

Graduate Student Celebration

December 6, 2019

Hager-Lubbers Exhibition Hall
Charles W. Loosemore Auditorium

Presented by The Graduate School
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in collaboration with the
Graduate Student Association (GSA)

Program

5:00 PM: Refreshments and Social Hour (Hager-Lubbers Exhibition Hall)

6:00 PM: Awards Presentation Ceremony (Loosemore Auditorium)

Introduction:

Nate Swanson, GSA Communications Officer

Welcome:

Dr. Jeffrey A. Potteiger, Dean of The Graduate School

Graduate Dean's Citation Awards Recognition:

Dr. Jeffrey A. Potteiger, Dean of The Graduate School,
Dr. Mark R. Luttenton, Associate Dean of The Graduate School,
and Jennifer Palm, Assistant to The Graduate School

Graduate Student Association Faculty Awards Recognition:

Executive Board of the Graduate Student Association

*Event Photography and Cover Photos Courtesy of
Bird + Bird Photography*

*Award recipients, please note: group photos will be taken
immediately following the award ceremony.*

Welcome!

Dear friends and members of GVSU's graduate education community,

This evening we have the great pleasure to honor individuals who have distinguished themselves in graduate education at Grand Valley State University. The Dean's Citation Awards for Academic Excellence are given to recognize the accomplishments of our students and faculty and celebrate their achievements. First held in 2006, this proud Grand Valley State University tradition began thanks to the combined efforts of the University Graduate Council and the Graduate Program Directors. The Graduate School and the Graduate Student Association serve as co-hosts for this evening's activities.

The Dean's Citation Awards recognize excellence in academic performance in several categories. Graduate students are nominated for these awards by staff or faculty members, advisors, graduate program directors, and departmental chair or school directors. The Dean of the Graduate School reviews the nominees and approves the final selection. Each recipient receives a certificate of recognition and a graduate honors cord to be worn at commencement. Additionally, we honor several of our graduate faculty members who have distinguished themselves in mentoring and serving our students at Grand Valley. Their dedication helps to create a rich and vibrant learning environment.

Grand Valley State University is proud of the accomplishments of these graduate students and graduate faculty members. I wish each of our award winners a very successful future.

Congratulations to all!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jeffrey A. Potteiger". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "J" and "P".

Jeffrey A. Potteiger, Ph.D., FACSM
Dean of The Graduate School
Grand Valley State University

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**GRADUATE DEAN'S CITATIONS FOR
ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE
Fall 2019**

ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE IN THE DEGREE PROGRAM

Seidman College of Business

- ❖ Rosa A. Estrada, Business Administration

College of Community & Public Service

- ❖ Jenny M. Dondzila, Health Administration
- ❖ Mary Jo Zazueta, Philanthropy and Nonprofit Leadership
- ❖ Julia J. Sturvist, Public Administration

College of Education

- ❖ Ashley M. Golin, Instruction and Curriculum
- ❖ Megan Westlund, Literacy Studies
- ❖ David R. Moncada, School Counseling
- ❖ Kevin D. Polston, Specialist in Educational Leadership

Padnos College of Engineering & Computing

- ❖ Jason J. Hansen, Computer Information Systems
- ❖ Kritika Sijapati, Health Informatics and Bioinformatics

College of Health Professions

- ❖ Kyrsten K. Austin, Clinical Dietetics
- ❖ Amy M. Maurer, Occupational Therapy
- ❖ Nicole Vanderstelt, Physician Assistant Studies
- ❖ Aimee R. Moccia, Speech-Language Pathology

College of Liberal Arts & Sciences

- ❖ Alexandra H. Crum, Biology
- ❖ Rashika Shrestha, Cell and Molecular Biology

- ❖ Katherine J. Dreyer, Communications
- ❖ Amy L. Jacobs, English

OUTSTANDING MASTER'S THESIS

Padnos College of Engineering & Computing

- ❖ Mowgli J. Crosby, Engineering

College of Liberal Arts & Sciences

- ❖ Sarah K. Lamar, Biology
- ❖ Julie B. Oosterink, English

OUTSTANDING FINAL PROJECT

College of Education

- ❖ Heather L. Minnebo, Instruction and Curriculum
- ❖ Elisia M. Beutlich, Literacy Studies

Padnos College of Engineering & Computing

- ❖ Shahryar Oliai, Health Informatics and Bioinformatics

College of Health Professions

- ❖ Kelly A. Leibovitz, Clinical Dietetics
- ❖ Katie M. Aho, Zachary A. Kilpatrick, Britlyn Long, Katie L. Lozon, and Josephine M. Miller, Occupational Therapy

College of Liberal Arts & Sciences

- ❖ Subechhya Neupane, Cell and Molecular Biology
- ❖ Kayla E. Cupples, Communications

OUTSTANDING PUBLICATION

College of Liberal Arts and Sciences

- ❖ Katie L. Knapp, Biology

EXCELLENCE IN SERVICE TO THE COMMUNITY OR PROFESSION

Seidman College of Business

- ❖ James G. Lilly, Business Administration

College of Community & Public Service

- ❖ Calli A. Crow, Philanthropy and Nonprofit Leadership
- ❖ Costas V. Ciungan, Public Administration

College of Education

- ❖ Katherine E. Merriott, Literacy Studies

College of Health Professions

- ❖ Bettina L. Jones, Clinical Dietetics
- ❖ Irma Rekid, Occupational Therapy
- ❖ Danielle N. Cook, Physician Assistant Studies
- ❖ Chandler P. Fritz, Speech-Language Pathology

College of Liberal Arts & Sciences

- ❖ Carlos G. Calderon, Biology
- ❖ Jacob T. Koetsier, Cell and Molecular Biology

EXCELLENCE IN LEADERSHIP AND SERVICE TO GVSU

College of Community & Public Service

- ❖ Rutendo C. Goto, Health Administration

College of Health Professions

- ❖ Taylor L. Law, Clinical Dietetics
- ❖ Kristen M. Struble, Physician Assistant Studies
- ❖ Ann E. Jonker, Speech-Language Pathology

College of Liberal Arts & Sciences

- ❖ Austin C. VanderWeide, Cell and Molecular Biology

PROMOTING DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION AT GVSU

College of Health Professions

- ❖ Emily R. Smith, Physician Assistant Studies

EXCELLENCE IN SUSTAINABILITY

College of Health Professions

- ❖ Whitney M. Warner, Physician Assistant Studies

Kirkhof College of Nursing

- ❖ Elizabeth J. Scott, Nursing-Doctorate

MAGS DISTINGUISHED THESES NOMINEES

College of Liberal Arts and Sciences

- ❖ Joseph Altobelli, Biology
- ❖ Molly Stabler, English

*Congratulations to all of the Fall 2019
Graduate Dean's Citation Award Recipients!*

GRADUATE STUDENT ASSOCIATION FACULTY AWARDS
Fall 2019

FACULTY MENTOR AWARD

Seidman College of Business

- ❖ Star Swift, Department of Management

College of Health Professions

- ❖ Breanna Chycinski, Department of Occupational Science and Therapy
- ❖ Elizabeth MacQuillan, Department of Allied Health Sciences

College of Liberal Arts & Sciences

- ❖ Sheila Blackman, Department of Biology/Cell and Molecular Biology
- ❖ Melba Velez Ortiz, School of Communications

OUTSTANDING TEACHING AWARD

Seidman College of Business

- ❖ Michael DeWilde, Department of Management

College of Health Professions

- ❖ Kelly Machnik, Department of Occupational Science and Therapy

*Congratulations to the Fall 2019
Graduate Student Association Faculty Award Recipients!*

**GRADUATE DEAN'S CITATION FOR
ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE IN THE DEGREE PROGRAM
Fall 2019**

Seidman College of Business

❖ **Rosa A. Estrada, Master of Business Administration**

Rosa has greatly excelled in her career as well as in the classroom at GVSU. She obtained her BBA from GVSU in 2013 which highlights her “Laker for a Lifetime” mentality. Her drive for career advancement at Gentex has fueled her success in the MBA program. Rosa was promoted to Corporate Controller at her job in 2018, which was a position she never thought she could obtain. This exemplifies her humble, yet hardworking personality. She completed the MBA program with an exceptionally high GPA. Rosa is truly a role model for what real dedication and hard work can help someone accomplish. This is why she is an excellent candidate for this award.

