

Preparing for the Twenty-First Century

In 1992, the University marked its 175th anniversary with a series of events that celebrated and took steps to preserve its past. An oral history of past presidents and other university leaders was initiated. A historical video and several historical publications were commissioned, including the revised edition of this book. Under the maize and blue banner of the "175th" events and lectures campus wide were drawn together to remind the university community of the strength and richness of its past. It was also in 1992 that the preservation of the University's heritage was placed in the hands of an official History and Traditions Committee appointed by the President and chaired by the University's newly appointed historian, Robert Warner.

As these events were unfolding, two powerful forces were also at work that increasingly turned the attention of the university community toward the future. One was the obvious approach of a new century, a time when individuals and institutions have traditionally heightened their interest in the world to come. The other was the vision of the University's eleventh president, James Duderstadt, who made preparing for the future one of the defining themes of his administration.

A nuclear engineer by training, Duderstadt brought to his administrative work, first as Dean of the College of Engineering (1981-86), then as Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs (1986-88), and finally as President (1988 -), an infectious confidence in the ability of educated people to control their destinies and to build their own futures. Soon after taking office as Provost, he implemented an ambitious strategic planning process that challenged all concerned to anticipate the needs for higher education in the coming century and then to map out a strategy for meeting those needs. Inherent in this process was the opportunity to define the role the University wanted to play in higher education in the decades ahead. From this process there emerged a clear and compelling strategic plan that had at its core one ambitious, all-encompassing goal--to become the university that set the standard for higher education in the twenty-first century, or simply put in the Victors, the unofficial school song of every Wolverine, to become the "leaders and best".

The heart of the new strategic plan was its vision of the future. In countless talks before the University's extended family, which spread from students and faculty on campus to alumni, to legislators in Lansing, and more broadly to the citizens of Michigan, now President Duderstadt described a future in which three crucial elements--knowledge, globalization, and pluralism--would dominate. Knowledge was becoming increasingly important as the key to growth and change. Change through knowledge was quickly breaking down barriers

between nations and economies, producing one interdependent global community that had to live and work together. As barriers disappeared and new groups entered the main stream of life, particularly in America, isolation, intolerance, and separation had to give way to pluralism and diversity. A new, dynamic world was emerging. If the University wanted to maintain the leadership position it had enjoyed for now close to two centuries, it had to adapt to life in that world

With this vision clearly articulated, under the leadership of Duderstadt; his new Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs, former Dean of Business Administration Gilbert Whitaker; and the other members of the new leadership team, the university set out to build for the future--physically, financially, intellectually, and culturally. Beginning in 1987, an ambitious program known as "the Michigan Mandate" was implemented to increase the number of students, faculty, and staff in all under-represented groups on campus and to encourage increased community commitment to diversity. Internationalization was fostered through new overseas educational initiatives, greater emphasis on international cooperation in research, and, in 1990, the creation of a new associate vice president for international academic affairs. Information, which has always been central to both research and teaching, increasingly merged with and became dependent on technology, through the various "nets" that link the University to the international world of higher education, business, and government. One sign of the new focus of some traditional fields was the appointment of a specialist in information technology and associate dean in Engineering, Daniel Atkins, to be the new Dean of the School of Information and Library Studies in 1992. Another was the 1991 selection of Garry Brewer, a Yale professor with interests in corporate America, to head the School of Natural Resources.

Over time, the areas for leadership grew into a more ambitious list of goals for the University in the 1990s. These goals targeted specific strategies for financial management, achieving excellence, helping American society rebuild its infrastructure, and creating an environment on campus that could change and embrace change more easily and more quickly. Leading higher education into the twenty-first century now included, among other activities: building more "spires of excellence"; making Michigan "the university of choice for women leaders"; developing "a new paradigm for undergraduate education"; increasing the University's endowment to \$2 billion, improving the quality of our facilities, making the Ann Arbor area "the economic engine of the Midwest", and helping "to implement a plan for restructuring the State of Michigan", and building "more of a sense of pride in...respect for...excitement about...and loyalty to the University of Michigan."

As this revised edition of the University's history goes to press, the new strategic plan, Vision 2000, is being implemented and carefully monitored under the watchful eye of an evaluation known as "the Michigan Metrics". A new capital campaign, the Campaign for Michigan, was launched in fall of 1992 with the goal of raising \$1 billion. East Engineering was recently stripped bare to its structural skeleton in preparation for major renovations. Reminiscent of the earlier remodeling of the Angell-era main library in the 1920s, when the present north wing was erected around the original stacks, a "new" library is being constructed around the 1950s Undergraduate Library, which will be connected with walkways to the Hatcher Library and westing Engineering, now the home of Physics, Women's Studies, the Center for AfroAmerican and African Studies, and the School of Library and Information Studies. The Diag will also soon have an entirely new Physics building, filling a space just south of Natural Resources and west of Randall Physics. The Medical Campus is about to dedicate a third Medical Sciences Research Building and is well along on a new Cancer and Geriatrics Center. The new library and information technology center currently under construction on North Campus will complete Engineering's move to its new campus, a move that began nearly fifty years ago. These, and the huge physical plant that has become the University of Michigan, will be home to the 36,000 students, 3,400 faculty, 14,000 staff, and 300,000 plus alumni who make up the university community, spending over \$2 billion annually to run seventeen schools and colleges and hundreds of programs, centers, and institutes.

As large and complex as the University is or promises to become, there is still one over-riding activity that not only binds it together but that binds it firmly to both its past and its future. However we go about our various activities, we are still a community and an institution that exists "to create, preserve, and disseminate knowledge". This seemingly simple task carries with it great responsibilities, responsibilities that can both challenge and overwhelm. After spending the afternoon reading in the University's small library of only a few hundred books one day in October, 1844, George Pray wrote in his diary: "it is discouraging to see an ambitious and ardent-minded student to enter a large library and see how much there is to be learned and how impossible it is to learn all things". His favorite teacher and later friend, physician Silas Douglas, expressed similar sentiments a few years earlier in a letter to his true wife when he wrote:

Our profession is one of a progressive character, and it requires all our energies to keep pace with its advancement. If periodicals for some time on my hands, calling loudly for perusal... Oh' what a mass of stuff there is to learn. The further we progress, the more we find...which we should learn.

Michigan's students, faculty, administrators, staff, alumni, and supporters have consistently risen to the challenge--the challenge to be at the cutting edge of creating, preserving, and disseminating knowledge. Assuming they continue to do so in the future, the chapters in the university's history that are yet to be written will be as rich and rewarding as those that have already been a part of *The Making of the University of Michigan*.