

Conferring of Honorary Degrees

Welcome to the University of Michigan's Spring Commencement

On behalf of the University's Board of Regents,

I would like to extend a special welcome to

Our First Lady, Hillary Rodham Clinton,

To our distinguished honorary degree recipients,

And to all our graduates and their families.

Commencement is one of those moments

when we realize the awesome responsibility

before today's universities.

You graduates before us today must take up leadership

in a society vastly different from the one we know now.

Our universities face the challenge of preparing you for that future

with only the dimmest sense of what you will need to know

or have to do, and even be

-- in that future world

where the only constant

is accelerating change

and the the only anchor

the accumulated wisdom and values of human

experience

that we are able to pass on to you

during you all-too-brief years in Ann Arbor.

Of course, the most important learning in a university

does not always take place in the classroom.

The conferring of honorary degrees here at Michigan,

gives us a wonderful opportunity

to teach by example--

to hold before our graduates

the example of women and men

whose lives and accomplishments exemplify
the highest aspirations and values of our University.

We seek out people who have made our world a better place,
people of talent who have applied their talents
wisely and generously
to improve the quality of human life.

This year, I think you graduates are very fortunate
in the models we set before them.

You will carry away with you
the example of five individuals who,
each in her or his own way,
has helped to shape our times.

Let us then turn to the conferring of honorary degrees.

By authority of the State of Michigan
vested in the Board of Regents
we shall now confer the degrees honoris causa
which have been recommended by the faculties
and authorized by the Regents of the University.

Members of the Board of Regents will present
the honorary degree recipients.

Regent Rebecca McGowan...

Recognition of Graduates

I confer upon each of you the degree for which
you have been nominated by your faculties,
admitting you to its rights, honors, and privileges,
and charging you with its responsibilities.

On behalf of the Board of Regents
and the entire University community
I congratulate you.

Please be seated.

Commencement is generally regarded as a time
to recognize, to celebrate,
the achievements of our graduates.

But, of course, Commencement is really not just for the graduates...
rather it is to honor the real heroes of this day,
those who made these academic achievements possible,
the parents and the families of those before us.

You, the families, are the ones who have cared and worked and
provided; you have loved and hoped, helped and sacrificed to
bring these students to this moment.

The selflessness that parenthood requires might seem a bit out-
of-fashion of late.

But all the while, families like yours just kept going, struggling
and striving to give your children, and through them, our
society, a better future.

Feel proud. This is really your day.

You have earned the gratitude and respect of everyone in this stadium.

Would all of the family members of today's graduates please rise and let us show our appreciation.

Thank you.

A Final Word to the Graduates:

Before concluding, I would like to address a few words directly to the graduates.

It is interesting that in our society, one's college years have as much impact as anything that will follow in our lives.

They put you on course to your career.
Many of the friends you have made will remain close throughout your lives.
Indeed, many of you have met your lifetime companions in college.

You should think of your college experiences as an anchor, a tie to the knowledge and values that you can depend on for guidance and inspiration as your life unfolds.

Further--at least as a graduate of Michigan--you will now always have something to do on Saturday weekends in the fall...
...or on New Year's Day...
...or on the first weekend in April!

Most of you will be leaving Ann Arbor now.

But I suspect you will find yourself returning
time and time again.

One of the most moving moments in the cycle of campus life comes in early September when the Ann Arbor merchants put up banners along State Street and South U welcoming back students at the beginning of the fall term with the simple phrase, "Welcome Home."

In a very real sense, this University has become forever your home... you will forever be a member of the Michigan family.

Today you join that long line of maize and blue that stretches back over eight generations and is now almost 400,000 strong-- one out of every 700 Americans.

And if there is a single common theme that seems to characterize the lives of Michigan graduates, it is the theme conveyed by that phrase in our fight song, "The Victors"... "Hail, hail to Michigan, the leaders and best "

You inherit a tradition of leadership...and excellence
...but tempered with an unusual commitment
to both intellectual and humane values.

Mrs. Clinton, we want to express our pride and gratitude that you have honored our graduates and our University with your visit today and for allowing us to recognize your achievements.

We are delighted to welcome you to the Michigan family of Maize and Blue.

Before we invite you to join with us in singing that famous Michigan fight song, "The Victors", and our alma mater,

Our students felt it appropriate to present you with proper attire...

Let me now ask all of our graduates
...their families and friends
...and the platform party to please stand.

To all of our graduates, our best wishes for health, happiness, and the satisfaction of a rewarding and meaningful life.

Congratulations,
God-speed...
and Go Blue!