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Campus-Wide Forum on Student Mental Health Difficulties and Suicidality

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Campus-Wide Forum on Student Mental Health Difficulties and Suicidality
President John M. Dunn
Friday, February 26, 2016
8:15-10:30 a.m.

- There appears to be increasing evidence and wide consensus that today's young adults experience more mental health difficulties than in the past. College student use of psychotropic medications for depression and anxiety, their visits to counseling centers, and their behavioral problems have increased significantly across the country in the past 15-20 years.
- Unfortunately, the completion rate of suffering individuals who have ultimately resorted to taking their own life has remained stagnant despite nation-wide efforts to reduce the incidence of suicide.
- The issues of suicide and mental pressures among college students are exceedingly complex. Institutions of higher learning across the U.S. are struggling to find effective ways to identify and help students who are at risk for behavioral problems, substance abuse, academic failure, social isolation, debilitating depression and anxiety, and other heart-rending outcomes.
- These efforts have prompted much debate and left us with still unanswered questions:
 - What is a university's role in addressing student mental health difficulties?

- How many, and what kinds of resources should be directed towards those efforts?
 - What is the role of faculty and staff in addressing student mental health problems?
 - How can a university find balance between the rights of students with problematic behaviors to live on campus and pursue an education and the rights of other students to live and learn in an environment of peace, order and security?
- Similar to our sister institutions, we have not, and will not, find flawless solutions to these complicated, thorny challenges.
 - Despite this, it is imperative that the Western Michigan University community continues to seek greater understanding about these problems and that we communicate in a real and open manner about our challenges and concerns. Truthful, respectful dialog about the often misunderstood subjects of mental illness and suicidality is our mission today. The more we each know, the better we can assist our students, our colleagues, our family members or ourselves to seek assistance that can make a difference.
 - Thank you for your attendance and participation in today's forum and your ongoing caring and concern for each other.