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## Center for Health Information Technology Advancement CHITA Welcome

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## IT Forum--Advancing Health Care with IT

John M. Dunn

Nov. 12, 2010

- Good afternoon. First I want to extend my welcome to you to Western Michigan University. This IT Forum has become a much-anticipated tradition in the IT community--this is our ninth annual forum. I am pleased that it offers you an opportunity to visit our campus and spend a productive day talking with your colleagues from other organizations and hearing about some of the latest and best thinking on critical issues facing you in your professional lives.
- This is always a great event, but this is forum is a very special one. Not only are you discussing one of the emerging solutions to our health care crisis, you are also helping us with the official launch of Western Michigan University's Center for Health Information Technology Advancement--CHITA.
- Your co-chairs for today's event are Dr. Bernard Han, director of CHITA and professor of business information systems, and Dr. Sharie Falan, associate director of CHITA and assistant professor in the WMU Bronson School of Nursing. Their partnership in this effort is a perfect example of how the two professions must come together to find solutions and establish best practices. They've done a wonderful job of organizing and arranging for great speakers and bringing IT education leaders together with IT practitioners.
- Health care IT--Informatics, if you will--is at the core of how this country will reduce costs and become more efficient in meeting our health care needs. I know a little about this because WMU is in the process of establishing a medical school and

ensuring the school we establish is one that is focused on how medicine will be practiced in the future.

- Just last night, one of our candidates for the position of founding dean of the medical school gave a public presentation at Bronson. He outlined the critical areas he thought should be our priorities for that school, and he identified IT as the tool that medical students need to embrace from their first days in school. IT, he predicted would be the way medical data would be gathered, organized, stored and communicated between professionals.

- IT, he said, could also enhance communication between doctor and patient--although he did stop short of suggesting good texting techniques would replace bedside manner. And IT must play a role in educating a generation of students who are comfortable with and expect electronic tools to learn and explore the academic disciplines that are at the heart of medical education.

- That's a message I've heard repeatedly as we've delved deeper and deeper into our planning and looked more closely at how medicine will be--must be--practiced in the future.

- For people in your profession, the future is not just bright, it is dazzling. A new federal focus that was part of the federal stimulus package call for digitization of all health care records by 2014. We've seen predictions that up to 50,000 new professionals will be needed just to make that happen.

- And that may be underestimating the need. In late 2008, a survey published by the New England Journal of Medicine revealed that only 4 percent of the nation's physicians have a fully functional electronic records system. The paper trail of our nation's medical profession is notorious.

- And once that is done, the new frontier will be how to take that wealth of information and use it to actually advance the care of patients in a way not yet possible. A new cadre of professionals will be needed to address the problem that our ability to gather and organize information digitally far exceeds our ability to put it to daily use.
- But think about the possibilities. Think about those times in your own lives when medical care was delayed because your family doctor's IT system couldn't communicate with your cardiologist's system and neither system was compatible with your hospital's data system. Think about the times you waited for a CD full of x-rays to be FedExed or you even hand carried that CD to make sure it was available to a doctor making critical decisions about your health or the health of your child.
- We have the technology that could change all that. And we're on the brink of a future that will see that happen. You are an enormous part of that future. Thank you for being here and helping us celebrate this important event. I hope you find your time here well-spent and invigorating.
- I hope today's discussions get your creative juices flowing and spark ideas that can be implemented. We're counting on you.
- Thank you.