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AC-4 Meeting Community College Counselors

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Good morning and welcome to Western Michigan University. You've picked a wonderful day to be here. You'll see lots of smiling faces. I'm talking about seriously happy people at WMU today. It's the end of finals week, and tomorrow, more than 2,600 students will leave here with degrees in hand.

This is a particularly festive weekend for a University that prides itself on being a heads-up campus where people greet each other as they hurry about. I think you'd notice and perhaps remark on that any time you're on campus. But this weekend, our campus community is almost giddy with joy and the feeling of success--I'm seeing chest bumps and high fives replacing the smile and a quick "Hi" normally seen. Our students have achieved their goals and found success. They'll be celebrating all day tomorrow in four ceremonies at Miller Auditorium.

Those 2,600 graduates include hundreds of students who began their college careers on your campuses. We take real pride in working with students who made a good decision when they selected your schools and then are looking for then next smart step to take. Each fall brings us about 1,800 new transfer students--two thirds of them from Michigan community colleges.

Our stance as a university is to honor and celebrate the choices students make and to welcome them here on our campus whenever the time is right for them. That's because this is all about students and what they need to be successful.

To that end, we've been stepping up our collaborative work with many of your schools. As time goes by, expect to see more and more programs like the two dual enrollment programs we have with Kellogg Community College. In the disciplines
of engineering and aviation, we recruit together, admit students to both schools and offer students all the benefits of both campuses right from the start. KCC/WMU dually enrolled students enjoy advising, library access, use of computer labs and student IDs from both schools. We're not making the transition seamless. We're eliminating the transition and making the two-college experience work from day one.

• I will say that this is a really exciting time for students to become part of our campus community at any level. I understand that you're interested in "What's New at WMU."

• Perhaps the most challenging and most exciting initiative we have under way is our focus on developing a medical school here on the WMU campus and in partnership with our two community hospitals--Bronson and Borgess. Those hospitals are really world-class teaching hospitals.

• As a community, we recognize the incredible potential as we develop a new medical school that will meet future needs AND serve as an additional building block upon which this region's century-long heritage in life sciences research and medical equipment innovation can be enhanced. The benefits to our University and community may be enormous.

• The benefits to our future students and our existing programs in the health and life sciences will be even more pronounced. Just imagine the value added if you are studying nursing in the setting of a medical school, or if you are preparing to be an audiologist or hospital social worker and part of your basic training allows you to be part of a complete medical team.
• There's more happening in every corner of our campus. I know you'll hear later about our Military Advocacy work—something we're enormously proud of. You'll also hear about our new Career Center in the Haworth College of Business.

• There are some wonderful physical improvements to the campus as well that have been designed to enhance campus life for our students. Construction is about to begin on a new student apartment complex on campus.

• We know that students who live on campus do better academically and are more engaged than students who live off campus, so we're building more of the kind of housing—apartments—that students tell us they want. Residence halls are wonderful for students first year or two. That environment helps students build their network of friends. As students become upperclassmen, they're more interested in apartment living, but they really want to stay on campus, so we're launching a project that will ultimately add 300 units to our campus, with the first ones to over for the fall 2011 semester.

• I hope while you're here you have a chance to check out our spectacular academic facilities. We have just one major academic building to update/rebuild. That's Sangren Hall at the heart of campus. Construction on the new Sangren Hall will begin this summer as well and be done in 2012. And in the Bernhard Center, we have just opened a renovation—the Student Organization Center—that gives our campus organizations and student leaders space to operate. I hope you'll take a walk through and check it out.

• Please walk around, enjoy the atmosphere and ask questions. Enjoy your time here today. Come back often.