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Award Ceremony for the President's Grant for Study Abroad

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President John M. Dunn Remarks
Award Ceremony for the President's Grant for Study Abroad
April 7, 2009

- I am delighted to be here today. This second time I have had the privilege of awarding the President's Grant for Study Abroad. Those of you about to receive these grants will take part in what will be a life-altering event--the chance to visit and really immerse yourself in the culture of another land. You'll get a certificate from me today, but the real award is at the end of an airplane ride you'll soon take.
- Western Michigan University's traditions in international education and the potential for growth in this area are among its core strengths. Not only do we bring students from other nations here to study, but we have a growing number of students like you who understand the importance of being globally connected and who want the sheer joy of traveling and living abroad.
- You will be part of more than 500 WMU students who study abroad in more than 35 countries this year. I said last year I'd love to see that number double or even quadruple during my presidency--2000 has a nice ring to it. I'm even more supportive of that goal this year.
- I am passionate about the importance of students having the opportunity to talk, live, study and eat with people from diverse backgrounds. The ability to do that is the greatest gift we give our students. I have known that ever since I was a student from a small town in Illinois who had his view of the world changed by attending a university that attracted people from around the globe.
- The award you're receiving is made possible by an endowment--private support--designed to encourage foreign-language based study abroad. You have demonstrated

that you have been carefully preparing academically for this opportunity. That preparation is about to pay off for you. You have laid the groundwork to really take advantage of the language challenges you'll face.

- You're about to discover the truth of what author Henry Miller once said. "One's destination is never a place, but a new way of seeing things."
- You know, last fall, I had an opportunity to travel to the University of Burgos in Spain to take part in 10th anniversary of our study abroad program there. I was able to learn first-hand about the amazing experience our students there were having, and how they've grown and changed as a result.

I also learned how deeply the community members there and university personnel cared for our students. I'm confident you'll find the same caring atmosphere when you travel.

- I envy you the adventure you're about to experience and wish you a safe journey. You'll be building memories that will last a lifetime and global skills that will give you the edge in whatever you do in the future.

Enjoy your travels.

"Travel is fatal to prejudice, bigotry, and narrow-mindedness." - Mark Twain

"The world is a book and those who do not travel read only one page." - St. Augustine