College of Community & Public Service

❖ **Jenny M. Dondzila, Master of Health Administration**

Jenny has an extensive background in health care with MetroHealth-The University of Michigan Health, Molina Health, and Spectrum Health. The MHA faculty have observed her work, interactions and leadership within the classroom and in service within GVSU, which has been excellent. Within the classroom, she has been the leader of several class work groups assigned to review and recommend improvements to organizations in the region, including a GVSU clinic. She received extensive praise from the class members and her group members for her leadership, skills, collaboration, and knowledge.

❖ **Mary Jo Zazueta, Master of Philanthropy and Nonprofit Leadership**

Mary Jo was already an accomplished professional when she enrolled in the MPNL program to pursue her goal of working in a community-based organization. During her time at GVSU, she served as a graduate assistant, building a video database for nonprofit academics and students. She has also

been an active member of the Nonprofit Graduate Students Organization, serving as Vice-President/Risk Management & Compliance Officer. She recently joined the team at SowHope as the Director of Development, a local nonprofit, where faculty know that she will have an immediate impact.

❖ **Julia J. Sturvist, Master of Public Administration**

The MPA program is pleased to recognize the accomplishments of Julia. She is a very talented student, an outstanding writer and researcher, and very dedicated to her coursework. She has a bright and curious intellect, is highly participatory in her classes, and her assignments and projects are of the highest quality. In addition, she has been active in the ICMA student organization and is a worthy recipient of this award. She has been able to integrate her internship experiences within the classroom setting, is always well prepared, and is poised to become a leader in local government.

College of Education

❖ **Ashley M. Golin, Master of Education in Instruction and Curriculum-Early Childhood Education**

Ashley has shown excellence in both her academics and her final project; she ranks in the top one percent of students and has consistently acted professionally. Through observations of her teaching, it is apparent that Ashley can take what she learns in her coursework and translate this into effective practices in a classroom setting. She has also demonstrated the ability to create and maintain a positive learning environment as well as work effectively with other adults supporting students in the classroom. Through interactions with Ashley, it is clear that she is very well organized, enthusiastic, and is committed to providing all students with an equitable educational experience. Ashley possesses all of the skills, knowledge, practices, and dispositions of an outstanding master's candidate and teacher.

❖ **Megan Westlund, Master of Education in Literacy Studies-Reading**

Megan has demonstrated academic excellence by maintaining a high GPA. Beyond grades, Megan has performed in outstanding ways within her coursework. Her thoughtful and conscientious persona has led her to create meaningful experiences for teachers and students, growing them as

professionals in the teaching field. What impressed faculty most is her ability to welcome alternate perspectives and grow herself to become a gifted literacy coach. Faculty have looked to Megan as a leader in the courses, and they see her as an emerging leader in the field. Megan is a talented woman—a true asset to the field. Megan’s dedication to the education of children and growth of teachers is obvious, as well as her commitment to her own growth and learning.

❖ **David R. Moncada, Master of Education in School Counseling**

David has excelled in all aspects of his graduate student experience. The journey to this degree has been one filled with life changes, triumphs, and tribulations. David puts the characteristics of perseverance and grit into a human form. David tirelessly advocates for students and works to help his colleagues become more culturally competent to address the needs of students of color. David also has demonstrated how he puts the immediate needs of students at the forefront of his practice, be it a crying student in the cafeteria, or a fist bump with a student who wanted to make sure he had David’s name correct. David is the type of school counselor who will change the lives of students.

❖ **Kevin D. Polston, Education Specialist in Educational Leadership**

While completing his Educational Specialist Degree in Educational Leadership, Kevin has proven to be an excellent student. Kevin also serves as the Superintendent of Godfrey Lee Public Schools. Entering his third year at Godfrey Lee, Kevin has been a highly visible leader in that district and community. He prides himself on extensive visibility and approachability by showing up to countless events throughout the district. Additionally, he has connected with the authors of *Becoming Brilliant: What Science Tells Us About Raising Successful Children* (Hirsh-Pasek, Golinkoff, 2016) in order to integrate 21st century skills of collaboration, communication, content, critical thinking, creative innovation and confidence into the instructional practices of the district.

Padnos College of Engineering & Computing

❖ **Jason J. Hansen, Master of Science in Computer Information Systems**

Jason earned his Bachelor's degree in Chemical Engineering from Michigan Technological University. He is now finishing his master's thesis this semester, graduating with a near perfect GPA. The faculty note Jason always participated, asked thought provoking questions, challenged what was being discussed in appropriate language, and is generally a very well-rounded student. During his time as a graduate student, Jason also published the article "Challenges in the elicitation and determination of precise requirements from animal stakeholders" for *Requirements Engineering Magazine*. Jason is currently a Junior Enterprise Analyst for Grand Rapids Community College.

❖ **Kritika Sijapati, Master of Science in Health Informatics and Bioinformatics**

Kritika is consistently one of the brightest and most ambitious students in class. Her work ethic is notable and obvious in not only her class work, but through research as well. She always completed assignments on time and exceeded expectations. Her organizational skills and ability to follow specific directions made her an excellent student overall. With one specific project from her coursework, she was to work with someone in a field she had no expertise in and create a group project. The goal was for students to better understand how to collaborate with professions completely different from their own. Kritika did exceptional work and had no problem mastering this assignment. Kritika's desire to be successful was evident through her ambition throughout her program and makes her deserving of this award.

College of Health Professions

❖ **Kyrsten K. Austin, Clinical Dietetics**

Kyrsten has been exceptionally successful in the Clinical Dietetics program at GVSU. She sets the expectations high by maintaining a 4.0 GPA and being the only student to do so in her program. She exhibits a positive attitude and a strong work ethic to her fellow students. Her application of dietetic coursework into practice has been highly noted by her clinical site preceptors.

Kyrsten's project centered around maternal-child nutrition in which she collected data from new mothers to gain insight on the intake of choline-containing supplements and foods during pregnancy. Her hard work and dedication were obvious, yet again, through the development of her project. Kyrsten's devotion to be successful academically in her program makes her an ideal recipient for this award.

❖ **Amy M. Maurer, Master of Science in Occupational Therapy**

Amy has consistently demonstrated academic excellence throughout her graduate education. Over the past 18 months, Amy has maintained a 4.0 GPA while completing rigorous and challenging coursework within the occupational therapy program. She is also a member of Pi Theta Epsilon (PTE), which is a specialized honor society for occupational therapy students. In order to qualify for PTE, students must be in the top 35% of their class. Amy is a student of integrity and possesses an outstanding work ethic. The quality of her work is consistently above that of her peers. In general, the quality of her work and dedication to student driven learning is on par for a doctoral student.

❖ **Nicole Vanderstelt, Physician Assistant Studies**

Nicole exemplified excellence during her time in the Physician Assistant Studies program in didactic coursework and during clinical rotations, recognizing the importance of understanding both the science and the art of medicine. She was active in the PA student society and was supportive of her peers at every stage of the program, all while maintaining an exceptionally high GPA. She epitomizes professionalism and a commitment to learning throughout her academic career. Nicole exemplifies the qualities and excellence required to be a great Physician Assistant. The PAS faculty are honored to recognize Nicole for this award.

❖ **Aimee R. Moccia, Speech-Language Pathology**

Aimee has earned a very high GPA in the master's program. She has continuously impressed her professors and clinical preceptors with her knowledge and clinical skills. Her clinical practicum sites include Ottawa Area Intermediate School District's Early On program, Leaps and Bounds Therapy Services, Ken-O-Sha Elementary School, and Metron of Forest Hills.

She has also participated in an Interprofessional Education Pediatric Simulation. All of the faculty in the Speech-Language Pathology program will miss her and they look forward to hearing about her future accomplishments.

