

## Parents Orientation

### Welcome to you as parents...

and also as new members of the Michigan family!!!

### Let me also convey a sympathetic understanding

as you participate in one of the most traumatic experiences of modern American life:

### the great dropoff!!!

### For you see, for each of the past two years I have

gone through the same experience as my wife and I dropped off each of our daughters into that brave, new world that we know as a college education.

Ah, I can still recall many of my thoughts at the time:

- i) How can we possibly fit all of the stuff she wants to take into the car...and how can we possibly get it out of the car and squeeze into her room--particularly when there are three other families trying to do the same thing.
- ii) What about a phone...a bank...a laundry... Gad, will she ever be clean again...?
- iii) If she can't keep her room straight at home, how will she ever survive here without us to keep after her...
- iv) How can she ever find her way around here... if I can't even find a parking place, how can she ever find her classes...

And then there are all of those haunting, more

philosophical questions

Can she stand her roommates...

can they stand her...

Will she be able to survive academically?

And what about boyfriends...

(Actually this was ONE question we soon decided we didn't want to know the answer to...)

.heyd 2 + But somewhere, in all of that confusion of the greyt dropoff,

I still recall those prophetic words of a wise university official...

head 3 + "You may be losing a child...

but you are gaining a friend.../c

.heyd < - Ah, yes...but a VERY, VERY expensive friend...

### NOTE:

Actually, you may have even more interesting dropoff experiences ahead of you...

head 3 + Day before yesterday my wife and went

through yet another dropoff!

one of our daughters--all alone--on a flight to Italy to spend her junior year at the UM campus in Florence this fall.

We spent most of the next 24 hours in some anxiety, wondering whether she could make connections in London and Pisa, then find a train to Florence and a cab without speaking a word of Italian.

Finally, we received a call late yesterday from our daughter, who in breathless gasps, announced "I'm here! I made it all by myself!

It's great! But I only have enough lira for 3 seconds...call me right back!"

...and then, before we could answer, she hung up!

Well, when we finally managed to get reconnected,  
we learned she had survived the trauma of  
her first solo international travel experience  
and was in remarkably high spirits...

For you see, at our Florence villa we have the  
civility to greet our new students with  
a glass of wine!

You know, maybe that is an approach we  
should take in Ann Arbor...but for the  
parents...not the students!

**Thanks and Congratulations...**

Let me begin by thanking you for granting us the privilege  
of working with your sons and daughters during  
the years of their college education.

Let me also congratulate you on the extraordinary records  
that each of your children have already attained...

This past year we had over 19,000 applications for  
the 4,500 positions in our freshman class.

We therefore had the opportunity to build a class drawn  
from students across the nation with  
extraordinary achievements  
...in the classroom...  
...in the studio or concert hall...  
...on the field...

**...as scholars, musicians, artists, athletes...**

**...as leaders...**

**I can assure you that we regard each and everyone**  
of your sons and daughters as something very special...  
and I must confess that we are already very proud  
of them...

**I should also know note that their class, the**

Class of 1991, is academically the  
strongest class in Michigan history...

**That's the good news...**

**Now for the bad news...**

Next year's class will probably be every bit better...  
It's been like that for several years now...  
So I'm afraid that the Class of 1991  
can't slow down!

**Despite their obvious academic talents, many...**

most...probably **ALL**...of your son's and daughters will find  
the Michigan experience very challenging...

...to some it will be through their formal coursework  
...to others, the size and complexity of the university  
...others will face challenges through athletics,  
social activities...

...even challenges to their most fundamental beliefs

But, of course, that is what a college education is all  
about...

Not to simply learn facts...or prepare for a profession...

But rather, a college education is a time of challenge  
and discovery, of curiosity and intellectual growth,  
of learning about oneself.

In a sense, the purpose of a college education  
is to learn the art of life...

**Hence, as your children prepare to take those first**

steps down the exciting trail of a college education, I felt it  
appropriate as the chief academic officer of the  
University to pass along a few observations about  
this journey, so that you as parents can better  
gain a better perspective of what we are trying to

do at Michigan.

**1. Michigan is not a small liberal arts college...it is a great research university.**

It is also a very large, complex, and exciting place...

Some parameters of the University

Parameters:

Enrollment: 35,000 (Ann Arbor) (47,000 total)

Faculty: 2,600 (14,000 employees)

Budget: \$1.3 billion

Academic Units

17 Schools and Colleges

Hundreds of research centers, institutes,  
and other types of interdisciplinary  
programs

Mission:

i) Provides instruction, research, service

ii) Spans all intellectual disciplines and  
professional areas

iii) Attempts to conduct programs that rank  
among the nation's best in all areas  
(and succeeds...)

On this campus, we provide one of the most  
incredible intellectual smorgasbords in  
the world--a fascinating cornucopia of  
ideas supported by some of the finest  
facilities in the world -- one of the nation's  
great libraries, museums, laboratories,  
computers, concert halls,  
athletic facilities -- and even more  
important, one of the world's most  
distinguished faculties.

