To the WMU Campus Community:

Since this is a community of learners, it is imperative that we create and allow opportunities for the expression of ideas, even those with which we disagree. To do less would prohibit us from having an environment that engages individuals in the pursuit of knowledge and the development of critical thinking skills. Western Michigan University is committed to fostering a climate that values diverse opinions, affirms freedom of speech and expects civility and respect in all forms of public discourse.

We choose always to put our faith in the ability of our students, faculty and staff to hear and consider ideas and arrive at conclusions that reflect the values and good sense that comes with being a full member of a vibrant academic community. We choose always to affirm our confidence in the ability of our community to debate ideas in a way that is both respectful and robust.

Speakers sometimes present ideas with which members of our campus community disagree. Occasionally, University leaders are asked to prevent such appearances because the ideas represented are disturbing or offensive to some. We should not prevent an idea from being heard, but rather our approach must be to encourage open debate and civility—civility to our speakers and to those who engage them. In turn, we require civility from our speakers and expect respect for opposing views expressed by members of our community. This is the response that best represents both our commitment to diversity and our belief that the free expression of ideas is a core academic value.
John M. Dunn
President