

## Commitment to Pluralism

### Introduction:

It is imperative that the University both recognize

< - the importance of diversity and pluralism in its mission - and make a firm commitment to its achievement:

- i) Through the recruitment, development, and retention of minority students, faculty, staff, and leaders
- ii) And through the development of an environment of mutual understanding, sensitivity, and tolerance which not only tolerates diversity, but instead seeks and embraces it as an essential component of  
- **this institution.**

### Why?

#### 1. Social responsibility...

As a public institution, as a source of leaders of our society we have an obligation to provide equal opportunity for all components of our society... represented and underrepresented. Furthermore, we have an obligation to reach out and make a special effort to increase the participation of those racial, ethnic, and cultural groups who are not adequately represented among our students, faculty, and staff.

#### 2. Excellence

I am convinced that our ability to achieve excellence in teaching, scholarship, and service will be determined over time to a considerable degree by the diversity and pluralism of our campus community.

I firmly believe that we draw strength from diversity. Excellence and diversity are not only mutually compatible, in many ways they are reinforcing objectives.

#### 3. A national imperative

Pluralism has not only been, but will continue to be an ever important characteristic of American society. Universities have a particular obligation to develop the models of tolerance and understanding of a pluralistic society essential to the future of our nation.

#### 4. Human resources

Our nation simply cannot afford to waste the human talents of underrepresented minority groups.

### Clouds on the Horizon

Traditional source of S&E college students is declining

25%-30% falloff in HS graduates by 1992

Assuming that same fraction (4.8%) choose to enter S&E, and assuming constant demand (very conservative), there will be a cumulative shortfall of 700,000 by 2010!

Note: Composition of college age population is also changing...

By 2020 30% will be composed of Blacks and hispanics... students who have not traditionally chosen S&E careers.

The fastest growing pool of youths has the lowest participation rate in college and the highest dropout rate in high schools -- not to mention the least likelihood to study science and math.

NOTE: We must make special efforts to expand participation by these groups...not just because that is good social policy, but because we cannot afford to waste their talents!

### Michigan's Efforts in Affirmative Action

In 1970s Michigan assumed a leadership role in higher

education with its firm commitment to achieving appropriate representation of blacks and other minority groups among its students, faculty, and staff.

Over the next decade, UM developed and implemented an array of programs aimed at recruiting, retaining, supporting, and developing minority students and faculty unexcelled by any other university in this nation. The commitment of resources -- whether financial or human -- was extraordinary by any measure.

And during this period, it achieved success... minority enrollments to 10% and black enrollments to 7.2% in 1978.

However, during the late 1970s and early 1980s, Michigan, like every other major university in this nation experienced setbacks in achieving these goals...enrollments began a gradual decline (down to 5% black). Why?

- i) Universities recognized that existing support services were simply inadequate to handle the large numbers of at risk students being admitted, and hence attrition rates were unacceptable high. Therefore, more selectivity in admissions qualifications was necessary.
- ii) Major programs which had traditionally enrolled far higher percentages such as Education suffered major declines due to the sharp decline in opportunities for graduates in these fields. At the same time, enormous demand built in areas such as Engineering which required far stronger pre-admission preparation.

Hence, in the early 1980s Michigan once again decided to assume a role of national leadership by implementing a broad array of new programs -- and once again it was successful in turning around the national trend and rebuilding, albeit slowing, the decline in minority student and faculty representation:

- i) Minority enrollments have risen to 12.7% ; Black enrollment to 5.3%.
- ii) Black freshmen enrollment has increased by 50% in three years
- iii) Black enrollment in Medicine (9.8%), Dentistry (8.5%), and Law (7.5%), Bus (7.6%)
- iii) UM now has higher black faculty percentage of any Big Ten or Ivy League university

But, any attempt at leadership is accompanied by certain risks...and at Michigan, despite our efforts.

- i) We have not been as successful as we should have been...
- ii) Expectations both within and outside the University were very high...
- iii) The growing national concern -- indeed tension -- over minority representation specifically and racial issues more generally was reflected on our campus

We are now convinced that leadership requires a major increase in our efforts...

A renewed commitment to our aspiration of eventual representation of all minority groups in proportion to their numbers in our society.

Commitment of additional human and financial resources...

And the involvement of our faculty, students, staff, alumni, and friends -- at all levels of the University, inside and out, in the effort to move toward this goal.

Hence we are setting out upon a new and exciting agenda to move toward these objectives.

Conclusion:

As Provost at the University of Michigan, I have become convinced that key to our mission in serving this State and its people is a renewed commitment to our aspiration of eventual representation of all minority groups in proportion to their numbers in our society.

This will require major new commitments of human and financial resources. It will also require the active involvement and cooperation of our faculty, students, staff, alumni, friends, and supporters in the effort to move toward this important goal.

The new agenda we have embarked upon aligns naturally both with the mission of the University and with our determination to be a leader in efforts to achieve new levels of understanding tolerance, and mutual fulfillment for peoples of diverse backgrounds.

For, after all, that is what America is all about, isn't it!

A Personal Observation

Finally, let me offer a personal observation...

A time when I was a college student in the early 1960s

a time when the burning issue on college campuses was the American Civil Rights Movement

a time when when students spent their spring and summer vacations engaged in voter registration, in protests against segregation...

Indeed, the commencement address at my graduation in 1964 was given by the Reverend Martin Luther King, himself...

And we followed his leadership in an effort to blaze a new path of opportunity for all peoples...

Many barriers have indeed been broken down...

And today,...much has been accomplished...

There is much we can be proud of...

At the University of Michigan:

We can point with pride to many accomplishments...

to increased enrollments of minority students

to the quality of our minority faculty

Yet, we also must acknowledge there is still a long ways to go...

and we are committed to increasing our efforts in this area...

Let me suggest that something more is needed...

We need to rekindle the fire, the commitment that characterized Dr. King's movement itself in the 1960s...

Through our action this past spring we hope to stimulate a renewal of commitment to and acceptance of diversity and equal opportunity key to the distinction of this University.