

**PROPOSAL: President Emeritus Status for Edward Montgomery**

Background

President Edward Montgomery assumed the leadership of Western Michigan University on Aug. 1, 2017, as the University's ninth president with a clear and ambitious vision: elevate student success, diversify the University's financial foundations and distinguish Western as a school of choice. Over the ensuing eight years, he collaboratively stewarded those priorities with vision, integrity and a student-centered focus that has positively altered WMU's trajectory.

Under President Montgomery's leadership, WMU achieved historic academic outcomes. Six-year graduation and first-year retention rates reached record levels and student enrollment experienced its first year-over-year increase. Equally transformative was the \$550 million Empowering Futures Gift—the largest single gift ever made for a U.S. public university—spurring such initiatives as the Navigator Network, Bronco Promise, Bronco Connect Living Learning Community and the Student Success Hub. These programs have strengthened student enrollment, well-being, belonging and career readiness while sparking faculty innovation in Experience-Driven Learning.

President Montgomery advanced the significant physical redevelopment of the campus. Landmark projects include the WMU Student Center, Arcadia Flats apartments, the Aviation Education Center and the extensively modernized Dunbar Hall. Construction of Golden Oaks, the University's first new residence hall in a decade, is underway and will welcome students for fall 2026. Concurrently, during Dr. Montgomery's tenure, WMU's research enterprise has grown vastly. In 2024-25, for example, faculty and staff secured \$51.8 million in research grants through May of this year.

Throughout his tenure, President Montgomery reaffirmed WMU's enduring credo "So that all may learn." He championed an inclusive campus culture that welcomes individuals of every background and perspective. His steady leadership during the pandemic exemplified resilience, safeguarding the Bronco community while accelerating innovations in teaching, student support and employee work-life balance.

President Montgomery's legacy is one of bold transformation—measured in record student achievement, unprecedented philanthropic investment, modernized facilities and an enduring commitment to student success. His tenure has positioned the University to thrive in a rapidly changing higher education landscape.

Recommended Action

In deep appreciation for his extraordinary service and lasting contributions, it is recommended President Edward Montgomery be granted the title President Emeritus upon retirement June 30, 2025, along with all associated honors and privileges accorded by Western Michigan University Board of Trustees.