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Lee Honors College Remarks  
Dr. John M. Dunn  
Sept. 15, 2010

• Thank you for inviting me. It's a pleasure to be here with you. You know I travel around the nation talking about Western Michigan University. I don't think I've even given one of those talks without mentioning the very special nature of the Lee Honors College.

• I tell people that 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.

• And invariably, when I speak, it is on the heels of a Lee Honors College member doing something outstanding--testifying before Congress, winning an anime acting contest in Los Angeles, placing first in a national trombone competition or winning a Udall Scholarship. So of course, I mention that as well.

• I have a lot of speeches on my calendar this year, so the pressure is on all of you. Don't let me down. There is nothing I like better than to talk about your achievements. Our alumni, prospective students, parents, legislators, business people and community members like hearing about successful students and the programs that support them. I am so proud of all of you and of this college and what it represents. Thank you for all the opportunities you have and will provide for me to boast.

**Turnabout--a story about Lee Honors College for current students**  
This college produces so many standout students and that it's only fair that I share a story designed to impress you and make you stop and consider the possibilities that come from being a Lee Honors College member. I could tell you about an alum
from decades ago who has gone on to do great things, but I’d rather focus on a more recent alum. Let me tell you about Aaron Boesenecker, a Dec. 1999 WMU graduate and Lee Honors College member from Hamilton, Mich. He's about 32 now.

Aaron had a great career here as an undergrad. He was a triple-major standout in comparative religion, German and political science. He was named a Presidential Scholar in the latter department and won a number of awards for his work from places like the Michigan Academy of Science, Arts and Letters.

He had some fun here as well. For three years, he led--was commodore--of the, the WMU Sailing Team. Under his leadership in 1998, the team became the only club-level, non-varsity, non-coached program in the country to earn a national ranking.

Aaron went on to earn an internship with the German parliament, worked in the Kalamazoo City Manager's office and finally went to grad school. He earned both a master's and doctoral degree from Georgetown University, and last year, he began his career as a faculty member and researcher.

Dr. Aaron Boesenecker, assistant professor at American University's School for International Service in Washington, D.C., will be on campus two weeks from now (Oct. 1) to deliver a talk titled “Where My Foreign Language Major Led Me: Reflections on an Interdisciplinary Education.” I'd say Dr. Boesenecker made pretty good use of his first 10 years as an alumnus of the Lee Honors College. His success in academic life and commitment to discovery is what I wish for each of you.

Celebrating excellence during the Academic Convocation

Tomorrow, we'll formally launch the year with our annual Academic Convocation. You are invited to be there at 3:30 p.m. in the Dalton Center Recital Hall. It's a longstanding tradition at WMU. We honor outstanding performance by faculty and
staff--this year 12 people will be honored--and I use the event to deliver the annual State of the University address.

• You are invited, but in case you're in class at the time, let me give you a preview of what I'm going to talk about (Expand on any of these as appropriate.)
  - I'll talk about the overall health of the University and share our fall enrollment. The news on that front is very good.

    - I'll remind the audience of one of the signature events of the fall semester--the accreditation site visit by a team from the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association, through which the University has been accredited since 1915.

    - I'll talk about the lengthy preparation that has been done campuswide to get ready for that visit and I'll talk about the self-discovery and reaffirmation value of that process.

    --And I'll spend a lot of time talking about discovery and its role in the academic life of our University. It is, quite simply, at the core of all we do.

    - Finally, I plan to lay down a series of challenges for the entire campus--students, staff and faculty--and the surrounding community. They're all based on discovery and where it can take us.

**Moving into the future**
What I will focus on tomorrow is my incredible optimism for our future--your future, really--as a University community. I think we have made great strides in recent years by focusing on three things that make Western Michigan University an inclusive, diverse and healthy place to learn and create.
• We've built a learning community that is sustainable. Our attention to green initiatives and sustainability really exceeds that of any other public university in Michigan.

• We’ve built a learning community that is diverse and is focused on nurturing the kind of respect that a diverse community requires. If there is one overriding message you take with you from your years at this University, I hope it is that every human being plays an important role and deserves to be heard and treated with the kind of respect each of us wants to experience.

• And finally, we're building a learning environment that is a healthy one--a place where we have an appreciation for the role that balance and healthy choices play in our lives--individually and as a community.

A Medical School on the horizon
One of the truly exciting developments in WMU's future will have a long-term impact on this University's growth and reputation and the value of the degree you will hold--regardless of your major. It is the development of a medical school here at Western Michigan University.

• Why a Med School?--life sciences heritage, world-class hospitals. economic development potential, opportunity to be on the cutting edge of medical education.

• Where we are in the planning?--seed money, hiring a founding dean, outstanding applicants

• What having a med school can mean to a University--research levels, synergies throughout the health and life science disciplines.
• **Why a med school is so important to the community**--tremendous potential for creating jobs and building the economy, the chance to enhance patient service and access.

• I've shared a bit with you about my views, but I suspect--I hope--that you have some areas of concern or curiosity that you'd like to hear addressed. So, I'd like to take the remainder of my time to respond to your questions and find out what issues are top of mind for you. Thank you for listening patiently to me. Now, please tell me what you would like to hear about.