Medallion Scholarship Competition Welcome

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Good morning. Welcome to Western Michigan University and to Kalamazoo. For some of you, let me also welcome you to Michigan. For those of you from warmer climates, let me assure you--this is not as cold and snowy as it gets in Kalamazoo. This is what we in Michigan fondly call, "The January Thaw."

Students, I wish you the best of luck as you tackle today's Medallion competition.

Parents and families, I want to congratulate you and thank you for the critical role you played in bringing your students to this point in their lives. By anyone’s standards, these young people are some of the brightest students, not just in Michigan or the Midwest but also in the nation.

**The Medallion Competition**

Today, we're looking for bright students with the character, curiosity, initiative and ability to take full advantage of the opportunities that Western Michigan University presents.

Our Medallion scholars make a real difference in the world. And our Medallions often stay in touch with their campus and their mentors for many years after they graduate. For instance, Dr. Marc Humphrey is a 1997 Medallion alumnus who went on to earn his Ph.D. from Harvard. He returned to WMU last year from Vienna to be honored as the Department of Physics outstanding alumnus for, among other things, his work as a team leader for the International Atomic Energy Agency.
(Optional: A note of interest: He shared the stage that evening with LZ Granderson, journalist and commentator with CNN and ESPN who is a 1996 alumnus (not a Medallion) being honored by our School of Communication. I fully expect to see them together on CNN someday discussing an urgent international energy issue.)

What WMU offers
You'll make some discoveries today as you learn more about WMU--and those discoveries will revolve around the people you meet as you become more familiar with our campus. We have some of the best instructional facilities you'll find anywhere, but it is the quality of the people who make up this university that makes all the difference in our students' lives.

We're learner centered, globally engaged and discovery driven. This is a place that has all of the resources of a much larger research University but still has kept the focus squarely on teaching and student success.

Students, this is a place where you will discover things you might not yet know you're searching for. This is a place where faculty and staff alike consider your academic and personal discoveries their personal priority. They will help you take control of your own academic success and you'll find you can literally "Discover Gold" once you decide to “Go West!”

• Just five years ago, Stephen John of Portage was sitting right where you are sitting today. Today, Stephen is a first-year medical student at the University of Michigan. Shortly after enrolling at WMU, Stephen and a fellow Lee Honors College member Joseph Barnett met and joined forces to address an international issue they both were passionate about--the death of too many premature newborns in developing nations. Stephen had seen it while volunteering in Nepal, and Joseph had encountered the same need while working in Central America. Joseph and Stephen developed a
friendship as Broncos that changed their lives and could save the lives of countless infants.

Working with a faculty mentor, the pair became the inventors of NeoVent--a low-cost respiratory device designed to treat critically ill infants with underdeveloped lungs. They started their own company with the help of WMU's student business accelerator Starting Gate and they went on to sweep five of the nation's top awards for student innovation, starting with the Lemelson-MIT prize last spring and finishing up in November by winning the U.S. Patent Office's Collegiate Inventors Competition. In December, Stephen's partner Joseph received his WMU diploma and is headed off to med school as well.

**An Entrepreneurial University**

We pride ourselves on being an entrepreneurial university that is agile enough to take advantage of opportunity--regardless of the timing and obstacles that may stand in the way. For example, with our two local world-class teaching hospitals, we launched a private medical school that is about to select its third class of medical students for next fall. This private medical school at a public university made national headlines in 2011 with our announcement of a $100 million gift from then-anonymous donors, as well as the gift of a major science research facility that has been transformed into the home of the Homer Stryker M.D. School of Medicine. Please don't leave town without driving by this impressive facility.

And, WMU has recently affiliated with one of the nation's largest private law schools. Two upper-level law classes are being offered this semester, and by next fall, we expect to be offering first-year law classes through the Western Michigan University Thomas M. Cooley Law School here in Kalamazoo. We also offer a legal studies minor to undergraduates that will allow our students to earn both a bachelor's degree and a law degree in fewer than the traditional seven years.
Closing

Finally, let me urge you to take a careful look at our home community while you're here today. This is a wonderful college town with people who go out of their way to make students an important part of the social fabric. Late last year, Kalamazoo was ranked as one of the top college towns of its size in the nation. It's also been ranked a good place for creative people to live and a top town for recent college graduates to build a life.

Enjoy your day here. My message to today's competitors is a simple one. I want to invite you here for four years that I promise will be the most meaningful and transformative in your life. I look forward to seeing each one of you on our campus in the fall. Regardless of today's outcome, we want you to be part of our campus community.

I'll close with something I say everyday. “It’s a great day to be a Bronco!”

Thank you.

(8 minute--with optional passage.)