

Academic Values and Responsibilities

Introduction

Pleased to be here today.
We have survived another eventful year together...
...with events ranging from MSA's attempt to
 establish a beachhead on the front lawn of
 the President's House
...to a Presidential Commencement
...and even to dinner with the Queen...
Now that we have a rare moment to reflect,
I thought it might be useful to talk with you
about some growing concerns I have about
threats to some of the most important values
on a university campus
...threats to academic freedom
...threats to our capacity to meet our responsibilities
 as teachers and scholars...
Let me first assure you that I do not come
 with a pocketful of policy pronouncements on these topics.
As usual I am coming to you with many more questions
 than answers
My comments this afternoon are intended only as
 are very preliminary thoughts about difficult
 and complex issues.

Torrent of Criticism

The Criticism
I'm sure I don't have to tell you that all of us in higher education
 are experiencing amounting torrent of criticism
Books
Articles
Media--file nearly 2" thick.
 Articles and editorials from prominent journals,
 magazines and papers now added daily.
 Even the President of the United States has challenged
 higher education...at our own Commencement!
The American research university is clearly under attack...
 ...by parents and students
 ...by Governors and State Legislatures
 ...by Congress and Government bureaucrats
 ...by the media and the public at large
They perceive the modern university as
 ...big, self-centered, and greedy...
 ...with spoiled misbehaving students
 ...and even more spoiled faculty
 ...gouging parents with high tuition
 ...and the government with inappropriate
 charges for research
 ...plagued by a long list of "isms"...
 ...racism, sexism, elitism,...and extremism
 ...and even for the deterioration of intellectual values
 ...scientific fraud
 ...lack of concern for undergraduate education
And, most recently, criticized for tolerating on our campuses
 a new form of extremism known as "political correctness"..
 ...which threatens not only quality and the curriculum
 but the very values which undergird the academy
 ...freedom of expression and academic freedom
It is largely on these latter sins that I want to focus today.
The Puzzle
Academia is not accustomed to dealing with
 so much attention and criticism.

Historically, probably due to our medieval religious origins,
universities over the centuries kept about them
an aura of the sacred
...a sense of being set apart from the fray of ordinary life

They have been accepted and respected by society
.....at least when it gave us any thought at all
which, frankly, wasn't all that often.

The seeming paradox is that the extraordinary broad attention
and criticism of academia comes at a time when
the university is more deeply engaged in society,
a more critical actor affecting the economy, culture,
technology, etc. than ever before.

To illustrate, let me provide a couple of quotes:

- 1) "In all advanced societies, our future depends to an ever
increasing extent on new discoveries, expert
knowledge, and highly trained people. Like it or not,
universities are our principal source of all three
ingredients." (Bok)
- 2) "The solution of virtually all the problems with
which government is concerned: health,
education, environment, energy, urban development,
international relationships, space, economic
competitiveness, and defense and national security,
all depend on creating new knowledge---and hence
upon the health of America's research universities" (Bloch)

The Key Issue: Victims of Success?

But, then again, perhaps it is not not so paradoxical.

When you get right down to it,
the key issue is that, at least in part,
we are victims of our own success.

We have reached an era when
educated people and the ideas they produce
have truly become the wealth of nations
and universities are the prime producers of that wealth.

What does this mean for us in universities?

It means that more people have a stake in higher education.

More people want to harness it to their own ends,

We are more visible, more vulnerable,

We attract more constituents and support

...and more opponents,

We have become in the minds of many

just another arena for the exercise of political power

...an arena for the conflict of special interests

We have become a prime target for

media attention and exploitation

We are more a focus of concern of the powerful

and for the powerless.

Thus we shouldn't be surprised by critics

or by assaults on the academy.

Because society has an increasingly vital stake in

what we do and how we do it.

Given the divisions in society at large,

the tensions between

...tradition and change,

...between liberty and justice,

...social pluralism and unity,

...industrial and postindustrial economy ,

...nationalism and internationalization.

is it any wonder that we find ourselves the battleground

for many competing values and interests, both old and new.

The more important question is whether can we survive

with our missions, our freedoms, and our values intact.

Doing Something Right

The evidence is strong that universities
must be doing something right--at least over the longer term.
Otherwise how can one explain that they have survived
more than 800 years and today are one of the few
nearly universal human social institutions
found now in vastly different societies
in every corner of the globe.
Perhaps if we understand the source of our strength,
we can identify the factors undermining it today.
What explains the power of this durable
and now pervasive institutional model?
Sir Eric Ashby points out that whatever the flaws,
"Universities are broadly accepted as
the best means for social investment in human resources."
Society believes in and supports this
fundamental mission of teaching and research.
It entrusts to us its children, its future
We exist to be a repository, a transmitter,
and a creator of human heritage .
We are guardians and creators of knowledge.
This mission is the glue that binds us together and accounts
for our successful adaptation throughout the centuries
and in so many disparate societies
Obviously it is relatively easy to carry out our task
in societies that are homogeneous and static
where there exists a high degree of consensus
and gradual change.
It is quite another thing to carry out our mission today
in our own increasingly pluralistic society
and interdependent world
characterized by revolutionary transformations
in knowledge and the very nature of our role.

Assaults on Academy

Threats to academic freedom and institutional integrity
are hardly new.
nor are conflicts within our ranks
about our direction and purposes.
Over the centuries, there have been persistent struggles
for the heart of the academy
There have been attacks from religious,
political, and other forces.
bent on capturing learning for their own purposes.
American academia, as we know, is no stranger
to periodic ravages
largely coming from zealots who would impose
a particular belief or orthodoxy on scholarship and teaching--
...creationism comes to mind as an example.
Recently we were reminded by the Senate Assembly
of the McCarthyite threat in the 1950s.
This was one of the most disgraceful episodes
in recent American history,
reminding us that when academic freedom is threatened
the stakes are high for individuals, for intellectual life
and for precious institutional integrity.
Unfortunately, threats to academic inquiry are
alive and well in our our world today.
In recent years, faculty and students have been killed,
universities closed, libraries stolen or burned in many places.
Why? The answer is seems obvious.

