

School of Music Commencement



Dean Boylan, graduates of the Class of 2000,
faculty, families, and friend...

It is a great honor and a pleasure to be invited to make a few remarks
at the School of Music Commencement exercises

My wife and I had the opportunity to sit in on part of your pre-
Commencement concert, and the talent characterizing
this class is formidable. I only wish I sprinkle some it
on the commencement exercises of our other schools!

It is also a bit intimidating to appear before such a talented group.

But my task is simple:

First, to wish you as graduates the best as you begin your careers.

Second, to thank the students and faculty of the School of Music
for the great impact your efforts and talents have had

on the cultural life of the University.

And, third, to thank and congratulate Dean Boylan for his remarkable leadership, on behalf of both your School and our University
Let me proceed in reverse order . . . , first by paying homage to
Dean Boylan.

Paul Boylan

For over two decades your School and our University have benefited not only from Dean Boylan's remarkable leadership ability, But as well his deep understanding of academic values and traditions, and his passion for excellence, so evident in the quality of your school.

As one of our longest serving deans, he has become "dean of deans", The senior role model that others look to for inspiration and leadership.

His enthusiastic, visionary, and courageous leadership was important to your school during the time of great challenge and change characterizing our world.

Clearly, during Dean Boylan's years of service, the School of Music has flourished, the quality of its students, faculty, and programs reaching formidable heights.

The School of Music

Today your School is widely recognized as one of the finest in the

world.

But unlike conservatories such as Julliard or Rochester-Eastman ,
your School of Music is intimately woven into
the scholarly and cultural life
of one of the world's great universities.

Our university, and our community, benefit greatly from the
Remarkable talents of the students and faculty of the school.

From orchestral performances to student recitals

From opera to drama to musical theatre to dance

From master's classes to the Michigan Marching Band

From Halloween concerts to multimedia extravaganzas.

The University of Michigan is a great university in part because of the
presence of one of the truly great music schools of the world.

While Ann Arbor is no stranger to cultural events, as evidenced by the
caravan of professional artists attracted each year by
organizations such as the University Musical Society,

Many of us believe, however, that the most important contributions to
cultural life in our community are made by the students and
faculty of your school, through their talents, enthusiasm,
and excitement.

These can never be matched by visiting professional
troupes.

Now, having appropriately honored your dean and your school, let me now
turn my remarks to today's graduates, since you are properly the focus
of this evening's exercises.

Just as the University of Michigan benefits enormously

from your school, so have you as graduates benefited from receiving an education from one of the great universities in the world. For while your musical talents could also have been nurtured and developed at a conservatory such as Julliard, at Michigan you have had the opportunity for something far more valuable: a liberal education!

Let me explain...

To many students and parents, the purpose of a college education is to earn the college degree necessary for a good job, for personal economic security and well-being. Many of today's students approach their college education with very definite career goals in mind. They enroll with plans to become doctors or engineers or lawyers or teachers or musical artists. While many students will change their minds during their undergraduate years, almost all will emerge with quite specific career goals still uppermost in mind.

Employers reinforce this utilitarian approach. Many of the recruiters companies send to campus are looking for very particular skills. Perhaps they seek something highly specific such as a professional undergraduate major or skills such as Internet site development or double-entry accounting.

Students are extremely sensitive to these signals from the employment marketplace, and the experience other students have with job interviews and placements can have a very significant impact on their own educational plans. In fact, I suspect that many of you look with some envy at the starting salaries boasted by your classmates majoring in subjects such as business administration or engineering.

Some of you may even worry that in choosing music for a major, you may have condemned yourself to a life of poverty--enjoyable to be sure—but without the promise of stock options, BMWs, and first-class air travel!

But not to worry! In some ways, you may be the wisest of all in your selection of a major.

When leaders in both the public or private sector are asked what they seek in college graduates, they mention something quite different than the practical knowledge or utilitarian skills of a business or engineering degree.

They seek graduates who exhibit strong communication skills, a capacity for and commitment to lifelong learning, a tolerance for diversity, and an ability not simply to adapt to but, indeed, to drive change.

Of course, these are characteristics more associated with a liberal education than a professional program of study.

As difficult as it is to define and as challenging as it is to achieve, perhaps the elusive goal of liberal learning remains the best approach to prepare students for a lifetime of learning and a world of change. The broader intellectual development of students, preparing them not simply for careers but for meaningful lives as contributing citizens, is a fundamental purpose of undergraduate education, all too often overlooked in the professional curriculums.

