



A Presentation by

JAMES J. DUDERSTADT, PRESIDENT

The University of Michigan

**The Michigan
Mandate:
Bridge to
Opportunity**

**Opening of the
UM Detroit
Admissions Office
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Introduction

I am delighted to be here to mark the official re-opening of the University's Admissions Office in Detroit. Of course, it is not really a change for the University of Michigan to be involved in Detroit. We have been a part of the City since our founding here in 1817. There has never been a time since then when the fate of the University and that of the City have not been closely related. What affects one affects the other.

This has never been more valid than it is today. When Detroit loses jobs and people, when it suffers economically, the University feels it. Indeed, all of Michigan's universities feel it painfully. We feel it academically because we lose the talents of children whose education has been shortchanged. We feel it economically, politically, and culturally when one of the world's great cities, historically a source of tremendous strength in our state, is struggling to renew its very foundation.

Of course, the University has always had many ties to the City. Since the opening of the Rackham Building in the early 1940s, and until the early eighties, we maintained a strong program of adult and continuing education in this building, an active program of research, outreach and service, along with many cooperative relationships with the schools and prospective students and their families. But sadly many of these programs, along with our entire educational extension service, fell victim to the recession of a decade ago. The massive cutbacks in state funding forced the University to cut back its formal presence in Detroit by reducing most of its operations here at Rackham.

It is easy in retrospect to say that we might better have cut something else. But those were difficult times, and we cannot undo what

was done. But what we can do is learn from past mistakes.

What we have learned is that we need to be in Detroit. We need to be engaged in its struggle. We need to be a part of its renaissance. We need the talents of more Detroit children in our student body. We need strong and enduring cooperation with Detroit schools. We need to be a part of the effort to improve educational opportunities for Detroit's children. We need to be a part of its economic development. We need to be a part of building a better future for the city and its people.

And as of today, the University of Michigan is here and ready to work, with the people, the parents, the teachers, and the students of Detroit.

And this time we are here to stay!

A Tour of Detroit

My visit here today is particularly timely since I am fresh from an all-day tour of the City of Detroit organized this past Monday for leaders of the University by Neal Shine, publisher of the Detroit Free Press. We couldn't have had better guides than Neal, reporter Peter Gavrilovitch, and former police officer Ike McKinnon. All three are native Detroiters who love this city and its people. They didn't take us to the obvious tourist spots, places such as the Detroit Institute of Arts or the RenCen or the Fox Theatre. Instead, they took us to the heart of the city, to its neighborhoods. We visited churches and shops and schools—places such as Western High School, Mrs. Funderburg's Restaurant, a Chaldean store. We visited churches and organizations, places where people were struggling together to sustain their communities.

We saw so many impressive grass roots efforts in which countless ordinary people are heroically and creatively reclaiming their communities, guiding and protecting their children, and supporting their schools. It was inspiring to witness these efforts and meet firsthand so many extraordinary Detroiters. It was clear that they were not waiting for someone else to do the job for them. They were leading, taking the initiative, and mobilizing communities to work together to help each other, to care for the children, and to build their future. We came away deeply impressed by this leadership and by the opportunity open to us to help build new bridges of opportunity for the children of this city.

Some Observations About the City of Detroit

The history of Detroit is the history of 20th century America. It is a history of immigration. It is a history of tremendous cultural diversity, of so many people with different traditions, beliefs, and experiences. But at the same time, this diversity has been transcended by shared values, hopes, and faith in the future.

Detroit was and remains today a gateway city: a gateway to hope, challenge, and opportunity. For so many immigrant groups, the very name Detroit spelled opportunity. Whether they came from foreign countries or from other parts of the United States, whether they came to escape poverty or oppression, whether they came here to build things, they came seeking a future for themselves.

In the past most of our ethnic groups came from Europe. Today people are coming to us from Africa, Asia, Mexico and other parts of Latin America, from the Middle East, and from Russia. But both then and now our immigrants

have brought us incredible riches in return for opportunity.

