

Congressional Breakfast

The Many Michigans...

How many of you remember the old parable about
the blind men describing what an elephant looked
like as they each felt a different part of it?

Well, in many ways the University of Michigan is just
such an elephant to the people of this state...

There is the Michigan of those marvelous Saturday
afternoons in the fall as 105,000 fans cram into
Michigan stadium to watch the Wolverines...
...or better yet, storming from behind in the
second half to beat USC in the Rose Bowl last month!!!

Then there is the Michigan of the Big Chill...

The tradition of student involvement helping to awaken the
conscience of a nation...

There is also the caring Michigan as seen by the over half-million
patients a year who are treated by the UM Medical Center,
Or the Michigan as Silicon Valley East, working to build the
high-tech infrastructure necessary to create new companies
and new jobs...as evidenced by the \$5 B industry in
industrial automation now building up in the Ann Arbor-
Detroit-Warren crescent...

Or the Michigan which attracts to our state almost
a quarter of a billion dollars of federal R&D each
year...not to mention many of the world's
leading scientists and engineers

And, of course, there is the Michigan as the educator,
attempting to provide, an education for Michigan
citizens as good as any available in the world...

It is important to note these different perspectives of the
University because all too often we tend to think of these
marvelous and complex institutions in one-dimensional images
that reflect only our particular interests or needs of the moment...
...when we read about student unrest on our campus...
...or see Michigan lose at the buzzer against Indiana...
...or open the tuition bill for our son or daughter...

The Historical Role of the Public University

To serve...perhaps the most unique theme of public higher education
in America...

For the bonds between the university and society are

particularly strong in this country...

Historically our institutions have been responsible to, shaped by,
and drawn their agendas from the communities that founded them...

Perhaps this is nowhere more apparent than in our State of Michigan
and with its institutions...

And perhaps it was appropriate that Michigan

A state with seemingly infinite resources of fur, timber,
iron, and copper...

A state with boundless confidence in the future...

Should play such a leadership role in developing the models
of higher education which would later serve all of America.

The State of Michigan, through its public universities
has provided the nation a model of how higher
education serves society through the triad mission of
teaching, research, and public service.

Our colleges have grown up with our State...responding to the
changing needs and aspirations of its people...

- i) First as Michigan tamed the frontier...
- ii) Then as it evolved through the industrial revolution
into the manufacturing capital of the world...
- iii) As the population of our state surged following the
war years...
- iv) And most recently, as Michigan has sought to
strengthen and diversity its economic base.

Yet the strength of our State, its capacity to build and
sustain such extraordinary institutions, lies not in
looking to the past, but rather in its ability to look to
the future...to take the actions and make the investments
in the present that would yield prosperity and well-being
for its people in the future.

Challenges for Today--Opportunities for Tomorrow

Our universities today are at a particularly important moment
in history, since they are being called upon to
educate students who will be spending most of their
lives in another century...citizens of the 21st Century,
if you will.

And while it is always risky to try to speculate about the
future our students will find, three themes of 21st
Century America seem clear...

- i) It will be future in which our nation becomes a truly

multicultural society, with a cultural,
racial, and ethnic diversity that will be extraordinary
in our history

In which those groups we refer to today as
minorities will become the majority population of
our nation in the century ahead...

In this future, full participation of today's underrepresented minorities
will not be just a matter of equity and social justice.

It will be the key to the future strength and prosperity
of America, since our country cannot afford to
waste the human talent represented by its minority
populations.

This is probably the most serious challenge facing American
society today. While it is true that universities cannot solve
this problem alone, we must not use this fact as an
excuse for doing nothing.

Rather we must intensify our efforts to seek full
participation of underrepresented minorities among
our students, faculty, staff, and leadership.

As both a reflection and leader of society at large,
we have a special challenge and
responsibility to develop effective models of
multicultural, pluralistic communities for our nation.

We must strive to achieve new levels of understanding,
tolerance, and mutual fulfillment for peoples of
diverse racial and cultural backgrounds.

ii) It will be a future in which America will become "internationalized"...

in which every one of our activities must be viewed from
the broader context of participation in the global community...

Whether through travel and communication, the arts and
culture, the internationalization of commerce, capital,
and labor, we will become increasingly dependent on
other nations and other peoples.

Further, as the destination of roughly half the world's
immigrants, the United States is rapidly becoming a "world nation"
with strong ethnic ties to every part of the globe.

If our institutions are to serve America in its role as a member
of the global community, we must think and act more
imaginatively, more aggressively, and more strategically
to strengthen our role as truly international centers of learning.

iii) The Age of Knowledge

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

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

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

In many fields, the knowledge base is doubling every few years...indeed, in some fields the knowledge taught undergraduates becomes obsolete even before they graduate!

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.

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 our research universities as primary sources of new knowledge and those capable of applying it.

Hence our institutions will face a period of unusual responsibility, challenge, and opportunity in the years ahead.

But I believe we will also face a period of major change.

In a very real sense, the university as we know it today was invented to serve an America of the past...
...a nation characterized by a rather homogeneous, domestic, industrialized society.

It is becoming increasingly apparent that it is time to develop a new model of higher education---

to re-invent the university, if you will--so that it is capable of responding to the needs of the highly pluralistic, knowledge-intensive, world nation that will be the America of the 21st Century.

Concerns...

Needless to say, these same challenges of pluralism, of globalization, and of this age of knowledge that is our future will pose great challenges and demand similar changes in our state.

Indeed, I am personally convinced our state and our nation period of challenge in the decade ahead...

My central theme is that education, broadly defined, will be the key element that determines our strength, our prosperity, our well-being.

Indeed, I am absolutely convinced that the dominant issue of the 1990s--both for this state and for this nation--will become the development of our human resources.

Hence the challenge before higher education is the challenge before America...

And the actions we must take...

...and the investments we must make...

...will clearly determine our capacity to respond to this future...

The Hazards of Predicting the Future

In summary, 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?...

The UM Heritage

And isn't that, after all, also just the heritage of the
University of Michigan

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.

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

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.

Perhaps it is time that we once again played that role...
re-inventing the nature of the university once again...
...a university capable of educating the citizens
and serving the society of not the 20th,
but rather the 21st Century.

A Mission for the 21st Century

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.

I believe that we should take this second path...
that we should summon the vision and courage...
the dedication and commitment...to accept our
heritage of leadership in higher education...

I believe that the 1990s and beyond can be a time
similar to the late 19th century when the
University of Michigan was a primary source
for much of the innovation and leadership in higher
education in this nation.

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.