Cesar Chavez Remarks

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Welcome. Thank you for asking me to join you. I'm happy we are all together this afternoon to continue what has become a decade-long tradition at WMU--celebrating the accomplishments of Cesar Chavez and reminding our community just how important the issues that drove him are. Today's celebration, appropriately, is a communitywide event.

When we stop to remember Cesar Chavez for his more than 30 years of nonviolent struggle to improve civil rights and working conditions for farm laborers, we are reaffirming the importance of the work he and his colleagues did in creating United Farm Workers--the nation's first successful farm workers union.

I am particularly pleased that joining us this year is Dolores Huerta, who co-founded United Farm Workers of America with Cesar Chavez. She is here with us as a result of the honors thesis work of one of our students, Julian Ramírez, who is an integral part of the planning for this year's celebration.

He arranged for her to be here with us. His commitment and intense involvement make today's activities all the more meaningful and appropriate for a University setting. What a wonderful indication of our students' passion, energy and dedication to basic human rights and fairness.

Ms. Huerta, we welcome you and honor your years of work on behalf of the farm workers' cause, women's rights and the expansion of freedom and justice throughout our society. You have been honored numerous times for your work:
• with honorary doctoral degrees from three universities

• by being inducted into the National Women's Hall of Fame

• by being named by Ladies Home Journal as one of the "100 most Important Women of the 20th Century"

• with the ACLU's Roger Baldwin Medal of Liberty, the Eugene V. Debs Foundation Outstanding American Award and the Ellis Island Medal of Freedom

• and with many other awards, appointments and recognitions.

• I suspect, though, those may all pale in comparison to what you've accomplished and the work that still keeps you traveling across America.

• Thank you for all that you've accomplished. And thank you for responding positively to Julian's request and helping make today's celebration exceptionally meaningful.