

Moral Leadership

As both an educator and the leader of a large and diverse learning community, a university president is occasionally called upon to provide a certain degree of moral leadership. Of course, today's presidents no longer are expected to teach the capstone course in moral philosophy, but they do have both the opportunity and the obligation to provide leadership on an array of value-related issues on the campus, ranging from the protection of academic values to institutional integrity to the pastoral care of students, faculty, staff and other members of the university family.

Certainly this is a natural and appropriate role of presidents in areas related to student behavior, from substance abuse to vandalism of the campus to sexual or racial harassment. Although incidents are less frequent, the conduct of faculty and staff also sometimes merits both decisive action and perhaps even public comment to protect the integrity of the institution. In today's post-Sarbanes-Oxley corporate environment, institutional integrity in areas such as finance and business practices has become all-important. While some presidents choose to delegate these activities to others such as student affairs staff, the provost and deans, or financial officers and internal auditors, depending on the issue, others use these incidents as teachable moments to stress the important values of educational institutions.

However, there are many university activities in which the opportunity for moral leadership by the president is complicated because of ambiguity or risk. One clear example is human rights and dignity, particularly in sensitive areas such as racial diversity or gay rights. To be sure, most university presidents embrace the fundamental values underlying such causes, of equal opportunity and social justice. Yet how many presidents are willing to use the bully pulpit of their office or take decisive actions to address these issues, when progress may be difficult and the risks posed by an increasingly conservative society, not to mention the strongly held views of many political leaders in national, state, and university governance are considerable? Little wonder that many presidents decide to keep their powder dry and let others carry on the battle.

Another obvious opportunity for moral leadership involves intercollegiate athletics, where rampant commercialism has not only exploited young student-athletes but also imposes a show-business culture that is corrosive to academic values. How many university presidents are willing to challenge the intractable training and traveling

schedules that interfere with the academic progress of student-athletes or their exposure to the risk of serious injury that accompanies competition at a professional level, just to satisfy the greed of celebrity coaches and insatiable appetites for more revenue and more facilities of ambitious athletic directors?

Many deplore the relative silence of university presidents on broader social issues such as corporate integrity, poverty, and international conflict. The usual rationalization is that the demands placed upon the presidency by the complexity of the contemporary university simply do not allow such activities, suggesting that management responsibilities, fund-raising, and political duties swamp the time available for moral and ethical leadership.¹ Some even suspect the influence of other considerations such as the fear of alienating donors or triggering political retaliation. Today most university presidents are acutely sensitive to the need to distinguish when they are speaking and acting *ex-cathedra*, on behalf of their institution, and when they are merely stating their own personal views on a subject. As Vartan Gregorian noted concerning his presidency at Brown University, "It is not natural for me, but I must speak with tact and diplomacy. I have come to agree with Lord Chesterfield that wisdom is like carrying a watch. Unless asked, you don't have to tell everybody what time it is."²

Beyond this, however, is the simple fact that many—perhaps most in our society—no longer believe that university presidents have any particular expertise or wisdom concerning issues beyond their campus. Some even question whether many presidents, hired more as fund-raisers, politicians, and managers, have the academic training, intellectual vision, and moral authority to address such issues even on their campuses.

However, in defense of my colleagues, I should note that it has been my experience that a great many college and university leaders do provide moral leadership, but through deeds rather than words. Here we must remember that early college presidents led very small institutions, typically with fewer than several hundred students and a dozen faculty members, in an age in which rhetoric was the primary means of addressing moral issues. Today, the contemporary university president assumes a role as a chief executive officer, addressing issues both on campus and off through example, decision, and action. Instead of measuring moral leadership by the statements of university presidents on controversial issues, it may be more appropriate to study instead their decisions and actions. Clearly as one who believed strongly in the admonition: "Don't listen to what I say but instead watch what I do!", this latter perspective most clearly reflects my own view of moral leadership by the university president.

The Challenges to Moral Leadership

An ancient Chinese proverb states: “The way to do is to be.” Clearly moral leadership begins at the top, with the integrity, both real and perceived, of the president. University leaders who have problems with personal integrity and morality are unlikely to command the high ground and possess the credibility necessary for moral leadership. Although some are able to disguise these shortcomings in the near term, one cannot fool all of the people all of the time.

Here I am not talking so much about university presidents who are outright scoundrels, although throughout history the university presidency has probably attracted its fair share of such miscreants. Rather, I am more concerned with those who fail to see any correlation between their personal behavior and their expectations for the integrity of their institution. To be sure, many of the trappings of the presidency have a royal character: a large, stately home; chauffeur-driven cars; first-class travel and lodging; a large and humble staff; VIP treatment; a lifestyle of the rich and famous. But when presidents begin to demand such royal treatment as an entitlement of rank, creating and enjoying court life much like a 17th century French monarch, setting themselves above the norms constraining other members of the campus community in areas such as financial accountability and personal austerity, they quickly lose their ethical compass, not to mention their moral authority.

The examples are all too numerous. In some cases they amount simply to bad judgment, such as excessive expenditures on the president’s house. Others involve more serious ethical lapses, such as tolerating the exploitation of students or sacrificing institutional welfare for personal career advancement. While this can be self-correcting—history provides many examples when losing one’s head over excessive personal expenditures leads to losing one’s head by the axe—the damage to the integrity of the institution can be considerable.

Truth is another area where many presidents can have difficulty. New presidents are sometimes unaccustomed to the public attention given their every word and when blindsided at a public presentation, sometimes cut corners with the truth. Others come from backgrounds in law or politics where distorting the truth is not only legalized but admired. Needless to say, a cavalier disregard for the truth can soon trample academic values.

Somewhat more abstract, yet of comparable importance to moral leadership, is an understanding and acceptance of those key values and traditions that undergird an

institution. Some of these are fundamental academic values such as academic freedom, scholarly integrity, and openness. Others trace back to the institutional saga, the history and culture, of the particular institution. Effective presidents accept, build upon, reinforce, and vigorously defend such values. Institution-hopping short-timers ignore them.

As in other leadership areas, one can find ample examples of most of the do's and don't's in the history of Michigan's presidents. Although a forceful advocate for scholarly values, Michigan's first president, Henry Tappan, preferred a lifestyle a bit too flamboyant for the frontier village that was then Ann Arbor (including a taste for fine wines), and this was an important factor in undermining his leadership. C. C. Little met his demise in part by choosing the wrong areas for moral leadership: criticizing temperance and promoting birth control in a conservative state.

When James Angell became the president of the University of Michigan, it was already one of the largest public universities in the nation. A man of strong Christian faith, Angell thought it natural to suggest that state and public universities should have the same deeply rooted concern for religious values as their older denominational college counterparts.³ Perhaps of most significance for the future of the university, however, was his articulation of a more fundamental purpose of public higher education aimed at serving the working class, the common man.

Among Michigan's more recent presidents, Robben Fleming also was known as a person of high integrity, with small town Midwestern roots and a modest lifestyle. His modesty and tolerant manner, formed from years of mediating contentious labor contracts, were factors that contributed to the strong public support he received when he spoke out courageously on controversial matters such as the war in Vietnam and racial justice.

The entrepreneurial nature of the contemporary university, in which individual faculty and staff are increasingly responsible for generating the resources to support their activities from myriad sources, can undermine not only the sense of loyalty to the institution, but any common agreement and acceptance of fundamental values. The many communities of the multiversity respond to different values and different moral perspectives. The social disruptions of the student movements of the 1960s and 1970s, leading not only to the rejection of *in loco parentis* but also the traditional values of the university, perceived as part of the oppressive establishment, were also contributors to this loss of moral cohesiveness. As universities accepted less moral responsibility for the lives of students and lowered expectations for faculty loyalty, they severed the linkages to their tradition, heritage, and values.

