



Western Michigan University
ScholarWorks at WMU

WMU President John Dunn

Office of the President

4-26-2008

Western Michigan University Commencement Exercises-9am

John M. Dunn

Western Michigan University, john.dunn@wmich.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/dunn>



Part of the Higher Education Commons

WMU ScholarWorks Citation

Dunn, John M., "Western Michigan University Commencement Exercises-9am" (2008). *WMU President John Dunn*. 353.

<https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/dunn/353>

This Speech is brought to you for free and open access by the Office of the President at ScholarWorks at WMU. It has been accepted for inclusion in WMU President John Dunn by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks at WMU. For more information, please contact wmu-scholarworks@wmich.edu.



WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY
COMMENCEMENT EXERCISES

Saturday, April 26, 2008, 9 a.m.

John M. Dunn, President, Presiding

PROCESSIONAL

The Western Brass Ensemble
Steve Wolfinbarger, Conductor

President Dunn: "Good morning, I am John Dunn, president of Western Michigan University. I am completing my first year as your president and I am delighted and honored to be associated with such an outstanding institution.

On behalf of the Board of Trustees and the entire University community I want to welcome you to our two hundred ninety-second (292nd) commencement ceremony.

Will the audience please stand, as able, for the National Anthem, sung by the Brothers of Phi Mu Alpha Sinfonia conducted by Marcus Jordan."

(President Dunn steps away from the microphone)

THE NATIONAL ANTHEM
Phi Mu Alpha Sinfonia
Marcus Jordan, Conductor

WELCOMING REMARKS AND INTRODUCTIONS

President Dunn:

“Commencement is a very special occasion - a time for celebration, a time for reflection, a time for closure, and a time for new beginnings.

Graduates, I applaud and thank you for choosing to participate in today’s event. Your presence allows us to recognize you and, equally important, to permit expressions of happiness, pride, and love which are so evident in the faces of those gathered here to observe you graduate.

Graduates, this is YOUR day! You have only two responsibilities: 1) to allow us to honor you and; 2) to reflect and say thanks to those---and you know best who they are---who have contributed to your academic, professional and personal development.

The latter first---the THANKS part. Graduates, please stand and those in front of me, turn and face the audience and remain standing.

Would the Moms and Dads in the audience please stand? (PAUSE)

How about the Grandparents? And Great Grandparents? (PAUSE)

Spouses, those special partners, and children? (PAUSE)

Brothers and Sisters? (PAUSE)

Aunts, Uncles and other Relatives? (PAUSE) And, Friends? (PAUSE)

This day is a very special day for you, our graduates, and it is my privilege and honor to preside at your commencement ceremony.

You will join more than 165,000 WMU alumni from all over Michigan and from around the world.

We shall award over 2600 degrees today.

More than 2100 of you will receive bachelor's degrees.

455 will receive master's degrees.

And 17 of you will be receiving doctoral degrees.

The next group that deserves recognition is our faculty. They are the very heart of this University. Their intellect, creativity and passion for teaching inspire each of us. Their faith and confidence in your abilities throughout your college years have built the foundation for your professional future. Without them this institution would not exist. Therefore, it is to our faculty that we express special appreciation today. I ask the faculty members to stand and all of you to please join me in applauding them for the fine education they have provided to you! (PAUSE)

Besides your professors, there have been many, many others on this terrific campus who have protected, encouraged, facilitated, and brightened the academic journey that has led you to this moment of celebration. They are the cooks, the custodians, office personnel, medical staff, police officers, landscape crews...the list goes on and on. They give their all, every day, to make your educational experience at WMU what you deserve: the BEST.

Let me now turn to my other colleagues on the stage and I ask each of them to rise as I mention them by category.

They are the executive officers, deans and chairs of the University, and representatives of the Faculty Senate, the University Chapter of the American Association of University Professors, the Administrative Professional Association, and the Alumni Association. (PAUSE)

Our University is governed by an autonomous Board of Trustees, appointed by the governor of the State of Michigan. The trustees are private citizens who serve the University without remuneration and who set policy direction for the campus. The University is very grateful to these men and women. Representing the Board of Trustees are Chair Ken Miller, Trustee Sarah DeNooyer, Trustee Bill Johnston and Trustee Emerita Carol Waszkiewicz (WAH-sko-wits).

