

Equity Within the Classroom III: Graduating Minority Students Conference

Friday, March 26, 1993

Lansing, Michigan

“The Michigan Mandate: A Progress Report”

Introduction

Good afternoon. I'd like to thank Earl Nelson and the Office of Minority Equity for inviting me to speak today. I'm pleased to see so many of you, including my friends and colleagues from other Michigan institutions.

I have been asked to speak to you today about the agenda we have been developing and committing ourselves to called the Michigan Mandate. Originally, I was asked to speak on “The Michigan Mandate: A Four-Year Progress Report,” but we're now in our fifth year, so I'll try to give you an even more current update on our progress.

Background

Five years ago, I placed a challenge before the University in the form of a quite personal statement that has become known as the Michigan Mandate.

The Mandate presents a vision, a strategy, and a series of concrete actions. It was designed to build a multicultural academic community that will be a model for higher education and society at large.

It was (and is) my belief that for the University of Michigan to achieve excellence in teaching and research in the years ahead, for it to serve our state, our nation, and the world...we simply must achieve and sustain a campus community recognized for its racial and ethnic diversity.

So I suggested that the University of Michigan had a mandate not merely to reflect the growing diversity of America in our students, faculty, and staff, but to go beyond that by building a model of a multicultural learning community for our nation...indeed, for the world....

This must be a community which values and respects and indeed, draws its intellectual strength from the rich diversity of peoples of different races, cultures, religions, nationalities, and beliefs.

In such an effort to build the multicultural university of the 21st century, we are attempting to address the most urgent and difficult issue confronting our nation today.

To learn how to resist the great pressures of separatism, fear, and bigotry which push us apart....

and instead commit ourselves to a university, and to a nation, committed to working together, to achieve common purposes.

The University of Michigan is first and foremost a "UNI"versity. Hence we view our challenge as learning how to weave together these dual objectives of diversity

and unity in such a way that strengthens our fundamental goal of academic excellence and serves our mission and our society.

In setting out this challenge before the University, I conveyed as well my growing sense that the traditional approaches of affirmative action and equal opportunity over the years were inadequate to achieve these objectives.

So, I suggested quite a different approach.....

Develop a carefully designed strategic plan to achieve fundamental and permanent change at the University....

...in order to respond to a changing America and a changing world.

The plan is an organic plan which evolves through continuing interaction with hundreds of groups both within and outside the University, as we gain experience and insight into how to improve or expand on it.

The Michigan Mandate breaks new ground, drawing on the best available research and experience for promoting significant social change. It provides the framework for a dynamic and inclusive reassessment of our future, based on the University's best academic traditions and values.

It calls on the entire community to join in a commitment to change. Unique solutions, experiments, and creative approaches are encouraged; and resources are committed to them. Special incentives reward progress in the strategic areas of faculty hiring and graduate student recruitment.

This is what we are trying to do at the University of Michigan.

We are trying to change our makeup and our culture, to bring all ethnic groups into the life of our institution.

People sometimes ask me why the University has made this commitment to change, and why I have made this change a cornerstone of my Presidency.

The reasons are simple. The reasons are fundamental to our teaching, research, and service.

First and foremost, it is morally right.

Second, a diversity of talents, perspectives, and experiences is essential to intellectual strength in our increasingly pluralistic and interdependent world. The challenge of new ideas, energies, and vigorous debate generates powerful new fields of inquiry, stimulates debate about accepted ideas and standards, and improves professional practice.

Third, America's future depends on our response to this nation's increasing diversity. Universities must accept responsibility for providing the educated people and ideas needed by this society to build unity out of diversity.

Fourth, Michigan and America require a highly skilled and competitive workforce--a workforce drawn increasingly from groups currently underrepresented in higher education and at the University of Michigan.

Finally, it fulfills our commitment as a public university to serve all of the people of our state and nation.

Signs of Progress - What has the Mandate Accomplished?

Today I can report to you that the Michigan Mandate is starting to work.

From top to bottom, and bottom to top, University decisions are now made with our goals of diversity as a priority.

In February, our Board of Regents gave the Michigan Mandate their strong endorsement and urged us to continue toward our objectives.

In fact, across the nation other colleges and universities are using it as a guide for their own planning.

There are many signs of progress, some of which I can share with you in the form of hard numbers.

Our Fall 1992 statistics show that we have the largest number of African American, Hispanic/Latino, Native American and Asian American students--graduate and undergraduate--in our history: 7,097, corresponding to 21.4 percent of our total enrollment.

This represents a 63 percent increase in student-of-color enrollments in the first five years of the Michigan Mandate.

