

The Michigan Mandate:
Looking Back and Looking Forward

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Last week I had the opportunity to attend a summit meeting in Washington, drawing together the leaders of higher education, business, and government to discuss the next steps in responding to the recommendations of the Spellings Commission, on which I served.

While higher education in America remains a world leader in many respects, during the year-long hearings and deliberations of our Commission, we found ample evidence to suggest two areas of growing concern: social justice and global competitiveness:

- **SOCIAL JUSTICE:** For close to a century now, access to higher education has been a principal – some would say *the* principal – means of achieving social mobility. Much of our nation’s inventiveness has been centered in colleges and universities, as has our commitment to a kind of democracy that only an educated and informed citizenry makes possible. Yet today too many Americans just aren’t getting the education that they need – and that they deserve.
- **GLOBAL COMPETITIVENESS:** The world is becoming tougher, more competitive, less forgiving of wasted resources and squandered opportunities. In tomorrow’s world a nation’s wealth will derive from its capacity to educate, attract, and retain citizens who are able to work smarter and learn faster – making educational achievement ever more important both for individuals and for society writ large. Yet again numerous recent studies suggest that today’s American college students are not really learning what they need to learn. As Derek Bok summarized it, the education provided today by many of our colleges and universities is “not good enough and getting worse.”

More specifically, we found that access to higher education in the United States is unduly limited by the complex interplay of inadequate preparation, lack of information about college opportunities, and persistent financial barriers, determined all too frequently by socioeconomic circumstances.

- More to the point, of every 100 American students starting high school today, 68 will graduate, 40 will continue on to college, and 17 will earn a college degree within 10 years—an absolutely terrifying statistic compared to the progress of many other nations in recent years.

- Only 8% of the bottom quartile will graduate from a four-year institution, compared to 75% of the top quartile.
- In fact, the least academically qualified students from the highest quartile are far more likely to attend college than the most academically talented students from the lowest economic quartile.

The Commission was especially concerned about the growing gaps in college access and success for ethnic and racial minorities. This is particularly troubling since one of the most enduring characteristics of American higher education has been its ever-broadening commitment to serve all the constituents of our increasingly diverse society.

- For over 30 years, America's colleges and universities have taken special steps to provide the opportunities for higher education to those elements of our society hindered by discrimination or economic means.
- Such broad-based participation is even more critical today, as we become ever more dependent upon educated people and their ideas, skills, and talents in an ever more competitive global, knowledge-driven economy—a flattening world.
- Yet today many in our society are challenging, in both the courts and through referendum, long-accepted programs such as affirmative action and equal opportunity aimed at expanding access to higher education to underrepresented communities and diversifying our campuses.

As some of you know, I was a named defendant in two landmark cases that ended up before the United States Supreme Court in 2003.

- Actually I was the “et. al.” in *Gratz vs. Bollinger, et. al.*
- (I might note that this was an interesting ploy by the plaintiff lawyers, who attempted to intimidate university leaders by naming them personally as defendants rather than simply suing the institution.

- Since this was a class action suit, and during my presidency probably 200,000 applicants had been denied admission, I had a particular interest in the outcomes of these cases. But I also have many scars from waging battles on behalf of equity and social justice, so this was really nothing new!)

But I had another interest in these cases beyond being a defendant in these important cases.

- During my presidency we launched an effort during the 1980s and 1990s on our campuses called the Michigan Mandate aimed at transforming the University of Michigan into an institution that not only reflected and served the great diversity of our nation, but clearly established itself as a leader in this commitment.
- The Mandate proved remarkably successful in not only doubling the number of underrepresented minorities among our students and faculty, but had achieved some of the highest minority graduation rates and success in faculty promotion and tenure decisions in the nation, while moving minority faculty and staff into positions of leadership and influence throughout the University.
- I suspect it was the success of this effort that made Michigan a high profile target for those conservative groups which were attempting to challenge the methods higher education has used for the past several decades to achieve diverse campuses and provide educational opportunities for underserved populations.
- By the way, since the various reports on the Michigan Mandate have mysteriously disappeared from the University archives, I've taken the liberty of scanning both the original Michigan Mandate as well as its seven-year review and putting them on our website so that anyone can read them or print off copies.