At this time, I would like to recognize those of you who are graduating with honors. Will those with honor cords, McNair Scholars and all honorary society members, please rise so that we can recognize the special distinctions you have earned. (PAUSE)

Western Michigan University is truly an international institution. We enthusiastically welcome students from other lands and we encourage all other students to experience a portion of their learning in one of our many study abroad locations around the globe. Will those students who were participants of our fine study programs please stand and be recognized. (PAUSE)

All of our graduates have their own stories of the determination, commitment and sacrifice that go into achieving what we celebrate today. I now ask Vice President for Student Affairs Diane Anderson to share a few stories that reflect the spirit each of you and your families have brought to today's commencement and to remind you how special the class of 2008 truly is."

(President Dunn to his seat and Vice President Anderson to the podium.)

Vice President Anderson: STUDENT STORIES

"All of our graduates have inspiring stories to tell about the dedication, hard work and support that it took for them to get here for this important occasion. There isn't time to tell everyone's story, so I'll just share a little information about a few of the wonderful people we're graduating today.

But before I do, I'd like to mention that WMU enrolls some 230 veterans who have served in Iraq or Afghanistan since 2001. This is the highest number of these veterans at a four-year institution in Michigan.

In all, more than 350 military veterans are attending college here. A total of 46 of them are graduating today, and several will be redeployed once they receive their diplomas. In addition, four of today's graduates have

been participating in the Army ROTC program offered through our Department of Military Science and will be commissioned as second lieutenants.

We're immensely proud of those cadets, as we are of everyone who participates in ROTC and everyone who has served in the military. We're enormously grateful for your dedication and the sacrifices you've made on our behalf.

Among the other students graduating today is **Joseph Parr** of Highland, Michigan, who's earning a master's degree in physical education with a concentration in sports management. Joe earned his bachelor's degree here, and while working as an undergraduate in the Student Recreation Center, became interested in the field of facilities management. Joe has served the recreation center for the past two years as a graduate assistant. He also has interned at Ford Field for a firm called SAFE Management, which oversees the operations at many professional sports stadiums. SAFE Management officials were so impressed by his work that they gave him the job of managing their safety and security operation during the 2008 Super Bowl. Now, the firm has hired Jake to manage its staff at the Florida stadium where the NFL's Jacksonville Jaguars play.

We also have two WMU employees who have chosen to advance their educations here. They are **Jennifer O'Donoghue** of Kalamazoo, and **Vicky Meinema (MEYEN-ah-mah)** of Plainwell, Michigan.

Jennifer, who's earning a doctoral degree in educational leadership with a concentration in higher education, is an instructor in the Department of Health, Physical Education and Recreation and directs our undergraduate athletic training program. Jennifer followed in the footsteps of her late father, who earned his bachelor's and master's degrees from WMU and taught at a local elementary school for 29 years. Jennifer also earned a master's from WMU and demonstrated that she cares deeply about her students' success. Her dissertation research is one example of that, as it focuses on improving undergraduate programs in athletic training.

Vicky, who's earning a bachelor's degree in recreation, has been an office associate in our accounting services unit since 1983. Vicky originally came

to campus in 1976 as a student. Her studies were interrupted by marriage, a job, and the birth of her daughter, who's now a WMU sophomore. With the encouragement of her work unit, Vicky resumed her studies part time. This September, Vicky will celebrate her 25th year of full-time employment at WMU, and today, she's celebrating her 50th birthday. Happy birthday, Vicky.

Continuing on with the recreation and athletics theme, we have two Canadians from Canmore, Calgary, graduating today. They are **Lindsey Materi (muh-TEHR-ree)** and **Susanne Turner**, who are earning master's degrees in physical education with a pedagogy concentration from the Department of Health, Physical Education and Recreation, where they have worked as graduate assistants for the past two years. This duo chose to come to WMU after working in the sports club industry as personal trainers, and establishing themselves in Canada as elite athletes in multiple sports and as strength and conditioning coaches in several sports at the university level as well as in the national Olympic sport training program. Lindsey and Susanne have continued their nontraditional educations by pursuing an equally nontraditional thesis project—one that was based on research and faculty support in not just their own department, but also the WMU School of Music and a grant from the Michigan Association for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance.

I've already mentioned several nontraditional students graduating today. One of the most remarkable of them is **Ruth Stoeffler** of Kalamazoo, who's earning a bachelor's degree in social science studies through our Extended University Programs division. Ruth, a retired registered nurse, has completed her studies with high honors—at age 83. She started her college career at age 70, and has been going to school continuously ever since. Ruth started her degree from scratch, and had a lot of catching up to do since going to nursing school decades earlier. That learning curve included buying a computer as well as figuring out how to use a mouse and log on to the Internet. But Ruth immersed herself in the learning process and has absolutely loved the challenge of her course work.

