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Edward Montgomery
Western Michigan University

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Montgomery Board Approval Message

Dr. Edward Montgomery's address at the April 12, 2017, special meeting of the WMU Board of Trustees at which the board approved his appointment as the ninth president of Western Michigan University.



Good morning, members of the Board of Trustees, the Presidential Search Advisory Committee, President Dunn, faculty, staff, students, alumni and community members. I want to start with a heartfelt "Thank you." I am both humbled and completely delighted at the prospect of becoming the ninth president of Western Michigan University.

For a university to have had just eight presidents in a history spanning more than 100 years is a remarkable testament to the Board and to the Western Michigan faculty, staff, students and alumni community. You've had a remarkable track record of picking successful presidents. Coming onto a team with a 114-year winning streak brings with it a certain amount of pressure—good pressure—to keep the streak alive. Following President Dunn at Western Michigan is sort of like being the running back who was asked to step in following Barry Sanders' retirement from the Lions.

I am eager to embrace that challenge and look forward to working with all of you in the days and years ahead. Joining this remarkable Bronco community is an incredible privilege and the highlight of my career—a career made possible by the loving support of my parents, my children and my wife, Kari. Without my wife's constant support (and occasional nudge), life would be nowhere near as sweet. I love you.

I want to express my profound respect and deep admiration for all President Dunn and his wife, Linda, have done for this University. Over the past decade, they have left a big imprint on every aspect of this University and sunk deep roots into this community. Their legacy is both broad and deep, for they have increased the campus' reach nationally and internationally with new programs and schools while deepening its student-centric focus. They leave behind a University ranked in the top 100 nationally, with dozens of quality graduate and professional programs, a vibrant and engaged student population and an active alumni community filled with good will. They have set the bar high, and I'm grateful that President Dunn has agreed to stay in the community with an offer to help and advise the new president on how to keep the momentum going.

As he passes the baton, I feel blessed to be given this opportunity to work with the members of the Board and the University community to chart the future course of this University. There will be challenges to be sure. Federal research funding is uncertain, state government support for public higher education hasn't kept pace, population growth has shifted away from Michigan and

the Midwest—to name just a few of those challenges. Working together, I know we can enhance our global reach, honor our commitments to sustainability, diversity and inclusivity, and strengthen our financial position while making WMU the institution of choice for students from the state and region.

So for me, job No. 1 from today forward will be getting to know the Western Michigan University faculty, staff, students and alumni communities better. To my faculty colleagues, I need your counsel, your ideas, your energy and your commitment. Shared governance and transparency are bedrock principles undergirding a successful university, so together, I am confident we can write a new successful chapter in Western's storied history. I can't wait to get to know you and learn more about your scholarly and creative efforts as well as the programs you run.

As the son of a historian, I know your annual hosting of the International Congress on Medieval Studies is legendary, while your aviation, speech pathology, occupational therapy, sales and writing programs, among others, are nationally ranked. These programs and departments represent just the tip of the iceberg. I know that on a comprehensive campus such as this, high-quality research, scholarship and creative efforts come in many forms and can be found in many locations.

Whatever its form and wherever it's located we must continually strive for excellence in everything we do. The world needs higher education as perhaps never before. We are the source of an educated workforce and of the scientific breakthroughs and innovation that spur our economies and make improvements in the quality of life possible across a broad range of spheres. We provide an understanding of human behavior and the cultural context in which it occurs. That is critically needed in our globally interconnected economy and societies.

My experience inside of government during the Clinton and Obama Administrations, and in the academy for over 35 years, has convinced me that universities can play a vital role in strengthening our communities and be engines of economic growth. Western Michigan has a reputation for innovation and for being at the forefront of tackling some of society's most intractable problems. We must continue to invest in our capacity to play these vital roles. But in so doing we must not lose sight of the fact that universities have a duty to promote unbounded curiosity and to foster inquiry and creativity even where there is no immediate short term payoff. It is from these activities that some of our deepest understandings and most profound and transformative discoveries all too often emerge.

To our students, my message is a simple one. We want you to succeed, and I will be your stalwart advocate and champion. As the proud parent of a Bronco senior who will graduate in a few weeks, I am dedicated to keeping you at the very core of our institution's mission. Your success, both in the near term while you are on campus and over the course of your lives, is our success. Your college years are a time for formation and transformation. It should be a time of boundless opportunity to find your voice and realize your potential. To reach that potential we must expose you to diverse ideas and perspectives in an environment that is at once challenging and civil. Your college years are a time to find your passions and shape your personality and perspective. Our curricula and extra-curricular activities should at once put you on a path for

successful careers as well as for successful lives. We want these to be the best days you've ever had, while positioning you to make the choices and take advantage of the opportunities that will put you on a path to an even brighter future. This requires us to continually be re-examining what and how we teach and mentor and to make sure your experience in and out of the classroom is rich and varied.

To our staff, you are the very backbone of this University. Your support is vital, your dedication essential and your heart keeps the blood of this institution flowing. Western Michigan has been a successful community of learners and scholars for over a hundred years in no small measure because of your efforts. I look forward to engaging with you and getting your counsel on how we can keep Western as the special place it is today.

Kalamazoo and Michigan already feel like home to us. For my wife, Kari, it is a very real homecoming. She has three cousins who attended Western Michigan and she grew up just down the road in Portland, Michigan. I have to give a shout out to the Wooden family and say thanks for welcoming me into the family. We want to thank you all for welcoming us so warmly into the Western Michigan family. We are proud to be to part of this University. President Dunn if I may...It's a good day to be a Bronco and we look forward to getting to know each of you.