<http://milproj.dc.umich.edu>

This afternoon I would like to do a bit of Monday morning quarterbacking,

- Assessing both the implications of the Supreme Court decisions on the Michigan cases that have firmly established that "diversity in higher education is an interest of the state" and that to achieve it, some consideration can be given to race,

- And then to address the question of “where to next?”, particularly after the passage of Proposition 2 which has banned public institutions in Michigan from giving preferential treatment to groups or individuals based on their race, gender, color, ethnicity, or national origin.

But first, it seems useful to explain just why the University of Michigan ended up leading the charge for higher education on this important issue.

Michigan's History

From its earliest days of our university, the mission has been to provide “an uncommon education for the common man”, as articulated by one of our early presidents, James Angell.

- Here the reference was to the working class, since the colonial colleges of the East were primarily concerned with educating the elite.
- But this definition of “common man” rapidly broadened to include African Americans and women in the 1860s.
- At a time when our state was hostile to immigrants, the University took great pride in the international nature of its student body.
- In fact, Michigan awarded a Ph.D. to the first Japanese citizen, who returned to play a key role in the founding of Tokyo University.
- During the 20th Century, when Jewish students faced quota barriers in Eastern universities, they came west to places like Ann Arbor and Madison, where they were welcomed.

Of course, this long-standing commitment of the University both to diversity and educational opportunity was sometimes not well received either by state or federal governments.

- But fortunately, the University's unusual constitutional autonomy and its rather weak reliance on state appropriations gave it the control of its own destiny to embrace diversity as a key mission.
- At Michigan we have been convinced that our university's capacity to serve our society, our nation, and the world successfully in the challenging times before us would depend in large part on our ability to achieve and sustain a campus community recognized for its racial, cultural, and ethnic diversity. Indeed, our diversity has been a cornerstone of our efforts to achieve excellence in teaching, research, and service.

The Michigan Mandate

Although the University sustained its commitment to diversity throughout the 20th century, its progress reflected many of the challenges facing our society during the years of discrimination based upon race, religion, and gender.

- Many were the times we took one step forward toward greater diversity, only to slide two steps back through later inattention.
- The student disruptions of the 1960s and 1970s triggered new efforts by the University to reaffirm its commitments to affirmative action and equal opportunity, but again progress was limited and a new wave of concern and protests hit the campus during the mid-1980s, just prior to the appointment of our administration.

In assessing this situation as first provost and then president of the University, I concluded that although the University had approached the challenge of serving an increasingly diverse population with the best of intentions,

- It simply had not developed and executed a plan capable of achieving sustainable results.
- More significantly, we believed that achieving our goals for a diverse campus would require a very major change in the institution itself.

It was the long-term strategic focus of our planning that proved to be critical.

- The University would have to leave behind many reactive and uncoordinated efforts that had characterized its past and move toward a more strategic approach designed to achieve long-term systemic change.
- In particular, we foresaw the limitations of focusing only on affirmative action; that is, on access, retention, and representation.
- We believed that without deeper, more fundamental institutional change these efforts by themselves would inevitably fail—as they had throughout the 1970s and 1980s.

The challenge was to persuade the university community that there was a real stake for everyone in seizing the moment to chart a more diverse future.

- More people needed to believe that the gains to be achieved through diversity would more than compensate for the necessary sacrifices.
- The first and most important 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 future.
- As we moved ahead, we began to refer to the plan as *The Michigan Mandate: A Strategic Linking of Academic Excellence and Social Diversity*.

The mission and goals of the Michigan Mandate were stated quite simply:

- To recognize that diversity and excellence are complementary and compelling goals for the University and to make a firm commitment to their achievement.
- To commit to the recruitment, support, and success of members of historically underrepresented groups among our students, faculty, staff, and leadership.
- To build on our campus an environment that sought, nourished, and sustained diversity and pluralism and that valued and respected the dignity and worth of every individual.

