

Alumni-March-89

Introduction

A few weeks ago a student asked me what the high points and low points were in my first year as President.

I suspect he thought I was going to answer
...the Rose Bowl victory as the high point...
...and that last second loss to Indiana as the low point.

Actually, however, I believe the high point has been more an accumulated understanding of the extraordinary importance of your University to so very many people throughout this state, the nation, and the world.

It is clear that the University of Michigan is very, very important in the lives of many, many people...

Not just our alumni or our students...but the citizens of this state...and indeed, friends throughout the nation and the world.

The Many Michigans...

Of course we all see the University in our own way...

There is the Michigan of those marvelous Saturday afternoons in the fall as 105,000 fans cram into Michigan stadium to watch the Wolverines...
...or better yet, storming from behind in the second half to beat USC in the Rose Bowl last month!!!

Then there is the Michigan of the Big Chill...

The tradition of student involvement helping to awaken the conscience of a nation...

There is also the caring Michigan as seen by the over half-million patients a year who are treated by the UM Medical Center,
Or the Michigan as Silicon Valley East, working to build the high-tech infrastructure necessary to create new companies and new jobs...as evidenced by the \$5 B industry in industrial automation now building up in the Ann Arbor-Detroit-Warren crescent...

Or the Michigan which attracts to our state almost a quarter of a billion dollars of federal R&D each year...not to mention many of the world's leading scientists and engineers

And, of course, there is the Michigan as the educator, attempting to provide, an education for Michigan citizens as good as any available in the world...

It is important to note these different perspectives of the University because all too often we tend to think of these marvelous and complex institutions in one-dimensional images that reflect only our particular interests or needs of the moment...
...when we read about student unrest on our campus...
...or see Michigan lose at the buzzer against Indiana...
...or open the tuition bill for our son or daughter...

Challenges for Today--Opportunities for Tomorrow

Our universities today are at a particularly important moment in history, since they are being called upon to educate students who will be spending most of their lives in another century...citizens of the 21st Century, if you will.

And while it is always risky to try to speculate about the future our students will find, three themes of 21st Century America seem clear...

- i) It will be future in which our nation becomes a truly multicultural society, with a cultural, racial, and ethnic diversity that will be extraordinary in our history

In which those groups we refer to today as minorities will become the majority population of our nation in the century ahead...

In this future, full participation of today's underrepresented minorities will not be just a matter of equity and social justice.

It will be the key to the future strength and prosperity of America, since our country cannot afford to waste the human talent represented by its minority populations.

This is probably the most serious challenge facing American society today. While it is true that universities cannot solve this problem alone, we must not use this fact as an excuse for doing nothing.

Rather we must intensify our efforts to seek full participation of underrepresented minorities among our students, faculty, staff, and leadership.

As both a reflection and leader of society at large, we have a special challenge and responsibility to develop effective models of multicultural, pluralistic communities for our nation.

We must strive to achieve new levels of understanding, tolerance, and mutual fulfillment for peoples of diverse racial and cultural backgrounds.

ii) It will be a future in which America will become "internationalized"... in which every one of our activities must be viewed from the broader context of participation in the global community...

Whether through travel and communication, the arts and culture, the internationalization of commerce, capital, and labor, we will become increasingly dependent on other nations and other peoples.

Further, as the destination of roughly half the world's immigrants, the United States is rapidly becoming a "world nation" with strong ethnic ties to every part of the globe.

If our institutions are to serve America in its role as a member of the global community, we must think and act more imaginatively, more aggressively, and more strategically to strengthen our role as truly international centers of learning.

iii) The Age of Knowledge

Looking back over history, one can identify certain abrupt changes, discontinuities, in the nature, the very fabric of our civilization...

There are many who contend that our society is once again undergoing such a dramatic shift in fundamental perspective and structure as we enter a new age, an age of knowledge.

The signs are all about us.

Today we are evolving rapidly to a new post-industrial, knowledge-based society, just as a century ago our agrarian society evolved through the Industrial Revolution.

New ideas and concepts are exploding forth at ever increasing rates...

In many fields, the knowledge base is doubling every few years...indeed, in some fields the knowledge taught undergraduates becomes obsolete even before they graduate!

The typical college graduate of today will likely change careers several times during a lifetime...

Hence a college education will only serve as the stepping stone to a process of lifelong education... and the ability to adapt to...indeed, to manage

change...will become the most valuable skill of all.
As our society becomes ever more knowledge-intensive,
and hence ever more dependent upon educated
people and their ideas...
It will become ever more dependent upon our research
universities as primary sources of new knowledge
and those capable of applying it.
Hence our institutions will face a period of unusual
responsibility, challenge, and opportunity in the years ahead.
But I believe we will also face a period of major change.
In a very real sense, the university as we know it today
was invented to serve an America of the past...
...a nation characterized by a rather homogeneous,
domestic, industrialized society.
It is becoming increasingly apparent that it is time
to develop a new model of higher education---
to re-invent the university, if you will--so that it is
capable of responding to the needs of the
highly pluralistic, knowledge-intensive, world nation
that will be the America of the 21st Century.

Concerns...

