students as well as one enrollee at a time.

“In the short term, we want to ensure that we maintain a strong mental health support for our students,” said Buford. “Our program has done a great job of creating a partnership with the College of Education so that our students can receive services in a trusted space: our office and drop-in center. I think that this partnership has been very effective for students who have taken advantage of it.

“For long-term goals, we have to meet the financial needs of the program and of our students who are over 21 by creating a diversified funding strategy.”

And all along the way, the program is propping up students who might otherwise falter, not because they want to but because they often don’t know how to negotiate a path to success by themselves.

40% of foster children who don’t attend college experience housing instability or outright homelessness

60% who don’t attend college wind up sentenced to jail time

“One of the biggest problems with being a foster kid going to college is the lack of support,” said Markita. “A lot of people have a mom and dad to be there if you get kicked out of the dorm room or don’t have anywhere to live. For former foster youth, you don’t have that... And coming out of foster care, you’re dealing with a lot of mental issues. You’re dealing with rejection, abandonment, with so many issues that aren’t dealt with for the most part.

“I’m not saying all foster kids are like that, but for the most part, because the foster care system is screwed up, it tends to screw up the people who come out of it even more because we aren’t getting all the help that we need. We don’t learn how to ask for that help. CHAMPS gives us that sense of belonging, that sense of support that most foster youth lack.”

And CHAMPS is looking to grow not just its target group but the full university population. Wineman notes that CHAMPS

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FIGURING IT OUT



Darryl Gardner, a director at the Center for Excellence and Equity in Mathematics, uses skills ranging from math to music to engage students.

As some of its earliest students move into leadership roles, the Center for Excellence and Equity in Mathematics keeps on turning out scholars and closing the achievement gap

Walking into Wayne State University, Darryl Gardner was optimistic and, to his mind, already prepared for his future in a STEM field. Then an aspiring engineering major, Gardner had what he thought was a solid foundation in mathematics.

It wasn't long before that notion crumbled.

After an underwhelming performance on his college placement exam earned Gardner a spot in remedial math, he quickly realized that he wasn't nearly as prepared for college-level calculations as he originally believed.

"I thought I had a pretty solid math background coming out of high school," said Gardner, who graduated from Detroit's Cody High School in 1999. "I think that's because I'd always gotten good grades in mathematics. I didn't realize until I'd taken the math placement exam here that I had so many holes in my math education."

That same placement test also landed Gardner at the university's Center for Excellence and Equity in Mathematics, a group in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences geared toward shoring up math proficiency among students who

have the potential to excel in the field but lack strong fundamentals. There, Gardner went through a series of programs, from remedial to advanced, that not only sharpened his skills but reignited the love for math that had dimmed after he started college.

These days, years after his time at the center, Gardner's math foundation couldn't be sturdier.

Now 36, the one-time remedial math student currently is working toward his Ph.D. in applied statistics at Wayne State and is slated to defend his doctoral dissertation later this year. Meanwhile, in the ultimate example of giving back, Gardner also serves as a director at the center, overseeing both the Rising Scholars Program (RSP) and the Emerging Scholars Program (ESP).

Gardner's turnaround story isn't the only one the center and its programs have produced, either. Although formally chartered in 2007, the center and the core programs on which it rests have for more than 25 years taken students from throughout metro Detroit — the vast majority of them students of color from low-performing school districts — and forged them into outstanding math scholars.

While the center has multiple components, its best-known facet is Math Corps, the middle and high school level program that has earned national recognition for its success in boosting math skills among Detroit Public Schools Community District students. Lesser known but just as critical are the Pre-Emerging Scholars Program (PREP), ESP and RSP, all three of which offer support to students at Wayne State.

Steve Kahn, founder and director of the center, said the programs have seen dramatic results over the past 25 years. "ESP essentially has closed the achievement gap," said Kahn. "So the difference between all students and minority students is incredibly small compared to what it usually is."

"This is a fight that's been going on for decades. I would want to say that the center is not just a mathematics program. Far from it. **It's a social justice.** I hope that going forward, we could finally see a day where kids of Detroit, through the good work of Wayne State and its resources, can find those opportunities all kids deserve."



Center founder Steve Kahn has been transforming Detroit high schoolers into math scholars for 25 years.

The center boasts impressive results. In ESP honors pre-calculus and calculus courses, the minority pass rate is 82 percent. Overall, the pass rate for all ESP students is 89 percent.

RSP, meanwhile, is offered to Wayne State students who need to develop basic college-level mathematical skills. A combination lecture and workshop, the format provides students with individual tutoring, study groups and the same strong support system as ESP.

Gardner said RSP has had such an impact on students that the center considers it more of a retention program than a math program, adding that it teaches students how to study and plan — skills they may not have developed before entering college. Many students transition to ESP upon completion of RSP.