A series of carefully focused strategic actions was developed to move the University toward these objectives.

- These strategic actions were framed by the values and traditions of the University, an understanding of our unique culture characterized by a high degree of faculty and unit freedom and autonomy, and animated by a highly competitive and entrepreneurial spirit.

The strategy was both complex and all-pervasive, involving not only a considerable commitment of resources (e.g., fully-funding all financial aid for all minority graduate students) as well as some innovative programs. A good example here was our Target of Opportunity program for recruiting minority faculty.

- Traditionally, university faculties have been driven by a concern for academic specialization within their respective disciplines.
- This is fundamentally laudable and certainly has fostered the exceptional strength and disciplinary character that we see in universities across the country; however, it also can be constraining.
- Too often in recent years the University had seen faculty searches that were literally “replacement” searches rather than “enhancement” searches.
- To achieve the goals of the Michigan Mandate, the University had to free itself from the constraints of this traditional perspective.
- Therefore, the central administration sent out the following message to the academic units: be vigorous and creative in identifying minority teachers/scholars who can enrich the activities of your unit.
- Do not be limited by concerns relating to narrow specialization; do not be concerned about the availability of a faculty slot within the unit.
- The principal criterion for the recruitment of a minority faculty member was whether the individual could enhance the department. If so, resources were made available to recruit that person to the University of Michigan.
- Note there was another shoe to drop in this effort. Since we did not have any new resources to launch this program, instead we simply wrote out an I.O.U. each time we authorized a new faculty hire under the Target of Opportunity program. At the end of the year we would then add up these I.O.U.s and subtract the total off the top of the next year’s budget, whatever the amount.

- In effect, this budget strategy amounted to shifting dollars away from those academic units that sat on their hands on diversity initiatives to reward those who embraced the goals. (E.g., it took Internal Medicine several years to realize that their inactivity was transferring a chunk of their budget each year to aggressive programs such as English Language and Literature!)

A brief summary of efforts in other areas is provided below:

Students

Actions

- Created pipeline programs for pre-college students across UM and within each school and college (e.g., DAPCEP for Engineering)
 - Wade McCree Incentive Scholarship
 - King/Chavez/Parks Program
 - Summer programs
 - College Day visitation
- Created Office of Academic Multicultural Initiatives
- Provided tuition to all Native American students from Michigan.
- Sample UG programs
 - Undergraduate Research Opportunity Program
 - 21st Century Program
 - CRLT Programs
- Fully funding minority graduate student support
 - Rackham Graduate School Merit Fellowship Program
- Tried to tap grass-roots creativity and commitment using \$1 million a year of Presidential Initiatives Fund to fund competitive proposals from faculty and student groups.

Results

- Enrollments:
 - 83% increase in students of color (to 28%)
 - 57% increase in AA (to 2,715 or 9.1%)
 - 126% of Latinos

- 100% increase in Native Americans
- Graduation rates for African Americans highest among public universities.
- UM ranked 27th in nation in total number of minority BA/BS degrees
 - “ 8th for M.S. degrees
 - “ 7th for Ph.D. degrees
 - “ 1st among non HBCU’s
- Graduate education
 - Increased minority fellowships by 118%
 - Of 734 Rackham Fellows in 1994, 51% were African American,
 - 29% were Latino
- Professional Schools:
 - Business: 11% AA, 28% color
 - Medicine: 10% AA, 39% color
 - Law: 21% color

Faculty

Actions:

- Target of Opportunity Program
- Faculty Development (Faculty Awards Program for minority faculty)
- Cluster hiring
- Creating a welcoming and supportive culture (networks, centers, surveys)
- Enlarging candidate pool by increasing PhD enrollments

Result

- +62% for African Americans (128)
- +117% for Latinos (52)
- +75% for Native Americans (7)
- Senior academic leadership (URM): from 14 to 25

Staff

Actions:

- Demanded accountability in hiring and promotion
- Human Resources and Affirmative Action programs
- Consultation and Conciliation Services

Results:

- Executive Officers (50% are African American)
- Top managers: +100% (to 10%)
- P&A: +80 (from 449 to 816)

More Generally

- Building University-wide commitments
- Office of Minority Affairs, Vice-Provost for Minority Affairs
- Demanding accountability
 - Included in compensation review
 - Included in budget review
 - Included in appointment review

The Michigan Mandate was one of those efforts that required leadership on the front lines by the president, since only by demonstrating commitment from the top could we demand and achieve the necessary commitments throughout the institution.

