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Faculty Retirement Dinner Remarks
President John M. Dunn
May 28, 2009

- Good evening. I am pleased to be here this evening to celebrate your retirement from Western Michigan University. I usually like to begin by thanking my hosts or the audience for inviting me to be their guest. Tonight, though, the "thank you's" are all directed at you.
- There are 15 of you being honored this evening, although some were not able to attend. You have been the heart of this University, and when you leave us, you collectively take with you more than 375 years of service and institutional memory. Your individual years of service range from six to 40 years, for an average of just over 25 years.
- You have witnessed countless physical changes--spectacular new homes for our colleges of Aviation, Engineering and Applied Sciences, Haworth College of Business, and Health and Human Services; You've also seen the completion of an arts village for our College of Fine Arts and the beautiful new Richmond Center for Visual Arts.
- Even more important, you've seen this University grow from a regional institution to the national research university it is today. You were an important part of that growth and critical to achieving the status we enjoy today.
- Your accomplishments are among the milestones with which we've tracked the progress of this wonderful University. The grants you've secured, books you've written, papers you've delivered and performances you've offered added immeasurably to the world's perception of WMU.

Most important of all are the thousands of students from more than two generations who were launched on the road to success through your efforts. When we honor your accomplishments this evening, we are honoring not only your work, but what you have helped build at this University.

- You are retiring from the faculty and a lifetime of commitment to higher education, but I don't believe you're done with the intellectually rich and challenging life of an academic. I can't help but be reminded of the words of Louis Armstrong when he talked about the possibility of retiring.

"Musicians don't retire," he said. "They stop when there's no more music in them."

I think the same is true for those who have spent their lives in the classroom. Teachers don't retire. They stop when there's no more love of education in them. As I look at all of you and all you've accomplished, and as I listen to your stories of life as faculty members at this university, I know none of you will truly retire.

You'll just change your focus a bit. You're not retiring "from" something, as some people do. More likely, you're retiring "to" a life of new discovery and intellectual inquiry. Those ideas and dreams that have been dancing in the background can now take center stage.

- Let me also take a moment to say thank you to those who have been part of your life here--your loved ones, who have supported you in so many ways and helped you be productive. I know many are here with you tonight, and I know this milestone is theirs as much as yours.

- I know some of you are making plans to move from this city, but I want you all to know that no matter where you are--here in Kalamazoo or on the other side of the globe--you will remain part of this university community. You are responsible in large measure for the rich academic life we've developed as a community. We want you to remain part of our community.

- I look forward to seeing you on campus enjoying yourselves in the coming months and years. You've earned it.