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Gold Pride Reception-Grand Rapids

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Gold Pride Reception-Grand Rapids
John M. Dunn
Feb. 9, 2010

Good evening.

- I am enormously pleased to be here this evening to meet with you to tell you more about Western Michigan University. You may feel you know us already, but it's my job tonight to make sure you know what is so powerful about WMU, why so many from the Grand Raids area--more than 1,700 from Kent County alone--have chosen WMU and why this university is the right choice for you.
- As families, you've been on a long journey together to prepare for this exciting point in your lives. I want to congratulate all of you on a job well done. You've laid the groundwork for success. You are here because you know that great potential can be enhanced by making the right college choice. You have heard or read about the benefits of being a student at WMU--wonderful faculty, great instructional facilities and people who really care about our students in and out of the classroom.
- This is a university that is focused on student success. We want you to succeed. Our entire university is devoted to helping our students live up to their potential.
- Let me brag a little bit. When I'm talking to people about this University, it's important that they're aware of some critical pieces of information about WMU. Here are a few things you should know.

-WMU is a research university--one of fewer than 200 in the nation to win that designation from the Carnegie Foundation. Why is that important to you? It

means you'll be taught by professors who are making the latest discoveries and are at the top of their game.

-We have an Honors College that is one of the oldest collegiate honors programs in the country and the credentials of our honors college classes equal or surpass those at the nation's most elite private colleges.

-We have the right program for you. There are more than 230 academic programs from which to choose--140 at the undergraduate level.

-We have nationally and internationally known programs that range from aviation and engineering management to vocal jazz, geosciences and medieval studies. In fact, if there were a "Final Four" for academic programs, WMU would have about a dozen programs one of the top slots every year. Earlier this month, for instance, our nonprofit leadership program was named the top such program in the nation by American Humanics, the professional group made up of nonprofit leaders from across the U.S.

- I could go on and on, but what I want you to know most is that the resources I just mentioned—and many, many more—are just the tip of the iceberg. In addition to great academics, we have wonderful social, cultural and athletic opportunities to enjoy and our student life staff is the best around.

I just gave you a few "Points of Pride" for WMU. Our students ran a contest on campus two years ago to select 100 things they value most about WMU. They received more than 700 suggestions--many of them running into 300 or 400 words. Let me tell you what an editing challenge that was!

- One of those points of pride was something we call the Western Edge. It's one way we describe the benefit of being a WMU student. You may already have heard about the Western Edge, since we talk a lot about it both on and off the campus. When people first learn about it, most of the discussion and interest centers on the four-year degree commitment and the retention scholarship. I hope many of you are able to take advantage of those opportunities. But when I talk about the Western Edge, I'm always careful to point out that the Western Edge is more. It is the total experience that comes from being part of the WMU community.

- The Western Edge is something our students take with them when they leave us. We've spent a lot of time researching what brings students to WMU and just what kind of feelings they take away with them when they graduate. Our alumni are extraordinarily positive about the spirit of this University that first attracted them, the caliber of the academic experience they found here and the level of success they've achieved as a result of their time as students at WMU.

- Just last week, some WMU students had an experience that is sure to have a lifelong impact. They are part of a WMU team that won the iOMe Challenge--a national collegiate contest asking some of the brightest minds in Generation Y to propose solutions to the nation's Social Security problems. Our team topped teams from Harvard, Boston University, St. Louis University, the Air Force Academy, University of Michigan and many others to win \$20,000 and an opportunity to go to Washington to present their plan to Congress. Last week, Wisconsin's Sen. Herb Kohl was their host as they shared their plan with members of Congress and Hill staffers during a meeting in the Hart Senate Office Building. Our Michigan delegation was there—Senators Levin and Stabenow and Congressman Upton. One of our four team members is a sophomore. She flew in to Washington from her study abroad location in France because she didn't want to miss this spectacular

opportunity. Two years ago, she was exactly where you are today--searching for the right school and finding the answer at a Gold Pride reception.

- (Possible add-ons.) Our students enjoy an enormous range of opportunities like the one I just described. Here are a couple of more examples that represent different areas of our University.

- This weekend, our synchronized ice skating team is in Italy to compete in an international event in Milan, where they'll represent both WMU and the U.S. Figure Skating Association.

- In two weeks, Gold Company, our world renowned vocal jazz group heads for New York to perform at Lincoln Center. They're becoming "regulars" in that venue.

- One of the great joys of being a university president is seeing students like you make a great decision. I'll be looking for you during Welcome Week on our campus next fall and I'll look forward to seeing you on campus after that. I'll be on the stage at Miller Auditorium to shake your hand when you receive your bachelor's degree a little more than four years from now.

- Thank you for your interest in Western Michigan University and thank you for being here this evening. I look forward speaking with you and answering any questions you have.