



1903 SOCIETY

FOUNDED BY YOU. CHERISHED BY BRONCOS.

1903 SOCIETY NEWSLETTER SPRING 2025

Bronco Spirit Soared at Homecoming! Thank you for making last fall's WMU Homecoming Alumni & Family Tailgate such a great success! From the crisp air and golden leaves to the BBQ and toe-tappin' tunes, it was a day to remember. We couldn't have asked for better Pure Michigan weather, and the feather in the 10-gallon hat, Western's big win over Kent State!

For members who joined us, you sure wore those 1903 Society-branded scarves with style! We hope they're still keeping you warm with Bronco pride.

Mark your calendar for this year's homecoming weekend: **Oct. 10-12, 2025**. We can't wait to catch up and celebrate everything you do for WMU!



Mark Your Calendar

May 16-17

1903 Society Brunch: The Sky's the Limit

June 28

Summer Commencement Ceremony

Oct. 10-12

WMU Homecoming Weekend

**Do you have a Bronco close to your heart graduating this summer? Let us know! Call (269) 387-8775 or email sonja.dotson@wmich.edu.*



Book Your Flight Now for Brunch

*Boarding has begun for the **1903 Society Brunch, May 16-17!** Enjoy delicious fare, discover why Western's aviation program continues to soar, and embark on a tour of the College of Aviation that includes viewing a state-of-the-art flight simulator room, expansive hangar and new Cirrus SR20 Generation 7 aircraft. Don't miss your flight—scan the QR code to register!*



Dear Friends,

When I first joined WMU’s College of Aviation, I was excited to return to the Midwest and be part of one of the most recognized programs of its kind. What I didn’t anticipate was the incredible passion and dedication of the team here.

Our team is exceptional, and every day, we are inspired by the great promise and enthusiasm of our students.

As dean, I’m proud to say the College of Aviation is soaring to new heights, earning a top 6 global ranking by Study International earlier this year. Our 1903 Society members help make achievements like this possible.

From our globally ranked flight science program to the recent addition of 32 Cirrus SR20 Generation 7 aircraft and cutting-edge simulators, WMU is investing in the future of aviation. These resources enhance student training and ensure our graduates remain industry leaders, equipped with the real-world experiences and skills they need to thrive in meaningful careers. With strong and growing programs in aviation management and technical operations, we’re also addressing critical workforce shortages and fulfilling a vital need in our state and across the nation.

None of this momentum and elevation happens without you.

Flight training adds a significant cost to earning a college degree at any institution. Scholarships help alleviate that financial burden and can mean the difference between a student at Western succeeding or putting their dreams on hold. Your generosity gives Broncos access to tuition assistance, essential learning tools and experience-driven opportunities, as well as enables ongoing facility upgrades in our state-of-the-art Aviation Education Center.

Looking ahead, we’re setting our sights on building a dedicated hangar for our new fleet, freeing up space for expanded educational activities and creating a foundation for decades of growth. With continued philanthropic support, I’m confident that Western Michigan University can become the national destination for aspiring aviation professionals across all disciplines.

Thank you for believing in our students and for fueling their journeys, both on campus and in the skies. The commitment you’ve made to Western lifts us all.

With gratitude,

Dr. Raymond Thompson
Dean, College of Aviation
Western Michigan University

Taking Flight: The Sumner-Arnett Scholarship Elevates Bronco Aviators

Alumnus Greg Sumner (B.A.’97, Spanish; B.S.’97, Aviation Technology and Operations) and his husband, Kevin Arnett, are helping ensure the dreams of aspiring aviators at Western Michigan University continue to soar.

The **Sumner-Arnett Flight Scholarship Endowment** offers hope for Broncos facing the financial hurdles of flight training. Much of the inspiration comes from Greg’s own experience as a Bronco.

“I was the first Medallion Scholar to finish the flight program at WMU,” Greg said. “In simple terms, this scholarship program changed my life and allowed me to pursue multiple disciplines and extracurriculars at Western.”

Greg’s career journey wasn’t free of turbulence. “As a struggling aviation professional dealing with challenges brought on by 9/11 and subsequent airline bankruptcies and industry consolidation, I wondered if the opportunity would ever arise for me to give back,” he shared. “Kevin and I had given our time and talents over the years, and we’re grateful the day finally came to give back through this scholarship support.”