To be sure, some graduates of our professional programs will have many lucrative opportunities upon graduation. But you should always heed the old saying that the purpose of a college education is not to prepare a student for their first job but rather their last job.

Put another way, a college education should prepare one for life, and a career is only one of life's experiences.

Perhaps Ralph Waldo Emerson said it best in his famous Phi Beta Kappa lecture at Harvard in 1838:

“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 on flame.”

And, of course, that is one of the great advantages you have had in obtaining an education in the liberal arts. Your faculty and your studies have not only set your hearts on fire, but through your talents and your performances, you have done the same for many others on our campus!

But there is a second reason why you should look upon your Michigan education in the arts as giving you a certain edge for the future.

The professions that have dominated the late 20th Century—and to some degree, the late 20th Century university—have been those which manipulate and rearrange knowledge and wealth rather than create it; professions, such as law, business, accounting, and politics. Yet, it is becoming increasingly clear that the driving intellectual activity of the 21st Century will be the act of creation itself.

After all, the tools of creation are expanding rapidly in both scope and power. Today, we have the capacity to literally create objects atom-by-atom. We are developing the capacity to create new life-forms through the tools of molecular biology and genetic engineering. And,

we are now creating new intellectual “life forms” through artificial intelligence and virtual reality.

The French intellectual, Jacques Attali, put it well in his provocative book *Millennium*:

“The winners of this new era will be creators, and it is to them that power and wealth will flow. The need to shape, to invent, and to create will blur the border between production and consumption.. The creator who turns dreams into reality will be considered as the workers who deserve prestige and society’s gratitude and remuneration.

Perhaps, the determining characteristic of the university of the 21st Century will be a shift in intellectual focus, from the preservation or transmission of knowledge, to the process of creation itself. Rather than producing graduates who master the skills of analysis and manipulation, perhaps instead we will focus on producing graduates who are distinguished by their creative abilities—graduates very much like you before me this evening!

For we need only look to schools and colleges located on the University’s North Campus, the schools of music, art, architecture, and ...at least I would maintain...the college of engineering. These are all intellectual disciplines which focus on the act of creation, of imaging what has never been before, of turning dreams into reality.

Actually, this theme of the North Campus as the home of the creative disciplines was well-recognized by Dean Boylan, who together with his colleagues, once proposed to replace the geographical name North Campus with one more suitable for this intellectual mission of creativity by renaming it the Renaissance Campus!

In fact, the Media Union, that strange complex that some have suggested resembles a postmodernist version of the Temple of Karnak, was designed to be a center for creativity, drawing together students from the visual and performing arts together with those from architecture and engineering to learn together the skills of creativity.

You, as graduates of one of the finest schools of music in the world, located in one of the finest universities, are particularly well-prepared for the world of the new millennium. Your exceptional talents in the performing arts, your creative skills and energy, and your liberal education at Michigan have prepared you well for the future.

In fact, you will likely play important roles in creating the very future that the more plodding manipulators and analysts graduating from our professional schools will enjoy. And if Jacques Attali is correct, you will be rewarded handsomely for this effort.

One final point here, particularly to our baccalaureate graduates:

Study after study has revealed the great impact that a college education has upon our lives.

It sets us on a career course...

Many of your classmates will remain close friends throughout your lives.

Many of us meet our lifetime companions in college...

Throughout our career and our lives our college experience provides us with an anchor, a tie to the values and understanding that guide our lives...

Although most of you will be leaving Ann Arbor following your graduation, I suspect you will find yourself

returning time and time again.

In a very real sense, this University has become your

home...you will forever be a member of the Michigan family.

And if there is single common theme that seems to characterize

the lives of Michigan graduates, it is the theme of

leadership...

Along with an unusual commitment to both intellectual and humane

values while achieving excellence that we are proud to see

governing the lives of our graduates as they take up

leadership roles in our society.

As a Michigan graduate, as a leader, you will face a

future of great challenge and responsibility...

but it will also be a future of great opportunity

and excitement.

Today we celebrate your accomplishments...

but even more, we look forward with great anticipation

to your achievements in the years ahead.

We hope your education has prepared you to now

assume the roles of leadership that is your heritage,

your destiny, as graduates of the University of Michigan...

To go out into that exciting world full of challenge and opportunity...

...and to create the future!

I congratulate you on your graduation.

I thank Dean Boylan for his many years of visionary, energetic, and

courageous leadership.

And I thank the School of Music, its students, faculty, and staff, for the remarkable impact the School has had on our University and our community.

You are truly the leaders and best!

Congratulations...

Godspeed...

...and Go-Blue...