We also now have the largest number of African American students in our history: 2,599 students, which is an increase of 50 percent over the past five years and now represents 7.8 percent of the student body.

In addition, our graduation rates for students of color are among the best in the nation: 68 percent for African Americans; 64 percent for Hispanic/Latinos.

If we look specifically at U-M's professional schools, including the medical and law schools, 22.8 percent of students are members of minority groups, including 9.7 percent African Americans, 8.2 percent Asian American, 0.6 Native American and 4.3 percent Hispanic/Latino.

Since Michigan and UC-Berkeley are the two largest graduate schools in the nation and the source of many of the faculty for higher education, we have set a particular emphasis on minority graduate students. During the 5 years of the Michigan Mandate, the number of minority fellows enrolled in our graduate program

has increased 86% to its present level of 625--the largest of any university in the nation.

And, when we stop to think that graduate students are the nation's future faculty members, the University of Michigan is among the leaders in training students of color, especially African American students.

We've brought along some copies of the Mandate progress report for those of you who would like a closer look at the statistics.

Faculty Recruitment

What about our faculty? Minority faculty members, now at nearly 13 percent, continue to increase at the University of Michigan, but it won't surprise you when I tell you that recruiting and retaining faculty of color are becoming more difficult.

To achieve our broader academic and diversity goals at Michigan, we have created the Target of Opportunity Program. The central administration agreed to provide financial support to departments for both non-tenured and tenured faculty of color hires. This has created strong incentives for faculty of color recruitment at the departmental level.

Moreover, the fact that the program's funds are reallocated from the base budget of the entire University makes it increasingly difficult for Schools and Colleges to continue "business as usual." Departments that don't compete for this funding will lose out.

The results of this program are extremely encouraging. Many units have become much more vigorous and creative in

identifying teachers/scholars of color. Departments have become less limited by concerns about narrow specialization and more attentive to whether an individual will enhance the department in general.

Our successes have largely been the result of individual faculty members doing good, solid recruiting. We don't give enough credit to a lot of people who have worked very hard. They have helped to change the University of Michigan.

We are on track to our objective of doubling the number of minority faculty, as well as African-American, Hispanic, and Native American faculty, over the first five years of the Michigan Mandate.

According to our annual faculty profile, as of November 1992, there were 480 faculty of color on the Ann Arbor campus amounting to 12.9 percent of the 3,721 total faculty members.

African American instructional staff stand at 155, representing 4.2 percent of the overall total. There are 242 Asian faculty members (6.5 percent), 75 Hispanic/Latino faculty members (2 percent) and eight Native American faculty members (0.2 percent).

We feel that on the whole, we're doing a good job. However, we believe we must maintain both the momentum and intensity of our effort, since it is easy to backslide.

The pool of potential minority faculty is still small, and there is more and more competition for these promising scholars.

Other universities have adopted the University of Michigan's successful strategies, such as aggressive, individualized recruiting and use of supplemental funds.

Further, we must recognize the particular pressures on minority faculty. Minority faculty also run the risk of burnout at early stages in their careers, because they have heavy involvement in undergraduate and graduate teaching and administrative duties, such as mentoring.

Leadership

So too, we have recognized that the University leadership must also reflect this diversity, and I am pleased to report that during the past 6 months, we have appointed minorities to 8 senior leadership positions in the University including:

- Chancellor
- Vice President
- Vice Provost
- Deans (2)
- Executive Directors (2)

Other Signs of Progress

There are many other signs of progress.

A broad series of outreach activities have been launched to help motivate students of color in high schools, and to help prepare them for college.

Many of you are already familiar with these programs, since you are active participants and have collaborated on their development. They include:

- *King-Chavez-Parks*, to which Earl Nelson and his staff are so dedicated;
- *Wade H. McCree, Jr. Incentive Scholars* program, a commitment to offer full-tuition, guaranteed scholarships to minority students which was endorsed by the Presidents Council of State Universities of Michigan.
- *Detroit Area Program in Science and Engineering*; --our School of Engineering in Dearborn is heavily involved here;
- *Detroit Compact Program*, a collaborative effort involving business, community organizations, government agencies and school officials. Here again, the U-M Dearborn has been an active participant.
- Cooperative relationships with key school systems across the state of Michigan, e.g., Detroit, Flint, Saginaw, and Ann Arbor, and with midsize community colleges;
- Cooperative relationships with historically African American and predominantly Hispanic/Latino colleges and universities;
- *Mackenzie High School Writing Program*;
- *Urban High School Scholars Program*;
- *Nuclear Reactor Intern Program* for women and minorities;
- *Summer Research Opportunity Program* for minorities; and,
- Expansion of alumni recruiting efforts.

