

Diversity

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Our universities are at important turning points in their histories. The students we are educating today will spend most of their lives in the 21st century. Theirs will be a very different world than the one we have known. Most of us who are leaders and teachers in the university are products of the 20th century. Furthermore, the structure of the American university as we see it today is a product of the 19th century and, of course, many of its features originated long before that in a far different and distance times and places.

As we look to the profound changes ahead of us, it is important to keep in mind that throughout their history, universities have evolved as integral parts of their societies to meet the challenges of their changing environments. They continue to evolve today. This disposition to change is a basic characteristic and strength of university life, the result of our constant generation of new knowledge through scholarship that, in turn, changes the education we provide and influences the societies that surround us. At the same time, this propensity of universities to change is balanced by vital continuities, especially those arising from our fundamental scholarly commitments and values and from our roots in a democratic society. While the emphasis, structure, or organization of university activity may change over time to respond to new challenges, it is these scholarly principles, values, and traditions that animate the academic enterprise and give it continuity and meaning. Thus, an integral part of the life of the university has always been to continuously evaluate the world around us, in order to adjust our teaching, research, and service missions to serve the changing needs of our constituents while preserving basic values and commitments. Today we must once gain try to anticipate the future direction of our society in order to prepare students for the world they will inherit.

As we have noted earlier in this book, higher education is facing a period of significant change, driven by the profound changes occurring in the society and world we serve. While it is always risky to speculate about the exact shape of things to come, especially in the face of the accelerating pace of change we are experiencing, three themes dominate the future we foresee in 21st century America:

- The University will become a truly multicultural society, with a cultural, racial, and ethnic diversity that will be greater than we have ever known before.
- Our nation will be “internationalized” as every aspect of American life becomes every more dependent on other nations and other peoples. Through immigration, too, we are becoming truly a “world nation”, with ethnic ties to every corner of the globe. Increasingly, all of our activities must be viewed within the broader context of our interdependence in the global community.
- The United States and the world community will rapidly evolve from a resource-and labor-intensive society to a knowledge-intensive society, in which intellectual capital-educated people and their ideas--become the keys to our own and, indeed, world productivity, prosperity, security, and well-being.

We cannot ignore these trends and their profound implications for our society and our universities. Nor should we react to them passively. In keeping with our heritage of

leadership in higher education, we must act directly to determine our own destiny, to make our ideals a reality.

Yet in this effort to change, to become more inclusive, to better serve a changing society, we face great challenge. The political climate swirling around Washington these days or sweeping westward from California raises serious questions about our commitment to achieve equity and social justice for all Americans. A recent *Wall Street Journal*/NBC News survey found that 2 out of 3 Americans oppose affirmative action. Federal courts are pondering cases that challenge racial preference. In Washington, the new Republican majority in Congress is taking aim at the nation's commitment to civil rights.

At a time when some would try to squelch discussion about diversity on our campuses — labeling it just another example of political correctness—it seems particularly important that we in academe to talk openly, with boldness, about the need for more, not less, diversity. Today it is more important than ever, to reaffirm the importance of diversity for our institutions and our society.

At the University of Michigan, we are particularly committed to this goal of diversity, both through heritage and destiny. Throughout our long history, perhaps the most distinguishing characteristic of the University has been our commitment, as President James Angell noted in 1879, to provide “an uncommon education for the common man”. This aspiration contrasted sharply with the goals of the nation's earliest colleges which traditionally served only the elite.

The journey from this early ambition to real diversity at Michigan, however, often required intense struggle. Our current successes did not come quickly, easily, or without detours along the way. Hence, it seems appropriate to examine more closely the Michigan experience as a case study of how one university has chosen to respond to the one of the most important challenges of our times.

Yet despite these efforts, it had become obvious by the end of the 1980s that the University had made inadequate progress in its goal to reflect the rich diversity of our nation and our world among its faculty, students and staff. Simply providing access to our institutions was not sufficient to provide full opportunity for those groups which continued to suffer from social, cultural, and economic discrimination in our society.

We knew we had to do more. We also knew that the University would have to change dramatically if it were to remain faithful to its century-old commitment of making education available to all people.

