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Opening of Heritage Hall

John M. Dunn
Western Michigan University, john.dunn@wmich.edu

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Good afternoon. Let me start by saying thank you to Richard Haworth for those wonderful comments on values and heritage. Today is all about celebrating those values and honoring our heritage. Those remarks could not have been more appropriate.

Today is also about saying thank you--thank you to a community that gave birth to Western Michigan University, thank you to the alumni and friends who made this renovation possible, and thank you to a superbly talented group of design and construction professionals from around our community and state who resurrected the birthplace of this great university.

First of all, our gratitude will always go to the Kalamazoo community. In 1903 the community truly rose to the occasion when the opportunity arose for this city to become home to Western State Normal School. Kalamazoo's committed, savvy and prescient media and business community led the way to success. They competed against 27 other West Michigan communities to be selected as the home to a new educational treasure that was destined to become the great national research university this is today.

As our friend Bud Parks of the Irving S. Gilmore Foundation likes to say, this community created this institution. They offered land, infrastructure and this building as the starting point to more than a century of success. This is and always will be Kalamazoo's University. And this building is a symbol of that shared commitment and connection. We're delighted it’s been transformed to become once again part of the daily life of this community.
The transformation you see before you has been made possible by the thoughtful design of Tower Pinkster, working hand in glove with historic renovation specialists from the Hopkins Burns Studio of Ann Arbor. Their vision was implemented through the construction management of the Christman Co. More than 30 contractors, almost all based in Michigan, worked with campus construction specialists and spent some 120,000 man-hours to bring us the magnificent building before us today. Please join me for a round of applause to show them how much their work and attention to detail is appreciated. *(Lead applause)*

And finally, I want everyone here today to be aware of the incredible generosity of our alumni and friends who contributed resources that allowed us to not just renovate this building, but to truly transform it into a home for returning alumni and a location that builds Bronco Pride in our students and in our community.

As you walk through the building you will notice unusually elegant furnishings throughout. For that we have the Haworth family and corporation to thank. Their generosity has imbued the WMU Alumni Center with a level of comfort that will set the tone for many years of thoughtful engagement and conversation. Thank you.

Our friends at the Gilmore Foundation made a major gift as well that has played a critical role in this transformation. We are grateful to them and proud to show them the impact of their gift.

And, of course, the WMU Alumni Association played a major role in making this the home that it is for generations of Broncos.
As you walk through the building in the weeks and months to come, you'll see additional acknowledgements of the support and care that has led to today's celebration. They range from named conference rooms to a plaza full of inscribed bricks and paving stones. Take some time to enjoy the spectacular view of our community from the East Portico Plaza. And then look down to read the names and messages that represent the hundreds of alumni and friends who wanted to be part of this labor of love. They wanted a role in bringing this building back to the daily life of WMU and Kalamazoo. I promise those messages will move you and make you smile.

Let me close by quoting one of those donors who felt compelled to offer an observation in brick. Carla Hashley, a 2007 history alumna now living in Washington, D.C., reminds us that, "It's a great day to be a Bronco."

Ladies and gentlemen, she's right. Enjoy your visit to Heritage Hall. Come back and see us often.

Thank you.