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International Student Welcome

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Good morning. It's my delight today to offer an official formal welcome to you as new members of the Bronco family. We're glad you're here. You made a great decision when you chose Western Michigan University. And Western Michigan University is an even more vibrant place because of your presence on campus, in our classrooms and laboratories, in our residence halls and in the many campus organizations and activities that you will enjoy.

We expect great things from you while you're a student here, and we know you'll accomplish great things when you're a proud Bronco alum working in your home nation and using the lessons you learned here to build your career and develop a rich personal and civic life. Believe me, that will happen sooner than you might think it possible at this point. Your next few years will be full ones and they will fly by with exceptional speed.

We are honored that you chose this university as the place in which you could invest your future. College choice is a decision of great consequence for all students. Your decision was more complex because you made the choice of both a nation and a university in which to pursue your goals. You are among some 1,400 students from more than 90 nations that have chose Western Michigan University.

We are proud that you chose Western Michigan University. We also know that your presence on our campus adds to the vitality and international focus of our campus. There are three basic tenets around which our university revolves.
- We are learner centered. You all expect to be learners, of course. But all of us are focused on learning and continuing to learn as well. We expect, in fact, to learn from you.

- Second, this is a discovery-driven university. Your professors are on the cutting edge of their disciplines. What they will share with you is the latest, most recently discovered information, and they'll expect you to be focused on discovering new information as well.

And finally, this is a globally engaged university, a place that is committed to building a community that is diverse in the very broadest understanding of the term. You play a big part in making our campus a diverse one. You've already shown yourselves willing to expand your horizons. We'll encourage you to keep doing that.

- And your presence on campus will help expand horizons for many American students. My own passion for international education and global connections began many years ago. I was a student from a small town in Illinois. My world was opened and forever changed by the opportunity to attend a large university where I was able to live, study, work, play, eat, compete and just talk regularly with students much like you who came from all over the globe. Those opportunities changed my life.

- Today, I am president of a university that has prided itself for decades on attracting students from other countries. It is such a tradition here that we now see the children of international students from earlier decades arrive on campus to begin their own academic careers. (Ask if there are any such legacy students in the
Our institutional tradition has become the family tradition for savvy families in so many nations.

- I'm determined to keep nurturing those longstanding connections and build new ones. Earlier this summer, I spent time in Malaysia to celebrate our 25-year relationship that has left us with more than 2,500 alumni in that nation. In the spring, I was invited to the Dominican Republic to celebrate our relationship with that nation. And late last year, I was in Milan to meet with colleagues around the world who are hosting Confucius Institutes on their campuses and working on student and faculty exchanges with China.

- You made a great decision in selecting WMU. We have a campus full of people eager to welcome you and make you an integral part of our campus community. Take advantage of everything this university offers and you'll truly understand what it means to be part of a university that is--learner centered, discovery driven and globally engaged.

- Your studies come first, of course, and you already know about the high quality of our academic offerings. But being a successful person means being able to balance work and fun. It means trying new things, meeting new people and learning both inside and outside the classroom. Don't miss a chance to do any of that.

- I hope to see you here in Miller watching Broadway shows; across the plaza at the Richmond Center for Visual Arts or at the Dalton Center; in Bronco Stadium, Lawson Arena and Read Fieldhouse for athletic events; on the intramural fields having fun; and downtown enjoying the Kalamazoo community. Think about
joining a student organization and plan on playing a leadership role now or in the future. Consider a study abroad program. Explore. Make friends with a faculty member (you'll be surprised at how easy it is).

• I'm looking forward to getting to know you. When you see me on campus, don't be shy about introducing yourself and talking. I try to greet and talk with as many students as I can, but I'd love it if you tap me on the shoulder as we're standing in line at Bigbees and just tell me who you are and how your student experience is going.

• As the next couple of years speed by--and believe me they will--I will watch your progress with pride. In due course, I'll be standing on the Miller Auditorium stage to shake your hand and present your diploma. It will be a moment in which we both will feel a great sense of accomplishment.

Welcome to WMU. Enjoy your introduction to WMU and the Kalamazoo community. Get ready for the ride of a lifetime and remember to "Grab the Reins."