

Parents Weekend

Welcome and Congratulations

Welcome to what we hope will become an annual tradition: Parents Weekend

I must say, this experience is teaching us a few things despite nearly 20 years here as a faculty member and administrator.

Let me offer both our congratulations and our gratitude to the many students who made this weekend possible...

For as you know, this event is entirely planned, organized, and run by our students!

The Tradition of Parents' Weekend

Parents Weekends are a very important tradition in many parts of the country...particularly the East Coast.

They are particularly useful for the parents of first year students -- "fresh-folks"--since not only to they provide parents with a better sense of what the campus community is really like...
...and a sense of reassurance and confidence to their students...

...but they also provide an opportunity to pick up two months worth of laundry...and provide enough food and cash to get your students through until Thanksgiving!

Since Parents Weekend is, in part, a learning process, I thought I would make a few comments on the nature of this new home for your sons and daughters.

Michigan as a Home

And Michigan is indeed a home...

In those short years that our students spent on this campus during their education, they become a member of the Michigan family for the rest of their lives...

And Ann Arbor becomes forever their home...
at least in their hearts...

A Time of Excitement

You are arriving at the University at a particularly exciting time...

Of course, things have never been dull at Michigan, that is one of the most distinctive things about us: the rich diversity and variety of this remarkable institution...

This was dramatically demonstrated to me earlier this summer by the events of a single week in late July:

i) A team of Michigan medical scientists announced they had discovered the gene responsible for neurofibromatosis... the Elephant's Man disease ...incidentally the same team discovered and cloned the gene responsible for cystic fibrosis last fall. (I might note that it was 40 years ago that another Michigan team performed the clinical trials for the Salk vaccine, eliminating that dreaded disease from our society. I should also note that Dr. Jonas Salk, himself, was a former faculty member at Michigan.)

ii) A team of over 100 Michigan students won the solar car race from Florida to Michigan, thereby earning the right to represent the United States in the world competition in Australia this fall.

iii) It was announced that two Michigan faculty members had won MacCarther prizes

prizes, the key prize used to acknowledge creativity and excellence in our society-- No other University won more than one.

- iv) The major computer network, operated by the University in collaboration with IBM and MCI, passed the milestone of linking together over one million users in the U.S. and around the world...
(In fact, you can sit down at any of our public computer workstations--or hook your own computer into our network--and communicate with people around the world--even with the President if you wish!)
 - v) Michigan scientists announced the development of the world's most powerful laser--with power equivalent to 40 times the electrical generating capacity of the U.S.
(I should note that the science of holography was invented at Michigan!)
 - vi) Teams of Michigan business students spent the summer in Poland, Soviet Armenia, and Czechoslovakia helping these rapidly changing nations in their transition to capitalism.
(And the President lent his daughter to Hungary as a Peace Corps volunteer)
 - vi) A Michigan paleontologist discovered a fossil demonstrating that whales once had hind legs and feet!
 - vii) And while not much happens in athletics during the summer, one of our women engineering students won the American Gladiator competition... and one of our alumni--and a former Regent-- Bob Nederlander, succeeded George Steinbrenner as managing owner of the New York Yankees.
(The second Michigan contribution to the American Baseball League this year...we lent Bo to run the Tigers last spring!!!)
- Not a bad week! But then, it was rather typical for this remarkable university.

Some personal observations

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.
Now that I am not teaching, my daughter and her friends help me to stay in touch with all the changes in student life.
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, interreaction, 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--

The Costs of Education

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.

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: 35,000 (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

We also run the largest health care system in

the midwest, treating over 750,000 patients each year...
We conduct events in the performing arts which
rival New York and London
...attracting the world's greatest performers
and orchestras
And, speaking of entertainment, we also have
the Michigan Wolverines, the Michigan Marching Band,
and the excitement of Michigan athletics...

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 most distinguished and dedicated faculties.

This extraordinary variety is demonstrated by the events of a single week this summer in which:

- i) A team of Michigan medical scientists announced they had discovered the gene responsible for neurofibromatosis...Elephant's Man disease ...incidentally the same team discovered and cloned the gene responsible for cystic fibrosis last fall.
- ii) A team of Michigan students won the solar car race from Florida to Michigan, thereby earning the right to represent the United States in the world competition in Australia this fall.
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- iv) The major computer network, operated by the University in collaboration with IBM and MCI, passed the milestone of linking together over one million users in the U.S. and around the world...
- v) Michigan scientists achieved the world's most powerful laser--with power equivalent to 40 times the electrical generating capacity of the U.S.
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Not a bad week! But then, it was rather typical for this remarkable university.

