Hello everybody:

Thirty-five years ago today, Southern California welcomed a bold endeavor, but one that got off to a pretty quiet start. This new enterprise opened with little fanfare on the day after Labor Day, 1977, starting life with two employees, a broken phone, and some rented furniture, and working out of a storefront office in a mostly abandoned outdoor shopping mall.

Over time, more space was acquired, more employees hired, and more awareness raised about the new venture, and by the time fall 1978 rolled around, 36 adventurous and committed souls had agreed to become the inaugural class of the College of Osteopathic Medicine of the Pacific.

I have been thinking a great deal lately about that first class of students, about their dreams, their commitment, and their willingness to take a chance on the unknown. In those early days of COMP, there were no guarantees that what we knew to be a worthy and needed addition to health-sciences education would even survive, much less thrive. As I did then, I today commend the members of the Class of 1982 for being possessed of the attitude, aptitude, and ambition necessary not only to become physicians, but to be the first worldwide ambassadors for what is now known as Western University of Health Sciences.

Too, I commend the staff and faculty who were the early builders of our curriculum and operations, and who embraced the philosophy of humanism and compassionate care not only in their instruction and dealings with our students, but with one another and with the community we call home. COMP, and now WesternU, has always been more than just a school. It is a valued community resource, partner, and friend, and serves as a beacon to all of what is possible when dreams, goals, commitment, and caring intersect.

The bold endeavor begun 35 years ago has become even more successful than we could possibly have imagined those many years ago. As I walk around our campuses in Pomona and Lebanon today, greeting our more than 3,500 students and more than 1,000 employees, I am consistently amazed and grateful that, regardless of how large our institution has become, we have never lost sight of what got us here: a mission to provide competent, compassionate care to all who seek it, and to live that mission through all that we do.

It’s my great pleasure today to mark WesternU’s 35th anniversary with all of you. Much has been accomplished since 1977, and much remains to be done. As we celebrate our past, let’s also embrace the opportunities the present and future provide, and embark on bold endeavors each and every day.

My best to you all,

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