By 1995 Michigan could point to significant progress in achieving diversity. By every measure, the Michigan Mandate was a remarkable success, moving the University far beyond our original goals of a more diverse campus.

- The representation of underrepresented students and faculty more than doubled over the decade of the effort.
 - Minority student enrollments rose to 28%.
 - African-American student enrollments to 9.1%
 - Our leadership was far more diverse. In fact, when I stepped down as president, 5 of the University's 10 executive officers were African American, including my successor Homer Neal.

- But, perhaps more significantly, the success of underrepresented minorities at the University improved even more remarkably, with graduation rates rising to highest among public universities, promotion and tenure success of minority faculty members becoming comparable to their majority colleagues, and a growing number of appointments of minorities to leadership positions in the University.
- The campus climate not only became far more accepting and supportive of diversity, but students and faculty began to come to Michigan because of its growing reputation for a diverse campus.
- And, perhaps most significantly, as the campus became more racially and ethnically diverse, the quality of the students, faculty, and academic programs of the University increased to their highest level in history. This latter fact seemed to reinforce our contention that the aspirations of diversity and excellence were not only compatible but, in fact, highly correlated.

The Michigan Agenda for Women

Even while pursuing the racial diversity goals of the Michigan Mandate, we realized we could not ignore another glaring inequity in campus life.

- If we meant to embrace diversity in its full meaning, we had to attend to the long-standing concerns of women faculty, students, and staff.
- Here, once again, it took time—and considerable effort by many women colleagues (including my wife and daughters)—to educate me and the rest of my administration to the point where we began to understand that the university simply had not succeeded in including and empowering women as full and equal partners in all aspects of its life and leadership.

Many of our concerns derived from the extreme concentration of women in positions of lower status and power—as students, lower-pay staff, and junior faculty.

- The most effective lever for change might well be a rapid increase in the number of women holding positions of high status, visibility, and power.
- This would not only change the balance of power in decision-making, but it would also change the perception of who and what matters in the university.
- Finally, we needed to bring university policies and practices into better alignment with the needs and concerns of women students in a number of areas including campus safety, student housing, student life, financial aid, and childcare.

Like the Michigan Mandate, the vision was again both simple yet compelling: that by the year 2000 the university would become the leader among American universities in promoting and achieving the success of women as faculty, students, and staff.

- Again, as president, I took a highly personal role in this effort, meeting with hundreds of groups on and off campus, to listen to their concerns and invite their participation in the initiative.

- Rapidly there was again significant progress on many fronts for women students, faculty, and staff, including the appointment of a number of senior women faculty and administrators as deans and executive officers, improvement in campus safety, and improvement of family care policies and child care resources.
- Getting women into senior leadership positions was critical—appointing the first women deans of LS&A, Rackham, and the Vice Provost for Health Sciences, leading to the appointment of Michigan’s first woman provost and later its first woman president.

The university also took steps to eliminate those factors that prevented other groups from participating fully in its activities.

- For example, we extended our anti-discrimination policies to encompass sexual orientation and extended staff benefits and housing opportunities to same-sex couples.

We had become convinced that the university had both a compelling interest in and responsibility 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, and geographical background.

The Battle Continues

But, of course, this story does not end with the successful achievements of the Michigan Mandate in 1996 when I stepped down as president.

