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Legacy Collections Center Groundbreaking

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• Good morning, thank you for being here with us this morning for this long-awaited event--the moment that signals the official start of construction of Western Michigan University's Legacy Collections Center.

I'm enormously pleased that you all decided this was an important enough event to move away from your air-conditioned home, office or car to brave the elements with us. I'd like to acknowledge a few special guests who are here with us today.

• Rep. Sean McCann (Has said he will be there)

( Others as they are spotted and names recorded prior to the ceremony)

As Dean Reish mentioned, this moment has been a long time in the making. I do, however, have to say that this University has never waivered from its commitment to ensure the longevity of these wonderful collections, as well as the public's access to them. I know it's been a priority of mine over the past five years, and it has been an institutional goal for more than 20 years--since many of these materials were first "temporarily" housed in what was the University's original gymnasium and swimming facility.

I regard these documents as a public treasure that has been entrusted to us. This community, region and state have our promise that we will continue to be outstanding caretakers of these collections. We want members of our communities, our faculty and students, and scholars who visit us to enjoy the use of these documents, photos and records for many years to come.

You know this community and this University have a partnership that goes back 109 years. It was the political and business leaders of this community that came together
in 1903 to develop the winning bid to have the Western State Normal School located here in Kalamazoo. They knew what resources could come into the community with such a school in place. They were right.

Here we are all these years later working together to extend the resources enjoyed by this community and others we serve. This project has attracted the philanthropic support of community donors who are making wonderful investments in this $8 million facility.

There are a number of private donors who have stepped up to help make this happen. Each deserves our deep gratitude. There are three major gifts I want to mention by name today.

First is a gift from the Irving S. Gilmore Foundation. We have three representatives from the foundation here to celebrate with us today. (Introduce and ask them to stand up.)

- Floyd L. Parks, president of the foundation's board of trustees
- Richard M. Hughey, Jr. Executive Vice President / CEO
- and Carol Snapp, program officer with the foundation.

Thank you. (Pause for round of applause)

The Kalamazoo Community Foundation is another major investor in the effort and I want to acknowledge that organization's generosity.

And through the Kalamazoo Community Foundation a third major gift for this facility has come to us from the late Dr. Frederick and Katharine D. Rogers.
We are grateful to them and to all of our other donors who have helped with this project so far. We expect there will be others as we move into the future with this facility.

There's another group of people I want to acknowledge and thank. That is archives' and libraries' special collections staff. Several of them have spent the past 20 years in what can only be described as an unusual setting--remember that gymnasium and swimming facility I mentioned? They've done so with grace, commitment to service and good humor.

You'll hear from the archives director, Dr. Sharon Carlson, in just a moment. I want you to know that over the years, when someone--anyone--on campus would make the case for a new initiative or facility by saying we needed it to be competitive because we were the only Michigan school or the only MAC school without one, Sharon Carlson would always make her point a in quiet, but determined way. We are, she would note, the only school in Michigan, the MAC or the United States that stores its archives in a swimming pool.

Duly noted, Director Carlson. And at about this time next year, our archives can be taken out of the lifeboat and finally put in a permanent home. We can't wait.

Thank you for celebrating with us and thank you for your continuing support of Western Michigan University.