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Future Educators Program Announcement

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

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• Good morning. We're so happy to have you all here with us in the amazing space to help us celebrate the launch of a truly important community partnership.

• This University is all about encouraging transformation, and we've always been convinced that teachers are at the core of transformation. For a student to have a teacher he or she can connect with is critical--and it starts in the earliest years of K-12 education. That's what this morning is all about.

• Today, we're announcing a new partnership with Kalamazoo Public Schools and the Kalamazoo Promise. Our goal is to boost the diversity of both WMU's education programs and the KPS teaching force. We'll do that by providing additional annual financial support for two groups of up to five Kalamazoo Promise students who hope to become educators. We're going to do everything we can to make sure KPS students see teachers in the classroom who look like they do and can help inspire youngsters realize higher education is meant for them.

• To launch this program, we have to thank an anonymous donor who has committed $250,000 to the effort. His gift will fund two groups of five students. Adding an additional student opportunity to that mix is made possible by a $25,000 gift from the Advia Foundation. We're fortunate to have two people
here today from Advia who we can thank-- Janet Veach, marketing coordinator, and Nancy Loftis, vice president of marketing and public relations. Please join me in thanking them and asking them to convey that gratitude to their colleagues.

- Of our anonymous donor, I can tell you that he had the personal experience of having his life transformed by a teacher who became his mentor and champion. He recognizes the importance of having a diverse teaching force that is able to inspire all students to take advantage of their opportunities. The donor has been working with us to leverage the Kalamazoo Promise in a way that will result in greater diversity among those headed for the K-12 classroom. This partnership with the donors and with our colleagues at KPS and the Promise is designed to provide that extra bit of support that can be a game changer for students with potential.

- So how will it work?

- Students selected for the initiative will each receive $5,000 annually for five years. That award will be made in addition to their tuition scholarship from the Kalamazoo Promise. Students can use the annual award for room and board, books, transportation expenses or other items that help them successfully earn a degree and teaching credentials.

- This all has just been finalized after many months of work. We wanted to announce it immediately because we want to start recruiting students right away for this fall. As the selection committee chooses students for the program,
preference will be given to students who are first generation college students, are from historically underrepresented student populations, or are from historically underrepresented K-12 teacher populations.

• We'll be delighted to diversify the pool of prospective teachers in our education college, and we'll be working hard to make sure the students who are chosen have the academic support they need to be successful. But this effort is so much more. The students selected will have some wonderful professional development opportunities throughout their undergraduate years. And they'll have an important professional opportunity when they succeed. You'll notice I didn't say "if" they succeed. They will.

• Here to tell you about the commitment Kalamazoo Public Schools has made to this partnership and to the student cohorts is Kalamazoo Public Schools Superintendent Michael Rice. Please join me in welcoming him.

Thank you.