College of Liberal Arts & Sciences

❖ **Alexandra H. Crum, Master of Science in Biology**

Alex is an outstanding graduate student who did exceptional work in her courses and research. She is enthusiastic and eager in all aspects of her graduate experience which drove her to exhibit a strong work ethic. Her research project was creative, exceptionally intellectual, and unanimously supported by committee members. Not only did she excel in research, but Alex also obtained a high GPA throughout her program. She went above and beyond on class projects simply because she enjoyed doing her best. Alex was accepted into all three of the Ph.D. programs to which she applied and is currently obtaining her degree at the University of Minnesota.

❖ **Rashika Shrestha, Master of Science in Cell and Molecular Biology**

During her studies at Grand Valley State University, Rashika has maintained a busy research schedule in addition to an excellent academic record. She completed two internships: one at the Van Andel Research Institute where she worked with Dr. Tao Yang to study skeletal disease such as osteoporosis; and one at Zoetis, an animal health pharmaceutical company, where she worked on a project to develop a novel organ culture model which could be used to test different antibodies and drugs. She recently joined the Ocular Genomic Institute at Harvard University working on projects developing therapies for inherited retinal diseases such as Usher's syndrome and Retinitis pigmentosa using the CRISPR system.

❖ **Katherine J. Dreyer, Master of Science in Communications**

Katherine exhibits a level of mastery of subject matter that is rare among graduate students nationally. Her academic performance has been superlative and, in every case, far exceeding the expectations of the program. Not only does Katherine possess a remarkable reading knowledge relevant to the field of communication, but she skillfully and successfully applies

conceptual principals to practical communication problem-solving situations. Katherine's pursuit of graduate education speaks to the heart of her character, that of an individual who is deeply passionate about education and committed to learning. The faculty in the School of Communications are confident that she will continue to be a major contributor in the field of communication throughout her career

❖ **Amy L. Jacobs, Master of Arts in English**

Over the course of her graduate program, Amy proved to be an exceptionally thoughtful, conscientious student. During class discussions, Amy was an active leader, regularly adding sharp insights and helping her peers to clarify their own interpretations of literary texts. A voracious reader, Amy was similarly adept at making connections among disparate branches of learning. In her thesis, "We Are the Walking Dead": Morality in Robert Kirkman's Comics Series, Amy focused on another unlikely pairing: the comics genre and moral theory. Via exploration of the history and reception of graphic novels, Amy concludes that "Kirkman's zombie narrative exhibits morality in multi-layered and complex ways" and thus provides for 21st-century audiences "lasting and significant lessons about how to best live." With her passion for literature, her creativity, and her sheer tenacity, Amy has excelled in her graduate program.

**GRADUATE DEAN'S CITATIONS FOR
OUTSTANDING MASTER'S THESIS
Fall 2019**

Padnos College of Engineering & Computing

❖ **Mowgli J. Crosby, Master of Science in Engineering**

- **Thesis Title:** A CFD Study on the Performance of High Speed Planing Hulls
- **Thesis Committee:** Dr. Wael Mokhtar (Chair) – School of Engineering, Dr. Shirley Fleischmann – School of Engineering, Dr. Wendy Reffeor – School of Engineering

Mowgli is a passionate individual with the drive to succeed. His thesis exemplifies his desire to do well in his profession. He used a Computational Fluid Dynamics simulation to characterize the effect of geometry in high speed planing hulls. He found that adding spray rails to the bottom of the hull significantly increased the sinkage, while moving the location of the spray rails away from the center of the hull increased total drag. During the duration of his research, Mowgli has shown his intellectual capability to attack a problem and find the solution with steadfastness. This is why Mowgli is the ideal recipient for this award.

ABSTRACT

Most high speed water craft are able to achieve high speeds through the use of a planing hull. Planing hulls use hydrodynamic forces to lift a portion of the vessel out of the water, reducing drag, and allowing for greater speeds. Determining the flow around such vessels is traditionally achieved using a scale model in a tow tank. The purpose of this study was to analyze the performance of a high speed planing hull determine the effects of several geometric features using computational fluid dynamics rather than traditional experimentation. The goal was to determine the best configuration to ensure the lowest resistance on the hull at high speed. This was achieved using STAR CCM+ to solve a three dimensional computational analysis for the multiphase flow and dynamic motion of a planing hull. An initial simulation was created for a 25 ft base hull and validated using experimental data from a towing tank. After developing an accurate simulation for a single hull, the hull geometry was modified to test for the effects of the keel line geometry, deadrise angle, and spray rail location. *Continued on the following page.*

A full factorial DOE analysis was performed to examine the effects of the tested geometric features and the interactions between them. The results from this analysis showed that the tested features had a significant effect on the performance of the hull. Increasing the deadrise angle resulted in a decrease in sinkage, an increase in trim angle, and an increase in the total drag on the hull. Raising the keel line height caused a decrease in trim angle and sinkage, while increasing the total drag. These two terms had a significant interaction. As one increased, the relative effect of changing the other also increased for total drag. The final geometric feature tested was the spray rails. Adding spray rails to the bottom of the hull significantly increased the sinkage. Moving the location of the spray rails away from the center of the hull increased the total drag. This showed that the total drag could be significantly reduced by altering these geometric features of the hull.

College of Liberal Arts & Sciences

❖ **Sarah K. Lamar, Master of Science in Biology**

- **Thesis Title:** Biological Invasions on a Large Scale: Investigating the Spread of Baby's Breath (*Gypsophila paniculata*) Across North America
- **Thesis Committee:** Dr. Charlyn Partridge (Chair) – Department of Biology/Annis Water Resources Institute, Dr. Jennifer Moore – Department of Biology, Dr. Timothy Evans – Department of Biology

Sarah's contributions to her discipline have landed her much success thus far in her college career. She was nominated and awarded recognition as the outstanding Biology Graduate Student. Sarah has done extensive work on her master's thesis, where she is combining germination, growth, genetics, herbarium information, and transcriptome analysis to examine how invasive baby's breath populations found in the coastal sand dune environments in Michigan differ from populations found along the eastern Cascade Mountains in Washington. Her research will greatly improve the understanding of the mechanisms that lead to successful plant invasions across various ecosystems.

Sarah's abstract appears on the next page.

ABSTRACT

Invasive species are a serious threat to biodiversity worldwide. While the impacts of invasive species increase annually, many gaps in our understanding of how these species invade, adapt, and thrive in the novel ecosystems into which they are introduced remain. This thesis aimed to add to our knowledge of invasion science, using the perennial forb *Gypsophila paniculata* as a study system. *Gypsophila paniculata* is a shrub native to the Eurasian steppe that was introduced into North America in the late 1800's. After introduction, *G. paniculata* quickly spread and now occupies diverse ecosystems across N. America. In chapter II of this thesis, I assessed relationships among *G. paniculata* growing in seven locations across its introduced range and current invasion status using historical herbarium records. Genetic relationships were analyzed using microsatellite analyses, which suggested the presence of two genetic clusters; when herbarium records were grouped according to these clusters, two distinct expansion phases became visible, suggesting the presence of at least two invasion events. In chapter III, I analyzed two populations of *G. paniculata* growing in distinct environments (Chelan, Washington and Petoskey, Michigan) for phenotypic and gene expression differences that may confer potential adaptation to unique environmental stressors. Results revealed that seeds collected from Washington germinated significantly quicker than seeds collected in Michigan (pairwise log-rank test, $p < 0.0001$). When grown in a common garden, seeds collected in Washington had higher levels of emergence (two-sided proportion test, $p=0.00018$). No significant differences in tissue allocation between populations were observed (ANOVA, $p = 0.0645$); however, family effects were visible (ANOVA, $p=0.0301$), though whether they are a function of maternal investment or evidence of genetic differences is unclear. Finally, results of RNA-seq transcriptome analyses revealed 1,149 genes differentially expressed among all tissue types (root, stem, and leaf); when considered according to tissue type and growing location, overrepresentations of genes related to circadian rhythm, stress responses, and nutrient deprivation were observed among the genes that were differentially expressed. These results not only add to our understanding of the North American invasion of *Gypsophila paniculata*, but also increase our understanding of how invasive species may be able to cope with the novel environments they encounter in their introduced range.

