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Diversity in Aviation Luncheon

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Dr. John M. Dunn
Diversity in Aviation Luncheon
W.K. Kellogg Foundation
Sept. 10, 2008

The importance of the Diversity in Aviation Scholarship

- With the worldwide need for aviation professionals, there is a critical need in the aviation industry to recruit and retain women and minorities. I'm grateful to the Kellogg Foundation for their financial support of a scholarship program designed to address this need. I'm also grateful to my predecessors, Diether and Elson (who I had the opportunity to meet for the first time this afternoon?) for their commitment to this important initiative. Ten years ago, just one percent of our aviation students were African American. Today the number is 6 percent. The numbers are moving in the right direction, but there is still much that needs to be done, and I am committed to ensuring that we continue down the right track.
- But numbers alone aren't the whole story. You know, shortly after being named president of WMU and while I was still at SIU I had the opportunity to learn something about WMU's aviation programs. (Story about the young man you met on the road...) Ours is an "awesome program" and one that offers opportunities I want to see extended to every qualified student. The Diversity in Aviation Scholarship program allows opportunities for individuals who may not have otherwise considered pursuing a career in aviation. These young professionals here today sharing their stories are the outcome of this work. I'm so happy we're in the position to make sure we do not lose the incredible potential they represent.

Additional bullet points from Tracey Henry

- The individuals selected went through rigorous testing and interviews before being selected as recipients of the scholarships. The dedication and determination of the candidates is apparent not only in their success throughout the program, but also today.
- “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.” Messages to the University Community, Nov. 21, 2007 - Statement on Diversity, Multiculturalism, and Inclusion
 - This is one such program that supports the message to the University community and helps reflect our society at large.
- I’ve been told that one of the current scholarship recipients, currently completing his training, has committed himself to giving back for this opportunity. He is active in the student organization, Multicultural Association of Aviation Professionals, and often volunteers to assist the college with the Division of Multicultural Affairs and OBAP aviation camps. His commitment to share aviation with women and minority youth is one of the many benefits of this program.

- The gift of these scholarships is greatly appreciated by Western Michigan University and the college of aviation.
- Thank you to the scholarship recipients that have taken the time to return to Battle Creek and share their experiences.