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Student Apartments Groundbreaking

John M. Dunn
Western Michigan University, john.dunn@wmich.edu

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• Good afternoon. This is a red-letter day for student life on the Western Michigan University campus. This morning, we broke ground for a new academic building--Sangren Hall. This afternoon, we're beginning the first new undergraduate housing project on this campus in nearly 50 years.

• We've been in the business of offering student housing on campus, now for some 72 years. Some of our housing is very traditional in nature and will continue to serve new students in ways that help them build a network of friends and learn to tap campus resources.

• This development, I believe, has been thoughtfully planned to meet the needs of upperclassmen--students who have already established themselves on campus but who also want the best of both worlds. They want the convenience of living on campus and having all of our campus resources at their fingertips. And they want the independence of being in an apartment environment.

• From my perspective, keeping students physically part of the campus community will pay dividends in their success as undergraduates and the strength of their ties one day as alumni. The students who live here will likely have more productive and successful careers as students, and that will translate to success in their chosen profession.

• The project we're beginning today--four buildings that will be home to some 300 students--will transform this corner of the campus and lead to student traditions we
can't yet envision or imagine. And if this complex is as successful as we think it will be, it will signal the start of similar building projects in other locations around the campus. We want to update our housing options in much the same way we've spent the past few years updating our academic buildings.

• This apartment complex was designed for students and with the input of students. Students, you've told us what you want. Now it's up to us to build it at warp speed, so next fall--fall 2011--some of you here with us today will have an opportunity to actually live here. In the meantime, we'll all be able to watch the building go up, courtesy of a set of Webcams that went live last weekend. You'll find a link on the Facilities Management website that will allow you to track construction progress in real time.

• Trustee Tolbert, Vice President Anderson and Mary Beth, please take a shovel and join me in this memorable moment.

(After the shovel routine, Diane Anderson will close by thanking everyone for coming and inviting them to the reception/social.)