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Gold Pride Reception—Troy

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Good evening.

• I am enormously pleased to be here this evening to welcome you--students and families--to an evening that is all about Western Michigan University.

• 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 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!

The total experience that comes from being part of the WMU community will spark your success and provide opportunities you may never even have considered.

Here are a couple of examples from very different disciplines:

- Mid winter in collegiate music circles is the time when the very best student musicians find out if they have made the grade for international solo competitions. Over the past few days, we've learned that a trio of campus trombonists will head to Paris this summer as finalists in three separate solo competitions. The freshman and
two seniors will compete against finalists from the Julliard and Eastman Schools of Music as well as from one of the top music schools in the United Kingdom.

• A few years ago, Dan Panozzo of Downer's Grove, Ill., 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 chose 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.

Today, Dan and two of his student colleagues are starting a company and filing for a patent to market a product they developed in one of their engineering classes last year. Their "Quick Hitch" is a simplified trailering system that Dan conceived after watching his family members struggle with the occasional boat and snowmobile hauling tasks.

They took their design to a statewide competition called Accelerate Michigan Innovation. Out of 298 student entries, Dan and his colleagues captured third place. Their $10,000 prize check has just arrived to bankroll their product launch.

• 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 question. I know you’ll be impressed by the answers you receive.