

Freshman Convocation

Welcome to Michigan!!!

In the weeks ahead you will be introduced to many Michigan traditions.

This is one.

It has become a tradition for the President and other leadership of the University to give our entering freshman class some advice.

I should also note that it has been a long tradition of our students to ignore it...

The Good News and the Bad News

Let me congratulate you on the distinguished record each of you have brought to Michigan...

This past year we had over 19,000 applications for the 4,500 positions in our freshman class.

We therefore had the luxury to build a class drawn from students across the nation with extraordinary achievements

...in the classroom...

...in the studio or concert hall...

...on the field...

...as scholars, musicians, artists, athletes...

...as leaders...

Each and everyone of you is something very special and I must confess that we are already very proud of you...

I cannot help but note that you are part of what is the strongest class in Michigan history...

That's the **good news**...

Now for the **bad news**...

Next year's class will blow your socks off...

They'll be even better, so I'm afraid that you can't slow down!

Despite your obvious academic talents, many...

most...probably **ALL**...of you will find Michigan a challenging experience.

...to some it will be through formal courses

...to others, the size and complexity of the university

...others of you will face challenges through athletics, social activities...

...even challenges to your most fundamental beliefs

But, of course, that is what a college education is all about...

Not to simply learn facts...or prepare for a profession...

But rather, a college education is a time of challenge and discovery, of curiosity and intellectual growth, of learning about yourself.

It is a time to learn the art of life...

Hence, as you take those first steps down the

exciting trail of a college education, perhaps it is appropriate for the Provost of the University to pass along a few pearls of wisdom...

Actually, most of you probably don't have the vaguest idea what a Provost is...

If you look up the word in a dictionary, you will find

it is derived from the Latin term for

"the one in charge"...

And while it is true that all academic programs, faculty, staff, and such report to me, ...

I tend to favor the last definition used in the

dictionary when it defines the Provost as
"the keeper of a prison"...

Actually, I would never dare give you any words
of advice from my perspective as the
University's supreme bureaucrat.

But in addition to being Provost, I am also
the father of two daughters now struggling
their way through college, and hence I
think I have some particularly relevant
first-hand experience with the trials and
tribulations of a college education.

**1. Michigan is not a small liberal arts college...
it is a great research university.**

It is also a very large, complex, and exciting place.

Some parameters of the University

Parameters:

Enrollment: 34,000 (Ann Arbor) (47,000 total)

Faculty: 2,600 (14,000 employees)

Budget: \$1.3 billion

Academic Units

17 Schools and Colleges

Hundreds of research centers, institutes,
and other types of interdisciplinary
programs

Mission:

i) Provides instruction, research, service

ii) Spans all intellectual disciplines and
professional areas

iii) Attempts to conduct programs that rank
among the nation's best in all areas
(and succeeds...)

On this campus, we provide one of the most
incredible intellectual smorgasbords in
the world--a fascinating cornucopia of
ideas supported by some of the finest
facilities in the world -- one of the nation's
great libraries, museums, laboratories,
computers, concert halls,
athletic facilities -- and even more
important, one of the world's great
faculties.

Our philosophy is to use these incredible
resources not simply to teach facts...indeed,
students of your ability can learn facts, content,
pretty much on your own.

Furthermore, In many fields, the knowledge base is doubling
every five years...hence an undergraduate education only
serves as the stepping stone to a process of lifelong
education

Moreover, save for the most basic information, it is no longer
necessary at the college level to commit vast amounts
of knowledge to memory. Indeed, we now live in a
world where knowledge and information can literally
be plucked out of the air...or off your computer terminal.

Hence, of more lasting value are the broadly applicable
skills and wide-ranging perspective that is
characteristic of a liberal education -- not a
narrowly focused curriculum.

Thus our goal is to expose you through to the world's
leading scholars, people who are struggling every day
with creating new knowledge, not simply relating old

content.

Our goal is to teach you methods of inquiry...methods of critical analysis and thought...

This can be frustrating at times, but we are convinced... as are the other great research universities of this nation...that you will be far better prepared to assume the role of leadership in society with this type of an education.

2. From this perspective, it is critical that you recognize that you will probably be learning more OUTSIDE of the classroom than in it!

This University is designed to provide a rich environment of intellectual experiences...

Whether it be through the wealth of formal instruction we provide, or through the array of cultural, social, athletic activities.

In fact, I suspect that most of you will end up learning more from your interaction with other students than you will from faculty!

Take advantage of this environment...

Get out and meet people and become involved!

3. Importance of diversity to this campus and your education

UM has made a very deep commitment to the achievement of an environment which seeks, nourishes, and sustains racial, cultural, and ethnic diversity.

We believe it essential to develop an environment of mutual understanding and sensitivity on this campus that not only tolerates diversity, but moreover seeks

to head 3 - and embraces it, as one of our most cherished characteristics.

From the earliest moments in our mŉng history, the UM has been known for a spirit of democracy and tolerance

ce among its students and faculty.

Head 3 - Almost 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."

We believe that this commitment to diversity is

key to the quality and distinction of this University--and to the quality of the education you will receive.

For that reason it is absolutely paramount that you

demonstrate the sensitivity and tolerance toward others of differing races, cultures, and nationalities. This will be an essential component of your education.

4. Preparation for leadership

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.

Broaden your horizon...

Become involved...

Develop a personal philosophy of life...

Become committed...

And if you have to come over and take over my office in protest, then so be it...it is all part of an education for leadership.

5. Finally, let me stress that your education

at Michigan will not be a passive process.

While it is true that we probably have more opportunities on this campus than any other university in the nation, it is also true that they will not be presented to you on a silver platter.

We expect you to play an active role in your education!

To explore, to discover, even to challenge yourself

After all, life is one of those do-it-yourself experiences...

We must understand the importance of deliberately leaving the fundamental freedom and responsibility of choice to the individual student. After all, this is part of their education.

But, you should steer yourself with care, for as the saying goes...

"At Michigan you will be given unusual freedom and responsibility...

You freedom to do what you want...

Head 3 - And the responsibility to choose the right things...

Because, of course, that is what life is all about for

Head 3 - Someone of your ability.

What are we trying to do at Michigan?

Prepare you for a career?...

As doctors, lawyers, engineers...

Head 3 - ...investment bankers???

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

Last fall, one of the keynote speeches at the Carnegie meeting was given by Frank Rhodes, President of Cornell...

In this talk, President Rhodes paraphrased the poet Robert Browning who wrote

"Ah, but a man's reach should exceed his grasp,
or what's a heaven for?"

President Rhodes rephrased this as:

"Ah, but a student's reach should exceed his grasp,
or what's a college for?"

What's a college for?...

"To promote the art of life"...

Or, as Emerson said in his famous Phi Beta Kappa
address at Harvard almost exactly 150 years ago:

"Colleges have their indispensable office, to teach
elements. But they can only serve us when they
aim not to drill but to create; when they gather
from far every ray of various genius to their
hospitable halls, and by the concentrated fires,
set the hearts of their youth aflame..."

And, I guess that is what we really want to do`..
Ignitethe intellectual fires within each of you...

We want to stimulate in each of you a spirit of
liberal learning...that will be with you for the
rest of your lives...

.heal 1 + Michigan is an exciting, challenging...sometimes

frustrating...but always rewarding place.

Let me wish you the best as you start the fascinating
and rewarding process of a Michigan education!

And may the,force of the maize and blue

be with you.`.