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Battle of the Buildings Kickoff

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• Good afternoon, and thank you all for being here to help us jump in with both feet to a statewide competition that focuses on what we do extraordinarily well--save energy.

• While the Battle of the Buildings was launched today in Grand Rapids, we were in Battle Creek meeting with the University's Board of Trustees. So, we pushed our own opening ceremony back a bit, but there was never any doubt the Western Michigan University campus would rise to the challenge.

• I noted during this morning's meeting that we would enter six buildings in this effort that is sponsored by the West Michigan and Detroit chapters of the U.S. Green Building Council, DTE and Consumers Energy. I also noted that the particular challenge we face in this effort is finding significant and measurable energy savings--because after decades of effort, our buildings are already incredibly efficient. Still, there's always room for improvement.

• Just in the past year, our energy savings and sustainability efforts have garnered these awards for WMU.

  • The **2014 Climate Leadership Award** from Second Nature, a national nonprofit organization that works to transform higher education to create a healthy, just and sustainable society.
• A gold designation from **STARS**—the Sustainability, Tracking, Assessment and Rating System—administered by the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education.

• **Green Seal Certification** for our cleaning systems, making WMU one of only four universities in the nation so honored.

• The **2014 Best of Green Schools** recipient in the higher education category of the Princeton Review and the U.S. Green Building Council's annual top-10 green schools ranking.

• A designation as one of the **nation's top 50 most affordable, eco-friendly** colleges by BestChoiceSchools.com.

• And another designation as one of the **five best U.S. campuses for electric cars** by the British publication Transport Evolved.

• Those are wonderful acknowledgements of what we do here, and we would love to add a new title from the Battle of the Buildings, but our sustainability work is not done to reap external awards. We do this to wisely manage the resources that have been entrusted to us and to inculcate in our students the value of sustainable living.

• Wise use of resources helps our budget, of course. It also helps determine the paths that are open to us in the future. We'll continue to eek out every bit of energy savings there is available because it's the right thing to do.

• And now, I'll turn the podium back over to our facilities management professionals who do so much to keep us on the sustainability track. Thank you for being here and
thank you, in advance, for doing all you can to find those last bits of energy savings in our Battle of the Buildings entries.