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## Bigelow/Hoekje Hall Closing Ceremony Remarks

John M. Dunn

Western Michigan University, [john.dunn@wmich.edu](mailto:john.dunn@wmich.edu)

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Bigelow/Hoekje Hall Closing Ceremony  
Remarks  
President John M. Dunn  
June 7, 2013

- Good afternoon. Thank you for being here and for helping us send these two long-time residence halls out in style.
- These are two facilities that have had an impact on tens of thousands of students during the more than half a century that they each have been in service. Memories were made here as students moved in and made these halls home. For many, Bigelow or Hoekje Hall was their first home away from home--their first home as young adults.
- For those of you who have returned to campus for just one last look, a photo and the chance to say farewell, we welcome you back. It is clear your time here was an important passage in your life.
- These two halls were named for two longtime and highly respected members of the University community. **Dr. Howard F. Bigelow** was an economics professor at WMU from 1924 to 1961. **John C. Hoekje [HOKE-yah]** was a professor of education and psychology who also served as registrar, dean of admissions and director of extension during his 1916-to-1955 tenure at the University.

- There's a small group here today with very personal ties to these buildings. We are enormously pleased and honored to have several members of both the Bigelow and Hoekje families with us. You'll hear from a member of each family in just a moment. In the meantime, I'd like to take a moment to thank both families for their clear attachment to Western Michigan University. I'd also like to thank them for lending their family names to these two important structures. Please join me in a round of applause.

- I know that Howard Bigelow and John Hoekje were both honored when the decision was made to name these buildings for them. We decided to celebrate that honor by including in this afternoon's printed program, a piece of artwork from the dedication materials for each building. The Hoekje dedication occurred in 1959 and the Bigelow event was in 1961.

- But you know, looking at the careers of these two wonderful educators tells me they would not be opposed to seeing the chapter close on their namesake facilities. They were focused on their students and making sure those students had opportunities here--in the classroom and outside the classroom--that were unparalleled.

- Both men were here during dire fiscal times and during times of great growth. I think if they were standing here with us today, they would be enormously proud of the institution they helped build. There would be a certain amount of nostalgia, but I think they'd be focused not so much on

the past, but on the future and the new opportunities that we'll be building on this spot for the tens of thousands of students still to come.

- Today is an opportunity to both honor the past and look forward to the future. This afternoon, we'll tip the scales a bit to focus on good memories shared by so many. But our underlying focus is, as always, on the future and building opportunities for those who entrust their futures to us.
- Thank you for being here, sharing your memories and taking the time to reflect on a bit of history. Enjoy the rest of the afternoon.