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Michigan Geographic Bee Welcome

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Michigan Geographic Bee
Welcome by President John M. Dunn
April 5, 2013

Good afternoon.

- All of us here at Western Michigan University are excited to welcome you here today and pleased to be the host--for the sixth year--of Michigan's statewide Geographic Bee. As I look around this morning, it looks like you're all pretty excited, too--and very ready.
- Just to get you started, I have a warm-up question to pose to today's contestants. Raise your hand if you can tell me how many national forests exist in the state of Illinois. (Follow-up question. What is the name of the forest--Shawnee.)
- That's it, You're ready for today and a chance to win that trip to the Galapagos Islands.
- This is a special year for the Geographic Bee. 2013 marks the 25th year of holding these annual competitions, and the National Geographic Society itself is celebrating the 125th anniversary of its founding. You picked the right year to be a geography whiz.
- There are 101 of you from cities across Michigan. You come from public schools, private schools and home schools--from:
 - as far north and west as **Hancock**,
 - as far east as **Marysville**, and

- as far south as **Monroe**. Each of you proved your knowledge of geography by winning a local competition to be eligible for today's state-level contest. You won your school bee and you were among those with the highest placement on National Geographic's written test.

- Whoever wins today will go from the campus of Western Michigan University to Washington to compete in the national bee. And we have very high hopes for whoever today's winner turns out to be.

Michigan has had four national champions in the 25-year history of the national bee. Michigan's last champion won the national title in 2002. In 2009, we came close once more when the Michigan winner became a national finalist--again someone who won the state competition right here. We're ready for another Michigan champion.

- Whether or not you win and move to the next level, I hope you enjoy your day on our campus, and I hope you view it as a preview of the kind of opportunities that are in your future. No matter what kind of community you come from and no matter how much you already know about the world's nation's, cultures, economies and people, I guarantee that your world will be changed forever when you go to college and have the opportunity to live, study and work with people from all of those countries.

- I know, because I experienced the thrill of having my world expanded by having such an opportunity. I grew up in southern Illinois--Pinckneyville--near the Shawnee National Forest. When I had a chance to attend college. It left me

changed forever. Today, it's my privilege to lead Western Michigan University, which welcomes students from 95 nations this year--and I learn something new from them every single day.

Because geography is your passion and because you are all much smarter than the average middle school student, I'd like to share a quote with you.

50 years ago next year, the Beatles came to the United States for the first time to appear on TV and perform in a series of concerts. Ask your grandparents. They were a media sensation and were peppered with questions about how they like the U.S., what were their favorite stops, what they would tell their fans back in the U.K.

One reporter fired a question at Ringo Starr. "How do you find America, Ringo?"

"Turn left at Greenland." was Ringo's quick response. He clearly knew his geography.

- Have a wonderful competition. We're counting on you to represent well your family, your school, and your special region of the beautiful state of Michigan. Good luck and have fun!

Thank you.