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University Center for the Humanities Open House

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University Center for the Humanities Open House
Dr. John M. Dunn
10/5/11

- Good afternoon. This is truly a great day for our University community. We're making a statement about what we value as a learning community, and we're committing time and resources to ensure our "**learner-centered, discovery driven and globally engaged**" environment is all that it should be.
- Today is about people like all of you here celebrating this wonderful new facility, and it's about people like **Katherine Joslin, Blain Auer, Lofton Durham, Natalia Ohonna** and so many others who have put their energies behind a campuswide movement to celebrate the humanities and reaffirm the fact that these disciplines are at the heart of what we bring to our students.
- At too many schools around the nation, courses that constitute what we would regard as core learning opportunities for students are disappearing --courses on languages, global studies, philosophy, ethics, history and even physics are being cut--sometimes because the view of what it takes for a graduate to be "job ready" does not take into account the entire range of important skills that will serve our graduates and our communities.
- I think Western Michigan University always been a bit ahead of the curve. And I think today is a proactive demonstration of our commitment to stay ahead of the curve and produce graduates who are prepared not just for jobs in the short term, but for a rewarding, thoughtful and full lives and a long professional careers. With a renewed commitment to the humanities and its role as the core of what we do,

we're making a commitment to our students, and to our country's civic and economic health.

• **And as it turns out, the values we have always espoused and embraced simply because we believe in their worth, are exactly those that will help our students economically in the long run.** Our most savvy business leaders already understand and embrace this way of thinking. They hold views reflected in a recent national survey about the value of having college-trained employees.

The survey

Early this year (January), the Association of American Colleges and Universities released a survey of 302 private-sector and nonprofit business leaders around our nation. It reflected employers' increased expectations of new employees. It also reflected increased demands that colleges produce graduates ready with specific job skills AND broad communication, research and analytical abilities.

-A full **91** percent said they want to hire people with a broader set of skills than in the past and

-**89** percent said colleges should place more emphasis on preparing students "to effectively communicate orally and in writing" and to use "critical thinking and analytical reasoning skills."

-Employers also said they want students who are prepared for the global economy--and they want colleges to do a better job of equipping students for that reality.

• This is the national job scene our graduates face. We're producing graduates who meet these national standards--and our state's needs. This center will help us empower students for life and allow them to reflect the reality of what "well-

educated" means for a citizen in a global economy. To do less will shortchange our students' future options and our nation's long-term health.

- Thank you for what you've done to make today's opening a reality. And thank you for being willing to make a commitment to the long-term work of continuing to integrate the humanities across our curricula.