Of course, very few brought with them riches of money or the advantages of privilege. Instead, they brought with them riches of a far greater value, riches that have formed the American culture and character. The wealth they have brought us--and are still bringing to us--is measured by their unique talents, energy, creativity, cultural richness, and traditions.

No other nation in history has been so enriched by the diversity of its people or by the incredible energy that is unleashed when people are given an equal chance to better themselves. Not that there was always the reality of equal opportunity, but there was always the ideal of it, the possibility and faith in it. This has not changed in all of our history. It remains true today. We have received the cream of the world's people: the adventurous, the hard working, the bold and creative men and women who have risked leaving home and family to make a better life on our shores and largely in our nation's great cities.

No, the people and the gifts they bring have not changed. But the nature of the opportunity they find here is changing. Indeed, our whole world is changing at an accelerating pace, driven by immense forces at work that are affecting our population, our work place, our society and culture, our view of ourselves, and our place in the world. Few, if any, places in our country have felt the force of these transformations more directly, more painfully than the people of Michigan and especially the people of Detroit. In little more than a generation, we have seen one of our nation's great cities lose almost one-half of its population. We have seen our seemingly invincible automobile industry threatened and diminished. We have seen the Detroit schools, which nourished generations of leadership for Detroit and the nation, lose the support they

need to provide for this generation of students. And we have seen the great promise of equality that is the foundation of our democracy compromised by new and damaging divisions and separations as groups are forced to compete for jobs, housing, and the chance for advancement because of economic forces beyond their control.

And Detroit is not alone. Look at how many of our cities are struggling to sustain themselves. Look at how many of America's former industrial giants are in decline. How many industrial and craft jobs have disappeared. And how many of our nation's schools are failing to educate their children.

What Is Going On Here?

Americans have been slow to realize the enormous changes our society is undergoing as it approaches the 21st century.

We are becoming more diverse, more pluralistic as a people. Indeed, almost 90 percent of the new entrants into our work force during the 1990s will be people of color, women, or immigrants.

Each day our economy and commerce are becoming more interdependent with other nations and other peoples as the United States becomes a true world nation, a member of the global community.

And we are rapidly evolving into a new post-industrial society in which the key strategic resource necessary for prosperity and social well-being has become knowledge itself, that is, educated people and their ideas. Indeed, knowledge will play the same role that in the past was played by natural resources, or geographical locations, or labor pools.

Concerns About the Future

Needless to say, these challenges of pluralism, of globalization, of the age of knowledge that are our future will call upon all the strength, vision, and unity we can muster. The America of the 20th century that we have known was a nation characterized by a rather homogeneous, domestic, industrialized society. But that is an America of the past. Our children will inherit a far different nation, a highly pluralistic, knowledge-intensive, world nation that will be the America of the 21st century.

Of course, these themes of the future, the changing nature of the American population, our increasing interdependence with other nations, and the shift to a knowledge-intensive post-industrial society are actually not themes of the future but rather themes of today. In a sense, I have simply been reading the handwriting on the wall.

The impact of the changes in this state is already painfully apparent to our workers and to our industries. In fact, it is here in Michigan, in the heart of the "rust belt," that the impact of these extraordinary changes are most clearly seen. We know that the past decade was a period of great difficulty for our state. Industries of great economic importance to our nation, such as steel and automobiles, have fallen victim to intense competition from abroad. Plants have closed. We still have many people chronically unemployed or underemployed.

There are many indicators of the impact of this transition on our state. Over the past decade Michigan has slipped badly in its ranking among the states in several key indicators of the quality of life. We now rank:

30th in per capita income;

41st in overall employment;

- 48th in business climate;
- 48th in high school graduation rates;
- 50th in return on federal tax dollars.