Kahn said the center has always been about closing achievement gaps, closing racial disparities, providing students with opportunities to succeed and helping them realize dreams they may not have otherwise been able to achieve.

"What I think it does more than anything is it says that first and foremost, before any mathematics, that we are going to care about you, and we are going to believe in you, and our job is to get you to believe in yourself," said Kahn. "And once that happens, then with very hard work and a commitment to excellence, great achievements are possible and happen."

Ultimately, Kahn said, the center is about creating programming in which any student can thrive, regardless of background or other personal factors.

"This is a fight that's been going on for decades," said Kahn. "I would want to say that the center is not just a mathematics program. Far from it. It's a social justice. I hope that going forward, we could finally see a day where kids of Detroit, through the good work of Wayne State and its resources, can find those opportunities all kids deserve."

Kahn and Gardner both credit the dramatic success of the math center to the natural pipeline that it creates. Math Corps creates opportunities for peer mentors once students reach college. Many former Math Corps students not only become peer mentors for Math Corps but often enroll in RSP and ESP. According to Kahn, most of the center's staff, like Gardner, are RSP or ESP alumni, and sometimes both. The center also has dedicated advisors and counselors to support students through both academic and nonacademic struggles.

Recalling his own early academic hardships, Gardner also hailed PREP, a developmental program offered at the remedial level.

"I was fortunate to be placed into the PREP program because they strengthened my foundation," said Gardner. "I developed such an affinity for mathematics that I actually earned my bachelor's degree in mathematics."

That degree led Gardner to earn a master's in education from Wayne State. Pursuing his Ph.D. was the next logical step, he said.

Once he's earned his doctorate, Gardner plans to use his expertise to evaluate solutions in social disparities among minorities. He is especially interested in closing education gaps.

"It's my passion for mathematics," Gardner said. "I've always enjoyed using it in a more real-world context. There's a lot of research out there, and a lot of data out there, so I really wanted to find ways to evaluate that and develop solutions for those disparities that we see."

Of course, in their search for at least some solutions, Gardner, Kahn and those at the Center for Excellence and Equity in Mathematics need look no further than in the mirror. 

ENGAGED

A Q & A with Professor Chris Collins

Widely considered one of the best jazz exhibitions in the world, the Detroit Jazz Festival entered its 39th year recently — and once again the influence, talent and presence of Wayne State University was on full display. Not only were Warriors represented onstage at the world's largest free premier jazz showcase, but Chris Collins, director of Jazz Studies at Wayne State and president of the Detroit Jazz Festival Foundation, served his eighth year as artistic director for the annual event, which ran from Aug. 31 to Sept. 3.

An internationally celebrated saxophonist himself, Collins has performed with many jazz greats and released numerous commercial and film soundtracks. He also has presented at a variety of conferences, workshops and residencies around the world — including Italy, Japan, South Africa and Scotland — on topics ranging from jazz saxophone improvisation to jazz education.

We caught up with Collins just before the showcase took place, sitting down with him in early August to talk about the Detroit Jazz Festival, its impact on the city (and vice versa) and the role that Wayne State has played — and continues to play — in furthering the legacy of what some call “America’s only true art form.”

Q **Warriors: The Detroit Jazz Festival is an iconic annual event, and has been for 39 years now. What should attendees expect this year?**

A **Collins:** We have what’s called the Untitled Artist, sponsored by Quicken Loans at the Jazz Festival. This year it’s Karriem Riggins, a great jazz drummer from Detroit who played for Hancock and everybody. He’s now in L.A., and a Grammy award-winning producer — and I’m talking for the major hip-hop acts, electronica and techno stuff. The end result, though, is this quintet of jazz musicians who are working with Karriem who will bring in assets from the hip-hop and techno worlds, and they’re going to be restructuring their original music to be this fusion of styles, but from a very sophisticated point of view.

They’ll be playing at the festival on Sunday at the Chase Main Stage, featuring four of our wonderful Wayne State jazz students front and center: Trunino Lowe, Jeff Trent, Louis Jones III and Jonathon Muir-Cotton.

What’s really wonderful about that is that band has been doing such great work, I brought them up with me to the Mackinac Policy Conference this year. When they performed up there, they got a lot of nice cred.



Q **Wayne State also has a stage at the festival. Is the Wayne State Stage a staple of the Jazz Festival?**

A It’s starting to become that. The last couple of years, Wayne State has actually sponsored the Pyramid Stage. There’s only four main stages at the festival, so it’s a unique thing. I’m a proponent of this because, again, the competition is fierce for that kind of recognition, and it should be Wayne State. This is Detroit so, all things being equal, it should be Wayne State University on that stage. Additionally, we have Wayne State students play at the festival every year with a major artist. This year they’re playing with Omar Sosa, who is a Cuban pianist who has a lot of Israeli and African influences in his music. He’ll be working with the students in the summer and then perform with them at the festival.

