

- +the university is more deeply engaged in society,
- +a more critical actor affecting the economy, culture,
- +technology, etc. than ever before.
- +To illustrate, let me provide a couple of quotes:
 - +1) "In all advanced societies, our future depends to an ever
 - +increasing extent on new discoveries, expert
 - +knowledge, and highly trained people. Like it or not,
 - +universities are our principal source of all three
 - +ingredients." (Bok)
 - +2) "The solution of virtually all the problems with
 - +which government is concerned: health,
 - +education, environment, energy, urban development,
 - +international relationships, space, economic
 - +competitiveness, and defense and national security,
 - +all depend on creating new knowledge---and hence
 - +upon the health of America's research universities" (Bloch)
- +
 - +The Key Issue: Victims of Success?
 - +But, then again, perhaps all the attention and criticism is not so paradoxical.
 - +When you get right down to it,
 - +the key issue is that, at least in part,
 - +we are victims of our own success.
 - +We have reached an era when
 - +educated people and the ideas they produce
 - +have truly become the wealth of nations
 - +and universities are the prime producers of that wealth.
 - +What does this mean for us in universities?
 - +It means that more people have a stake in higher education.
 - +More people want to harness it to their own ends,
 - +We are more visible, more vulnerable,
 - +We attract more constituents and support
 - +...and more opponents,
 - +We have become in the minds of many
 - +just another arena for the exercise of political power
 - +...an arena for the conflict of special interests
 - +We have become a prime target for
 - +media attention and exploitation
 - +We are more a focus of concern of the powerful
 - +and for the powerless.
 - +Thus we shouldn't be surprised by critics
 - +or by assaults on the academy.
 - +Because society has an increasingly vital stake in
 - +what we do and how we do it.
 - +Given the divisions in society at large,
 - +the tensions between
 - +...tradition and change,
 - +...between liberty and justice,
 - +...social pluralism and unity,
 - +...industrial and postindustrial economy ,
 - +...nationalism and internationalization.
 - +is it any wonder that we find ourselves the battleground
 - +for many competing values and interests, both old and new.
 - +The more important question is whether can we survive
 - +with our missions, our freedoms, and our values intact.
 - +
 - +Who are the Critics?
 - +Many of the issues raised by our critics are varied,
 - +difficult and complex.
 - +Some are easily dismissed,
 - +but others have important things to tell us.
 - +In any case, we cannot ignore them

- +They will not go away.
- +Best thing is to consider thoughtfully,
 - +respond selectively,
 - +accept accountability
 - +and responsibility to engage in public debate
 - +about what we do and what we hope to become.
- +Our critics represent a startlingly broad range of ideological views.
 - +Many are themselves academics, or students or staff.
 - +Many others are influential opinion makers
 - +--prominent intellectuals--
 - +and I think their strongly critical stance--
 - +indicates a growing and damaging gap dividing them
 - +from scholars in the academy
- +
 - +Political Correctness
 - +They assail us for imposing an orthodoxy,
 - +a single standard of “political correctness”.
 - +Granted, a good many of the “anti-PC’ers”
 - +are extremists, polemicists, and
 - +have own political and opportunistic agenda.
 - +Indeed, much of what is being written is incredibly superficial,
 - +factually incorrect, and wildly over-stated.
 - +Some of it is pure opportunism
 - +...ideological guerrilla warfare.
 - +Some of it represents just another chapter
 - +in the contemporary media debasement of
 - +public discourse about important social issues
 - +through hype, sound bite simplification,
 - +and pandering to fads and basest prejudices.
 - +Some of these folks are always on the lookout
 - +for a sensational new lightening rod
 - +for public dissatisfaction and frustration.
 - +This time around it is the university that is taking the heat.
 - +So too, part of this anti-pc agenda is familiar,
 - +old fashioned reactionary stuff.
 - +A resort to polemic to try to stop
 - +the greater inclusiveness of people and ideas
 - +...to hold on to status quo at whatever price,
 - +to protect unearned privilege.
 - +But we also have to face the painful truth
 - +that critics of the “politically correct”
 - +don’t lack examples of destructive, even ludicrous,
 - +extremism and zealotry on campuses in recent years,
 - +... indeed, at times on this campus!
 - +While foolish or destructive behavior is by no means
 - +rampant on our college campuses
 - +that amount which does occur
 - +can seriously undermine important academic values
 - +while serving as a lightening rod for critical attention.
 - +Here we also cannot ignore the fact that there are
 - +a growing number of concerned faculty, students,
 - +administrators, and other educators and leaders who
 - +are equally concerned that we are losing touch with ourselves
 - +and our most fundamental missions--teaching and research.
 - +We need to heed a basic message:
 - +*What these critics are saying*
 - +*is that we have lost touch with our most fundamental*
 - +*missions and values...*
 - +*...and this strikes a deep vein of public discontent with academia.*
 - +Since the real issue concerns our commitment
 - +to our own values as teachers and scholars,

+it is on values that we must stand and debate.

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+What is this really about?

+On reflection, I think many of our critics,

+particularly those opposing so called "political correctness"

+are really opposing

+the direction and rate of social and institutional change.

