Community Welcome for New Legislators

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Community Welcome for New Legislators  
Dr. John M. Dunn  
1/15/09

• Good evening and let me begin by congratulating on your victories last November. I want also to thank you for your willingness to serve our state and the citizens of Michigan. I don't have to tell you the kinds of challenges Michigan faces, but I do have to let you know how appreciative I am for the service and time you will commit to finding solutions and helping our state reach its full potential.

• Seeing a group of new legislators take their seats in Lansing will make me feel like an old hand on the Michigan scene. I'm still relatively new here, but I can tell you that Michigan's reputation in higher education is strong and well deserved. I've known about Western Michigan University and the rest of Michigan's public universities for my entire career, and I have been so pleased to have the opportunity to lead one of Michigan's five research universities.

• As you face the challenges of office over the coming years, you'll often be inundated with detail, but I want to encourage you to use our state's educational resources whenever you can to take a step back and get the big picture. I speak for WMU of course, but I think I'm safe in saying that my colleagues across the state feel the same way. When you have
question or need additional information on literally any topic, don't hesitate to pick up the phone and call us.

• Whether the issue is green manufacturing, alternative energy options, vehicle design questions, treatment of post-traumatic stress syndrome, protecting our water resources, nanotechnology, health care education or aviation regulations, there are people in my university community ready to respond to your questions and provide the background you need.

• And if you want to get an accurate read on the future, I can tell you where to find about 25,000 bright young people--students from every corner of the state, nation and world, most of whom want to pursue careers, homes, families and community connections right here in Michigan. You'll hear from them from time to time, and you'll undoubtedly receive invitations to speak to them at various times.

I hope you are able to accept some of those opportunities. I guarantee you'll come away inspired somewhat in awe of the quality of our young people. It happens to me every day. You'll also come away from those encounters with a smile on your face and great hope for the future of Michigan. That happens to me every day as well.
• Finally, let me say you can expect to see us in Lansing in May--May 27. Last year, we started our WMU Day at the Capital initiative and it was spectacularly successful--some 800 students, faculty and staff spent the day showcasing our programs, research and cultural strengths. Please consider this your first official and very personal invitation to spend some time on the front lawn of the Capitol with us that day. We're looking forward to the chance to visit.

• Thank you and enjoy your legislative experience. I'm looking forward to working with you.