A neat program I started just this year is called the Detroit Resident Assemble. The idea is that a very high-profile artist works together on a regular basis — comes in to the city, puts on master classes, rehearsals and special programs — and then presents multiple programs at the Detroit Jazz Festival in different ways, from small groups up to full symphony orchestra.

Q **As president of the Detroit Jazz Festival Foundation and a professor at Wayne State, you have a unique chance to connect students to opportunities that they may not have received otherwise. How does that work?**

A It’s a great example, I think, of when a faculty member uses the fullness of their professional life — when it’s appropriate and right — to bring in Wayne State students and faculties into these opportunities. We have additional resources because it’s in collaboration. The end result, though, is that we’re providing opportunities for students that can easily lead to exposure to major artists.

This is sort of my general philosophy with everything, from when I brought [philanthropist and jazz fan] Gretchen Valade in. [Valade, a noted jazz aficionado, recently committed \$9.5 million to the jazz program, including \$2.5 million to create an additional performance space in the future Gretchen Valade Jazz Center at Wayne State University.] From that role, and my role in the music department and in the community, I’m looking for what different ways can we provide opportunities for our students. Then, I work to remove barriers so they can participate in those opportunities, which is the second step that is often neglected. Sometimes it’s [providing students with] transportation, sometimes it’s translating things into other languages. Whether it’s international stuff or whether it’s local community outreach, I want to get them involved as a full artist so they have a full life experience as an artist in Detroit.

So, they’re connected to the city, they’re connected to these other musicians and they get this unique opportunity to be heard. I think it’s in the best interest of all of us here at Wayne State to look for these possibilities, because of the shared resources presenting themselves. We can do much more that way than if we’re just trying to own the entire thing ourselves. I look at myself as a bridge to that and, of course, in my playing career. Whenever I can have a student involved in any level, I do it, and I have really found it to be a valuable asset.



Q **Many people know about the festival, the Jazz Foundation’s most publicized event, but what other community programs and initiatives does the Jazz Foundation orchestrate?**

A The Jazz Festival itself is the signature event of the foundation, but it is in fact a year-round entity. This way, it becomes valuable to the city and to institutions like Wayne State, particularly because of my bridge between the two institutions. Through the year-round activity that surrounds education — the preparation of new works, rehearsals and master classes that culminate with the festival — the Jazz Festival Foundation is committed to the Detroit region.

So, most of our educational initiatives are focused in Detroit. Much of our unique programming at the festival revolves around Detroit-area artists and the sensibilities of our city.

When we talk about the educational programs, what I have tried to do in my life here at Wayne State and throughout my entire career is to look for opportunities to use my credentials and professional opportunities to provide unique opportunities for students and faculty that might be able to get them involved when they first come to the city.

So, there are programs year-round. There’s one called The New Infusion program that I started in 2011. It focuses on Detroit Public Schools. We work through the fine arts with the director of fine arts, Willie McAllister. We have up to seven schools a year, mostly high schools, sometimes a couple of middle schools. I have an Artist of Note from Detroit, several of whom have been members of our faculty. They are assigned to a school like Cass, King, DSA, Duke Ellington, Renaissance, etc., and they go there twice a week. They teach jazz to the students and work with the jazz band instructor at those schools to help rebuild some of that structure that has been challenged in the last couple of decades. We get some Wayne State connectivity. We give a student here an opportunity to work directly with a major artist in a school setting, which hopefully opens the mind to creativity and educational opportunities. Also, it reminds us all that we all have to eventually become mentors in all that we do.

Q **Do any of these programs offer high school students the opportunity to perform at the professional level or work with professional artists? Perhaps at the Jazz Festival or other events held by the Jazz Foundation?**

A The J.C. Heard Jazz Week program! It is also for high school students, and is something I started 11 years ago. My initial design was that up to about 40 students can audition into the program. No one can pay, and no one has to pay. It’s all based on talent. You get in on an audition. You have one week of intensive study — all day, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. — with jam sessions and concerts with national artists in the evening. Our faculty teaches, along with students that serve as mentors in the program. The students study small group, they study big band and they study theory.

Every year for the last five years I've brought Shannon Powell, one of the great drummers from New Orleans, to teach the New Orleans tradition and the history of the New Orleans bands. He teaches students that end up forming what we call Dr. Valade's Brass Band, after Mrs. Valade's honorary doctorate from Wayne State.

Dr. Valade's Brass Band opens the Jazz Festival every year and includes all of the participating students playing traditional New Orleans music under the guidance of Mr. Powell. Then we also pick an all-star group each year and they are presented at the festival, presented on the Wayne State Pyramid Stage.

