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4-8-2009

20th Anniversary of Phi Kappa Phi WMU Chapter

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Dunn, John M., "20th Anniversary of Phi Kappa Phi WMU Chapter" (2009). *WMU President John Dunn*. 296.

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President John M. Dunn
Remarks
20th Anniversary of Phi Kappa Phi WMU chapter
April 8, 2009

- Good evening. What a wonderful occasion we're celebrating this evening. It is my pleasure to be here and congratulate all of you for being part of what is now a 20-year tradition of celebrating academic success at Western Michigan University.
- You know, one of the markers of a top-notch research university is the endorsement of national honors organizations. Those endorsements are bestowed when an honor society authorizes a university to have its own chapter on its campus. The existence of honor societies like Phi Kappa Phi is one of the markers I looked for two years ago, when I was learning about this wonderful university.
- Phi Kappa Phi is the nation's oldest, largest and most selective all-discipline honor society. The presence of a large and vital chapter at WMU told me that a national organization of great prominence had recognized the academic excellence of the University and its programs. And it told me that this University had a tool to recognize the important achievements of its students.
- As I looked into the history of Phi Kappa Phi at WMU, I was not surprised to learn the identity of the person who sparked the initiative to earn the approval of this honor society. Diether Haenicke, who was a member himself, assessed the quality of this place and the achievement of students shortly after his arrival on campus. In late 1987, he asked a group of faculty members to begin the work of bringing a chapter to this campus.
- He's not physically with us this evening, but I'm sure he is here in spirit. This is part of his legacy.

- It is not an easy process to earn the right to shelter a chapter. That group of faculty members charged to accomplish the task drafted a 181-page petition. Phi Kappa Phi reviewed that petition and approved the University for the next step--a site visit.

The Phi Kappa Phi team came to WMU and interviewed key administrators and faculty, toured the academic facilities, examined our resources and met with student leaders. After reviewing the site team's report, the national organization granted WMU a chapter.

- That faculty steering committee and the society's first officers continue to have great influence on WMU. Drs. Joel Bowman, Larry Oppliger (AHPliger) and Joyce Zastrow are emeriti professors who are still active members of our campus community.

Three other members of the original officers group--apparently very young faculty members 20 years ago--are integral members of our campus leadership:

Dr. James Gilchrist, the chapter's first president, is today vice provost for academic operations and our chief information officer.

Dr. Eileen Evans--the chapter's first vice president today is vice provost for institutional effectiveness.

Dr. Maria Perez-Stable (STAH-blay)--who became president-elect in 1989, today leads our central reference operations at University Libraries.

- Twenty years ago--April 10, 1989--an installation ceremony was held right here in the Bernhard Center. Some of you who are newer members of Phi Kappa Phi were just infants then, but your University was working then to put into place a system to recognize your academic success
- Congratulations to everyone here this evening--for your work on behalf of Western Michigan University and for your academic achievements. You make us very proud.