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Kalamazoo Rotary

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• Thank you for inviting me back to talk with you as Western Michigan University's president. We've had a long relationship--starting with my first appearance here in January 2008--just months seven months into the period people keep telling me is known as the Dunn Decade.

• In 2008, it was my honor to be introduced by a relatively new friend and someone I'd already come to admire, Diether H. Haenicke. That first talk featured a few first impressions and some notable predictions. I took a quick look at my notes recently--just to see how well we did in meeting some of those aspirations and if first impressions held true.

• I spoke in 2008 about how impressed Linda and I were with this community and how vibrant we found the downtown area. We still strongly hold that opinion--in spades. This is an amazing community with a range of urban and suburban neighborhoods that literally beckon people to make them home. And since Linda and I had occasion recently to find some post-presidency housing, I want to share with you the fact that we are now two of downtown Kalamazoo's newest residents.

• I talked that day about our goal to be thoughtful and intentional about recruiting students in some specific populations--international students, underserved populations and out-of-state students. And I spoke specifically about an initiative we had just announced--our Seita Scholars Program to support students who had aged out of foster care.
We've done pretty well on that front:

- Doubling international enrollment--900 to 1,800
- Increasing minority enrollment from 10 to 22 percent of the student body
- With the support of many in this community, our Seita Scholars program has become a national model and the largest and most comprehensive such program in higher education. We saw our 100th graduate in December.
- We've made enormous gains in our Lee Honors College enrollment and in our ability to serve veterans.
- It took us a bit longer to see the out-of-state enrollment gains we're after, but, thanks to a change in how we assess nonresident tuition, that is something to watch out for this fall.

- I may have gone out on a limb a bit on that day back in 2008, but this community is really impressive, and some key partners were already involved in important conversations. The future looked promising. I'm talking, of course, about the idea of a medical school right here in Kalamazoo.

This community has world-class hospitals with teaching capacity and tradition. Parts of the infrastructure already were in place to launch a medical school. We could not underestimate the challenges and costs of going down this road. But we also could not underestimate our ability and capacity to make the idea a reality. Nor could we underestimate the benefit this community would realize from such an initiative.

Today, the Western Michigan University Homer Stryker M.D. School of Medicine is preparing to welcome its fourth class of medical students--84 students selected
from among more than 4,800 applicants. Next spring, the first class of graduates will begin their medical careers--many of them right here in this community.

• Establishment of the medical school and our affiliation with the Thomas M. Cooley Law School--something I did not talk about in that first Rotary address--mean WMU is now one of only 90 colleges and universities in the nation to house both a medical school and law school operating as part of its academic family.

And finally, on that day nearly 10 years ago when I was first invited to talk with you, we discussed the opportunities that could grow out of a call the Kalamazoo Gazette had just made for this community to "seize and own" the title of "The Education Community." That idea was pegged on the Kalamazoo Promise and the city's history of supporting "firsts" that had a national impact on education.

Together, I think we've made important strides in both being "The Education Community" and reminding ourselves how strong our education ties and traditions truly are. Those traditions are academic and extracurricular, and those ties involve people and infrastructure. As a University community, we've tried to add or leverage a bit of non-academic collegiate tradition in recent years by bringing our athletic success to a new level. And we've renovated one of the strongest physical ties to the Kalamazoo community, honoring the the community's role in founding WMU by bringing Heritage Hall, the birthplace of WMU, back into daily service for the campus and the community. I hope you look up at that beautiful pillared facade atop Prospect Hill many times and with pride over the coming years.

This entire community has opportunities no other community has. We have a past that revolves around education. We have a present marked by a great Promise.
And we have a future fixed on the one path that can and is leading Michigan back to prosperity. And we're a community that believes in the power of partnership. I will always treasure the partners and friends here who have made Kalamazoo a community focused on the future and the power of education.

In a few weeks, Dr. Edward Montgomery will take the reins of the University. I can tell you right now, you will be delighted with his presidency and the fact that partnership is a core value to him. He understands what we've already accomplished together and what the future can hold.

Thank you for your friendship, your commitment to our community and your willingness to be good partners. I will be here in the community for the next year and look forward to continuing our relationships.

I want to be respectful of your time this afternoon. And I wasn’t to make sure any questions you have are addressed, so I'll ask you now to pose your questions and concerns.