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New Faculty Orientation Welcome

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Good afternoon. It is my absolute pleasure to welcome you to your role as new members of the faculty of Western Michigan University. I am proud that you accepted the opportunity we extended for you to teach and continue your scholarship here as part of our campus community.

We are convinced you are a good match for this University community—that's why we extended our offer. You, clearly, were savvy enough to recognize the caliber of this University and community, the tremendous potential for career and family satisfaction here, and the unique and appealing nature of becoming a citizen of Kalamazoo, Mich.

This is a tremendous University to work for, and you join a faculty body that is highly accomplished and one that is preparing a generation of young people to do great things. I am continually reminded of just how good our faculty is and what accomplished students we produce. This summer has been no exception. Last month, for instance, one of our graduating music students, Eric Bowman, captured first place in the solo competition that was part of the International Trombone Festival in Paris—beating competitors from the University of New Mexico and the Eastman School of Music.

And just last week, we learned that one of our doctoral students in chemistry, David Sellers, has won a prestigious National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellowship, which will provide him with $42,000 in funds for the next year and is renewable for an additional four years. Past fellows include 30 Nobel
Prize winners, including U.S. Secretary of Energy, Steven Chu; Google founder Sergey Brin; and "Freakonomics" co-author Steven Levitt.

• This is a place you will want to embrace and make your own. It is a university around which you can build your career and make a significant impact—-in your discipline and on those who follow you in that discipline. You'll hear this descriptor over and over. Western Michigan is a learner centered, discovery driven and globally engaged.

• We've kept our focus on learners--and we include ourselves and all of our students in the term "learner." We realize the importance of discovery and involvement with the global community and the impact of those on learning. This is a place where you'll work with colleagues who embrace all three facets of our mission and excel in them all.

• Here's just one good example. A year ago, our most senior faculty member retired. When I say "senior," I am talking about our longest serving faculty member ever. Dr Paul Maier is a Harvard educated internationally renowned historian who is the epitome of what any university would want its professors to be and one of the world's leading authorities on early Christianity. He retired after more than 50 years as a WMU faculty member. For years, he has been sought out by national and international media.

• Just before I was invited to speak about him at a special tribute dinner, I found out that he went through his life as a Bronco, incredulous that we paid him for doing what he loves. He remarked to a staff member that he didn't think there was
any better job than being a university professor. He said, "I've actually had a little pang of conscience all these years about cashing my paychecks."

• Now I'm not going to ask you to adopt that particular philosophy, BUT…..

• You have a full schedule for orientation and you'll be filled in on lots of upcoming events and initiatives. I'd like to close, though, by adding my personal invitation to one more very important event. On Friday, Sept. 21 at 2 p.m., in the Dalton Center Recital Hall, we'll hold Academic Convocation--the traditional celebration of the start of a new academic year. It is also the occasion at which we honor our colleagues, ranging from seasoned academic stars like the one I've just described to up-and-coming "Emerging Faculty Scholars." Please join us in the audience that day. And plan to be among those we honor at a future convocation.

Again, welcome to our University community, and have a wonderful WMU career.