

State of the University 1.8

Introduction

The State of the University = Michigan...

Whether at the level of the University, the state, or the nation, an address entitled "the state of something or other" is likely to be focused on the present...typically on the year past or the year ahead...

It seems more appropriate, however, that in my first State of the University address I depart from the usual tradition of talking about "what is"...and instead focus on "what might be"...

To use this as an opportunity to gaze into the crystal ball...to look not just at the year ahead... but down the road 10, 20, 30 years or more... to consider the possibilities for our University... what it is...what it could become... indeed, what it must become...

I should say at the outset of this process of "futuring" that I believe the University faces a period of unusual challenge and responsibility in the years ahead...but also a time of exceptional opportunity and excitement.

Themes of the Future

Think about it for a moment...

The students we are educating today will spend most of their lives in the next century...they will be citizens of the 21st Century...

Yet we, their educators, are very much products
of the 20th Century...

And our institution, the university of today, is
in reality a product of the 19th Century!

The way we are organized into departments and
colleges...our sequential approach to education...
even the concept of courses and credit hours...
all were introduced over a century ago.

And yet the American society we serve has changed dramatically
during the past century and continues to change at an
ever accelerating pace.

It is therefore both appropriate and important to ask the question:

Is the University as we know it today really prepared to
educate the citizens and serve the society of the 21st Century?

While it is always dangerous to attempt to predict the future,
three themes seem likely to dominate:

i) It will be a future in which our nation becomes a truly
multicultural society, with a racial and ethnic diversity
that will be extraordinary in our history...

ii) It will be a future in which The United States will become
"internationalized"...

in which every one of our activities must be viewed within
the broader context of an interdependent global community...
as we become a "world nation", with ethnic ties
to every part of the globe...

iii) It will be a future in which we rapidly evolve from a resource- and
labor-intensive society to a knowledge-intensive society,
in which intellectual capital...educated people and their

ideas...become the keys to our prosperity, security,
and social well-being.

Let's consider for a moment the challenges these themes
pose for our society and its institutions...and for our
University.

Challenges

1. The Challenge of Demographic Change...

The United States is changing rapidly today...

When we hear references to the demographic changes
occurring in our nation, however, we first tend to focus
on the aging of our population.

It is indeed true that the baby boomers are now entering middle
age,

and their generation has been followed by a baby bust...
in which the number of young adults will be declining over the
remainder of this century by roughly 20%.

The rapid increase in the average age of the
American population is being driven primarily by the
huge increase in the number of middle-age Americans
as the baby boom grows up.

But this has followed on the heels of a significant growth in
the 1980s in the number of senior Americans.

Indeed, today there are more people over the age of 65
than teenagers in this country, and this situation is
certain to continue for the remainder of our lives.

Further, the growth rate in both our population and workforce is
is declining to the lowest level in our nation's history.

The United States will simply not be a nation of youth again in our

lifetimes.

And this fact poses a most serious challenge to institutions such as universities which have traditionally served the young.

Yet, there is a far more profound change occurring in the population of our nation.

The United States is rapidly becoming the most pluralistic, multicultural nation on earth.

By 2000, one-third of college age students will be Black or Hispanic...

By 2000, 47% of our school children (K-12) will be Hispanic or Black (today 25% are)

In the second half of 21st Century, Hispanics will likely become the largest population group in The United States

Those groups we refer to today as "minorities" will become the majority population of our nation in the century ahead...just as they are today throughout the world.

In this future, full participation of currently underrepresented minorities will be of increasing concern for reasons of equity and social justice.

But, in addition, this objective will be the key to the future strength and prosperity of America, since our nation cannot afford to waste the human talent represented by its minority populations.

America cannot afford the loss of this human potential, cultural richness, and social leadership.

If we do not create a nation that mobilizes the talents

of all our citizens, we are destined for a diminished role in the global community, increased social turbulence, and most tragically, we will have failed to fulfill the promise of democracy upon which this nation was founded.

What are the implications for Michigan?

Many of us have become firmly convinced that for Michigan to achieve excellence in teaching and research in the years ahead, for it to serve our state, our nation, and the world...we simply must achieve and sustain a campus community recognized for its racial and ethnic diversity.