Of course, we still rank near the top in some things. For example, we rank:

- 14th in teenage unemployment rate;
- 13th in incarceration rate (and rising rapidly);
- 13th in percentage of children in poverty;
- 12th in property tax burden;
- 10th in infant mortality;
- 4th in public aid recipients;
- 1st in mortality from major disease.

There is still one additional category of indicators of some concern. These reflect our willingness to invest in the future. Michigan ranks:

- 37th in support of higher education per student;
- 45th in support of higher education during the 1980s;
- 43rd in state support of K-12 education.

It is clear that the State of Michigan is in the midst of a profound transition from an industrial economy based upon the abundance of natural resources, unskilled labor, and—to some degree—constrained, slowly moving domestic markets, to a knowledge-based

economy, characterized by intensely competitive world markets, rapid change, and--most important of all--educated people and their ideas.

This has not been--and will not be--an easy transition to make. The truth is that the outcome is still very much in doubt! Whether we will emerge from this transition as a world economic leader once again--with a strong, prosperous, albeit new, economy producing jobs and improving our quality of life--or whether we will fail to heed the warnings, to make the investments and sacrifices necessary today for strength and prosperity tomorrow, and become an economic backwater in the century ahead--that is the real choice before us.

It is clear that we face a watershed, a fork in the road ahead. My central theme is that education, broadly defined, will be the pivotal issue in determining which of these two alternative futures will be Michigan's--and America's. Indeed, I am absolutely convinced that the dominant issue of the 1990s will be the development of our human resources. Previous economic transformations have been closely associated with major public investment and infrastructure such as railroads, and highways, and electrical networks. However, in the upcoming economic transition an equivalent infrastructure will be an educated population. Hence, the actions we must take today and the investments we make must clearly be in our people if we are to enable ourselves to emerge from this remarkable transition as a prosperous state with the quality of life we have known throughout our history.

Keys to the Future

Years ago our parents stepped up to their responsibilities by sacrificing to give us an

opportunity for a better life through education. Now it is our generation's turn to take the baton and run the next lap. Today we are being called upon to demonstrate a similar commitment to our children, to the next generation, and to the future.

But here I know I am preaching to the faithful. For if there has been one common thread in the history of Detroit, of Michigan, it is the faith in the power of education. People from every ethnic background have shared that fundamental and abiding faith. Generation after generation, they have struggled and sacrificed, no matter how hard the way, no matter how steep the odds, no matter how great the sacrifice. They have done what they have had to do to educate their children, to build for them a better life than they themselves have had.

But I don't have to come here to this group to tell you about the importance of education. Indeed, many of you in the room here today are educators. And I don't have to come with dire warnings about the great challenges facing education in America today. You know these first hand and all too well. You know how many of our children are being cheated of their birthright, how many have been deprived of the opportunity for the education so necessary for their future.

As a nation we have been spending our children's future to pay for greedy consumption and quick fixes. Instead of investing in our schools, we have squandered our money on junk bonds and leveraged buy-outs, on pay-outs and write-offs to people who already have enough--or more than enough.

The dilemma facing our nation was brought home to me in a very frightening and convincing way at a recent conference with top leaders of Japan. We asked them, "What do you

think are America's greatest strengths and weaknesses?" They gave us an interesting reply. They said that America's greatest strength was our system of higher education. But then they said that our greatest weakness as a nation was public education at the primary and secondary level.

Quite a contrast! Quite a challenge!

Higher Education in America

These Japanese leaders were right about America's colleges and universities. They are indeed the strongest in the world, as evidenced by the great desire on the part of students throughout the world to attend our institutions. Furthermore, the State of Michigan has one of the strongest systems of higher education in the nation, including several of its finest universities: Wayne State University, Michigan State University, and our own University of Michigan. And, of course, this is because of the commitment and sacrifices of more than eight generations of Michigan citizens.

Perhaps the most impressive thing about higher education in Michigan has been the desire of our people to build outstanding universities with a public character, designed to fulfill the public interest; designed to provide, as one of our early Michigan presidents put it, "an uncommon education for the common man."