Our philosophy is to use these incredible  
resources not simply to teach facts...indeed  
students of the ability of your children can learn facts  
pretty much on your own.

Furthermore, In many fields, the knowledge base is doubling  
every five years...hence an undergraduate education only  
serves as the stepping stone to a process of lifelong  
education

Moreover, save for the most basic information,(it is no longer  
necessary at the college level to,commit vast amounts  
of knowledge to memory. Indeed, we now live in a  
world where knowledge and information can literally  
be plucked out of the air...or off your computer terminal.

Hence, of more lasting value are,the broadly applicable  
skills and wide-ranging perspective that is  
characteristic of a liberal education .

Thus our goal is to expose students to the world's  
leading scholars, people who are struggling every day

.h}ad 3 - to create new knowlee□e, not simply u□ relate old  
content.

Our goal is to teach them methods of inquiry...methods of  
critical analysis and thought...

Our objective is to give them the capacity to learn for  
themselves...

This can be frustrating at times, but we are convinced...  
as are the other great research universities of this  
nation...that students of the quality we are fortunate  
enough to attract to Michigan will be far better  
prepared to assume the role of leadership in  
our society with this type of an education.

**2. From this perspective, it is critical to**

understand that your students will probably be learning as much if not more OUTSIDE the classroom than in it. This University is designed to provide a rich environment of intellectual experiences...

Whether it be through the wealth of formal instruction we provide, or through the array of cultural, social, athletic activities.

In fact, I suspect that many students end up learning more from their interaction with other students than from the faculty!

**3. Importance of diversity to this campus**

UM has made a very deep commitment to the achievement of an environment which seeks, nourishes, and sustains racial, cultural, and ethnic diversity.

We believe it essential to develop an environment of mutual understanding and sensitivity on this campus that not only tolerates diversity, but (moreover) seeks and embraces it as one of our most cherished characteristics.

**History, the**

has been known for a spirit of democracy and tolerance among its students and faculty.

Almost a century ago/ Xarvers Weekly noted:

"The most striking feature of the University of Michigan, is the broad and liberal spirit in

which it does its work. + We believe that this commitment to diversity is

key to the quality and distinction of this University--and to the quality of the education your sons and daughters will receive.

For that reason, it is absolutely paramount that our students, just as our faculty and staff, demonstrate the sensitivity and tolerance toward others of differing races, cultures, and nationalities

This will be an essential component of their education.

**4. Preparation for leadership**

As I noted earlier, your sons and daughters are an extraordinarily talented group...

It is likely that regardless of what happens during their college education, they will go on to become leaders of our society...

Hence, we believe it important that they prepare for this life of leadership now by taking advantage of all that this University has to offer.

That they...

Broaden their horizons...

Develop a personal philosophy of life...

Become involved...

Become committed...

And if they have to come over and take over my office in protest, then so be it...it is all part of an education for leadership.

**5. Finally, let me stress that an education at Michigan**

**is not a passive process...** While it is true that we probably have more opportunities on this campus than any other university in the nation...it is also true that they will not be presented to your sons and daughters on a silver platter.

We expect them to play an active role in their education!  
To explore, to discover, to challenge themselves  
After all, life is one of those do-it-yourself  
experiences...

We believe it important to deliberately leave  
the fundamental freedom and responsibility of choice to  
the individual student. After all, this is part of their education.

But, we also believe they should steer themselves with care,  
for as the saying goes...

"At Michigan you will be given unusual freedom and  
responsibility...

The freedom to do what you want...

And the responsibility to choose the right things...

**What are we trying to do at Michigan?**

Prepare your sons and daughters for a career?...

As doctors, lawyers, engineers,...  
or even investment bankers...?

Well, we will do our best to give them the  
foundation necessary for such  
careers, but that is not our real mission.

Perhaps Emerson put it best 150 years ago in  
his famous Phi Beta Kappa address at  
Harvard when he noted...

"Colleges have their indispensable office, to teach  
elements. But they can only serve us when they  
aim not to drill but to create; when they gather  
from far every ray of various genius to their  
hospitable halls, and by the concentrated fires,  
set the hearts of their youth aflame..."

And, that perhaps is the simplest and best statement  
of what we are trying to do at Michigan...

Ignite the intellectual fires within each of  
our students

We want to stimulate in each of them a spirit of  
liberal learning...a spirit that will be a part of  
them for the rest of their lives...

**Michigan is an exciting, challenging...sometimes  
frustrating...but always a rewarding place.**

Let me once again thank you for your confidence  
in lending us your sons and daughters for  
the next several years...

We look forward to working with them as they journey  
down the fascinating and rewarding road of a  
Michigan education.

And we look forward to welcoming them as the  
newest members of the maize and blue!