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State Farm Scholarship Reception  
Dr. John M. Dunn  
April 20, 2009

• Good evening. It is really a pleasure to be here and have this opportunity to again publicly thank State Farm for its support of our students and our College of Education. This is our chance to say "thank you" as an institution, and it is a chance for our students and their families to say "thank you" on a more personal level.

• We welcome our partners from State Farm, our student interns and their families and our state legislators who have taken time from their busy day to help us celebrate this important partnership. It's a partnership that will pay dividends to our state for years to come.

• There are 20 student teaching interns who enjoyed important support from State Farm this semester--each received a $1,000 scholarship. Our interns hail from communities across the state, and they taught this semester in such locations as Benton Harbor, Muskegon, and Grand Rapids--many in what we like to call "urban schools of promise." That reflects our commitment and State Farm's commitment to helping youngsters who often face the greatest number of challenges.

• Our 20 teaching interns are part of WMU's School University Partnership Team, which has been recognized nationally by the Association of Teacher Educators as a "Distinguished Program in Teacher Education." We are proud of our 106-year-old teacher education heritage and proud of the caliber of educators we prepare for the classroom.

• The word about WMU-trained teachers is well known around the state. Just two days ago, we had representative from 95 Michigan school districts on our campus
recruiting this spring's graduates during our 21st annual Education Career Fair. There were school districts from around the nation as well, but for so many of our students, their hearts are in Michigan and they want to build their lives here and make a difference in their home state.

• For our students, the path to graduation was made easier by their State Farm scholarship. The company's support for the intern program is absolutely vital because it is a “make or break” time for our students, when they must devote their full energies to student teaching. We asked this semester's recipients to share with us what the $1,000 scholarships they received from State Farm meant to them and how it helped. Here are just a couple of their responses.

    - One nontraditional student who has paid for her education entirely through work and financial aid, called the State Farm scholarship "a blessing" that relieved the stress of having to work extra hours and allowed her to focus on her internship assignment, where she learned new teaching skills and classroom management strategies. "It was an experience that has made me grow as an individual," she said.

    - Another student, who said the scholarship allowed her to pay the rent and keep all of her energies focused on teaching, had this to say: "The experience I have had has been amazing. I think about what I would have gone through if I had a job, too. There is no way it would have been possible for me to have such a great experience without these monies."

    - And finally, one teacher intern who wants to build a career in urban education had this to say. "It was wonderful to be rewarded just for doing what I like to do. State Farm's award was a tremendous help during my internship semester."
• State Farm is a wonderful partner in this initiative and in so many other ways. The firm provides support for our College of Education's minority scholarship program as well, and they have helped us grow a wonderful financial planning program in our Haworth College of Business.

• Thank you for all that you do. And please enjoy the opportunity to chat with our students and hear their stories.