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State Farm Scholarship Reception

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• Good evening. It is really a pleasure to be here and have this opportunity to again publicly thank State Farm for its support of our students and our College of Education. This is our chance to say "thank you" as an institution, and it is a chance for our students and their families to say "thank you" on a more personal level.

• We welcome our partners from State Farm, our student interns and their families and our state legislators who have taken time from their busy day to help us celebrate this important partnership. It's a partnership that will pay dividends to our state for years to come.

• There are 30 student teaching interns who enjoyed important support from State Farm this year, including 15 during the current semester. Our interns come across the state and they worked in what we call "urban schools of promise." That reflects our commitment and State Farm's commitment to helping youngsters who often face the greatest number of challenges.

• Support of our education students is illustrative of State Farm's overall commitment to philanthropy. It's the reason State Farm was singled out for its generosity when it received the 2009 Outstanding Corporation Award from the Association of Fundraising Professionals, West Michigan Chapter. The award is presented to a corporation, or its corporate foundation, that demonstrates outstanding commitment through financial support and through encouragement and motivation of others to take leadership roles toward philanthropy and community involvement. On behalf of Western Michigan University, I'd like to add our congratulations for that richly deserved honor.
• Our 30 State Farm teaching interns were part of WMU's nationally recognized School University Partnership Team. Just 10 days ago and even in a tough hiring climate, we had representatives from 60 Michigan school districts on our campus recruiting this spring's graduates during our 22nd annual Education Career Fair. There were school districts from 15 other states as well, but for so many of our students, their hearts are in Michigan and they want to build their lives here and make a difference in their home state. The State Farm opportunity really solidified their goals.

• For our students, the path to graduation was made easier by their State Farm scholarship. The company's support for the intern program is absolutely vital because it is a “make or break” time for our students, when they must devote their full energies to student teaching. Having financial assistance during this important time is critical because so many of our students work part time jobs, and we try to encourage them to forego this additional work during the internship period. State Farm’s generosity makes this possible.

• State Farm is a wonderful partner in this initiative and in so many other ways. The firm provides support for our College of Education's general scholarship program as well, and they have helped us grow a wonderful financial planning program in our Haworth College of Business.

• Thank you for all that you do. And please enjoy the opportunity to chat with our students and hear their stories.