The fact that we are supported and sustained by the public carries with it a deep obligation to the people of this state. At the University of Michigan we accept this challenge, this public trust. We know we are privileged to serve the people of Michigan—not to serve just some of the people but to serve all of the people. We are working more intensely than ever before with Michigan's other public universities to serve the people of our state.

The University of Michigan's Commitment to the City of Detroit

As I said at the outset, the University of Michigan feels a particular responsibility to this city and its schools. After all, you are the city of our birth. We were founded in Detroit in 1817. Further, just as Detroit and the University of Michigan have been closely linked in the past, we believe it essential that we become more closely linked in the years ahead.

This is particularly important in the areas of K-12 education. In particular, we seek to cooperate and collaborate with the schools in Detroit to share our resources and our knowledge. You notice that I didn't say that we wanted to come in and reform the schools, to tell people what to do. I didn't say that we have the answers. We don't. What we do have are resources of people and ideas that we can share. And we have the determination to work together with the Detroit community to enrich the education of Detroit children.

Whether it is through the King-Chavez-Parks Program to bring students to our campuses, the Wade McCree Incentive Scholarship Program, the Detroit Compact, the DAPSEP program designed to encourage students to become interested in science and engineering careers, or the more than seventy individual projects the University is now engaged in with various Detroit schools, we seek to work with your schools to provide them with the tools that they need to assure each of their students the education so necessary for the 21st century.

And that is why today we are re-establishing our Admissions Office here in the Rackham Building.

It is full-time. It is permanent. It is a first step. Our very able new representative,

Gloria Taylor, will be working closely with schools, parents, and students every day. She will also help to connect people with all the other resources of the University. We will also have representatives of our Office of Financial Aid available as well as other staff who can help with admissions and also with developing programs of cooperation.

One of the most important tasks for our University representatives is to help Detroit students understand the educational opportunities available to them early enough in their school careers to make a difference in their sense of possibility, in their understanding of what they need to do for themselves, of where to get help and find mentors and guidance.

We need to get the word out that money is not the issue. Getting ready is the issue. The University of Michigan meets the full financial need of ALL Michigan students. We have special additional support available for minority and disadvantaged students. If a student works hard enough in school to be admitted to the University, they will be supported. But we also know that just letting students know the opportunity is there, is not enough. We also have to help them get ready to take advantage of that opportunity. As I said, individuals and units of the University are involved in more than seventy programs designed to help improve educational preparation and motivation of students in Detroit schools.

A Glance Backwards

Yet, while such partnerships are critical, it is also the case that the fundamental responsibility of the University is the education of students enrolled on our campuses. That is our primary mission. Let me also acknowledge that here our record is mixed, both for higher education in general and for the University of Michigan in particular.

Of course, by any ranking, we at Michigan provide one of the best educations available anywhere in the world, but we have not succeeded in making this marvelous education available to all. It has to be said forthrightly and honestly that we have failed to provide equal educational opportunity to many ethnic groups throughout much of our history. While the University has admitted minority and disadvantaged students from its earliest days, while graduates from many ethnic groups have earned degrees at the University, and while we have never had an official policy of discrimination, it is also true that you don't need to have an official policy to discriminate. What you need to have is an official policy and a plan if you want to overcome discrimination because its effects are so deeply rooted in our society.

And the fact is that for too long our universities did not have a plan for enrolling students and hiring faculty from underrepresented minority groups. There was unofficial but real racism and discrimination. We were often blind to the pain of campus life for those who were in some way different from the dominant culture of the time. It was clear that our universities were simply not responsive to the remarkable change occurring in the population of this nation.

The Michigan Mandate

That is why in recent years the University of Michigan has set out on a new course to better respond to the extraordinary diversity of both our nation and the world. We are trying to change our makeup and our culture to bring all ethnic groups into the life of our institution. People sometimes ask me why the University has made this commitment to change, why I have made this change a cornerstone of my presidency. The reasons are simple:

First and foremost, it is morally the right thing to do.

