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Welcome to New Faculty-WMU, KVCC and K-College

John M. Dunn

Western Michigan University, john.dunn@wmich.edu

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WMU President John M. Dunn
Welcome to New Faculty-WMU, KVCC and K-College
Oct. 1, 2013

- Good afternoon and welcome to this event honoring our newest community members-- new faculty from Kalamazoo College, Kalamazoo Valley Community College and Western Michigan University.

- We're all glad you're here and eager to welcome you, not just as part of our academic communities but of our extended Kalamazoo and Southwest Michigan communities as well. We look forward to seeing you in our neighborhoods and throughout the very special civic infrastructure. This is a town that is dedicated to education, the life sciences and human service. You will fit right in.

- But I know how stressful it is to move, perhaps with a family, to begin a new job and navigate the intricacies of a new hometown. And I know that first impressions are important and timing is everything. So, I'd like to share the experience of one young person who made a successful transition to this community.

More than 55 years ago on a bleak January evening, a young graduate student and his friend were hitchhiking home for the weekend. They found themselves standing on Stadium Drive, just a few blocks from here. It was the proverbial dark and stormy night. A driving snowstorm and extreme cold chilled them to the bone as they waited in desperation for a ride out of town. The young student could not see a thing, but he remembers one thing vividly. He asked his friend the name of the town they were in and was told it was Kalamazoo.

"Mark my words," he said to his friend. "I will never set foot in this white hell-hole again as long as I live."

That same young man, a little grayer and infinitely wiser, is now Dr. Paul Maier, the Russell Seibert Professor Emeritus of Ancient History at Western Michigan University and a world-renowned expert on the early history of Christianity. He retired two years ago after serving for 54 years as a member of the WMU academic community--more than 50 years of that time as our longest-serving board-appointed faculty member.

A few years after his initial introduction to Kalamazoo, Paul Maier became a new faculty member at the University, and he managed to see what was obscured by snow, darkness and inexperience on his first disastrous trip to the area. He plunged into life here and built an academic and personal life that is the envy of many. He has inspired generations of students, and he's had more than his share of fun along the way. He has reaped the benefits from his energy and engagement and his total immersion in the life of this University and this community.

That is the kind of career I wish for each of you. Welcome, and thank you for deciding to become a member of our community. Enjoy yourself this afternoon, and please know that regardless of which school you teach at, I'm looking forward to seeing you at events on campus for many years to come.

Welcome.