

National Merit Scholars Luncheon

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Remarks

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Thank you Christine for that kind introduction.

I appreciate the opportunity to be here today and to have this chance to visit with some of the brightest young people of this area. It is indeed one of the great benefits of working in higher education that I have the chance every day to interact with people who are imagining the future and who have the skills and the drive and the enthusiasm to build that future for the good. Thank you for coming and thank you for your interest in Wichita State University.

I want to add my congratulations to those that you have already been given on what you have accomplished so far in your journeys as scholars. You should take pride in those achievements both for what they say about your talent and your commitment but, importantly, what your successes say about who you may become.

Earlier, President Beggs invited each of you to join the Wichita State University community in order to create yourselves. I like this image of the possibility of Wichita State. It's an image that has you joining us, bringing with you the skills that have given you the success that you have enjoyed so far, a truck load of curiosity and a least a little bit of uncertainty about the future to work with our distinguished faculty to set you on this great journey of discovery that you seek.

It is this discovery of what you are and what you can be, more than a curriculum or a major, that is what higher education is all about.

And, what an exciting journey of discovery it will be.

You have decided to take the next step, to come to the university to study more deeply and more broadly, to confront new ideas, to reach deeper into yourself for understanding, to learn to appreciate in different ways, and to eventually – and to the great joy of your parents – choose constructive work and join society as a productive citizen. This will be a most transformational part of your journey of discovery. How can we join you in that journey?

We know that you have great capability and many choices. Because you are here, we know that you have some familiarity with or interest in Wichita State University.

I am guessing that you have looked over our academic programs. And, so, you probably already know that we have a nationally ranked business school, one of the finest colleges of engineering in the country, world class fine arts programs, a college of education that interacts fully with one

of the largest urban school districts in the country, a college of health professions that supports the largest health care sector in Kansas and, of course, the full range of liberal arts and sciences leading to virtually any exciting career that you can imagine.

We have one of the largest Cooperative Education Programs in the country, a thriving honors college, and many programs of interdisciplinary study.

We have a distinguished faculty that share a commitment to student success.

And, you probably already know that we have one of the best faculties in the country, a beautiful campus, marvelous technology and, of course, shocker athletics.

There is no question that Wichita State has the rigorous academic programs that you will need in order to make your journey of discovery a success. When we invite students to join us to create themselves, we are fully confident that we have the faculty and academic programs to nurture that that enterprise.

But, we believe that we have something else that many of you might be interested in. An intangible really.

Wichita State University is a university with a soul. A university that knows where it is going and who it serves. A university that embraces its obligation to be a full partner in its community and with that joins in accepting responsibility for making constructive change.

We are an urban serving research institution with an attitude.

- If you want the best academic programs, come to Wichita State.
- If you want to apply your studies in partnership for public health, education, economic growth and community well being in a diverse and complex environment, come to Wichita State.
- If you want to understand how your life connects to rest of the world, we can explore that with you.
- If you love music and at the same time can't wait to get back to that experiment in the biology laboratory, use us to make that connection for a life time.
- If you love to read but worry about whether every child will know that joy, come here and show us how to make sure that they do.
- If you want to be the first astronaut to read Faulkner aloud while circling Mars, we can get you started on that journey.

- If you want to serve and lead, come be a Shocker and learn how.
- If airplanes, computers, spiders, music, art, books, video games, history, political debate, or the unknown turn you on, we will share that fascination and join you in your exploration of it.
- Or, if you simply do not know what is possible or what is right for you, we have the tools you need to figure that out.

These are not idle promises. This is the way that we dream of interacting with you.

We are in the business of collaborating with students in their mission of discovery, on their mission to create themselves.

This is why our mascot Wu has such a big head. He needs it to hold all the wild dreams of our students.

But what is more important to us is that, whatever university you choose, you give yourself a chance to change that university. Learning is not a passive art. Wherever you go, leave your mark. We are counting on you to do that for our future.

We invite you to come to Wichita State. We invite you to use us to create yourselves. We invite you to change us in the process.

We appreciate your taking the time to come learn about Wichita State. I wish each of you good luck.