

Informational Report

ACADEMIC AFFAIRS

Wayne State will implement a new course scheduling matrix in fall 2017 designed to improve graduation and retention rates while making best use of classroom space on campus. Classes will begin on the hour and half hour and will run for 50 instructional minutes per hour instead of the current 55 minutes. “The driving principle behind the new matrix is that it be student-centered,” said Margaret E. Winters, provost and senior vice president for Academic Affairs. “By offering classes when students want to take them, we hope to reduce the time it takes them to earn a degree, and improve our four-year and six-year graduation rates. She added, “If you can schedule classes better, you are going to progress more quickly.” The matrix is designed to better utilize WSU’s 200 general purpose classrooms which now can be scheduled back-to-back.

Wayne State has experienced significant progress in undergraduate student retention and graduation rates according to Monica Brockmeyer, associate provost for student success, who reported in May that the university is continuing to invest in student success. WSU’s six-year graduation rate has risen from 26 percent for students entering school in 2005 to 35 percent for students entering school in 2009. “Increasing 9 percent in four years is a really good trend that we hope to continue,” said Brockmeyer. “We have a long way to go, but these numbers indicate that with a sustained effort we can, and will, make great strides.” She also reported that WSU was in the top 5 percent of public institutions nationally for its graduation rate increase.

SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

Eranda Nikolla, assistant professor of chemical engineering and materials science, is one of 13 scholars from across the country to receive a 2016 Camille Dreyfus Teacher-Scholar award from the Camille and Henry Dreyfus Foundation, Inc. Nikolla received the award, which provides an unrestricted research grant of \$75,000, for her research project, “Oxidative Coupling of Methane using Layered, Nickelate Oxide Catalysts.” The award supports the research and teaching careers of talented young faculty in the chemical sciences. Criteria for selection include an independent body of scholarship attained in the early years of a candidate’s appointment and a demonstrated commitment to education, signaling the promise of continuing outstanding contributions to both research and teaching.

The School of Social Work received a \$500,000 gift to create a new scholarship for high-achieving students experiencing financial hardship. The donation is the largest gift from an alumnus in the school’s history. Betty Appich, who received a bachelor’s of Social Work from Wayne State in 1982 on a full scholarship, made the gift with her husband, Horst Appich. The scholarship will be available to any social work student (B.S.W., M.S.W., or Ph.D.) with a 3.0 GPA or higher who

demonstrates financial need. Betty, who went on to earn a Master of Social Work from the University of Michigan, worked with troubled families at Brightmoor Community Center and Northwest Guidance Clinic before finishing her career at Walter P. Reuther Psychiatric Hospital, where she helped implement innovative models for group and family practice.

FACULTY

It was a gloomy, rainy day when Ambika Mathur walked by the loading dock behind a research building a few years ago. Maybe it was the cloning and scientific fraud cases making headlines, or her love of mystery and suspense novels, but the thought occurred to the professor of pediatrics and dean of the Graduate School about how nefarious scientists could get away with terrible things if left unchecked. A few years and 225-pages later, Mathur's medical mystery, *Transplant*, was released in May by Black Rose Writing. "It was a fun process, but it's scary that it'll be published and out there for people to read the machinations of my imagination," said Mathur. "They say a book has a life of its own and it does. As I was writing it changed directions and evolved on its own."

STUDENTS

A Wayne State graduate student hopes he can help persuade people to grow their own food by showing that farming is an economically viable occupation which also provides a healthier lifestyle. Jared Talaga, a graduate student studying urban planning, works with Growing Hope, an agricultural focused nonprofit in Ypsilanti to assess their local food system through the use of data collection and assessment. In high school, Talaga had no idea he would gain interest in urban agriculture. Instead, he spent his time skiing, skateboarding and surfing with plans to pursue a career in architecture. After a skiing accident left him paralyzed, he yearned for a new way to spend time outdoors. When he took a class in urban planning that required him to work on a farm in Lansing, he found his new outlet.

Tech-savvy students from high schools and universities across metro Detroit and Windsor convened on the Wayne State University campus in late May for a 24-hour hackathon hosted by WSU's Blackstone LaunchPad student entrepreneurship center and the College of Engineering. During 24 hours, students wrote web-based software, created mobile apps or designed computer programs which addressed a need or innovation of their choice. HackWSU is the official pre-launch event for Detroit Startup Week, held May 23 through 27. The event was open to Detroit-area college (undergraduate and graduate) and high school students, who will worked together in teams to compete, problem-solve and learn more about the craft of software development.