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Admitted Student Reception—Oak Brook, Ill.

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Good evening.

• I am enormously pleased to be here this evening to welcome you as new members of the Western Michigan University community--the Bronco family. And I always enjoy offering such a welcome in the Chicago area. For decades, there's been a special relationship between this great city and WMU. When I see a terrific group of new Broncos like all of you here tonight, I am reassured that those strong ties will only increase in the decades to come.

• As individual families, you've been on a long journey together to prepare for this point in your lives. Congratulations on a job well done. You've laid the groundwork for success. You are here because you know that the great potential of your son or daughter will 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, most of all, people who really care about our students in and out of the classroom.

• This university is focused on student success. We want you to succeed--to "Go West" to find and prepare for your personal frontier. Our entire university is devoted to helping our students realize their potential by offering an environment that is learner centered, discovery driven and globally engaged.
• Tonight is all about helping you understand what your next four years will be like as part of the Bronco family and a citizen of Kalamazoo--and we very much want you to be part of our broader community.

• Let me brag a little bit. I want you to be 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 just over 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 passionate, 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 nationally and internationally known programs that range from aviation and engineering management to vocal jazz, geosciences and medieval studies. In fact, if there were an "Olympics" for academic programs, WMU would have programs on the podium after every competition.

-I mentioned our many national rankings. My recent favorites include WMU being called a Best Value University by Washington Monthly magazine and a "Best Bang for the Buck" college by the millennial website PolicyMic. Both of those lists appeared last summer, and I think they say a lot about the kind of value added education we provide.

-And finally, I want you to be aware of our most recent work in graduate and professional education. This fall, the first class of students will be welcomed into the WMU School of Medicine. And later this spring, we expect to formally affiliate with a private law school that will become the WMU Thomas Cooley Law School.

• I could go on and on about our academic resources. Making WMU your home also means having access to student life that is the best around. Every year, our students
enjoy hundreds of music, theatre, dance and art events; hundreds of guest speakers; free admission to campus sporting events and a surrounding community that is alive with shopping, dining, entertainment and recreational opportunities. It's all part of the WMU student experience.

• Being a Bronco includes football Saturdays in Waldo Stadium and weekend evenings as a member of the Lawson Lunatics who make up what last month was named "the best student section in college hockey."
• Bronco life also means having a chance to do the Polar Plunge to raise money for Special Olympics. If that sounds too cold, there are plenty of other service opportunities, and our campus community every year logs in more than 600,000 hours of service and volunteer work.
• Being a Bronco means being part of a diverse and sustainable community. We're nationally known as a green campus that has built sustainability into every facet of campus life.
• And for those of you who dream of becoming an entrepreneur, we have a new student incubator called the Starting Gate—(do you get the Bronco connection?)—designed to help students launch their own innovative ideas and businesses.

This is all part of the total experience that comes with being part of the WMU community. Your experiences in and out of the classroom will spark your success.

• One of the great joys of being a university president is seeing 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. And 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.
• Again, thank you for being here this evening. Ask lots of questions. I know you’ll be impressed by the answers you receive. Let me close with a reminder that whatever the weather or time of year, it's always a great day to be a Bronco!