Free inquiry simply cannot be tolerated
by tyrants or mobs or ideological zealots.
Of course, not all threats to the academy are so malicious.
In fact, even well-intentioned bureaucrats and citizens
sometimes have a hard time with it.
Many of the threats we experience today
are motivated by the best of intentions.
Often they are no more obviously ominous than
a new regulation to achieve a laudable end
or even an incentive to stimulate the right behavior
promulgated by a Washington or Lansing
(or Fleming Building) bureaucrat
myopically focussed on a short term goal
and mindless of the longer term erosion
of intellectual and institutional autonomy that may result..

Examples of such efforts abound:

...the example of a Governor attempting to hold down the
costs of attending college with an ill-conceived
guaranteed tuition plan--that threatened quality
...the efforts of a State Legislature to protect Civil Rights
by mandating curriculum requirements--trampling
on the rights and responsibilities of faculties
...or the efforts of a Congress to extend 1st Amendment
protections to private universities--threatening the
autonomy of private education

But, by and large, over the longer term
academic freedom has survived and evolved
because of the value of our service to society
and because of the courage of scholars the world over
who guard autonomy and freedom,
resist tyrants, and uphold free scholarly inquiry.

Eventually they win society's understanding, however grudging,
because, society has long ago learned that if it
wishes to educate its young to be civilized citizens of the world
and to advance learning to serve its interests,
then it must grant freedoms to scholars and their institutions.

But we can never be complacent about our autonomy and freedoms.

Our compact with society is a delicate one.
Like all liberties, freedom of inquiry requires
eternal vigilance to maintain.

Excesses and violations invite intervention
from external authorities.

We must not abuse academic freedoms or take them for granted

The price is not just the loss of our
particular institutional freedoms and values
but erosion of one of humanities finest
institutional achievements.

Therefore we must constantly be alert to threats from
the right and left...from outside our walls
...but also from within.

Who are the Critics?

Many of the issues raised by our critics are varied,
difficult and complex.
Some are easily dismissed,
but others have important things to tell us.
In any case, we cannot ignore them
They will not go away.

Best thing is to consider thoughtfully,
respond selectively,
accept accountability
and responsibility to engage in public debate

about what we do and what we want to become.
Our critics represent a startlingly broad range of ideological views
Many are themselves academics.
Many are influential opinion makers
--prominent intellectuals--
and I think their strongly critical stance--
indicates a growing and damaging gap dividing them
from scholars in the academy
But we also cannot ignore the fact that there are
a growing number of concerned faculty, students,
administrators, and other educators and leaders who
are equally concerned that we are losing touch with ourselves
and our most fundamental missions--teaching and research.

Political Correctness

They assail us for imposing an orthodoxy,
a single standard of "political correctness".
Components of PC attacks
i) victim studies
ii) commitment to traditional curriculum
iii) affirmative action
iv) philosophical absolutism--fear of relativism
Granted, a good many of the "anti-PC'ers"
are extremists, polemicists, and
have own political and opportunistic agenda.
Indeed, much of what is being written is incredibly superficial,
factually incorrect, and wildly over-stated.
Some of it is pure opportunism
...ideological guerrilla warfare.
Some of it represents just another chapter
in the contemporary media debasement of
public discourse about important social issues
through hype, sound bite simplification,
and pandering to fads and basest prejudices.
Some of these folks are always on the lookout
for a sensational new lightning rod
for public dissatisfaction and frustration.
This time around it is the university that is taking the heat.
So too, part of this anti-pc agenda is familiar,
old fashioned reactionary stuff.
A resort to polemic to try to stop
the greater inclusiveness of people and ideas
...to hold on to status quo at whatever price,
to protect unearned privilege.
iv) Have to hafce up to the fact that we have changed our
campuses by making them more diverse..."preferential
treatment"...rethink curriculum. Old paradigm of assimilation
will not work any more. New people don't want to be
melted down.
But we also have to face the painful truth
that critics of the "politically correct"
don't lack examples of destructive, even ludicrous,
extremism and zealotry on campuses in recent years,
... indeed, at times on this campus!
Other side:
i) PC is real--the left has a tendency toward intolerance
ii) proponents of PC have a very strong ideological stance
...and also intolerance and regressive
iii) the challenge is to keep the debate open
While foolish or destructive behavior is by no means
rampant on our college campuses
that amount which does occur

can seriously undermine important academic values while serving as a lightning rod for critical attention.

We need to heed a basic message:

What these critics are saying is that we have lost touch with our most fundamental missions and values...

...and this strikes a deep vein of public discontent with academia.

Since the real issue concerns our commitment to our own values as teachers and scholars, it is on values that we must stand and debate.

What exactly do critics charge?

The term "political correctness" is just a code word for a number of concerns:

1) Insistence on "correct" language

Many would argue that as a supposedly "civil" and increasingly diverse community, we must strive to be aware of the preferences and sensitivities of our colleagues who have suffered from past exclusion and discrimination.

However, it is one thing to encourage people to be sensitive and considerate and quite another to require it.

Censoring speech, allowing or disallowing particular words or phrases, may be well intentioned, but its effects range from damaging to foolish.

There is a kind of priggish self righteousness about some of the language policing, that more often turns people off than persuades them.

2) Sensitivity Training

As a civil community, shouldn't we try to be sensitive to one another, and isn't reasonable that as we become more inclusive it will be helpful for us to learn more about one another and to learn skills to help us work and live together?

