IT Forum Welcome

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• Good morning. I am enormously pleased to welcome you here this morning to Western Michigan University's 8th Annual IT Forum.

• I'm proud that WMU's Business Information Systems Program has made a commitment to bring this kind of information to you annually and establish a venue where there can be an open exchange of ideas and best practices in the profession.

• This year's forum topic, "IT Education and Careers 2.0," is one designed to pluck at the heartstrings of a university president. I know that what we do here in IT education is very, very good, and I think you'll be intrigued and excited by the results our students will show when they demonstrate how they've applied the lessons learned in the classroom to real-world problems.

• To get the industry perspective on career trends and IT education, we have two wonderful keynote speakers here with us today--John Dean of the Information Technology Management Association and formerly of Steelcase and Ann Harten of Haworth Inc. I want to personally thank them both for being with us and for lending their insights to today's discussions.

• Between their talks, you'll have the opportunity to see some revolutionary work done by our students. I hope you are as excited as we are about the "e-Firm" projects our students took on and completed with our industry partners at Steelcase and BlueGranite.

We believe this is the first time anywhere that something of this scale has been done in a higher education setting. We had more than 125 students from six different
courses working concurrently on projects that involve complex enterprise information systems in a professional work environment.

• We really want you to stop and think about how IT education has changed over the past few years and how it is still changing. And we want you, as employers, to see how you can interact with higher education in a way that allows you to tackle initiatives for your firm and, at the same time, have a chance to evaluate prospective employees. This is an approach that is strongly centered on student success, but it's also designed to fit your company needs.

• You will likely be impressed by the quality of the work you'll see and the capability of our student teams. It's a tradition at WMU. Some of you may know Matt Mace, president and CEO of BlueGranite. He was still a student at WMU when he met his business partner and BlueGranite co-founder Dan Blackledge 13 years ago.

Matt, who was already running his own company, joined forces with Dan, and the rest is history. Today, Matt is working with a new group of WMU IT students to expand and enhance BlueGranite's work. The leadership at Steelcase made the same decision and we're grateful to them for doing so as well.

• We love to have all of our students witness and be part of this kind of interaction. We make it our business to make sure that our students see and understand the importance of connections and collaboration. We want them to understand the power and synergy that comes from having people passionate about their discipline get together to decide how to make the best use of new developments and practices. And we want them to be ready to make immediate contributions when they hit the job market--maybe even at your company or organization.
• Enjoy your day here, but please don't wait until next year to come back. We want you to consider Western Michigan University your university. And we want you to feel right at home on our campus. Enjoy the day.

Thank you.