So how do we take advantage of this remarkable environment for learning?

Our philosophy is to use these incredible resources not simply to teach facts...indeed students of the ability of your children can learn facts 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 .

Thus our goal is to expose students to the world's leading scholars, people who are struggling every day to create new knowledge, not simply to relate old content.

Our goal is to teach them methods of inquiry...methods of critical analysis and thought...and beyond that, to expose them to the most fundamental of human values which are essential to our civilization

Our objective is to give them the capacity to learn for themselves...

This can be frustrating at times, but we are convinced... as are the other great research universities of this nation...that students of the quality we are fortunate enough to attract to Michigan will be far better prepared to be leaders of our society through this type of an education.

An Aside:

There is very recent evidence that this approach to education is actually the most effective, at least for students of the quality of your sons and daughters.

Study

Sample: Over 50,000 students majoring in S&E whose 1987 GRE score (quantitative and verbal) could be matched by ETS with SAT score

Variables: GRE, SAT, gender, race, UG major, UG school

Value Added: Average additional to a student's total GRE score associated with going to a particular school, irrespective of SAT, gender, minority, or UG major.

Results:

1. The top 20 research universities scored far higher in the "value added" than any other institutional type...even better than the small, prestigious liberal arts colleges to renown for their teaching focus.
2. The educational value added was highest in those institutions doing the most research.
3. It was also highest in the largest institutions.

Hence, it is clear that both the size and intellectual excitement of major research universities such as Michigan, Berkeley, Harvard, and Stanford create the most effective learning

environment--at least for students such as yours.
For that reason, there is no reason to be apologetic about the research performed by our faculty--or the services performed by our professional schools. They all add to the educational experience of our undergraduates.

2. From this perspective, it is critical to

understand that your students will probably be learning as much if not more OUTSIDE the classroom than in it. This University is designed to provide a rich environment of intellectual experiences...

Not just through the wealth of formal instruction we provide, or through the array of cultural, social, athletic activities.

But, I suspect that many students end up learning as much from their interaction with other students than from the faculty!

3. Importance of diversity to this campus

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 and embraces it as one of our most cherished characteristics.

There seems little doubt that America of the 21st century will probably be the most pluralistic, multicultural nation on earth...and perhaps in the history of civilization...

It will be nation of peoples of vastly different backgrounds, cultures, and beliefs...people seeking to retain their cultural roots...to maintain their identities.

On this campus your sons and daughters will encounter for the first time in their lives the remarkable diversity and richness of peoples of different races, cultures, religions, nationalities, and beliefs.

One of the most important things our students must learn on this campus is to respect others for their differences...as well as their similarities.

To learn how to resist the great pressures of separatism, fear, and bigotry which push us apart...
...and instead commit themselves to a university...
...indeed, to a nation, committed to working together, united by common values and goals.

Michigan is first and foremost a "UNI" versity.

Hence we view our challenge...and the challenge before your sons and daughters...as learning how to weave together these dual objectives of diversity and unity in a way that strengthens our fundamental goal of academic excellence and serving our society.

In a very real sense, we believe that Michigan has a mandate to serve as both a microcosm and a leader of society at large.

We believe in and we are committed to a diversity in our people, in our activities, in our intellectual endeavors, which mirrors the great diversity of our nation and the world...

But we also believe that our university has a special responsibility to develop effective models of multicultural communities, in which peoples from

vastly different backgrounds study together and learn together.

We believe that this commitment to diversity and unity is key to the quality and distinction of this University--and to the quality of the education your sons and daughters will receive.

For that reason, it is absolutely paramount that our students, just as our faculty and staff, demonstrate the sensitivity and tolerance toward others of different races, cultures, nationalities and beliefs, and seek to learn from this remarkable and rich diversity of people and ideas on this campus.

This will be an essential component of their education.

And we hope that you will support your son's and daughter's growth in understanding and commitment.

For that reason, it is absolutely paramount that our students, just as our faculty and staff, demonstrate the sensitivity and tolerance toward others of differing races, cultures, and nationalities. This will be an essential component of their education.