Second, we see this commitment as the cornerstone of our capacity to serve a changing nation and a changing world. America is rapidly evolving into one of the most diverse, multicultural societies on earth. The America of the 21st century will be a nation without a dominant ethnic majority; it will become a nation of minorities. To serve this changing nation, institutions such as the University of Michigan must also change.

And third, we are convinced that for the University to achieve excellence in its fundamental missions of teaching and scholarship, it seems clear we must reflect the growing diversity of America and the world around us among our people and our activities.

Over the past three years we have been developing and committing ourselves to this end, to a new agenda we call the Michigan Mandate. Some of you may have heard of it. Many of you are a part of it. The fundamental idea of the Michigan Mandate is that the University of Michigan must become a leader known for the racial and ethnic diversity of its faculty, students, and staff. We must become a leader in creating a multicultural community that will be a model for higher education and a model for society at large. We don't believe we can serve this state and this nation unless our campus reflects the strengths, perspectives, talents, and experiences of people of color in everything that we do.

But we know the Michigan Mandate is not by itself a magic cure. It is not going to change our University overnight. Instead, it is a strategic plan that sets a direction and points to a destination. The Michigan Mandate has evolved over these past three years through

literally hundreds of meetings such as this, seeking advice and assistance from people inside and outside the University.

Signs of Progress

Today I can report to you that the Michigan Mandate is starting to work. From top to bottom University decisions are now being made with goals of diversity as a priority. In fact, across the nation other universities are using the Michigan Mandate as a guide in their own planning.

There are many signs of progress this Fall, and this seems to me to be exactly the right occasion to note our most recent data.

1. Our fall statistics now reveal that we have the largest number of students of color, 6,044, in our history, corresponding to 18.2 percent of our enrollment. This represents a 39 percent increase in minority enrollments in the first three years of the Michigan Mandate.

2. Moreover, we now have the largest number of Black, Hispanic, Native American, and Asian students at all levels—undergraduate, graduate, and professional—in our history. For example, we have increased Black enrollments by 35 percent over the past three years to 2,358 students, representing 7.1 percent of our student body. Hispanic students have increased 56 percent to 1,055 or 3.2 percent of our student body.

3. In particular, we have had the most successful recruiting year in our history, with an increase in the past year alone in this year's freshman class of 35 percent Black, 39 percent Hispanic, and 23 percent Native American. In fact 22 percent of this year's freshman class are students of color.

4. At the graduate and professional level we have also seen remarkable progress: 46 percent increase in minority graduate students (55 percent increase in Black), 36 percent in minority professional students (53 percent Black). For example, our entering MBA class is 30 percent minority (20 percent Black).

5. Our graduation rates among students of color are among the best in the nation.

6. During the first three years of the Michigan Mandate we have added 128 new faculty of color to the University, including 62 African American faculty. We are ahead of schedule in our objective to double the number of faculty of color on our campus within the first five years of the Michigan Mandate.

But there are many other signs of progress, ranging from major growth in financial aid to students of color to major outreach programs to school systems in cities such as Detroit. We have now put into place the people, policies, and programs that will increase our representation for students of color at a rate that will make our University community fully representative of the national population during the 1990s.

By now, however, you may be asking yourself the question, "If they are making so much progress, why are we still reading about racial incidents on many of Michigan's university campuses?" The reason is that increasing the numbers of minority faculty, students, and staff is only the first step in the Michigan Mandate. If we only needed numbers, it would take great effort and resources, but with determination we could get there in a reasonable time.

But numbers are the easy part. We all know that you can have a lot of different people living in the same locale, working side-by-side,

shopping in the same stores, and going to the same classes. But that doesn't mean that you will have a community. Just increasing the numbers and mix of people doesn't mean that you will have mutual respect, that you can work toward common goals.

