Greetings and welcome to all of you.

This has become one of the highpoints of my year because I am always delighted to see so many old friends and because it is always such a warm and enjoyable gathering. And also because you exemplify for me the tremendous strength our University has in its alumni.

It is only since I became President that I have fully appreciated how important our alumni are to us. Not just in giving money--though that is certainly important--but in recruiting students, and mentoring them once they are here, in helping build public understanding and support for the University, and, through your achievements, in providing an example to others what is best in a Michigan education.

Our African American alumni lead the way in loyalty and support. This is especially moving to me because I know that many of you have bittersweet memories of your years at Michigan. Like our larger society, our campus has not done its best for minority students, faculty and staff.

I know that there were many barriers, large and small, that unfairly made your student days more difficult. So your loyalty to Michigan is all the more remarkable and appreciated.

We cannot undo the past. I wish we could but we can’t. What we can do today is make sure the past is not repeated. And you know, I am pledged to do that and more to make Michigan the leader in diversity.

Once again, I am pleased to report to you that we are making progress in recruiting African American faculty and students. For example this year we have Xx new faculty members. This makes a three-year total of Xx and at this rate we are on track to double the number of minority faculty in three years.

Our student numbers are also improved although this year’s counts will not be in until later this month, all the preliminary indicators are excellent.

We really have in place now the people, the policies and the mechanisms that will keep our rate of increase moving up so that we will be representative of the population in this decade. I think you will be proud to learn that Michigan is now regarded as a national leader in building diversity and the Michigan Mandate has become a model for others.

I wish that I could tell you that this means we have achieved our goals. But we all know that increasing the numbers is only the first step.

Now comes the hard part. And believe me, it is hard, to try to change and to build a community that values its differences but at the same time can hold together, work and live together and pursue common goals and forge common values.

I believe we have made some progress here. But I know we have a long way to go.
This isn't surprising, when you consider that universities are one of the few institutions in our society where the effort is being made. While separation increases in many aspects of American life, universities are one place where people have the opportunity to come together. And it isn't always easy. In fact, it brings stresses and strains, friction and even conflict at times. But I see this as a sign that we are making progress, a natural part of a process of becoming more representative. We all know you don't get change without pain in this life. So we may still be in the headlines from time to time. But we can't let ourselves be distracted by that or by setbacks, mistakes or occasional detours. We are on this road for the long haul. We can’t and won’t let up until we get to the destination which is to make our University the leader in being the most diverse and cosmopolitan campus in the country. We can’t do it without you. With you we can’t miss! And before I close I want to say that one of the ways you help us most is when you let us know we are off the track. So keep in touch. Many thanks and Go Blue!