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2012 Matriculation Ceremony

John M. Dunn
Western Michigan University, john.dunn@wmich.edu

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Good morning. I'm John M. Dunn, president of Western Michigan University--our University. This is the first official gathering of the Class of 2016. It's my pleasure today to say, "Welcome" to each of you and "Welcome" to all of you who are new transfer students and international students. You, and your families, too, are now part of the Bronco community.

The first thing I want to do is let you know about a few of the people who are here on the stage this morning. They are all committed to ensuring your college career gets off to a good start.

You'll hear from a few of these people in a few moments, but let me briefly introduce them and ask them to stand and be recognized.

-Bobby Hopewell, mayor of Kalamazoo
-Dr. William Rantz, president of the Faculty Senate
-Members of the University's senior leadership team
-Representatives of our staff and student government
-Our deans and associate deans who lead our individual colleges
-And finally--and most important, the people who will play the most critical role in your studies and who serve as the heart of this institution--members of the faculty of Western Michigan University.

This is a full week and tonight, you'll all have the chance for a late night 3K run on campus. It's called Buster's Moonlight Stampede. It's a fun event, and in the past, I couldn't resist taking part as well. One year, I showed up in my t-shirt and running shorts. One young man standing near me at the start of the race was obviously
mindful of our instructions to reach out and meet new people. He said hello and asked if I was a prof. I couldn't resist. "No, I'm a freshman," I said. "I'm pretty sure I live on your floor." He was startled, but decided to take it in stride. We chatted and exchanged comments throughout the run. Finally, as the run was ending, I decided to confess my ruse.

Because that student was open and ready to be inquisitive and open to a conversation with someone new, he got the unexpected opportunity to take part in some lighthearted banter with his new university president.

Opportunities--the kind you expect and those that are unexpected--are what today is all about. The ability to recognize and use unexpected opportunities is central to getting the most out of being a student.

You came here with high expectations of us, and we will fulfill them. But it will be the things you don't expect that may, in the end, have the most lasting effect on your future. My advice to you is to leave yourself wide open--to breathe deep and literally inhale all there is to take in at Western Michigan University.

You will have unexpected opportunities to:
• Challenge your own core beliefs, embrace them anew or develop new ones;
• Meet and develop relationships with people from backgrounds and cultures you cannot imagine as you sit here this morning;
• Consider ideas that will startle you; and
• Contribute your own innovative ideas and discoveries.

So, what do you have to do to make the most of these unexpected opportunities? You already know the basics. You'll go to class, find and use the library, and take
advantage of advising and career exploration options. If you are going to truly profit from all the unexpected opportunities, though, you have to do more.

1) Ask questions.
2) Find a path that is broader than the one you envision right now by sampling the whole range of entertainment, social, cultural and athletic opportunities available.
3) Sustain your current friendships--and make new ones.
4) Enjoy yourself, but do so responsibly.
5) And finally, take chances. I'm not suggesting risky behavior here. I'm suggesting adventurous ways of thinking. Accomplish things you have not yet considered and solve problems not yet discovered.

Over the coming years, people will ask you to describe our university. We've spent some time recently developing some key points that describe the essence of WMU. I want you to remember three things about WMU that you can share with your family and friends.

• First, we're a learner-centered University--You expect to be a learner of course, but all of us here 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. We'll encourage you to expand your horizons, and to work and study abroad.

*Learner centered, discovery driven and globally engaged.* Remember those three descriptors, and use them when someone wants to know about your university.

And now to help you understand the very special city that surrounds this University, we have invited a guest from the community. I can assure you that at most colleges and universities, the mayor of the local community is an unknown figure to most students. That's not the case in Kalamazoo. We have a mayor who is frequently seen at campus events. He is a major advocate for Western Michigan University and a fan of our students' achievements.

Our mayor was born and raised in this city and has been Kalamazoo's leader and its biggest booster for the past four years. When we asked him to come and speak with you today, he agreed immediately. Transfer students, international students, members of the Class of 2016, please join me in welcoming Mayor Bobby Hopewell.