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Broncos4Broncos Kickoff

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Good afternoon. It's always a great day to be a Bronco! Today, we're here to increase the power of that message. We're here to launch an initiative designed to build our resources and make sure we remove financial barriers that can keep good students from becoming or staying part of the Bronco community.

It's called Broncos4Broncos and it’s aimed at engaging faculty and staff--all of us who know best the value that Western Michigan University offers to students. We know because we've seen how being a part of our campus community changes lives. We've seen the transformation. We've created that transformation. We hear every day from alumni who are eager to say this University made it possible for them to accomplish great things. We are, what I like to call, an opportunity University.

• We're asking faculty and staff to help us all keep adding value to student lives by contributing to the Broncos4Broncos Campus Campaign. Gifts to the campaign will boost the resources we have to benefit students. We're asking longtime members of the Bronco family to help us keep expanding the family.

• To each of you who have agreed to serve as an advocate or part of the advisory board for Broncos4Broncos, my message is a simple one. Thank you. You know the need and you know the potential. And you know how important an individual gift can be. You've known students who needed an extra leg up, and you've known students who struggled financially and were not able to take full advantage of their time with us. That knowledge and your ability to share such stories will make you powerful advocates for this cause. I know we'll hear some of those stories this afternoon.
• Our ability to boost institutional funds to support students is critical. When I first came to Michigan, there were substantial state resources in place that Michigan families counted on to help finance their students' education. The Michigan Promise Scholarship, for instance, used to provide up to $4,000 per student for qualifying Michigan high school grads. That program was cut four years ago, and it has fallen on colleges and universities to search for ways to help fill the gap created.

• Private giving is the way we can step in and make a difference.

• Right now, 18 percent--almost one in five--WMU employees are donors at some level. We're extremely grateful for their commitment. I have a challenge though for everyone here today. Let's move that needle. By the end of 2015, we can boost employee giving to 30 percent and see nearly one in three employees become part of our campaign to help students. (If you're a competitive type, I might mention that 30 percent employee giving is the MAC average--and we're so much better than average.)

• Our faculty and staff already make an enormous difference in the lives of students and the civic and economic health of our communities. With your energy, advocacy and commitment, we can all find ways to make an even bigger difference. Let's expand the Bronco family and make every day a great day for new Broncos to find opportunity and fulfill their dreams.

Thank you.