To have this you must have a new kind of community. And at the University of Michigan we are determined to seek the changes necessary to build this kind of community. This is the hard part of the task ahead of us.

Issues of Community

What we are seeing now on our campuses, I believe, are the birth pangs of this new type of community. Our universities are confronting one of the most painful and persistent problems in American history. Because now, even as America's population is becoming ever more diverse, it is also becoming ever more separated. Tragically, students coming to our campus today have grown up in communities that are separated by race and ethnic group, by nationality and belief, by occupational level and economic background.

Our communities and institutions have failed to create a sense of community or to provide the models for creative interaction that we need to build a new kind of society based on genuine mutual dependence, trust, and respect. The truth is that in America today it is on our university and college campuses that many students come together for the first time and are expected to live, work, and learn together. It is not surprising that they don't get along, that it is sometimes painful. It also isn't surprising that this shows up in the newspapers or on television.

This is the price higher education pays because it is one of the few institutions in our

society that is stepping up to the problem of racism and diversity in America. Yet, I believe that such a mission is our destiny—our mandate. Our campuses have become the crucibles in which the multicultural, multiracial, world cultures of 21st century America are being brewed!

You don't get change without pain. What we are experiencing are the first faltering steps forward. We are seeing the effects of increasing the number of students of color and the early stages of creating the new kind of community that is built on diversity. Our job is to educate the students, these world citizens of the 21st century, to inspire them and, if necessary, require them to respect each other and to learn to live together.

If the way ahead seems discouraging at times, we should remember that we are not the only society grappling with these problems of human failure. Historians tell us that group conflict, discrimination, prejudice, and oppression have been with us since the beginnings of human society. It is a tragic part of human character to reject others in order to define oneself. And we have only to look around us to see that such discrimination and prejudice exists in all parts of the world. We need only acknowledge the disgrace of apartheid in South Africa or the deep-rooted division between Muslims and Hindus, Jews and Arabs, Christians and Moslems, Catholics and Protestants. Nearly every country and every region is struggling with the same problems we face on our campuses, in our state, and across our nation.

But in today's world we cannot afford to tolerate racism and prejudice and discrimination any longer. We cannot live divided from one another. Our world has become one world. Our people must learn to accept our common humanity, our common fate. Just because a problem is old or widespread or complex or

difficult doesn't mean that we have an excuse to ignore it or avoid it. It may mean the job is harder to do. But I, for one, do not believe the task is impossible. Maybe it is the engineer in me that makes me hopeful, that makes me determined to try. We have to begin somewhere; we have to take a stand.

A Vision of the Future

At the University of Michigan we are trying to do just that. We believe we have a mandate to build a model of a learning community that thrives on the glorious and unique differences of our human heritage, which uses its common sense of values and objectives to bind itself together. We have set the highest goals for ourselves and our University.

I don't know if we can make this dream a reality during my presidency. I know that we will try. Of course, I also know that we will sometimes fail. We will take the wrong turn, stumble, lose our way at times, become confused. It is clear that we do not have all the answers. There is an old saying among engineers: If you never fail, you just haven't set your goals high enough. So a few missteps or detours won't bother me, as long as we hold to our basic ideals and direction. What will not change or falter is my personal determination to lead the University in a direction that serves all the people of our society. Of course, I know that our University can't accomplish its mandate alone. We are determined to do our part, but we also need your help, your support, and your understanding. And we ask you to join with us and others throughout this state in a commitment to provide the best possible education for every child, for every citizen—and a commitment to create the models of multicultural communities so necessary for the new century which lies ahead.

In years to come I hope our children can look back with pride and gratitude and say that in this time and at this place, the University of Michigan, the people of Michigan, and of the City of Detroit took a stand. They came together and worked together to build a new model of community for the good of the children.

I hope that we can say that we made a difference, that together we became a mighty force for change.

Nothing we do in our lives is more important than this.

Thank you very much.