❖ **Julie B. Oosterink, Master of Arts in English**

- **Thesis Title:** “Arriving at Your Own Door”: Transnational Identity Formation in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s *Americanah*
- **Thesis Committee:** Dr. Avis Hewitt (Chair) – Department of English, Dr. Robert Rozema – Department of English, Dr. Douglas Montagna – Department of History

Julie’s one-hundred-page study of Adichie’s globally-savvy protagonist, Ifemelu, is a formidable contribution to immigration literature. Her extensive research, close reading, and paradigmatic framing of the text as it unfolds combine to create a reading of the novel that is intensely focused not only on identity formation but also subject performativity and illuminates the evolution that is possible for a courageous and candid seeker of an honest sense of self. Julie’s work demonstrates that Ife emerges as both richly cosmopolitan and intensely local (returning to Nigeria after her American years) at the same time, and that sometimes little is lost while much is gained as citizens of the 21st century make multiple global moves. Julie’s meticulous explicating of the novel negotiates the intersection of themes familiar to today’s generation: the cultural complexities of studying abroad, of working at both insufferable employment and in privileged positions, and of integrating the power of scholarship with that of relationships and the offer of expanding personhood that both powers carry.

ABSTRACT

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s *Americanah* (2013) guides readers through the internal questions and external pressures that contribute to identity formation of her transnational characters. This paper examines the specific ways in which Adichie’s protagonist, Ifemelu, engages with both self-discovery and self-fashioning in order to shape the narrative of her past and make a plan for her future. Kwame Anthony Appiah’s *The Ethics of Identity* offers a philosophical framework to consider the many components of identity formation and the ways in which individuals form personal and collective identities. Adichie uniquely addresses personal and collective identities through the transnational experiences of her characters. Her protagonist, Ifemelu, experiences Homi K. Bhabha’s concept of unhomeliness and seeks belonging as she moves from Nigeria to the United States. More importantly, once she finds ways to belong in the United States, she makes the decision to return to Nigeria. *Continued on the following page.*

Adichie presents Ifemelu's story through her braided memories by jumping back and forth between varied experiences of the past and the present. Through Ifemelu's reflection on her actions to find belonging and fashion her identity in the United States, she crafts a narrative of her experience which helps justify and empower her in the decision to return to Nigeria. Adichie's characters immerse themselves in literature and the stories around them. Ifemelu, especially, shapes her understanding of the world through the books she reads. She seeks stories which help her imagine her life as a narrative toward self-actualization.

Ifemelu discovers that the "single story" for 21st century immigrants in the United States is one of suppressing alterity in order to assimilate. When she first arrives in America, she follows the advice of fellow African immigrants and begins to hide her identity by imitating an American accent and relaxing her hair. She even uses another woman's name in order to search for a job while she does not have a green card. However, Ifemelu finds this existence unfulfilling and makes the deliberate decision to stop conforming to the expectations placed on her by others. She stops speaking with an American accent and cuts her hair. Rather than feeling more isolated, Ifemelu finds that embracing her alterity allows her to connect to an online African hair movement. She writes a blog in America and gains financial stability and social connections. By expressing herself through writing, Ifemelu further recognizes how she can delineate her worldview and even influence those around her.

It is when Ifemelu has the option of staying in America, that she realizes her desire to return to Nigeria. The "single story" of immigration celebrates finding a home in the host country, but Adichie presents a different story through Ifemelu. Adichie shows Ifemelu's ability to embrace the parts of her identity like her name and accent that make her unique, while she seeks new stories to guide her self-fashioning. As a transnational migrant, Ifemelu views the world from the threshold. She exists in the liminal space between nations, cultures, and languages. This allows her to imagine many possibilities of her life, choose the life she wants, and inspire others to do likewise.

**GRADUATE DEAN'S CITATION FOR
OUTSTANDING FINAL PROJECT
Fall 2019**

College of Education

- ❖ **Heather L. Minnebo, Master of Education in Instruction and Curriculum**
 - **Project Title:** The Benefits of Studio Thinking for Middle School Students: Beyond the Visual Arts Classroom
 - **Project Advisor:** Dr. Nagnon Diarrassouba – College of Education

Heather is very creative and has developed a well-written project based on research evidence drawn from two fields (business and education). She argues that if secondary school teachers want to be effective in their profession and produce long lasting impacts on their student's learning, they need not only base practice on high leverage pedagogical and learning methods, but also, they must show creativity. Thus, her project builds on the development of creativity, communication, and critical thinking skills proven to be effective by experts in business and educational fields. She offers a potential solution to address the needs of our current education system, and equip students with many of the skills, habits and characteristics needed for success in an increasingly global society.

- ❖ **Elisia M. Beutlich, Master of Education in Literary Studies-TESOL**
 - **Project Title:** Alleviating Foreign and Second Language Learning Anxiety by Employing Stage Right Reduction Techniques
 - **Project Advisor:** Dr. Nagnon Diarrassouba – College of Education

Elisia has developed an innovative approach to reduce stress and anxiety experienced in the learning of foreign and second language settings through techniques borrowed from the performing arts. Her project has the potential to be highly effective among professionals and could develop language proficiency in students. Elisia proposes teaching and learning strategies to motivate language students to overcome anxiety-related emotions to become proficient users of the foreign language. Her project is well-written and has the ability to reduce language barriers. Because of her creative thinking and passion to make a difference in foreign language speakers, Elisia is an excellent recipient for this award.

Padnos College of Engineering & Computing

- ❖ **Shahryar Oliai, Master of Science in Health Informatics and Bioinformatics**
 - **Project Title:** Predictive analytics in identifying advanced heart failure patients
 - **Project Advisor:** Dr. Guenter Tusch – School of Computing and Information Systems

Shahryar is a student who exceeds expectations and works his hardest in all areas of his graduate work. For his capstone project, he conducted a quality study on Predictive Analytics with Stage D Heart Failure Populations at Spectrum Health. He identified partners for his research, developed the project with the clinicians, maneuvered the necessary IRB requirements, and identified a dataset to conduct the study. His positive attitude, curiosity, and interest in new research is remarkable. Because of Shahryar's project report, academic record, ambition, and determination, he would be an exceptional candidate for this award.

College of Health Professions

- ❖ **Kelly A. Leibovitz, Master of Science in Clinical Dietetics**
 - **Project Title:** Inflammatory Bowel Disease (IBD) and its Impact on Quality of Life
 - **Project Advisor:** Jennifer Ford – Department of Allied Health Sciences

Kelly has exemplified extreme passion for the field of dietetics through her knowledge of nutrition, her ability to balance graduate-level coursework with a demanding supervised practice schedule, and through her master's project. She gathered original data, completed data analysis, formulated a conclusion, and provided recommendations for further research implications. Her knowledge in nutrition and research provides an essential contribution to the field of dietetics and gastrointestinal disease through her exploration of Inflammatory Bowel Disease and its Impact on Quality of Life. Kelly remained on top of deadlines and made excellent use of the writing center to create an exceptional project. Kelly's passion, preparation and strive to succeed makes her an ideal recipient for this reward.

The Department of Occupational Science and Therapy has selected a group for this semester's Outstanding Final Project Award.

- ❖ **Katie M. Aho, Zachary A. Kilpatrick, Britlyn Long, Katie L. Lozon, Josephine M. Miller, Master of Science in Occupational Therapy**
 - **Project Title:** Postoperative Outcomes of the Tenotomy or TightRope Procedure for Carpometacarpal Joint Osteoarthritis
 - **Project Advisor:** Dr. Jeanine Beasley – Department of Occupational Science and Therapy.

In the Occupational Therapy program, final projects are completed as a group. This group's completed project demonstrated excellence from its conception, has received national recognition for merit, provides significant results, promotes the relationship with Orthopaedic Associates of Michigan, and is outstanding in its presentation including written and oral forms. This project was a collaboration with Orthopaedic Associates of Michigan and GVSU. Osteoarthritis (OA) of the carpometacarpal (CMC) joint is one of the most prevalent issues of the hand, resulting in significant functional ramifications in relation to pinch strength, mobility, and pain. In regards to merit, the group's poster has now been accepted at the national annual meeting of the American Occupational Therapy Association in April. In addition, the paper will be presented at the Philadelphia Hand Rehabilitation Meeting in March 2020 as an invited presentation.

