



4-1-2016

Michigan Geographic Bee

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WMU ScholarWorks Citation

Dunn, John M., "Michigan Geographic Bee" (2016). *WMU President John Dunn*. 665.
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Michigan Geographic Bee
Welcome by President John M. Dunn
April 1, 2016

Good afternoon.

- All of us here at Western Michigan University are excited to have you here today and pleased to be the host--for the ninth year--of Michigan's statewide Geographic Bee.
- Just to get you started, I have two easy warm-up questions to pose to today's contestants. Raise your hand if you can tell me how many national forests exist in the state of Illinois. (Follow-up question. What is the name of the forest--Shawnee.)
- That's it, You're ready for today and a chance to win that trip to Washington D. C. and a shot at the national championship prize--a \$50,000 scholarship.
- There are 104 of you from cities across Michigan. You come from public schools, private schools and home schools. You come from as far north as Houghton, as far west as Escanaba, as far east as Marysville and as far south as Lambertville. Today, you all have two things in common: You all love geography and, for today at least, you're all Broncos!

We have high hopes for whoever wins the state bee and heads to Washington. Michigan has had four national champions. Our state's last national champion won the title in 2002. In 2009, 2013 and 2015, we came close when the Michigan winners became national finalists. It's time for another Michigan champion.

- Whether or not you win and move to the next level, I hope you enjoy your day on our campus, and I hope you view it as a preview of the kind of opportunities that are in your future. No matter the size of the community you come from and no matter how much you already know about the world's nation's, cultures, economies and people, I guarantee that your world will be changed forever when you go to college and have the opportunity to live, study and work with people from other nations around the globe.

Because geography is your passion and because you may be asked why that is, I'd like to share a quote with you. President Obama told competitors at the 2012 National Geographic Bee that the study of geography is:

"about understanding the complexity of our world, appreciating the diversity of cultures that exists across continents. And in the end, it's about using all that knowledge to help bridge divides and bring people together."

- We need to bring people together, and I can't think of a better reason to excel in this wonderful discipline. Good luck today. Have a wonderful competition. We're counting on you to represent our state well in Washington.

Thank you and Go Broncos!