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1st Excellence in Diversity Awards Ceremony

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1st Excellence in Diversity Awards Ceremony
Dr. John M. Dunn
4/6/11

- Good evening. I am so pleased to be here for the very first award ceremony to honor those on our campus who demonstrate Excellence in Diversity.
- It's been a breakout year on our campus and in our community in recognizing and celebrating the diversity that makes us a stronger place to live and work. I'd like to point to just three milestones that set the tone for this year and the establishment of this awards program.

-First, is the wildly successful partnership that brought to our community and our region a national exhibit that helped spark conversation in classrooms, offices and homes across Southwest Michigan. The "RACE: Are We So Different?" exhibit opened last fall after three years of preparation. Tens of thousands of people--more than 35,000--visited the exhibit. The conversations that it sparked will go on in our community for months and years to come. It is entirely appropriate that some of today's honorees are being celebrated for the enormous commitment of time and energy they expended to make this exhibit a success. I'll single out one you all know-- Zarinah El-Amin Naeem in the Office of Diversity and Inclusion.

- The second milestone--we had our new Committee for Leadership in Diversity, Social Justice and Inclusion. Dr. Yvette Hyter, associate professor of speech pathology and audiology, and Dr. Katharine Cummings, associate dean of the College of Education and Human Development, led that initiative and are being honored today.

-And third, and critical for our continued progress in celebrating diversity, was the appointment of Dr. Martha Warfield as this University's first vice president for diversity and inclusion. Dr. Warfield, whose appointment was made early last fall, is a leader who for many years has played an important role as an advocate for diversity and inclusion. By moving her role into a central leadership position, we did two things. We signaled our University's commitment to the value of diversity and we celebrated the specific strengths Dr. Warfield has always brought to her advocacy role--expertise, sensitivity and compassion. Moving forward from this year of accomplishment, we have Dr. Warfield to lead us.

- This award ceremony is designed to recognize the first recipients of WMU's new Excellence in Diversity Awards. We're honoring people who have shown leadership, as demonstrated by their successful efforts to increase diversity on campus, advance WMU's Diversity and Multicultural Action Plan, and help create a climate that welcomes and supports all individuals.
- We celebrate diversity in the very broadest definition of the term. It is one key to a strong future. Diversity demands first that we commit to access for the broadest range of deserving students, and second, that we commit to the development of the full potential of each person we bring into our academic community.
- I've said before, and I will repeat it often into the future, I see diversity as part of our commitment to human capital--to sustaining the kind of environment in which we allow the full development of the potential of every member of our community.

When we do that, we all benefit from the contributions each fully developed person makes.

- Thank you for all you do to make this a diverse and healthy community. Join me in congratulating those who are leading the way.

Thank you.