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The 21st century knowledge-based economy has changed expectations for the global competitive market and society. It not only requires the knowledge base, but more importantly the application of knowledge in creative and innovative ways. As a result, these expectations have placed a responsibility on academic institutions for preparing our graduates for global opportunities. Our graduates will not only use knowledge to solve technical problems at work places, but they will also use it for identifying novel approaches to address societal challenges. It is the acquired knowledge that facilitates leveraging the critical thinking skills for breakthrough ideas, for creating bold visions for the future, and for creating new enterprises with implications for our world. The quest for continued growth of one's knowledge gives birth to the next generation of scholars, researchers, and leaders to improve the quality of life for all of us.

Knowledge has always been divided into two categories: existing knowledge and new knowledge. Existing knowledge has always been shared through books, lectures, publications, news media, and other platforms. The use of existing knowledge serves as a critical platform for giving people the tools and critical thinking skills to look at problems for discovery, and it encourages inquiry in new ways and different approaches. This process of discovery and inquiry and the application of existing knowledge to problems also grows the body of new knowledge that gives people the insight and the understanding for identifying creative and novel solutions.

At WKU we have been engaging our students in such hands-on research and creative activities. Such a platform integrates and complements the classroom learning experience. This hands-on activity can be carried out in a laboratory or out in a community to help gain insights and also help students to shape their dreams, their aspirations, and ideas for their unique roles in society as contributing citizens. This hands-on activity forces an individual to use the existing knowledge and think outside the box for breakthrough solutions. WKU is proud of this tradition that allows our students unique experiential learning platforms. It better prepares our graduates for 21st century challenges. None of this would be possible without the interest and dedication of our faculty members who are creating these opportunities for our students.

This issue of *WKU Scholar* is yet another illustration of the diverse research interests, scholarship, and creative activities of our faculty members. They take our students on a journey and nurture the next generation of scholars, philosophers, teachers, business leaders, researchers, political leaders, and others to make the world a better place to live for generations to come.

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