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President's Perspective (November 2013)

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President's Perspective - November 12, 2013

Dear Colleagues:

While it seems like just a few weeks ago since I wrote about the start of the fall semester, we are now hurtling toward the end of the semester. It's been a semester full of accomplishment, and we still have some major initiatives planned for the final few weeks.

Recent accomplishments and recognition

Just in case you haven't been following campus news, I'd like to make sure you're aware of some recent events that showcase where we are headed as a great University.



Sustainability achievements

We observed national Campus Sustainability Day Oct. 23 this year with two days of intense focus on what we do so well. A vibrant community panel discussion, a "sustainability slam," campus tours and celebration of an energy-saving partnership with Honeywell were all part of the mix.

We announced a groundbreaking two-year research project by one of our doctoral students, Kate Binder, and we summarized nearly two decades of energy accomplishments that have resulted in reducing our carbon footprint in a way that is equivalent to adding 3.2 million trees to the environment or taking 26,000 cars off the road.



Zhang Legacy Center opening

An enormous communitywide celebration marked the opening of our wonderful new Charles C. and Lynn L. Zhang Legacy Collections Center.

Those of us on campus and in the community who care intensely about protecting our region's important historical records truly rejoiced in the fact that they are being safely stored and made available to the public for the first time ever. The singular significance of the occasion drew nearly 500 campus and community members to the celebration.



School of Medicine and Cooley Law affiliation developments

During this year of change and opportunity, we're moving rapidly to opening the WMU School of Medicine and affiliating with the Thomas M. Cooley Law School. The renovation of the medical school's new home is on schedule, and our first medical students will be here nine months from now. The final steps in the law affiliation initiative also are being taken.

In the end, both initiatives will bring new opportunities to our University without the investment of any WMU financial resources. We'll have new research initiatives, new dual degree programs, new undergraduate opportunities and a strong new student recruitment profile that will pay dividends for generations to come.

WMU women win soccer championship

Just as I was putting the final touches on this message, I learned that our women's soccer team, playing Ball State at Eastern Michigan Sunday, won the Mid-American Conference Tournament Championship and a trip to this year's NCAA tournament. Congratulations to our athletes and their coach. Go Broncos!

Campus conversations

The past few weeks have been challenging times for the University community. The salary disparity adjustments and the program planning and review process have been central topics of discussion. Although differences of opinion have surfaced, the exchanges have been thoughtful and constructive.

With respect to the salary disparity adjustments, Provost Greene expended time and energy in reviewing and carefully examining salaries. He studied earlier recommendations made by college committees and made certain to confer with the academic deans prior to final determinations. The Provost consulted with others to ensure that the process, although time consuming, was managed in a manner that was thoughtful and analytical. In the process, he and others, including me, have learned much.

With respect to program reviews, I believe it is essential that we manage our University in a manner consistent with both best practices and our own high expectations. The goal of program review as communicated by Provost Green is not to eliminate departments or the full range of inquiry within the academy, but rather to establish a baseline such that we can continue to celebrate our accomplishments, and, of course, make adjustments as necessary and where opportunities exist.



Program review is necessary so that we can be responsible and good stewards and make the best use of our limited resources. We are always mindful of our students and what they pay for their education. The desired outcome of reviews is to embrace a path of continuous improvement. The departments being reviewed this year are part of the Beta process. The process will allow faculty who are part of the Academic Program Review and Planning Committee to assess whether the review process is correct or needs further adjustments. The committee will, in

turn, share its recommendations with the Faculty Senate and administration. The outcome, I believe, will be informative and helpful to everyone, primarily our faculty, chairs and deans. We will certainly listen carefully and respectfully. Our University's unwavering commitment to student opportunity must continue to be at the center of everything we do.

Looking ahead

Over the next few weeks we'll continue to celebrate our history, the contributions of our faculty and staff, and the success of our students.



Veterans Day extended

The past week has offered a number of opportunities to honor our veterans and at least one still remains. This weekend's football game has been designated a special events for vets. A 5K run sponsored by our Bronco ROTC Battalion and a Veterans Day luncheon for area veterans have

already taken place.

More than 300 of our First-Year Experience students from the Haworth College of Business spent a rainy and cold Saturday at Fort Custer National Cemetery cleaning grave markers and getting the site ready for its Veterans Day ceremonies. I'm so proud of the way our students and faculty, staff and student vets came together to mark this annual day with the honor and solemnity it deserves.



50th anniversary of MLK address

Nationally, this is a year to mark the 50th anniversary of historical events of great magnitude—Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I Have a Dream Speech" and President John F. Kennedy's assassination. At WMU, we will be marking our own historic event with a celebration and remembrance of Dr. King's visit to our campus 50 years ago this fall.

To ensure our campus community is able to take full advantage of the celebration, we've selected Monday, Dec. 2, as the date we will commemorate the event that occurred on Dec. 18, 1963. Dr. King's eloquent remarks that evening were lost for decades until a tape recording of his speech was discovered in the 1990s.

Those remarks, which many have never read or heard, will be the focal point for our celebration and will trigger the topics for a campus panel discussion led by newsman and WMU alumnus Ed Gordon. Please plan your schedule that day around this important event.

25-year Club induction ceremony

Once again, we will have the opportunity to honor those members of our faculty and staff who have built their careers at Western Michigan University. On Tuesday, Dec. 3, some 52 new members will be inducted into the WMU 25-Year Club. That means we'll be honoring their more than 1,300 collective years of service. Please take a moment to congratulate your faculty and staff colleagues who will be honored that evening.



Commencement

On Saturday, Dec. 14, we'll celebrate the success of more than 2,000 of our students in three commencement ceremonies at Miller Auditorium. If you are a faculty member, I urge you to attend your college's ceremony and help your students celebrate their achievement. Your presence makes the day a particularly special one for our students and their families.

Thank you for all you do every day to make our University one that adds value to our communities and our students' lives.

Continuing best,

John M. Dunn

President