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## Statement on Diversity, Multiculturalism, and Inclusion

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## **Statement by President John M. Dunn on Diversity, Multiculturalism, and Inclusion**

Nov. 26, 2007

Great universities, including Western Michigan University, strive for an inclusive environment in which the student body, faculty, and staff reflect society at large. Western Michigan University has a long history and well-deserved reputation of being committed to diversity and multiculturalism. The university's programs, faculty, staff, and students reflect that commitment. Our welcoming environment is one to honor, preserve, and nurture.

Western Michigan University's development of a Diversity and Multicultural Action Plan (DMAP), adopted by the Board of Trustees in 2006, is a significant step in reinforcing our dedication to inclusion. It is a "living document" we will update and revise, based on input from the University community, those responsible for implementing it, and applicable law.

As the DMAP states, diversity at WMU "encompasses inclusion, acceptance, respect, and empowerment" and "includes the dimensions of race, ethnicity, and national and regional origins; sex, gender identity, and sexual orientation; socioeconomic status, age, physical attributes, and abilities; as well as religious, political, cultural, and intellectual ideologies and practices." The DMAP also points out that "multiculturalism at WMU is a belief that speaks to the issues of human diversity, cultural pluralism, and human rights for all people" and that it "goes beyond the recognition of diversity."

WMU's pledge toward inclusiveness is likewise reflected in the non-discrimination policy adopted by the Board of Trustees, which prohibits discrimination or

harassment which violates the law or which constitutes inappropriate or unprofessional limitation of employment opportunity, University facility access, or participation in University activities, on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, protected disability, veteran status, height, weight, or marital status.

In 2006, Michigan voters amended the state constitution to prohibit certain forms of discrimination or preferential treatment on the basis of race, sex, color, ethnicity, or national origin. Of course the University will comply with these new requirements, while continuing to maintain and support an environment that is welcoming to all.

The University promotes a diversity of ideas and intellectual inquiry, always with a steadfast dedication to discussions that are civil, courteous, and respectful. As an international university, WMU recruits students, faculty, and staff from throughout the world, ensuring that the entire University community is a better place as a result of its abundance of cultures and viewpoints.

To preserve and enhance its commitment to diversity and multiculturalism, the University must continue to recruit and retain faculty, staff, and students who understand and appreciate the importance of inclusion. The university must also foster and support programs and projects that help the entire University community appreciate and value the benefits that come from being part of a campus where all are welcomed.

The University's prosperity and future successes will be measured, in part, by the degree to which it is inclusive and respectful of those it serves. I ask you to join me in taking a personal interest to do what we can so that all within the University

community know that they are welcomed and supported. Together we will do so with conviction and by taking action that is consistent with the values of a great university -one that honors and respects the customs, cultures, and opinions found on a diverse and multicultural campus that is rich in the composition of its people and ideas.

In order to sustain our long history of diversity efforts and improve the inclusive nature of our campus community, I have asked Dr. Martha Warfield to assume these responsibilities as Director of the Office of Diversity and Inclusion. This office will be responsible for numerous duties including but not limited to: a) implementation of the Diversity and Multiculturalism Action Plan (DMAP); b) management of the University affairs for the Kalamazoo Promise; c) presentation of the 2010 exhibit, "RACE: Are We So Different?"; d) planning of the annual Martin Luther King Jr. Convocation; e) support for community development activities relating to recruitment of students of all levels and descriptions; and f) other projects as directed by the president. Dr. Warfield will report to the president for these purposes. I ask that all members of the University community give Dr. Warfield their cooperation and assistance.

Thank you.

John M. Dunn, President