While certainly challenging, the vast, complex, and frequently political responsibilities of the contemporary president should not be used as an excuse to avoid moral leadership. Effective leadership usually entails a certain degree of risk. Moreover, to change an institution in a fundamental way, the president has to lead from the front line, not from a command bunker far from the action.

To illustrate the opportunity for moral leadership by the president of today's university, I have chosen several examples from my own experience: Michigan's leadership in demonstrating the importance of diversity to excellence in higher education, the effort to change the student culture to stress personal responsibility, and the importance of integrity in university business practices. Each example illustrates somewhat different aspects of both the opportunity for and challenge to the moral leadership of the contemporary university president. Finally, although somewhat tangential to moral and ethical leadership, I have included a discussion of the president's responsibility for providing pastoral care and concern for the diverse elements of the campus community.

Social Diversity and Academic Excellence

The effort of the University of Michigan in the 1980s to bring diverse racial and ethnic groups more fully into the life of the university provides an excellent example of the moral leadership that can be exerted by a university president. This process of institutional transformation was guided by a strategic plan known as the Michigan Mandate, which achieved very significant progress toward the objective of social diversity, leading eventually to a landmark decision by the United States Supreme Court in 2003.

As with most of higher education, the history of diversity at Michigan is complex and often contradictory. There have been many times when the institution seemed to take a step forward, only to be followed by two steps backward. As I noted in the discussion of institutional saga in Chapter 1, Michigan was one of the earliest universities to admit African-Americans and women in the late 19th century. It took pride in its large enrollments of international students at a time when the state itself was decidedly insular. Yet it faltered as minority enrollments languished and racial tensions flared in the 1960s and 1970s, only to be jolted occasionally into ineffective action by student activism—the Black Action Movement in the 1970s and the United Coalition Against Racism in the 1980s. Nonetheless, access and equality have always been central

goals of the institution. Michigan has consistently been at the forefront of the struggle for inclusiveness in higher education.

When I became provost and then president in the late 1980s, it had become apparent that the university had made inadequate progress in its goal to reflect the rich diversity of our nation and our world among its faculty, students and staff. In assessing this situation, we concluded that although the University had approached the challenge of serving an increasingly diverse population with the best of intentions, it simply had not developed and executed a plan capable of achieving sustainable results. More significantly, we believed that achieving our goals for a diverse campus would require a very major change in the institution itself.

It was the long-term strategic focus of our planning that proved to be critical, because universities do not change quickly and easily any more than do the societies of which they are a part. Michigan would have to leave behind many reactive and uncoordinated efforts that had characterized its past and move toward a more strategic approach designed to achieve long-term systemic change. Sacrifices would be necessary as traditional roles and privileges were challenged. In particular, we understood the limitations of focusing only on affirmative action; that is, on access, retention, and representation. The key, rather, would be to focus on the success of underrepresented minorities on our campus, as students, as faculty, and as leaders. We believed that without deeper, more fundamental institutional change these efforts by themselves would inevitably fail—as they had throughout the 1970s and 1980s.

The challenge was to persuade the university community that there was a real stake for everyone in seizing the moment to chart a more diverse future. People needed to believe that the gains to be achieved through diversity would more than compensate for the necessary sacrifices. The first and most important step was to link diversity and excellence as the two most compelling goals before the institution, recognizing that these goals were not only complementary but would be tightly linked in the multicultural society characterizing our nation and the world in the future. As we moved ahead, we began to refer to the plan as *The Michigan Mandate: A Strategic Linking of Academic Excellence and Social Diversity*.⁴

The mission and goals of the Michigan Mandate were stated quite simply: 1) To recognize that diversity and excellence are complementary and compelling goals for the university and to make a firm commitment to their achievement. 2) To commit to the recruitment, support, and success of members of historically underrepresented groups among our students, faculty, staff, and leadership. 3) To build on our campus an

environment that sought, nourished, and sustained diversity and pluralism and that valued and respected the dignity and worth of every individual.



The annual Martin Luther King Day Unity March

A series of carefully focused strategic actions was developed to move the University toward these objectives. These actions were framed by the values and traditions of the University, an understanding of our unique culture characterized by a high degree of faculty and unit freedom and autonomy, and animated by a highly competitive and entrepreneurial spirit. The strategy was both complex and pervasive, involving not only a considerable commitment of resources (e.g., fully funding all financial aid for minority graduate students) but also some highly innovative programs such as our Target of Opportunity program for recruiting minority faculty.⁵ It also was one of those efforts that we believed required leadership on the front lines by the president, since only by demonstrating commitment from the top could we demand and achieve comparable commitments throughout the institution.

By the mid 1990s Michigan could point to significant progress in achieving diversity. The representation of underrepresented minority students, faculty, and staff more than doubled over the decade of the effort. But, perhaps even more significantly, the success of underrepresented minorities at the University improved even more remarkably, with graduation rates rising to the highest among public universities, promotion and tenure success of minority faculty members becoming comparable to their majority colleagues, and a growing number of appointments of minorities to

leadership positions in the University. The campus climate not only became more accepting and supportive of diversity, but students and faculty began to come to Michigan because of its growing reputation for a diverse campus.

Perhaps most significantly, as the campus became more racially and ethnically diverse, the quality of the students, faculty, and academic programs of the University increased to their highest level in history. This latter fact reinforced our contention that the aspirations of diversity and excellence were not only compatible but, in fact, highly correlated. By every measure, the Michigan Mandate was a remarkable success, moving the University beyond our original goals of a more diverse campus.

But, of course, this story does not end with the successful achievements of the Michigan Mandate in 1996 when I stepped down as president. Beginning first with litigation in Texas (the Hopwood decision) and then successful referendum efforts in California and Washington, conservative groups such as the Center for Individual Rights began to attack policies such as the use of race in college admissions. Perhaps because of Michigan's success in the Michigan Mandate, the University soon became a target for those groups seeking to reverse affirmative action with two cases filed against the University in 1997, one challenging the admissions policies of undergraduates, and the second challenging those in our Law School. Although I had been succeeded by Lee Bollinger by that time, I was still named personally as a defendant in one of the cases (here I referred to myself as the "et. al" in the *Gratz vs. Bollinger, et. al.* case), although I had little influence on the strategies to defend both cases to the level of the Supreme Court, aside from giving day after day of depositions and having all of the records of my presidency digitized, archived, and posted publicly by our university history library.⁶

At Michigan, we felt it was important that we carry the water for the rest of higher education to re-establish this important principle. Throughout our history, our university has been committed to extending more broadly educational opportunities to the working class, to women, to racial and ethnic minorities, and to students from every state and nation. It was natural for us to lead yet another battle for equity and social justice.

Although the 2003 Supreme Court decisions were split, supporting the use of race in the admissions policies of our Law School and opposing the formula-based approach used for undergraduate admissions, the most important ruling in both cases stated, in the words of the court: "Student body diversity is a compelling state interest that can justify the use of race in university admission. When race-based action is necessary to further a compelling governmental interest, such action does not violate the constitutional guarantee of equal protection so long as the narrow-tailoring requirement

is also satisfied.”⁷ Hence, the Supreme Court decisions on the Michigan cases reaffirmed those policies and practices long used by those selective colleges and universities throughout the United States. But more significantly, it reaffirmed both the importance of diversity in higher education and established the principle that, appropriately designed, race could be used as a factor in programs aimed at achieving diverse campuses. Hence the battle was won, the principle was firmly established by the highest court of the land. We had won. Or so we thought...

