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## Friends of Historic East Campus Reception Remarks

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Friends of Historic East Campus Reception Remarks  
Dr. John M. Dunn  
July 27, 2007

Good afternoon.

First of all, I want to thank the board of the Friends of Historic East Campus for arranging this wonderful opportunity for Linda and me to meet and get to know you better. We've been here for just three weeks, and we already feel at home and part of this wonderful community.

I'm also happy to be in this location, looking out on a wonderful view and relishing the central role this University has played in the Kalamazoo community since 1903. I am honored to be part of the tradition and delighted to be able to contribute to and promote the Western Michigan University legacy that was born on this hillside.

In the past three weeks, my focus has been on the most critical part of that legacy—opportunity for students. This week, we raised tuition, but we were able to keep that increase to the lowest level of any of Michigan's public universities. And this week we announced a plan, the Western Edge, designed to move students quickly toward graduation. Those two items were announced together, because I believe they are intimately related and are the keys to providing opportunity that will make our students successful.

Next week, the Board of Trustees will meet again to approve a budget. Many of you know we face real financial challenges as we head into the next academic year, with uncertain state funding at the top of the list. Our focus

is and will remain on preserving the quality of our programming and making sure we remain accessible to the students this University was founded to serve. I know each of you shares my commitment to those goals.

As we move forward, I anticipate days, maybe even weeks, in which I will have the opportunity to continue my conversations with you. I truly appreciate the passion that so many of you have brought to the issue of the East Campus and its future. As a new president, I am heartened--actually delighted--by the depth of the feelings and sense of pride and attachment so many of you have expressed. Even before my arrival in Kalamazoo, you made your concerns clear and expressed your commitment to history and tradition and honoring the University's roots.

Now, I live close by and have taken the opportunity several times to walk the grounds and look out on this spectacular view. I'm also slowly learning about the history, the intricacies and the nuances that are part of this great university and the values that hold it together.

In that context, I feel I should share with you a little about my management style. Those on my senior leadership team have already learned that I do not readily embrace "either/or" scenarios. I'm a great believer in creativity. Over the years, I've found that the best solutions to even the most difficult issues are found when people set aside what they see as two opposing outcomes and do some serious thinking about how and why a project might be approached, what the results will be, and how the results will enhance the mission and future of the institution.

What I have learned already about WMU is that it was founded and has thrived on some very basic and important principles—the most important of which is an overarching commitment to students and their potential. One has only to look at the growth patterns and current facilities of this University to realize WMU today is the product of a handful of presidents who poured into it all of their energy, vision, creativity and persistence. In doing so, they gave evidence of their love for students and their commitment to both student success and Michigan's future. I feel privileged to join that group and will consider it a great honor to work with all of you to move the University to its next level of accomplishment.

Thank you for the conversations to date, the wonderful reception this afternoon and the promise of working together in the future.