College of Liberal & Arts and Sciences

- ❖ **Subechhya Neupane, Master of Science in Cell and Molecular Biology**
 - **Project Title:** Somatic gene editing to create mouse models of gynecologic cancer
 - **Project Advisor:** Dr. Ronald Chandler – Michigan State University

Subechhya's project was carried out in the Department of Obstetrics, Gynecology, and Reproductive Biology of Michigan State University's College of Human Medicine in Grand Rapids. Her research required skills she developed in her graduate courses as well as new ones she acquired in Dr. Chandler's lab. Her project uses a CRISPR/Cas9 gene editing approach to inactivate ARID1A, a highly mutated gene in endometrial cancer, in vivo in mice. The main goal of her project was to investigate if we can target the endometrial epithelium by this somatic gene editing method. She presented

her work at the Van Andel Research Institute scientific retreat at Crystal Mountain Resort in 2019 as well as the Professional Science Master's showcase in 2019.

❖ **Kayla E. Cupples, Master of Science in Communications**

- **Project Title:** Communication Plan for the Division of Student Affairs
Project Advisor: Dr. Alex Nesterenko – School of Communications

Kayla's final project is exemplary of what world-class communication professionals do best: problem-solve significant issues so that individuals and organizations may improve their communication effectiveness. Kayla's project is part of the strategic plan of Grand Valley State University's Division of Student Affairs. Its purpose is to develop a streamlined communication plan with the end goal of creating increased visibility for the division, as well as enhancing the division's brand. This is a complex, multi-step project that is sophisticated in its scope and application. Kayla is a highly capable professional who has the drive, determination, curiosity, and ambition that makes her successful in the communication profession. There is no doubt that Kayla will continue to be a major contributor in the field of communication.

**GRADUATE DEAN'S CITATION FOR
OUTSTANDING PUBLICATION
Fall 2019**

College of Liberal Arts & Sciences

❖ **Katie L. Knapp, Master of Science in Biology**

- **Publication Title:** Chronicles of Hypoxia in a Great Lakes estuary
- **Advisor:** Dr. Bopi Biddanda – Annis Water Resources Institute

Katie has been heavily involved in research throughout her time at GVSU. She is a co-author of the publication entitled "Chronicles of hypoxia: Time-series buoy observations reveal annually recurring seasonal basin-wide hypoxia in Muskegon Lake – A Great Lakes estuary" in which she was a key contributor. One of Katie's roles included analyses of the time-series data from a buoy located in Muskegon Lake that monitored a variety of environmental parameters over several years on a seasonal basis. This study was published in the Journal of Great Lakes Research in April 2018 and has been cited nine times thus far, which exemplifies the level of scholarly intellect that Katie possesses. She has also been the author on several education outreach publications related to scientific literacy. Katie's success with her recent publication in addition to her dedication to enhance her research skills make her a qualified candidate for this award.

Chronicles of Hypoxia in a Great Lakes estuary. J. Great Lakes Res. 44: 219-229 (2018).

The publication abstract appears on the follow page.

ABSTRACT

We chronicled the seasonally recurring hypolimnetic hypoxia in Muskegon Lake – a Great Lakes estuary over 3 years, and examined its causes and consequences. Muskegon Lake is a mesotrophic drowned river mouth that drains Michigan’s 2nd largest watershed into Lake Michigan. A buoy observatory tracked ecosystem changes in the Muskegon Lake Area of Concern (AOC), gathering vital time-series data on the lake’s water quality from early summer through late fall from 2011 to 2013 (www.gvsu.edu/buoy). Observatory-based measurements of dissolved oxygen (DO) tracked the gradual development, intensification and breakdown of hypoxia (mild hypoxia <4 mg DO/L, and severe hypoxia <2 mg DO/L) below the ~6 m thermocline in the lake, occurring in synchrony with changes in temperature and phytoplankton biomass in the water column during July-October. Time-series data suggest that proximal causes of the observed seasonal hypolimnetic DO dynamics are stratified summer water-column, reduced wind-driven mixing, longer summer residence time, episodic intrusions of cold DO-rich nearshore Lake Michigan water, nutrient run off from watershed, and phytoplankton blooms. Additional basin-wide water-column profiling (2011-2012) and ship-based seasonal surveys (2003-2013) confirmed that bottom water hypoxia is an annually recurring lake-wide condition. Volumetric hypoxic demand was high (0.07-0.15mg DO/Liter/day) and comparable to other temperate eutrophic lakes. Over 3 years of intense monitoring, ~9-24% of Muskegon Lake’s volume experienced hypoxia for ~29-85 days/year – with the potential for hypolimnetic habitat degradation and sediment phosphorus release leading to further eutrophication. Time-series observatories can provide penetrating insights into the inner workings of ecosystems and their external drivers.

**GRADUATE DEAN'S CITATION FOR EXCELLENCE IN SERVICE
TO THE COMMUNITY OR PROFESSION
Fall 2019**

Seidman College of Business

❖ **James G. Lilly, Master of Business Administration**

James has held multiple leadership roles that have made him an excellent candidate for this award. When he began his program at GVSU, he had a career in the area of banking serving as the Vice President of Commercial Lending at Macatawa Bank. He ran for public office in 2015, and in 2016 he was elected to the Michigan State House, 89th district. He was awarded the Legislator of the Year award from Michigan Municipal League, Michigan Soft Drink Association, and Michigan Restaurant and Lodging Association. His tenacity, hard work, and commitment to service and completion of his degree make him an exceptional recipient.

College of Community & Public Service

❖ **Calli A. Crow, Master of Philanthropy and Nonprofit Leadership**

Calli has showed an impressive record of volunteering during her time as graduate student. With a Certification of Volunteer Administration, Calli serves as the Volunteer Coordinator for the Kent District Library, where she put her newfound knowledge to work every day in service of the community. She is also a founding member of the library's Sustainability Workgroup. Calli is an active member of Grand Rapids' nonprofit community as well, serving as the Membership Chair for the Volunteer Management Association of West Michigan and on the board of the Greater Grand Rapids Bicycle Coalition. The faculty have no doubts she will continue to contribute to her community in significant and meaningful ways following graduation.

❖ **Costas V. Ciungan, Master of Public Administration**

Costas is an inquisitive public administration student and plays an integral role for student athletes at GVSU. In 2016, he ran a youth camp in Allendale to teach the sport of rowing to local youth. As a student athlete himself,

Costas has also served as an assistant coach for the men's rowing team. With the departure of John Bacheri, Costas stepped into the role of interim coach. Additionally, Costas has served as a web master for the GVSU Lanthorn during his time as an undergraduate student and was recently recognized as an Alumni Champion by the Laker Effect campaign. Costas's work as a legal assistant in the Allegan County Legal Assistance Center illustrates his commitment to community service, and faculty are proud to have such an exemplary student in their field.

College of Education

❖ **Katherine E. Merriott, Master of Education in Literacy Studies-TESOL**

Katherine is the perfect example of passion within her profession. She works in a high needs school district where she takes it upon herself to raise funds to pay for admission fees on a yearly basis to assist students who have a desire to attend college. Her actions have caused many students to become more interested in and apply for college. Furthermore, more students have attended college guided tours as a result of Katherine's efforts. She is also the Spanish advisor and middle school varsity cheerleading coach where she further dedicates her time for her students. Her impact has made a difference in so many students lives. Because Katherine serves in an underprivileged school district and acts to support students in various ways, she is an ideal candidate for this award.

College of Health Professions

❖ **Bettina L. Jones, Master of Science in Clinical Dietetics**

Bettina has shown exceptional commitment to service for her community and to the profession of dietetics through her wide range of involvement. She has participated in community service work for Flat River Outreach Ministries and Bowne Mennonite Church, where she utilized her knowledge of nutrition to provide services to the members of both communities. Bettina is also involved with the coordination of student enrichment seminars for the organizations. She has donated 60 volunteer hours this year in addition to her responsibilities completing the Clinical Dietetics program. Bettina's heart of service is exemplified in her everyday life and makes her an excellent recipient for this award.