While an important battle had been won with the Supreme Court ruling, we soon learned that the war for diversity in higher education was far from over. As university lawyers across the nation began to ponder over the court ruling, they persuaded their institutions to accept a very narrow interpretation of the Supreme Court decisions as the safest course. Actually, this pattern began to appear at the University of Michigan during the early stages of the litigation process. Even as the university launched the expensive legal battle to defend the use of race in college admissions following my presidency, it throttled back many of the effective policies and programs created by the Michigan Mandate, in part out of concern these might complicate the litigation battle. As a consequence, the enrollment of underrepresented minorities began almost immediately to drop at Michigan, eventually declining from 1996 to 2002 by almost 25% overall and by as much as 50% in some of our professional schools. Although there was an effort to rationalize this by suggesting that the publicity given the litigation over admissions policies was discouraging minority applicants, there is little doubt in my mind that it was the dismantling of the Michigan Mandate that really set us back.

Since the Supreme Court decision, many universities have begun to back away from programs aimed at recruitment, financial aid, and academic enrichment for minority undergraduate students, either eliminating entirely such programs or opening them up to non-minority students from low-income households. Threats of further litigation by conservative groups has intensified this retrenchment. As a consequence, the enrollments of under-represented minorities are dropping again in many universities across the nation (including Michigan).⁸ After the years of effort in building successful programs such as the Michigan Mandate and defending the importance of diversity in higher education all the way to the Supreme Court, it would be tragic indeed if the decisions in the Michigan case caused more harm than good by unleashing the lawyers on our campus to block successful efforts to broaden educational opportunity and advance the cause of social justice.

Ironically, the uses of affirmative action (and programs that involved racial preference) actually were not high on the agenda of the Michigan Mandate. Rather our

success involved commitment, engagement, and accountability for results. Yet there is ample evidence today from states such as California and Texas that a restriction to race-neutral policies will drastically limit the ability of elite programs and institutions to reflect diversity in any meaningful way. As former UC President Richard Atkinson noted in a recent address in Ann Arbor, "Proposition 209 asked the University of California to attract a student body that reflects the state's diversity while ignoring two of the major constituents of this diversity—race and ethnicity. A decade later, the legacy of this contradictory mandate is clear. Despite enormous efforts, we have failed badly to achieve the goal of a student body that encompasses California's diverse population. The evidence suggests that without attention to race and ethnicity this goal will ultimately recede into impossibility."⁹

Yet it is also the case that many today believe that despite the importance of diversity, racial preferences are contrary to American values of individual rights and the policy of color-blindness that animated the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Atkinson suggests that we need a new strategy that recognizes the continuing corrosive force of racial inequality but does not stop there. We need a strategy grounded in the broad American tradition of opportunity because opportunity is a value that Americans understand and support. We need a strategy which makes it clear that our society has a stake in ensuring that every American has an opportunity to succeed—and that every American, in turn, has a stake in equality of opportunities and social justice in our nation.

Even while pursuing the racial diversity goals of the Michigan Mandate, we realized we could not ignore another glaring inequity in campus life. If we meant to embrace diversity in its full meaning, we had to attend to the long-standing concerns of women faculty, students, and staff. Here, once again, it took time—and considerable effort by many women colleagues (including my wife and daughters)—to educate me and the rest of my administration to the point where we began to understand that the university simply had not succeeded in including and empowering women as full and equal partners in all aspects of its life and leadership.

In faculty hiring and retention, despite the increasing pools of women in many fields, the number of new hires of women had changed only slowly during the late twentieth century in most research universities. In some disciplines such as the physical sciences and engineering, the shortages were particularly acute. We continued to suffer from the "glass ceiling" phenomenon: that is, because of hidden prejudice women were unable to break through to the ranks of senior faculty and administrators, though no formal constraints prohibited their advancement. The proportion of women decreased steadily as one moved up the academic ladder. Additionally, there appeared to be an

increasing tendency to hire women off the tenure track as postdoctoral scholars, lecturers, clinicians, or research scientists. The rigid division among various faculty appointments offered little or no opportunity for these women to move into tenured faculty positions.

Many of our concerns derived from the extreme concentration of women in positions of lower status and power—as students, lower-pay staff, and junior faculty. The most effective lever for change might well be a rapid increase in the number of women holding positions of high status, visibility, and power. This would not only change the balance of power in decision-making, but it would also change the perception of who and what matters in the university. Finally, we needed to bring university policies and practices into better alignment with the needs and concerns of women students in a number of areas including campus safety, student housing, student life, financial aid, and childcare.

To address these challenges, the university developed and executed a second strategic effort known as the *Michigan Agenda for Women*. While the actions proposed were intended to address the concerns of women students, faculty, and staff, many of them benefited men as well. In developing the Michigan Agenda, we knew that different strategies were necessary for different parts of the university. Academic units varied enormously in the degree to which women participated as faculty, staff, and students. What might work in one area could fail miserably in another. Some fields, such as the physical sciences, had few women represented among their students and faculty. For them, it was necessary to design and implement a strategy which spanned the entire pipeline, from K-12 outreach to undergraduate and graduate education, to faculty recruiting and development. For others such as the social sciences or law, there already was a strong pool of women students, and the challenge became one of attracting women from this pool into graduate and professional studies and eventually into academe. Still other units such as education and many departments in humanities and sciences had strong participation of women among students and junior faculty, but suffered from low participation in the senior ranks and in leadership roles.

Like the Michigan Mandate, the vision was again both simple yet compelling: that by the year 2000 the university would become the leader among American universities in promoting and achieving the success of women as faculty, students, and staff. Again, as president, I took a highly personal role in this effort, meeting with hundreds of groups on and off campus, to listen to their concerns and invite their participation in the initiative. Rapidly there was again significant progress on many fronts for women students, faculty, and staff, including the appointment of a number of

senior women faculty and administrators as deans and executive officers, improvement in campus safety, and improvement of family care policies and child care resources. In 1997 Michigan appointed its first woman provost, Nancy Cantor (now president at Syracuse University). Finally, in 2002, the University of Michigan named its first woman president, Mary Sue Coleman.



Listening and learning about the concerns of women faculty.

The university also took steps to eliminate those factors that prevented other groups from participating fully in its activities. For example, we extended our anti-discrimination policies to encompass sexual orientation and extended staff benefits and housing opportunities to same-sex couples. This was a particularly controversial action because it was strongly opposed not only by the religious right but also by several of the university's regents. Yet, this was also an issue of equity, deeply frustrating to many faculty, staff, and students, which required attention. Harold Shapiro had tried on several occasions to persuade the regents to extend its anti-discrimination policies to include the gay community, without success. Finally, with a supportive, albeit short-lived, Democratic majority among the regents, I decided to move ahead rapidly to put in the policy while there was still political support, no matter how slim. The anticipated negative reaction was rapid and angry—an attempt by the Legislature to deduct from our appropriation the estimated cost of the same-sex couple benefits (effectively blocked by our constitutional autonomy), a personal phone call to me from our Republican governor (although it was a call he did not want to make and did not insist upon any

particular action), and a concerted and successful effort to place two conservative Republican candidates on our Board of Regents in the next election (resulting in the horror of a 4-4 divided board during my last two years as president).

