

Service Awards Dinner/6/6/90

It is my great pleasure to be with you tonight

to honor members of our staff who have served
so long and faithfully
the faculty, students and extended family of our University community.

Each of you we honor tonight is observing an anniversary of service--

ranging from 10 to as much as 40 years.

The University has seen many changes during that time...

in the growing diversity of our faculty, students and staff,
in the sheer size and scope of our campus and our educational programs,
in the range and complexity of our research enterprise,
in the growth of information technology
that is so rapidly transforming
our teaching, learning and working,
in the explosion of knowledge itself.

These years have been a time of tremendous challenge and change for the University.

And for all of us who have made the University what it is today,
one of the world's great centers of learning.

My wife, Anne, and I are marking our 26th year at Michigan.

We have been here since 1967
when I arrived as a young Assistant Professor.
From the start we felt at home here--
Part of the Michigan family
And it's a big family
some 35 k students
more than 20k faculty and staff.

Sometimes I ask myself, what holds us all together?

We always talk about how decentralized we are.
Yet, there is a force that binds us close together,
that gives us our unique sense of identity and community
something that transcends all of our many differences,
many roles and images.

It is quite a far flung enterprise,
very hard to capture in just one view.

The Many Michigans

What images come to your mind when you hear
the words "University of Michigan"?

Great faculty challenging and exciting students in the classroom;
students studying in the library or on the lawn of the Diag;
scientists toiling away late in the evenings in our laboratories, striving to understand the
molecule or the universe;
or, scholars poring over ancient manuscripts in our collections of antiquities.

There are some other very special images of the University of Michigan:

Walking down through the falling leaves on a marvelous autumn afternoon
to Michigan Stadium, to be thrilled by a crowd of 105,000,
the Michigan Marching Band, and, of course, the Michigan Football Wolverines.
Or those very special moments,
such as a Rose Bowl victory or the NCAA Final Four,
which we all share as moments of great pride.

Then there is Michigan of the Big Chill,
the tradition of social concern on our campus.
Whether it be Earth Day, Project Community, the Michigan Mandate,
or the recent sight of thousands of students, faculty and staff
marching together, arm-in-arm, down South University
to honor the memory of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.,
Michigan has frequently managed to stir the conscience of a nation.

There is also Michigan of the arts, with the hundreds of
world class performances of music, theater, dance,
and our thriving visual arts.

There is also the caring Michigan,

as seen by the over 750,000 patients each year
who are treated at the University of Michigan Medical Center,
one of the world's great centers of medical research, teaching, and clinical care.

There is Michigan as "Silicon Valley East",
working to attract the scientists and engineers
and to build the high tech infrastructure needed to create new companies and
new jobs,
as evidenced by the \$5 billion industry in industrial automation
which has sprung up in Southeastern Michigan during the past several years.
In many ways, the roughly \$250 million of research contracts
the University attracts each year serves as the "venture capital"
for this great effort to diversify and strengthen the economy
of the industrial heartland of America.

There is the Michigan of the cutting edge,
which conducts the research that changes our lives
exemplified by the announcement earlier this year
that a Michigan team had identified and cloned
the gene responsible for cystic fibrosis,
thereby opening up the possibility of saving thousands of lives every year.

There is Michigan, a university of the world,
long renown as a truly international center of learning.
Indeed, one cannot walk down the streets of any city in the world
without encountering our graduates, frequently in positions of leadership.
Indeed, Michigan is even a university of the universe,

with the establishment of the first chapter
of the UM Alumni Association on the moon
through the efforts of Apollo 15, the "Michigan mission to the moon"!

There is Michigan as the unifying force in tying us together with friends and family through
so many alumni activities and involvements all across America and around the world.

And you will find our alums in leadership in every walk of life
in every part of the country.
Their loyalty to the University is one of our greatest strengths!

And, most fundamentally, there is Michigan as the educator.
Attempting to provide, in the words of President Angell,
"an uncommon education for the common man".
An education as good as any available in the world for every person,
regardless of race, creed, or socioeconomic background,
who has the ability and will to achieve. □

In many ways, Michigan Michigan is the heir to the Jeffersonian ideal
for higher education in America,
where scholarly excellence is harnessed to serve
great public purposes.

All of these images convey some part of our University,
something about what makes us stand out--special and unique.
But none of them captures what is, for me,
the true spirit--quality-- of the place.
The essence of all that we do and are as a University.

I think that is unquestionably our people.

and their commitment to be the best at whatever they do.
....to go all out.... to excel.

