

Op-Ed #2
The University of Michigan:
Honoring the Past, Serving the Present,
and Preparing for the Future

To serve--perhaps the most unique theme of higher education in America. For the bonds between a university and society are particularly strong in this country. Historically our institutions have been responsible to and shaped by the communities that founded them. They draw their agenda from these communities.

Perhaps this is nowhere more apparent than in our State of Michigan and with its institutions. For example, the founding principle of this institution can be found in those familiar words from the Northwest Ordinance chiseled above the entrance to Angell Hall at the University of Michigan, "Religion, morality, and knowledge being necessary to good government and the happiness of mankind, schools and the means of education shall forever be encouraged."

And perhaps it was appropriate that Michigan, a state with seemingly infinite resources of fur, timber, iron, and copper--a state with boundless confidence in the future--should play such a leadership role in developing the models of higher education which would later serve all of America. For while the University of Michigan was not the first of the state universities, it nevertheless is commonly regarded as the model of the true public university, responsible and responsive to the needs of the people who founded it and supported it, even as it sought to achieve quality equal to that of the most distinguished private institutions.

For over one hundred and seventy-five years there has been an unusually strong bond between the people of this state and your university, the University of Michigan. Generation after generation of Michigan citizens have reaffirmed the commitment to building and sustaining an institution capable of providing to their sons and daughters an education equal to the best in the nation.

Our ancestors sought an institution capable of attracting to their state the most outstanding scholars, scientists, engineers, doctors, lawyers, teachers, and other professionals so essential to prosperity and well-being. They recognized the need for an institution capable of creating--through its teaching, research, and scholarship--the new knowledge and human capacities necessary to economic

growth and development and to the fuller realization of the human potential. And they sought an institution that could address, through a myriad of public service activities, the many challenges facing our state and our nation.

This sustained public investment and confidence in the University over the decades, has enabled it to serve the state in all of these ways and more. Through this unique partnership, the University in its activities and education, research, and public service has served Michigan and its citizens well.

Today our state faces serious challenges that will call once again on the vast resources of this institution: the challenge of pluralism, the challenge of participation in a global community, the challenge of the Age of Knowledge that is our future, and, of course, the challenge of change itself. Indeed, at perhaps no previous time in our state's history has there been a greater dependence upon this University, for the people it educates, the knowledge it produces, and the services it provides.

It is true, indeed, that the University of Michigan belongs to the people of Michigan. It is your university. But it is also a university built and sustained through the commitments and sacrifices of your ancestors. And it is a university that must be preserved and strengthened through your commitments today if it is to serve your descendants tomorrow.

Through this unique partnership, between a people and their University, we face together a future of challenge and responsibility, a future of opportunity and excitement, a future in which the University of Michigan is deeply committed to serving the State of Michigan, and by serving our state, serving our nation and the world.