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GSAC Thanksgiving Dinner

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Thank you for gathering this evening and for inviting me to be with you.

- Thanksgiving is one of my favorite holidays. It really demands nothing other than being reflective and thankful for all that is working well in our lives—that plus an enormous appetite and a willingness to watch lots of parades and football.

- If you are an American, you perhaps treasure this holiday (or you will learn to) as a time for multiple generations of your family to gather together. If you are an international student, as I know many of you here tonight are, you might wonder about this holiday. This is a uniquely American tradition. While it dates back to our founding days, it has come to symbolize family gatherings and a return to roots.

O. Henry put it best many years ago when he said, "There is one day that is ours. There is one day when all we Americans who are not self-made go back to the old home to eat saleratus biscuits and marvel how much nearer to the porch the old pump looks than it used to. Thanksgiving Day is the one day that is purely American."

The original Thanksgiving was nearly 400 years ago. It lasted three days. We've added a day and football. Today, we might not make it back to the old home physically, but we do in our hearts. And we invite you to adopt this wonderful tradition. It requires nothing more than a sense of home and a grateful heart.

- For academics like you, Thanksgiving presents a dilemma. Do you take a break or relax? Does Thanksgiving become a four-day writing binge or a four-day respite for the brain. I was interested this morning to see Inside Higher Ed today explore that conundrum.
• For college presidents--especially in this tough economic climate, Thanksgiving is a time to assess what is working. I tried to do that earlier today in a message to the campus community. But I want to expand on that for you. Here are some things about graduate education at WMU for which I am exceptionally grateful.

- Graduate enrollment this year was up for the fourth consecutive year.

- We have been blessed with graduate student leadership that is among the best that any University could ask for.

- The Graduate Student Advisory Committee is active, vibrant and full of students who are playing critical roles in the academic life of WMU--from finance to research policy.

- Our graduate student community has extended and honored academic tradition with its own annual journal, The Hilltop Review.

• Thank you for all you do for your disciplines, your university and your community. Enjoy the Thanksgiving holiday.