8-22-2013

Lifelong Learning Academy D. Terry Williams Award

John M. Dunn
Western Michigan University, john.dunn@wmich.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/dunn

Part of the Higher Education Commons

WMU ScholarWorks Citation
Dunn, John M., "Lifelong Learning Academy D. Terry Williams Award" (2013). WMU President John Dunn. 578.
https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/dunn/578

This Speech is brought to you for free and open access by the Office of the President at ScholarWorks at WMU. It has been accepted for inclusion in WMU President John Dunn by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks at WMU. For more information, please contact maira.bundza@wmich.edu.
• Good afternoon. It is a pleasure to be here to celebrate the success of our Lifelong Learning Academy. I can't think of a better way the "learner centered" nature of our University community.

• It's been successful because it has had great leadership. One of my roles today is to note the special qualities that one individual has brought to the table.

• When I was first preparing to come to WMU in 2007, I was cautioned to keep an eye on D. Terry Williams, who, curiously, retired just a day before I took office. I've often wondered about that timing. D. Terry, people noted, would bear some watching. All that energy and over-the-top showmanship would need a new focus after more than 25 years in the theatre department. We could be facing high comedy or deep drama.

• I watched, and I waited while Terry remained active on campus. I'd see him at events, and we'd touch bases occasionally. But I never had the feeling he had really sorted out the retirement issue. It was with enormous interest/relief that I finally learned that he would chair the Lifelong Learning Academy Advisory Board with his colleague Ruth Heinig. They launched the community learning initiative in 2011 to what one could only call “box office success”. Expecting 50 to 75 people to attend the academy's first open house, they packed Walwood Hall with nearly 300 people. And yes, it was Standing Room Only.

• The mission of the academy, Terry told a reporter, was to dispel the myth that retired seniors and older adults are content to stay home, read, travel, or basically be put out to pasture.
• D. Terry Williams went out of his way to personally dispel that myth--leading by example. He was back doing what he does best--teaching and sharing his love for the theatre. Among the Lifelong Learning Academy's first offerings was a short course on three plays by Edward Albee, taught, of course by Terry Williams. Since then, we've seen him everywhere--teaching, staging labor protests, "Dancing With the Stars" and returning to the Department of Theatre for a guest directing stint.

• All that showmanship and energy needed a focus. This university and this community are better places today because Terry Williams channeled his strengths into laying the groundwork and setting the bar high for our very successful Lifelong Learning Academy. Terry, thank you, on behalf of your University and the entire community for your work in making the first two years of this Lifelong Learning initiative the spectacular success that it is.