- Beginning first with litigation in Texas (the Hopwood decision) and then successful referendum efforts in California and Washington, conservative groups such as the Center for Individual Rights began to attack affirmative action policies such as the use of race in college admissions.
- Perhaps because of Michigan's success in the Michigan Mandate, the University soon became a target for those groups seeking to reverse affirmative action with two cases filed against the University in 1997, one challenging the admissions policies of undergraduates, and the second challenging those in our Law School.
- Although I had been succeeded by Lee Bollinger by that time, I was still named personally as a defendant in one of the cases, although I had little influence on the strategies to defend both cases to the level of the Supreme Court, aside from giving several days of depositions and having all of records of my presidency digitized, archived, and posted publicly by our university history library.

At Michigan, it was important that we "carry the water" for the rest of higher education defend the value of diversity and the actions necessary to achieve it.

- Throughout our history, our university has been committed to extending more broadly educational opportunities to the working class, to women, to racial and ethnic minorities, and to students from every state and nation.
- It was natural for us to lead yet another battle for equity and social justice.

Yet there is a certain irony here.

- Never in our design or execution of the Michigan Mandate, Michigan Agenda for Women, and other diversity efforts did we ever consider admissions policies to be particularly relevant to the strategy.

- To be sure, our admissions policies contained affirmative action provisions that were consistent with those used elsewhere in universities with selective admissions; we carefully instructed our staff to make certain they were also consistent with the law and ongoing court rulings.
- But we simply didn't believe that tinkering with admissions policies was the key to achieving diversity.
- Hence it was ironic that these rather standard policies used throughout higher education should be the target of those groups seeking to challenge our efforts rather than some of our more innovative and effective programs.

Although the Supreme Court decisions were split, supporting the use of race in the admissions policies of our Law School and opposing the formula-based approach used for undergraduate admissions, the most important ruling in both cases was, in the words of the court:

- "Student body diversity is a compelling state interest that can justify the use of race in university admission"
- "When race-based action is necessary to further a compelling governmental interest, such action does not violate the constitutional guarantee of equal protection so long as the narrow-tailoring requirement is also satisfied."

Hence, the Supreme Court decisions on the Michigan cases reaffirmed those policies and practices long used by those selective colleges and universities throughout the United State.

- But more significantly, it reaffirmed both the importance of diversity in higher education and established the principle that, appropriately designed, race could be used as a factor in programs aimed at achieving diverse campuses.
- Hence the importance of diversity in higher education and the affirmation of methods to achieve it was firmly established by the highest court of the land. We had won. Or so we thought...

Yet while an important battle had been won with the Supreme Court ruling, we soon learned that the war for diversity in higher education was far from over.

- As university lawyers across the nation began to ponder the court ruling, they persuaded their institutions to accept a very narrow interpretation of the Supreme Court decisions as the safest course.
- Actually, this pattern began to appear at the University of Michigan during the early stages of the litigation process. Even as the university launched the expensive legal battle to defend the use of race in college admissions following my presidency, it throttled back many of the effective policies and programs created by the Michigan Mandate, in part out of concern these might complicate the litigation battle.
- As a consequence, the enrollment of underrepresented minorities began almost immediately to drop at Michigan, eventually declining from 1996 to 2002 by almost 25% overall and by as much as 50% in some of our professional schools (Law, Medicine, Business).
- Although there was an effort to rationalize this by suggesting that the publicity given the litigation over admissions policies was discouraging minority applicants, there is little doubt in my mind that it was the dismantling of the Michigan Mandate that really set us back.

Since the Supreme Court decision,

- Many universities have begun to back away from programs aimed at recruitment, financial aid, and academic enrichment for minority undergraduate students, either eliminating entirely such programs or opening them up to non-minority students from low-income households.
- Threats of further litigation by conservative groups has intensified this retrenchment.
- As a consequence, the enrollments of under-represented minorities are dropping again in many universities across the nation (including Michigan).

I must say that after the years of effort in building a diverse campus at Michigan and successfully defending our actions all the way to the Supreme Court, it would be tragic indeed if the decisions in the Michigan case caused more harm than benefit to the cause of diversity.

