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Champion's Club

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• I am delighted to see you all here this evening. This is an opportunity for me to say a personal thank you for all you do to support and promote Bronco athletics. You make an enormous difference in helping us both reach out to talented students with scholarships and maintain great facilities in which our young athletes practice and compete. And with your attendance at athletic events and the personal support you show the commitment of the Bronco family.

• You're here because you share one of my particular passions--Bronco athletics. I understand that in this community, I’ve left little doubt about how much I care about the success of our athletic teams and our individual athletes. Apparently, I use a lot of "body English" to convey my sentiments.

• I AM proud of what our athletes accomplish on the competitive fields, but I'm even more proud of the fact that we nurture true student athletes here at Western Michigan University. They are first and foremost students, and our responsibility to them is first and foremost in the academic arena.

• Our individual athletes and teams are successful academically and they're successful as people. We have high-profile student/athletes like:
  • Tim Hiller, our quarterback last year who was named Second Team All America by ESPN and a National Scholar Athlete by the National Football Foundation. He also won the 2009 Wuerffel Trophy, dubbed the "Humanitarian Heisman." (first ever in the MAC to win that award.)
  • Phil Swanson, another Second Team All America selection who was invited to chronicle team life last year for the New York Times.
• We also are being recognized more broadly for our athletes' academic prowess. This spring we learned that for the sixth consecutive year, Bronco teams placed in the top 10 percent of Division I teams nationwide in academic progress.

The WMU men's basketball team, coached by Steve Hawkins, and women's tennis, coached by Betsy Kuhle, are among some 800 Division I teams that were honored by the NCAA for posting multi-year Academic Progress Rates in the top 10 percent in their respective sports. We were one of just four programs in the Mid-American Conference, and the only one in the MAC West, to have more than one team make the list.

• And last month (July 22) We learned that Western Michigan University's volleyball team has earned the American Volleyball Coaches Association's Team Academic Award for the second season in a row and the third time in Colleen Munson's five seasons as head coach.

The AVCA award was first presented for the 1992-93 academic year and honors collegiate and high school volleyball teams that displayed excellence in the classroom by maintaining at least a 3.3 cumulative team grade-point average. The Broncos had six student-athletes who earned cumulative GPAs for the year above 3.3: senior Allyson Doyle, 4.0; graduated senior Katie Eberling, 3.96; sophomore Elizabeth "Boo" Sweeney, 3.67; sophomore Jessica Brown, 3.64; graduated senior Jillian Mitchell, 3.59; and junior Sam Viox, 3.52.

• This evening is a celebration of a key factor in making our student athletes successful--your generosity. Thank you.