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Kalamazoo Rotary

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Opening  

Thank you, Dan (Litynski). Good afternoon. It's really very nice to be here with you today. It's been a few years since the last time I had a chance to speak with you. A lot has happened, and some of the ideas we were exploring the last time I was here have moved well past exploration and discovery and are now a reality.

I'm going to move quickly through a number of items, and I want to be respectful of your time. So, let's start with two images that have great meaning to me and, I think, are symbolic of Western Michigan University's relationship with the Kalamazoo community.  

These are two similar images representing a time span of 110 years. The image on top is the oldest image we have of East Hall--just after it was opened in 1904. The image on the bottom is what East Hall will look like at this time next year when we are through renovating the building that is the birthplace of WMU.

Though strikingly similar, the images represent commitment to core principals infused with a staggering amount of change--because change is what we as a University and we as a community are all about.

In 1903, members of the business community came together and mounted a campaign to convince the Legislature to locate a college for teachers--a Normal School--here in Kalamazoo. The group organized, fundraised and committed a 20-acre site atop Prospect Hill as a location for the new school. They also committed funding to build this building--East Hall--as the first home to the new school
Those business leaders made that effort because they wanted, in their beloved city, an institution that could be a change agent, an institution that would be good for business as an economic development asset, and a school that could showcase Kalamazoo's commitment to education.

The group of business leaders evolved into the Kalamazoo Regional Chamber of Commerce. The school they worked so hard to establish became Western Michigan University. Ever since then, this community and its University have been allied to bring about change, economic development and world-class educational commitment.

Change, growth and commitment--those are the constants. And today, I'd like to view a year full of those qualities that has been a year like no other in our shared history. Western Michigan University is a fundamentally changed institution as a result of initiatives that have come to fruition over the past year.

A few weeks ago, several of the members of the WMU Homer Stryker M.D. School of Medicine inaugural class were having dinner in a downtown Kalamazoo restaurant. I can imagine it was a lively group, and the young people attracted some attention. They struck up a conversation with their waitress, who asked them what brought them to town. Their reply was a simple one. "We're students at the new medical school," they said. At that point the startled young people--the WMU students--were treated to an ovation by the rest of the patrons in the restaurant. It was a marvelous moment because everyone in that restaurant "got it."

That moment is reflective of what this community, this University and all of us together have accomplished.

- (Slide 4) The past year has seen us move from a comprehensive research university to one of only 90 universities in the nation with both a medical school and a law school
under its aegis and the opportunity to offer legal and medical education to its students now and for many years to come. The Western Michigan University name is now firmly attached to the ([click]) Homer Stryker M.D. School of Medicine as well as the ([click]) Thomas M. Cooley Law School. Those affiliations have come with new physical resources in our community and new linkages in four other communities--one of them in Florida.

- The addition of a medical school has taken us from being a respected national research university, to one that also attracts, as it has in the past four weeks, visits by such luminaries as the head of the National Institutes of Health, a director from the Food and Drug Administration, and the chair of the board of directors for the Association of American Medical Colleges.

In this era of state budget difficulties and cuts to higher education appropriations, how were we able to add graduate professional education to our offerings? We did it by tapping the private sector and moving to the unusual model of private professional schools within a public university. For the medical school, of course, that meant securing the incredibly generous support of individuals and corporations in this area whose roots are with the names that are synonymous with innovative life sciences--Stryker and Upjohn.

For the law school, we have formally affiliated with a private school that has a similar commitment to the same basic educational values we hold. We are now able to offer the two signature professional graduate programs--law and medicine--that are characteristic of great national universities.

**Stryker School of Medicine**

- ([Slide 5]) I suspect many of you were among the nearly 2,500 people who took part in the grand opening of the WMU Stryker School of Medicine a few weeks ago, but in
case you weren't, I'll happily share a few images (click) and pertinent facts (click and click) about this initiative that was seven years in the making. In fact, I spoke to this group in early 2008 and talked about the possibility of a medical school in purely speculative terms. It seems like a century ago.

• (Slide 6) This partnership involving Borgess Health, Bronson Healthcare, WMU and the entire community was launched this fall with 54 students from 14 states who earned their undergrad degrees at 35 colleges and universities around the country. It's curriculum is based on team-based medical care--literally preparing doctors for the way they'll work in the 21st century.

• And the new medical school is based on innovation. It is named for the medical device innovator Dr. Homer Stryker, who founded Stryker Inc. (Slide 7) And the school is at home on the W.E. Upjohn M.D. Campus that bears the names of the person who launched Kalamazoo's involvement in the pharmaceutical industry. That campus, as you all know, is just a block away and already a critical new player in downtown Kalamazoo.

(Slide 8) That innovative spirit (click, click, click) is celebrated and inculcated into the medical school, informing the curriculum that was developed and influencing the building renovated around that curriculum. Innovation, research, discovery and new economic development tools are all part of the future here.

As a community, we'll benefit by having top-notch medical care opportunities, a pipeline of young physicians eager to start their careers nearby and the likelihood of a plethora of spinoff firms, as the discovery focus of the medical school takes off and leads to the commercialization of new products.