We were determined to defend this action, however, as part of a broader strategy. We had become convinced that the university had both a compelling interest in and responsibility to create a welcoming community, encouraging respect for diversity in all of the characteristics that can be used to describe humankind: age, race, ethnicity, nationality, gender, religious belief, sexual orientation, political beliefs, economic background, geographical background.

Student Affairs

The social disruptions of the student protest movements of the 1960s and 1970s led to the rejection of not only *in loco parentis* but as well as many of the traditional values of the university, which were also perceived as the agenda of the oppressive establishment. As students pushed the faculty and the administration out of their lives, the universities themselves accepted less moral responsibility for the lives of students, in part out of fear of liability and litigation that might result from a deeper engagement, and in part because of the shift in faculty interests and loyalty in the entrepreneurial university. As a consequence, the students in most large universities lost the linkages to many of those institutional values and traditions that had shaped the learning and lives of earlier generations.

My own educational experience had been in the early 1960s when value-laden issues such as the civil rights movement energized the campus, in contrast to the later nihilistic protests against the establishment. Hence I believed strongly in the role of the university president to provide moral leadership for the student body. In my early speeches I challenged students to understand that freedom must be earned through responsible behavior. More specifically, I called for “a new respect for limits that carries with it concern for the moral values and restraints that unify communities and keep human conduct within acceptable bounds. Universities cannot avoid the task. Like it or not, they will affect the moral development of their students by the ways in which they administer their rules of conduct, by the standard they achieve in dealing with ethical issues confronting the institution, by the many who counsel their students and coach their athletic teams.” I went on to urge that “universities should be among the first to reaffirm the importance of basic values, such as honesty, promise keeping, free

expression, and nonviolence, for these are not only principles essential to civilized society; they are values on which all learning and discovery ultimately depend.”¹⁰

Two particular issues illustrate this approach: the effort to put into place a student disciplinary policy and my efforts to change the destructive culture of our fraternities. One of the university’s hangovers from the volatile days of the 1970s had been the absence of a code of student conduct. The elimination of this policy in 1974 had been intended only as a temporary lapse pending the development and adoption of a new and more contemporary code. But student government was given veto power over the process, and it had consistently exercised this veto to prevent the development or adoption of a new disciplinary policy. As a result, the university had gone for almost 15 years without any of the student disciplinary policies characterizing essentially every other university in the nation. The only option available for student disciplinary action was to utilize an obscure Regents’ Bylaw that gave the president the authority to intervene personally to handle each incident. Although the university knew it was at some risk in the absence of such a student code—and, indeed, out of compliance with federal laws that required such policies to govern areas such as substance abuse—each time an effort was made to develop a code, it was blocked by activist students (occasionally aided and abetted by a maverick regent, who appeared in this case to be a libertarian at heart).¹¹

There was yet another related issue of great concern to many of our students—but also providing opportunities for protest to others who resented any authority: campus safety. For most of the university’s history, Ann Arbor was a rather simple and safe residential community. But as Southeastern Michigan evolved in the post-war era to metroplex with intricate freeway networks linking communities together, Ann Arbor acquired more of an urban character, with all of the safety concerns plaguing any large city. While many aspects of campus safety could be addressed through straightforward and noncontroversial actions, such as improving lighting or putting security locks on residence hall entrances, there was one issue unique to the university that proved to be more volatile: the absence of a campus police force. Unlike every other large university in America, the university had never developed its own campus police and instead relied on community police and sheriff deputies. Throughout the 1980s, it became more and more evident that local law-enforcement authorities simply would never regard the university as their top priority. Their responsiveness to campus crime and other safety concerns was increasingly intermittent and unreliable. Furthermore, most other universities had found that the training and sensitivity required by police dealing with

students was far more likely to be present in a campus-based police organization than in any community police force.

The issues of both the code of student conduct and a campus police force came into focus in 1992 when a university task force on campus safety strongly recommended that both be established. Although surveys indicated that most students supported both steps, a number of student groups—including student government and the Michigan Daily—rapidly put together a coalition to protest “No cops, no codes, no guns.” Like most protests resisting efforts to bring the university in line with the rest of higher education, these rapidly faded. The campus police force was established and demonstrated not only that they could reduce crime on campus, but further that they were far more sensitive to student needs and concerns than the local Ann Arbor police. Several years later students again protested, this time to urge more campus police in preference to the use of city police.

There was also major change in Greek life during my years at the helm. Since the 1960s, the university had generally kept at arm's-length distance from fraternities and sororities, even though over 6,000 undergraduates each year chose these as their residential environment. This reluctance to become involved grew, in part, from the university's concern about liability for the institution should it become too closely linked with fraternity behavior. This attitude of benign neglect changed in the late 1980s, when the university—and the Ann Arbor community—became increasingly concerned about a series of fraternity incidents involving drinking and sexual harassment. The university concluded that it had a major responsibility both to its students and the Ann Arbor community to become more involved with the Greeks.

As president, I finally decided it was time to step in by calling a special meeting with the presidents of all of the university's fraternities to address the growing concerns about their destructive behavior. Here I reminded them of Michigan's heritage of leadership, and I challenged them to strengthen their own capacity to discipline renegade members through organizations such as the Interfraternity Council. Although I issued a strong challenge for self-discipline, I also indicated quite clearly that the university would act with whatever force was necessary to protect the student body and the surrounding community. (More precisely, I suggested that if their disruptive behavior continued, I would come down on fraternities “like a ton of bricks.”)

This challenge was picked up by fraternity leaders, and a new spirit of responsible behavior and discipline began to appear. Policies were adopted forbidding drinking during rush along with strong sanctions for entertaining minors from the Ann Arbor community in the houses. With the arrival of Maureen Hartford as vice-president

for student affairs, the university took further steps by hiring a staff member to serve as liaison with the Greeks. This is not to suggest that misbehavior in Greek life vanished from the campus. Indeed, several fraternities suffered from such a pattern of poor behavior that their national organizations agreed to withdraw their charter, and they were removed from campus. But in general, the nature of Greek life became one of far greater responsibility and self-discipline.

Institutional Integrity

Closely related to a president's responsibility for moral leadership are those values and ethical principles undergirding institutional integrity. As Mark Yudof, Chancellor of the University of Texas, has observed: "This is the era of Enron; this is the era of disclosure. This wave has already swept over the public schools, and now it is approaching higher education. Either you help to shape this accountability revolution so that it is done in an intelligent way, or you're going to get swept over by it."¹²

Of course, part of the problem here is the very complexity of the issues and ethical incidents. To be sure, there are obvious cases that amount essentially to criminal activity, for example the cases with Enron, Tyco, and Worldcom. But what about more subtle business practices such as the predatory behavior of Microsoft to prevent competitors from accessing their operating system, or the American automobile industry's efforts to block enhanced fuel economy, or pharmaceutical companies ignoring the needs of children for vaccinations and instead focusing drug development to the far more lucrative market of aging baby boomers?

The same is true in higher education that has its own list of high profile ethical lapses: the loss of life in clinical trials conducted by faculty with interests in associated spinoff companies; the blatant conflict of interest of trustees cutting business deals with one another at their institutions' expense; college sports scandals involving sexual assault and substance abuse; or a host of extreme cases of faculty misbehavior in areas such as scientific integrity, sexual harassment of students, and so forth.

But here, too, there are more subtle issues that raise serious ethical questions: The "management" rather than the "avoidance" of conflict of interest in intellectual property commercialization that is clearly distorting the scientific enterprise, limiting publication and even the cooperation among investigators; the tolerance of the abysmal graduation rates of college football and basketball players, now well under 50%, that clearly represent exploitation of these young students at a time when their coaches'

compensation has soared to truly obscene levels; and exposing our students to credit-card scams and other predatory commercial practices on our campuses.

