2-11-2009

Gold Pride Reception

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Good evening.

• I am enormously pleased to be here this evening to meet you and tell you more about Western Michigan University. I am delighted by your interest in WMU. Frankly, it shows you have been careful in your research and have wisely narrowed your college choices to one that can only be described as a great university.

• As families, you've been on a long journey together to prepare for this exciting point in your lives. I want to congratulate all of you on a job well done. You've laid the groundwork for a future of success. You, no doubt you are here because you know that great potential can be enhanced by this university. You have heard or read about the benefits of being a student at WMU--wonderful faculty, great instructional facilities and people who really care about our students in and out of the classroom.

• Most of all, this is a university that is focused on student success. We want you to succeed. Our entire university is devoted to helping our students live up to their potential.

• Let me brag a little bit. I always want to know when I'm talking to people about this University that they're aware of some of the most critical pieces of information about WMU. Here are a few things you should know.

  - WMU is one of Michigan's five research universities (The others are U of M-Ann Arbor, MSU, Wayne State and Michigan Tech). There are more than 4,000 colleges and universities in the nation and fewer than 200 have been designated by the Carnegie Foundation as research Universities. That means you'll be taught by professors who are making the latest discoveries and are at the top of their game.

  - We have an Honors College that is one of the oldest collegiate honors programs in the country and the credentials of our honors college classes equal or surpass those at the nation's most elite private colleges.
WMU is one of only 100 public institutions in the nation authorized to have its own chapter of Phi Beta Kappa. I'm enormously proud of that fact.

We have nationally and internationally known programs that range from aviation and engineering management to vocal jazz and geosciences.

There are places in this world where only two things are known about Michigan--Detroit makes cars and Western Michigan University is home to the world's largest gathering of medieval scholars.

I could go on for quite a bit longer, but the thing I want you to know is that all of the resources that I just mentioned and many, many more, are here and available to help our students succeed. In addition to great academics, we have wonderful social, cultural and athletic opportunities to enjoy and our student life staff is the best around. I just gave you a few "Points of Pride" for WMU. It may interest you to know that there are so many others, our students last spring ran a contest on campus to select 100 things they value most about WMU. They received more than 700 suggestions--many of them running into 300 or 400 words. Let me tell you what an editing challenge that was!

One of those points of pride was something we call the Western Edge. It's one way we describe the benefit of being a student here. Now you may already have heard about the Western Edge, since have talked a lot about it both on and off the campus. Most of the discussion lately has been on the four-year degree commitment and the retention scholarship. I hope many of you are able to take advantage of those opportunities. But when I talk about the Western Edge, I'm always careful to point out that the Western Edge is more. It is the total experience that comes from being part of the WMU community.

The Western Edge is something our students take with them when they leave us. We've spent a lot of time over the past year doing research to find out just what brings students to WMU and just what kind of feelings they take away. Our alumni are extraordinarily positive about the spirit of this University that first attracted them, the caliber of the academic experience they found here and the level of success they've achieved as a result of their time as students here.

One of our alums, Dennis Nally, spent some time with us on campus recently to tell current students what being a WMU alumnus has meant in his life and career. He
wanted to give them some early career hints and maybe direct into the same career path he took. He had a great story to tell. You see he is the chairman and senior partner of PriceWaterhouseCoopers--one of the world's great accounting powerhouses.

• I welcome new students to the campus each semester, and I've got a three-part mantra I ask them to repeat on the day we meet and everyday, thereafter. It goes like this:
  • I'm a student at one of the nation's top universities.
  • I'm surrounded by people ready to help me.
  • I'm on my way to success

• I'll be looking for you during Welcome Week next fall and I hope you're ready to adopt that mantra. I'll look forward to seeing you on campus after that, and I'll be on the stage at Miller Auditorium to shake your hand when you receive your degree a little more than four years from now.

• Thank you for your interest in Western Michigan University and thank you for being here this evening.