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Gold Pride Reception—Chicago

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Gold Pride Reception—Chicago  
John M. Dunn  
Jan. 31, 2012

Good evening.

• I am enormously pleased to be here this evening to meet with you--students and families from one of my favorite regions--to tell you more about Western Michigan University. There's a long and strong tradition of top Chicago-area students choosing to travel to the other side of the lake to study at WMU. Illinois, with more than 6,500 alumni is second only to Michigan as the home of Western Michigan University alumni.

• As families, you've been on a long journey together to prepare for this exciting point in your lives. I want to congratulate all of you on a job well done. You've laid the groundwork for success. You, are here because you know that great potential can be enhanced by a making the right college choice. You have heard or read about the benefits of being a student at WMU--wonderful faculty, great instructional facilities and people who really care about our students in and out of the classroom.

• This is a university that is focused on student success. We want you to succeed. Our entire university is devoted to helping our students live up to their potential by offering an environment that is learner centered, discovery driven and globally engaged.

• Let me brag a little bit. I want to know when I'm talking to people about this University that they're aware of some of the critical pieces of information about WMU. Here are a few things you should know.
WMU is a research university--one of fewer than 200 in the nation to win that designation from the Carnegie Foundation. Why is that important to you? It means you'll be taught by professors who are making the latest discoveries and are at the top of their game.

We have an Honors College that is one of the oldest collegiate honors programs in the country and the credentials of our honors college classes equal or surpass those at the nation's most elite private colleges.

We have the right program for you. There are more than 230 academic programs from which to choose--141 at the undergraduate level.

We have nationally and internationally known programs that range from aviation and engineering management to vocal jazz, geosciences and medieval studies. In fact, if there were a "Final Four" for academic programs, WMU would have programs in the top slots every year.

• I could go on and on, but what I want you to know is that all of the resources I just mentioned and many more, are just the tip of the iceberg. In addition to great academics, we have wonderful social, cultural and athletic opportunities to enjoy and our student life staff is the best around. I just gave you a few "Points of Pride" for WMU. Our students ran a contest on campus a few years ago to select 100 things they value most about WMU. They received more than 700 suggestions--many of them running into 300 or 400 words. Let me tell you what an editing challenge that was!

It is the total experience that comes from being part of the WMU community that will spark your success.
Here’s an example:

• A few years ago, Dan Pannozzo [pan-O-so] of Downer's Grove was in the same place you are--he was a high school senior trying to make his decision about which college to attend. He wanted an engineering school that offered a degree program with an entrepreneurial focus. He selected WMU's Industrial and Entrepreneurial Engineering major after he visited WMU and fell in love with both the campus and the feeling of individual attention he found in talking with faculty. He also liked knowing the program he chose was on the cutting edge and was the first such engineering program in the nation accredited by the ABET--the Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology.

Working with two other students in one of his engineering classes last year, Dan developed an idea for a simplified trailering hitch he conceived after watching his family members struggle with the occasional boat and snowmobile hauling tasks that go with owning a lake home. Dan and his team got a great grade--4.0--for their design project. They also got the feedback and support they needed from our engineering and business colleges to realize they had developed a terrific marketable project.

Last fall, they took the next step and entered their "Quick Hitch" design in a statewide competition called Accelerate Michigan Innovation. Out of 298 student entries, Dan and his colleagues captured third place and a $10,000 check. Today, they're in the process of forming a company, securing a patent and preparing to launch their product.

• One of the great joys of being a university president is seeing students like Dan and students like you make a great decision. I'll be looking for you during Welcome Week on our campus next fall and I'll look forward to seeing you on campus after that. I'll be on the stage at Miller Auditorium to shake your hand when you receive your bachelor's degree a little more than four years from now.
• Thank you for your interest in Western Michigan University and thank you for being here this evening. Ask lots of questions. I know you’ll be impressed by the answers you receive.