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Friends of WMU Dinner Welcome

John M. Dunn

Western Michigan University, john.dunn@wmich.edu

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Friends of WMU Dinner Welcome
Dr. John M. Dunn
Aug. 1, 2009

- Good evening. Thank you for being part of the Friends of WMU and supporting Western Michigan University. I can't imagine a more agreeable group of dinner companions.
- And I can't imagine a more important vision or mission--making our voices and this University's contributions to our community, state and nation better known in Lansing and the broader leadership community.
- With 15 public universities in Michigan, there is a lot of "noise" generated--good noise, for the most part, but noise nonetheless. We have to find a way to cut through that noise and make sure our messages are heard clearly and understood.
- I think it is particularly important that those whose job it is to sift through that noise get a healthy dose of input from Western Michigan University. They need information from you, our friends, who are willing to step up and let our legislators know how you feel about WMU and how the issues on the table in Lansing might positively or negatively impact our overarching mission--providing the best university education possible to our students.
- We're out to establish a drumbeat of WMU voices that will help keep this University top of mind. Our legislators know how important we are to the state, but they need to be reminded and brought up to speed on a regular basis.

- We all know a lot about this university--or at least we think we do. There's something new happening every day on campus though. If you and I have difficulty staying abreast of the news on campus, just think how hard it is for those without the community or alumni ties that we have. Just look at what's happened during the past few months--supposedly the slow days of summer.

-For six days, ending last Monday, we had 700 of the world's leading physicists, including Nobel Laureates, on campus and in this community for the International Conference in Photonic, Electronic and Atomic Collisions. Held every two years, it's usually in places like London, Vienna, Paris or New York. They came to Kalamazoo this year because two of our physics researchers--Nora Berrah and John Tanis, the conference organizers--are internationally respected in the scientific community.

-Thursday, our campus anthropologists cut the ribbon on this year's public open house for our archaeological dig in Niles. Ft. St. Joseph was one of the original colonial French settlements in the Midwest. It was founded in 1691 and rivaled Fort Michilimackinac (mich ihl ah MACK in ah) in importance. Other universities (MSU and U of M-AA) tried for years to find the site where it once stood, but they failed. We succeeded, and we're uncovering a wealth of new historical information. Our work there may ultimately lead to the development of a major cultural/historical tourist attraction in SW Michigan.

-And yesterday, we announced the new WMU Confucius Institute, which will make this university and this community a center for Chinese language instruction and cultural exchanges. This development puts us in partnership

with Beijing Language and Culture University, China's premier language instruction school. The WMU Confucius Institute will enhance opportunities in our K-12 schools and it will become a resources for members of the business community--especially those firms and individuals interested in trade with China.

That's about two weeks worth of news. There's so much more on the way. Thank you for helping us make sure we cut through the clutter and leverage these developments in a way that will make our community grow and prosper.

Enjoy the evening.