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President's Perspective (January 2015)

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President's Perspective

Dear Colleagues:

Welcome back. I hope your holiday break was restful, joyful and full of opportunities to revitalize. The spring semester and upcoming year will be full of the kind of activity that will require energy, focus and commitment.

I'd like to provide you with some updates—things that have happened over the past four weeks since the fall semester ended. The fall litany of accomplishment continued even after classes ended.



U.S. Green Building Council picks WMU as 2014 honoree

The sustainability accolades of 2014 hit a peak Dec. 17, when Western Michigan University was one of just 10 schools and individuals nationwide honored by the U.S. Green Building Council's Center for Green Schools, which named the top innovators in school sustainability at all educational levels.

WMU was named the 2014 Best of Green Schools recipient in USGBC's higher education category. The annual awards program is designed to recognize the best environmental efforts in schools across the country. In making the announcement, the council's leadership lauded more than 20 years of WMU sustainability accomplishments in energy conservation efforts, recycling and waste reduction programs and support of cooperative research into green manufacturing practices.



Broncos make a national statement in Boise

While many of their classmates were home for the holidays, our Bronco football team, Bronco Marching Band, and the cheer and dance teams were in Boise, Idaho, for the Dec. 20 Famous Idaho Potato Bowl that, this year, pitted the Broncos against the U.S. Air Force Academy's Falcons.

While the outcome of the game was not a victory, I can tell you that our students represented our University in an extraordinary manner. I was privileged to see that play out over several days, and I could not have been more proud to claim these young people as Broncos. As the semester begins and you encounter members of the football team, band, and cheer and dance teams in classes, please add your thanks to them for leaving Boise impressed by the Bronco nation.

There's a tent in the middle of campus

No, we're not about to have an outdoor soiree to celebrate the arctic blast, but there is a festive-looking tent in the middle of campus. It's housing the final stages of work on a wonderful new campus icon that will be dedicated later this semester.

The University seal is the focal point of the work by Kalamazoo artist Joshua Diedrich. Located at the center of campus near the pedestrian mall in front of Sangren, the sculpture will include lighting and a water feature. It will be completed and formally dedicated this spring. Be sure to watch Western News and the University website for details about this wonderful new campus feature.

Coming up as the semester begins

New interim sexual misconduct policy and procedures ready for rollout

While attending family gatherings over break, many of you may have heard questions about one of the critical higher education issues of the day—how campuses respond to allegations of sexual assault or harassment. You will remember, as well, that we have been working proactively for many months to examine our procedures and ensure that every member of our campus community feels empowered and comfortable to report an incident.

Once our students are back on campus next week, we will roll out an interim policy on sexual assault and harassment. The intent of the policy is to simplify and consolidate the process of reporting and investigating any such incidents on our campus. We also want everyone on campus to clearly understand their responsibility to report as well as the resources available to address any problem. Since it is an interim policy, there will be an anonymous feedback mechanism external to the University that will allow you to note any part of the policy that you perceive as problematic.

I urge you to read the new policy carefully and provide your thoughtful feedback, as appropriate. There will be a website with information and a downloadable document that lays out each element of the policy.

2015 will be as busy as 2014

The year 2014 was an extraordinary one. And 2015 has all the makings of one with the same kind of intensity and accomplishment. We've already been informed of a couple of laurels the University will be receiving in the next few days. The news is embargoed, so I can't share it with you here, but keep watching WMU News and WMU Today for the latest updates, so you can be among the first to know the news.



Looking ahead, this will be the year we complete our first new residence hall in 50 years. Western Heights will welcome the 2015 incoming class of new students. It also will be the year that East Hall has a rebirth on campus—as the WMU Alumni Center.

So I hope you're well rested and ready for all that comes next. Our students will be back in the classroom next Monday, and we'll be off and running.

Thank you for all you do every day to make this the kind of University community in which we can all take great pride. Stay warm this week, and get ready for a wonderful year in which your work will inspire great achievement by our students.

Best regards,

John M. Dunn
President