

## First Presidential Lecture on Academic Values

### Introduction:

Good afternoon. I'm Jim Duderstadt. It is my pleasure this afternoon to welcome you to the first lecture in a five-part series on academic values, which we have scheduled throughout this academic year, which marks the 175th anniversary of the University of Michigan.

In planning for the 175th anniversary year, a number of us thought it would be fitting to devote a special lecture series on the general subject of academic values. These values--whether they be freedom of speech, academic freedom, or scientific integrity--have been items of considerable debate over the past few years here at elsewhere on campuses across this country.

But there is another important reason for seeking opportunities to discuss the academic values which bind us together as a community of scholars:

Many have suggested that the 1990s should be  
a time in which we re-examine the nature  
of the American university.

Indeed, some have even suggested it is a time  
to "reinvent" the university to better enable  
it to serve a changing world.

Of course, "re-invent" is surely the wrong word...

Few propose that we change our  
fundamental missions of teaching and scholarship.

They must always remain the core of the University's activities.

Indeed we must be concerned about  
preserving what is most precious and fundamental  
about our University and its scholarly life.

Rather I believe our challenge is to adapt  
some aspects of what we do  
to changing needs and conditions  
both within and outside the academy.

Much of what is needed is a rebalancing

where the pendulum has swung too far  
to one or another extreme  
at the expense of our basic mission and values.

But now we must join together to focus our attention on  
our primary endeavors of teaching and scholarship  
and attempt to define the fundamental academic  
mission of the University in light of the changes occurring  
in our internal and external worlds.

And we should remind ourselves that

As institutions, universities are always changing--  
probably never more so than in the past fifty years  
as the modern public comprehensive research university  
that we know today took shape.

Futhermore, while change and renewal will be important themes of  
our future, they can only occur upon a foundation  
of fundamental institutional values.

Of course, academic institutions usually focus first on  
intellectual values...values of the mind....

The seeking of wisdom  
Freedom of inquiry  
Intellectual integrity  
Discipline of the mind  
Respect for reasoned conclusions

By focusing on academic values throughout this year, we hope to reflect not  
only on the history of this university, and of higher education in America  
generally, but also to think ahead, to explore how these values--sometimes  
thought to lie at the core of education--will help shape the university in  
the future. We have invited five of our distinguished colleagues from  
around the university to explore this topic in any way they wish, and this  
afternoon we will hear the first of these explorations--from Ejner Jensen,  
the chair of the Senate Advisory Committee on University Affairs.

Before intorducing Ejner, let me take just a moment to explain the format of  
the presentations. After Ejner speaks, he and I will be joined by three of  
our colleagues, who offer their reflections on what we have just heard. We

will then open the session for further comments and questions from the floor. At the close of our formal session, we will adjourn to the Assembly Hall directly behind the amphitheater for a reception, which will of course provide us with more time for informal discussion of the subjects Professor Jensen will raise in his talk.

I'm pleased that we are able to begin this session with a lecture by Ejner Jensen, not only because he is a provocative thinker but also because as chair of SACUA he stands for the strong role the faculty play in forming and transmitting values within the University.

Ejner is chair of SACUA and professor of English. He has written widely on topics as disparate as renaissance drama--his academic speciality--and softball, formerly a major love of his life, until a back injury forced him to retire to the comparative ease of the golf course.

For his address today, Ejner has chosen the topic: "Arresting Change: Visions and Values in the University." Ladies and gentlemen, Professor Ejner Jensen.