Yet, it is one thing to educate and quite another to impose a single "orthodox" point of view on our students and staff?

As teachers and employers we can require certain standards of civil behavior but can we require "right" thinking without compromising our values.

3) Harassment Codes

In a similar vein, critics assail codes that prohibit racial and sexual harassment

This raises very difficult and volatile issues about which there is strongly divided opinion.

There is no denying the potential for abuse any more than we can deny the abuses that are damaging to individuals and to the social fabric that led to codes in the first place.

Such intimidation cannot be understood outside of the historical framework of violence and fear that has surrounded racial prejudice and discrimination.

This has meant that what is merely intimidating to a white student can be experienced as a serious threat of violence by a student of color.

Here at Michigan, when we experienced such abuses in 1987 then Interim President Fleming felt that the University was very much at risk because of the absence of any general code of student conduct capable of dealing with students who would threaten and

intimidate others.

Hence, to protect the learning environment,
he put into place an explicit discriminatory harassment
policy through an open and accessible consultative process.

The problem was that this consultative process itself
broadened and distorted President Fleming's original policy
...and the policy was subsequently misapplied,
both by those with the best of intentions
--but inadequate understanding of academic values
--and by those with other agendas.

The courts soon found the policy
--actually the bureaucratic framework
surrounding it--unconstitutional.

To protect the campus from the anarchy that could
develop in the absence of any more general
student disciplinary policies,
In fall of 1989, I decided to respond to
the court action by using my presidential powers
under Regents' Bylaw 2.01 to put into place a
far narrower interim policy--based on the
so-called "fighting words" principle--
that was accepted by the ACLU and since adopted by
a number of other universities.

This is why our legal tradition has recognized that to serve the
interests of freedom as well as of order, threats should be
punished, including what the courts have termed
"fighting words": a face-to-face insult to a specific person that
is so abrasive that it threatens and threatens to provoke a
violent act.

This "interim" policy remains in effect today,
but it will need to be reviewed to see if
or how well it is working.

More generally, however, I believe that what is at issue
is whether we are right to have a policy in the first place
...whether as an educational institution,
we can ever punish speech or ideas
however painful or abhorrent they may be.

The chilling effects on speech of the vagueness and open-ended nature
of these codes are compounded by their enforcement by
students and faculty who are untutored in the most rudimentary lessons
of the history of freedom, and who have in many cases acted and
spoken in the belief that general offensiveness and breaches of
civility by means of speech should be punished, even if freedom of
expression on campus is the loser.

It is clear that we should strive to act as individuals
to raise the standard of civility and mutual respect
so that we do not need to rely on
legislation, litigation or policies
to enforce common decency and mutual respect.

The campuses are heedless of the oldest lesson in the history of freedom of
expression, which is that offensive, erroneous, and obnoxious speech is
the price of freedom.

Vague and unpredictable possibilities of punishment for expression on campus
not only fly in the face of the lessons of freedom, but are in addition
antithetical to the idea of the university.

- 4) Required courses on diversity
Isn't it reasonable, even imperative that
we educate our students---
and, of course, ourselves---
about the culture and experience of groups
in our own pluralistic society

- and in our interdependent world ?
 Isn't it also critical for all of us to understand
 in some comparative perspective
 more about the nature of group relations and interactions
 in a world that is rampant with division of race, class, caste,
 belief, nationality, that affect all of us
 and threaten our very existence as a society
 and even as a species.
- At the same time, there are many and various ways
 to provide education about diversity.
 But can academics in good conscience,
 require students to take any course
 that presents a single "orthodox" view of the subject?
 Like any other important curriculum issues,
 this should be openly and widely debated.
 We have well established framework
 for these faculty discussions.
 The recent LS&A debate was a model of civility
 and intellectual seriousness and shows
 that we can discuss these matters and make progress.
- 5) The intimidation of professors who teach "incorrect"
 subjects...or do research in "incorrect" areas...
 Isn't it important to challenge ideas with which we disagree?
 But can we ever tolerate intimidating
 attacks on those with whom we differ?
 To our discredit, intimidation, and reckless charges,
 seem to become accepted by many of us--
 students and faculty alike.
 Perhaps in more subtle form this includes attempts,
 however well meaning,
 to impose test of political orthodoxy
 in grading or hiring/professional advancement.
 We have no business in academia
 in silencing any view or person.
 The test of an idea must be on its merits,
 not who propounds it
 or whether we like it or even hate it or not.
- 6) Censorship of campus speakers or groups and individuals
 Given all the potential for conflict and sensitivity
 on our campuses today, should we not declare
 that some people or views are off limits
 either by not inviting controversial speakers at all,
 or by preventing them from being heard.
 The answer to this is clearly no.
 Our doors must stay open.
 If we don't like what we hear, then speak out.
 Some on campuses seem to feel that free speech is for them
 ...but not for those with whom they disagree.
 We have seen all too much of this on our campus
 in last few years.
 I think of the regular attempts
 to shout down Regents meetings.
 or to prevent the Chief Justice of the United States
 from teaching a class at our Law School
 There is a certain irony here, since the surest way to
 gain attention for any views are to attempt to disrupt
 or forbid its presence on a university campus.
- 7) Curriculum Correctness
 Here we are pilloried from right and left,
 by radical traditionalists and radical radicals.
 From those who would confine our curriculum

to a fixed and narrow set of "Great Books"
to those who would disallow
any work by "DWEMS"--dead white European males.
Is it wrong to adapt our teaching to include
a broader range of experience and expression
from across time and the world?

Clearly we must prepare our students to live in a world
in which a majority of people come from
very different backgrounds and beliefs.

