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WMU Confucius Institute Grand Opening

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WMU Confucius Institute Grand Opening
Dr. John M. Dunn
Nov. 23, 2009

- Good afternoon. Welcome to those of you in the audience here to celebrate with us this afternoon. And welcome to our guests from China--our partners in this wonderful new initiative. Welcome to Western Michigan University and welcome to Kalamazoo.

- Professor Wang, Vice General Counsel Chu, Professor Chen, and our other distinguished Chinese guests, your presence here today brings us great honor, great personal pleasure and creates a sense of tremendous excitement.

Your presence brings Great honor--in your acknowledgement of this University's commitment to international education and a longtime focus on China studies. You recognize the great friendship between this University and such scholars from your university as Dr. Lu Bisong. And you recognize the quality of the scholarship of such WMU scholars as Dr. Timothy Light and Dr. Xioajun Wang.

Your presence brings great personal pleasure--as you allow me to act as your host and return the hospitality you extended to me and the WMU delegation when we visited you last summer.

And, your visit to Kalamazoo and our campus brings great excitement for all of us as we look forward to the wonderful new opportunities for study, cultural exchanges and the promotion of deeper understanding between our nations.

- University life, by its nature, is focused on exploring new ideas and cultures and understanding the perspectives of others. With this new Confucius Institute, our faculty and students--at both Beijing Language and Culture University and Western Michigan University--will be able to expand the depth and the breadth of their knowledge of each other and each other's nations. What a perfect time for us to launch this effort. Just last week, as our national leaders met, they announced a commitment to dramatically expand the number of our students who study in each other's nations. (For U.S. it will be an increase of 80,000 over the next four years.)

- Just as exciting is the fact that with this institute, we will be able to extend opportunities to local communities. We will reach out to children in our elementary, middle and high schools and provide them with new language and cultural opportunities. Our business community will learn how to take advantage of the growing economic links between our countries, and our arts community will have new venues to consider and new international events around which to build their programming.

- As a student, as a faculty member, as a University president and as a citizen, I have been the eager recipient of such opportunities. I count my days in China last summer and the warm hospitality of your fine university as a signature moment in my personal journey of understanding.

- Thank you for your visit here this week. May it be just the first of many such trips, as we nurture our personal and professional friendships.

- Finally, let me close by complimenting your nation on choosing the name of Confucius as the focal point for your international outreach efforts. Even among

those who know relatively little about your nation and culture--for now--the name of Confucius is instantly recognized as one whose words reflect universal wisdom and common human truths.

Confucius once said, "They must often change who would be constant in happiness or wisdom."

Welcome to our community. Let us learn change together and let us celebrate change with this new partnership.

Thank you.