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## 25 Year Club

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Dr. John M. Dun  
25 Year Club  
Dec. 3, 2008

Good evening. It is truly an honor for me to be here this evening and to congratulate and thank all of you for your years of service to Western Michigan University. It's also a bit humbling to stand here with just over a year experience at WMU, looking out at a group of inductees into the 25 Year Club who have, collectively, devoted more than 775 years of service, hard work, commitment and caring to this University and its students.

A lot has happened since 1983--the year you first made your commitment to WMU. Vice President Rinker has just given you a pretty compelling rundown to illustrate how different things were then. In many ways, though, it was the beginning of the world we know today. Let me add a few words and phrases to remind you of how far we've come and how much is still the same.

- Lotus 1-2-3 (introduced that year)
- The Evil Empire (The real one, not Star Wars)
- Suicide bomber (Beruit)
- Tom Brokaw (takes lead anchor role on NBC)
- MLK Day (becomes a federal holiday)
- MASH final episode (you can still watch it on cable)
- Recession (enough said)
- Mobile phone (first commercially available)

That's just a snapshot of the world when you made your commitment to Western Michigan University. You decided then, or sometime thereafter, to build your career at this University. You'll note I did not say you chose to work here. I believe, as Scottish novelist Sir James Barrie (Peter Pan's creator) once said:

"Nothing is really work unless you would rather be doing something else."

There is one core message I'm here to deliver--the one thought I want you to leave with this evening. It's a simple one. Thank you.

You have the gratitude of tens of thousands of students who have benefited from your work as well as thousands of colleagues over the years whose work was made easier by the stability, wisdom and experience you brought to your roles at this institution.

You have built this university--through your teaching, through the support you have provided in keeping our physical plant sparkling, in keeping our academic enterprise humming, in building our technical assets and in providing top-notch and compassionate service to our students before, during and after their enrollment here.

Leadership guru Michael Armstrong tells us that the ancient Romans had a tradition: whenever one of their engineers constructed an arch, as the capstone was hoisted into place, the engineer assumed accountability for his work in the most profound way possible: he stood under the arch. I think each of us has the same accountability moment when our students hit that capstone moment. They graduate and leave us to assume their roles in the society in which we all must live. In a very real way, we are putting our lives and futures on the line and showing our confidence in the product of our life's work and passion. The contributions of our students are the proof of our success.

That success is what we are celebrating this evening. You made a commitment to the mission of WMU. I hope that your experience in doing so is and remains one of your central accomplishments in life.

Please enjoy the rest of your evening. You deserve to revel in this moment of accomplishment. Your work has made our University and our world a better place to be. Please also continue to grab me on campus for chats. I treasure hearing your thoughts and value getting a feel for what you think is going well or not so well. There's no one in a better position to provide that perspective.

Thank you for your dedication.