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Kalamazoo Summit on Racism

John M. Dunn

Western Michigan University, john.dunn@wmich.edu

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• Good morning and welcome to Western Michigan University. I am enormously pleased that we are coming together as a community to discuss this critical issue, and I am enormously pleased that you have chosen to meet here on our campus.

• Your presence here this morning and the summit theme--Transforming Tomorrow Through Action Today--deliver a powerful message to our students and the community at large. The message is a simple one. We are united in our commitment to establishing a community in which every individual can reach his or her full potential.

• That full realization of potential is a moral, fiscal and social imperative. It makes sense. It feels right because it is right.

• A bit later today, I will be giving my annual State of the University address. I'll be talking about diversity in the broadest sense of the term and the strength that diversity brings to our organizations and the people we serve. That's a critical message in the educational community in general, but here in Kalamazoo, it's even more important. We have a great gift in the Kalamazoo Promise. It is both our challenge and responsibility to use the Promise as a tool to help students realize their potential.

• Dr. Tatum, we're honored to have you with us today and eager to hear your insights--especially as they relate to combating racism in education. We have our
work cut out for us, but I believe the very fact that we are gathered here to signal our commitment gives us a head start--and gives us hope for the future.

• Thank you for being here. And thank you to the YWCA of Kalamazoo for organizing today's summit. It is my pleasure to introduce to you Jennifer Shoub, the YWCA's chief executive officer who has worked so hard on this event and a number of related initiatives in the community. Please join me in welcoming her. Jennifer.