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Seita Scholar Networking/Welcome Event

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Seita Scholar Networking/Welcome Event
Dr. John M. Dunn
President of Western Michigan University
July 19, 2017

- Thank you, Tamara (Toutant) for that kind introduction. You are such an outstanding Seita success story, yourself, that it warms my heart and fills me with pride for what you've accomplished. For the new Seita Scholars here with us, please know that Tamara is someone who has taken advantage of all the opportunities WMU offers. Please plan to do the same and put yourself on the same path to success.
- This is one of the last times I'll make remarks like this as the WMU president. I'm to do so in front of a gathering of Seita Scholars, because the Seita program has been a part of life here at the University almost since the beginning of my presidency. And what we, as a university, have built is something special--and something that will have an impact for many years to come.
- You know, it's been just 10 years since three key members of our campus community--Penny Bundy, Mark Delorey and Yvonne Unrau--met John Seita and brainstormed their way into an idea that literally captured the hearts of our campus community as well as those we have shared it with around the country.

The program that John Seita inspired came about because he was able to articulate, from personal experience, the unique situations and challenges facing young people aging out of foster care who want to attend college. He was able to attend and succeed in college through sheer perseverance. He earned three degrees from WMU and rose to prominence as an advocate for young people and a professor at

Michigan State University. He helped us understand just how tough the challenges foster youth face really are. And his ability to share that information sparked an idea at his alma mater--WMU.

- It's a simple idea really. We decided Western Michigan University could become the support system for a group of students who did not have one. We would develop an academic home and a haven and campus network for students who had aged out of foster care and who had the desire to attend and succeed in college. We could start to level the playing field.

- We developed a program that has set the national standard and is generating best practices now in use around the nation. But most of all, it is a program that has helped students become successful. More than 100 Seita Scholars have graduated and more are in the pipeline getting ready to celebrate their own success.

- Seita Scholars have climbed to every pinnacle at this University, regularly appearing on the Deans List, joining the Honors College, doing undergraduate research and being named Presidential Scholars. Those of you who are returning Seita Scholars have added to the academic vibrancy of WMU and shared with us your unique perspectives. You've also demonstrated your own commitment to finding ways to "pay it forward" by helping the classes of scholars who come after you and the students in your communities who need the kind of opportunity you've had.

- But most of all, you've reminded us that each of us has only achieved success because people were willing to help and mentor us along the way. I think that's

why the Seita program has touched the hearts of so many and opened the arms of many in the community who want to help you succeed.

For many years, I told incoming Seita Scholars that I was looking forward to greeting them on Miller Auditorium stage to shake their hands and hand them the degree they've earned. I won't be the one doing that now, but I can assure you that Dr. Montgomery, our new president, is proud of your success and deeply committed to this program. I will continue to do whatever I can to raise awareness of what is being accomplished here--what you've accomplished. And I will continue to watch what you accomplish with enormous pride.

- Welcome. Make the most of every opportunity you find here, work closely with your campus coach and don't ever hesitate to reach out and ask for help. We've all been in need of assistance ourselves, and we're all here to help.

Enjoy your year and always remember, it's always a great day to be as Bronco!