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Welcome to Chinese Visiting Faculty
John M. Dunn
July 9, 2012

• Good morning, and welcome to Western Michigan University, to Kalamazoo, Michigan and the United States. We are so pleased you are spending time with us this summer. We look forward to spending time with you, talking about global issues of higher education and contrasting our nations' and universities' responses to those issues.

• You've arrived on our campus during the quietest period of the year. During July and August, we have just a few--6,000-- students enrolled and a smattering of summer programs and camps for young people. For the rest of the year, this campus is teeming with more than 25,000 students from some 94 nations. I hope you have an opportunity to come back and visit us again someday when we are at peak activity level.

• In the meantime, however, the quiet summer weeks will afford you time for some intense interaction with members of the WMU faculty and staff. We are all eager for the opportunity and delighted to meet you and strengthen the ties that have already been established over the past few years between our universities. The initial five-year relationship between WMU and Sichuan University at first mostly resulted in exchanges between our two universities' engineering and business colleges. Then, programs in the fine arts got into the act. With last year's renewal of our relationship for a new five-year period, we're seeing even more disciplines involved.

Here are just a few of the ways we've learned about each other.

• A group of our engineering students and faculty visited your university for three weeks in 2007.
• Sichuan University Art Troupe performed on our campus and for our community in early 2008.

• WMU Director of Bands Robert Spradling served as artist in residence at Sichuan's Conservatory of Music just a year ago, when the Western Winds, a troupe from our School of Music was privileged to perform two wonderful concerts at your university.

• And Dr. (Jialin) Liu from your West China Medical School visited us last fall to help explore new trends in medical information technology.

So now, there are two dozen of you here to explore with us the common issues, goals and hopes we have for our students, our universities and our nations. I could not be happier that this has all come together and we have this unique opportunity to get to know you better.

The late Sen. J. William Fulbright, an American leader whose legacy is our Fulbright Scholars Program once said this about the kind of conversations we are engaged in together.

"Perhaps the greatest power of such intellectual exchange is to convert nations into peoples and to translate ideologies into human aspirations."

I could not agree more. In my visits to your nation, I have been received with such warmth and openness. It is my goal that you experience the same feeling while you are here as our guests.

I think you'll find your colleagues here extraordinarily receptive to the chance to talk with you. We've taken great pride in the strides we've made in establishing connections with your nation's universities. Our University is home to the Timothy
Light Center for Chinese Studies--named for an eminent scholar who has spent many years in your nation and who some of you may know.

In 2009, we also became the site of a Confucius Institute that formalized our long relationship with the Beijing Language and Culture Institute. That development has been embraced by our University and our community and has led to such things as new cultural exchanges and Chinese language classes in local schools.

I know you'll find your welcome to Western Michigan University and to Kalamazoo a warm one. I hope for many of you it is just the start of a long and strong relationship with those of us who consider ourselves your American colleagues.

Welcome. Enjoy yourselves and let us know how to help you maximize your opportunities to explore and meet new friends.

Thank you.