



A Presentation by

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The University of Michigan

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Address
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Introduction

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 President, particularly 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 ten, twenty, thirty 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

Let’s 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 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:

1. It will be a future in which our nation becomes a truly multicultural society, with a racial and an ethnic diversity that will be extraordinary in our history.
2. It will be a future in which the United States becomes “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 all parts of the globe.
3. It will be a future in which we rapidly evolve from a resource and labor-intensive society to a knowledge-intensive society, a future 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

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 twenty percent. The rapid increase in the average age of the American population is

being driven primarily by the huge increase in the number of middle-aged Americans as the baby-boom generation 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 sixty-five than teenagers in this country, and the situation is certain to continue for the remainder of our lives. Further, the growth rate in both our population and our work force 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 the year 2000, one-third of college-age students will be Black or Hispanic. By the year 2000, roughly fifty percent of school children will be Hispanic or Black. In the second half of the 21st century Hispanics are likely to become the largest ethnic group in America. The groups that 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 of our citizens, we are destined for a diminished role in the global community and 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 the University of 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 that is supportive of all individuals, regardless of race, creed, national origin, gender, or sexual orientation; a community that 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 a 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, students, and staff—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 responding to this mandate!

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; the internationalization of commerce, capital, and labor. The facts of life are clear. In fact, a truly domestic United States economy has ceased to exist. The market for nearly all significant industries has become world wide. In slightly more than five years, the United States' 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 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 United States has become the destination of over one-half of the world's immigrants, probably ten million in this past 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 nor self-sustaining. We are not immune to the shocks of the world's 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 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. Our academic programs, our relationships with institutions abroad, the international representation among our students and faculty—all contribute in important ways to our University. However, if the University of Michigan 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 truly international center of learning. To assist 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.

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 around 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 that depend upon knowledge as their primary ingredient. A transition is occurring in which intellectual capital, that is, brain power, is replacing financial and physical capital, as the 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 a 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 have 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. A college education will only serve as a 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.

What are the implications for Michigan? As our society becomes more knowledge intensive and, as a result, ever more dependent upon educated people and their ideas, it will become more dependent upon research universities such as ours, since we are one of the primary sources both of new knowledge and of those who can apply it. This will provide us with some unusual opportunities and responsibilities in the year 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 surely 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. Many in recent years have suggested that there is a need for a paradigm shift in the nature of higher education in years ahead.

But I suspect that such a change in the paradigm in 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. We will need leadership that is capable of identifying and articulating an exciting, challenging, and compelling mission for our institutions and that is capable of uniting our university communities and those whose support depends 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. First among them is 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 act establishing 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. It was the first to blend the classic curriculum with the German approach that stressed faculty involvement in research and dedication to the preparation of future scholars. It was the first university in the west to pioneer in professional education, establishing the Medical School in 1850, the Law School in 1859, and engineering courses in 1854. The University was among the first to introduce instruction in zoology and botany, modern languages, modern history, American literature, pharmacy, dentistry, speech, journalism, teacher education, forestry, bacteriology, naval architecture, aeronautical engineering, computer engineering, and—my own field— nuclear engineering (with the associated Michigan Memorial Phoenix Project).

Beyond tradition, however, there are other characteristics of our University today that position us well for the role of leadership. We continue to have a reputation as the flagship of public higher education. We are the prototype of the large, comprehensive, public research university, with a serious commitment to scholarship. We are distinguished by unusual breadth, a rich diversity of academic disciplines, professional schools, social and cultural activities, and intellectual pluralism. We have benefited from an unusual degree of participation by our faculty and students in University decisions. Indeed, throughout its history, Michigan has long been known for a spirit of democracy and tolerance among its students and faculty. Over a century ago Harper's Weekly noted that "the most striking feature of the University of Michigan is the broad and liberal spirit in which it does its work."

We are characterized by a faculty of great intellectual strength and unusual breadth. Our student body has a quality unsurpassed by any public institution. And, of course, there is that marvelous army of Maize and Blue alumni, over 350,000 strong, one of every thousand Americans, who nourish a deep commitment to this institution.

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 public and private sectors. And, of course, 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 universities in having the ability to control our own destiny.

It is this rich set of characteristics that could well position the University to once again assume the leadership role it played in the 19th century by developing a new model for higher education appropriate for the needs of our state and our 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 emotion, 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 sacrifice that was 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 achieve 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, that have the capacity to manage and control change. I believe it was Burke who said, "A state without the means of change is without the means for its preservation." I believe this 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 improve we must seek a culture in which creativity, initiative, and innovation are valued. To save the best, we must achieve a process of continual renewal. Unfortunately, change can be threatening, particularly when it is imposed by factors which victimize people. But change and renewal can also empower people and 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 computer-ese 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 in leadership.

4. A Return to Fundamental Values

Let me suggest, as we contemplate the various actions necessary for leadership in higher education, that we would do well to recommit ourselves to sustaining the most fundamental values of a 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—characteristics of the mind—such as the seeking of wisdom, the freedom of inquiry, intellectual integrity, discipline of the mind, respect for reasoned conclusions, and democracy and justice. But 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, and compassion. And there are the values of a civilized society, such as tolerance and mutual respect, collegiality, civility, and community.

5. The Important “C” Words

Let me focus a bit on these all-important “C” values, values such as caring and concern and compassion, or cooperation and communication and civility. These are the values that pull us together as a community. As the face of change accelerates and its direction becomes less predictable, forces inevitably develop that tend to pull us apart, that 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 that we resist those which drive us apart. This is 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 the limits of their abilities; and then getting out of their way! However, in striving for a culture that 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. The challenge of the modern university is defined in our history and our tradition: those values that unite us and renew our commitments 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 our faculty, students, and staff and 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 any 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 it is essential to recognize that the role of 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 and what they are committed to. The momentum and the quality of this University, of any great university, flows from the faculty not from the administration! Indeed, we must always remember and heed that familiar saying that "Great universities are run by their faculties, for their faculties." And, I might add, 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, of opportunity and excitement, as the United States becomes a pluralistic world nation—intensely dependent upon knowledge and upon educated people and ideas, and hence, intensely dependent upon these marvelous, mysterious, and complex institutions we know as research universities.

How 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 in 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 twenty years, first as a faculty member, then as a dean, and most recently as Provost, I 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 to sustain its quality and distinction, but 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.

