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3-30-2016

## Bernhard Center Program Following Chavez March

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### WMU ScholarWorks Citation

Dunn, John M., "Bernhard Center Program Following Chavez March" (2016). *WMU President John Dunn*. 840.

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Bernhard Center Program Following Chavez March  
Welcome by President John M. Dunn  
March 30, 2016

Good morning. It is my pleasure to officially welcome you to Western Michigan University. I hope you're ready to sit back and be inspired by our guest speaker today, poet, artist and organizer Michael Reyes.

As always, your march this morning was a beautiful sight to behold. There's nothing quite like a good idea that has found good people to carry it out and keep the tradition moving forward. The march was founded at WMU in 1994 by **Mike Ramirez** of our Division of Multicultural Affairs and a few WMU students. The intent was to celebrate the life and achievements of the late César Chávez. And that remains the goal today.

The event has grown steadily in size and scope over the years, with the help of the Kalamazoo Central High School Bilingual Students Club, which became the prime organizer in 2002, and the Kalamazoo César E. Chávez March Committee. This morning's turnout speaks volumes about what a terrific job those dedicated groups have done with this annual event. There is indeed strength in numbers--strength, pride and inspiration. Thank you for making today's event such a success.

With some 700 participants, this event is now the largest such march in southwest Michigan. It not only honors Cesar Chávez, but also celebrates the Hispanic community's rich cultural history and serves as way to teach us all about nonviolent social justice and change.

We have community members with us today, and many high school and middle school students. I'd like to give a shout out to the schools represented:

- Kalamazoo Central High School,
- Loy Norrix,
- Maple Street Magnet Middle Schools,
- South Haven Community Schools,
- Kalamazoo College, and, of course,
- Western Michigan University!

We're proud that you chose to be here today to end the march here at WMU and spend a few hours with us to reflect on Cesar Chavez's work and the work he left for all of us to continue.

Enjoy your time here today and please come back often to visit, wander the campus and feel at home on the campus of your community's university. Thank you.