We believe the University has a mandate to build a model of a pluralistic, multicultural community for our nation...an environment which is supportive of all individuals, regardless of race, creed, national origin, gender, or sexual preference...

Which values and respects and indeed, draws its intellectual strength from the rich diversity of peoples of different races, cultures, religions, nationalities, and beliefs.

It seems apparent that we cannot sustain the distinction of our University in the pluralistic world society that is our future without intellectual diversity and an openness to new perspectives and experiences.

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 are bound together by a common core of values and beliefs.

In a very real sense, in our effort to build the multicultural university of the 21st Century, we are attempting to address the most urgent and difficult issue confronting our nation today.

All of us--faculty, staff, and students--must recognize that the challenge of diversity and pluralism is our personal challenge and our personal responsibility.

In particular, let me clearly state now, at this, the beginning of my presidency, that my personal commitment to meeting this challenge is both intense and unwavering.

I am determined that the University of Michigan achieve leadership in higher education by developing a model of what a pluralistic, multicultural university must be to serve America of the 21st Century -- and I urge each of you to join with me in the responding to this mandate!

2. The Internationalization of America

Every aspect of American life is becoming internationalized...

The signs are all about us...

Communications, travel, the arts and culture

Political security and interdependence...

Internationalization of commerce, capital, and labor...

Some facts of life:

The fact is that a truly domestic US economy has ceased to exist.

The market for nearly all significant industries

has become world-wide

In slightly more than 5 years, US trade deficit has taken us from the world's largest creditor to its largest debtor nation.

Here in Michigan, in the heart of the Rust Belt, we have learned the painful lessons of the new global economic order...
...as key industries have fallen victim to intense competition from abroad...

our plants have closed...our cities have filled with the unemployed...and our social burdens have assumed staggering proportions...

The growing internationalization of America suggests that understanding cultures other than our own is necessary not only for personal enrichment and good citizenship in the global community, but indeed, necessary for our very survival as a nation...

But there is another important reason for our renewed attention to the international agenda of the University.

The US has become the destination of about half the world's immigrants
Probably 10 million this decade alone...

With falling fertility rates, immigration will soon become the main determinant of the variability in our population.

The United States is evolving into the first true "world nation", with economic and ethnic ties to all parts of the globe.

We are no longer self-sufficient or self-sustaining. We are not immune to the shocks of the world society. We have never been more dependent on other nations and other peoples.

What are the implications for Michigan?

Among the University's many responsibilities and priorities, one therefore must rank high our responsibility to develop and sustain programs which reflect this international perspective.

It is true that this University has a long tradition of involvement in international activities...indeed, our academic programs, our relationships with institutions abroad, the international representation among our students and faculty...all contribute in important ways to our institution.

If the UM is to fully participate in an increasingly interdependent world, it must begin to think more imaginatively, more aggressively, and more strategically about how to strengthen our role as a true international center of learning.

To assist us in this effort, we have recently asked Professor John Jackson of the Law School to join us as an Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs to help design an appropriate strategy for our international activities.

3. The Age of Knowledge

Looking back over history, one can identify certain abrupt changes, discontinuities, in the nature, the very fabric of our civilization...

The Renaissance, the Age of Discovery, the Industrial Revolution...

There are many who contend that our society today is once again undergoing such a dramatic shift in fundamental perspective and structure.

As Erich Bloch, Director of the National Science Foundation suggests, we are entering a new age, an "Age of

Knowledge"

The signs are all about us.

Today we are evolving rapidly to a new post-industrial, knowledge-based society, just as a century ago our agrarian society evolved through the Industrial Revolution.

Our economy is switching steadily away from material and labor-intensive products and processes to those which depend upon knowledge as their primary ingredient.

A transition is occurring in which

Intellectual capital--brainpower-- is replacing financial and physical capital as key to our strength, prosperity, and social well-being

This is having a profound impact on our social structure, culture, and economy.

There is also great intellectual change and ferment...

New ideas and concepts are exploding forth at ever increasing rates...

We have ceased to accept that there is any coherent or unique core of wisdom that serves as the basis for new knowledge...