I wish we could note the hundreds of other enterprising and talented students who are receiving their diplomas today. We can't do that, so lastly, let me just mention two of our 2008 Presidential Scholars. Being

selected as a the Presidential Scholar by the faculty in one of our academic schools, departments or specialty programs is the highest honor WMU can bestow on an undergraduate.

The two Presidential Scholars graduating today from the College of Education are **Lauren Kenny** of Hoffman Estates, Illinois, and **Lara Vertalka** of Grand Ledge, Michigan. Lauren, who majored in elementary education in the area of Teaching, Learning and Educational Studies. Lara majored in school health education in Health, Physical Education and Recreation.

Congratulations and the best of luck to all of you.”

(Vice President Anderson to her seat and President Dunn to the podium.)

President Dunn: “There are many more stories that could be told. Many of you held down jobs working long hours while being full- or part-time students.

Some finished your studies in record time while others of you studied hard and long and longer... But what is important is that you finished, you accomplished your goal, and we are very proud of you and your achievement. "(PAUSE)

A great number of you are international students who have studied far away from your home and family for many years. Some of your parents have traveled half way around the world to be here with you today. As you journey back to your home countries, you have our best wishes and the hope that you take fond memories of Michigan and your University with you. (PAUSE)

And many of our graduates are non-traditional students with family and job obligations and for

whom being a student came after family and work. We have great admiration for your achievements. (PAUSE)

While you have worked hard we hope that you have also enjoyed your time here at the University. For many of you, this has been your first experience away from home and family. So while you have learned much from your course work, we are sure that you have also learned much about life and living. (PAUSE)

We hope that the many friendships you have formed will stand the test of time and that you will include among them associations that you have made with our faculty and staff. For just as we have been an important part of your life, you too have become a part of ours. (PAUSE)

Chair Ken Miller will now extend a welcome to you on behalf of the Board.”

(President Dunn to his seat and Chair Miller to podium)

Chair Miller: “Good morning!

This is a great day for all of us because Western Michigan University--its governing board, faculty and staff--and your families, friends and peers are all very proud of your academic achievements. Congratulations to the members of the Class of 2008. Please accept our best wishes for your continued success. We hope that you will keep in contact with our alma mater and that you will come back to visit us from time to time. Again, congratulations, and good luck!”

(President Dunn goes to podium)

CONFERRING OF DEGREES

President Dunn: "It is now time to call upon Vice Provost Keith Hearit to come forward for the conferring of degrees."

(Vice Provost Hearit joins President Dunn at podium.)

Vice Provost Hearit: "Will those receiving a Doctoral or Master's Degree please rise, as able. (PAUSE)

President Dunn, it is my pleasure to present these candidates who have completed all the requirements for a Doctoral or Master's Degree as prescribed by the graduate faculty of this University." (PAUSE)

President Dunn: "By the authority of the State of Michigan, vested in the Board of Trustees, I hereby confer upon you the appropriate degrees indicated in your programs with all the rights, privileges, and responsibilities appertaining thereto.

Please be seated."

(Vice Provost Hearit will introduce the Deans as they come forward.)

Vice Provost Hearit: "Will Dean Gary Wegenke of the College of Education, please come forward."

Dean Wegenke: "Will those receiving a Bachelor's degree or a teaching certificate through the College of Education please rise. (PAUSE)

President Dunn, it is my pleasure to present these candidates who have completed all requirements for the Bachelor's degree as prescribed by the faculty of this College.

Please be seated."

(After introducing Dean Johnson, Vice Provost Hearit returns to his seat)

Vice Provost Hearit: "Will Dean Darrell Johnson, Extended University Programs, please come forward."

Dean Johnson: "Will those receiving a Bachelor's degree through Extended University Programs, please rise. (PAUSE)

President Dunn, it is my pleasure to present to you these candidates who have completed all the requirements for the Bachelor's degree as prescribed by the faculty of this University.

Please be seated."

President Dunn: "Will all those receiving a Bachelor's degree rise once again please. (PAUSE)

By the authority of the State of Michigan, vested in the Board of Trustees, I hereby confer upon you the appropriate degrees indicated in your programs

with all the rights, privileges, and responsibilities appertaining thereto.

Please be seated.” (PAUSE)

PRESENTATION OF DOCTORAL DIPLOMAS
(NO MUSIC - NAMES ANNOUNCED)

President Dunn: “Will the doctoral candidates please come forward as Dr. Lewis Pyenson, Dean of the Graduate College announces their names.