But does this have to mean that we abandon or denigrate
the learning that is the foundation of our own tradition?
After, many of our most profound concepts are derived
from the heritage provided by Western Civilization
...our faith in rationalism
...in knowledge and science
...in the notion of human progress itself.

Hanna Gray has said that arguments about the curriculum
are really a way to criticize the present
and consider what the future ought to be.

The faculty is charged with this rather awesome responsibility.
Let them do it openly and reasonably.

8) New Fields, e.g., ethnic and gender studies

A truly vigorous and rigorous scholarly institution
will give rise to new fields
new ideas and insights, new paradigms.

Isn't that the point?

If there are excesses or deficiencies in any field,
then we can put them to the test of scrutiny
and rational debate.

New ideas or fields are no more a threat than entrenched ones.
Neither should be exempt from the time honored test
of whether they are intellectually worthwhile,
whether they help us understand better ourselves
and our world.

9) Affirmative Action

So much of the anti-PC criticism is really aimed
at affirmative action programs in our universities.

Critics claim that Affirmative action actually
promotes increasing segregation and balkanization,
separate and unequal education and services.

It is seen as undemocratic, divisive and ultimately
a disservice to those it is meant to serve.

I am on record with my firm support for the Michigan Mandate.

I believe the goals it establishes for the University
are critical for our future
and for the future of our society.

The Michigan Mandate clearly does not establish quotas
nor does it lower standards--quite the contrary,
I believe it to be a key element in our quest for excellence.

It was developed through very broad participation
and consultation both within and outside the University.

The purpose and supporting arguments are familiar to you
and I won't go into them now.
except to say that its primary aim
is not affirmative action in the traditional sense,
but rather to improve our collective intellectual enterprise,
while seeking to serve all the members of our society.

But I do think it is important to state unequivocally
that we must continue to debate both the merits
of the Mandate and the means for achieving its goals.

In a University no subject can be declared off limits.

We have nothing to hide or be ashamed of in the Mandate.
On the contrary, I am proud of what we have accomplished.
I believe it will stand against critics
but I also think we will benefit from discussion of methods.
If there is a better way, a more effective or just way
for us to proceed, then we need to talk about it.

What is this really about?

As we consider these issues it becomes apparent that
an important part of criticism and counter criticism
is about the direction of social and institutional change.
Much of it is about the struggle for greater inclusiveness
...of more openness to ideas and people
...and it is about the intellectual challenge
...of what some call the new "Age of Knowledge".
We must not become overly reactive to
what is superficial or transitory and opportunistic in criticism
at the expense of more important continuing debate
over fundamental issues of our future
and renewal of our mission in response to change.
We are trying to deal with some of the most painful, persistent
and intractable problems in human experience:
Racism, sexism, --centuries of prejudice and discrimination
that have robbed the world of precious cultural wisdom,
talent and leadership.
We are also trying to ride out an intellectual revolution
We are trying to incorporate comparative
and international perspectives and experiences
into our intellectual framework.
We are scrambling to keep up with
the breathtaking advances
in knowledge and technology
that are transforming the academy and our society.
To address the intellectual and practical issues of our time,
we have to be open to new paradigms, new theories
new combinations of knowledge.
While many in society may prefer to ignore or deny
the changes taking place,
as scholars and teachers we cannot responsibly do so.
This puts us in the sometimes uncomfortable
vanguard of change.
In many ways, the intensified criticism directed at the
academy may be in part a manifestation of the
age-old practice of slaying the messenger
bearing bad tidings...
Indeed, some in society actually hold us responsible
for social change.
In a sense they are right.
After all, we are educating students for changing world
and we are producing the knowledge and
the technology that fuels it.
Little wonder that some are threatened
or that many are unsure and concerned.
Little wonder that with our growing influence on society,
we have become an arena of special interest conflict.
We are riding the tiger of a profound transformation of society.
What is the Chinese curse?
"May you live in interesting times"
Well, here we are, and the going can definitely get rough.
But we do have the means to stay the course
if we have the will.

Free and open inquiry/shared values

Students and scholars must be able to do their work
in an atmosphere of tolerance. Scholarship will
flourish only if members of the academic community
do their best to remain open to new or opposing
ideas and to evaluate them on their merits.

Academics thrive on difficult debate, on the conflict of ideas.
After all, that is our business.

Even in the most placid times and places, scholarship and teaching
are highly contentious at times.

By its very nature, scholarship challenges prevailing truths,
myths and pieties.
because, through time, we have found
the free expression of ideas,
however unorthodox, eccentric, grotesque, or even abhorrent.
provides the only sure way to truth.

Given the frequently conflictual nature of our calling,
we have had to develop ways of dealing with conflict.
They are based on reason and a striving for objectivity.

We have the traditions, values, methods and principles
we need to meet the challenge
of debate about our future

We can rationally reflect on the criticisms
and ask ourselves if they reveal to us
some real problems worthy of debate and attention.

If so, then we should ask ourselves
how to respond as individuals and as an institution.

We have time-tested values, principles, methods
and procedures for debating
about policy and substantive ideas,
about conflicting perspectives and evidence.
Fundamentally, we rely on the application of reason,
the the free exploration of all ideas.

The more difficult, passionate the conflicting ideas
we need to discuss, the more critically important
it is that we agree to respect our core values:
reasoned inquiry, freedom of inquiry, freedom of speech.

We have to ask what kind of community we want to become.

If we want to be a genuine academic community
in which people can work together with civility
and mutual respect then we have to practice
those virtues in our daily lives
and model them for our students.

To protect our freedoms,
we have to accept certain responsibilities.

We are accountable to society
and if we violate our own values,
we can be sure that there are many
always ready and eager to step in
to apply their own rules and restrictions.

