Luncheon for Dora and Delia DeMaso

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• Good afternoon. And welcome to so many of our friends and supporters from the Battle Creek community. It is always wonderful to see you on the WMU campus.

• As beautiful as this campus is on an autumn day like today, the real draw for this gathering would be two wonderful products of this University-- Dora and Delia DeMaso. We honor these two longtime educators for their commitment to the transformational power of education and for their unflagging support for their alma mater – Western Michigan University.

• Dora and Delia DeMaso, we are so thankful that you are not only proud alumni, but also that you have chosen to stay connected over the years and, through your generosity have allowed succeeding generations of students to enjoy the benefits of higher education. Thank you.

• I know your parents instilled in you the importance of education and exploration. What they perhaps did not know then was the level of impact they created. Both of you became educators. You enjoyed long careers as teachers in the Battle Creek Public Schools and you continue today, through scholarships that you have funded, to support the hopes and dream of students who aspire to become teachers. WMU thanks you for your caring support.

• But there another gift for which we wish to thank you. As construction of Sangren Hall was coming to a conclusion, there was a desire to grace that home for educators with permanent art installations. You agreed to provide funding for Paul Marquardt's "Prime Field." Thank you!
• Today, anyone who walks through Sangren Hall is drawn to that installation that is so perfectly attuned to the messages that Dora and Delia DeMaso have dedicated their lives to. Illuminated with LED lights, words like "think, create, imagine, communicate, persuade, visualize, adapt and gather" appear in six different languages. Artist Paul Marquardt describes the work as "a particle field of words."

• Thank you, Paul, for a beautiful piece that, I believe, does everything that all artists would hope to accomplish with their work.

• Those words reflect the values today's honorees have made the core of their lives' work. They are educators who believe in international travel and exploration and education as a transformational power.

• I know Dora and Delia like to describe themselves as "retired and enjoying life," but I am reminded of the words of Louis Armstrong when he talked about the possibility of retiring. "Musicians don't retire," he said. "They stop when there's no more music in them."

• I think the same is true for those who have spent their lives in the classroom. Teachers don't retire. They stop when there's no more love of education in them.

• Dora and Delia, from that perspective, you are clearly still teaching. You love education and what it can do and you teach each of us the lessons of commitment and generosity. Thank you for all you do and for being a part of the Western Michigan University community. You have our admiration and our gratitude.