Needless to say, these same challenges of pluralism,
of globalization, and of this age of knowledge
that is our future will pose great challenges and
demand similar changes in our state.
Indeed, I am personally convinced our state and our nation
period of challenge in the decade ahead...
My central theme is that education, broadly defined, will
be the key element that determines our strength,
our prosperity, our well-being.
Indeed, I am absolutely convinced that the dominant issue of
the 1990s--both for this state and for this nation--will become
the development of our human resources.
Hence the challenge before higher education is the
challenge before America...
And the actions we must take...
...and the investments we must make...
...will clearly determine our capacity to
respond to this future...

The Hazards of Predicting the Future

In summary, my crystal ball suggests a future of
challenge and responsibility, opportunity and excitement...
As the United States becomes a pluralistic world nation, intensely
dependent upon knowledge--upon educated people
and ideas--and hence intensely dependent upon
these marvelous, mysterious, and complex institutions
we know as research universities.
How of much of this particular vision of the future will
actually come to pass?
Will the themes of pluralism, internationalization,
and knowledge really dominate our future...
To be sure, change is not a predictable process..
There is always a hazard to predicting the future...
But then I always remember that old saying
"The best way to predict the future is to invent it!"..
And isn't that, after all, just the role of the University...
the job of inventing the future?...

The UM Heritage

And isn't that, after all, also just the heritage of the
University of Michigan
Although Michigan was not the first of the state universities, it was the

first to free itself of sectarian control and become a true public institution, governed by the people of the state. From its founding, Michigan was identified with the most progressive forces in American higher education... In a very real sense, it was our University that developed the paradigm of the public university capable of responding to the needs of a rapidly changing America of the 19th century... a paradigm that still dominates higher education today. In a sense, we have been throughout our history the flagship of public higher education in America. Perhaps it is time that we once again played that role... re-inventing the nature of the university once again... ...a university capable of educating the citizens and serving the society of not the 20th, but rather the 21st Century.

The Role of Alumni and Friends

And that is where you come in...
A university achieves greatness through its people... through their talents and abilities... their involvement and commitment...
But it is important to recognize that the "community" that comprises a university extends far beyond its students, faculty, and staff...
Rather this community extends outward... beyond our ivy-covered walls to embrace our alumni and friends...
it also extends backward in time...to include that long line of maize and blue that have build and sustained the distinction of this University...
I might even suggest that this community extends into the future...through those families...many of them already associated with the University.. that will produce the students and faculty for this institution in years to come
A key factory in the strength of the University... active involvement by alumni
Not just for financial support... although you can expect to hear from us even more frequently
Not just for your efforts in directing outstanding students to Ann Arbor -- many of them your own children or grandchildren...
Not just for influence... although since Michigan produces leaders, many of alumni have the opportunity to have major impact on UM through their roles as leaders of government or industry
But beyond that, through your active involvement... to provide to our students a sense of potential, what the future holds in store for them...
for our faculty, since by buying in to what we are trying to do, you provide them with strong evidence of the profound importance of their activities
In a sense, our alumni and friends play the key role in passing the torch... in passing from one generation to the next the Michigan tradition...the tradition of excellence which we all cherish so deeply.

Concluding remarks

I cannot stress strongly enough the importance of active involvement...particularly in the years to come
For we at Michigan believe that the next decade

with be a time of extraordinary opportunity,
responsibility, and challenge
for the University as it prepares to enter the
21st century.

I and my colleagues have meet with students
faculty and staff, with alumni and friends throughout the state
and the nation, to listen and to learn about their views
of how we should chart a course for the University into
this future of opportunity, challenge, and responsibility.

We sense the extraordinary quality and
excitement "out in the trenches"...among the faculty
staff, and students of this University...individuals deeply
committed to teaching, scholarship, and serving
this state and the nation...

We began to understand more clearly the
very special nature of the University--of the
extraordinary intellectual breadth and diversity
of teaching and research on the Ann Arbor campus...
of the deep commitments of our Flint and Dearborn
campuses to serve their regional communities, even
as they respond to the needs of the state.

With each passing day we have become more
and more convinced that this University is really
a very special place...and a very special resource to
this state and the nation because of the talents,
commitments, and vision of its people.

As I and my colleagues have become ever more
deeply involved in this process over the past two
years, we have become ever more convinced that the
University today faces a pivotal moment in its history...
a fork in the road...

Taking the path in one direction will, with dedication
and commitment, preserve the University as a distinguished--
indeed, a great--university, but only one among many such
institutions.

However there is another path...a path that would
require great vision and courage in addition to
dedication and commitment...in which the University
would seek not only to sustain its quality and
distinction, but it would seek to achieve leadership as well.

I believe that the 1990s and beyond can be a time
similar to the late 19th century when the
University of Michigan was a primary source
for much of the innovation and leadership in higher
education in this nation.

And what more exciting mission could we have than to accept
this challenge by striving to develop a new model of
the research university capable of responding to the changing
needs of our state and our nation...

The challenge of making the University of Michigan the model
for the University of the 21st Century.

Michigan is on the move!

We are committed to strengthening our role of leadership
in education, research, and service.

And, of course, the key in accomplishing this will be your
continued interest, involvement, and support.

May the force of the maize and blue be with you...