Academic Freedom

Academic freedom is the core value that supports
our service to society.
Without it, we cannot freely search
for truth in teaching and research,
much less act as a critic of society.

It will be our mainstay as we consider together
the future of our University.

Academic freedom is not in the constitution.
It figures in law but not as clearly defined right
(Note Bollinger here: "(Academic Freedom) is a value that
exists independent of law.")

Academic freedom is supported by Constitutional rights such as those embodied in First Amendment at least in public universities (While it doesn't apply to private institutions but we should note that our freedoms have sometimes been better safeguarded in them than in public institutions.)

But legal definitions and protections, though important, are not the bedrock of academic freedom.

Academic freedom is too precious to leave to lawyers and politicians.

Only we in the academy, only faculty, ultimately can define and defend it.

The concept of academic freedom was introduced less than a century ago when the modern university evolved into an institution with a fundamental mission of not only training and research, but for criticizing society's current arrangements as well.

In this sense, the concept of academic freedom becomes a defining ingredient of the modern university, reflecting as it does our belief in the power of intellectual discovery and insight of reason, inquiry, and criticism.

The most significant underlying social value of academic freedom is the time tested proposition that free inquiry is the best road to truth.

Academic freedom is, of course, never absolute. It is instead one of many values that must coexist in an increasingly complex world. Moreover, the phrase "academic freedom" suggests at once too much and too little. On the one hand, it proposed the possibility that teaching and research can be free of constraints. On the other hand, it fails to acknowledge that the ever-present limits on those activities that result from other values that we hold...restrictions of time and resources, professional ethics, establishment procedures and paradigms, the scientific method itself.

Academic freedom is, in a sense, a compact between society and academic institutions

...a matter of trust

...attemptingly fragile bond easily breached by opportunists or the well intentioned.

It is a compact not for short term benefits as immediate payoffs e.g., cures for a disease, or economic development.

(We make a profound mistake if we suggest this as a rationale)

No, academic freedom is much more long term and fundamental.

It rests on society's need for learning

It rests on the proposition that the deeper quality of life is benefited by the pursuit of learning.

Therefore, threats to academic freedom are threats to our essence, whatever their origin.

Where is the real threat to academic freedom in the dispute over political correctness?

Universities are paying dearly for extremists from both the "pc" and the "anti pc" camp.

As usual when extremists are at work, truth and principle are the first victims.

Academia is facing difficult issues and choices.

Polemics obscure the real and important issues creating climate in which it is increasingly difficult

to discuss and debate openly critical issues before us.
So-called PCer's trivialize and obscure fundamental issues
and too often try to impose their rigid orthodoxies
through intimidation.
Anti-pc'ers take advantage to try to intimidate us
from coping with fundamental issues.
Both undermine climate and values necessary
for rational discussion.
Superficial polemics and orthodoxies on all sides,
obscure the real issues we ought to be discussing
and debating openly and vigorously among ourselves
and with larger society.

The real question is whether and how we debate serious issues

Our traditions and freedoms allow us to take
on the toughest questions.
The issue is not whether we can debate tough questions.
This issue is whether we have the courage to take them on.
and how we debate them among ourselves.
Today many factors are undermining our ability to debate openly.
These factors are providing fuel for our critics.
bringing down on us ridicule and even contempt.
They are undermining our sense of community
and in the long term can lead to a loss of our freedoms.

Factors undermining our academic freedom

Let me mention some of them
although I warn you that I regard these comments
as very preliminary thoughts on the matter.

1) Conformity

With all the hoopla, it is easy to overlook
the most persistent and insidious threat to free inquiry.
It is conformity.

As our colleague, Lee Bollinger has pointed out:
"It is common to think of threats to academic freedom
as something that needs to be protected from
(external) official interference or sanctions."

....On the other hand, academic freedom can be inhibited
by very subtle interventions, by the atmosphere
in which people work, think and teach."

Significantly, he points to conformity as a subtle
but insidious threat:

"Little actions here and there, insignificant
in themselves, may together add up to a feeling that
the better course is to conform,
to avoid risks in research and teaching."

First and foremost, we must resist pressures to conformity
--whether political, economic, cultural, ideological--
in admissions, hiring, advancement...
and intellectual conformity in ideas
and I would include here the conformity
of disciplinary rigidity.

Conformity can be fostered by the need to please
external masters--civic, commercial, media .

Conformity can also be internally generated by erosion
of common values of free inquiry, politicization,
zealotry , discrimination, rigid orthodoxy
and unthinking adherence the status quo for its own sake
or in order to protect privilege.

2) Politicization

Universities have become saturated with po9itics, often of a fiercely
partisan kind. Universities have indeed become the anvil on which
young people and old beat our their resentments at the incompleteness

of life. The economic and political insecurities of universities, from within and without, have produced a style of academic leadership that tends to be highly risk-averse, queasy about defending academic values, and inclined to negotiate and propitiate about almost anything.

The most critical threats to academy are the increasingly non- or anti-rational methods being employed to influence our institutional purposes and directions.

Anti-intellectualism is as American as apple pie. as Richard Hofstadter pointed out long ago.

But seldom has it been so prominent within the academy as in recent years.

But much of the unreason is an aftermath of 60's activism.

While this era is rightly credited with raising critical issues ushering in needed reforms, it also introduced some naive or pernicious notions that are proving hard to live with.

Often, with the best of intentions, all aspects of the the academy became fair political game, Students and faculty, frustrated at inability to affect national, foreign, or domestic policy through traditional political activity, abandoned it and turned inward, instead, to universities to make them an arena of intense political conflict.

In pursuit of good ideals, all aspects of the the academy are seen to be fair political targets for revolutionary change.

No area of university life was left untouched. Instead of applying reason to debate issues, it became acceptable to politicize all discussion.