Whether we are on the playing field of Pasadena,

or in the Aerospace Lab,
at an accountants computer, a secretary's desk,
or working on a repair or innovation as a carpenter or painter,
or as a groundskeeper,
an administrator, clerk, or cook,
Michigan's people... wherever they are,
and whatever they do
....stand out.

I believe that what sets Michigan apart

what makes us a unique community
is this Michigan spirit of individual and collective effort.
Our people are committed to serve and excel at serving
the University's mission because
we care passionately about education and learning.

That is what unites us as an extended family,

This is what accounts for the affection, dedication and loyalty
so many of us feel for the University.

For me, this is what "Go Blue" really stands for.

Of course, like any family we have differences.

Generations are succeeding one another.
Leadership is being passed on.
Change comes too fast for some
and too slowly for others.

We are having to adapt to breathtaking change in the society around us.

as well as to the growing demands on higher education to perform
many more tasks and take on many more responsibilities.

And we must make tough choices.

We cannot just grow incrementally anymore

but instead must set priorities and manage more efficiently
We must do more with less.

Because today society, however much it depends on us,

is not prepared to invest in education,
to invest in our future.
as earlier generations have done.

For the first time in our history, the public is following a philosophy of
"Eat dessert first, life is uncertain".
So education is suffering and, there is a rising chorus of critics
from the left and the right who have little good to say about universities.

We are too important, society needs us too much,
for us to give in to these temporary shifts in public support and opinion.
We just have to work harder to explain ourselves
and to strengthen our ties to our State and nation
through greater service, improved quality and strict economizing.

Like any family, we sometimes have conflicts
and disagreements.
People who make up this University have high ideals,
aspirations and expectations
of themselves and their institution.
sometimes the many different expectations are in conflict
or cannot be met fully or quickly enough.

Perhaps we need to try harder sometimes
to consider the greater good,
the needs of the community as a whole
to focus on those values and interests we have in common.
as well as those that separate us.

But through it all, what does hold us together?
What keeps us on course through 175 years--some eight generations--
of history
I've already suggested that we are united in our will to excel,
in our common love of learning,
But I also think there is another quality that holds us together.

Pride.
Pride in each other.
Pride in what we do.
High ideals for ourselves and our society.
Caring and commitment to the University, to each other,
to the people of Michigan,
of America, of the world.

As an institution, Michigan has from the beginning
been committed to be the best and to serve the public.

And the University of Michigan has never been better.
By whatever measure, we are sustaining the quality of everything we do.

And it is you the members of our staff
who are helping to make this possible.

You provide the dedication and effort
the commitment to excellence
the pride in serving
our faculty, students, staff and the public.

I know that the role of staff is too often underrecognized

and may sometimes seem insufficiently appreciated.

But I want you to know here and now
that what you do for the University
is critical in all that we do
and all that we are as a great institution.

It is our staff who serve our principal clients--our students.

How they are treated, their daily perceptions and experiences--
has a lot to do with how well students succeed here
and how they feel about the University now and in the future.
When you go that extra distance to help a student
find the information or service that he or she needs
you help give the University a "human" face...and heart...
that lets students know we care about them as individuals
and about their education.

It is staff who serve our faculty

staff who make this place work--
from accounting to zoology,
our faculty rely on staff to support their teaching, research and service missions
and as valued colleagues in the University leadership
and day-to-day functioning.

I can assure you that I could not get through the day

without the help of dozens of staff people who work hard at my side for long hours
far beyond the call of duty.

And it is staff who have most to do with how the public sees us and supports us.

Because it is staff who greet and serve the public every day.
every contact you have with the public, no matter how brief or seemingly unimportant,
is a significant opportunity
to demonstrate the University's commitment to quality, caring and public service.

You make a difference, whatever your job.

When staff are dedicated, caring and giving their best,
the University shines.

Each one of you has played a part in one of the great, most difficult

and most important periods in our history.
It has been a time of challenge, growth and change.
Together we have weathered some economic, political and social storms.
And together we have achieved many significant goals and victories.

Thanks to your efforts we are today

stronger than we have ever been.

On behalf of the University, and speaking personally,

I want to thank each one of you
for all you have done to help us seize our opportunities and overcome our challenges.

Now we stand poised on the threshold of a new decade

and we are soon to enter a new century.

The times ahead will be exciting.

There will be many new opportunities and challenges.
To meet them will take every bit of dedication, commitment, creativity and energy
we can muster.

With your help and that of all the Michigan family,

I have no doubt of the outcome.

We will not just hold our own

but we will surpass ourselves

in achieving our highest aspirations for scholarship, education and service.

With you on our team, how can we be anything but winners.

Thank you again.