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Welcome to East Lakes Region Association of American Geographers

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

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Good evening and thank you all for choosing to meet here on the campus of Western Michigan University. We are delighted to welcome you to—

- The second most westerly of Michigan's five Carnegie-designated research universities

- Which is located in the city of Kalamazoo, the majority of which sits on the southwest bank of a major bend in the Kalamazoo River, with a small portion, about 2.8 square miles on the opposite bank.

Those last facts I shared are just to let you know that we've been listening carefully over the past seven years as each spring, our campus is host to the Michigan statewide National Geographic Bee. Each spring I spend a bit of time listening to some of the brightest young middle school minds in the world and wondering where I went wrong.

I will say that the seven years WMU has hosted the event coincides exactly with my tenure as president of this great University. For that fact, I will happily take whatever credit is left after we rightfully reach out to praise Dr. Lisa DeChano of our faculty who has been the moving force behind the Geographic Bee at this University.

We are enormously proud of our Department of Geography, which was one of Western Michigan University's early strengths as a very young institution. That department has remained a vital and vibrant academic hub for the changing discipline that opens doors to an incredible array of career paths. Today, WMU has the second largest geography
department in the state and it ranks ninth among the 89 institutions in the United States that award theses-based master's degrees in geography.

As a research university with a number of interdisciplinary initiatives in such areas as water resource mapping and management, transportation, historical tourism and archaeology, and climate science, you can imagine how important our geographers are to this University's success on many levels. I hope you have the time while you're here to hear more about that work.

And as a University deeply committed to the principals of sustainability and climate protection, we know the resource your discipline brings to the table in that arena. I can only imagine that all of these topics will be part of the poster and paper presentations you're able to enjoy during your conference.

Again, welcome and please take some time to really explore our campus and community. We're very glad you're here.

Thank you.