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Center for Gerontology Opening

John M. Dunn

Western Michigan University, john.dunn@wmich.edu

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Center for Gerontology Opening
Dr. John M. Dunn
6/14/11

- Good afternoon. I am delighted to be here today for the opening of the Center for Gerontology in our wonderful College of Health and Human Services. I'm even more pleased that our focus on gerontology has been reinvigorated. I think our university and our health and human service programs are indebted to Dean Washington for making this happen and for championing this initiative.
- The timing on this development could not be better. In a global sense, of course, gerontology will be the discipline that drives a staggering percentage of our medical care and medical decision-making in the coming years. This year, the first baby boomers are turning 65. By the year 2030, all 78 million baby boomer will have done the same—giving this nation almost double the number of people this 65 and older that it had in 2005. One of every five people will be over 65 by the year 2030.
- The need for professionals who understand the biological, psychological and social aspects of aging is here already, and that need will only skyrocket. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services estimates 874,000 additional workers in the field will be needed during the next 10 years alone. That's the global outlook.
- Closer to home, right here at Western Michigan University, we're building a medical school. As we develop our curriculum, one idea we've talked about from the start was also a recommendation in the Carnegie Foundation's recent report on reforming medical education. That idea is to offer more opportunities

for medical students to train in teams with nursing and other health-care students--the kind of teams in which they'll work as professionals. An important part of many health care teams in the future will clearly be gerontology, and we're going to make sure it's a discipline in which all of our students are well versed.

- This center and the reinvigoration of gerontology education and research at our university means that we'll be where we need to be--on the cutting edge in preparing professionals and acquiring new knowledge. Just as important is the fact that our gerontology education program will be structured in a way that will allow a business student or psychology major to minor in gerontology and develop specialty areas to serve older Americans in a variety of disciplines.

- Years ago, author Truman Capote said, "Life is a moderately good play with a badly written third act." For the sake of all of us who are getting ready for that third act, I'm so pleased that Western Michigan University is investing its time and resources in making sure the play tells a complete and compelling story with a thoughtful ending.

Thank you.