The Michigan Mandate

It seems increasingly clear that our university's ability to achieve and sustain campus community recognized for its racial, cultural, and ethnic diversity will in large part determine our capacity to serve successfully our society, our nation, and the world in the challenging times before us. This diversity will become a cornerstone of our efforts to achieve excellence in teaching, research, and service in the years ahead.

Seven years ago the U-M launched a strategic initiative we named the Michigan Mandate, designed to change the institution in profound ways to better enable it to serve a changing nation and a changing world. The Michigan Mandate reflects our commitment to make the University of Michigan a national and world academic leader in the racial and ethnic diversity of our faculty, students and staff. It is a plan to link academic excellence and social diversity.

More specifically, the Michigan Mandate was based on the following premise:

Embracing and, even more importantly, capitalizing on our racial cultural, and ethnic diversity will be a critical element of the university's ability to achieve excellence in teaching and research while serving our state, nation, and the world in the years ahead.

At Michigan we created a strategic framework for this commitment known as the Michigan Mandate. We posed this as both a challenge and a framework to build a multicultural community that would become a model for our society. The purpose of the Michigan Mandate was to guide our university in creating a community that:

- Supports the aspirations and achievements of all individuals, regardless of race, creed, national origin, or gender;
- Embodies and transmits those fundamental, academic, and civic values that must bond us together as a scholarly community and as part of a democratic society;
- Values, respects, and, indeed, draws its intellectual strength from the rich diversity of peoples of different races, cultures, religions, nationalities, and beliefs.

The reasoning that led us to consider this commitment to the achievement of diversity to be a key element in our efforts to build a university for the 21st century grows out of our tradition of educational leadership as well as our assessment of the trends we anticipate in our nation's future.

Planning models for the institutional change necessary to become a genuinely pluralistic, multicultural community are still difficult to find. However, we were fortunate to be able to draw on the expertise of faculty colleagues with experience in other arenas, particularly in the corporate world, where significant cultural changes in the workplace have been achieved, using strategic approaches and techniques. A small group of advisors with first-hand corporate experience was assembled to help forge the first outlines of the Michigan Mandate. This group, nicknamed “the Change Group”, conceived this Mandate not as a bureaucratic directive, but as an organic and evolving framework for organizational change that would attract and reflect the active participation of faculty, students, and staff at all levels of the University.

The Change Group recognized early on that the real goal was institutional change. The objective was to develop a preliminary version of a plan, a new agenda, a vision of the future of the University of Michigan that would respond more effectively to two of the principal challenges before us in the 21st century: first, the fact that our nation was rapidly becoming more ethnically and racially pluralistic; and second, the growing interdependence of the global community, which called for greater knowledge, understanding, and appreciation of human history than ever before needed in our history. As president, I believed it important to assume personal responsibility for the design, articulation, and implementation of the plan. Credibility also required that I be held personally accountable for its success or failure

The purpose of the plan was to change the institution in such a way that all institutional barriers were removed to full participation in the life of the University and the educational opportunities it offered for peoples of all races, creeds, ethnic groups, and national origins. But it was also recognized at the outset that the strategic plan would really become only a road map. It was intended to set out a direction and point to a destination, but the journey itself would be a long one and much of the landscape through which the University would travel was still to be discovered. As the effort evolved, it attempted to deal with two themes that heretofore had appeared to be incompatible: community and pluralism. The goal of the effort was to strengthen every part of the University community by increasing, acknowledging, learning from, and celebrating the ever-increasing human diversity of the nation and the world.

It was also recognized at the outset that the plan would be organic and evolving in such a way as to facilitate the involvement of both the University community itself and the broader external community. The challenge was to construct a process that would engage the various constituencies of the institution, reflecting their opinions and experience. Indeed, the plan would provide the framework for a continuing dialogue about the very nature of the institution. In this sense, the Change Group was engaged in developing a dynamic process and not a finished product.

In their discussions, the Change Group became convinced that the University's ability to achieve and sustain a campus community recognized for its racial, cultural, and ethnic diversity would in large part determine the University's capacity to successfully serve the state, the nation, and the world in the challenging times before us. The group became convinced that this diversity would become the cornerstone in the University's efforts to

achieve excellence in teaching, research, and service in the multicultural nation and world in which it would exist.