Half-baked Marxist theory was applied to reduce all intellectual questions to overly simplistic expressions of power.

Of course, there is value in looking at issues of power in the academy, and scholars should be free to express their views, their ideologies freely.

What is not acceptable is the attempt to impose these views/ideologies on the institutional of academic by political means whether it is intimidation, derision, shouting, disrespect for views and rights of others

The University, because of its growing visibility, its importance, and its vulnerability has become the battleground for national political issues over which it has little or no influence or control and which are only distantly relate--if at all--to our expertise or mission..

The debate about some important questions of human rights and justice and other critical education, moral, and political issues is critically important. But we have to recognize the limits on what we can and cannot do.

For one thing, when we focus on those things over which we have little control, we are distracted from doing what is right and possible for us to do.

Many methods employed to achieve desirable goals have left permanent scars.

As Derek Bok has noticed in his recent paper, "Universities are not very good at passing

collective judgments on political issues in the outside world. Their decisions often reflect the strong convictions of strategically placed minorities-- whether they be trustees or activist groups-- rather than informed judgment of the entire community. If university officials tried to act consistently and fairly in taking sides in social controversies, they would have to spend an inordinate amount of time and effort on the task." "However perhaps the greatest danger in exerting political pressure is the risk of sacrificing academic independence. Universities can hardly claim the right to be free from external pressure if they insist on launching campaigns to force outside organizations to behave as their students and faculties think best. Generations of effort to secure autonomy would be placed in jeopardy."

3) Ends/Means

Methods of agitation also reveal a deep confusion about the relation of ends and means. Some have come to accept the ancient and dreadfully pernicious idea that a just end, justifies any means used to achieve it. For some debate becomes, not the free exchange of ideas, but a political contest in which victory goes to the largest or most militant group or the one best able to exploit media attention or mobilize political constituents or silence the opposition through intimidation, or vandalism.

4) Indoctrination/imposing orthodoxy/propagandizing

No one would challenge an individual's right to express his own point of view properly labeled as such. However, is it not an abuse of academic freedom to propagandize to present only one side of a case? The safeguard for academic freedom has been the principle that academics would conduct their teaching and research ideally free of bias. (We may not achieve this standard, but it is one we agree to strive for.) When we fail to honor the ideal of fair hearing for all sides of intellectual issues, attempt to indoctrinate or propagandize students in the classroom we are betraying fundamental professional responsibilities. Once scholarship is politicized ...once it becomes a partisan issue, an arena for political activism, we have undermined a principle argument for academic freedom. For example, I was deeply disturbed to learn that some of our students were shown only one side of the argument about the Gulf War by their teaching assistants and faculty. Classrooms were opened to a so-called guerrilla theater group that opposed the war but opposing views were not expressed. I heard many many students complain about this. Whatever our personal views on the war itself I cannot believe that the classroom is

the place for propaganda or indoctrination
This is a violation of students rights and
undermines credibility of entire academic profession.
It is one thing to express ones own views
and label them as such and also
to then note opposing views.
It is quite another to endorse political positions
and open the classroom to outright propaganda
Of course, in the end, I have confidence in our students ability
to arrive at their own opinions despite misguided
though perhaps well intentioned efforts
to indoctrinate them.
Propagandizing more often than not leads to backlash
and therefore has an effect opposite to the one intended.
Rather than indoctrination, what we really need more of
is education in critical thinking and debating skills,
in logic and philosophy.

5) Intimidation

Intimidation of faculty, students, staff, speakers
is contrary to everything we stand for
as scholars and citizens.
And I think it is important to point out,
that it is not only mob action in trying to silence
a speaker that I am referring to.
Intimidation also includes abuse of authority and freedom
in the classroom in ways that prevent or discourage
participation by women, minorities
or with those with whom we disagree.

6) Personalization

We seem to be losing the critical ability to distinguish
between ideas and the people who hold them.
Instead of focusing on the merits of ideas and proposals,
we zero in on the character and personality
of those who oppose them.
This leads to acrimonious conflict
generating heat but little light on the subject at hand.
Ad hominem arguments and attacks undermine
our ability to function.
They betray our ideals of community.
They feed a kind of paranoid hysteria
that poisons the atmosphere.
If the argument we make is sound,
there is no need to impugn the integrity of an opponent.
Bush: "We must conquer the temptation to assign bad motives
to people who disagree with us."
Labels and stereotypes are no substitute
for the hard work of intellectual engagement
with people and ideas.
and, I might add that indiscriminate
charges of sexism, racism, homophobia and so forth
threaten to devalue the real force and meaning
of these terms.

7) Litigiousness and regulatory excess

Like the rest of society we seem to be losing the ability
to resolve our disputes through informal means
or to persuade others rather than regulate them.
Instead, we rely increasingly on regulations and policies,
litigation and formal procedures.
In the administration we hear many complaints
from faculty and others about too many policies,
but it is often those very same people

who want policies enacted to protect
or advance their own special interest.
Somehow, we need to renew the bonds of trust
and mutual respect that make
excessive regulation unnecessary.

8) Polarization

Division and polarization are painful reminders
of how far we have to go to create a true community.
While there may be some who despair of achieving that goal,
I am not one of them.
I don't think an academic community or our society has to be
a "melting pot".
But at the same time, I know that we must be able
to work and live together
and I think we must strive for even more than this.
We have it within our power to create a model of community
in which we draw on the unique talents and strengths
of all of our members
to build mutual trust and respect,
to treat all individuals equally and fairly,
and to renew our collective commitment
to scholarly and democratic principles and values.
Perhaps some of you disagree with me.
If so, then join me in debating, openly and vigorously,
about what kind of community we want to be.
This is a challenge worthy of our finest traditions and values.

