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Nonprofit Leadership Grant Award Ceremony
Dr. John M. Dunn
April 11, 2011

- Good afternoon.
- I am deeply appreciative of all the time and effort that has gone into this annual event and happy to be a part the festivities. This is really a celebration of excellence in non-profit leadership, non-profit organization and exceptional business commitment to this community's non-profit sector.
- I often tell people that one of the things I found most appealing about Kalamazoo after moving here was the incredible commitment this community has to people, to the arts and to the quality of life for every one of its citizens. This is a community that is passionate about such things and it shows. This community allows and encourages the very best instincts of all of its citizens.
- A good example--but just one example--is our local United Way organization, which has been ranked nationally in the top 5 percent for the quality of its leadership and the effectiveness of its service to the community. That's the top 5 percent out of 1,300 United Way communities around the country.

WMU and service learning

- As a community, we have a lot to be proud of. At Western Michigan University, we spend a lot of time sharing that community commitment with our students. We want them to understand the possibilities of service in their community and the benefits they can bring to the table as well as the benefits from service that they can take away with them when they leave.

- In January, the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching singled out WMU as one of just 115 colleges and universities nationwide to earn a special designation this year for community engagement. The application process afforded us an opportunity to carefully evaluate the manner in which community engagement is embedded in our curriculum expressed through the collaborative work in the community and reflected in our longstanding outreach programs and partnerships.

We documented and the Carnegie Foundation lauded us for these and other facts:

- Service Learning courses are offered in six of our seven academic colleges.
- All of our student organization--nearly 300 in number--have a service component.
- Many of our student organizations have a service focus to them. They include student chapters of groups such as Habitat for Humanity and Engineers Without Borders.
- Our highly regarded nonprofit administration program has graduated and certified 90 nonprofit leaders over the past eight years.

- I see these characteristics play out on campus and in the community all the time. Just over a week ago, I was privileged to meet with students on our campus who were conducting their annual Spring Into the Streets--with the help of many of you here this evening. That day saw more than 700 WMU students at work in more than 20 locations around the city.

This evening's awards

- This evening's event is a celebration of all of the WMU connections to and partnerships with our community's nonprofit sector. But it is a celebration as well of one program's success in that arena--that nonprofit administration program that has produced 90 young nonprofit leaders. We'll honor students who are part of that program. These students are working toward a minor in nonprofit leadership and a

National Certification in Nonprofit Management and Leadership from the Nonprofit Leadership Alliance.

- These students are required to take three classes plus two electives, complete a 300-hour internship, attend a national conference, and participate in the Nonprofit Leadership Student Association. The minor and Nonprofit Leadership Alliance program is designed to prepare students for entry-level professional positions in nonprofit organizations.

- Through this single academic program--just one of our more than 230 academic programs--about 100 students have spent more than 39,000 hours during the past decade working as interns and volunteers in community organizations. They have interned at the Gilmore, the Kalamazoo Symphony Orchestra, Habitat for Humanity, Relay for Life, the Event Company, Kalamazoo Public Schools, Fort St. Joseph Archaeological Project, and the Lions Club. These students also do volunteer work through some of their major coursework and their work with student organizations.

The nonprofit award grant project

Celebrating our partnerships and honoring young leaders in the nonprofit sector--that sounds like a full plate to me, but we have one more important initiative to celebrate.

Our nonprofit leadership students have an opportunity to find out just how tough a job it is to give money away effectively--to give money away so that it makes the biggest impact. This is an incredibly rare and valuable experience--and one afforded to students in only a handful of programs in the nation.

For each of the past three years the Seminar in Nonprofit Leadership has granted \$15,000 to local nonprofit organizations. This year's grants have been funded by Michigan Campus Compact, three anonymous donors to the WMU Foundation, and the faculty in the School of Public Affairs and Administration.

Learning objectives for the seminar include:

1. understand and use consensus decision-making.
2. become a problem solver.
3. learn how to read statistical reports and tie the information to decisions.
4. learn about the demographics in Kalamazoo County and be able to research information in other geographic locations.
5. build local and regional partnerships with the nonprofit community.
6. learn how to research best practices.
7. learn the processes that organizations use to collaborate.
8. understand the importance of financial planning, policies and monitoring and be able to read and interpret financial statements.
9. learn best practices for grant writing and how to effectively critique grants.
10. articulate theories for measuring impact.

After studying community needs, students decided to fund only projects that would:

- (1) promote economic and neighborhood development through education about household financial literacy and energy conservation.
- (2) increase both high school graduation and post education rates through programs that develop essential skills in youth.
- (3) foster programs that promote fine arts for youth in diverse communities.

Seventeen proposals requesting more than \$74,000 were submitted. After reading, analyzing, and ranking proposals, questions were developed and students visited each agency. The class then heard each student's recommendation for funding and

our discussions began. The decisions presented here this afternoon, were decided by consensus.

The benefits to all involved

Those decisions might sound like we're announcing winners today. In reality, this community and the larger nonprofit community are the winners. Why?

- Those grants are staying here in the community to address very real needs.
- A steady supply of young leaders is being prepared to raise AND distribute funds in a professional manner. This program is focused on helping students distribute funds in a way that enhances their training and gives them insight into the workings of the nonprofit sector.

Nonprofit status in Michigan

These are important outcomes, but I think even more important is recognizing just how important the nonprofit sector is in our state. Just last week, a report was released. It was a study conducted by Johns Hopkins University and funded by the Mott Foundation (and reported in yesterday's Gazette).

Here's the executive summary.

In Michigan, employment in the nonprofit sector--places like hospitals, universities and social service agencies--rose by 23 percent during the past decade. At the same time, Michigan's for-profit jobs fell 21 percent.

Today, about 375,000 people, nearly 1 in every 10 workers in the state, are employed in the nonprofit sector. Nonprofits represent the fourth largest industry in the state behind manufacturing, retail trade and government. About two-thirds of nonprofit jobs are in health care.

“One of the fundamental stories coming out of the report is that Michigan is fortunate to be home to such an inventive, entrepreneurial nonprofit sector — one that is making a difference in a state under economic siege,” said the report’s principal author.

Deep state budget cuts in the coming fiscal year budget will put even more pressure on nonprofits to provide social services to the poor, and health care to the uninsured. Nonprofits will struggle to provide the staff needed to meet the state’s growing need for human and community services, the study said.

Closing

Here in Kalamazoo, I think we're leading the way in preparing those future staff members and in sustaining a commitment to service. Thank you for all you do in helping secure the future for communities around our nation.