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25-Year Club

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• Good evening. Thank you, Terry, for that kind introduction. It is my pleasure to be here this evening at an event I always consider one of the fall semester highlights.

• My message tonight is simple and sincere. Thank you. Thank you--each of you here this evening--for choosing to build your professional life around this great university, and thank you for committing your energy, intellect and passion to making Western Michigan University the vibrant institution it is today.

• All of you--past inductees and the new members we honor this evening have built this University. You have built it through your teaching, through the support you have provided in keeping our physical plant sparkling, by keeping our academic enterprise humming, in building our technical assets and by providing top-notch and compassionate service to our students before, during and after their enrollment here.

• You have built this University's physical structure and, more important, its reputation. You have provided the credentials and structure that allow
us to stake our claim as a learner centered, discovery driven and globally engaged national research university.

• There are 51 people being inducted into the 25 Year Club this evening. Including this year's inductees, there are now more than 1,000 faculty and staff members who have earned the right to be part of this august group. More precisely, there are now 1,086 club members--408 active employees and 678 retirees.

• It's a great club--no regular meetings except this annual celebration. There are no committees to chair and no other demands on your time. There are also no dues. We think you've already paid them in full. I'm somewhat envious of your membership in this elite group. Although I regard you as my contemporaries, I have more than 20 years to go before becoming eligible--that would require the trustees to extend my contract a few more times.

• With 51 of you being inducted this evening, that means we are honoring you for a combined 1,275 years of service to Western Michigan University, our students and our community. I am particularly struck by the diverse backgrounds you brought to your service here and the variety of roles you played and the workplace changes you have adapted to and embraced.
• To say that you began your careers at WMU in a pre-email or pre-electronic era really understates the case. In 1986 when you were hired, the protocol for an Internet transfer of mail was being defined, IBM was introducing its first laptop, the first LISTSERVE was being launched and the creator of Facebook (Mark Zuckerberg) was a two-year-old toddler.

• As life on campus changed on the edges, you adjusted, adapted, embraced and learned to innovate with every new development. But as our core mission and goals remained the same, you celebrated those goals and rose to every occasion to keep our students and their success at the heart of what we do. This University thrived because of your willingness to both change and remain constant to our core.

Please enjoy the rest of your evening. You deserve to revel in this moment of accomplishment. Your work has made our University and our world a better place to be.

Thank you.