

Faculty Awards and Welcome---9/24/90

Introduction

About a hundred years ago,
one of my most illustrious predecessors
President James Angell,
remarked that the true glory of Michigan
was the quality of our people.

He went on to say that it certainly wasn't our buildings
--he had not long before had to negotiate
for indoor plumbing in the President's House--
but that's another story.

He certainly had it right about our people.....
more particularly --our faculty--
as the awards for faculty distinction in teaching, research and service
confirm once more this evening.

A Changed Format

As most of you know, we have changed the format for the awards this year
so that our attention more appropriately will be focussed exclusively
on our faculty and their achievements.

The added bonus in this new arrangement is that you are spared
the traditional lengthy address from me on the State of the University.

Based on the evidence of these awards
and what they stand for
in scholarly talent, accomplishment, and commitment,

I think we can rest easy that the State of the University
is very good.

In fact, I would assert that judged by the quality of our faculty,
including our new faculty,

the state of the university has never been better.
But you don't need the President to tell you that.
Our faculty are demonstrating this in countless ways every day
as we can see from the citations for tonight's awards,
and by any other measure we care to take,
whether it is national and international awards and recognition,
productivity in research and publications,
or in the achievements of your students who go on to leadership
in every walk of life across the country and around the world.
or the ways your research are advancing knowledge
and improving the quality of life.

Critics of the Academy

We hear a lot of criticism of academia these days.
Books with titles like Profscam, The Moral Collapse of the University,
Tenured Radicals-- suggest that we in the academy
are in pretty deep trouble, failing ourselves
and our society.
I think the work of the faculty we honor tonight,
puts such criticism in healthy perspective.
Of course, we always need to listen to our critics
and understand what they have to offer that is constructive.
Like any institution, universities always have plenty of room
for change and improvement.
I need, in this period of economic, cultural and social transition

The Theme of Leadership

Michigan is exercising national leadership in confronting the challenges of
change
and we are making making good progress.

Three themes:

Of course, we also still have a ways to go.

We must open our community to the diversity of our changing student body,

we must open our minds to many new perspectives and experiences-- international, ethnic, religious, gender--in ways that invigorate our teaching and scholarship

We must help society benefit not suffer from the technological transformation now underway.

But then, we might remind ourselves that universities are always changing and adapting to new circumstances.

In fact, if we were not changing, we would have real cause for alarm.

But universities are proving to be one of the most enduring and adaptive social organizations in history.

We must be doing something right.

After all, we have been around for some 800 years

Beginning as monastic centers of learning and evolving through the centuries until today, universities are a nearly universal institution firmly grounded in vastly different societies varying in some characteristics but fundamentally the same in our essential values and purposes across the centuries and around the globe.

Indeed, today universities have become key institutions for our emerging global community-- educating the people and developing new knowledge essential for what Erich Bloch has called the "Age of Knowledge".

The Sacred Calling of Higher Education

For me, one of the most compelling legacies of our distant origins
is that sense of the “sacred” that still clings to the academic calling.
Despite all the recent criticism from the media and the public,
even from within the academy,
I think our abiding faith in academia as a special and sacred place
set aside for the pursuit of fundamental things--of truth, learning,
wisdom-
is justifiably still strong both within and outside our universities.
and so is faith in the value and rewards of the scholarly life.
And after all, society continually demonstrates this faith, entrusting us
with its most precious possession--its children..... its future.
The faculty we are honoring here this evening
show us in countless ways, how they are meeting and surpassing
the highest expectations and hopes society has for us in academia.
Their work truly justifies the privileges we have been granted
and reminds us of the virtue that is the foundation of scholarly life.
In our day to day routine, we may sometimes lose sight
of the special honor and privilege in our work.
We get lost in such profundities as meetings, bureaucracies,
fundraising, backward administrators....
or our occasional obsessions with the ever-present “p-words”
...parking, police, and Penn State...
So it is important to gather together each year to celebrate
our colleagues and their extraordinary achievements.
Collectively our faculty make this a world center of learning.
one of a select few of the great universities.
Perhaps you can tell that in my heart I’m still faculty.....

in temporary exile for my sins.

New Faculty Welcome

Now on behalf of the University community,

I want to say a word of welcome to our new faculty colleagues.

Fall is an exciting time

a time of renewal...

even more exciting for new faculty...

finding a place to live, park,

find out how to get football tickets...

But at least you have warm weather...

The Duderstadts Experience

This December will mark the 22th year

since my family and I first arrived here from Pasadena.

When we left Pasadena it was sunny and in the high 80s.

However, as we stepped off the plane in Metro into snow

and subzero temperatures, with no warm clothing

and children who had never seen snow, we wondered

whether we have made the right choice.

Two decades of service as a faculty member in

this University is testimony to the fact that we've

become hooked on Michigan. We have found our

warmth through friends and colleagues...indeed

we now feel like native Michiganders!

And we have found this University to be a truly

extraordinary place for teaching, learning, and living...

for scholarship and for service.

I hope and believe that you will find here what Anne and I have found

...a brilliant and challenging intellectual community

that is at the same time a warm, welcoming collegial place.
that will support your work and your personal development.

It is a place that

values each one of you for the unique strengths you bring to us---

You are an outstanding group of scholars

But on top of all of your academic accomplishments

you bring us something even more valuable

.... your new ideas, new perspectives,

different points of view and experiences, challenges to accepted
wisdom--

Without these we could grow stiff and crustyeven smug.

But as long as we succeed in attracting people of your ability,

energy, diversity and intellectual venturesomeness,

we can be sure Michigan will continue its tradition of leadership

for a long time to come.

I cannot think of a time in our history that offered more promise

more opportunity and excitement than now

when you will have so much influence

on the future of our University and our country.

Just think about it.

The graduate students we are training now

will in a few years be taking up places in the leading universities

of this country and the world as we approach

the first period of faculty shortage in a generation.

The students we teach will be leaders in our society,

polity, society and culture long into the new century.

Michigan's influence is unsurpassed because of the quality and sheer
size of

our alumni body--now 340k strong.

In hiring faculty now and in increasing numbers in the coming decade,
you have the chance to shape this institution
for a new and challenging era.

Concluding Remarks

This is no time for business as usual.

Given the opportunity to shape the future of our university

I hope that you will be bold and daring in asking questions
and charting our directions

that you will engage with all of us in reflection and discussion
about our future and how we must prepare for it.

Historically, what we do here at Michigan

makes a difference not just for our University
but for all of higher education.

This might be a daunting prospect for some,
but not for you.

Each one of you---

those honored tonight and our new faculty--and all of our faculty
colleagues

together are already leaders.

Our University and its future could not be in better hands .

Congratulations to our honorees and welcome to our new colleagues.

Long may you prosper at Michigan.

Thank you.