But the Change Group also recognized that institutions do not change quickly and easily any more than do the societies of which they are a part. To move toward the goal of diversity, the University would have to leave behind those current reactive and coordinated efforts that had characterized its past and move toward a more strategic approach designed to achieve long-term systemic change. In particular, it recognized the limitations of those efforts that focused only on affirmative action; that is, on access, retention, and representation. It believed that without deeper more fundamental institutional change these efforts by themselves would inevitably fail--as they had throughout the 1970s and 1980s. While such affirmative action efforts should be continued, what was really the focal point would be to achieve a more permanent and fundamental change in the character of the institution itself.

To make progress in achieving such a change, it was recognized that the first and vital step was to link diversity and excellence as the two most compelling goals before the institution, recognizing that these goals were not only complementary but would be tightly linked in the multicultural society characterizing our nation and the world in the years ahead. the challenge was to broaden its vision, to draw strength from its differences, and to learn from new voices, new perspective and different experiences of the world.

In these efforts the University would have to take the long view that would require patient and persistent leadership. Progress would also require sustained vigilance and hard work as well as a great deal of help and support. The plan would have to build on the best that we already had. The challenge was to persuade the community that there is a real stake for everyone in seizing this moment to chart a more diverse future, that the gains to be achieved would more than compensate for the necessary sacrifices.

It was also recognized at the outset that there would be many mistakes in the early stages. There would be setbacks and disappointments. The important point was to make a commitment for the long range and not be distracted from this vision. This long range viewpoint would be particularly important in the face of activist groups because of the ongoing pressures to serve one special interest group or another or to take a particular stance on a narrow issue or agenda. Indeed, many, both on and off the campus, tended to view the presence or absence or nature of such responses as a sequence of litmus tests that measured the extent of University commitments.

While the inevitable pressures were understandable, the plan would succeed only if the University leadership insisted on operating at a long-term strategic rather than on a short-term reactive level. It was essential to keep one's eyes focused on the prize ahead and resist efforts to react to every issue that arose. In this sense then while commitment and support within and outside the University community were necessary ingredients for success, it could not succeed alone as the University had learned in the past two decades. It was essential to have a strategy, a plan designed to guide institutional change.

The goals in developing the Michigan Mandate were to: i) develop a carefully designed strategic process for achieving, using, and cherishing diversity, ii) achieve a community strongly committed in philosophy to our objectives, and iii) allocate the necessary resources to accomplish this task. A plan was sought that featured clear, concise and simple goals, proposed specific actions and evaluation mechanisms, and reflected extensive interaction with and direct comment from a variety of constituencies and individuals to ensure responsiveness to the plan. It was also decided that once the basic outlines of the plan were developed, a broad process of consultation would be launched to engage groups both on and off campus.

The mission and goals of the Michigan Mandate were quite simple:

Philosophy: To recognize that diversity and excellence are complementary and compelling goals for the University and to make a firm commitment to their achievement.

Representation: to commit to the recruitment, support, and success of members of historically underrepresented groups among our students, faculty, staff, and leadership.

Environment: to build on our campus an environment which seeks, nourishes, and sustains diversity and pluralism and in which the dignity and worth of every individual is valued and respected.

Associated with these general goals were more specific objectives:

Faculty recruiting and development: to substantially increase the number of tenure track faculty in each underrepresented minority group; to increase the success of minority faculty in the achievement of professional fulfillment, promotion, and tenure; to increase the number of underrepresented minority faculty in leadership positions.

Student recruiting achievement and outreach: achieve increases in the number of entering underrepresented minority students as well as in total underrepresented minority enrollment; establish and achieve specific minority enrollment targets in all schools and colleges; increase minority graduation rates; develop new programs to attract back to campus minority students who have withdrawn from our academic programs; to design new and strengthen existing outreach programs that have demonstrable impact on the pool of minority applicants to undergraduate, graduate, and professional programs.

Staff recruiting and development: to focus on the achievement of affirmative action goals in all job categories; to increase the number of underrepresented minorities in key University leadership positions; to strengthen support systems and services for minority staff.

Improving the environment for diversity: to foster a cultural and diverse environment; to significantly reduce the number of incidents of racism and prejudice on campus; to increase community-wide commitment to diversity and involvement in diversity

initiatives among students, faculty, and staff; to broaden the base of diversity initiatives, for example, by including comparative perspectives drawn from international studies and experiences; to ensure the compatibility of University policies, procedures, and practice with the goal of a multicultural community; to improve communications and interactions with and among all groups; and to provide more opportunities for minorities to communicate their needs and experiences and to contribute directly to the change process.

