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"Road to Reintegration" Remarks

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"Road to Reintegration" Remarks  
Dr. John M. Dunn  
2/19/09

• Good afternoon and welcome to Western Michigan University. That welcome is extended to all, but I want to acknowledge some very special guests here this afternoon.

1) First, we have two National Guard leaders and an associate who have traveled here from Lansing:

- Brigadier General James Anderson, Assistant Adjutant General Army Michigan Army National Guard

- Brigadier General Carol Ann Fausone  
  Assistant Adjutant General for Veterans Affairs Department of Military and Veterans Affairs and MI Air National Guard

- Lisa Gorman, Contractor for the Michigan National Guard "Road to Reintegration" Program

Thank you for being with us here today.

I'd like to also ask if there are other current service members or veterans with us and if there are any family members of current service members or veterans. If so, please stand so we can acknowledge your service and sacrifice. You have our gratitude.
Gratitude is at the heart of what we're discussing today. As a University community, WMU has made a special effort over the past several years to reach out to veterans and let them know how welcome they are on our campus.

- We've established an advocacy office to help them navigate the issues they face as new and continuing students.

- We've launched a scholarship for veterans' first semester on campus and offered them residency status for the semesters that follow.

- We are very proud of the fact that Western Michigan University has the largest number of Afghanistan and Iraq veterans of any of Michigan's 15 public universities, and we're enormously pleased by the fact that our veterans have organized and are reaching out to each other here at WMU and to their colleagues at other universities.

- But there's so much more we need to do—primarily in the area of counseling to help veterans navigate the transition from areas of combat to what is a different environment with less dangerous stressors. It's not enough for us to say to veterans "Welcome home" or "Welcome to our university." We have to be able to say—"We're ready to help you adjust, and tackle issues that you may not even realize you'll face." That is simply the right thing to do.

- We're eager to work with the Veterans Administration and those with appropriate resources in the community to improve the services we offer veterans. We've already signaled our interest to have a VA facility for veterans on our campus and we're eager to reach out to those in the community.
• That's what today's program is about. It's about exploring those issues and needs and learning how we can say to veterans, "You were there for us. Now it's our turn to learn how we can be there for you."

Thank you for being here for this important work.