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WMU/Cooley Signing for MSW/JD

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• Good afternoon. I'm delighted to be here with my friend and colleague Don LeDuc to announce the next element in a partnership between our institutions that is more than a decade long.

• We're here to formalize and celebrate The Western Michigan University and Thomas M. Cooley Law School Master of Social Work/Juris Doctorate Dual Degree Program. The first thing I have to say is this program will not lend itself to easy characterization as an acronym. Don't even try it.

• The fact that it does not lend itself to shorthand is really all right. This partnership represents the first opportunity for professionals in West Michigan to earn an important combination of degrees that will allow graduates to become powerful advocates for families, children and youth, senior citizens and those with disabilities. The dual degree graduates will understand the underlying social pressures and issues AND they will know how best to employ our nation's and state's laws to assist them.

• The WMU/Cooley partnership has been strong since we launched our first dual degree program in Lansing--a Master of Public Administration/Juris Doctorate--in early 2001. A year later, when Cooley decided to expand to include a Grand Rapids campus, we supported them, and, beginning in 2003 housed Cooley classes in our Graduate Center next door while this beautiful facility as completed. And in
2008, we took the partnership a step further by launching another dual degree program--an MBA/JD program here in Grand Rapids.

• Today, we offer another link in that chain of connection, and we celebrate the benefit that this development will offer to this community and all the communities in which graduates will build their careers. We are combining the resources of Grand Rapids' hometown law school and this community's oldest and strongest MSW program. We're doing it in a way that will enhance both programs and bring a new level of expertise to the Grand Rapids legal and social service community.

• It's my absolute pleasure to be here and to be a witness to the growing partnership between our schools and the communities we serve. WMU has been part of the fabric of Grand Rapids for more than 100 years (since 1909), and I appreciate this new opportunity to meet the needs of this and other communities in our state and nation. Thank you.