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WMU IT Forum Welcome

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(Theme of this year's conference is "Information Security, Privacy & Trust)

• Good morning, and welcome to Western Michigan University. This IT Forum has become a new much-anticipated tradition in the West Michigan IT community and also among our faculty and students. Part of the tradition stems from the fact that each forum is focused on a timely theme for professionals in the IT community--and by extension, a topic that is important to all of us who use the technology you manage.

I have to first note that today's event is part of our celebration of the 10-year anniversary of the establishment of the Telecommunications and Information Management Program here in the Haworth College of Business. I would be remiss if I did not also mention another piece of information about Western Michigan University that gives us great pride and demonstrates how important Information Technology is to us. This was the first college or university in the nation to implement computer literacy as a requirement for every graduate. We did that 32 years ago. It was a visionary decision by those who came before us, and I am convinced that history plays a significant role in the way information technology has developed on this campus.

• This is the 11th time this forum has been convened. As I mentioned earlier, it always focuses on a timely issue.

• This year's topic--Information Security, Privacy and Trust--is perhaps the most timely and deeply concerning topic yet addressed by this annual conference. We
live in an age of marvelous technology, but we have, in recent months and years, become wary of that technology--and with good reason. We may certainly have been too trusting. And as the technology matures, we will need to approach it with a level of caution and skepticism that we never envisioned back when we were in the "Gee whiz" era of wonderful new tools that seemed to make life easier.

• A quick scan of news stories over the past 24 hours is not terribly reassuring. Cyber attacks by ISIS, malware targeting Apple products and state-sponsored hacking of national security interests are just a few of the hundreds of stories today. One news item recounts how Germany's Deutsch Telecom is now recording one million cyber attacks on its network EVERY DAY. Another notes that two thirds of technology experts expect a major cyber attack somewhere in the world that will cause significant loss of life or property. Clearly cyber security will be a timely topic for many days to come.

• I believe there are people in this room today who can help up look thoughtfully at the issues as they affect us locally and maybe even be able to offer solutions--or at least reassurance that solutions are possible. Just look at the calibre and experience today's speakers bring to the table. And reflect, for a moment, on some of the presentation topics--cyber and mobile security, healthcare and cloud security, privacy and, perhaps most important of all, trust. The discussions today will put this community of IT professionals at the cutting edge of one of the most critical issues of our time.

• My wish for you is that today's discussions get your creative juices flowing and spark ideas that can be implemented and new paths to be explored. We're counting on you. And I hope we see you back on campus often in the future. Thank you and enjoy your time here today.