❖ **Irma Rekić, Master of Science in Occupational Therapy**

Irma exemplifies the spirit of this award in that her service has benefited the community expanding the outreach of GVSU. Irma is a 4.0 student that manages to balance school, work, and family while completing her degree in Occupational Therapy. She is a leader in her cohort. In regards to Community service, she is the Vice President of the Grand Rapids Chapter of the Brain Injury Association. She is also bilingual in English and Bosnian. She has volunteered both at Mary Free Bed Rehabilitation hospital and Spectrum Health Butterworth here in Grand Rapids. Irma exemplifies the well-rounded characteristics of excellence in service both in the classroom and extracurricular activities.

❖ **Danielle N. Cook, Master of Physician Assistant Studies**

Danielle has demonstrated her passion for giving back to the community in a variety of ways. She was elected as the GVSU PAS Student Society's representative to the Michigan Academy of Physician Assistants (MAPA). In this role, she served as the liaison between her classmates and the Academy. She kept her classmates updated on the developments within the profession and coordinated student activities at the state professional conference. Danielle coordinated the 'quiz bowl' team and organized student fundraising for a women's and children's center. Her dedication to the profession extends beyond her commitments to MAPA. She was a guest speaker for the Grand Valley State University Pre-PA club where she discussed helpful strategies to apply to PA school. She also volunteered hundreds of hours as a medical assistant at the Oasis of Hope Center medical clinic in Grand Rapids.

❖ **Chandler P. Fritz, Master of Science in Speech-Language Pathology**

Chandler is an exceptional student and community member. She has been instrumental in organizing a group to facilitate improvement in working memory at the retirement community, Village of Heather Hills. Chandler has taken initiative to organize other students involved in facilitating the group and in providing education for the staff at the retirement community. The faculty appreciates Chandler's willingness to engage in service to the community, even as she is excelling in a demanding, accelerated master's program. The faculty are confident that she will continue to make a positive impact in her community after graduation.

College of Liberal Arts & Sciences

❖ **Carlos G. Calderon, Master of Science in Biology**

Carlos demonstrates devoted energy towards the Greater Grand Rapids environmental community and to its citizenship. His thesis project was community-based and has developed strong working relationships between several community organizations including the Lower Grand River Organization of Watersheds, Natural Resources Conservation Service, WMEAC, Boy Scouts of America, citizen scientists from various local groups including Friends of Indian Mill Creek, and students from West Catholic and Kenowa Hills High School and Frost Elementary. Carlos successfully created a regional environmental management plan in which he identified environmentally degraded areas within the Indian Mill Creek watershed with the help of these community groups. He hopes the results will guide future restoration of the degraded watershed. In addition to his project, he has continued to work at the GVMC and has expanded his leadership to other local watershed groups including Plaster Creek and Coldwater River.

❖ **Jacob T. Koetsier, Master of Cell and Molecular Biology**

Throughout his time at GVSU, Jake has aimed to further his education as well as create lasting relationships with his peers, his professors, and the members of his profession. Since 2017, Jake has served as the head coach for the Northpointe Christian High School (Grand Rapids) Science Olympiad team where he used his science, communication and teaching skills to good effect. In addition, Jake tutored senior students at City High School (Grand Rapids) in human anatomy, ecology, molecular biology, and genetics for their International Baccalaureate Exam. Jake currently works in the chemistry department at Amway and would like to utilize his newfound knowledge and skills in product development.

**GRADUATE DEAN'S CITATION FOR
EXCELLENCE IN LEADERSHIP AND SERVICE TO GVSU
Fall 2019**

College of Community & Public Service

❖ **Rutendo C. Goto, Master of Health Administration**

Rutendo is a student who goes beyond the classroom to contribute to the work of the student leadership groups and to the work of the MHA faculty. She has been active in the international student group for the College of Community & Public Service and with the Healthcare Professional Graduate Student Alliance, supporting their initiatives and taking on volunteer roles with them. She also sought out opportunities to assist faculty with their research and service activities. She volunteered to assist with the planning and evaluation of the annual Art & Science of Aging Conference. Her skills in data analysis and data management were also supportive of the work of another faculty member. This level of volunteerism is unique and much appreciated by those with whom she worked. In addition, she has been a member of several student teams working on class projects that served organizations in the greater Grand Rapids area, and her leadership and diligence have made a significant contribution to those endeavors.

College of Health Professions

❖ **Taylor L. Law, Master of Science in Clinical Dietetics**

Taylor has shown remarkable leadership capacity. She graduated from Michigan State University where she held several leadership positions in clubs that centered around student dietetics. During her first semester at GVSU, she approached faculty about starting a Registered Student Organization for Clinical Dietetics. In the past, faculty had encouraged students to do this, but Taylor took the initiative, put in the hard work, and created the RSO where she served as president. The Clinical Dietetics RSO serves as a networking tool for advocacy at GVSU. Fundraising and various volunteer experiences are also offered for students to enrich their dietetics involvement. Taylor has expressed extreme leadership and a passion to serve

the dietetic community through her involvement and dedication to enhance the Clinical Dietetic program.

❖ **Kristen M. Struble, Master of Physician Assistant Studies**

Kristen is a most deserving candidate for this award. She served as the Vice President of the GVSU PAS Student Society for GVSU at the Traverse City Campus. In this role, she represented the Traverse City Campus students and was instrumental in maintaining a strong organizational structure between the two sites. Additionally, Kristen frequently helped organize fundraising events for the Traverse City PAS students and attended numerous GVSU outreach programs and events to raise awareness of the PA profession and the PAS program at the Traverse City campus. Her passion for the PA profession and dedication to her patients make her a natural leader. The faculty are fortunate to have her represent the GVSU PAS program at the Traverse City Campus.

❖ **Ann E. Jonker, Master of Science in Speech-Language Pathology**

At Grand Valley State University, Ann has continuously impressed the faculty with her willingness to go “above and beyond.” She volunteers for every opportunity offered, including volunteering at department open houses. She has volunteered to work with a client via telepractice, under the supervision of a faculty member. She was accepted into a prestigious clinical placement, Camp Shout Out, during the summer of 2019, being the first Grand Valley speech-language pathology student to be awarded this opportunity. She elected to write a summary of her experience to share with future graduate students in our program in order to facilitate their knowledge of the program, with the intent of having more Grand Valley students selected to participate in Camp Shout Out. Ann’s contribution to our department has exceeded that of any other student in our program’s six-year history.

College of Liberal Arts & Sciences

❖ **Austin C. VanderWeide, Master of Science in Cell and Molecular Biology**

After completing his Bachelors of Science in Biomedical Science at Grand Valley, Austin subsequently enrolled in the Cell and Molecular Biology

Professional Science Program. Austin completed a Graduate Assistantship with the department where he assisted in our graduate laboratory techniques course and, in another assignment, assisted with our undergraduate cell and molecular biology lab where he worked closely with students to help them understand laboratory techniques and their applications. For the 2018-2019 academic year, Austin served as the president of the Professional Association of Graduate Scientists. In this role he was responsible for organizing events related to the goals of the organization and presiding at regular meetings. Austin completed an internship at Perrigo where he gained invaluable experience in an FDA-regulated lab setting. Following the internship, Austin accepted a position with Perrigo which he currently holds while he considers pursuing medical school with the ultimate goal for working in medical biotechnology.

**GRADUATE DEAN'S CITATION FOR EXCELLENCE IN
PROMOTING DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION AT GVSU
Fall 2019**

College of Health Professions

❖ **Emily R. Smith, Master of Physician Assistant Studies**

Emily was voted the Diversity Chairperson by the GVSU PAS Student Society to promote inclusion and diversity within the program. She facilitated visits from outside professionals and medical providers from a variety of specialties. These speakers were chosen to expand exposure of PA students and faculty to a variety of professionals and diverse patient populations. The program broadened outside-of-the-classroom experiences, expanded cultural competency, and enabled her classmates to become more inclusive providers. As the Diversity Chair, Emily was a tireless advocate for inclusion. Her passion was evident to both her classmates and faculty in the program. The faculty are pleased to nominate her for this award and know she will have a positive impact as a Physician Assistant after graduation.

