Student Welcome Week Address

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Good morning. I know you've been hearing the word "welcome" all week and I hope you hear it many more times before your Welcome Week activities are done.

I've been asked to offer the official formal welcome to WMU's incoming freshman class. So here it is:

**By the authority vested in me by the state of Michigan and the Board of Trustees, I hereby welcome the Class of 2012 to Western Michigan University!**

Welcome to the Bronco family.

All of us--faculty, staff, administrators and members of the community--are delighted to have you here. We want to help you in any way we can. Over the next few weeks, I want you to look around whenever you have a question or concern, and find someone wearing the big, brown and gold "Welcome" button. All of our faculty and staff will be wearing those buttons for the opening days of the semester--first, to let you know how happy we are that you're here, and second, to let you know who to turn to if you can't find your way or need a question answered.

And let me emphasize this. There are no dumb questions. Ask us anything--anything at all. We were all incoming students once and we remember what it was like.
You know I'm always really excited to see the fall semester begin. Do you know what a university campus is like in late July and August? It's eerily quiet--something like your room at home is now. It can get so quiet in July and August that I begin to wonder if I am really part of the kind of big, boisterous, bustling university I know we are.

But you're here now, and you have absolutely restored my faith. I now get up every morning and know I'm in the right place. It's noisy. There are traffic jams, cars racing for parking spots and stray laundry carts everywhere. There was even a line this morning at Biggby's when I was getting my morning coffee. The bookstore is packed. And best of all, I'm getting e-mail messages every day about people who have added me as a friend on Facebook. (And yes, I'd be glad to have any of you add me as a friend.)

This is what we've been waiting for all summer. You are what this University is all about. Your success is what we've been working on and planning for. You made a great decision when you chose WMU, and we're going to work with you during the coming years to help you take advantage of everything we have to offer to make sure you're successful here and successful in everything you do in life.

I'm looking forward to getting to know as many of you as possible. Four years from now I'll be standing right here on the Miller Auditorium stage to shake your hand and present your diploma. I've been president of WMU for just over a year now and have had the opportunity to award diplomas at three sets of ceremonies. It is definitely the best part about being a University president--seeing our students celebrate their success.
Four years from now may seem like a long time away, but it's really not. As college careers go, it's a fairly short time. Most college students today take five or more years to earn a degree. But I'm so confident in your ability to succeed and our faculty's ability to help you achieve your goals, that we have a program called the Western Edge. We've told you about it during orientation, and we'll remind you about it in the coming weeks, months and years.

I know that you're scheduled to receive some very detailed information Western Edge shortly, but now is my chance to remind you that there's a few things you have to do to fulfill your part of the deal. You've already heard me say this at least once, and this won't be the last time. Last year, our students got to the point where they were ready for me whenever I asked what students need to do to be successful. It's simple

• You've got to go to class.
• You've got to find the library.
• You've got to study.

Beyond that, if you take 30 credits a year, see your advisor every semester and lock in a major by the start of your sophomore year, you'll be walking across this stage in four years. If you achieve a 3.0 GPA on the first 30 credits in your first year, we'll provide $500 to help toward your second-year costs. If you decide to live in the residence halls next year and after, we'll freeze your room and board rates for up to four years. And we'll guarantee that if you decide to become part of the Western Edge, meet the requirements and stick to a four-year plan, we'll make sure the classes you need to take are available when you need them.
We're confident in your ability to earn your degree, and we're confident in our faculty and staff. They're good. If you are up to the challenge, they will make sure you have that degree in hand in as short a time as possible.

Along the way, though, I don't want you to forget about some of the non-academic parts of college life. You won't forget those, will you? We want you to have fun, make lasting friendships and build great memories. Your studies come first, of course, but being a successful person means being able to balance work and fun. Our goal is to offer you lots of ways to strike that balance.

This fall is going to offer some spectacular opportunities for fun. Let me mention one that you need to start planning on now. Nov. 8, the Bronco football team will take on the University of Illinois at Detroit's Ford Field, home of the Detroit Lions. We've got the home team advantage. I think there's enough of you who are from Detroit, who grew up near Detroit or who would just like to take a road trip to Detroit, that I think we're going to pack the WMU section. You're going to start getting lots of information about this during the next few days, so start making your plans.

And by the way, Ford Field on Nov. 8 is just the beginning. Next year, the Broncos will take on Michigan State's Spartans at Ford Field, and once again, we'll have the home team edge. Plan on it. Welcome to WMU. Enjoy this week, and get ready for the ride of a lifetime. Go Broncos!