The Michigan Mandate has become a model nationwide for institutions of higher education who are working to increase diversity on their campuses. Let me give you some highlights of the impact of this important effort:

1. Today, in every degree program, at every level, for every minority ethnic group, we currently enjoy the highest enrollments in our history.
2. Currently we enroll 7,927 students of color, over 24% of our student body (and 27% of this year's freshman class)--an increase of over 60% over the past seven years.
3. African American enrollments have risen also risen over 60% to 2,715, bringing their enrollment to 8.5% of our student body. So too, enrollments of Latino students increased to 1,533 (4.7%); and Native American at 258 (1%).
4. Our graduation rates for African American students have risen to 70%, the highest for any public university in the nation--indeed, higher than the graduation rates for white students at most public universities.
5. Since the beginning of the Michigan Mandate we have added over 100 new African American faculty, roughly doubling their number. And again, their quality is evidenced by the fact that they are achieving tenure at a rate of over 85%.
6. More generally, the representation of faculty of color has now risen to 13%.

7. Since the University of Michigan ranks among as the leading source of doctorates in the nation, it plays a key role in producing the next generation of faculty for American universities. Hence the importance of our commitment to dramatically expand the number of graduate fellowships we provided for underrepresented minorities, doubling these to over 600, the largest commitment of any university in America.
8. So, too, many of our professional schools have become national leaders in their diversity, including our schools of Business, Law, Medicine, and Engineering.

Even as the Michigan Mandate gained momentum and our University began to change, we launched other strategic efforts aimed both at enhancing our diversity and achieving social equity and justice.

A year ago we launched the Michigan Agenda for Women, aimed at making the University a national leader in overcoming gender discrimination and providing full opportunities for women students, faculty, and staff in all aspects of the University. Although this major initiative is still in its early stages, thus far we have:

1. Allocated resources to establish a number of new faculty lines for senior women faculty (6 thus far...)
2. Overhauled our policies with respect to dependent care, family leave, and flexibility in the workplace.
3. Launched a major new task force aimed at improving campus safety and eliminating violence against women.
4. Made a series of appointments of women in key leadership positions, including deans and executive officers.

5. Institute for Study of Women and Gender
6. And next year Michigan will become the first major university in America to commit sufficient resources to achieve true gender equity in intercollegiate athletics, providing the same number of varsity opportunities for women as we do for men (50% - 50%).

We have moved ahead in some other areas that deserve mention:

1. Our Regents have expanded their nondiscrimination policies to prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation, and last year we extended staff benefits and housing opportunities to same-sex couples.
2. We are moving rapidly to achieve greater international diversity among our people and our programs. For example, within the past two years we have opened major new instructional centers in Hong Kong, Seoul, and Paris, and we expect to open a similar program in London this fall.

People ask why we have made this commitment to change, why diversity is the cornerstone of our efforts to achieve national excellence and leadership during the 1990s.

The most compelling reason is that it is the morally right thing to do. Plurality, equal opportunity and freedom from discrimination are the foundations upon which the University--and indeed, our nation-- are built. It is more that what we do; it is what we must be if we are to call ourselves a truly public university.

But there are other reasons:

■ America of the 21st century will be a nation without a dominant ethnic majority. It will be truly pluralistic. To serve America's rapidly changing population, our universities must provide the educated people and ideas needed by our society both to understand and to build unity out of diversity.

■ We do not believe a university can achieve excellence in teaching and scholarship unless it also benefits from the varied intellectual perspectives and experiences of America and the world in every aspect of our community.

Diversity and Change

Diversity is essential to any university as we approach the new century for a fourth reason. Unless we draw upon a vast diversity of people and ideas, we cannot hope to generate the intellectual and social vitality we need to respond to a world characterized by great change.

In the midst of lively debate, the scientific community has begun to realize how central diversity can be to the survival of many groups. Homogeneous populations are often much less able to respond to change in their environment. A field of monocultural wheat, for example, can produce explosively under relatively controlled conditions. But it is in great danger from climatic change or new diseases. The wheat has a very limited library of genetic material, giving it few options with which to respond.