9) Prejudice and Discrimination

Nothing is a greater denial of our values
than prejudice and discrimination.
Nothing is more destructive of our freedoms
and our intellectual work
Nothing is more harmful to our community and our future.
Let us recognize that some of the criticism
of political correctness
is really just a code word for our old enemies
of racial and gender exclusion.

10) Self Righteousness

Extremism does not accept compromise
or tolerance of the views of others..
Zealots see only the saved and the damned.
Our Puritan heritage is sometimes apparent in our tendency
to separate the saved from the damned
--the correct from the incorrect
and then to try to silence or exile the latter.
Extremism does not tolerate debate.
As we consider our future, let us also not forget
some other forces for conformity
that infringe on academic freedom and open inquiry.
Many are as or more important than the ones
we have so far discussed
and they deserve a more extended discussion at some point.
For example, we should ask ourselves
if we are trying to please too many masters
and that this in itself is compromising freedom and values
Accountability to sponsors can impose a subtle but real
and self imposed censorship through a desire to please
There are other pressures from within that also
undermine academic freedom
e.g., intellectual orthodoxies--conformities imposed
by disciplinary orthodoxies or funding agencies
or administrative bias that subtly or not

so subtly operate against risk taking
and unfettered inquiry.

Academic Values and Traditions

The foregoing touches on some of the forces at work
that can threaten our ability to debate important questions and
that undermine our teaching and research mission.

They pose dangers but we are by no means helpless
in the face of them.

On the contrary.

We have evolved a set of traditions and values that
over many centuries have attracted people to universities
and command their loyalty and devoted service

We have educated generations of humanity to value learning,
even as they prepare for vocations. They have gone forth
to work in widely varied societies of many religious,
political, and ideological orientations.

What does it boil down to?

Perhaps Theodore Roosevelt said it best in a speech
at Duke University in 1905:

“You stand for those things for which the scholar must stand
if he is to render real and lasting service (to
the state). You stand for academic freedom,
for the right of private judgment, for the duty
more incumbent upon the scholar than upon any
other man, to tell the truth as he sees it,
to claim for himself and to give to others
the largest liberty in seeking after truth.”

(quoted by Terry Sanford in Pullias Lecture)

Fundamental idea is the application of reason to
human affairs, the pursuit of truth through reasoned inquiry
The scientific method/experimentation/debate
are all variants on this principle

Commitment to openness, to debate, to free inquiry--
only when ideas can be freely explored,
can we hope to find truth.

While not fundamental principle, mutual respect and civility,
a willingness to respect and consider views of others,
is needed for conduct of teaching and research.

We cannot accept those who would shout down a person
or idea or who think that opinions should be imposed
on others by intimidation, ideas should be judged by
the number of their adherents rather in whether they are right.

Over centuries we have found that our objective of seeking truth
and our means of seeking it have stood the test.

We haven't achieved perfection but we do have a way
of considering questions and problems that yields insight
and lights the way to new and better questions.

What binds us together then is this search for truth,
the tested methods, principles and values of scholarship.

Society supports these values because universities over
the centuries and across the globe
have managed to teach succeeding generations a
respect for the pursuit of truth and an ability to take up
the quest themselves and because our methods and principles
have succeeded in increasing our store of knowledge
and understanding over the centuries

Society has accepted this and has respected the value
of academic freedom that is the essential prerequisite
to learning and teaching.

Integrity of mission is our foundation

The most effective protection of all for academia

is the integrity of our commitment to teaching and research.
I think our more critical role also means that
the quality of what we do
and our fidelity to our primary mission
are more important than ever before.
It is our best defense against critics.
It is what we do best to serve humanity.
must be more protected as its value to society grows.
One thing is certain and unchanging.
We cannot perform our primary mission
of teaching and research properly,
we cannot produce what society most needs from us,
without the freedom to pursue truth wherever it takes us.
That seems fundamental.
Education and research are the primary functions of
a university and its principal contributions to
society.
When universities act in ways inconsistent with the
pursuit of education and research, they do not
merely compromise their mission; they threaten
reservoirs of confidence and trust on which
their welfare ultimately depends.
Problem is that universities are continually asked to do things
which are not their first purpose. In particular, universities
are asked to be ideal communities and ideal parents.
Concern that efforts of peace, compassion, the desire to
build an ideal community have distracted us from the
fundamental purpose of universities--we are a
community of scholars, not an ideal community. We
should encourage debate and disagreement.
Very few people are articulating vision of university.
The university is NOT about utility, but about
understanding. Further, we must never compromise
freedom of expression and freedom of thought.
Finally, we should only evaluate people according
to academic merit...not other issues over which we
have no competence.

Defense of Values

Academia must defend its fundamental values and freedoms:
We need to debate critical issues and problems
but within the context of our values and traditions
What is the value of academic freedom to the faculty.
Studies repeatedly show that what faculty value most
are autonomy and freedom, intellectual interchange
and the opportunity to be with students.
These are rare and precious satisfactions
well worth the effort of preserving them.
Chicago's President, Hanna Gray, also reminds us
of an even greater obligation:
"We are responsible for handing down to future generations,
the freedoms we inherit intact and preferably strengthened."

Some Modest Proposals

What can we ourselves do to promote community
and values and protect freedoms.
1) It is critical that we all speak out
...even the president, although judiciously, I hope
(avoiding the "Demands that the president
issue a statement condemning"...syndrome)
While all speech must be allowed in a free community,
it must also not be allowed to go unchallenged
when it contains falsehoods or hatred.

The freedom conferred by tenure
is meant to be used.
Few in our society are so protected.
Tenure is not an economic right.
It is nothing if it does not confer the responsibility
to speak, work, and think freely.
Defend your views, disagree with others,
take on the administration when you don't agree.
At the same time, I also think we must resist efforts to coerce
or persuade the University as an institution
to adopt political or ideological positions.
since we do not have the mechanisms
for weighing or adjudicating conflicting claims
and if we were to try to develop them
we would have to devote unreasonable amounts
of time and effort.