Another program we're excited about is a program we began in the Fall of 1991 for undergraduates at Michigan, called the *21st Century Program*.

Over 250 first-year students live and work together on a single wing of our Markley Residence Hall, taking part in seminars, academic workshops and other activities. These students reflect the increasing diversity of society, and the goal is to promote tolerance and understanding among students of different backgrounds, cultures and experiences.

The program helps students acquire the thinking and social skills that will be needed for leadership in the vastly changed and increasingly diverse world of the 21st century.

Drawing on research that indicates students do better when they work together rather than alone, the program builds a community focused on academics within a supportive environment of friends.

In weekly community seminars, students explore important issues in society as well as those that arise in the life of a first-year Michigan student.

Preliminary indications show that participants did better in class, and at the same time they began the process of creating a community with others who were very different from themselves. Working with diverse groups helped them appreciate different skills and approaches to academics--and to life as a first-year student.

This program is just a beginning, a single year out of a student's life. But it is an important example of the various programs being developed across campus to help students grapple with the changing world and the changing University.

The Challenge Ahead

We are putting in place the people, policies, and programs that will increase our representation of students, faculty, and staff of color at a rate that will make our University community fully representative of the national population during the 1990s.

Yet we recognize that increasing the number of minority faculty, students, and staff is only the first step in the Michigan Mandate.

If we only needed numbers, it would take great effort and resources, but with determination, we would get there.

But numbers are the easy part, relatively speaking.

We all know that you can have a lot of different people living in the same locale, working side by side, shopping in the same stores, going to the same classes. But that doesn't necessarily mean that you have a community.

Just increasing the numbers and mix of people doesn't mean that you have mutual respect, that you can work toward common goals.

To have this, you have to have a new kind of community.

At the University of Michigan, we are determined to seek the changes needed to build this kind of community.

Being a leader in creating a multicultural community that will be a model for higher education, and a model for society at large.....

that is the hard part of the task ahead of us.

What we are seeing on our campuses, I believe, are the birth pangs of this new type of community. Our institutions are confronting one of the most painful and persistent problems in history.

Because now, even as America's population is growing more diverse, it is also becoming more separated. Tragically, students coming to our campus today have grown up in communities separated by race and ethnic group, by nationality and belief, by occupational level and economic background.

The truth is that for many students, coming to campus may give them their first exposure to living, working, and learning together with others who have grown up in different worlds.

It is not surprising that they don't always get along, that it is sometimes painful. It also isn't surprising that this shows up in the newspapers or on television.

You don't get change without pain. But it is our job to educate the students, these world citizens of the 21st century, to inspire them, and if necessary, require them to respect each other and to learn to live together.

If the way ahead seems discouraging at times, we should remember that we are not the only society grappling with these problems. Historians tell us that group conflict, discrimination, prejudice, and oppression have been with us since the beginnings of human society.

It is a tragic part of human character to reject others in order to define oneself. And we only have to look around us, to read the international headlines on any given day, to see that such discrimination and prejudice exists in all parts of the world.

In today's world we cannot afford to tolerate racism and prejudice any longer. We cannot live divided from one another. Just because a problem has been around for ages does not mean that we have an excuse to ignore it. It may mean the job is harder to do.

But I do not believe the goals of diversity and community are incompatible any more than excellence and diversity are incompatible.

A Vision of the Future

We know that the Michigan Mandate by itself is not a magic cure. It is a strategic plan that sets a direction and points to a destination. The Michigan Mandate has evolved over these past five years through hundreds of meetings, seeking advice and assistance from people inside and outside the University.

We have set the highest goals for ourselves and our University. And to be honest, I don't know if we can make this dream a reality during my presidency. I know that we will keep trying. Of course, I also know that we will sometimes fail. We will take the wrong turn, stumble, lose our way at times, become confused. It is clear that we do not have all the answers.

Maybe it is the engineer in me that makes me hopeful, that makes me determined to try.

There is an old saying among engineers: If you never fail, you just haven't set your goals high enough. So a few missteps or detours won't bother me, as long as we hold to our basic ideals and direction. What will not change or falter is my personal determination to lead the University in a direction that serves all the people of our society.

But we will need to work hard, and work together, to find our way. I hope that in the years to come our children can look back with pride and say that the University of Michigan, the people of Michigan took a stand. I hope they will say they we came together and worked together, that we made a difference, that we became a mighty force for change.

Nothing we do in our lives is more important than this.

Thank you very much, and I look forward to hearing your comments and questions at the end of this session.