Just as with the business community, lapses in ethical behavior can cause very great damage to the reputation and integrity of the university and higher education more generally, undermining its privileged place in our society. Note that when one institution stumbles, we all get tarnished as public opinion surveys clearly indicate! It all comes down to the need to make judgments and decisions on increasingly complex cases. This requires a solid foundation of institutional values that frequently goes beyond what the law would require. It also requires an extensive program of education about fundamental institutional and social values for students, faculty, and staff, not just a focus on the laws. Put another way, just as with the business community, universities are at increasing risk if they lack a clearly understood and accepted *code of ethics* and along with a *process* both for educating the university community and continually reviewing and revising when necessary both the code of ethics and the policies and guidelines for its implementation.

So where are the key areas of concern? Clearly, we must include those areas that relate directly to the fundamental education and scholarly mission of the university such as academic integrity and research accountability. But universities are also places charged with developing human potential and serving society. Hence there are also concerns such as faculty-student relationships, exploitation of students, and the protection of human subjects. Since universities are places where the young are not only educated but socialized, there are also issues such as student disciplinary policies, substance abuse concerns, sexual harassment and assault, and a host of “isms” such as racism, sexism, elitism, and extremism to confront. Finally, since many of our institutions are multi-billion global conglomerates, higher education also faces most of the same challenges with business practices characterizing any publicly-traded corporation.

Today there are many factors that are intensifying both the importance and complexity of ethical behavior in higher education. For example, the soaring commercialism of intellectual property, the increasing university dependence on business activities (e.g., endowment management), the faculty dependence upon external compensation (consulting, publishing, equity interests), and the increasing pressures on auxiliary activities such as hospitals and intercollegiate athletics all raise serious conflict-of-interest and business practice issues comparable to those addressed by the Sarbanes-Oxley Act in the corporate setting. As mission creep continues to expand the complexity and scope of universities with new enterprises, it also entails

new risks, such as the equity interests associated with technology transfer, real estate ventures, expansion of health care systems, international activities, and technology (software piracy). Driving it all is the increasingly Darwinian nature of the competitive environment in higher education, for the best faculty and students, for research grants and private gifts, for winning athletic programs, and for reputation.

More fundamentally, in an era in which the marketplace is replacing public policy in determining the nature of higher education in America, one must question the degree to which financial gain is replacing public purpose in determining the actions of universities and their faculty, staff, students, and governing boards. It is my belief that we have reached a tipping point that requires more rigorous attention to institutional values and ethical practices in higher education. Clearly the privileged place of universities demands higher standards than those simply required by law or public perception. After all, values are far more important than laws. There is a very significant difference between legal behavior and ethical behavior. The law provides very little guidance as to what is or is not ethical behavior, particular in an academic institution where values such as academic freedom, scholarly, rigorous inquiry, and openness simply require higher standards than those merely tolerated by the law.

The lesson of the past several years of corporate misbehavior—Enron, Worldcom, etc.—involves the importance of both process and transparency. The corrective medicine of Sarbanes-Oxley demands that corporations and their boards of directors not only have to be fiscally accountable, but they also have to be able to prove it! Some universities such as the University of Texas have already adopted such reforms as best practices. There are increasing calls to strengthen financial controls at colleges not simply by government, but also by credit-rating agencies, accounting and law firms, and private foundations. But while these may pose challenges—albeit necessary—the call for greater accountability and transparency may also present important opportunities.

Here governing boards must be particularly attentive, since they will increasingly be held to the same standards as the boards of directors of publicly traded corporations, both in their own competency and the processes they utilize for assuring institutional integrity. Furthermore, governing boards must be more scrupulous in their oversight both of the compensation and expenditures of senior university administrators, with particular attention paid to the university president. In public universities this extends to transparency, since the failure to disclose key aspects of presidential compensation or expenditures can be just as damaging politically as the inappropriate nature of these decisions.

Finally, achieving public trust and confidence in higher education may require some reform of the academy itself. The academy claims to be a profession, much like law, medicine, and engineering. Members of such learned profession agree to maintain high standards of performance, to restrain self-interest, and to promote ideals of public service in the areas of responsibility. In return, society grants them substantial autonomy to regulate themselves.

Many of the recent scandals in business practices resulted from professionals such as accountants, lawyers, bankers, security analysts, and corporate officers allowing self-interest and greed to trump integrity. Rather than acting as a constraint against excess, they facilitated unrestrained self-interest. As a result, these professions are increasingly losing their autonomy, as government steps in to provide through laws such as the Sarbanes-Oxley Act strict regulations for professional practice largely because the professions have lost the sense of public trust.

There is an important lesson here for higher education. Like other professions, the professoriate is granted the autonomy of academic freedom as long as it is able to demonstrate that it has the capacity to set and enforce standards for ethical behavior. Yet, in all candor, it has failed to do so. Ethical codes such as those adopted by the American Association of University Professors and various disciplinary societies are largely vague and toothless. The evidence suggests that most faculty members fail to set high standards for the behavior of their colleagues, frequently tolerating the most blatant misbehavior of colleagues. The academy's credibility to students is undermined by inattention to teaching, exploitation of student relationships, and numerous examples of conflict of interest (e.g., scholarly ethics).

As a result of its benign neglect of professional ethics, the professoriate could find itself facing the same intrusion of regulation and constraint now characterizing the legal, accounting, and business professions should the public lose confidence that it is upholding its end of the social contract that provides academic freedom and autonomy. Trustees need to act to hold the professoriate more accountable for maintaining its end of the social compact. They should require orientation programs for new faculty and include substantial material on ethics and values in graduate education (key to producing the next generation of professors).

More specifically, the increasing demand for institutional accountability and integrity may provide an important opportunity to re-insert the subject of values and ethics into the curriculum. Key to institutional integrity is an understanding and acceptance of those values and traditions that under gird an institution. Some of these

are fundamental academic values such as academic freedom, scholarly integrity, and openness. Others trace back to the institutional saga, the history and culture, of the particular institution. But unfortunately all such discussion of such values seems to be missing in action from the campus these days. Presidential and trustee leadership can fill some of the gap created by faculty reluctance to discuss moral values with students.

Today's climate of increasing public scrutiny and accountability may present an opportunity. It is easier to make the case that it is time for universities to take strong action to stimulate a dialog concerning and a commitment to embracing fundamental values and ethics into their activities—certainly their practices, but perhaps even more so their fundamental activities of teaching and scholarship.

The Bully Pulpit

It was my experience that the opportunities for moral leadership by the president were not only abundant but also highly influential. While examples such as those described in this chapter were important, and to be sure, required a certain amount of intestinal fortitude and tolerance for danger, they concerned the mainstream interests of the university.

Yet, like other presidents of major universities, including my predecessors at Michigan, I also used the bully pulpit to address moral issues of broader social import such as the deteriorating social foundations of our families and communities, the growing divisions in our society (by race, class, age, religion, political persuasion), the increasing distrust of social institutions, the eroding appreciation of quality, and the growing imbalance between consumption to satisfy present desires at the expense of investment for the future. After such “fire-and-brimstone” addresses, I would always try to end on an upbeat note, albeit one of challenge:

America—and Michigan—have called upon some generations more than others for exceptional service and sacrifice, to defend and preserve our way of life for future generations, from taming Frontier America and the Revolutionary War to the Civil War, securing through suffrage the voting rights of all of our citizens, Wars I and II, and the Civil Rights Movement. Americans have always answered the call. Now, no less than in those earlier struggles, our generation must rise to the challenge to serve. This time there are no foreign enemies. Our battlefield is at home and with ourselves. I've no doubt that in the end we will prevail through our collective wisdom and resolve.