The Trustees and the graduates' advisors will place the hoods on the shoulders of the doctoral graduates.’ (PAUSE)

(President Dunn and Trustee DeNooyer to diploma table and Dean Pyenson to podium. The doctoral candidates will rise and proceed to the stage. Guides will assist in directing the candidates. Dean Pyenson will call candidates/advisors forward. He will indicate the candidates by name and announce their degrees. President Dunn will present labeled diplomas on diploma table. Trustees DeNooyer and Johnston and advisors will place hoods on shoulders of doctoral graduates.)

Trustee DeNooyer and Advisors:

Shawn Bultsma
Xiaofan Cai
Rosemary Cleveland
Lisa Kasmer

Trustee Johnston and Advisors:

Marcia Kaye

Jennifer O'Donoghue
Donghai Xie

**PRESENTATION OF MASTER'S DIPLOMAS
(NO MUSIC – NAMES ANNOUNCED)**

Vice Provost Hearit: “Will the graduates receiving Master's degrees please come forward to receive their diplomas as Ms. Michele McLaughlin announces their names.”
(PAUSE)

(Ms. McLaughlin will go to microphone at right of platform. Deans Wegenke and Johnson assist President Dunn and Trustees (one at a time) with presentation of diplomas.)

**PRESENTATION OF UNDERGRADUATE DIPLOMAS
(NO MUSIC – NAMES ANNOUNCED)**

Vice Provost Hearit: “Will the graduates receiving Bachelor's degrees please come forward to receive their diplomas as their names are announced by Ms. McLaughlin and Mr. James Williams.” (PAUSE)

(Mr. Williams joins Ms. McLaughlin at microphones. Deans assist President Dunn and Trustees with presentation of diplomas.)

ALUMNI ASSOCIATION INDUCTION

President Dunn: "Will Mr. Kirk Hoffman, president of the Western Michigan University Alumni Association, please come forward. Mr. Hoffman is vice president of the King Trust Company, Spring Arbor.

(President Dunn returns to his seat and Mr. Hoffman to the podium)

Mr. Hoffman: REMARKS
(Mr. Hoffman returns to his seat and President Dunn returns to podium.)

President Dunn: "Thank you, Kirk. We appreciate your serving as President of the Alumni Association for the past year and we thank you for attending these commencement ceremonies as we honor our newest alumni."

CONCLUDING REMARKS

President Dunn:
"We are at the end of our ceremony. Please permit me a few minutes to share a final thought or two. I intend to heed the words of Thomas Jefferson who said never use two words when one will do. Therefore, I intend to be brief.

This is the end of my first academic year as president. You are the first class I have been able to know and follow throughout the year. It has been my privilege to do so. Thank you for the warm reception and for your support! And, special thanks to those of you who have accepted me as one of your Facebook Friends!

There are two students graduating today to whom, in particular, I owe a debt of gratitude for making this year so memorable: Rosana Alsaud, who served this year as chair of the Graduate Student Advisory Committee, and

Chris Praedel, who served as president of the Western Student Association. I could not have asked for the assistance of a better set of student leaders. Their counsel, input, friendship and commitment to you--our students--and to the University have been commendable. They have been responsive, enterprising, helpful and a joy to know. I will miss them both.

Graduates, we are proud of you. Earning a degree is a significant accomplishment; an honor for which you should be justifiably proud. You are the recipient of a first-class education at a world-class university, provided by an outstanding faculty and made possible through the support and affection of family and friends--many of whom are gathered here.

You join an elite group of men and women who have successfully earned undergraduate or graduate degrees here. You have accomplished this in a very challenging time in the history of the world. Domestic and international crises consume much of our media attention and thoughts.

Yet, we see positive signs that inspire and motivate us to even greater heights. As you make your way in the world, I promise you will be struck by how often you learn about or meet a fellow WMU alum. They are literally everywhere and playing significant roles in their professions and world affairs.

You'll find our nearly 165,000 alumni in some surprising places.

- If accounting is your field, you might want to know about 1974 alumnus Dennis Nally, who is the chairman and senior partner of the US firm of PricewaterhouseCoopers. He visited campus this semester and told our business students that his WMU education "served him incredibly well" during his celebrated career.
- As you watch news reports this weekend about the U.S.S. Kitty Hawk making a high-profile and diplomatically tricky port call in Hong Kong, take note of the commander in charge of that warship, its 5,000-sailor crew, and its full complement of aircraft. He's Capt. Todd Zecchin (ZECH-in), a 1980 WMU alumnus.

