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Reaffirming Our Values

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Reaffirming Our Values

Dear Colleagues:

On Saturday, more than 1,800 of our students will graduate from Western Michigan University. Each of them will celebrate their individual achievements, and as a University, we will celebrate the success of the diverse academic community we have built.

Given the current political climate in our nation, I feel compelled to note that those 1,800-plus students will include individuals from around the globe and those who count themselves among believers of all of the world's great religions. Their joy of accomplishment and sense of contribution to the body of knowledge should be matched by our pride in establishing an environment in which they have each felt valued and respected.

Thank you for building that environment and for your commitment to practicing the ideals laid out by our nation's founding fathers and affirmed by those who have worked so hard to help establish higher education as a model to show the value and impact of diversity--in the very broadest sense of the term. Learning about differing beliefs and practices and connecting those lessons to real individuals we care about makes all of us better people.

This year, those beliefs we hold so dear and are such a part of America's value system are under attack by some. I hope you will join me in reaffirming and reassuring those on our campus and in the broader community that our values remain unchanged. Those who feel targeted or vulnerable because of their religious beliefs or nations of origin deserve and have our support.

We will continue to examine, discuss and debate the accomplishments and merits of every belief system, be it political, religious, nationalistic or philosophical. That's what education is about. But at this University, we must and will carry out such discussions in an atmosphere of civility and one that begins with the basic American premise that all religious beliefs are respected and equal in the eyes of the law.

Please take a moment to convey this message to your students in a way that comports with your own style and comfort level. In the coming weeks and months please do not hesitate to alert me to any incidents or trends that concern you and that might infringe on our ability to continue to celebrate our diverse and inclusive campus environment.

Best regards,

John M. Dunn

President