Of course, with each sacred cow challenged, with each ox gored, I would use up a bit more political capital. But I believed these were messages that folks needed to hear, and as president of the University of Michigan, it was my responsibility to be the messenger, even if it shortened my tenure in the process. And sometimes people even agreed with me! Or at least they respected my right to be heard.¹³



A particular dangerous bully pulpit: CBS's *60 Minutes!*
(Mike Wallace, Leslie Stahl, Steve Croft, Cokie Roberts, and Barbara Walters)

Pastoral Care

The contemporary university is much like a city, comprised of a bewildering array of neighborhoods and communities. To the faculty, it has almost a feudal structure, divided up into highly specialized academic units, frequently with little interaction even with disciplinary neighbors, much less with the rest of the campus. To the student body, the university is an exciting, confusing, and sometimes frustrating complexity of challenges and opportunities, rules and regulations, drawing them together only in cosmic events such as fall football games or campus protests. To the staff, the university has a more subtle character, with the parts woven together by policies, procedures, and practices evolving over decades, all too frequently invisible or ignored by the students and faculty. In some ways, the modern university is so complex, so multi-faceted, that it seems that the closer one is to it, the more intimately one is

involved with its activities, the harder it is to understand its entirety, to miss the forest for the trees.

But a university is also a diverse community of many families: faculty, staff, and students, to be sure, but also deans and executive officers, office staff and former presidents. As university president one becomes not only a member of each of these families, but also assumes responsibilities to understand, support, encourage, and protect them, to understand their concerns and their aspirations, and to advance their causes. It is this pastoral role that is among the most important, challenging, yet also most rewarding aspects of university leadership.

In the early days of American higher education, many college presidents played a direct role in student life, knowing each student by name and following their progress, much as would the headmaster of a preparatory academy. Yet from its earliest days, Michigan's presidents followed a different path. They sought to build a great university not a college, where faculty scholarship and professional education would be placed on an equal footing with the training and socialization of young adults. Both Henry Tappan and James Angell were strongly opposed to college traditions such as dormitories and rigid discipline. Instead they believed that students should be treated as adults, living independently in the community, rather than subjected to a common and carefully prescribed living experience. Later attempts to impose the collegiate model at Michigan, such as those by C. C. Little, met fierce resistance from both faculty and students alike—and continues to do so today.

Beyond this striking difference in educational philosophy, the size and diversity of large universities such as Michigan, with tens of thousands of students spread across hundreds of different disciplines and professional majors, dictates much of the presidential role with respect to students. Certainly, the president may have significant impact on the student body through involvement in key policy areas such as admissions, student conduct, and student extracurricular activities (including, of course, intercollegiate athletics). But much of the president's direct interaction with students is to symbolic activities such as presiding over student events such as convocations, honors ceremonies, and, of course, commencement.

Some university presidents still attempt to teach a regularly scheduled course and hold office hours for students. Others maintain research programs—even laboratories—and advise graduate students. Yet first as provost and then as president, I soon became convinced that the complexity, unpredictability, and importance of presidential duties and responsibilities outweighed any substantive or symbolic value to taking on the additional burden of regularly scheduled courses (although I did spend

much of my time educating legislators, trustees, alumni, and even the faculty on the intricacies of the contemporary university). Instead I used other methods to keep in touch with students and student issues including regular visits as a guest lecturer (sometimes unannounced) in a wide array of undergraduate and graduate classes, frequent meals with students in residence halls, regular meetings with leaders of various student groups such as student government and the student newspaper, and a series of events that Anne would arrange at the President's House for various student groups throughout the university year—but on a schedule compatible with other obligations and responsibilities.

Campuses with an activist student body pose a particularly exhilarating challenge for the president. Michigan's tradition of activism, while being a source of great energy and excitement, also had its drawbacks, particularly when the issues and agendas were more annoying than compelling—opposing all rules governing student behavior or legalizing marijuana. Student protests could distract the attention of the institution and the president from other more compelling priorities such as achieving academic excellence, dominating the local headlines and occasionally triggering strong political responses, sometimes favoring, sometimes opposing student issues. Student protests could also catch the attention of the university's governing board. Hence, like it or not, university presidents frequently become the point person in dealing with student protests.

To be sure, on many occasions student activism has had a very positive effect in raising issues of great importance—e.g., the Vietnam War in the 1960s, the environmental movement in the 1970s, and social justice and the plight of underrepresented minority communities through the latter half of the 20th century. Yet there is an ebb and flow to student activism, just as there is to broader political life, determined by social issues of the times—e.g., an unpopular war, the draft, an economic downturn, the lack of jobs for graduating students—and by the quality of student leadership, since pulling together such movements requires some talent. There were occasional flare-ups of student activism during my years as a campus administrator, sometimes over important issues such as racial tolerance or gay rights, and sometimes over cosmic concerns than have long since lost any relevance such as establishing Ann Arbor as a nuclear-free zone. Yet, I found those students involved to be quite sincere and committed to their cause. Here I must confess that there have been many moments of peace and quiet on the campus when I have longed for a more activist student body.

In my inauguration address, I began my comments to the faculty by observing: "It is sometimes said that great universities are run by their faculties, for their faculties.

Clearly the quality of our institutions is determined by the quality of our faculty—by their talents, their commitments, and their actions.”¹⁴ Actually this faculty-centric statement reflected well my own perspective, shaped by two decades of toiling in the faculty vineyards at Michigan, teaching, conducting research, advising students, hustling research grants, and serving on faculty committee after committee after committee. Similarly Anne had served in numerous leadership roles with university faculty and community groups.

Anne and I had developed empathy for faculty life through personal experience, understanding well stresses of the promotion and tenure decisions, the relative poverty of junior faculty, and the frustrations of faculty politics. From this background, we understood clearly our obligation to serve the faculty of the university in various leadership roles—first as dean, then as provost, and finally as president. Yet even in these leadership roles, we continued to view ourselves as first and foremost members of the university’s faculty community, on temporary assignment to administrative positions. Of course, despite our best efforts, many of our friends and colleagues among the faculty began to pull away from us, whether because of the faculty’s natural suspicion of all administrators or because of their perception that we no longer had time for our old activities and friends, or because we were being held prisoner in the fortress of the administration building, out of sight, out of touch, and out of mind.

The deans themselves form yet another family of the university, occasionally in competition with one another, more frequently working together, but always requiring the attention and the pastoral care of the president and the provost. While being a faculty member is the best job in a university—the most prestige, the most freedom, and the most opportunity—if one has to be an academic administrator, the next best role is that of a dean, at least at Michigan. Although some academic units such as our College of Literature, Science, and the Arts or the School of Medicine rival major universities in their size, financial resources, and organizational complexity, for most University of Michigan schools and colleges, both the size and intellectual span is just about right to allow true leadership. To be sure, deans have to answer in both directions, to the provost from above and their faculty from below. But their capacity to control both their own destiny and that of their school is far beyond that of most administrators.



The deans of the University of Michigan (1996).

