Alumni Talk

Introduction

What is a “Provost”?  
Dictionary:  Latin: “the one in charge...”
1. chief dignitary of a collegiate or cathedral chapter  
2. chief magistrate of a Scottish burgh  
3. the keeper of a prison  
4. a high-ranking university administrative officer  

At Michigan:
1. Chief line officer for academic staff...  
2. Chief budget officer  
3. President = CEO, Provost = COO  
4. President leads, Provost pushes...  
5. President determines direction, Provost determines pace  
6. Provost is the one who says “No”...

Images of Michigan

Fall in Ann Arbor...  
Bright football weekends...  
Students walking across the Diag, the Engineering Arch, the Blue Front  

Or, perhaps, an image of roses...  
Michigan...the nation’s flagship of public higher education  
a tradition of excellence  

Yet University is undergoing rapid change  
Not in quality of students in faculty,  
nor in its commitment to excellence  
But in other characteristics:  
its physical plant...  
$700 M in construction over past 5 years...  
Medicine, Engineering, Business, LS&A  
Information technology  
Computer access, telecommunications, supercomputers  
its funding base...  
Most interesting experiment in higher education...  
less than 20% State ($220 M in $1.2 B)  
Rest comes from tuition, research, and private support  
its attitude toward the world beyond the ivory tower...  
Revised policies to encourage rather than constrain  
MRC, ITI, CMI, Health Care  
and in its basic philosophy...  
Note: We are changing, not so much in an effort to respond  
to external pressures...but rather to position ourselves  
to take advantage of some extraordinary opportunities.  
We are attempting to seize control of our destiny, to determine a  
direction and a strategy to take us into the 21st Century.  

Let me explain...  

Some parameters of the University  

University of Michigan = “mega-university”  
i) Spans all intellectual disciplines and  
professional areas  
ii) Provides instruction, research, service  
iii) Attempts to conduct programs that rank  
among the nation's best in all areas  
(and succeeds...)  

Parameters:  
Enrollment: 34,340 (Ann Arbor) (46,725 total)  
Faculty: 2,600 (14,000 employees)  
Budget: $1.1 billion ($406 million for academic)  
$206 million State  
$166 student tuition and fees  
$495 million “auxiliary services” (hospital, housing, ..)  
$192 million, sponsored research
$45 million, gifts

Quality:
Students: Top 3% of high school graduates
Faculty: Recruit the best in the world
Programs: Generally all ranked in top 10 nationally

A time of opportunity, responsibility, and challenge

Opportunities
1. Reputation as the flagship of public higher education
2. People
   A faculty of great intellectual strength and unusual breadth
   Student body of quality unsurpassed by any public institution
      Quality x quantity = #1
   Largest alumni body in US (1 out of every 1,000 Americans)
3. Resources
   Prosperous state, with the potential for greater support
   Federal support...learning how to play game better
   Private support...Campaign for Michigan
4. Ability to control our own destiny
   Best of public and private worlds
   Public support - $200 M/y -- $4 B endowment
      Greater than Harvard and Texas
   Autonomy of private institution

Summary of Opportunities:
Believe UM faces opportunities unmatched by another other
institution in this nation...
The opportunity is there...
But then so are some important responsibilities!

Responsibilities
To our students
   The "raw material" entering this institution today
      is the most valuable resource of our nation...
   Truly extraordinary quality and commitment.
   We must be responsible stewards and provide the
      "value-added" of an outstanding education.
   Incidentally, despite the fact I'm an engineer, I
   am firmly committed to the importance of a broad
   and liberal education...including some science,
   of course...

To our faculty
   Hired over 900 new faculty in past 5 years
   Salaries to asst and assoc prof the best
   Getting the best!
   And we owe them the opportunity to develop their
      exceptional talents to the fullest by providing them
      with the environment, support, and encouragement to
      push to the limits of their abilities.

To our State and nation
   We are a public institution, after all...and as such, we have
   an important responsibility to our state and nation.

Challenges:
    It is a time of unusual opportunity, to be sure. But, if
    we are to grasp these opportunities while meeting our
    responsibilities, I believe we must face several important
    challenges.
    These challenges are no so much concerned with resources
    state funding or physical facilities or such.
    Rather they are concerned with the very nature of what we
    believe the University is...and what we wish it to be.
    These are challenges of excellence!
1. Picking up the pace a bit...
    To build a level of intensity and expectation to
settle for nothing less than the best in the performance of faculty, students, and programs
The thundering herd...the hoofbeats behind us
Excellence sets us apart...
provides the visibility to attract resources
We must shake off that extraordinary intolerance of extreme excellence which seems to plague midwestern institutions...
and set our course for achieving the best.

