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## Sangren/Lee Honors Celebration

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Dr. John M. Dunn  
Sangren/Lee Honors Celebration  
Sept. 28, 2012

*(Opening remarks)*

Good evening. Thank you--every one of you--for being part of our celebration this evening.

Those who know me will tell you that I believe the very best way to set the stage for a great party is to invite the Bronco Marching Band and the brothers of Phi Mu Alpha Sinfonia. They are part of our School of Music that will be 100 years old next year. Let's take a moment to let them know how much we appreciate their performances and participation in this evening's activities.

I'll be joined at the podium this evening by Larry Tolbert, a member of the Western Michigan University Board of Trustees; Rep. Jase Bolger, who is the speaker of the Michigan House; and by State Sen. Tonya Schuitmaker. They've all been instrumental in making this evening a reality, and I'll be telling you more about the roles they played in just a moment.

With us this evening are also some people who are incredibly important members of our University family.

- Carl and Winifred Lee (or just Carl), whose incredible generosity gave us the original Lee Honors College as well as the renovations of that building we're celebrating this evening.

- Carol Haenicke, our University's former first lady who remains a champion for all that we do. President Haenicke would have reveled in this evening's celebration.

*(Others? Development to supply list)*

There are many people we need to recognize this evening, and we'll do that. But first, I need to put this in context and tell you why this is such an important event in the life of this University.

We are here to formally introduce and celebrate our wonderful new Sangren Hall, the renovation of the Lee Honors College and the completion of the beautiful green gathering space--the pedestrian mall-- that we've just left. We're acknowledging the impact these changes will have on members of the communities we serve, our alumni, area business and political leaders and, most important, on our students, faculty and staff.

Sangren Hall--the new Sangren Hall--is literally and figuratively at the heart of our campus. This building, the beautiful pedestrian mall and the newly renovated Lee Honors College have transformed our core campus. These facilities reflect and enhance all the values we hold dear--intellectual success, discovery, sustainability, excellence and a commitment to both our community and our legacy of transforming lives.

We're calling this evening's celebration a "Renewal of Excellence," and we do so with good reason. This building could be considered as something of a bricks-and-mortar metaphor that reflects the strengths, the past and the future of our University. It offers a chance to reflect on:

- Our **legacy**. As home to the College of Education and Human Development, it reflects our roots and reminds us of what we've always done and what we'll continue to do so well--prepare future generations of educators.

- The **sustained growth we will continue**. Sangren has enormous capacity and serves as a core instructional facility for the scores of programs that are part of the modern university we've become. Almost every student who earns a WMU degree will have taken at least one class in this technologically sophisticated building.

- The impact of **leadership**. There's a special spot in this building that reminds us of the leaders that have come before us and upon whose shoulders we all stand and to whom we owe gratitude. The ashes of Dr. Paul V. Sangren, WMU's second president who served WMU for 37 years--24 of them as president--rest in a vault overlooking the WMU seal on the first floor. The remains of his wife Flossie are there as well.

- Our **commitment to community**. Not only will this building serve our community, it also illustrates our commitment to the future of our state, nation and world. It is a structure built to showcase what it means to be "green," and I hope you take a few moments this evening to learn about it's special features.

Let me borrow a routine from the commercial world and share some figures with you.

- Number of man-hours worked to build this spectacular building?  
400,000.

- Worker wages generated in our community by this construction project?  
\$16 million

- Value to our students and community?  
Priceless.

Our education students will be among those who are most affected by this new learning environment. A bit earlier today, we were at the Lee Honors College to celebrate its new space. The honors student who spoke on behalf of her fellow students was Mary Davis, a secondary education major of great accomplishment. She is a wonderful example of the future educators who will call Sangren their academic home.

With us here tonight are many people--faculty, staff and students from the education college--who have poured their hearts, energy and innovative ideas into making sure Sangren was all that it could be.

Someone who is not with us this evening is the late Dr. Van Cooley. He had served as the college's dean since January and was intimately involved in every building detail before he died suddenly and unexpectedly just weeks ago. He would have loved this evening's celebration. His wife Linda is here with us tonight, and I've got a feeling he's watching with great pleasure as well.

(Moment of silence?)

"Thank you" seems an insufficient term for the many others responsible for this spectacularly successful project. I am however going to single out a few groups we need to acknowledge:

- First, of course, we thank our legislators, especially the members of our local delegation who secured capital outlay for this project.

- The University's Facilities Management staff shepherded this project through many years of planning, pre-construction, construction and building opening.
- The College of Education and Human Development faculty, staff and students continually stepped up to offer input and make this happen.
- SWH Group, the architectural and engineering firm that conceived this "smart" building and all that it represents.
- Our construction management firm Miller Davis that guided the building of Sangren, stayed on schedule, and set and achieved remarkable safety standards.

Within each of these groups are individuals whose commitment and dedication could only be described as remarkable. Please take a few moments this evening to personally thank them.

*Intro of Larry Tolbert*

And now, I'd like to introduce Trustee Larry Tolbert who is here representing his fellow members of the Western Michigan University Board of Trustees. We are fortunate to have trustees who care deeply about our University and whose involvement in University life isn't confined to a formal meeting schedule. Trustee Tolbert, who has served on the board since 2005, is a wonderful example of our board's commitment. Please welcome Trustee Larry Tolbert.

*(Intro of Legislators after Larry Tolbert speaks)*

Sangren Hall is opening this evening because of funding we received from the state of Michigan. There are two people here this evening without whom this building

would not have been funded and built. The Sangren Hall project had been on our list of capital outlay requests since 1995 and by 2000, had made it to the top of that list. In 2010, the need for improved instructional space was critical. Rep. Jase Bolger and Sen. Tonya Schuitmaker were steadfast in their support of Sangren funding. They were persistent and creative in ensuring that Western Michigan University finally received the green light to develop this amazing community and state resource. Over a two-year period, these two legislators ensured that the funding needed would be ours. It was not easy, but they kept the faith. Please welcome first Speaker of the House Jase Bolger and then Sen. Tonya Schuitmaker.

*(Closing after Sen. Schuitmaker speaks)*

The evening is not over. It is now yours to design to your own liking. The Lee Honors College is open for you to tour and we want you to thoroughly explore this building. Because this is the vibrant and multifaceted university, you may find that your evening has just begun. There's a beautiful pedestrian mall to wander and enjoy. There is a concert this evening in the Dalton Center. A short walk away--in Schneider Hall--U.S. Poet Laureate Philip Levine will give a reading. We hope this is just one of many evenings you choose to spend on our campus.

We're done with the program now. There is this wonderful building and another next door that are literally calling out to you and asking you to explore them. We have designed some self-guided tours that will allow you to see the highlights and chat with some students who can fill you in on the details. Our students and all of us are ready and eager to have these buildings begin to make a difference.

Winston Churchill once said:

"We shape our buildings; thereafter they shape us."

It's time to let that shaping begin. Please rise while the brothers of Phi Mu Alpha Sinfonia lead us in singing two important pieces--the Alma Mater and the WMU Fight Song.

*(Following the singing)*

Thank you for being here and helping us mark this wonderful moment in the history of Western Michigan University. Enjoy your evening.