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Distinguished Alumni Dinner Remarks

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Thank you, Jennifer and Suzanne. I am excited to be here. This is a great night to be… a BRONCO. It is one of the best nights of the year as we come together to celebrate our alumni.

I would like to thank the Alumni Board for selecting this year’s Distinguished Alumni Award recipients and for hosting this event. To all of our award recipients, I am humbled by your collective accomplishments and proud that as Broncos you are making an impact in your chosen field and in your communities. Our current students look to you as examples. And you have set the bar high.

I know many of you had an opportunity to spend time with our students today. Sharing your knowledge and experience with our students is a precious gift, and I am truly grateful, as I know they are. The stories and insights you impart will inspire our students to pursue their dreams and hopefully join you one day as outstanding alumni. This is why we have chosen to have students here tonight to help us honor those who have come before them.

As alumni, this is your University. Throughout the years we’ve been an institution that was learner centered, discovery driven and globally engaged.
Those three pillars remain our foundation today. Through the focus and hard work of our dedicated faculty and staff, your University is positioned for a future that few universities will have the opportunity to realize. Let me share a few recent accomplishments.

Michigan Lieutenant Governor Brian Calley visited campus recently to help us open Western's Evaluation Center for Autism and Neurological Disorders—WECAN. The center is part of our Autism Center of Excellence that was funded earlier this year with a special $4 million grant from the Michigan Legislature. The grant is helping us leverage a decades-long international reputation for training and service in the area of autism spectrum disorder.

Our expertise and leadership in flexible printing and electronic sensors garnered the attention of the Department of Defense and we will become one of a handful of centers around the nation that are a critical part of a new $171 million manufacturing initiative for both consumers and the military.

This fall the medical school welcomed its second outstanding class—60 students from 12 states who represent 39 colleges and universities around the nation.

In addition, we're working closely to integrate WMU and Cooley resources to enhance both schools’ offerings to students, while Cooley is carving out a national presence in student legal competitions and initiatives like its Innocence Project.
Finally, I hope you were able to join us earlier today as we celebrated the grand opening of Heritage Hall, home of the WMU Alumni Center. What that building represents is the commitment this city undertook in 1903 to become the home to an institution of higher education. It was civic pride, marketing savvy, investment of resources and a vision for the future that led to the outcome they desired—and what today we celebrate as Western Michigan University.

To our alumni, Western Michigan University is your home. I hope you come home often. I want to thank each of you for the role you play in adding to the stature of this great University. Your collective accomplishments honor us as a University, and we, in turn, are proud to honor you tonight. Thank you and congratulations!