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5-26-2016

## Faculty Retirement Dinner Remarks

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### WMU ScholarWorks Citation

Dunn, John M., "Faculty Retirement Dinner Remarks" (2016). *WMU President John Dunn*. 648.

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Faculty Retirement Dinner Remarks  
President John M. Dunn  
May 26, 2016

- Good evening. I am honored to be here this evening to celebrate your retirement from Western Michigan University.
- I often like to note that it was this annual event nine years ago, that gave me some of my first great insights into the quality and dedication of the WMU faculty, having just been named president in the spring of 2007, I had the opportunity to attend the 2007 dinner with then-president Diether Haenicke. It was the most profound affirmation of the power of this university that I could have hoped to experience and I am reminded of that again this evening as I talk with you and read the materials that celebrate your accomplishments.
- There are 23 of you being honored this evening, and you represent six of our seven degree-granting colleges. You have been the heart of this University, and when you leave us, you collectively take with you 642 years of service and institutional memory. This year's faculty retirees have an average of 28 years of service, but the range of individual years of service runs from 12 to 48 years.
- The first thing I want to do is to simply thank you for your commitment and contributions. I also want to thank those who have been part of your life here--your loved ones who have supported you in so many ways and helped you be productive. I know many are here with you tonight, and I know this milestone is theirs as much as yours. Let's take a moment to acknowledge their role in making tonight's celebration possible. (pause and lead applause)

- In that average 28 years of service, you have witnessed countless physical changes--spectacular new homes for our colleges of Education, Engineering and Applied Sciences, Haworth College of Business, and Health and Human Services. You've also seen the completion of an arts village for our College of Fine Arts, the beautiful new Richmond Center for Visual Arts, and most recently, the reclamation of the University's birthplace with the reopening of Heritage Hall on Prospect Hill. You've witnessed a dramatic shift in student attitudes and expectations, in technology and its role in instruction and daily life, and in the demands on higher education to bring economic vitality to our state and nation.

- And more recently, you've seen our University become one of fewer than 90 colleges and universities in the nation that is home to both a medical school and a law school.

- Even more important, you've seen this University grow into to the national, inclusive, sustainable, vital research university it is today. No, let me correct that. You didn't just see that evolution. Your work--your teaching, research and creative work--fueled that growth and made this University the renowned institution it is today.

- You know, last year at this dinner I noted the generational shift underway by reminding those attending that their retirement celebration was happening within the same 24-hour period that David Letterman was retiring. There's an update. After a year of quiet life as a retiree and growing a beard, David Letterman weighed in Saturday on what he had learned. He recalled a moment during a recent White House state dinner he attended when a diplomat seated at the same table asked him who he was and why he'd been invited to the event.

“I tell you, if you want to have something affect your self-esteem, retire,” Letterman told an audience to whom he told the story.

- That may be the experience of an entertainer, but I guarantee your self-esteem will never be in that kind of jeopardy. You are professors who, as W.H. Auden once said, are the continuing voice "in someone else's sleep." And those "someone else's" are all around the world. They're former students for whom your voice is a permanent part of their dreams and the sense of direction they summon to meet every challenge. They are your legacy.

- I know some of you are making plans to move from this city, but I want you all to know that no matter where you are--here in Kalamazoo or on the other side of the globe--you will remain part of this university community. You are responsible in large measure for the rich academic life we've developed as a community. We want you to remain part of our community.

- I look forward to seeing you on campus enjoying yourselves in the coming months and years. You've earned it. Congratulations.