2. Focusing resources to achieve excellence...
   Should not try to be all things to all people...
The time of continual increases in public support ended more than a decade ago.
   Quality should dominate breadth and capacity...
   Build "spires" of excellence

3. Highest priority: academic excellence
   UM's reputation and quality will be based on its activities in instruction and scholarship...
   Academic excellence must be our highest priority...

4. Changing intellectual currents...
   Intellectual leadership...
   demands pushing to the forefront of discovery working on the exponential part of the knowledge curve
   Shift to a change-oriented, risk-taking culture
   Relish change!!
   Stress bold, new initiatives...
   Defy the deification of disciplines
   New knowledge created at interfaces...
   At turbulent mixing, collision of disciplines

5. A sense of community, collegiality
   Resist "centrifugal" forces on strong disciplines...
   Pull people together...

Strategic Leadership

So how do we respond to this time of opportunity, responsibility, and challenge?

I suggest that we do not "respond"...as we have all too often in the past, but that we seize the initiative by taking action to determine our own destiny.

All too often in the past, we have tended to respond to external pressures, opportunities, needs, rather than taking control of our own destiny. We have been been blown in one direction or another by winds from outside. It is now time that we grasp the wheel firmly to steer the University in a direction appropriate for the future.

To seize the opportunities, to face the responsibilities, and to meet the challenges before us, the University should initiate a process capable of determining both a direction and a strategy capable of guiding it into the 21st Century.

In a sense, I propose that we initiate a process of "strategic leadership" that first addresses the question about "what" we want this University to be -- what our values, goals, priorities, and objectives should be.

We should approach our future "strategically" rather than merely position ourselves to respond.

A Plan to Respond to the Challenge of Leadership

First phase: "what" do we want to be?
   "Smaller but better"?...
   "Poorer but wiser"?...
   What is unique about UM -- our "market niche"?
   A large, comprehensive, public, research university
   A serious commitment to scholarship
   Unusual breadth, rich diversity of academic disciplines,
professional schools, social and cultural activities
Unusual degree of participation of faculty and students in University decisions
AND... probably the highest quality undergraduate student body of any public university in the nation...
Indeed, UM probably enrolls more outstanding students than any university in the nation.

Idea:
Why don't we take advantage of these factors by choosing a mission which links together
Teaching, research, and service
Quality, breadth, and size
Undergraduate, graduate, professional education and faculty development
to provide UM with a unique role in higher education.

Suggestion: A mission of leadership
For the decade ahead, the UM should select as its primary goal: “Building the leadership of tomorrow on a foundation of academic excellence.
We should place primary emphasis on the development of leadership through the education of our students, the intellectual development and contributions of our faculty.
Of course, the key to success in this mission will be academic excellence: education, scholarship, and research of the highest quality.

Such a mission would:
1) Take advantage of where we are today...
2) Enhance our impact on society in a manner consistent with our responsibilities as a public institution
3) Lay the foundation for the long term strength and distinction of the University through the achievement, contributions, and influence of its graduates and faculty.

And this is where you come in...

The Role of Alumni
Key factor: active involvement by alumni...
Not just for financial support...
although you can expect to hear from us even more frequently
Not just for influence...
although since Michigan produces leaders, many of alumni have the opportunity to have major impact on UM through their roles as leaders of government or industry
But beyond that, through your active involvement...
to provide to our students a sense of potential, what the future holds in store for them...
for our faculty, since by buying in to what we are trying to do, you provide them with strong evidence of the profound importance of their activities

Cannot stress strongly enough the importance of this active involvement...

Concluding remarks
For I believe the University will face many opportunities in the years ahead.
Exceptional quality of its people -- students, faculty, and staff
Abundance of resources
Ability to control our own destiny...
But we also have responsibilities
Students
Faculty
State, nation, world...
Challenges
To respond to these opportunities...to meet our responsibilities...
I believe that we must pull together as a scholarly community
to address the challenges of excellence I have put before you:
1. We must intensity our commitment to excellence...
   our determination to seek only the best!
2. We must focus our resources to build spires of excellence...
   to stress quality over breadth and capacity!
3. We must place academic excellence as our highest priority!
4. And we must build the kind of exciting, change-oriented
   risk-taking environment which will stimulate our students
   and faculty to push to the limits of their abilities, to create
   that sense of excitement, both in scholarship and in education,
   which characterizes the most distinguished institutions.

Add one more word...
The decade ahead will indeed be a time of opportunity,
responsibility, and challenge.
But there is one more word that I believe we should add
to those characterizing Michigan's future: excitement!
I believe Michigan is going to be an extraordinarily exciting
place in the years ahead...and I look forward to working
closely with you and your colleagues during this
period of opportunity and excitement to maintain and
strengthen Michigan's long tradition of excellence.

Conclusions
UM is on the move!
We are committed to strengthening our role of leadership
in education and research.
And, of course, the key in accomplishing this will be your
continued interest, involvement, and support.

Go Blue!