**GRADUATE DEAN'S CITATION FOR
EXCELLENCE IN SUSTAINABILITY
Fall 2019**

The Excellence in Sustainability award nominees have demonstrated outstanding leadership and innovative thinking in the community by implementing sustainable best practices. The award recipients must have given life to a sustainability initiative in one or more aspects of the triple bottom line in sustainability (economic, social, or environmental).

College of Health Professions

❖ **Whitney M. Warner, Master of Physician Assistant Studies**

Whitney has continuously promoted the idea of reducing waste and improving reusability with her PAS classmates at the Traverse City campus. Whitney was vigilant of maintaining sustainability in day-to-day activities and events in both the classroom and student lounge. She stressed the importance of using locally sourced foods to promote local businesses. By her example, she reminded faculty and students how to be responsible consumers in today's high demand market. The PAS program in Traverse City is more economically sustainable than ever, thanks to the efforts of Whitney.

Kirkhof College of Nursing

❖ **Elizabeth J. Scott, Doctor of Nursing Practice**

Elizabeth is an example of the excellence that Grand Valley State University graduates demonstrate as community and national leaders. Through her engagement with the Mercy Health Saint Mary's, Elizabeth assessed the needs of the organization and developed a strategic business plan to implement and evaluate sustainable practices for quality health care outcomes. Working in concert with the leadership team of Mercy Health, she identified a threat to continued certification as a Compressive Stroke Center. At this center, errors were identified in the Clinical Provider Order Entry (CPOE) systems that had the potential for medication errors and risks to patient safety. Elizabeth's work focused on using LEAN processes and

evidence-based sustainability practices to sustain essential practice change throughout other major organizational changes. The sustainable implementation of her project resulted in improved safety in patient care and improved financial reimbursement as a Comprehensive Stroke Center. Mercy Health Saint Mary's recognized the importance of Elizabeth's project, which included a long-term plan for sustainability of best practices.

MAGS DISTINGUISHED THESIS NOMINEES OUTSTANDING THESIS 2019

The Midwestern Association of Graduate Schools (MAGS) calls for nominations for the annual Distinguished Thesis Award. Each school is allowed to nominate one student thesis for the award competition in each discipline category. This year's categories are Biological/Life Sciences and the Humanities. The theses representing GVSU are selected by a committee of faculty members from multiple disciplines and approved by the Dean of The Graduate School.

The GVSU faculty who served on the 2019 MAGS selection committee included:

- Dr. Corey Anton, College of Liberal Arts and Sciences
- Dr. Tim Born, Padnos College of Engineering and Computing
- Dr. Kurt Bullock, College of Liberal Arts and Sciences
- Dr. Anirudh Chowdhary, Padnos College of Engineering and Computing
- Dr. Amanda Dillard, College of Liberal Arts and Sciences
- Dr. Neil MacDonald, College of Liberal Arts and Sciences
- Dr. Osman Patel, College of Liberal Arts and Sciences
- Dr. Laura Stroik, College of Liberal Arts and Sciences
- Dr. Kevin Strychar, College of Liberal Arts and Sciences
- Dr. Jennifer Winther, College of Liberal Arts and Sciences

College of Liberal Arts and Sciences

- ❖ **Joseph T. Altobelli, Master of Science in Biology**
 - **Title:** Nest-Site Selection and Neonate Survival of Eastern Box Turtles (*Terrapene carolina carolina*) in Michigan's Northern Lower Peninsula
 - **Advisor:** Dr. Jennifer Moore – Department of Biology

Dr. Moore writes: "Joe is an extremely hard worker and an excellent problem solver – both of these skills were put to the test during his thesis research. Joe's field work involved identifying nesting turtles, and radio-tracking neonates. Both of these can prove to be true character tests. Females make multiple nesting attempts over many days and can take hours to nest (throughout the night). Likewise, neonate box turtles are extremely difficult to locate (even with telemetry), and have very high mortality. Joe far and away exceeded my expectations for this challenging field work. He was

incredibly dedicated – often spending the night alone next to nesting turtles to get the nests protected before raccoons would predate them. Because of this dedication, Joe has collected the largest existing dataset on box turtle nesting and neonate ecology (from a well-studied species!).”

ABSTRACT

Turtles (Order Testudines) are experiencing global declines largely due to anthropogenic influences such as habitat fragmentation, illegal collection and sales, and the threat of global climate change. Removal of individuals from the adult age-classes means there is now a greater need to understand the survival of neonate and juvenile turtle age-classes. In this study I examined a population of eastern box turtles (*Terrapene carolina carolina*) at the northern limit of their range in Michigan’s lower peninsula. The objectives of my thesis were 1. to determine the microhabitat factors that influence nest- site selection by female box turtles and how selected microhabitat and environmental factors affect box turtle nest success and 2. create known-fate annual survival estimates for hatchling box turtles through the first year of life. Box turtles select nest sites with a higher percent of bare soil and lower amounts of understory vegetation compared to random sites and avoid nesting on north facing slopes. Larger clutch sizes as well as a lower percent of bare soil at the nest site increased the probability of nest success.

Depredation and exposure to suboptimal environmental conditions were the primary sources of neonate mortality from 2013-2015, and annual survival estimates for neonate box turtles predicted survival to decrease through the first year of life with a steep drop in the probability of survival from nest emergence in the fall, before leveling off at 50% for overwintering (day 50 = .503; SE = 0.067), then gradually decreasing again with spring emergence till reaching 0% survival short of the 1 year mark (day 335 = 0.0). Similar studies should be conducted across the geographic range of Eastern Box Turtles to better understand the major threats to the survival of other box turtle populations.

❖ **Molly A. Stabler, Master of Arts in English**

- **Title:** A Maze to Grace: Ted Hughes's Casting of The Myth of the Minotaur in *Birthday Letters*
- **Advisor:** Dr. James Persoon – Department of English

Dr. Persoon writes: "Molly's thesis fills in the historical context needed to understand her original reading of *Birthday Letters*. When Plath famously committed suicide in 1963 at the age of thirty-two, leaving behind not only the husband she was divorcing and two small children, but also a manuscript of poems that Hughes published under the title *Ariel*, she quickly became sensationalized as a feminist icon and mourned as a poet of the first rank.

Molly is aware of multiple uses in Hughes's re-purposing of classical myth of the Minotaur in the Cretan Labyrinth in one of Plath's earliest poems to his own poems, including a possible self-serving re-positioning of himself as helpmate and victim rather than villain. Her conclusion ultimately, though, is a forgiving one, that "Hughes's role in his wife's mental illness and suicide" is "witness to the man's own self-reflection and ultimate discovery of personal grace." What Molly has done in her thesis is to provide an original reading of a major writer's major work. She gives us a new and I think truer way to read *Birthday Letters*. This is not only publishable work, it is important work."

Molly's abstract appears on the next page.

ABSTRACT

This work analyzes Ted Hughes's poetry collection *Birthday Letters*, specifically his allusions to The Myth of the Minotaur in the poems "18 Rugby Street," "Your Paris," "Fishing Bridge," and "The Minotaur." This analysis of *Birthday Letters*, recognized as Hughes's perspective on his relationship with Sylvia Plath -- from their fateful introduction to her traumatic suicide -- asserts that Hughes utilizes The Myth of the Minotaur to reflect on the role he played in his wife's mental illness and suicide by casting himself, Plath, her clinical depression, and her death in the roles of Ariadne, Theseus, the Labyrinth, and the Minotaur, respectively. Furthermore, Hughes's allusions to The Myth of the Minotaur are investigated here as a means by which Hughes uses his art to find personal grace -- despite public calumny -- in his role as lover, professional partner, and husband of feminist icon Sylvia Plath, and in doing so, offers readers an empathetic lens through which to view him. In order to lay a groundwork for said analysis, the exploration begins with a thorough summary of The Myth of the Minotaur, addressing various classic retellings, while highlighting the core plot common across sundry versions of the myth. Next, close readings of the four aforementioned poems are presented, supplemented with biographical information of the couples' relationship, juxtaposing the details and chronology of Hughes's lines with his relationship to Plath. Each poem's individual analysis hones in on the allusions -- implicit and explicit -- to The Myth of the Minotaur, clarifying the double exposure of the mythical characters to Hughes and Plath, as well as to Plath's mental illness and self-inflicted death. The piece concludes by asserting Hughes's role as that of mythical Ariadne, for he loves --and attempts to help -- a "Theseus," who must navigate the labyrinth of mental illness and face the monster of suicide. Most importantly, this work presents a unique reading of Hughes's final poetry collection -- one that fosters a sympathetic understanding of Hughes's role in his wife's mental illness and suicide and that serves as a witness to the man's own self-reflection and ultimate discovery of personal grace.

