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Dr. John M. Dunn
100+ Ph.D.s
June 26, 2008

- I'm so happy to be here with you and part of this celebration of Western Michigan University's strength in the realm of graduate education. Among the things that attracted me to WMU last year were the vitality and diversity of its doctoral offerings and the reputation that you--members of the graduate faculty--have built over the years.
- We're celebrating a real milestone today--112 doctoral degrees awarded during this academic year. Not only did we surpass the 100 doctoral degree mark, but we also surpassed by 17, the previous record of 95 degrees set in 2004-05 and repeated in 2006-07.
- What a tribute this is to all of you that this University has come so far so quickly. Since the first doctoral degree was awarded 40 years ago (1968-69 academic year), more than 2,000 students have earned doctoral degrees here. Only those of us in higher education truly realize what an accomplishment that is and what an investment of time, energy and dedication each of those degrees represents for the faculty members who mentored those graduates.
- I know the bonds between a doctoral student and his or her advisor are strong, and I know you often stay in touch with your students over the years. I saw something this week that really drives home the message about just how great and long lasting your influence will be. Just a few days ago, a news story was forwarded to us about a college instructor--one of our alums-- who is retiring this year. He is retiring after 42 years of teaching and three

decades as a local historian and author. He is retiring with the admiration of thousands of students--sometimes students of different generations in the same family. He traced his career and success as a historian his college teachers who were passionate about their discipline. He mentioned one in particular.

"I fell under the influence of Willis Dunbar at Western Michigan University," he told his local paper.

Willis Dunbar was an accomplished man. Head of the WMU history department, president of the Michigan Academy of Science and Letters, and a leading Michigan historian and author. For many of us here today, Willis Dunbar is a name on a building. But for his students and his student's students, and maybe even students that come after that, Willis Dunbar is so much more. He is the source of a lifetime love for a discipline and a commitment to higher education. Willis Dunbar died 38 years ago, but his influence on his students continues to be felt.

That may sound corny, but isn't what this is all about? The work that each of you do has the same or greater potential. It's not the name on the building we're after. It's having a name that has found a home deep in the heart and soul of a young scholar. It's being the owner of a name that comes spilling out when someone asks that young scholar how he or she got interested in a discipline.

I am so proud of what we have accomplished as a university, what we will accomplish together in the future and the impact it will have for generations

to come. Please keep inviting me back to celebrations like this. I can't wait for the next one.

Thank you.