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Legislative Briefing/Evolution of Sangren

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Good morning. I hope you are truly enjoying your visit to our new Sangren Hall. I'm going to tell you a little bit about how a very tired 60-year-old building evolved into the amazing facility that you are sitting in today. It was a multi-year effort. And to set the mood, I'm going to start at the end of the process--the last two years of the evolution of Sangren Hall condensed down into 40 seconds.

(Show video)

We also like to point out that what you just saw can also be characterized as about $1.5 million per second.

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

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

- Amount of worker wages generated in our community by this construction project? $16 million

- Value to our students and community? Priceless.

Sangren Hall--the new Sangren Hall--is literally and figuratively at the heart of our campus. This building and the beautiful pedestrian mall in front of it have transformed our core campus. These facilities reflect and enhance this University's
key values--intellectual success, discovery, sustainability, excellence and a commitment to both our community and our legacy of transforming lives.

• The original Sangren Hall was completed in 1964 and named for Western Michigan University's second president. What remains of it can still be seen behind this building. At 200,000 square feet, it was our largest and most heavily used classroom facility, home to our College of Education and used to teach courses in disciplines from across the University. It was our workhorse building for delivering general education coursework. Very few students graduated from WMU without having taken at least one class in Sangren.

• By 1995, we knew that technology and energy considerations had changed so dramatically, that we needed to massively renovate Sangren. We needed to update it after more than 30 years of high wear, and we needed to ensure we could offer cutting edge instructional space for our students, employing the technology they will use in the workplace and in graduate school.

• The Sangren Hall renovation project first made it to our list of capital outlay requests in 1995, and by 2000, had made it to the top of that list. The project remained at the top of our capital outlay request year after year. As the years passed, we first identified the cost of the total project as being about $52 million. We were still looking at the total renovation of an existing building.

• By 2008 when the Legislature approved the first phase of Sangren renovation, the renovation cost had grown to $56 million. Renovation by that point required a complete overhaul of the building's systems--roofing, external walls, the works.
• As we did our pre-construction due diligence, we quickly came to realize that for not much more--$60 million--we could construct a completely new building. Instead of trying to fit current academic needs into an existing structure, we could build a building that was larger by more than 30,000 square feet and able to serve us well into the future. It could also be built in such a sustainable way that we would save some $345,000 annually in energy costs. It was a better value for the state's dollars and the University's dollars. And it had the potential to transform our core campus.

• We broke ground in 2010, razing one wing of the old Sangren Hall for the new building's footprint. The rest of that older building will come down over the next year.

• The two years you saw elapse in that 40 seconds of video a few moments ago ultimately ended with the building we sit in today.

• Sangren 2.0 is home to the most innovative teaching and sustainability technology found on any campus in the Midwest. The new Sangren includes a reading clinic that will be widely used by children across the region, nine auditoriums, 50 classrooms, an Education Library and a state-of-the-art computer/teaching lab.

• In addition to that $345,000 in annual energy savings, the building is designed to cut overall water consumption by 50 percent. Built from sustainable materials, Sangren features:
  • recycled structural steel that came from within 500 miles of Kalamazoo,
  • locally sourced concrete,
• renewable cork walls and flooring and wood features made from renewable bamboo,
• terrazzo flooring that incorporates recycled glass and sea shells,
• a sophisticated air exchange wheel that will help cut heating and cooling energy usage by up to 70 percent, and
• green roofing and daylight harvesting features.

• The entire facility was built to LEED gold specifications and we hope someday soon to be celebrating with you the announcement of Sangren Hall being officially certified as one of Michigan's LEED gold building treasures.

• We officially opened Sangren on Sept. 28. Some of you were here with us to celebrate. Those who were present heard my heartfelt "Thank you" issued on behalf of all of Western Michigan University. I want to take the opportunity today to convey that message again. I'm not sure it can be said too often. Thank you.

• I'm happy to continue talking about Sangren, but I'm also the first to note that outside this room is one huge and inviting building that is just begging for you to explore and see for yourself what is so special. Please take some time while you're here to take a tour.

• And don't confine your gaze to the bricks and mortar. I urge you to look long and hard at the faces--the very happy faces-- of our students and our state's future.

• Enjoy your visit and please feel free to pose any questions.