**GRADUATE STUDENT ASSOCIATION
FACULTY MENTOR AWARD
Fall 2019**

The Faculty Mentor Award serves to acknowledge faculty who exemplify a deep commitment to fostering the professional and personal development of graduate students. This includes encouraging the development of individual talent through advising graduate level research, promoting professional development opportunities beyond the classroom, and providing successful transition from graduate studies to individual careers.

Seidman College of Business

❖ **Professor Star Swift, Associate Professor of Management**

Nominated by: Pradeep Charath, Business Administration

Pradeep writes: "Professor Swift works with graduate students of different backgrounds, identities and abilities to train them to become leaders through project work that benefits the community. This includes website and app development to share knowledge, installations of solar panels and solar powered medical devices at clinics and a hospital in Malawi, Africa as well as through academic work such as research, article publishing, and presenting at conferences. Professor Swift has also provided current graduate students guidance on receiving Graduate Assistantships which I can certainly say has been an invaluable opportunity for me. She has also helped graduate students with employment opportunities and developing their careers.

Professor Swift has created a sense of community for alumni, graduate and undergraduate students with her organization, Teaching Through Technology, which allows graduate students to obtain 21st century skills. Not only are her classes extremely engaging and challenging for students, but her work with students outside the classroom is exemplary."

College of Health Professions

❖ **Professor Breanna Chycinski, Associate Professor of Occupational Science and Therapy**

Nominated by: Amy Maurer, Occupational Therapy

Amy writes: “During my time in the Occupational Science and Therapy program, I have had the privilege to learn from Professor Chycinski. In her role as an Academic Fieldwork Coordinator, she has fostered the development of her students’ critical thinking skills and facilitated her students’ transitions from their graduate studies to their fieldwork experiences.

Professor Chycinski is a faculty member who genuinely cares about her students and demonstrates a sincere and active interest in her students’ well-being. She actively listens to students’ opinions and encourages students to participate in engaging class discussions. In addition, she exemplifies a deep commitment to nurturing the professional and personal development of her students and always provides timely, detailed, and thorough feedback. She continuously demonstrates a high level of professionalism while also exhibiting compassion for her students. I am thankful for Professor Chycinski’s guidance and mentorship.”

❖ **Dr. Elizabeth MacQuillan, Assistant Professor of Clinical Dietetics**

Nominated by: Bettina Jones, Clinical Dietetics

Bettina writes: “Dr. MacQuillan began as my academic advisor and in that role, she assisted me by creating a unique academic schedule that helped me balance school and life successfully. I was a transfer student and brought some credits with me; she helped me by finding classes I could take to balance my semesters and prevent burnout.

As an instructor Dr. MacQuillan is very quick to respond to communications with helpful feedback and suggestions. She is also the chair of my thesis committee. In this role she has given of her time and talents endlessly. She has advocated for me with Spectrum IRB and legal department. Always putting my needs as a student in the forefront. Without her persistence I would not be completing a thesis. Dr. MacQuillan is a hands-on mentor, and

the guidance she provided for me and many others makes her well qualified to receive this recognition.”

College of Liberal Arts & Sciences

❖ **Dr. Sheila Blackman, Professor of Biology/Cell and Molecular Biology**

Nominated by: Joanne Thomson, Cell and Molecular Biology

Joanne writes: “I am sincerely grateful for the mentorship that Dr. Blackman has provided me throughout my graduate studies. She has made a tremendous impact on strengthening my attributes as a scientific researcher and helping me achieve my professional goals. I admire her drive, attention to detail, and integrity. Overall, she is a fantastic mentor. Dr. Blackman has selflessly invested herself in my success.

As a non-traditional student with unique needs, she strives to provide me with the support and guidance I need, regardless of the situation. Also, I know I can always depend on her. She quickly responds to emails and questions I have regarding my thesis work or professional development. Additionally, she encourages me to maintain a clear focus on my main research question, and when I go astray, she helps me refocus. I appreciate her constructive criticism, respect towards me, and her determination to make me recognize areas where I need improvement. She is more than a mentor. She is a role model that inspires me to be the best that I can be.”

❖ **Dr. Melba Velez Ortiz, Associate Professor of Communications**

Nominated by: Elisa Salazar, Communications

Elisa writes: “Dr. Velez Ortiz has made a tremendous impact on my introduction to the Communications field. As someone who currently holds a master’s degree, Dr. Velez Ortiz offered mentorship that met me where I am in my professional development.

Dr. Velez Ortiz is high energy, validating, engaging, and highly professional. When I struggled with finding an ethical framework, Dr. Velez Ortiz suggested a book that immediately resonated with me. The model she suggested has been life changing for me and I so thankful she responded so intentionally. The most influential thing Dr. Velez Ortiz has done for me is see me for who I am. She supported the vision I have for myself. She did this

by giving me the proper tools, listening, and helping me synthesize my thoughts. As a woman of color, it is inspiring to have a mentor that reflects aspects of my identity. As I progress with my goals in the future, it will be in large part because of her kindness, encouragement, bravery, and leadership.”

**GRADUATE STUDENT ASSOCIATION
OUTSTANDING TEACHING AWARD
Fall 2019**

The Outstanding Teaching Award distinguishes faculty who deserve special recognition for exemplary teaching. This includes contributing to graduate student development by using thoughtful and creative methods of instruction, assisting in deeply understanding course content, and engaging students in a dynamic and inclusive manner.

Seidman College of Business

❖ **Professor Michael DeWilde, Professor of Management**

Nominated by: Paul Cullen, Business Administration

Paul writes: "Professor DeWilde managed to take the place as my most favorite instructor at GVSU (including both undergrad and grad work). His teaching style is effortless, highly engaging, and created a great class environment both in-class and online. He encouraged me to continue my education and look at terminal degrees.

In addition to encouraging additional formal education, Professor DeWilde invited me to the Koeze Business Ethics Initiative reading group, which has introduced me to a lot of great local business professionals, some excellent reading selections, and a lot of great debate and discussion on ethics in business and in West Michigan. Meeting with this group has provided a great real-world component to my MBA education, something that he realizes is essential for receiving a complete education.

Professor DeWilde has proven to be an outstanding professor, going above and beyond for students in his classes, and he is a huge asset to GVSU."

College of Health Professions

❖ **Professor Kelly Machnik, Assistant Professor of Occupational Science and Therapy**

Nominated by: Josette Dreyer, Occupational Therapy

Josette writes: “In her time of teaching at GVSU, Professor Machnik has dedicated herself to expanding the knowledge and experiences of her students in the areas of mental health and social justice. Taking topics that are sensitive in nature, she has found creative ways to engage her students in the learning process, such as bringing inspirational speakers into the classroom dealing with substance use or mood disorders and structuring a project using photovoice to develop a new understanding of perspective and empathy for individuals experiencing mental illness.

She values input from all her students and encourages a safe environment for discovery of talents and individuality in the Occupational Therapy program. As much as she values academic rigor through her course content and research projects with students, Professor Machnik also values learning outside the classroom by mentoring the Hybrid Student Occupational Therapy Association Executive Board. I want to thank her for expanding my understanding and empathy for others who are different from me and for believing and encouraging me that I had the potential to learn more about difficult topics than what I thought I already knew. She is a part of my development as a leader and advocate for others in my community.”

GRADUATE STUDENT ASSOCIATION OFFICERS

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