- Imagine our frustration in fearing that rather than advancing the cause of social justice, our efforts have simply empowered the lawyers on our campuses to block effective efforts to broaden educational opportunity.

But of course, in Michigan we faced even further challenges:

- In 2006 Michigan voters approved a constitutional referendum to ban the use of affirmative action in public institutions similar to that of California's Proposition 209 (headed up by the same players such as Ward Connerly, former Regent of UC).
- This referendum will prevent Michigan colleges and universities from using the narrowly tailored prescriptions of the 2003 Supreme Court decision.
- It is likely that the University of Michigan will see a rapid decline in campus diversity similar to that which has occurred in California.
- Yet it also seems clear that many people today believe that, despite the importance of diversity, racial preferences are contrary to American values of individual rights and the policy of color blindness that animated the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

The Road Ahead

As I noted earlier, the uses of affirmative action (and programs that involved racial preference) actually were not high on the agenda of the Michigan Mandate. Rather our success involved commitment, engagement, and accountability for results.

Yet there is ample evidence today from states such as California and Texas that a restriction to race-neutral policies will drastically limit the ability of elite programs and institutions to reflect diversity in any meaningful way.

As former UC President Richard Atkinson noted in a recent address in Ann Arbor,

- “Proposition 209 asked the University of California to attract a student body that reflects the state’s diversity while ignoring two of the major constituents of this diversity—race and ethnicity.
- A decade later, the legacy of this contradictory mandate is clear.
- Despite enormous efforts, we have failed badly to achieve the goal of a student body that encompasses California’s diverse population.
- The evidence suggests that without attention to race and ethnicity this goal will ultimately recede into impossibility.”

To be sure, states facing affirmative action bans such as California, Texas, Washington, and Florida have tried many alternatives.

- Some have simply chosen to admit the top percentage from each high school, effectively depending on the segregation of secondary schools systems to lead to the admission of minority students.
- Others have used surrogates such as family income or first generation college students.

- However, the available evidence suggests such alternatives may not suffice. Income-based strategies are unlikely to be good substitutes for race-sensitive admissions policies because there are simply too few blacks and Latinos from poor families who have strong enough academic records to qualify for admission to highly selective institutions.

How About Restructuring Admissions?

- Perhaps to turn this around and first ask which of our current policies (or mindsets) already discriminate against certain communities.
- For example, it is well known that standardized admissions tests such as the SAT, ACT and LSAT are of limited value in evaluating “merit” for underrepresented minorities (as established by a former Michigan faculty member, Claude Steele).
- There is extensive empirical data indicating that experiences tied to one’s racial and ethnic identity can artificially depress standardized test performance.

End Runs

- Perhaps we should follow the lead of several other public universities and utilize independent external bodies such as our alumni association to become more engaged in recruiting and supporting underrepresented minority students, since these are not subject to Prop 2.
- Or perhaps we should launch another major statewide civic education program to build support for reversing Prop 2 (and similar ballot initiatives).

UM Diversity Blueprints Effort

- Recently the UM Diversity Blueprints effort has come up with a series of important recommendations, including:
 - Establish fully coordinated educational and community outreach and engagement activities, expanding partnerships with K-12 schools.

- Maintain and improve student admissions, conversion, and retention practices within the new legal parameters, stressing holistic review processes for applicants that measure student potential.
 - Address UM's interpersonal climate by providing structured interactions, facilitated dialogue, and opportunities to work across boundaries, making intercultural skills and diverse encounters part of the work and learning environment for everyone at UM.
 - Dismantle structural impediments and increase structural support for faculty, staff, and students, especially those working on diversity-related issues, simplifying and bolstering the complex terrain of financial aid and providing additional resources to individuals, schools, and communities that make the goal of a Michigan education more possible.
 - Ensure campus-wide buy-in, engagement and transparency with diversity efforts.
 - Increase accountability and sustainability mechanisms for all units and departments across the university.
 - Continue to advance these goals.
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- Yet ironically, essentially all of these activities were elements of the original Michigan Mandate effort during the late 1980s and early 1990s. Hence it is fair to ask the question: "Just when were they halted...and why?"