And we hope you will support your son's and daughter's growth in understanding and commitment.

4. An Activist Campus (possibly omit)

Now that you have a student at Michigan, I suspect that each of you will pay far more attention to newspaper articles or television stories on the University.

And I have no doubt that from time to time you will be concerned...if not shocked...when you read that yet another student group has taken over my office...or attempted to disrupt other University functions as protest against the "administration"... of the University...or possibly society at large.

From the earliest moments in our long history, the UM has been known for a spirit of democracy and tolerance among its students and faculty.

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."

As you listen or read about these incidents, I would caution to bear a couple of things in mind:

- i) First, because student activism has both a long tradition on this campus and plays an important role in a Michigan education, there are always a long laundry list of protest movements going on at any particular time...whether it be military research, gay rights, concerns about racism, South Africa, Latin America, and so on... However it is also the case that while the media generally finds these protest movements make great press...only a very small fraction of our students are ever involved in them--although the media frequently portrays them as burning the campus to the ground.
- ii) Second, while it is of paramount importance that we protect the fundamental freedom of students and faculty to explore new ideas and concepts, to state their beliefs and values, no matter how far they may be from mainstream thought...
...it is also essential to recognize that without the

acceptance of responsibility, freedom is meaningless.

In a very real sense, I suppose, the acceptance of responsibility along with freedom implies that one also accepts a commitment to move away from a negative stance of merely complaining or protesting... and rather making a positive effort to address the challenges before our society.

And that is one of the lessons we will be trying to teach our students.

5. Preparation for leadership

As I noted earlier, your sons and daughters are an extraordinarily talented group...

It is likely that regardless of what happens during their college education, they will go on to become leaders of our society...

Hence, we believe it important that they prepare for this life of leadership now by taking advantage of all that this University has to offer.

That they...

Broaden their horizons...

Develop a personal philosophy of life...

Become involved...

Become committed...

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

6. Finally, let me stress that an education at Michigan

is not 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 your sons and daughters on a silver platter.

We expect them to be active partners in their education!

To explore, to discover, to challenge themselves

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

We believe it important to deliberately leave the fundamental freedom and responsibility of choice to the individual student. After all, this is part of their education.

But, we also believe they should steer themselves with care, for as the saying goes...

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

The freedom to do what you want...

And the responsibility to choose the right things...

What are we trying to do at Michigan?

Prepare your sons and daughters for a career?...

As doctors, lawyers, engineers, teachers...

or even investment bankers...?

Well, we will do our best to give them the foundation necessary for such careers, but that is not our real mission.

Perhaps Emerson put it best 150 years ago in his famous Phi Beta Kappa address at Harvard when he noted...

"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, that perhaps is the simplest and best statement

of what we are trying to do at Michigan...
Ignite the intellectual fires within each of
our students

We want to stimulate in each of them a spirit of
liberal learning...a spirit that will be a part of
them for the rest of their lives...

In short, we want them to be leaders who
will use their knowledge to serve humanity!

Concluding Remarks

You know, Michigan is really a very special place....
It is one of only a handful of universities capable
of truly changing not only higher education,
but the nation and the world.

We believe the challenge of re-inventing
the American university for the 21st Century
...is not only an exciting and
challenging mission for the 1990s
...but it is also a mission befitting
UM's long heritage of leadership
...and it is also a challenge worthy of
the army of maize and blue alumni
across the nation and around the world

Indeed, I'd be very surprised if you
settled for anything less from your university!

The 1990s will be a time of great challenge
opportunity, and responsibility for your university.

But they will also be years of great excitement.

As we stand on the threshold of this
great adventure of re-inventing the
University for the 21st Century,

Let me call on you to demonstrate yet
again that extraordinary sense of
loyalty and pride in your University
that has been our key source of
strength...

Let me call on you to show that
"Go-Blue" spirit that is the key
to our heritage and our destiny.

Thanks and Congratulations...

Let me thank you once again for granting us the privilege
of teaching and learning with your sons and daughters during
these years of their college education.

Let me also congratulate you on the extraordinary achievements
that each of your children have already attained...

I can assure you that we regard each and everyone
of your sons and daughters as someone very special...
and I must confess that we are already very proud
of them...

Welcome you as parents...

and also as new members of the Michigan family!!!