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Ford Field Admissions Event

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• Good evening, and Happy Halloween. Your choice of costume--prospective Bronco--truly warms this University president's heart. We're working hard to make sure the messages and information you receive this evening fall firmly in the "treat" category.

• Among the items firmly in the "treat" category will be remarks by NASA Astronaut Gregory Johnson. I want to thank him for being here with us this evening and at tomorrow's event.

• You're here because you want to know what Western Michigan University has to offer and whether or not it's the right fit for you. I can and will gladly give you a litany of reasons why you should carefully consider WMU. There are staff and faculty members here this evening as well to answer your questions. Some of them are stationed in the back of the room to tell me when to stop. I have a tendency to get pretty excited when I tell people about all of the opportunities they'll find at Western Michigan University.

• Let me start by telling you our focus is success--your success. We have a track record in producing successful alumni who are literally changing the world. Every member of our university community is focused on making the next wave of alumni--students like you--even more successful. We pride ourselves on being a campus that is learner centered, discovery driven and globally engaged.
• If you haven't already done so, I want to invite you to visit our campus. It's the first thing you should do if what you hear this evening piques your interest. What we know from generations of Broncos is that the first time they physically set foot on the campus in Kalamazoo, they were hooked. Alumni around the world have regaled me with the stories of how our campus "just felt right." Once they visited campus and saw how it fits into a perfect college town called Kalamazoo, they knew they had found the academic home they'd been looking for.

• When you visit, you'll find a campus with instructional facilities that are second to none. We've just finished the transformation of our core campus by opening new Sangren Hall, which is home to our education college and serves students in just about every other major. You'll be able to tour our engineering and aviation campuses and visit our arts and sciences, fine arts, business and health and human service facilities--all state of the art. Depending on your long-term academic interests, you may want to also take a peek at the new home in downtown Kalamazoo for our School of Medicine, which will open in fall 2014.

• You'll want to check out our Western View apartment-style housing for upperclassmen. It is enormously popular, and we're now building phase two to open next year.

• If you can't wait for your WMU visit and you want more information immediately, I suggest you download our free WMU Mobile app on your smartphone--iPhone or Android. The app was created for WMU by teams of our students, and it will give you a taste of the news, sights and sounds of our campus--from what's on the menu in the residence halls to a schedule of guest speakers,
plays and concerts. You can listen to the student radio station, check out Bronco sports scores and even use the app to apply.

• I always urge our faculty, staff and students to let their Bronco pride show--and I like to lead by example. We have programs that are known nationally and internationally--240 of them, as a matter of fact. That's includes more than 140 undergraduate majors--the second highest number at any Michigan university. It's appropriate that we're in this athletic venue this evening to talk about them, because if there were a "final four" in areas like jazz studies, engineering management, aviation, geosciences, creative writing or medieval studies, we'd be in that final four mix every year.

• No matter what major you choose, we want you to be successful, so we've invested ourselves and our resources in making our programs the very best they can be. We have people in every college and in every office whose first priority is to make sure our students succeed in class, find their career path and prepare to be the citizens and professionals who will lead our nation forward--and have some fun while they're doing it.

• We want you to be Broncos as you start your career. We want you to take real pride in what you study and in the opportunities you find on campus, and we want you to brag about your college experience--while you're a student and long afterward when you're an alum and making your mark on the world.

• You've got a sense of where I stand. I'm the president of Western Michigan University and perhaps not an unbiased source. Let me give you a sense of what some external entities think about us. You've all heard of the U.S. News & World
Report's annual list. We've been on that publication's annual list of top national universities for 22 years.

• You'll find us on a number of other such lists as well. The Carnegie Foundation's classification system--the gold standard in high education--lists us as one of fewer than 200 research universities in the nation. Phi Beta Kappa has identified our university as one of just 100 public universities in the nation authorized to house a chapter of that prestigious honor society.

• Early this fall, we learned of a new honor. We were pleasantly surprised to awake one morning and find that Washington Monthly had announced its eighth annual list of best colleges. The magazine ranked Western Michigan University among the top 100 colleges that are best for students and best for the nation because they produce cutting-edge knowledge, are accessible to and diverse population of learners, and we have high graduation rates. The editors looked at colleges that "are both effective and inexpensive." By focusing on institutions that combine higher-than-expected graduation rates with affordable prices, they said, we were "able to offer a true measure of where the biggest 'bang for the buck' is to be found in higher education."

• They captured the essence of WMU--the ability to transform students' lives and add real value.

• Your university experience will be transformative--because of what you learn both inside and outside the classroom. I know that because I had the good fortune to attend a diverse public university as a student. My worldview was changed by what I learned from my professors, of course, but also from what I learned by
having the opportunity to study, eat, live and work with students from around the world and from every conceivable background. That was--a few--years ago, but that experience guided my career path and still influences and informs me every day. That transformative experience is what we all wish for each one of you.

• What kind of people will you meet, live and study with at Western Michigan University?
  - Students from every conceivable income level and background--in recent years our graduates have ranged from the child of a U.S. cabinet member to an orphaned member of the "Lost Boys of Sudan."
  - Students from every state in the nation and all of Michigan's counties
  - Students from 95 other countries on all the world's continents
  - Students your own age and nontraditional students of all ages
  - Students from all of the world's major belief systems and religions
  - Veterans--we have more vets of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars than any other Michigan university, and we've been honored repeatedly for being one of the nation's best colleges for vets.

• Sitting next to you in class might be a trombonist who has just returned from winning an international competition in Paris. You might be having lunch with a student entrepreneur who is starting his or her own business, or you may be playing intramural soccer with a financial services student who just captured first place in a national case competition. And each of those people will be eager to learn about academic and professional achievements you bring to the table.

It's all at Western Michigan University waiting for you to take charge and decide the direction for your life. I'm here tonight to urge you to: "Grab the reins."
Thank you and enjoy your evening with us.