- Should you head to the University of Minnesota for graduate school, you might want to know that the Big Ten University's president, Dr. Robert Bruininks, is a fellow alum. He graduated from WMU in 1964.
- If you're assigned to help your company or organization improve its use of information technology, you may work with Matthew Male, a 1998 alumnus in business administration and computer information systems who is president and CEO of BlueGranite. His company, which is headquartered in our Business Technology and Research Park, was part of Michigan's inaugural list of "50 Companies to Watch," and has been named one of West Michigan's "101 Best and Brightest Companies to Work For."
- If you're a fan of television's "The Shield," you're already familiar with L. Michael Burt, a 2003 alum in organizational communication. He's just finished his second season as the actor in the role of Moses for the FX show that's been called the best police drama on TV.
- Laura Stemmler earned her BA in Broadcast/Cable Production in 1999. Today, she's in Bristol, Conn., as an associate director for ESPN and she has two Emmy's sitting on her mantle for her work on the SportsCenter post game show.
- And for all of us so concerned about the health of our environment, it's comforting to know there's a Bronco playing a significant role. Cara Mroczek (ROE-zak), who earned her B.A. in political science and environmental studies at WMU in 2002, is a trial attorney in the Environmental Enforcement Section of the Environmental and Natural Resources Division of the Department of Justice. Her responsibilities include litigation on behalf of the Clean Water and Safe Drinking Water acts, as well as the Superfund law.

That's just a snapshot--information about a few WMU alumni who, like you, left WMU determined to do great things. Doing great things requires dedication of one's chosen profession. It also means committing to serve others--your family, friends and those less fortunate. Be generous with your time, talent and resources, and if you do, the rewards--extrinsically

and intrinsically-- will be plentiful. Some of the world's most brilliant humanists --Albert Schweitzer, Mother Teresa to name just two--remind us time and time again that true happiness is gained only when we give generously to others. George Washington Carver may have said it best, "How far you go in life depends on your being tender with the young, compassionate with the aged, sympathetic with the striving, and tolerant of the weak and the strong. Because, someday in your life, you will have been all of these."

Your faculty and all of our honored guests join with me in wishing you a life filled with service, success and happiness. Here on campus, we'll be watching proudly as you move forward with your careers. We ask only that you remain true to yourself and the values you cherish, and that you live each day in a way that makes you proud of who you are.

As Robert F. Kennedy put it, "Few will have the greatness to bend history itself, but each of us can work to change a small portion of events, and in the total of all those acts will be written the history of this generation."

Continue to challenge and nurture your mind. Remember, too, that good health is essential throughout your life. Take time daily to exercise. We all know that physical activity is good for your heart. Experts now agree that activity is equally good for your mind--giving you clearer thinking and a better memory. I believe that activity and discipline also nurture a person's soul. So, please, make your total health a top priority in your life.

Finally, although you have graduated from this University, we invite you to stay connected to us. We need your help in preparing the next generation of professionals. You are partners in this endeavor and we--the faculty and I--want you to know that you will always be a part of us. Keep active, keep learning, and keep in touch!

And, finally, what a great day to be a BRONCO!!

And now, please enjoy the slide presentation prepared for you and remember the good times, the people, places and things from your years here at Western Michigan University.”

(Slide Show - Music by Professor Steve Zegree)

President Dunn: “In closing, there are many people who work very hard to make this commencement ceremony meaningful and memorable for you.

Thank you to Marcus Jordan and the brothers of Phi Mu Alpha Sinfonia, Professor Steve Wolfinbarger and the Western Brass Ensemble, Professor Steve Zegree, pianist for the slide production, the commencement committee, and the many people who work behind the scenes and contribute so much to our commencement. (PAUSE)

And finally graduates, thank you for all that you have given to us and for all that you will be giving to society in the years to come. Make your mark on this world, fulfill your dreams and always remember those who helped to make this all possible for you!

(PAUSE)

May you enjoy happiness, peace, and health.

At this time the Brothers of Phi Mu Alpha Sinfonia will present the Alma Mater of Western Michigan University. After their performance, the Alma Mater will be repeated, at which time, all of you are invited to sing. Please rise for the Alma Mater and remain standing until the platform party leaves the stage.”

ALMA MATER

Western, we sing to you Brown and Gold
Western, we bring to you faith untold,
You challenge and inspire,
Your hope is our desire,
We sing to you our Alma Mater, Brown and Gold

RECESSIONAL

Western Brass Ensemble
Steve Wolfinbarger, Conductor

(President Dunn and Chair Miller lead to march off stage.)