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Summer Orientation Welcome

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• Good afternoon. It's my job and my delight today is to offer the official formal welcome to you as beginning students at Western Michigan University and new members of the Bronco family. We're glad you're here.

• Your orientation is a time to become more familiar with the campus. We like to let you get comfortable before you are introduced to both the rigors and the fun of academic life. We also encourage you to get it right, right from the start. We want you to take advantage of everything we offer here so you can realize the full WMU experience.

• You've heard many of our "Points of Pride" before. I suspect they're what brought you to Western Michigan University. And you've likely heard those "Points of Pride" reinforced in recent weeks and months.

   - If you're attracted by the international reputation of our College of Fine Arts in areas like Jazz Studies, perhaps you saw our famed Gold Company vocal group perform on "Oprah" two weeks ago. Or maybe you watched Matt Giraud, a recent alumnus make his way to the top five on "American Idol."

   - If you're impressed by the caliber of our College of Aviation, surely you were watching and listening just a week ago at the news that our precision flight team, the Sky Broncos, took third place among the top aviation schools in the country at the National Intercollegiate Flying Association championship in St. Louis.
(That's the 18th consecutive time they've finished in the top four in the nation.)

- If you're a future engineer, perhaps you made it to the Society of Automotive Engineers' World Congress in Detroit last month and saw our SAE student chapter take top honors among all Michigan universities for its presentation on Formula SAE racing.

• You made a wonderful decision when you chose Western Michigan University. We expect great things from you while you're a student here, and we know you'll accomplish great things when you're a proud Bronco alum--and believe me, that will happen sooner than you might think is possible, at this point.

• Just a few weeks ago, I stood on the stage at Miller Auditorium to award diplomas to nearly 2,500 graduating students. A few years ago, they were sitting where you're sitting now. They found success here, earned degrees and now and have begun careers or are headed off to graduate school.

• Those new Bronco alumni left here with the kind of memories that you are just beginning to make. And they left WMU with a great sense of Bronco pride--the kind of pride that makes them brag about being a Western Michigan University wherever they are. I run into them all over the world. I consider them among our brightest points of pride.
In recent months, I or someone in my family has encountered young Bronco alums working:

- As a State Department officer at an American Embassy in the Dominican Republic;

- On the stage in Las Vegas as part of the celebrated Blue Man Group.

- In Washington, DC, in such positions as a U.S. Trade Representative and a trial attorney for the Justice Department's Environmental Enforcement Section, and

  - Right here in Kalamazoo as the head of a young IT company.

• In a few years, I want to be talking about your exploits as a student or your accomplishments as an alum. I know you'll be successful here on campus and in your professional life.

• Take advantage of everything this university offers. Your studies come first, of course, but being a successful person means being able to balance work and fun. It means trying new things, meeting new people and learning outside the classroom. Don't miss a chance to do any of that.

• Think about joining a student organization. Consider a study abroad program. Explore. Make friends with a faculty member (you'll be surprised at how easy it is). Read the paper everyday to find out what's happening and who's speaking on campus. Go to everything that sounds even remotely interesting. Do as much as you can here. You will never regret it.
• I'm looking forward to getting to know as many of you as possible. When you see me on campus, don't be shy about introducing yourself and talking. I try to greet and talk with as many students as I can, but I'd love it if you tap me on the shoulder as we're standing in line at Beaners and just tell me who you are and how your student experience is going.

In due course, I'll be standing on the Miller Auditorium stage to shake your hand and present your diploma. It will be a moment in which we both will feel a great sense of accomplishment.

Welcome to WMU. Enjoy your orientation activities, and get ready for the ride of a lifetime.