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## Hanukkah Party Remarks

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Hanukkah Party Remarks  
Dr. John M. Dunn  
12/13/09

- Good afternoon. Thank you so much for inviting me to be with you this afternoon. And thank you, in particular, for asking me to take part in the lighting of the menorah.
- Some of you have heard me mention before that I grew up in a small southern Illinois town without much diversity. My introduction to higher education as a student was my first chance to become aware of the rich cultural traditions that exist across our nation and around the world. Ever since then, I have been fortunate to continue learning and sharing in the traditions that my colleagues and students hold dear. I count this afternoon a privilege and am deeply honored to be included in your festivities.
- This Festival of Lights celebrates a spirit of warmth and fun and togetherness that resonates with me and reminds me of my own family traditions. Over my years as a university administrator, I have been honored to take part in Hanukkah events, but this one is special.
- As I look around this afternoon, I see familiar faces of students who are extremely active on our campus. I know your Hillel organization is a strong one and growing. I know also that having a space in the new Student Organization Center in the Bernhard Center has been a positive move for you. It has helped you raise your profile among your fellow students and better serve Jewish students by offering them opportunities to continue to celebrate Jewish life here in Kalamazoo.

- I know you have big plans for your organization to grow, and my message to you is that this campus community supports your desire to grow. A strong WMU Hillel is good for Jewish students and it is good for this University. It sends a message that this is a welcoming campus and that we want younger students from your home communities to consider WMU. With successful students like you as role models and a strong Jewish student community to lend support to incoming students, I think we can expect to welcome even more students from your home communities to our campus.

- I know as well, that the ultimate dream for you is to have a Hillel House here in Kalamazoo. Such a facility would serve as an illustration of this community's welcoming nature, but it could also serve as a force to solidify and build interaction with the local Jewish community.

- I have had productive discussions with Jewish community leaders along those lines. In those conversations, I have indicated our support for the concept and our appreciation for all that you do to serve as advocates for WMU in your communities. The time is right and your level of enthusiasm is commensurate with the task at hand. I will eagerly watch the next steps in this process and help in any way that is appropriate.

- May you and your families have a happy and joyful Hanukkah and a wonderful new year.

Thank you.