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4-3-2013

Excellence in Diversity Awards Remarks

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Dunn, John M., "Excellence in Diversity Awards Remarks" (2013). *WMU President John Dunn*. 390.
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Excellence in Diversity Awards
Remarks by President John M. Dunn
April 3, 2013

(You are introduced following a video of students talking about about diversity)

- Good evening, and thank you all for being here. It makes me enormously proud to bring our honorees and those who nominated them together for a celebration of what we do so well at this university.

- You know I like talking about the value of diversity and how important it is to what we do here as a University and what we are able to accomplish as a nation. But honestly, after watching the video we just saw, I may be hard put to add more value to the really thoughtful words of the students we just heard from.

- What an amazing collection of insights we've just heard. Throughout that video, I heard echoes of the lessons I learned as a student many years ago when I was an undergraduate at Northern Illinois University. The world opened up for me there. Meeting, working, living and eating with people from diverse backgrounds changed my worldview and set me on a course I'm still following, exploring.

- What struck me about the students we just heard from is how much more sophisticated and aware they are about matters of diversity. They have already learned and internalized what it took years for many in my generation to realize. Diversity is not just about skin color or ethnicity. It is about accepting, honoring

and celebrating all the differences we bring to the table--differing worldviews, philosophies, gender orientations, political affiliations, geographic origins, learning styles, religions, temperaments--and more.

- Our strength--as a university, as a community and as a nation--comes from considering and sometimes even embracing the differences we all bring to the table. The more we embrace the differences in others, the more we give ourselves permission to be ourselves and live and work in the ways most comfortable to all of us.

- The students we just heard from understand that value. They've made it part of their lives and know they're reaching out to encourage their own campus organizations to join forces and make their actions and operations more inclusive. I am enormously proud to be the leader of a campus community where that is happening.

- Diversity demands we commit ourselves to helping each member of our campus community--students, faculty and staff--develop to their fullest potential. I am delighted to be here with you to honor those who are helping us fulfill our commitment. Each of our honorees has my gratitude and admiration. And each of this event's organizers deserves our thanks as well for reminding us how important it is to recognize the good work of individuals who truly lead by example.

- Thank you for all each of you do every day. And thank you for choosing to celebrate this important commitment.