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52nd WMU Food Marketing Conference Welcome

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52nd WMU Food Marketing Conference
Welcome by President John M. Dunn
March 21, 2017

- Good evening and hello Grand Rapids. It is my absolute pleasure to welcome you here to attend Western Michigan University's 52nd Annual Food Marketing Conference--the largest ever. You just keep growing I understand this year's conferences is some 900 people strong.

- For many of you, I simply want to say, "Welcome back." I 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.

This conference has become a rite of spring for the industry--one you can set your calendars by and one that we guarantee will deliver the most up-to-date information on industry trends possible. How to survive and thrive in a period of transformation and how to adjust to the critical changes in the way customers interface with your organizations are just two of the important topics on this year's agenda.

- 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 and is one of the 20 largest such marketing departments in the nation.

- Now more than 50 years old, the Food Marketing and Consumer Package Good program keeps current with the help of more than 40 members of the industry on our program's advisory board. And generous support from the industry means our students enjoy nearly, \$100,000 worth of scholarship opportunities every year.

- How important is our program to your industry? It has a 94 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 around the nation 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. We also pride ourselves on inculcating our role as a global research university into our industry outreach. Researchers across our campus are doing cutting-edge research in such areas as global food consumption trends, supply chain logistics 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.

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

Thank you.