5-29-2013

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WMU ScholarWorks Citation
Dunn, John M., "Faculty Retirement Dinner Remarks" (2013). WMU President John Dunn. 588.
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Faculty Retirement Dinner Remarks  
President John M. Dunn  
May 29, 2013

• Good evening. It is good to be back with you this evening for this opportunity to note the achievements of this year's honorees and, above all, to thank them--and all of you--for service to the University and generations of students.

• This year, I'm bringing you a slightly different perspective. On Sunday evening, I returned from a two-week trip to China and Japan to meet with our educational partners. My final days overseas--in Japan--gave me the opportunity to spend time with members of our alumni club in Tokyo. I had dinner with the club's executive board one evening and spoke the next day at the club's reunion held at the Mitsubishi Club.

• Kalamazoo Kai is comprised of generations of our Japanese alumni--roughly 40 years of people who attended WMU and then returned to their home nation, forever changed. They were changed by you. They were changed by the way you touched and mentored them. Kalamazoo Kai members returned to Japan as young professionals with extraordinary skills in disciplines like education, engineering, marketing and social work.

• They returned to Japan passionate about this institution and about the difference WMU and you made in their lives. They asked whether you're still teaching and whether or not you're still in the Kalamazoo community. They want to know what is happening on campus and the direction we are going. They are passionate about WMU and, as they told me, Kalamazoo remains in their hearts. Occasionally, they are able to return. They did so in great numbers this spring to honor and attend a
memorial service for Michitohsi Soga, a faculty retiree who spent years mentoring international students.

• In that one nation alone--one of the 95 nations from which our students come--there are hundreds who are forever changed. That's hundreds of people who will be Broncos forever.

• There are 14 of you being honored this evening. I always like to do the math. You represent five of our seven degree-granting colleges. When you leave us, you collectively take with you more than 400 (405) years of service and institutional memory. This year's faculty retirees have individual years of service that range from 13 to 47 years, for an average of nearly 29 years.

• There's another calculation to make that is difficult to do accurately. Multiply those 400 years of service by the number of students served in each year. The number will reach into the tens of thousands.

• W.H. Auden once said "A professor is one who talks in someone else's sleep." I've always liked that description. As we honor you tonight, I want you to think about those "someone else's" all around the world. They're former students for whom your voice is a permanent part of their dreams and the sense of direction they summon to meet a challenge. They are your legacy.

• This evening, the first order of business is to thank you for your commitment and contributions. I also want to thank your family members who have been part of your life here--your loved ones who have supported you in so many ways and helped you to be productive. Even though our focus this evening is on you, I know this milestone
is theirs as much as yours. So please join me in extending the gratitude of this
University to them (pause to lead applause).

• You are retiring from the faculty, but I don't believe for a minute that you're done
with the intellectually rich and challenging life of an academic. You'll change your
focus a bit. You're not retiring "from" something, as some people do. You're retiring
"to" a life of new intellectual inquiry. Those ideas that have been dancing in the
background can now take center stage--on your own schedule. As one sage said of
retirement, "The money is no better, but the hours are."

• I want you all to know that no matter where you are you will remain--always--a part
of this University community. I look forward to seeing you on campus enjoying
yourselves in the coming months and years. You've earned it.