

Graduate Student Welcome

Welcome to Michigan!!!

It is always a pleasure to have the opportunity to welcome new graduate students to the University...since, way back when I had an honest job as a faculty member, it was in a small department that primarily focused on graduate education.

Indeed, my most valuable colleagues and closest friends were always my PhD students... which is natural, I suppose, because the bonds between faculty and graduate students are particularly strong in almost every discipline.

The Excitement of Graduate Study

Many of you are making that exciting transition from undergraduate to graduate student...

Thinking back, almost 25 years ago when I made the same transition, I can recall many of my reactions at the time...

1. The very rapid sense of responsibility and control. Graduate students are expected to possess the intellectual maturity to determine their own course of study -- to set their own pace...
2. The intellectual excitement--of being able to dig into a subject as deeply as you choose!
3. The quality of student colleagues...I made the transition from Yale to Caltech. When I left Yale, I felt that I was at the top...only to find at Caltech that students from renown institutions like Southern University of North Dakota at Hoople e were capable of blowing my socks off -- as were the Caltech freshmen in some of my classes. It was a humbling, tho important, experience...
4. The sense of collegiality with the faculty.
In a short time, many of you will have acquired knowledge in a narrow area that exceeds your faculty advisor. At this stage, the learning relationship passes from a parent/child to a peer-to-peer nature...and you become a collaborator and a colleague.
(Although I would note that this biological relationship model seems to apply in tracking the family tree among PhDs...
For example, I can trace my own PhD heritage back to Von Karman...
while I can also count some 22 PhD children
...and perhaps another 50 PhD grandchildren...
5. Actually, graduate study is one of the most exciting periods in your intellectual development since you will rapidly become a master in your chosen area of study... and indeed can draw on the reputation of the institution and your faculty colleagues...yet you are not subject to the other pressures of a faculty position -- e.g., pressure to achieve tenure.

Hence, as you take those first steps down the

exciting trail of a college education, perhaps it is appropriate for the President of the University to pass along a few pearls of wisdom...

Actually, I would never dare give you any words of advice from my perspective as the University's supreme bureaucrat. But, as a faculty member, I have spent almost 20 years teaching and advising graduate students...

1. Michigan is not a small liberal arts college...it is a great research university.

It is also a very large, complex, and exciting place. Some parameters of the University

Parameters:

Enrollment: 35,000 (Ann Arbor) (47,000 total)

Faculty: 2,600 (14,000 employees)

Budget: \$1.5 billion

Academic Units

17 Schools and Colleges

Hundreds of research centers, institutes, and other types of interdisciplinary programs

Mission:

- i) Provides instruction, research, service
- ii) Spans all intellectual disciplines and professional areas
- iii) Attempts to conduct programs that rank among the nation's best in all areas (and succeeds...)

On this campus, we provide one of the most incredible intellectual smorgasbords in the world--a fascinating cornucopia of ideas supported by some of the finest facilities in the world -- one of the nation's great libraries, museums, laboratories, computers, concert halls, athletic facilities -- and even more important, one of the world's great faculties.

2. Diversity and Pluralism

On this campus we cherish the remarkable diversity and richness of peoples of different races, cultures, religions, nationalities, and beliefs. time in your lives the remarkable diversity and richness of peoples of different races, cultures, religions, nationalities, and beliefs.

As both a reflection and leader of society at large, we believe the University has a special challenge and responsibility to develop effective models of multicultural, pluralistic communities.

At Michigan we are firmly convinced that the ability of this University to achieve excellence in teaching, research, and service will be determined increasingly by our capacity to achieve and sustain a campus community characterized by its racial, cultural, and ethnic diversity.

We seek to build an environment on this campus which is receptive, supportive, and nurturing for all individuals, regardless of race, creed, national origin, gender, or sexual preference.

Yet the goal of diversity is a challenging one, particularly in the face of the prejudice and ignorance which continue to plague our campus and our society.

The challenge of pluralism and diversity is based on the notion that different races, cultures, and nationalities

can peacefully and productively exist side-by-side by celebrating their differences.

Our challenge is not to make one group from many, to blend together all cultures into a homogeneous mixture...but to build from many varying cultural, racial, and ethnic groups a truly multicultural community in which we share those common beliefs and values which bind us together.

All of us--faculty, staff, and students--must recognize that the challenge of diversity is our challenge and our responsibility, and until we recognize and accept this both as individuals and as members of the University community, we are unlikely to achieve our goals.

We believe that this commitment to diversity is key to the quality and distinction of the University--and to the quality of the education you will receive.

3. The role of graduate students

Graduate students play many roles in a research university:
students

head 4 - teaching assistants

research mssk uAnts head 4 - faculty codm values

You will soon be confronted with several of the age-old tensions which surround

universities. I am lined to point at this tension

between teaching and research as something unhealthy...

Section 3 - as something detrimental to the quality of education...

However, let me suggest that it is instead, the very cornerstone of what makes education at a research university so very important...

For unlike small liberal arts colleges, a major research university like Michigan expects all of its faculty to be active scholars...and to bring

g that perspective formed from
the continual struggle to extend mankind's knowledge into
the classroom.

Indeed, I believe that the unique character of the
education at this institution is due to the manner in which
we strive to bring together talented undergraduates with
active scholars...thereby exposing them to the excitement,
challenge, and occasionally, the frustration of scholarly
inquiry.

This is what makes Michigan...and Berkeley, and Stanford,
and Harvard...such important institutions in our society...

And this is what makes your role as developing
scholar-teachers so important.

4. Finally, let me suggest something else that

may sound almost sacreligious in the tradition-bound world
of graduate studies.

Since this will be one of the few occasions in your life when
you are relatively unconstrained--at least in an intellectual
sense--try to inject a sense of daring and adventure in
your work...

Try to be creative and imaginative...

I don't know how many of you have ever read Thomas Kuhn's
book on the nature of scientific revolution, but Kuhn
points out that most scholarship is really quite traditional...
it is really not designed to produce major novelties.

Progress is not gradual, but rather occurs through revolution...
through dramatic changes from one way of thinking...
from the old "paradigm" as Kuhn puts it, to the new "paradigm"

As Kuhn puts it, those scholars who achieve the fundamental
inventions of a new paradigm have been either very young or
very new to the field whose paradigm they change. These are
the individuals who, being little committed by prior practice to the
traditional rules of normal scholarship, are particularly likely to
see that those rules no longer define a playable game and to
conceive another set that can replace them.

In a sense, try something new before you fall into the same
ruts that have trapped the rest of us.

Oh, and one more thing...Try to have some fun in your graduate
studies...it can be one of the most enjoyable intellectual
experiences of your lives.

**Michigan is an exciting, challenging...sometimes
frustrating...but always rewarding place.**

Let me wish you the best as you start the fascinating
and rewarding experience of graduate study at Michigan.

Once again, congratulations on your accomplishments...
and we wish you the best as you pursue your careers as
future members of the academy.