+Much of their opposition centers on the struggle for greater inclusiveness

+...of more openness to ideas and people

+...and it is about the intellectual challenge

+...of what some call the new "Age of Knowledge".

+We must not become overly reactive to

+what is superficial or transitory and opportunistic in criticism

+at the expense of more important continuing debate

+over fundamental issues of our future

+and renewal of our mission in response to change.

+We in academia are trying to deal with some of the most painful, persistent

+and intractable problems in human experience:

+Racism, sexism, --centuries of prejudice and discrimination

+that have robbed the world of precious cultural wisdom,

+talent and leadership.

+Affirmative Action

+We should recognize that much of the anti-PC criticism is really aimed

+at affirmative action programs in our universities.

+Critics claim that Affirmative action actually

+promotes increasing segregation and balkanization,

+separate and unequal education and services.

+It is seen as undemocratic, divisive and ultimately

+a disservice to those it is meant to serve.

+I am on record with my firm support for the Michigan Mandate.

+which is our University's strategic plan to achieve national leadership

+in representing cultural diversity among our faculty students and staff.

+I believe the goals it establishes for the University

+are critical for our future

+and for the future of our society.

+The Michigan Mandate clearly does not establish quotas

+nor does it lower standards--quite the contrary,

+I believe it to be a key element in our quest for excellence.

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+bearing bad tidings...

+Indeed, some in society actually hold us responsible

+for social change.

+In a sense they are right.

+After all, we are educating students for changing world

+and we are producing the knowledge and

+the technology that fuels it.

+Little wonder that some are threatened

+or that many are unsure and concerned.

+Little wonder that with our growing influence on society,

+we have become an arena of special interest conflict.

+We are riding the tiger of a profound transformation of society.

+What is the Chinese curse?

+“May you live in interesting times”

+Well, here we are, and the going can definitely get rough.

+But we do have the means to stay the course

+if we have the will.

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+Where is the real threat to academic freedom

+in the dispute over political correctness?

+Universities are paying dearly for extremists from

+both the "pc" and the "anti pc" camp.

- +As usual when extremists are at work,
 - +truth and principle are the first victims.
- +Academia is facing difficult issues and choices.
 - +Polemics obscure the real and important issues
 - +creating climate in which it is increasingly difficult
 - +to discuss and debate openly critical issues before us.
- +So-called PCer's trivialize and obscure fundamental issues
 - +and too often try to impose their rigid orthodoxies
 - +through indoctrination, coercion
 - +or political strategies and tactics borrowed from the political world.
 - +that are antithetical to scholarly values of rational discussion and debate.
- +Anti-pc'ers take advantage of the excesses of a few to try to intimidate us
 - +to keep us from coping with fundamental issues of social and academic change.
- +Both extremes undermine climate and values necessary
 - +for rational discussion.
- +Superficial polemics and orthodoxies on all sides,
 - +obscure the real issues we ought to be discussing
 - +and debating openly and vigorously among ourselves
 - +and with our society.
- +The real question is whether and how we debate serious issues
 - +Our traditions and freedoms allow us to take
 - +on the toughest questions.
 - +The issue is not whether we can debate tough questions.
 - +This issue is whether we have the courage to take them on.
 - +and how we resolve to debate them among ourselves.
 - +Today many factors are undermining our ability to debate openly.
 - +These factors are providing fuel for our critics.
 - +bringing down on us ridicule and even contempt.
 - +They are undermining our sense of community
 - +and in the long term can lead to a loss of our freedoms
 - +because freedom's enemies are always ready
 - +to step in with their own laws and regulations.
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- +Conclusion
 - +Society has granted us in academia exceptional privileges.
 - +As I told our graduates at Commencement,
 - +much has been given to us and therefore
 - +much is expected in return.
 - +Ours is a good life full of freedom to think and work
 - +according to our individual talent and vision
 - +But it is not without a price.
 - +Price is adherence to values and courage
 - +to apply and defend them.
 - +But when we misuse or abuse our freedoms or just fail
 - +to defend them, society holds us accountable
 - +We set ourselves a high standard, and we are being held to it.
 - +When we stray from it, the price is erosion of public confidence
 - +and support.
 - +In the long term this can spell the of hard-won freedoms
 - +which once lost will be hard to regain.
 - +We represent among faculty, students and staff
 - +a tremendous range of difference in our views,
 - +opinions, beliefs, backgrounds and experiences.
 - +This is by design
 - +...this is how we hire
 - +...this is how we admit
 - +This is the stuff of which debate is made.
 - +We cannot be all things to all people,
 - +to solve all society's problems.

+What we can and must do is be true to ourselves
+and our mission and values.
+If we do this, then we will preserve our freedoms
+and serve our society in the best way we can.
+This is the high and best road to public respect,
+confidence and support.
+This must be the answer to our critics.
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+Once again, thank you for coming.
+I hope you have a lively and enjoyable meeting.
+We won't see you back here in Ann Arbor until the year 2003 or so
+so I know Rick and his colleagues will do their best
+to make this a meeting to remember for a while.
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