Since the University of Michigan is so heavily dependent upon the quality of its deans, most presidents and provosts make a great effort to attract the very best into these important positions. It is my belief that great universities have great deans. Hence it is important for the president and provost to work closely together not only in the appointment and support of these key academic leaders, but also to build a sense of community among them, establishing friendships and bonds, since these, in turn, glue together the university. Perhaps because of our own experience as members of the “dean’s family,” Anne and I were always on the lookout for new ways to involve the deans more intimately in the leadership of the university.

We took similar pride in the quality of the executive leadership team of the university, which I believed to be one of the strongest in the nation, both during my administration and throughout the university’s earlier history. The executive officers were also a family, although quite unlike the deans they were characterized by a great diversity in roles and backgrounds; some were line officers; others were in staff roles. Although at most universities many of the executive officers come from outside the academy—e.g., business and law—during my years as president, Michigan had the very unusual situation in which all of our senior officers had academic roots, some even with ongoing teaching and research responsibilities. This provided the leadership team with not only a deep understanding of academic issues, but it gave us important flexibility in breaking down the usual bureaucracy to form multi-officer teams to address key issues

such as federal research policy, fund-raising, resource allocation, and even academic policy—issues that in other universities would be constrained to administrative silos.

The University of Michigan Regents comprised yet another family requiring pastoral care by the president. Although most of our governing board members were dedicated public servants, with a strong interest and loyalty to the university, as with any family, there were occasional disagreements—indeed, long-standing feuds—among some members that might last months or even years. But this was not surprising for a governing board that owed both its election and support to highly partisan political constituencies.

Although Anne and I tried to be attentive to the concerns of both current and past board members, this was complicated by the fact that we were occasionally viewed by some regents as hired hands, totally subservient and submissive to their particular requests and occasional whims. Although every effort was made to treat the regents with respect, concern, and attentiveness, this great diversity among the attitudes of individual regents toward the role of the president and the first lady made the task extremely complex, as it had been for our predecessors over the years. Most presidents of public universities know these challenges well.

Students and faculty members tend to take the staff of a university pretty much for granted. While they understand these are the people who keep the trains running on time, who provide them with the environment they need for teaching and research, most view staff as only the supporting cast for the real stars, the faculty. When staff come to mind at all, it is usually as a source of complaints. To many faculty members, service units such as the Plant Department, Purchasing, and Internal Audit are sometimes viewed as the enemy.

Yet, with each step up the ladder of academic administration, my wife and I came to appreciate more just how critical the staff was to both the functioning and the continuity of the university. Throughout the university, whether at the level of secretaries, custodians, groundskeepers or the rarified heights of senior administrators for finance, hospital operations, or facilities construction and management, it became clear to us that the quality of the university's staff, coupled with their commitment and dedication, was actually just as important as the faculty in making Michigan the remarkable institution it has become. In some ways, even more so, since unlike many faculty members, who view their first responsibilities as to their discipline or perhaps their careers, most staff members are true professionals, deeply committed to the welfare of the university as their highest priority, many dedicating their entire careers to the institution. Most staff members serve the university far longer than the faculty, who

tend to be lured away by the marketplace. This was impressed upon me twice each year, when the president would host a banquet to honor staff with long-term service—20, 30, even 40 years. In a very real sense, it is frequently the staff that provide through years of service the continuity of both the culture of the university and its commitment to excellence. Put another way, it is the staff, as much as the students, faculty, or alumni, who perpetuate the institutional saga of the university.



The staff of the University administration.

Beyond their skill, competence, and dedication to the university, there was also a remarkable spirit of teamwork among staff members. We found ourselves working with them not so much as supervisors but rather as colleagues, and in time we began to view our presidential roles as more akin to those of staff than faculty, in the sense that our first obligation was always to the welfare of the university rather than to our academic discipline or professional career.

While intensely loyal to the university, staff also require pastoral care from the president, particularly during difficult times such as budget cuts—sometimes involving layoffs—or campus unrest. Anne and I always gave the highest priority to events that demonstrated the importance of staff to the university and our strong support for their efforts. Whenever launching a major strategic effort, such as the Michigan Mandate or the Michigan Agenda for women, I would meet with numerous staff groups throughout the university to explain the effort and seek their advice and counsel. We made it a point to attend or host staff receptions, for example, to honor a retiring staff member or

celebrate an important achievement. And, while we understood the central role of faculty in determining the quality of academic programs, we felt it was important that the president always be seen, in word and in deed, as committed to the welfare of the entire university community—students, faculty, and staff—in a balanced sense.

In our presidential roles, Anne and I were always very conscious of being part of another very important Michigan family comprised of former presidents and first ladies of the university. We believed ourselves particularly fortunate in having several of these former presidential teams living in Ann Arbor—the Hatchers, the Flemings, and the Smiths—with the Shapiros only a phone call away at Princeton. This gave us access to almost a half a century of experience and wisdom.



Five generations of Michigan presidential leadership: From left to right: Harlan and Anne Hatcher (seated), Vivian and Harold Shapiro, Alene and Allen Smith, Anne and Jim Duderstadt, Robben and Sally Fleming (seated).

We made it a point not only to seek the advice and counsel of earlier presidents and spouses whenever we could, but to also involve them as completely in the life of the university as they wished to be. We made certain that they were invited to all major campus activities such as dinners, receptions, commencements, and VIP visits. This conscious effort to involve the former presidents in the life of the university was intended not only to take advantage of their experience and wisdom, but to better establish a sense of continuity. We realized that each presidency built on the accomplishments of its predecessors, and we wanted to make certain this was recognized throughout the university.

But here I should stress that we also enjoyed immensely the friendship of the Hatchers, Flemings, Smiths, and Shapiros. There was a bond that only those who serve in these roles can understand. Even after one of our interim presidents, Allen Smith, passed away, we felt it very important to keep his wife Alene involved in university activities. And when we had the opportunity to honor the Shapiros by naming the newly renovated Undergraduate Library after them, Anne went all-out to design events both for the Shapiros and their families to convey a sense of the university's appreciation for their efforts.

Both Anne and I believed it important always to keep in mind the historical context for leadership. Institutions such as the University of Michigan have existed for centuries and will continue to do so, served by generation after generation of leaders. To serve the university, any Michigan president must understand and acknowledge the accomplishments of his or her predecessors and build upon their achievements. Each president must strive to pass along to his or her successor an institution that is better, stronger, and more vital than the one he or she inherited. Indeed, this strong tradition of improvement from one presidency to the next had long been the guiding spirit of the university's leaders.

While Michigan enjoys an intense loyalty among its students, faculty, and staff, it can also be a tough environment for many. It is a very large and complex institution, frequently immersed in controversial social and political issues. The Michigan campus culture has evolved to accommodate a tough political neighborhood. The president's challenge is to provide pastoral care and leadership for a highly diverse campus community that, left to its own devices, could become highly fragmented, to create community in a cold climate.

During my presidency we sought to temper somewhat this hardened character by stressing the "c-words": community, communication, comity, cooperation, civility, caring, concern, and commitment, in contrast to those other harsher c-characteristics such as competition, complaining, conniving, and conflict. (Anne suggested adding some other c-words just for students, such as cleanliness and chastity, but she soon realized this was a hopeless cause.) Particularly during a period of change, we believed that we needed to better link together the various cultures, values, and experiences that characterized our campus community. We also sought to build a greater sense of pride in and loyalty to the institution, pulling people together with a common vision and commitment to the achievement of excellence.

