

Governor Bush, President Machen, members of the University of Florida community, guest, families, and friends...

It is a pleasure to bring greetings and salutations from your sister flagship university to the north—the far frozen north: the University of Michigan. This is a task that seems particularly appropriate on this day when you will install a new president at the University of Florida with strong Michigan ties, Dr. J. Bernard Machen.

Of course, there have always been strong ties between our institutions. Befitting the inaugural theme, “Flagship of Discovery,” both of our institutions are the flagship public research universities of our states, indeed of our regions of the United States, with the University of Florida as the premier university in the Southeast and the University of Michigan the leading university in the Midwest. Both institutions have long traditions of service, excellence, and leadership.

There has long been a beneficial exchange of students, faculty, and staff, usually flowing from north to south in winter...and perhaps from south to north during hurricane season.

Both of our universities have distinguished faculties, although Florida has set a new standard by electing a distinguished theoretical physicist—a “string theorist” no less, as head of its faculty governance. (At last night’s inaugural reception I had the surreal experience of a conversation with Professor Ramond and the head of the NSF Physics division, talking about gravity waves and cosmology to the music of a bluegrass band and amid dancing gators!)

Speaking of gators, there are also competitive linkages among our institutions, such as those which occur from time to time on the gridiron or basketball court. In fact, tomorrow the University of Florida will play a Michigan team, and I predict you will win! (Of course, another Michigan team will be playing in South Bend, and here I will NOT make a prediction.)

But most significant, both of our universities face similar challenges and opportunities in the century ahead that will require particularly strong and visionary leadership for our institutions. Let me explain:

Flagship public research universities such as the Universities of Florida and Michigan must be regarded as among the most significant social institutions of contemporary society. These universities lead the world in the quality of their

academic programs, as evidenced both by their dominance of international awards and by their status as the institutions of choice for students throughout the world.

These universities have applied the fruits of their scholarship and research to provide the knowledge and services to meet the diverse needs of our society, stimulating our economy, reshaping our culture, and addressing social priorities from health care to international competitiveness to national security.

Such public universities have democratized higher education, extending the opportunities for a college education to all of our citizens. And they have become deeply engaged with their local communities and regions to provide the graduates the knowledge, and services critical to economic prosperity and cultural vitality.

Yet this is a time of change, for our society and its universities. The forces driving change in our world today are many and varied:

- The intensifying, lifelong educational needs of citizens in a knowledge-driven, global economy (with “outsourcing” and “off-shoring”).
- The increasing diversity of our population and the growing needs of under-served communities.
- The globalization of commerce, culture, and education.
- The impact of rapidly evolving technologies such as the computer and telecommunications.
- And the growing importance of the graduates educated and new knowledge created on our campuses as keys to the innovation that drives our economic prosperity and provides for our national security.

We face many challenges:

- A changing student population, far more diverse in age, ethnic background, and economic circumstance, is demanding change in our institutions.
- The exponential increase in new knowledge coupled with the intensifying needs for advanced education in the workplace are challenging traditional disciplines and methods of instruction.

- The rapidly evolving technologies of computers and the Internet are eroding constraints of space and time and stimulating new market forces for educational services.
- Furthermore, despite the growing educational needs of a knowledge-based society, public higher education frequently falls behind other public priorities such as health care, corrections, national security, and, of course, tax relief.

While all of higher education faces the challenge of change as we enter a new century, these challenges are particularly intense for flagship public research universities such as Florida and Michigan, which must address:

- The complex political and social environments in which these institutions must function;
- The rapidly changing character of their financing;
- Their public responsibilities and accountability;
- And, as flagship universities, honoring their long tradition and mandate for leadership.

But our universities also face a time of quite extraordinary opportunities, since society's dependence upon higher education in general and the research university in particular has never been stronger. Today we are evolving rapidly into a global, knowledge-based society, a shift in culture and technology as profound as the shift that took place a century ago when our agrarian societies evolved into industrial nations. A radically new system for creating wealth has evolved that depends upon the creation and application of new knowledge. In a very real sense, we are entering a new age, an *age of knowledge*, in which the key strategic resource necessary for prosperity has become knowledge itself—educated people and their ideas. Unlike natural resources, such as iron and oil, that have driven earlier economic transformations, knowledge is inexhaustible. The more it is used, the more it multiplies and expands.

But knowledge can be created, absorbed, and applied only by the educated mind. Hence schools, in general, and universities in particular, will play increasingly important roles as our societies enter this new age.

Even more fundamentally, as we enter the new millennium, there is an increasing sense that the social contract between the public university and

American society may need to be reconsidered and perhaps even renegotiated once again. Today we have entered an era in which educated people and the knowledge they produce and use have become the keys to the economic prosperity, national security, and social well-being. Moreover, education, knowledge, and skills have become primary determinants of one's personal standard of living. One might well argue that it has become the responsibility of democratic societies to provide their citizens with the learning opportunities they need, throughout their lives, whenever, wherever, and however they desire it, at high quality and at an affordable cost, and the university—particularly the flagship public university—must provide the leadership in achieving this objective.

The State of Florida itself presents particularly unusual opportunities. In many ways the diversity of this state, the global nature of its economy (not to mention its importance for national elections...) characterizes the nature of America in the 21st century, just as did California during the last half of the 20th century. In this sense, I believe that the University of Florida has the opportunity to provide leadership on the national—indeed, the global—level, just as the University of California did during the 20th century.

The challenge of leading a public university during a time of great change is considerable, particularly when the institution has the prominence of a flagship state university. These institutions touch the lives of thousands—indeed, millions—as students, parents, patients, alumni, sports fans, and, of course, taxpayers.

Throughout its history, the University of Florida has benefited from strong leadership. And I have great confidence that your 11th president, Dr. J. Bernard Machen, will similarly provide the vision and leadership needed to help you face the challenges and grasp the opportunities that lie before your university.

Bernie Machen is a citizen of the south, as sometimes betrayed by his accent. Educated at Vanderbilt and then receiving both DDS and PhD degrees from St. Louis University and the University of Iowa, he has an unusually broad command of both the professional and academic disciplines.

His rather formidable leadership skills were forged in two of the top public research universities of our nation, the University of North Carolina and the University of Michigan. This experience has provided him with not only an appreciation for the unique character of public higher education, but just as important, an appreciation for academic excellence, as well as the skill and determination to achieve it, as manifested in the leadership roles both in these institutions and as president at the University of Utah.

At Michigan, we came to appreciate not only his commitment to excellence, but his courage on taking on difficult issues and his skill in building broad consensus and support. His leadership style wears well, particularly during challenge times.

And key to the University of Florida community, he has a great partner in his wife, Chris. She has played an important role in Bernie's leadership roles as dean, provost, and president, and I think you already sense her energy, enthusiasm, and commitment to your university.

Hence it is with considerable confidence and enthusiasm that I congratulate the University of Florida in its choice of leadership. President Machen is truly a leader for the times, capable of leading the University of

Florida during a period of considerable challenge and extraordinary opportunity, as you become a “Flagship for Discovery!”