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51st Food Marketing Conference

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51st Food Marketing Conference  
Welcome by President John M. Dunn  
April 11, 2016

• Good evening and hello Grand Rapids. It is my absolute pleasure to welcome you here to attend Western Michigan University's 51st Annual Food Marketing Conference--and the first one ever to be held in Grand Rapids. I understand this year's conferences is also among our largest at nearly 800 participants strong.

• This conference has become a rite of spring for the industry. Many of you have attended regularly in Kalamazoo. Welcome back, and we hope you enjoy the opportunity to network with your colleagues from around the nation. For those of you who are first-time attendees, we are glad to see you. I hope this is the first of many visits with us to get your annual fix on the state of this important industry.

• We are enormously proud of Western Michigan University's Food and Consumer Packaged Goods Marketing Program. It is part of our Department of Marketing in the Haworth College of Business. Our marketing department is one of the 20 largest such marketing departments in the country. The Food Marketing and Consumer Package Good program is more than 50 years old and is considered one of the top programs of its kind in the nation.

• With the help of more than 40 members of the industry on our program's advisory board, we're able to ensure our classes are relevant and tailored to fit industry needs. And generous support from the industry means our students enjoy nearly, $100,000 worth of scholarship opportunities every year.
• How good is our program? It has a 93 percent placement--or post-graduate success--rate and a number of its graduates have gone on to become entrepreneurs and CEOs and executives at major corporations and industry organizations. If past experience holds, 2/3 of those who will graduate from the program this month have had jobs lined up for about two months already. The industry--you--clearly know how valuable those students will be as future employees.

• Your participation in this annual event and your year round service as mentors to our students and advisors on our industry boards are among the critical elements that give our program its national reputation.

• You will also want to know that we pride ourselves in being learner centered, discovery driven and globally engaged. The food marketing program fits beautifully into that description with significant research that has an impact on your industry. Our faculty members have professional backgrounds with such companies as Hormel, Kellogg and Kraft. And researchers across our campus are doing cutting-edge research in such areas as global food consumption trends and hybrid flexible printing innovation that can revolutionize the way we package foods and other consumer goods.

• I could continue, but I want you to have a chance to enjoy your dinner and savor the conference. You have an amazing group of speakers this evening and throughout the day tomorrow. Many old friends of the conference will be here along with some new high-profile industry figures. Tomorrow afternoon, for
instance, you will hear from Hank Meijer, co-chair of Meijer, who will deliver a keynote address on "Minding our Customer."

Welcome to you all. Please enjoy the conference and come to visit our campus in Kalamazoo. You are always welcome.

Thank you.