

Angell Society, Detroit (June 11, 1991)

Good evening

Anne and I are delighted to be here tonight
to honor and thank this very special group of friends
whose vision, commitment and generosity are helping to keep
the University of Michigan at the world forefront of knowledge
and educational opportunity.

Each one of you whom we recognize tonight has made a unique and lasting
contribution to our University

And I don't mean only that you have contributed financial support.

Of course, that is absolutely critical, especially in these lean days
that are seeing a near silent but pernicious erosion of the very principle
of publicly supported quality higher education.

But even more than money for our programs, for buildings, for scholarships,
it is the personal support---the unique vision,
caring and commitment to the future
that you bring to us.
that makes the difference for Michigan.

Without you, undoubtedly we would be a very fine public institution,
the leading University in our State and significant, too, in our region.

Undoubtedly, we would say that public support
has built and sustains our solid scholarly foundation for what we are
and do.

It is public funding that accounts for the unparalleled breadth, depth and scope
of our academic programs, our athletic prowess,
the sheer size and great diversity of our student body.

But it is your help that puts us in the major leagues in all that we undertake,
the acknowledged academic equal
of the finest universities of America or the world.

With your help we continue to represent educational opportunity
for all those with the ability and will to achieve
whatever their background or circumstances.

You bring the energy and the drive,

the knowledge and experience,
and the personal faith in our public mission
that energizes and inspires us.

It is private support such as yours
that allows us to take risks, seize opportunities, meet challenges.
You and a select few others like you
are the critical margin of excellence for Michigan.

Let me point to just a few examples of what I mean.

Michigan's intellectual span across seventeen schools and colleges
is a particular intellectual strength today
because it allows us
to address some of the largest and most significant issues of our time--
global warming, biotechnology, artificial intelligence,
educational and welfare reform, robotics, international trade and
financial---

Increasingly we see that we must understand these issues
in the context of large and complex systems, many of them global in
scope,
systems that can only be understood by working collaboratively
joining together scholars, students and practitioners
from many disciplinary and professional perspectives
and providing them with the technology
for very large scale information gathering and analysis.
that spans continents.

Yes, public support supports the breadth we need
to lead intellectual breakthroughs of this order of magnitude.

But I don't have to tell this group that it is private donors
who share the excitement
see the potential and provide support for new ventures,
interdisciplinary centers,
a key appointment here, or a state of the art facility there.

This is the critical difference that makes Michigan a leader.

Let's face it.

Government committees are not visionary or often innovative.
Politicians can't often gamble on a person or act on faith in an idea.
No, when it comes to forging new directions or dreaming new dreams,
we turn to people like you who have the imagination and wisdom
and resources to help turn dreams into magnificent reality.
And we should not forget that some of our most critical problems
are addressed by individual scholars
whose genius sparks an intellectual leap forward in our comprehension.
Here, too, public support has helped us attract and keep faculty
of exceptional range and ability.
But private donors guide us to build new centers of strength
to attract stars of brilliant magnitude
through support for professorial chairs, innovative new programs,
creative incentives and challenges.
Again, it is private support that is the creative difference for Michigan.
And let's look at our student body for a moment.
Federal and state financial aid for students has been declining precipitously
in recent years at the same time that our costs have increased.
Tuition has risen and, although Michigan is still the best bargain in higher
education,
many of our most able students from Michigan and outstate
would not be enrolled if it were not for the investment made by private
donors
in scholarships and grants.
Thus private donors account for the generous Michigan difference
that allows us to meet the financial needs of all Michigan
undergraduates
and I hope that before long we can increase our funding
to say the same thing about
our support for out of state students.
Let me note here that the sheer size of our student body
means that in supporting student aid and educational excellence at
Michigan

you have far reaching impact on the quality and direction of national life.

No University can claim the extraordinary reach of our 350 k alumni who are in leadership in all walks of life across American and around the world.

In boardrooms, classrooms, laboratories, concert halls, press rooms, studios, legislatures, government agencies, and clinics and spaceships,

Michigan grads are in the lead.

And if we are talking about leadership, let's not forget athletics.

There is no doubt that it is our friends and alumni who put us over the top every time.

You only have to come to campus to see the top of the line Schembechler Hall to understand what I mean.

Michigan athletes and coaches are given the best possible chance to excel and make us all proud.

They are also given more loyalty, inspiration and respect... and probably more prayers... than any other teams.

In fact, I suspect that some of you in this room may have practiced a heavenly intervention or two in the last seconds of the Rose Bowl

or NCAA Basketball Championship.

Our friends and supporters serve the University in many other important ways.

First and foremost you are a valued source of wise counsel to me and to my fellow administrators and faculty.

Whether it is regarding finance or long range planning, or politics or community building, new programs, concerns about student life and educational values, we turn to you for advice and you give it unstintingly.

You and our alumni are also a bridge to the many University constituents, old and new, helping us communicate

helping us serve them more effectively,
building understanding and support for our mission.

Perhaps most important of all,

you exemplify in your life, among your friends, in your communities,
the special spirit and values of Michigan.

Your support is a strong endorsement of our mission

it fortifies and emboldens us to stand fast
and hold to our deepest traditions and values
whatever prevailing fads might dictate.

We live in a time when too many ignore the claims of the future
for the sake of short term solutions and stop gap measures.

As a society we can't afford this heedlessness much longer.

And those of you we honor this evening have shown the way.

Only by investing in people, in quality education, in new ideas can we turn
the corner

and renew America's historic faith in and commitment to progress.

These are difficult times for our state

and for the city of Detroit and surrounding area.

What Detroit feels, we in the University feel, too.

This is our city.

We were born here.

We have been a part of the city through good times and bad.

That won't change.

We are determined to help build a better future

for this community and for our country.

Michigan is a leader,

the "Mother and model" for American public higher education.

What we do reverberates far beyond our walls.

Just as we helped move this state from an agrarian to an industrial
economy,

we will now help develop the infrastructure for a knowledge intensive
society.

But we can only do it with your help.

We will need private support more than ever as we move ahead.

We will need imagination, vision, some prodding and questioning,
We will need your candid criticism as well as counsel.

We live in a time when educated people and the ideas they produce
are truly the wealth of nations.

With your help and that of our many friends and supporters.
our University is contributing a critical part of that wealth
and we will keep on with the job in the new century ahead.

We are immensely grateful to each one of you.

More importantly, many generations who come after us
will have reason to be grateful to you, as well.

On behalf of the University of Michigan, I thank you.