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Spring Convocation Closing

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Spring Convocation Closing
Dr. John M. Dunn
Feb. 17, 2017

- Good Afternoon. We're at the end of Spring Convocation, and there's only me standing between you and the Gold Gathering that awaits you just outside those doors.
- This moment, perhaps, calls for me to heed the words of Franklin Roosevelt, who famously advised speakers to "Be sincere, be brief; be seated."

Let me add my congratulations to today's honorees. And offer my thanks for the good work being done. As I told our research honorees at lunch, I had the opportunity earlier this week to meet with alumni in Scottsdale and San Francisco. They are grateful for the experiences they had here and proud of what their alma mater does everyday to lead in innovation and, by example, to set the tone of civility and respect.

Our mission for this wonderful new spring tradition at WMU is to honor the very best of our community members--faculty, staff and students--who make outstanding contributions in the areas of research, diversity and global engagement.

This year the latter two qualities are particularly meaningful and important, given our role as an organization that is trying to provide leadership in those areas during a time of deep societal stress. As we take note and celebrate those in our community who have a deep commitment to diversity and global engagement, the topics are at the core of community discussions and national debate. Our spring convocation is one of many efforts in our community and elsewhere to put the focus on respect for all and civility in a diverse community.

I'd like to note that we are both a resource for our community in these matters as well as companions on the journey. We may have been at this longer than some, but we continue to learn from each other and those who make up our neighborhoods.

Tomorrow, we will be the host, right here, to a countywide community conversation that looks at diversity and respect and their importance. What began as a conversation among Portage residents, will become a communitywide discussion involving school superintendents, mayors, law enforcement officials, state regulators and elected officials. We'll be at the table as well--again both learning and offering the lessons we've learned through our long experience.

Next Wednesday evening, we'll have the opportunity to meet again as a community--this time in Sangren Hall. We'll come together to brainstorm about how to continue and enhance the sense of welcome we have always prided ourselves in offering to a diverse and international population. It's part of our effort to reduce the anxiety so many of our international students are feeling in the wake of the president's executive order.

I hope you take advantage of both opportunities to continue to celebrate the diverse and welcoming nature of this community. It is imperative at this point in our history that we demonstrate the values of respect and civility, and that we lead by example. Sometimes leadership comes from the bottom up. This may well be such a time.

Thank you for all you do everyday to make this a community in which we can take great pride. And now, the Gold Gathering is beckoning, and I have just one more reminder for you.

"It's always a great day to be a Bronco."

Thank you.