



1903 SOCIETY

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1903 SOCIETY NEWSLETTER FALL 2025



Aiming High to Elevate Western: President Kavalhuna Returns Home

Western Michigan University rolled out the brown and gold carpet this summer to welcome home one of its own. Bronco for life and now WMU's 10th president, Russ Kavalhuna brings deep appreciation for the transformative power of a Western degree and bold aspirations for the University's next chapter.

President Kavalhuna's career flight path is far from ordinary. An alumnus who earned his bachelor's degree in aviation science and juris doctorate from Cooley Law School, he's flown as an airline captain, fought crime as a federal prosecutor, and most recently, led Henry Ford College as president.

Kavalhuna's journey reflects the promise of an experience-driven education: an approach that empowers Broncos to thrive by blending classroom learning with resume-worthy opportunities.

"Western has made me better in countless ways, as it has for hundreds of thousands of Broncos," he said. "I'm a Bronco through and through and I believe we are on the cusp of the very best of Western's 122-year-old legacy."

"Everywhere I go, I hear excitement about the direction Western is headed—in both academics and athletics," he continued. "This optimism mirrors my own. I'm thrilled to be back. This community holds a special place in my heart."

At the recent 1903 Society brunch, Kavalhuna shared his gratitude and a call for support. His message was both a thank you, recognizing the incredible generosity and impact of the 1903 Society, and an invitation for members to help shape WMU's future.

"You've already shown incredible commitment," he said. "Now I'm asking for your time and ideas. We are in a competition... to persuade people why Western is the right bet for their philanthropy, for their time, for their children's education."

Building on the strong foundation laid by his predecessor, President Edward Montgomery, Kavalhuna is aiming high to elevate WMU to a top three university in Michigan by focusing on student success, accelerating research innovation and expanding immersive, hands-on learning for Broncos. "I'm ready to say that at Western, we do it better than everybody else," he said. "We don't just help our students earn degrees; we help them build lives of purpose and possibility."

From aviation, education and engineering to health care, the arts and more, WMU's wide-ranging programs and opportunities enable students to soar inside and outside of the classroom. "There's no ceiling to what Western can achieve," Kavalhuna said. "With your partnership, we'll build on our legacy and ensure every Bronco has the tools to succeed—in college and in life."



1903 Society Brunch Takes Flight

We loved seeing many of our 1903 Society members at this year's brunch! A special thank you to the College of Aviation for being such gracious hosts—members enjoyed tours of the college and hangars, heard directly from passionate students and even tested their skills in the flight simulators.

President Russ Kavhaluna shared his excitement about returning to Western and expressed heartfelt gratitude for your continued commitment to our students.

Looking ahead, we're charting a new course! Plans are underway for events in Detroit, Chicago and Florida, with our cherished gathering in Kalamazoo still on the flight plan for May. We can't wait to connect with you on the next leg of our journey, so stay tuned for more details!

Mark Your Calendar

Oct. 10-12
WMU Homecoming Weekend

Dec. 2
GivingTuesday

Dec. 8-11
WMU Final Exam Week

Dec. 13
Fall Commencement

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

Bob White's Lesson in Giving Back

For alumnus Robert (Bob) White, Western Michigan University is more than the place he earned his degrees; it's where he found his footing and his calling.

Bob (B.A.'60, History; M.A.'62, Social Studies) arrived at WMU intending to pursue a career in law, but with a laugh, he recalled being "brainwashed into teaching," a nod to the University's former identity as a teacher's college. That shift launched a 30-year career in education with Portage Public Schools, where he taught middle and high school social studies before serving in administration as an assistant principal.

Although he did not live on campus, Bob still felt—and feels—a strong connection to WMU. "I'm really grateful to the instructors and for the education I received," he said, "and the older I get, the more and more I appreciate what Western gave me."

A loyal donor for more than four decades, Bob recently arranged for a planned gift to WMU through his estate, an extension of his lifelong love for the University and belief in the transformative power of higher education. When realized, his unrestricted gift to the Fund for Western will empower WMU to address its greatest or most pressing needs.



Today, Bob lives in his grandfather's home, a 120-year-old house filled with family history, on Grass Lake in Jackson, MI. Just as he hopes to one day leave that home to someone in his family, his planned gift to Western ensures he will also pass on opportunity and access to critical resources to Broncos for years to come.

"I made my living as a school teacher," Bob said, "but I did my best to give something every year to help the kids that are coming up. Western depends on the support of everyone, even the 'little people.'"

Event Spotlight



2025 WMU Homecoming Alumni Tailgate | Saturday, Oct. 11

Onward for the brown and gold!



You brought your A-game last year and it's almost time for the encore! Mark your calendar for our annual tailgate party on Oct. 11 before the Broncos take Stafford-Smith Field at Waldo Stadium against Ball State. Let's keep moving Onward and make the 2025 WMU Homecoming Alumni Tailgate the best one yet!

Look for an email with a special link to your complementary alumni tailgate tickets.



Put Your Property to Work for a Purpose You Love

How a gift of real estate can make a lasting impact at WMU

Did you know your home, vacation property or other real estate can help you support Western in a meaningful way and offer you tax benefits? Real estate can be donated just like cash or stock. Whether you're ready to part with your property or wish to keep living in it, there are flexible giving options.

- 1. Outright Gift of Real Estate:** Donate a property you no longer need, such as a rental or second home, to eliminate capital gains taxes and possibly receive a charitable deduction. WMU will sell the property and use the proceeds to support the program or area that matters most to you.
- 2. Retained Life Estate (RLE):** Transfer ownership of your home or vacation property to WMU while retaining the right to live in it for life. You'll receive an immediate tax deduction and create future impact for Broncos.
- 3. Charitable Remainder Trust (CRT):** Place appreciated rental or investment property in a trust to avoid immediate capital gains tax, receive lifetime income and qualify for a charitable tax deduction. When the trust ends, the remainder supports WMU.



Leave a Legacy with a Gift of Real Estate

A gift of real estate makes a lasting impact, may allow you to give more than you thought possible and alleviates future property-related responsibilities.

To explore if this option is right for you, call (269) 387-8791 or visit wmualumni.org/gift-planning.