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Illinois High School Counselors Campus Visit

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• Good afternoon thank you all for being here at Western Michigan University. The WMU ties with your home state and communities are deeper and stronger than you might know. That's why I wanted to spend a bit of time with you today.

• Just to set the stage, let me share with you that I'm an Illinois native, born in Southern Illinois, and immediately before coming to WMU, I was the provost and interim chancellor at Southern Illinois-Carbondale. Since coming here, I've been struck by this university's ties to Illinois overall and the Chicago area in particular.

• We have more than 7,000 alumni in Illinois--second in size to Michigan. Your state is home to some incredibly active Bronco Alumni groups. And many who came here as students from Illinois stayed and built their careers here. They include one of our trustees--William Johnston, who has served on our board since 2007.

• What brings them to WMU? We offer value and all of the resources of a national research university on a campus that is a bit smaller and a lot friendlier and more inclusive than many. It's a place where students really get to know and work with top-notch professors, and no one is ever "just a number." And we're located in the ideal college community--one that was recently named the No. 3 city in the nation for creative individuals. As a campus and a community, we're all about making a real and lasting difference in peoples' lives.

• Over the past several years, we've begun to see a subtle but decided shift in the way college rankings assess U.S. Schools. While we do well in a variety of rankings, my
favorite is by Washington Monthly magazine, which assesses universities on the good they are doing for students and the nation when it comes to producing Ph.Ds. and new knowledge, encouraging service and adding value and success to the lives of individual students. Washington Monthly gets it. That value-added quality and commitment to the larger community have long been our hallmarks. Three times, now, including this year, WMU has appeared on Washington Monthly's list of top-100 national universities. WMU is also slotted at No. 13 in the Midwest in the magazine's "Best Bang for the Buck" category.

• Those are our traditions and values, but we're continuing to change and evolve. We like to keep our alumni talking about us. Over the past two years, for instance, we've launched two transformational initiatives.

• The first is the new Western Michigan University Homer Stryker M.D. School of Medicine, a spectacular entry into the nation's medical education infrastructure. It's a private medical school that leverages Kalamazoo's 135-year history in the health sciences. It was developed in partnership with Kalamazoo's two world-class teaching hospitals--Borgess Health and Bronson Healthcare. We're about to welcome our third class of students in this cutting-edge medical school.

The second big initiative got underway at roughly the same time as the medical school. We are now two years into a formal affiliation with a private law school. That affiliation created the Western Michigan University Thomas M. Cooley Law School. The affiliation has led to a number of joint projects and programs, and today we announced that first-year law classes would be available this fall for the first time on the WMU campus here in Kalamazoo. One of our goals is to allow a WMU student to earn both a bachelor's degree and a law degree in a shorter time frame--shaving time and tuition costs off the traditional seven-year path.
• So now, Western Michigan University is one of about 90 schools in the nation that is home to both a medical school and a law school. I could continue talking for some time about this University and what it offers, but perhaps my most important advice is to tell your students to take a drive or Amtrak trip to Kalamazoo to check out the possibilities.

• Thank you for all you do for your students and for being here with us today. I am confident you'll be leaving with a wealth of data and contact information, but let me add one more piece. My email is john.dunn@wmich.edu. I answer my own email and I welcome feedback from you. We are partners in helping young people find their paths. Enjoy the rest of your visit. Thank you.