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8-29-2013

2013 Matriculation Ceremony President's Video-Taped Remarks

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Dunn, John M., "2013 Matriculation Ceremony President's Video-Taped Remarks" (2013). *WMU President John Dunn*. 574.

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2013 Matriculation Ceremony
President's Video-taped Remarks
(John M. Dunn in Santo Domingo, Dom Rep. attending ceremony honoring WMU)
Viewed at Matriculation in Miller Auditorium on Aug. 29, 2013

- Good afternoon. (Pause) Dr. Anderson was kind enough to introduce me. I'm going to ask her now to help me get this evening's event started right. So, let's try that one more time.

Good evening. (Pause--for student response--encouraged by Anderson)

I'm John M. Dunn, president of Western Michigan University--your University. This is the first official gathering of the Class of 2017. It's my pleasure today to say, "Welcome" to each of you and "Welcome" to all of you who are new transfer students and international students. You, and your families, too, are now part of the Bronco community.

- The first thing I want to do is let you know about a few of the people who are here on the stage this afternoon. They are all committed to ensuring your college career gets off to a good start.

- You'll hear from several of these people in a few moments. They include a University trustee, the mayor of Kalamazoo, faculty and staff leaders, a student government leader and the deans who lead our academic colleges. And finally--and most important--here to welcome you to our community today are the people who will play the most critical role in your studies and who serve as the heart of this institution--members of the faculty of Western Michigan University.

Opportunities--the kind you expect and those that are unexpected--are what today is all about. The ability to recognize and use unexpected opportunities is central to getting the most out of being a student.

You came here with high expectations of us, and we will fulfill them. But it will be the things you don't expect that may, in the end, have the most lasting effect on your future. My advice to you is to leave yourself wide open--to breathe deep and literally inhale all there is to take in.

You will have unexpected opportunities to:

- Challenge your own core beliefs, embrace them anew or develop new ones;
- Meet and develop relationships with people from backgrounds and cultures you cannot imagine as you sit here this morning; and
- Consider ideas that will startle you; and
- Contribute your own innovative ideas and discoveries.

So, what do you have to do to make the most of these unexpected opportunities?

- 1) Ask questions.
- 2) Find a path that is broader than the one you envision right now by sampling the whole range of entertainment, social, cultural and athletic opportunities available.
- 3) Sustain your current friendships--and make new ones.
- 4) Enjoy yourself, but do so responsibly.
- 5) And finally, take chances. I'm not suggesting risky behavior here. I'm suggesting risky ways of thinking. Accomplish things you have not yet considered and solve problems not yet discovered.

To paraphrase the words of Thomas Edison, 'If there is a way to do something... find it!'

Welcome to the Western Michigan University community. We are delighted to have you here and eager to get to know you.

(Closing set-up for Trustee Miller)

Today, you begin your adventure as a member of this University community, AND as a new member of the Kalamazoo community. There is a special bond between this University and the city that is its home. Here to tell you a little about this relationship is a longtime member of the Western Michigan University Board of Trustees, Mr. Ken Miller, who is also a leader in the Kalamazoo community.

I'll leave you with one thought that I know Trustee Miller will echo. Remember, it's always a great day to be a Bronco!