We've seen simply too many instances in which a new concept has blown apart our traditional views of a field...

We are increasingly surrounded by radical critiques of fundamental premises and scholarship...

In many fields, the knowledge base is doubling every few years...

The typical college graduate of today will likely change careers several times during a lifetime...

Hence a college education will only serve as the stepping stone to a process of lifelong education... and the ability to adapt to...indeed, to manage change...will become the most valuable skill of all.

What are the implications for Michigan?

As our society becomes ever more knowledge-intensive, and hence ever more dependent upon educated people and their ideas...

It will become ever more dependent upon research universities such as Michigan since we are one of the primary sources both of new knowledge and those who can apply it...

This will provide us with some unusual opportunities and responsibilities in the years ahead...as we are increasingly viewed as key players in the age of knowledge that is this nation's future.

The Need for a New Paradigm

The future will indeed be a time of great challenge as we attempt to serve the pluralistic, knowledge-intensive, world nation that will be The United States of the 21st Century.

Many of us are becoming convinced that higher education in America will be facing a period of challenge and change similar to that of a century ago, when the great land-grant universities were

born in a response to the industrial age...and in a response to a profound democratic impulse to extend the benefits of learning to all of society.

Indeed, many in recent years have suggested that there is a need for a paradigm shift in the nature of higher education in the years ahead.

But I suspect that such a change in the paradigm of the research university will not be gradual and evolutionary... but rather of a more dramatic and revolutionary nature.

Further, rather than the paradigm serving as a model simply to permit replication,

the new paradigm of the research university for the 21st Century will clearly be an object for further articulation, specification and refinement as the pace of change in our society accelerates.

And this will require, perhaps more than at any time in the recent history of higher education unusually strong leadership...leadership capable of identifying and articulating an exciting, challenging, and compelling mission for our institutions and then uniting our university communities...and those who support and depend upon us...in a common effort to pursue this mission.

A Heritage of Leadership

Who will determine the new paradigm for the research?
university in America?

Who will provide the leadership?

Why not the University of Michigan?

After all, in a very real sense, it was our University

that developed the paradigm of the public university
capable of responding to the needs of a rapidly
changing America of the 19th century...
a paradigm that still dominates higher education today.
In a sense, we have been throughout our history the
flagship of public higher education in America.

I believe that today our University is once again in an excellent position to
assume a role of leadership in higher education...
to develop a new model of what the research university
must become to serve 21st Century America...

Several characteristics of the University suggest this role of leadership:

1. Michigan's **Heritage** of Leadership

Although Michigan was not the first of the state universities, it was the
first to free itself of sectarian control and become a true
public institution, governed by the people of the state.

So too, the organic act establishing the Michigan in 1837 was regarded
as

"the most advanced and effective plan for a state
university, a model for all the state institutions of higher
learning which were established subsequently."

From its founding, Michigan was identified with the most
progressive forces in American higher education...

First to blend the classical curriculum with
the German approach stressing
faculty involvement in research and dedicated to
the preparation of future scholars.

First university in the West to pioneer in professional
education, starting the Medical School in 1850,

the Law School in 1859, and engineering courses in 1854
Among the first to introduce instruction in zoology and botony,
modern languages, modern history, American literature,
pharmacy, dentistry, speech, journalism,
teacher education, forestry, bacteriology,
naval architecture, aeronautical engineering,
computer engineering...and even in my
own field, nuclear engineering (with the associated
Michigan Memorial Phoenix Project)
Beyond tradition, however, there are other characteristics
of our University today which position us well for
this role of leadership.

2. **Reputation** as the flagship of public higher education

A large, comprehensive, public, research university

A serious commitment to scholarship

Unusual breadth, rich diversity of academic disciplines,
professional schools, social and cultural activities...

...our intellectual pluralism...

Unusual degree of participation of faculty and students in
University decisions

Indeed, throughout its history, Michigan has been known for
a spirit of democracy and tolerance among its
students and faculty.

Harper's Weekly (1860):

"The most striking feature of the University is the
broad and liberal spirit in which it does its work."