Universities, of course, are not fields of wheat; they are much more complex. Yet the analogy in many ways is apt. While we may, in general, be able to control the conditions in a wheat field, this is much less true for a university. In fact, our

world today is characterized by a burgeoning complexity and a rapidly increasing rate of change. Perhaps (and I say this advisedly), our society could tolerate singular answers in the past, when we could still imagine that tomorrow would look much like today. But this assumption of stasis is no longer plausible. As knowledge advances, we uncover new questions we could not have imagined a few years ago. As society evolves, the issues we grapple with shift in unpredictable ways. A solution for one area of the world often turns out to be ineffectual or even harmful in another. Academic areas as different as English and sociology have found their very foundations radically transformed as they attempt to respond to these dilemmas.

For universities to thrive in this age of complexity and change, it is vital that we resist any tendency to eliminate options. Only with a multiplicity of approaches, opinions, and ways of seeing can we hope to solve the problems we face. Universities, more than any other institution in American society, have striven toward a vision of tolerance and intellectual freedom. We must continually struggle to advance this heritage and to become places where a myriad of experiences, cultures, and approaches are valued, preserved, discussed, and embraced.

This need for multiple points of view³ is easier to establish in the social sciences and the humanities, but these different “ways of seeing” are also critical in the hard sciences.

But diversity alone is not enough. While we must celebrate differences between people, we also must make every effort to find common grounds around which

to unite. The multicolored skein that is the modern university must be woven together, becoming a tapestry, with each thread retaining its unique character.

Seeing Difference Differently

We must work diligently to create a welcoming community, encouraging respect for diversity in all of the characteristics that can be used to describe humankind:

age

race

ethnicity

nationality

gender

religious belief

sexual orientation

political beliefs

economic background

geographical background.

As the University becomes more multicultural, we see an increasing number of student groups organizing to preserve and share their ethnic and cultural traditions with the rest of the campus. Some think of multiculturalism as a melting pot where group identity is lost or as Balkanization into separate groups whose members refuse to mingle. It doesn't have to be that way. Groups can enhance their own cultural identity while inviting others to share in their history and traditions.

We must move in two directions at once. We all must stop assuming that people from groups different from ours necessarily have the same needs, experiences, and points of view that we do. Yet, at the same time, we must not succumb to the equally pernicious assumption that “they” are all the same. Real barriers, experiences, and culture may be shared by many in a group, but that does not give us permission to treat people as though they conform to some stereotyped image of “white”, “gay”, or “Latino”. We must create a community where various cultures and ethnicity are valued and acknowledged, but where each individual has the opportunity to find her or his own path.

At the same time, we must recognize that not everyone faces the same consequences for their differences. The experience of an Asian American person is not the same as that of an African American person or a white woman or a person with a disability. We cannot forget that issues of difference are inextricably intertwined with issues of power, discrimination, and with the specific histories of groups and of each individual. As we pursue a pluralistic campus, we must remember that equality will require effort, resources, and commitment to both structural change and education. We must learn to see difference differently.

Moving Forward

As we move into the future, it is becoming increasingly clear that the university’s excellence and national leadership will be greatly determined by the diversity of our campus community. Different ways of conceptualizing and addressing intellectual issues give new vitality to our education, scholarship, and communal life. Excellence and diversity are not only mutually compatible but mutually

reinforcing objectives. We draw great strength from our extraordinary multiplicity.

True diversity means accepting new members not only into our classrooms, but into dialogues about how classrooms are structured and what is taught there. Diversity is not just about “numbers”; it requires profound structural change. As we have learned to be more open to different ways of seeing, we have discovered that there has always been more diversity on campus than we every accommodated. Many of the new programs that were created to support students of color or women have actually improved the opportunities for success for all students. We will not succeed until all who come here feel a sense of ownership, until the experiences and points of view they bring are reflected in every aspect of our communal life.

We are far more diverse today than we were twenty years ago or even ten years ago. Our commitment has increased our recognition, world-wide, for academic excellence in every field. We cannot know beforehand where this journey will take us. Progress toward plurality will involve many different actors and multiple points in our community. The University is not monolithic and neither is discrimination; both are shifting constantly. We move ahead, knowing we can never simply rest.