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WMU's Birthplace Will Be Preserved

John M. Dunn

Western Michigan University, john.dunn@wmich.edu

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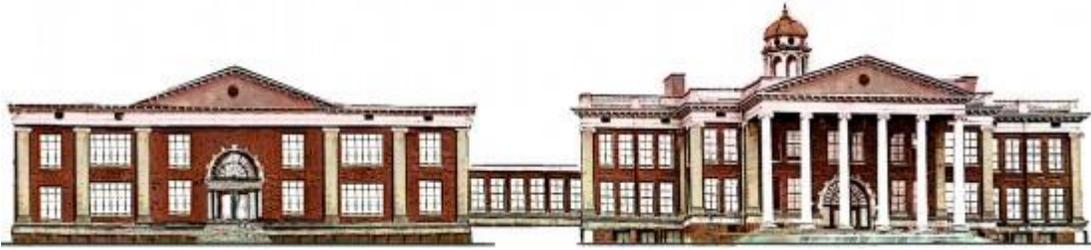
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WMU's birthplace will be preserved



We have made a commitment to restore—to save—East Hall and bring it to life again as an alumni center.

I restate our intent simply to communicate clearly Western Michigan University's unwavering commitment to East Hall and Prospect Hill. The building and hilltop were gifts from this community when the University was established in 1903. They will remain as testament to the lasting partnership between this University and its home community.

Our commitment means we will preserve the white-columned presence and lighted cupola that the Kalamazoo community created and has treasured for more than 100 years. We want future Kalamazoo residents to look to the top of Prospect Hill and enjoy the same view and sense of pride Kalamazoo citizens first enjoyed in 1905.

A reclaimed East Hall will become a resource for our campus and the community at large. The building will be home to our alumni and development units and will showcase artifacts, pictures and remembrances of the University's history.

The refurbished facility will serve as the site of campus and community events, including receptions, reunions and other celebratory occasions on the East portico steps. With a new lease on life, East Hall will join other East Campus treasures like Walwood Hall, the Little Theatre and Oakland Gym as buildings we have renovated to again be part of the fabric of daily University life.

Since we announced our decision in December, the response from the Kalamazoo community and our global alumni network has generally been positive. Late last month, our plans received a unanimous endorsement—and gift pledges—from the 19 members of the WMU Alumni Association Board of Directors.

The Kalamazoo Gazette perhaps expressed it best just days after our announcement.

The headline read, "Tough call, but right one." The editorial went on to say, "We have high hopes for the renovation of East Hall and its new use as an alumni center...It is a painful decision, but ultimately, we believe it is the right one for East Campus and will reclaim the heart of East Hall for the entire community."

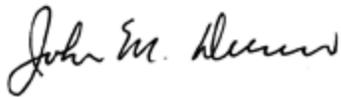
The Gazette got it right. It was not an easy call, but the slow deterioration of the structures on East Campus could not continue.

There also have been expressions of disappointment and even anger regarding our plans. Some have urged us to continue mothballing the remaining buildings. I have given thoughtful consideration to those arguments, but that strategy has already been costly, with an annual expenditure of \$250,000 for heat and energy to preserve empty space. Limited resources mean we cannot renovate East Hall AND continue to spend money on unused buildings.

We are moving closer now to refurbishing East Hall. In the coming months, we will:

- Announce an architect for the East Hall renovation and begin public sessions to get campus and community input in the design process,
- Rescue architectural elements from the buildings so they may be incorporated into the new alumni center,
- Move University Archives to its new home—the Zhang Legacy Collections Center, and
- Begin the transformation process this fall with a goal of opening our new alumni center in mid-2015.

To those who plead "Save East Campus," I would say, that is exactly what we are doing. We are following the advice of those who warned us we must act now to save what's most important, or risk losing it all. To do nothing might quell the angst of some, but serve only to allow the slow erosion of all the structures, including the jewel in the crown, East Hall.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "John M. Dunn".

Dr. John M. Dunn

President, Western Michigan University