

Parents Weekend (10/28/90)

Welcome to all of you---parents, students, faculty and staff.

My wife Anne and I are delighted to be here

.....in fact we feel especially at home on this occasion

because we are Michigan parents, too.

Our daughter is a student here and living in a dorm.

I must say, this experience is teaching us a few things

despite nearly 20 years here as a faculty member and administrator.

We see some things we could be doing better.

Now that I am not teaching, my daughter and her friends

help me to stay in touch with all the changes in student life.

And there are some pretty amazing changes

since you and I were students.

For example, I don't know if you have seen the Angell Hall Computer Center.

If not, try to stop by there and take a look.

It is exciting stuff.

Or stop by the one of the libraries and see the computerized catalogs and databases.

We are trying to provide the most advanced computer environment for our students and they are used not just for writing but for communication, intereaction, collaboration creative arts, dance, design, experimentation---

they are transforming learning and teaching

Your student is part of a true intellectual and technological revolution.

**Another difference is that our student body is much more diverse--
we have more students of color, students from all fifty states**

and many foreign countries.

Increasingly, too, women students are assuming their rightful place in campus and academic leadership.

These changes are important because

we must prepare your daughter or son to work effectively with people from many cultures and backgrounds if they are to succeed in the century ahead.

What else has changed?

Let's see. We lost two home games in a row.

Tuition has gone up again this year.

Have you seen the bumper sticker that says

"Help. I'm a Michigan parent.

Honk and throw money!"

Seriously, we know that tuition is no joke.

We know that most of you have to sacrifice to give your student this Michigan education.

We know it isn't easy

and that you ask yourself why it is so hard..

I'd like to tell you about the reasons.

First, the costs of providing

the best education are not cheap.

Since we were in school, knowledge and technology

have advanced at a breathtaking pace.

Computers, top faculty, fellowship aid, libraries --

they all cost more money every year.

Second, federal aid has been cut by XX in the last decade or so.

Third, the State of Michigan has dropped from

the top third to 45th in support given to higher education.

Indeed what we are seeing not just in Michigan but across the country

is a dramatic shift in public policy

---never fully debated or discussed with the electorate--

that shifts the costs of education more and more to the students and their families.

Unlike most developed countries that see investments in youth

as investments in the national future,
our political leadership has chosen to view education as just another consumer item
of no special relevance to the long term national interest.
The problem is that it is not only our students and their families and
our universities who pay the price.
Their children and generations to come will pay
because society has no more precious resource than its children
if it wants to survive and prosper in the coming new century.

Another factor in rising costs is room and board.

As you know yourselves the cost of living keeps on getting higher
wherever you live.
whether you are on your own, in school or living at home.

**I do want to point out that compared
to other universities and colleges of equal quality,
a Michigan education is a bargain
--fully a third less than some of our private peers.**

This may be some comfort

and you should certainly feel a deep satisfaction
in knowing that there are very few gifts
you can give your children of greater and more lasting value
than their education at a first rate university

For our part, we are doing everything we can

to raise funds from other sources to help cut the costs to students and families.

We are increasing financial aid every year

and now some 65% of our students receive aid in some form

We are taking the lead in cutting costs and eliminating unnecessary bureaucracy

so that our resources are focussed on improving education.

We are working to rebalance the quality of undergraduate education

In fact, a new task force report

has just come from our leading faculty that will result in
a more effective teaching, curriculum reforms
and a closer link between education in the classroom and in extracurricular life.

Indeed the truth is our students learn as much

outside the classroom as in and nearly as much
from each other than from their classes.

That is why having the best students is so important

to the success of your student's education.

One thing you can be sure that hasn't changed over the years

--the quality of our students
Our Michigan students today are better prepared
and more capable than any in our history.

Despite all the concern about American education---

and it is a dire problem for our country--
Michigan is still attracting the most lively and gifted students
from across the country and indeed from around the world.

I think this is because whatever else changes around us,

One thing that is always with us is that unique Michigan "spirit"

that has characterized this campus from the beginning.

I think it comes from being a public university

committed to be the best.

Believe me that hasn't changed and I hope it never will.

We were not founded to serve privilege but to provide

what President Angell called "an uncommon education for the common man"

I think it is this special "spirit" that attracts special students to Michigan.

They are independent with a strong energy and drive to go all out

to explore frontiers and to be leaders

Of course, I don't have to tell you that.

You raised these fine young people and entrusted them to us.

And, whatever they may think now, they didn't get to be so talented

so independent, or capable without the help
of you parents.

You deserve tremendous credit for sending us these outstanding

young people.

parents please stand up.

Let me ask everyone out there to join me

in acknowledging our Michigan Parents with a big round of applause.

Thank you .

We thank you for coming today

and more importantly for being the parents you are

and raising these wonderful young people.

You have every reason to feel proud.

We are proud of them, too.