2) Let's get back to basics.

Take personal responsibility for maintaining
an open and free climate for debate,
for teaching and research.
Let us each accept the responsibility for keeping
to our own highest standards and values
as well as working in our community to promote them.

3) Distinguish between our political views as individuals--
and our responsibilities as teachers and scholars.

More specifically, it is our obligation as members of the academy
to foster open debate and inquiry in carrying out roles
as learners and employees
...protect open inquiry in classroom and research
by rejecting all attempts to impose
a single ideological perspective.

4) Let's restore some balance, humor, civility to community life.

It is time we turned down the thermostat...
...or, as it is said..."chill out"
...and lighten up a bit.
Not that questions aren't important.
In fact, it is because they are so important
it is essential that we rid ourselves of self righteousness
and moral snobbery.

Left wing professors may trumpet an intent "to transform
the hegemonic cultural forms of the wider society and
the academy into a social movement of intellectuals
intent on reclaiming and reconstructing democratic
values."

Conservatives claim that "behind the transformations
contemplated by the proponents of feminism,
deconstruction, and the rest is a blueprint for a
radical social transformation that would revolutionize
every aspect of social and political life."

The media are quick to report these outbursts and to
garnish them with accounts of the same oft-told
episodes of intolerance and ideological warfare that
have cropped up on various campuses.

The ultimate risk in these overheated struggles is that
they will undermine confidence in the academic
enterprise.

Humor is a small and welcome signal
of objectivity and is the enemy of the pomposity
which afflicts us and charges the atmosphere.

As far as I know, no one of us has a monopoly
on truth or correctness.

(If anyone does, please come and see me.
I need your help.)

But until then, I think a bit of humility would be very welcome
in our community.

- 5) Don't look for the expedient solution, look for right thing to do.

This applies to all of us--
to administrators, faculty, students and staff.

We must try to stick to our basic missions and values.

Easier said than done.

We aren't dealing with simple
questions, conflicting views of what is right.

But must be conscious that what we do today has lasting
impact on our University--

and because of our influence on higher ed more broadly.

The actions of every single one of us counts
when it comes to building community.

- 6) The best defenders of academic freedom and integrity are
the faculty.

Take personal responsibility for sustaining our freedoms.

Encourage open and vigorous debate.

Engage and commit to educating about our
freedoms and values.

Tenure is not granted as an economic right.

it is a protection of freedom and it is meant to be used.

It is a unique right in our society...and it carries with it
a heavy responsibility to speak out.

Stand up to those who would undermine our values....
including administrators!

Exemplify them in your own teaching and research.

No lesson you teach your students will be more important
than the example you set yourself for open, fair and rational
discussion, respecting the rights of all equally to speak out.

This is an example our society desperately needs to revive
rational political discussion.

Values of civility, mutual respect, and harmony are rightly prized within the
university. BUt these values must be fostered by teaching and by
example, and defended by expression. It is both futile to seek to advance
them by suppression and an inversion of the values that underlie the
academic mission. If fear, ignorance, and bigotry exist on our campuses,
it is far better that they be exposed and answered than that they be
bottled up.

Perhaps the most important lesson universities can teach their students
is to think and search for truth in freedom. For most students, this
lesson is not easy. They come to universities with little or no
understanding of the theory and practice of freedom of thought.

- 7) I hope we will work together to educate
and renew our understanding of and commitment
to academic standards and values.

Few higher institutional priorities than stimulating broad based
consideration of academic values.

Here at Michigan, we have a long and proud record
of respecting academic freedoms.

And this is due in large part to strong faculty leadership.

Let me say that I am very encouraged in this regard
by the recent action of the Senate Assembly
to promote the adoption of the statement of values
in the Tenets of Membership in the Academic Community.

This is an important step forward toward
renewal of fundamental values.

In the coming year, I hope we will find ways
to use this statement to draw our community

together through discussion and education.

This is a good beginning.

There are other avenues for debate in the works for next year.

Senate Assembly lecture on academic freedom

Fall leadership retreat

Fall symposium

Let's open up the doors and windows around here

and get the debate out in the open.

We must not leave this to courts, media, politicians, ideologues,
or cranks with an ax to grind.

Let us do what we do best--consider the issues and arguments
and subject all sides to rigorous scrutiny, unafraid, unfettered,
but also with civility, humility, and mutual respect.

Conclusion

The relationship between the modern university and society
is very complex and fragile because of the university's
dual role as society's servant and as society's critic.

Society has granted us exceptional privileges.

As I told our graduates at Commencement,
much has been given to us and therefore
much is expected in return.

Ours is a good life full of freedom to think and work
according to our individual talent and vision
But it is not without a price.
Price is adherence to values and courage
to apply and defend them.

But when we misuse or abuse our freedoms or just fail
to defend them, society holds us accountable

We set ourselves a high standard, and we are being held to it.

When we stray from it, the price is erosion of public confidence
and support.

In the long term this can spell the loss of hard-won freedoms
which once lost will be hard to regain.

We represent among faculty, students and staff
a tremendous range of difference in our views,
opinions, beliefs.

As individuals we are free to express them
and to promote them.

This is by design
...this is how we hire
...this is how we admit
...and this should be how we behave!

This is the stuff of which debate is made.

We cannot be all things to all people,
to solve all society's problems.

What we can and must do is be true to ourselves
and our mission and values.

If we do this, then we will preserve our freedoms
and serve our society in the best way we can.

This is the high and best road to public respect,
confidence and support.

This must be the answer to our critics.