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Gull Lake Rotary

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Gull Lake Rotary
"What's New at WMU"
John M. Dunn
May 31, 2012

- Good Morning, and thank you so much for asking me to be here today. I understand you are interested in learning about my favorite topic--"What's New at WMU"--so let's not waste any time. I have a lot to share.

Just this month

- Let me start with a couple of items that will illustrate what happens on campus during "summer vacation." The major part of our academic year ended almost five weeks ago with April commencement. But things don't exactly grind to a halt on campus. If you were ever curious about the economic and cultural impact of WMU on the greater Kalamazoo community even in the summer, the past few weeks have provided a great way to illustrate the fact that every year, WMU has what is about an **\$800 million economic impact** on this county's economy.
- Within days of commencement, we welcomed 3,000-plus medieval scholars who came from all over the globe to spend four days in Kalamazoo attending the 47th International Congress on Medieval Studies. We've been home to this event for 50 years and this is the largest gathering of medieval scholars in the world. Filling the area's hotels and restaurants were scholars from every state in the U.S., Canada and universities across Europe, Asia, South America and Latin America. They were monks and professors, museum curators, musicologists and military specialists. You'll be interested to know that there are places in the world where Michigan is known for just two things--automobiles and WMU's annual medieval congress.
- Sharing the campus with the medievalists that weekend, were some 1,000 high school student artists and their families from all around Michigan. The students were

the cream of the crop in band and choral music, art, dance and writing who were attending the 50th annual Michigan Youth Arts Festival. They won the opportunity to have their talents showcased here by winning their local competitions earlier this year.

- In the coming four weeks, we'll welcome another 8,000 people to campus from all over the nation. These guests will be this fall's beginning students and their families who will be getting acquainted with the area during our Orientation sessions. These trips to our campus will be the first of many more the families will make over the next four years as they support their students and see them through to graduation.

Building projects on campus

- With the majority of our regular student body away for the summer, we're doing some major campus improvements. Earlier this month, we announced that we would be adding new buildings to our on-campus housing stock. Beginning this summer, we will launch an aggressive building project that will add two or three new buildings to our Western View apartment-style student residences. The first phase of the project was completed for occupancy just last fall. The new buildings will come online for fall 2013. These two phases represent the first new student housing we've built on campus in some 50 years. The housing style--apartments--and amenities of this project are proving extraordinarily popular. Phase I is at full capacity and we expect the same response to Phase II.

- Also while our students are home for the summer, we are putting the finishing touches on the transformation of the center of our campus. WMU's largest classroom building will open this fall. The new Sangren Hall is 230,000 square feet, four stories tall and designed to meet LEED gold standards, and will save us about \$350,000 annually in energy costs. The \$60 million Sangren project includes a landscaping "makeover" of the center of campus that will include walkways and

green space as well as outdoor seating and water features that will turn the area that was once a series of roadways and parking lots into a campus gathering space. Visit the campus in late August and you will be amazed at the transformation. (But don't come just yet, or you will be challenged to park and navigate the new area. It is an intensely busy construction zone.)

- And yesterday, we announced that we will build a new home for our University Archives and Regional History Collections on our Oakland Drive Campus, with construction beginning in July.
- These three building projects are already and will continue to be responsible for hundreds of construction jobs in Kalamazoo County. We're enormously pleased that we have been able to undertake them at a time when every job means so much to our community.

Students showcasing WMU around the country

- While we're making news and enhancing the campus here at home, we have students out and about and carrying the WMU reputation and Kalamazoo identity to locations around the world. We are a learner-centered, discovery driven and globally engaged university, and our students and alumni illustrate that every day.

Here are just a few examples:

-Earlier this month, two of our student filmmakers were featured on CNN. A short video they produced won first place in a national collegiate competition to explore the topic of press freedom for International Press Freedom Day. Judges, including Anderson Cooper, selected their film as the winner. They were flown to New York, interviewed on air and had their film aired by CNN and shown at an international press event.

-Also, this month, our men's tennis team earned its ninth MAC tournament championship and its 31st overall MAC title.

-And finally, I think you all know about the caliber of the WMU College of Fine Arts. Last weekend, a dance troupe from the college appeared at the Kennedy Center for the Arts in Washington, D.C., after winning the invitation to perform there at a hotly contested regional competition sponsored by the American College Dance Festival. And we have three phenomenal trombone students getting ready to head for Paris. They've been selected as finalists for international competitions that will put them up against students some of the top names among the world's music schools.

- I have two more items I want to tell you about. The first one is a perfect segue to the second. For many years, we have had an outstanding roster of graduate programs in the health care disciplines. This spring, U.S. News & World Report published its annual rankings of such graduate programs. Six Western Michigan University health programs were named among the best in the nation, with three of them--occupational therapy, physician assistant and speech-language pathology--rated both the highest in Michigan and among the top 50 nationwide. The remaining highly rated programs are in rehabilitation counseling, social work and audiology. We have a phenomenal reputation in those fields and we're about to take a dramatic step to enhance that reputation.

Medical school

- I want to bring you up to date on that longer-term effort that will have a real impact on all of our lives for many years into the future--the WMU School of Medicine.

The Cliff notes version of this is that two years from now, we'll be ready to open a medical school that will be not just the newest medical school in the nation, but one

that is also among the best. It will operate in the same entrepreneurial spirit that has made this community a hotbed for the life sciences and innovation.

For more than four years, we've been talking about this--first as a possibility and more recently as a reality. From the start, this has been a communitywide initiative. Our partners are this city's two world-class teaching hospitals--Borgess and Bronson.

We've said from the start it would be a privately funded medical school. That was the only way we would do it. Our focus from the start was to do this in a way that would not divert existing resources from our students and programs. We've been able to announce some huge developments along the way:

- In March of 2011, we announced a \$100 million anonymous gift to fund the school. That gift was among the ten largest cash gifts every made to an American public university. It was a transformational moment that illustrated we have the confidence of an important donor base and we can make this medical school happen with private funding. A gift like that--one that reflects confidence in our work--has the tendency to attract additional private support. We're already seeing that happen.

- In December, we received another major gift--a seven-story, 330,000-square-foot building in downtown Kalamazoo that will serve as the home to the medical school. The former Upjohn/Pharmacia/Pfizer research facility was given to us by MPI Research and William Parfet. Bill Parfet is the great grandson of W. E. Upjohn, and the site holds personal meaning to him. The building sits on the piece of land W.E. Upjohn purchased in 1876 to launch his company. We'll be honoring that tradition. Late this year, we'll begin a major renovation to prepare it for the arrival of our first class in 2014.

Since December, we've been somewhat quiet, and you may be wondering what's been happening. We've actually been pretty busy.

- The medical school has been recognized as a degree granting entity by the State of Michigan
- Our accreditation materials have been completed and submitted to the national accrediting body Liaison Committee on Medical Education.
- The building renovation details are nearing completion
- The school's governing board has been formally meeting and
- We're completing transition of Kalamazoo Center for Medical Studies into the School of Medicine

For all of us and our families, neighbors and colleagues, this new school of medicine will mean:

- Continually enhanced health care
- A pipeline that will ensure future generations of physicians are part of our community.
- Increased economic development opportunities as medical research synergies develop around the new school
- A direct economic impact on our community of more than 200 medical students and their families.

All of us on campus are tremendously excited about the possibilities and we want every member of our community to fully understand the potential and the power of what is coming to fruition. In that spirit, I will stop here and answer any question you have about these or other campus developments.

Thank you.