2-9-2011

Open House for Lifelong Learning Academy Remarks

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• Good afternoon and welcome to everyone here--member of our campus community and, of course, the much larger community. *Marilyn Schlack will be there as well as someone from K*

• We're here to talk about one of my favorite topics--learning, lifelong learning, learning for learning's sake and learning specifically geared to the desires of those who are 50 and over.

• We're talking about learning that is motivated by the most sincere factor of all, curiosity. In the words of renowned Canadian writer and editor Arnold Edinborough, “Curiosity is the very basis of education and if you tell me that curiosity killed the cat, I say only the cat died nobly.”

• Whatever took us so long? I'm ready, and I hope there are dozens of you here today who are ready to learn something new as well--Survival Spanish or Michigan water quality sound like some great topics to start with but the menu is wide open. I understand that if you don't find what you're looking for in the first round of classes, just wait. Upcoming sessions are in the works, and organizers are open to your suggestions.

• For months now, a steering committee of nearly 20 people from across the community have been working together to make this a reality. They were ably led by co-chairs D. Terry Williams, WMU professor emeritus of theatre; and Ruth Heinig, WMU professor emerita of communication.
• We began looking at how college communities across the country have made a commitment to use their extensive resources to serve a population ready to keep learning. The first 15 classes begin next month, but planning is already under way for future semesters.

This is a perfect storm of an opportunity--we have demand and supply in sync. We have a highly educated population that wants to keep learning. And we have wonderful instructional resources to meet those demands. Just look at the instructor lineup for the first-class offerings:

- Retired professors and instructors from WMU, K College and KVCC
- The bilingual and World Languages Director for Kalamazoo Public Schools (Manuel Brenes)
- The newly retired president and CEO of the Fetzer Institute (Tom Beech).

• This also fits into what, for the past two decades has been one of the hottest trends in senior lifestyle decisions. U.S. college communities have emerged as the retirement choice of more and more Americans. According to David Schless, president of the Washington, D.C.-based American Seniors Housing Association, more than 100 retirement communities tout proximity to a college campus for their cultural and intellectual opportunities.

“The concept works," Schless says, "because there are so many ways for the seniors to continue their personal growth.”
• We know that. This is a community richer than most with the ability to do this. Thank you to our co-chairs and the entire advisory board for recognizing this demand and working so hard to fill it. And thank you to those of you here to today ready to learn.

In the words of Harry Truman, "It's what you learn after you know it all that counts."