MLK Higher Education Open House Welcome

John M. Dunn  
Western Michigan University, john.dunn@wmich.edu
Good morning and welcome to Western Michigan University. We are so pleased to have you here with us today.

This year, we've chosen to celebrate the life of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. a little differently than we have in the past. With this year's theme, "Equity in Action-United Community," we thought it particularly important to reach out in a way that might have an impact on families in our community.

Dr. Martin Luther King’s own words said it best. In accepting his Nobel Peace Prize in Oslo in 1964, he said:

“I have the audacity to believe that peoples everywhere can have three meals a day for their bodies, education and culture for their minds, and dignity, equality, and freedom for their spirits.”

Those words reveal Dr. King’s respect for knowledge and its power. He fought for the right of all children to be well educated and to have the opportunity to realize their potential. Because of the Kalamazoo Promise, we have the gift, as a community to ensure that we can provide that opportunity to every one of our children.

The Promise is a gift of enormous potential. I'm an educator. I have a bias for education and what it can accomplish. I know that from personal experience. I share Dr. King's belief about how critical it is to provide our young people with the
opportunity for education. He knew that without that opportunity, those he fought for could only go so far.

• Quality, integrated education had to be achieved, he said. Without it, "the drive for freedom will be undermined by the absence of a most vital and indispensable element--learning."

• Together, we can help our young people begin the process of exploring how best they can take advantage of the Promise. It’s about seizing a precious opportunity.

• This is not about where children choose to attend college--although I'll be honest and say I hope they choose their hometown university--this is more about making sure our children fully understand the wealth of opportunity that is available to them with a college degree, no matter what school they choose to attend. We want them to begin working on the particulars--deciding exactly how they are going to realize the Promise and fulfill their dreams.

• Enjoy this open house and the opportunity to get the kind of information that's important for your family. And please, as you're browsing and taking part in some of the activities, stop and chat with me and introduce me to your family. I'm eager to get to know you.

Thank you.