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## WMU/Consumers Energy Solar Garden Launch

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WMU/Consumers Energy Solar Garden Launch  
Dr. John M. Dunn  
Sept. 16, 2016  
11:30 a.m.

- Good morning/afternoon (it will be almost noon) Thank you for joining us for this celebration of a truly great partnership that has resulted in a new resource for our campus and community.
- Consumers Energy has a long proud tradition of consumer service. Our relationship with the company over the past many months has certainly demonstrated to us the company's commitment to community, to education, and to modeling and building a sustainable future. We could not be more proud to be partners with Consumers Energy, and we look forward to a long productive relationship.
- When it comes to forming a partnership with impact, I think we picked the trifecta here (That's a good horse/Bronco analogy) This solar energy plant:
  - Provides members of our community with a way to support and make a commitment to renewable energy,
  - Provides a site in which we can both model sound environmental practices and train students for a future in which solar energy is an important source of energy, and
  - Provides a site for this research university to do work that will continue to maximize solar energy use in the future.
- I cannot think of a more appropriate way to partner with a company than providing community opportunity today and preparing our students for the future. And what better place for this to be located than right here on our College of Engineering and

Applied Sciences campus and near Floyd Hall. I will confess to being pretty fond of the view from U.S. 131 and the way the Solar Garden adds to the already high-tech and high-energy feeling of our engineering campus and the surrounding Business Technology and Research Park.

- Partnership, community service and sustainability are core values for Western Michigan University. Our sustainability commitment dates back decades, with initiatives that are fashionable in collegiate circles today, but were revolutionary when Western Michigan University first adopted them.

More than 35 years ago--in 1980, this University became the first in the nation to establish a green revolving fund to harvest savings from energy conservation initiatives and reinvest those savings in more energy saving projects. We've used that tool to finance more than 100 energy-saving efforts. Today, green revolving funds are being launched at colleges and universities around the nation.

- We're proud to welcome this new Solar Garden concept as another pioneering effort. The facility we formally open today is the largest on-campus solar power plant in the state. We'll use the opportunity provided by our partnership with Consumers Energy for education and research. It will help turn the attention of communities like this one to the potential of solar power.

And that potential is enormous. Tesla Motor's CEO Elon Musk once described the sun as a "handy fusion reactor in the sky" and noted we don't really have to do anything to use it. It just works, and it shows up every day.

He's right. It's there every day and is a clean source of power. As we learn more about maximizing its use, we don't need to worry about side effects. As a billboard once famously trumpeted:

"When there's a huge solar energy spill, it's just called a 'nice day.'"

Thank you for being part of this celebration. We look forward to sunny days ahead. Today, as always, it's a great day to be a Bronco.