Serving on the WMU Alumni Association board made Greg more aware of the financial pressures students face, especially in their junior and senior years. “It was only fitting we establish and grow this scholarship for future aviation students of all backgrounds,” he said. “With funding to state institutions under pressure, it’s imperative we support students who may need additional assistance to tackle the expenses they incur on the way to becoming professional aviators.”

The first recipient, David Christie, exemplifies the spirit of perseverance. An aviation flight science major expected to graduate in 2026, David



“Receiving this scholarship reaffirmed that I chose the right path and motivated me to keep pushing forward,”

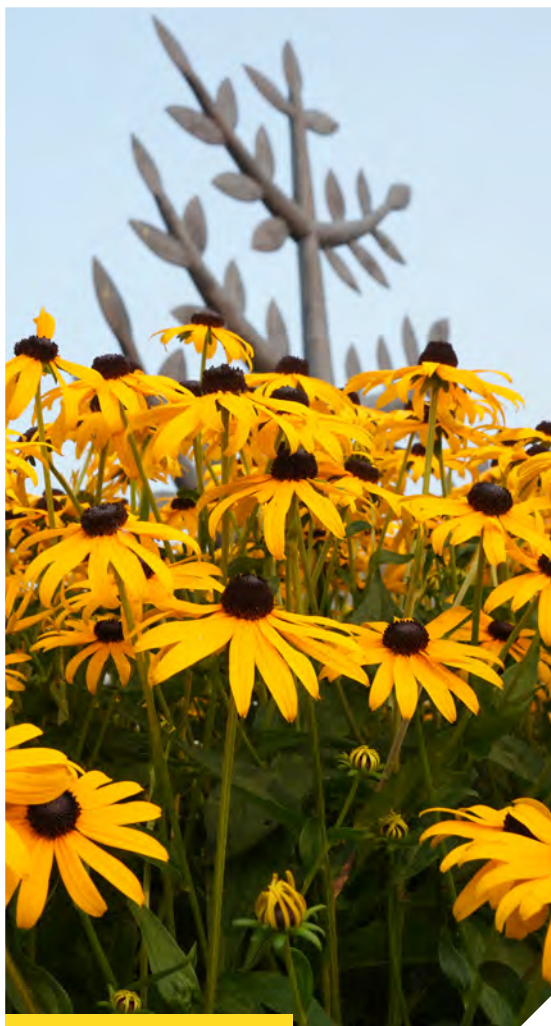
DAVID CHRISTIE

balances training with being a member of the WMU cheerleading team and summer jobs.

David hopes to fly for a Chicago-based airline after graduation. He credits Western’s strong sense of community and personalized learning atmosphere for empowering him to thrive. “WMU stood out because it offered a more tailored, student-focused experience,” David said. “With small class sizes and adaptable instructors, the program felt more approachable and supportive while still producing great pilots.”

As David charts his path, he does so uplifted by the **Sumner-Arnett Flight Scholarship Endowment** and all those at the University who believe in his potential.

Greg and Kevin’s commitment to WMU is rooted in the Medallion Ethic: to give back what you’ve been given. “Do whatever you can, whenever you can, to help our future Bronco graduates succeed,” Greg said.



Tax-Savvy Giving Opportunities

Your generosity empowers Broncos to thrive and shapes the future of Western Michigan University. To help you make the most of your philanthropy, we're pleased to share tax-savvy options designed to maximize your impact and enhance your tax benefits. Always consult your financial advisor to determine the best options for you.

1. **“Bunch” charitable contributions:** Combine multiple years of donations into one tax year to exceed the 2025 standard deduction (\$29,200 for couples, \$14,600 for individuals) and maximize your deductions.
2. **Give from your IRA:** If you're 70½ or older, donate up to \$108,000 tax-free from a traditional IRA to a qualified charity like WMU. These qualified charitable distributions (QCDs) also count toward your RMD if you're 73 or older.
3. **Donate appreciated assets:** Avoid capital gains taxes by donating appreciated stocks held for over a year. Claim a charitable deduction for the fair market value, or use appreciated stocks to fund a charitable gift annuity or remainder trust to supplement your income.



New in 2025!

The IRS increased the QCD limit to \$108,000 and the QCD-funded gift annuity limit to \$54,000 per individual.

Learn more at wmualumni.org/gift-planning or call us at (269) 387-8791 with questions.