3. **People**

A faculty of great intellectual strength and unusual breadth

Student body of quality unsurpassed by any public institution
And, of course, that marvelous army of maize and blue alumni...
over 300,000 strong...indeed, one of every 1,000 Americans...
with a deep commitment to this institution.

4. Resources

While it is true that state support has not been strong in recent years, we nevertheless benefit from an unusually broad and balanced base of support from both the public and private sectors.

5. Ability to control our own destiny

Finally, we must never underestimate the importance of the fact that the University was created by the State Constitution itself...which establishes our Board of Regents as a coordinate branch of state government, with authority over the University exceeding that of the legislature, governor, and judiciary.

In a sense, we are almost unique among public institutions in having the ability to control our own destiny...

It is this rich set of characteristics that could well position the University to assume once again the leadership role it played in the 19th century by developing the new model for higher education appropriate for the needs of our state and nation in the 21st Century.

A Call for Action

But if we are to be successful in defining and achieving a mission of leadership in higher education, we will need far more than these characteristics.

Let me suggest several of the most critical themes:

1. The Commitment to Quality

Of course, one of the canonical invariants, the constants of the motion, that will allow us to respond to a future of change is an unrelenting commitment to academic excellence and scholarly values.

This will require that we also commit ourselves to focusing resources to achieve excellence...since in a future of limited resources, quality must inevitably dominate the breadth and capacity of our programs.

Our adherence to the highest standards of achievement must be based in a humble appreciation of the sacrifices made by the generations that built and sustain us.

Arrogance has no place in our quest for excellence.

2. Diversity, Pluralism, and Multiculturalism

I have mentioned this theme earlier, but it is so essential that I feel obliged to return to it once again.

It is imperative that the University recognize the importance of racial and cultural diversity and pluralism to achieving our objectives of excellence in teaching, research, and service.

We draw great strength from diversity, from the new intellectual perspectives and richness of diverse cultural expressions and experiences.

We simply will be unable to sustain the distinction of our university in the pluralistic world society that is our future without reflecting this diversity in our

intellectual activities and in the people who
comprise our campus community.

3. The Challenge of Change

We face a future in which permanence and stability
will become of less importance than flexibility and creativity...
in which the only certainty will be the presence of
continual change...

Just as with other institutions in our society, those
universities that will thrive will be those that are
capable not only of responding to this future of
change...but, indeed, have the capacity to
manage and control change.

I believe that it was Burke who said that:

"A state without the means of change is without the
means for its preservation"

I believe this is to be true for all institutions in our society
...and for universities in particular.

One can argue that such renewal and change
are essential both for the achievement and
the sustaining of excellence.

To get better, we must seek a culture in which
creativity, initiative, and innovation are valued.

To stay the best, we must achieve a process of
continual renewal.

Unfortunately, change can be threatening,
particularly when it is imposed by external
factors which victimize people

But change and renewal can also empower people;

it can give them control over their destiny

To this end, we must build a secure environment on this campus that can

sustain change and risk-taking and even failure..

as they say in computers, a "fault-tolerant" environment...

since the safer you can make a situation, the

higher you can raise the challenge.

We believe the University should not simply

respond grudgingly to change and challenge;

it must relish and stimulate and manage a

process of continual change and renewal if

it is to sustain its quality and leadership.

4. A Return to Fundamental Values

Let me suggest, that as we contemplate the various actions

necessary for leadership in higher education, we would

do well to recommitment ourselves to sustaining the most

fundamental values of the University.

For while change and renewal will be important themes of

our future, they can only occur upon a solid foundation

of institutional values.

Of course, academic institutions usually focus first on

intellectual values...characters of the mind....

The seeking of wisdom

Freedom of inquiry

Intellectual integrity

Discipline of the mind

Respect for reasoned conclusions

Democracy and justice

While these are essential in any university,
there are also other sets of values which we must
not ignore:

Values of moral character such as:

Honesty

Integrity

Courage

Compassion

Values of a civilized society:

Tolerance and mutual respect

Collegiality, civility, and community

5. The Important "Cs":

Let me focus a bit on these all-important "c-values"...

