

Student Recognition Awards -- April 3, 1989

Welcome

Michigan is a very challenging institution...but it is also an institution characterized by an extraordinary diversity of opportunities.

The students we honor this afternoon have not only met these academic challenges, but they have excelled as well in a broad range of extracurricular activities...the performing arts, athletics, student organizations, leadership.

Our pleasure and pride thus is not only for your individual achievements, but as well for your collective role in reflecting and sustaining the values and goals upon which the University of Michigan is based.

Citizens of the 21st Century

You are graduating at a truly extraordinary time... Think about it for a moment...

While you were born in the 20th Century, you will be spending the majority of your life in the 21st Century... (unlike those of us who have been educating you...)

You will inherit a future of great change, challenge, and opportunity

- i) A future in which our nation rapidly evolves into a truly multicultural society, with a cultural, racial, and ethnic diversity that will be truly extraordinary in our history...
- ii) A future in which America becomes "internationalized", in which every aspect of American life must be viewed within the broader context of an interdependent global community...as America becomes a truly "world nation", with not only economic and political, but as well ethnic ties to all parts of the globe...
- iii) A future in which we rapidly evolve to a new post-industrial society in which knowledge--that is, educated people and their ideas--will become the primary keys to our prosperity, security, and social well-being...
- iv) A future in which permanence and stability become less valued than flexibility and creativity... in which the only certainty will be the presence of continual change itself.

In this future it seems clear that while your Michigan education will provide a foundation for your future lives, it will also serve only as the stepping stone to a process of lifelong education... and the ability to adapt...indeed, to manage change... will become the most valuable skill of all.

The Responsibilities of Leadership

And if there is single common theme that seems to characterize the lives of Michigan graduates, it is the theme of leadership...

As a Michigan graduate, as a leader, you will face a future of great challenge and responsibility... but it will also be a future of great opportunity and excitement.

As I noted earlier, you are an extraordinarily talented group of individuals...

It is likely that regardless of what happens during your college education, you will go on to become leaders of our society...

Hence, we believe it important that you prepare for this life of leadership now by taking advantage of all that this University has to offer.

John Gardner suggests some of the key themes:

1. A commitment to the fulfillment of human possibilities.
The release of human potential is and must always be a central value.
Serious and sustained attention to the special problems of justice to historically deprived groups is essential.
2. Creating a sense of community
Shared values and goals are the chief resources leaders can count on in motivating people--the task grows difficult--eventually impossible--as shared values disintegrate.
You should strive to participate in and experience a sense of community on this campus.
3. Renewal
Leaders have to be capable of self renewal, and capable of helping in the renewal of the systems over which they preside.
Must learn to balance continuity and change.
4. Hope
Human beings are creatures who cheerfully act against the odds if they believe strongly enough, who reach for the unreachable stars and dream of impossible victories.
We must help young, potential leaders to value and to understand this side of our nature.
5. Discipline of the Mind
The central task of a university, a task which separates it from all other social institutions, is the creation of an environment where the quality of mind and of its performance is always the central concern.
The spirit most likely to develop leaders is a disciplined use of reason, enlivened by daring and the courage to experience, and tempered by respect for what we can learn from others.
6. Acceptance of Responsibility...
From the earliest moments in our long history, the UM has been known for a spirit of democracy and tolerance among its students and faculty.
Over a century ago, Harpers Weekly noted:
"The most striking feature of the University of Michigan is the broad and liberal spirit in which it does its work."
Student activism and involvement have always been an important part of the learning process at Michigan.
Yet, while it is of paramount importance that we protect the fundamental freedom of students and faculty to explore new ideas and concepts, to state their beliefs and values, no matter how far they may be from mainstream thought...
...it is also essential to recognize that without the acceptance of responsibility, freedom is meaningless.
Indeed, true leadership consists not of simply protesting the existence of a problem...but rather consists of doing something positive about it.
out against injustice
In a very real sense, I hope that you will make a positive commitment to address the challenges before our society and not be content simply with complaining...

Theodore Roosevelt

"It is not the critic who counts, nor those who point out how the strong stumbled or where the doer of deeds could have done better."

"The credit belongs to those who are actually in the arena; whose faces are marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strive valiantly; who err and come up short again and again; who know the great enthusiasms, the great devotions, and spend themselves in the worthy cause; who, at the best, know in the end the triumph of high achievement; and who, at the worst, if they fail, at least fail while daring greatly, so that their place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who know neither victory or defeat."

What have we tried to do at Michigan?

Prepare you for a career?...

As doctors, lawyers, engineers,
...investment bankers???

Well, we will do our best, but that is not our real mission...

These challenges suggest that the principal focus of an undergraduate education appropriate for the 21st Century will be the goal of liberal learning... that is, a liberal education as the preparation for a lifetime of learning.

We must take heed from T.S. Eliot's haunting passage:

T.S. Eliot ("The Rock", 1934)

All our knowledge brings us nearer to our ignorance.
All our ignorance brings us nearer to death.
But nearness to death no nearer to God.
Where is the Life we have lost in living?
Where is the wisdom we have lost in knowledge?
Where is the knowledge we have lost in information?
The cycles of Heaven in twenty centuries.
Bring us farther from God and nearer to the Dust.

While you might view your education at Michigan

.heaO†3 - as o

e aimed at extracting knowledge from the worst
information characterizing our society, let me suggest

.head 3 - that

uR real goal was something **Error!**
beyond that.

Alfred North Whitehead, in

his "Aims of Education", puts it best:

"Though knowledge is one chief aim of intellectual education, there exists another ingredient, vapour but

\$ -!greater and more dominating in its importance.

It is wisdom. You cannot be wise without some

head 4 - basis of knowledge, but you may easily acquire knowledge and remain bare of wisdom."

head 3 + Whitehead went further when he characterized the purpose of a college education as

"...to learn the art of life".

..." Education has but one aim:

head 5 - that is life, in all its richness and in all its manifestations"

head 2 + Our goal, indeed, the goal of any liberal education,

was to help you learn how to seek wisdom from knowledge -- and through that wisdom, prepare you to learn the art of life itself...

Concluding Remarks

Today we celebrate your accomplishments...

but even more, we look forward with great anticipation to your achievements in the years ahead.

We welcome you to the Michigan family.

We wish you health, happiness, and the satisfaction of a rewarding and meaningful life...

Congratulations...

Godspeed...

...Go-Blue...

...and Go Get 'Em!!!