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2016 Matriculation Ceremony

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President John M. Dunn
2016 Matriculation Ceremony
Aug. 31, 2016 – Miller Auditorium

- Thank you. I'm John M. Dunn, president of Western Michigan University--your University. This is the first official, ceremonial gathering of the incoming freshman class and our new transfer and international students. It's my pleasure today to say, "Welcome" to each of you. You, and your families, too, are now part of the Bronco community.
- The first thing I want to do is let you know about a few of the people who are here on the stage this afternoon. They are all committed to ensuring your college career gets off to a good start.
- You'll hear from a several these people in a few moments. The mayor of Kalamazoo is here along with faculty and staff leaders, a student government leader and the deans who lead our academic colleges. And finally--and most important-- here to welcome you to our community today are the people who will play the most critical role in your studies and who serve as the heart of this institution--members of the faculty of Western Michigan University.
- Opportunities--the kind you expect and those that are unexpected--are what your time at WMU will be all about. Your ability to recognize new opportunities is central to getting the most out of your time here as a student. And our commitment to providing more and more opportunity is at the core of our promise to you.
- You'll find during your time here that this University--like all great universities--is constantly changing. Recent years have been a time of enormous change. We've launched the WMU Homer Stryker M.D. School of Medicine, for instance, and

we've just welcomed our third class of medical students. Three of those students were WMU freshmen just a few years ago. And the medical school has a special preferred status for future WMU graduates.

- We are formally affiliated with one of the nation's largest and most diverse law schools-- the Western Michigan University Thomas M. Cooley Law School. The result is that this fall, for the first time ever, first-year law school classes are being offered here in Kalamazoo. Other legal education opportunities are growing.
- We always like to put a special focus on WMU's ties to the very best college community in the nation. The city of Kalamazoo gave birth to Western Michigan University 113 years ago, and that special relationship is celebrated in our newly renovated Heritage Hall Alumni Center atop Prospect Hill overlooking the city. It is a place we want you to feel comfortable visiting as students and later as alumni. And it has the best views for miles around.
- And change at WMU is sometimes about the daily rituals of life--like eating. I know you have had a chance to check out our new Valley Dining Center. We hope the healthy food and great atmosphere give you a chance to stay healthy, build new relationships and create memories you'll enjoy for decades to come.
- You'll see many changes in the coming years. You came here with high expectations of us, and we will fulfill them. But it will be the things you don't expect that may, in the end, have the most lasting effect on your future. My advice to you is to leave yourself wide open--to breathe deep and literally inhale all there is to take in.

So, what do you have to do to make the most of every opportunity?

- 1) Ask questions.
- 2) Find a path that is broader than the one you envision right now by sampling the whole range of entertainment, social, cultural and athletic opportunities available.
- 3) Sustain your current friendships--and make new ones.
- 4) Enjoy yourself, but do so responsibly.
- 5) And finally, take chances. I'm not suggesting risky behavior here. I'm suggesting risky ways of thinking. Accomplish things you have not yet considered and solve problems not yet discovered.

To paraphrase the words of Thomas Edison, 'If there is a way to do something... find it!'

(Closing set-up for Mayor Bobby Hopewell)

Today, you begin your time as a member of this University community, AND as a new member of the Kalamazoo community. As I mentioned, there is a special bond between this University, the city that is its home and the entire West Michigan region. To help you get an even better understanding of the ties between the city and University community, we have a special guest from the community.

At most colleges and universities, the mayor of the local community is an unknown figure to the students. That's not the case here. We have a mayor who is frequently seen at campus events. He is a major advocate for Western Michigan University and a very proud alumnus. He's also a big fan of our students' achievements.

Our mayor was born and raised in this city and has been Kalamazoo's leader and its biggest booster since taking office in 2007. When we asked him to come and speak with you today, he agreed immediately.

Welcome to the Western Michigan University community. We are delighted to have you here and eager to get to know you. I'll leave you with one final and very important thought--one that Mayor Hopewell will likely reiterate. Remember, it's always a great day to be a Bronco!

Transfer students, international students, and members of the freshman class, please join me in welcoming Mayor Bobby Hopewell.