Caring and concern and compassion

Cooperation and communication and civility

Since these are the values that pull us together as
a community.

As the pace of change accelerates and its direction
becomes less predictable, forces inevitably develop
which tend to pull us apart--which trigger
misunderstanding and conflict.

And yet the challenges we will face in the years ahead
require us to pull together as a scholarly community.

It is desperately important that we seek the themes
and mechanisms capable of uniting us--and resist
those which drive us apart.

This is a particularly important in universities...

In these intensely people-dependent institutions

we have long accepted the premise that the key to quality is attracting and retaining the most outstanding students, faculty, and staff, providing them with the environment and encouragement to push to the limits of their abilities...and then getting out of their way!

However, in striving for a culture

Which stresses excellence and achievement, we also run the risk of losing that sense of collegiality, that sense of a scholarly community, that will, in the end, determine our capacity to face the challenges ahead.

A challenge of the modern university is to find in our history and tradition those values that unite us and to renew our commitment to these values in such a way that they shape our future.

We must strive for a true sense of an academic community in which the human mind is brought boldly to bear on the most enduring questions that confront us.

For that reason, we are convinced that we must look for experiences beyond the academic process to bring people together...to establish new bonds of friendship and understanding.

A final comment here...

When we think of the university community, we tend to think first of students, faculty, and staff.

But, of course, our community goes far beyond

this. It is a community of families, of spouses, children, and friends...

And I am absolutely convinced that there are thousands of members of this extended Michigan family who are every bit as committed to the University as those among our faculty, students, and staff--who contribute their energy and talents in a host of important, yet frequently unrecognized ways.

As we address this challenge of "community-building" in the months ahead, it is essential that we extend our efforts to include these people as well.

The Role of the Faculty

Of course, we realize in an institution of such size, complexity, and tradition, the articulation and achievement of any institutional mission must be a communal effort.

Success will rest with faculty groups in and across schools and colleges, with students inside and outside their formal organizations; with staff throughout the University.

Here is it essential to recognize that the role of the University administration is not to manage the University...

Rather it is to generate the debate... and provide the resources for continual experimentation and innovation.

For the University simply cannot function with

a corporate style of top-down, command-control management.

Rather we are a "voluntary" organization...

a creative anarchy...in which people do what they believe in... what they are committed to...

The momentum and quality of this University...of any great university... flows from the faculty ...nor from the administration!

Indeed, we must always remember and heed that familiar saying... "Great universities are run by their faculties... for their faculties..."

And, I might add, and for their students and their society as well...

The Hazards of Predicting the Future

In conclusion, my crystal ball suggests a future of challenge and responsibility, opportunity and excitement...

As the United States becomes a pluralistic world nation, intensely dependent upon knowledge--upon educated people and ideas--and hence intensely dependent upon these marvelous, mysterious, and complex institutions we know as research universities.

How of much of this particular vision of the future will actually come to pass?

Will the themes of pluralism, internationalization, and knowledge really dominate our future...

To be sure, change is not a predictable process..

There is always a hazard to predicting the future...

But then I always remember that old saying

"The best way to predict the future is to invent it!"..

And isn't that, after all, just the role of the University...

the job of inventing the future?...

A Mission for the 21st Century: Leadership

In my roles over the past 20 years, first as a faculty

member, then as dean, and most recently as provost,

have become increasingly convinced that the University

today faces a pivotal moment in its history...

a fork in the road...

Taking the path in one direction will, with dedication

and commitment, preserve the University as a distinguished--

indeed, a great--university, but only one among many such

institutions.

However there is another path...a path that would

require great vision and courage in addition to

dedication and commitment...in which the University

would seek not only only to sustain its quality and

distinction, but it would seek to achieve leadership as well.

I believe the University could...indeed **should**...

embrace its heritage of leadership in public higher education...

that the 1990s and beyond could be a time similar to that

extraordinary period in the late 19th century when the

University of Michigan was a primary source for much of

the innovation and leadership in higher education.

And what more exciting mission could we have than to accept

this challenge by striving to develop a new model of
the research university capable of responding to the changing
needs of our state and our nation...

The challenge of making the University of Michigan the model
for the University of the 21st Century.