 - In fact, it is probably also fair to ask whether any of the members of the Diversity Blueprints effort had ever read the original Michigan Mandate documents and the follow-up studies of the success of that program.

A Broader View

It is clearly the case that many today believe that despite the importance of diversity, racial preferences are contrary to American values of individual rights and the policy of color-blindness that animated the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

- Atkinson suggests that we need a new strategy that recognizes the continuing corrosive force of racial inequality but does not stop there. We need a strategy grounded in the broad American tradition of opportunity because opportunity is a value that Americans understand and support.
- We need a strategy which makes it clear that our society has a stake in ensuring that every American has an opportunity to succeed—and that every American, in turn, has a stake in equality of opportunities and social justice in our nation.

Let me mention a broader theme that might suggest such a strategy.

- There is growing recognition that we have entered an age of knowledge in a global economy, in which educated people, the knowledge they produce, and the innovation and entrepreneurial skills they possess have become the keys to economic prosperity, social-well being, and national security.
- Moreover, education, knowledge, innovation, and entrepreneurial skills have also become the primary determinants of one's personal standard of living and quality of life.
- Democratic societies—and state and federal governments—must accept the responsibility to provide all of their citizens with the educational and training opportunities they need, throughout their lives, whenever, wherever, and however they need it, at high quality and at affordable prices.

Perhaps it is a time akin to 1862 when President Lincoln signed the Morrill Act to create the land-grant colleges to serve an industrial nation,

- or in 1944 when President Roosevelt signed the G. I. Bill, or in 1965 when President Johnson signed the Higher Education Act. Perhaps it is time to create an analog to the Land Grant Act or G I Bill for the 21st century–
- Perhaps it is time for a *Learn Grant Act* that would provide every citizen with an entitlement for as much education as they need, wish, or are capable of, throughout their lives.
- Government leaders could define and embrace a vision for the nation’s future that provides citizens with the lifelong learning opportunities and skills they need to live prosperous, rewarding, and secure lives in this world.
- The theme would be universal life-long educational opportunity as a fundamental right—a CIVIL right– to all Americans, not a privilege for the fortunate few.

Actually, this past year we managed to persuade our colleagues on the Spellings Commission to include this as one of our major recommendations.

In fact, I spent much of last week with 300 leaders of higher education, business, and government to get the necessary buy-in and begin to develop the detailed action plan to move this agenda ahead.

One Final and Very Personal Observation

At Michigan we remain absolutely convinced that there is a very strong linkage between academic excellence and campus diversity.

- We have both demonstrated and fought to sustain this bond.

The same can be said for the dependence of our nation's prosperity and security upon social diversity and broad representation in all aspects of American life.

- Indeed, in an increasingly diverse world, it is hard to imagine how we can flourish as a nation without tapping the talent, the wisdom, the experience, and the cultures of all of our citizens.
- We are a great multicultural nation—and we must reflect that extraordinary diversity in every aspect of our national character.

Yet, speaking as a former leader of a major university, let me caution that defending principles such as equity and social justice can be hazardous to one's health, not to mention one's career.

- Not only are they usually controversial, but they also frequently demand leadership on the front lines.
- I firmly believe that only a leader who is willing to carry the flag into battle can move such complex agendas ahead, albeit at considerable risk.
- This is perhaps the reason why so few institutions make progress in complex areas such as social diversity.

There is an old saying among university presidents cautioning them to take great care in choosing the ditch where they fight from, since that battle may be their last.

- But sometimes risking one's tenure is necessary to serve the institution and sustain one's personal integrity.
- Diversity was clearly such an issue for me.

- Although Michigan's efforts to achieve diversity received the strong support of most members of the university community, these efforts were not accomplished without considerable resistance.

Yet I also believe today that I would choose to fight in this ditch again, even knowing the likely personal toll it would take.

- There are few causes that are clearly worthy of such sacrifices.
- Diversity, equity, and social justice are certainly among them.