Some of the most important changes occurring at the university during the decade affected the various family cultures of the university. The student culture

evolved beyond the distrust and confrontation born in the 1960s to a spirit of mutual respect and trust with the administration. The university's commitment to diversity through major strategic efforts such as the Michigan Mandate and the Michigan Agenda for Women would never have been possible without such a major change in the campus climate. So too, the staff culture became more tolerant of change, in part because of our efforts to recognize both their loyalty and immense contributions to the university.

Changes occurred far more slowly in the faculty culture, because of its complexity and diversity. Fundamental academic values still dominated this culture—academic freedom, intellectual integrity, striving for excellence—as they must in any great university. However, there seemed to be a growing sense of adventure and excitement throughout the university as both faculty and staff were more willing to take risks, to try new things, and to tolerate failure as part of the learning process. While the university was still not yet where it needed to be in encouraging the level of experimentation and adventure necessary to define the future of the university, it seemed clear that this spirit was beginning to take hold.



Toasting the team.

Personal Traits ... and Traps

Each president approaches the challenge of moral leadership in a unique way, shaped by his or her own experiences, personality, and deeply held values. As a skilled labor negotiator, Robben Fleming looked for teachable moments even during the most

stressful moments of confrontation, always able to control his own demeanor while those about him lost theirs. His calm, reassuring approach to difficult issues, tempered at times with a Midwestern sense of humor, served him well in providing moral leadership.

In contrast, Harold Shapiro always gave careful and deep thought to the values underlying major issues such as racism on campus or faculty governance. One could always be certain that Shapiro not only listened carefully but read thoroughly the arguments and concerns of others and that he had given matters great thought. Although it was more difficult for him than Fleming to remain emotionally detached from many issues, his careful, thoughtful approach was understood and accepted by all (or at least most).

Clearly I was neither a skilled negotiator nor always a sufficiently thoughtful (or even rational) leader. But my small-town Midwestern roots gave me a “what you see is what you get” reputation. As one of the leaders of the Michigan Mandate, Charles Moody, put it, “If President Duderstadt tells you he is going to do something, you can take it to the bank.”

But along with these personality characteristics (possibly flaws to some), I also enjoyed taking on apparently insurmountable challenges, in part because sometimes I actually managed to accomplish something! And even if I occasionally failed, I rationalized that someone had to do it, and it might as well be me. After all, that goes with the territory of the presidency.

Taking on issues of values and morality can be hazardous to one’s health, not to mention one’s career. Not only are they usually controversial, but they also frequently demand leadership on the front lines. I firmly believe that only a leader who is willing to carry the flag into battle can move such complex agendas ahead, albeit at considerable personal risk. This is perhaps the reason why so few institutions make progress in complex areas such as social diversity. Several examples illustrate this philosophy.

Many viewed as a significant risk my decision to deliver a sermon on the importance of social diversity at Detroit’s largest African-American church, the Hartford Memorial Baptist Church. But it was key to building the broad support we needed for the Michigan Mandate. In a similar sense, going over alone to meet with all of the deans and department chairs of the Medical School to read them the riot act about their failures to provide more opportunities for minorities and women students and faculty probably left some bruises (and grudges). But it certainly got the message across.

So, too, did my decision to address the Michigan Quarterback Club, a large body of the football team’s most rabid fans, which excluded women from their meetings. It

would have been easier to take the politician's approach of simply blasting their behavior in the press, although I suspect that this would have simply bounced off their stag policies. Instead, by using a personal appearance as a teachable moment, I was able to convince them that there was simply no place in the university for gender discrimination, and that it was my intent to remove their university recognition if women were not promptly and fully integrated into their activities. Needless to say the change was immediate and permanent, even if the grumbling continued for a few months.

There was also my support of issues such as diversity and gay rights, which posed certain dangers from the political environment. On any given issue, presidents may decide that this is not the ditch that they choose to die in. But sometimes, risking one's tenure is necessary to sustain one's personal integrity. Diversity was clearly one such issue for me. Although the university's efforts to achieve diversity received the strong support of most members of the university community and alumni, these efforts were not accomplished without considerable resistance. In the mid-1990s the mood of the nation began to shift toward the right, and the university was attacked more frequently for its stances on issues such as affirmative action and gay rights. Indeed, during the last year of my tenure, even as other institutions such as the University of California were backing away from affirmative-action programs, I publicly reaffirmed the university's strong commitment to the Michigan Mandate with the strong support of the campus community and established even further the university's leadership in higher education.

Yet these political forces began to affect the university's board of regents, resulting in the election of new conservative members who joined others on the board who had opposed the university's diversity efforts. There was little doubt that my deep commitment to diversity and outspoken efforts to lead the university in this direction were not well received by many beyond the campus, including several regents, who preferred a far more conservative—and socially homogeneous—campus. In retrospect, I have little doubt that these efforts consumed a great deal of my political capital, with the regents, political leaders in the state, and perhaps with the media. It can be argued that they were instrumental in eroding regental support to the point where months later I would conclude that I no longer had sufficient support to continue my ambitious agenda for university transformation. Yet I also believe that I would probably choose to fight in this ditch again, even knowing the outcome. There are few causes that are clearly worthy of such sacrifices. Social justice and equity are certainly among them.

¹ Stephen James Nelson, *Leaders in the Crucible: The Moral Voice of College Presidents* (Westport, CN: Bergin & Garvey, 2000).

² Vartan Gregorian, *The Road To Home: My Life and Times* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2003).

³ Stephen James Nelson, *Leaders in the Crucible: The Moral Voice of College Presidents* (Westport, CN: Bergin & Garvey, 2000).

⁴ Actually, the earliest name for the effort was “the Michigan Plan.” But before this name became public, a new chancellor at the University of Wisconsin, Donna Shalala, announced “the Madison Plan”, a far less ambitious effort that was aggressively promoted.

⁵ James J. Duderstadt, *A University for the 21st Century* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2001).

⁶ Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, Papers of President James J. Duderstadt (1967-ongoing); Finding Aids:

<http://www.hti.umich.edu/cgi/f/findaid/findaid-idx?c=bhlead&idno=umich-bhl-9811>

See also:

<http://www.hti.umich.edu/cgi/f/findaid/findaid-idx?c=bhlead&idno=umich-bhl-87274>

⁷ Supreme Court ruling:

⁸ Jeffrey Selingo, “Michigan: Who Really Won?”, *Chronicle of Higher Education*, January 14, 2005.

⁹ Richard Atkinson, University of Michigan Symposium on Diversity, Ann Arbor, MI, 2005.

¹⁰ James J. Duderstadt, State of the University Address, University of Michigan, 1991.

¹¹ The absence of a student disciplinary policy and process left the university with only one recourse to address serious student incidents: for the president to act directly using presidential authority (so-called Bylaw 2.03) to sanction the student. I was forced to do this in particularly serious cases, such as when I suspended one of our hockey players after he went into a violent rage and destroyed the furniture in his girlfriend’s sorority house (and, much to the chagrin of our hockey coach, just before the playoffs for the national championship). But with 36,000 students, it made for an extremely awkward system.

¹² Stephen Burd, “Bush’s Next Target?”, *Chronicle of Higher Education*, July 11, 2003.

¹³ Carl Cohen, an eminent university professor of philosophy (and because of deeply held convictions about the inequity of “racial preference” in admissions, one of the early litigants against the university’s affirmative action policies) put it this way: “President James Duderstadt is a gracious and eloquent representative of the UM. No one who knows him or has occasion to differ with him will deny that he is invariably patient and courteous, that he listens carefully, reasons well, and presents balanced arguments with restraint and grace.”

¹⁴ However I quickly followed these statements with: “I must hasten to add here that they are also run for their students and their society as well!”