Q How instrumental have Detroit and Wayne State been in the evolution of jazz?

A In modern times, we are known for techno or Motown music, but jazz is in the DNA of Detroiters. Detroit can brag about a very unique relationship with jazz. And the two shape each other. Many of the great Detroit jazz artists, many from Wayne State, went on to establish the 1950s and '60s vocabulary that became modern jazz vocabulary.

It's always important to note that, when we talk about those who are going to Wayne State and those who have gone here, we're talking about Joe Henderson, Curtis Fuller, Pepper Adams, Kenny Burrell, Yusef Lateef. They were all students here at Wayne State. In fact, jazz trombone legend Curtis Fuller just moved back to town, and we've been doing some musical things for him and celebrating him. He's the Legacy Artist at the Jazz Festival this year. Curtis Fuller was a student here at Wayne, and his roommate was [saxophonist] Joe Henderson. Want to talk about a powerhouse moment?

So, Wayne State has a lot to celebrate with its connection to Detroit and that jazz legacy. And we should not overlook that because it gives a certain framework to what we do here and our connectivity to the urban sensibilities and the music of this environment that reflect the culture at large. 



Cuello: continued from page 4

many in China. Meanwhile, in many African cultures, female images abound, used commonly to represent fertility. He nodded toward a piece of Haitian artwork that sits next to his desk, a wooden statue depicting one man smoking a pipe and another holding a long pole. The pipe, Cuello noted, symbolizes a spiritual commune with the gods, while the pole represents fecundity.

Although many of the works could conceivably be used for rituals or ceremonies, Cuello is much more concerned with a piece's symbolism than its ceremonial function.

"The reason I collect this art is because it reflects our humanity," said Cuello. "We all have multiple identities, so your ethnic identity should not be in conflict with your American identity or your human identity." 

CHAMPS: continued from page 13

is looking to help the university create pathways for a broad diversity of students, beyond even just foster care youth.

"We're looking at research into a functioning model for how to serve anybody who wants to come to this university and at how to support their success," said Wineman. "It could take a long time to happen, but for us, that's really big."

Meanwhile, as CHAMPS continues to see positive outcomes, it's earned broader support from the university community.

"Wayne State University's School of Social Work and the Corporate and Foundations Relations department meet with our staff regularly to strategize and take advantage of any funding opportunities that are available and aligned with our mission," Buford said. "The administration and staff at the School of Social Work have been a tremendous support in ensuring that we have what we need for day-to-day operations. And the Office of the Provost has been integral in offering retention support for our older students. Without the support of the Associate Provost's office, many of our students would not be able to continue or to be as successful as they are."

Buford and Wineman pointed out that, while other universities may have programs for foster care youth, few integrate those services into the overall college experience. In that regard, Wayne State — and CHAMPS — stands out.

"My advice for foster care students who want to attend college is to make sure you are informed," said Buford. "Although there are plenty of resources for foster youth for post-secondary education, it is not free. The cost can be minimal but ask all of those questions before selecting a school."

"Wayne State is a great option because of campus support programs such as ours. I provide presentations for students, workers and guardians so they can get a personalized feel for what our program and Wayne have to offer. So many students have changed their outlook because of the experience. If the university as a whole does not meet the student's needs then they are less likely to be successful — and that's the complete opposite that anyone should want for our future leaders. We want our students and graduates to be Warrior Strong."

And for many of those successful Wayne State students who've teetered between triumph and trauma, for young people like Markita Terry and many others, CHAMPS has often provided the winning edge. 

BY THE NUMBERS

A few fast facts illustrating Wayne State's community involvement

100

The approximate number of student advocates who, each year as part of the WSU School of Medicine's Medical Political Action and Public Health Leadership program (MPAC), educate state legislators about health care issues affecting vulnerable communities.

5,000

The average number of tutoring hours provided each year by Irvin D. Reid Honors College students through the Detroit Fellows Tutoring Project.

34,000

The total number of community service hours volunteered by first- and second-year Wayne State medical students in a single academic year.

776

The number of homeless and service-resistant individuals who engaged with Wayne State through the student-run Street Medicine Detroit program.



4,206

The total number of students participating in the C2 Pipeline program overseen by the WSU College of Nursing.

60

The percentage by which major crime in Midtown dropped last year, according to the Wayne State University Police Department.

5,560

The number of patients in a landmark university study of African American cancer survivors — the largest such study in the nation — that is designed to better understand major factors affecting cancer progression, recurrence, mortality and patient quality of life.

1,016

Total hours of pro bono legal services provided to the community by 22 students in Wayne Law's Student Voluntary Pro Bono Program between the 2017 summer semester and May 2018.



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