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11-15-2015

An Opportunity to Reflect and Recommit

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WMU ScholarWorks Citation

Dunn, John M., "An Opportunity to Reflect and Recommit" (2015). *WMU President John Dunn*. 35.
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An Opportunity to Reflect and Recommit

Dear Faculty, Staff and Students:

The recent events on the University of Missouri campus have attracted national attention and led many, appropriately, to stop and reflect about substantive issues that still plague our society and additional change that is needed.

I want you to know that we, at Western Michigan University, are no exception, and that we recognize the need to continually assess and respond to the idea that change may be needed here—that the work done at WMU to build an inclusive community is not done.

Clearly, positive gains have been made on our campus in recent years. There continues, however, to be room for improvement, and we are committed to additional progress.

The mark of any great University is its commitment to diversity and its ability to create a place where every individual is respected, supported and valued. Perfection is difficult, but possible. We are certainly not yet there. We still hear reports of students, faculty and others who experience hostile actions or statements that are unwarranted, unkind and hurtful. We encourage those on the receiving end of such incivility to report the offense and to access, if needed, other resources such as counseling and support services.

When bad things happen, administrators must address matters quickly, respect the rights of all, and insure a policy of zero tolerance for acts that are characterized by hatred or discrimination against the vulnerable, including members of underrepresented communities. I am proud of Western Michigan University and our focus on being a friendly campus, where we greet and acknowledge the presence of others. During this time of controversy and resulting reflection, I am calling on each member of our campus community to renew their individual commitments to being civil, courteous and respectful of all. And I remind each member of our community that we have a responsibility to speak up and intervene when we see or hear anyone mistreating others for any reason. I ask you to join me in renewing our commitment to a campus where intellect, talent, and ability are not limited by the color of one's skin, place of origin, gender, orientation or nature of disability.

My understanding is that on Monday, Nov. 16, selected students are organizing a show of solidarity in support of students at the University of Missouri. I know our campus community will respect the right of these students to gather for a peaceful demonstration of unity and support for others. I am hopeful that this will also become a campuswide opportunity to reflect and renew our goal of being a welcoming and supportive campus for all.

Thank you,

President John M. Dunn