Cooley Law School
Our second monumental change in 2014 (Slide 9) was completion of a formal affiliation (click, click, click) that created the Western Michigan University Thomas M. Cooley Law School--with campuses in Lansing, Auburn Hills, Grand Rapids and Tampa Bay.

The affiliation grew out of decade-long relationship with the Lansing-based law school that is the nation's largest and most diverse law school. We share a common mission and vision with Cooley--both WMU and Cooley are committed to access, diversity and adding value to the lives of the students we serve.

(Slide 10) The formal affiliation is only two months old at this point, but we're already on a path that will bring the beginnings of legal education to Kalamazoo and dramatically expand opportunities for students through such programs as a 3+3 initiative that will allow students to shave a year off earning both a bachelor's and law degree. We're just beginning to explore some additional benefits of joining legal education and the assets of a research university. Look for new developments and joint programs in areas like accountancy, intellectual property, the foster care arena and health care.

• 2014 has been notable for a number of other campus accomplishments and changes. (Slide 11) From a University known statewide for its outstanding efforts and results in the area of sustainability, we have moved to being one honored, as we were two weeks ago in Boston, with a national "Climate Leadership Award." We were one of two research universities so honored, and the award came from the nation's leading collegiate climate action organization, the very credible Second Nature. They got it right. And this week, we learned that our University has been named one of the top 50 most affordable and eco-friendly universities. We're No. 13, in fact, the highest ranked university in Michigan.
• We have moved with determination, over the past year, into the position that puts us among the 25 percent of colleges and universities nationwide that have made the health and well being of the campus community a priority by making the campus tobacco free. You'll notice the change when you're attending events on campus.

• Our national profile is changing--or rather national assessments of quality in higher education are changing to recognize what institutions like Western Michigan University do to add value to individual lives--and our nation.

My favorite assessment, for example, comes from Washington Monthly magazine, which assesses universities on the good they are doing for students and the nation when it comes to producing Ph.Ds. and new knowledge, encouraging service, and adding value and success to the lives of individual students. They get it. It's that value-added quality and commitment to the larger community have long been our hallmarks. This is the second year WMU has appeared on Washington Monthly's list of top-100 national universities and its second appearance in the magazine's more recent "best bang for the buck" category. They got it right. We're a value-added institution. We're an opportunity university. We roll up our sleeves, and we get the job done here.

Moving forward...

(Slide 12) We're certainly not done. Remember what I said about change being a constant.

This year we started building our first new residence halls in 50 years. That 750-bed facility is expected to be an enormous asset in our student recruitment efforts.

And we've settled on a design and placement for a new dining hall in Goldsworthy Valley. Like the residence halls, the dining hall will be a state-of-the-art facility that caters to student needs and best practices in serving today's students. We know that one
of the best ways to help students succeed is to keep them connected with the campus--ideally living and eating on campus--so these new assets are tied to overall student success.

So much more to tell...
I could go on and talk about a number of other things as well (Slide 13):

• Our growing interdisciplinary research initiatives in areas that range from transportation and manufacturing technology to developing best practices to keep high risk students on the path to a degree
• Our training and advocacy work for families dealing with autism--just funded with $4 million from the Legislature
• Our increasing international enrollment that is making an enormous contribution to this community's economy.
• Our Business Technology and Research Park that is now full after welcoming an international design center this year.
• And the University's economic impact on the Kalamazoo region--which was last pegged at $820 million annually.

Those items and the ones I described earlier have a profound impact on the lives of everyone in our community--everyone in this room.

Together, this University and this community have lived up to the vision that group of Kalamazoo business leaders had back in 1903--economic development, commitment to education and, above all, having a change agent for the region.

• So, let's return to those initial two images. (Slide 14) for a final look at change. Those images represent both change AND a sense of constancy and fidelity to the community that gave Western Michigan University life. Change, in the end, is what a vibrant community and a vibrant university can and must offer its citizens and stakeholders.
Today, we are bringing the birthplace of WMU back to life and planning its emergence once again as a focal point to honor our legacy and our partnership with our community. It is a changed existence, but it will remain East Hall--a better East Hall, in fact. Inside, it will be a resource that is constructed to serve a 21st century campus and community. East Hall will be an active part of our campus, and you're going to love what you find there. You have my word on that. In fact, I'm sure those 1903 business leaders would have been proud of what will re-emerge at the top of Prospect Hill.

In closing, I'd like to invite you to campus. This weekend is Homecoming 2014 and Family Weekend. I can think of no better population to call WMU "home" and be considered part of the family than this group of people who support and celebrate the WMU/community connection on a daily basis. There's a football game, two hockey games, volleyball and men's soccer, a 5K run, tailgate celebrations and a pancake breakfast. And if you're in the mood to help us break a Guinness World Record for gathering the most people to wear sunglasses in the dark, show up at Kanley Track tomorrow night.

Again, I want to be respectful of your time constraints and provide the opportunity for any questions you may have.

Thank you for your attention and interest. I'd like to open the floor to any questions.

(Slide 15)