

Problem Challenge

Welcome to the University of Michigan!!!

We're absolutely delighted to have such a distinguished group visit our campus!

This is a very exciting place, and I hope you have some time to get out and enjoy both Ann Arbor and the University.

There are lots of things going on here...and I would encourage you to wander around. Check out our museums, our laboratories, our massive computer clusters, ...and, of course, our ice cream shops, snack bars, and videogame parlors!

Just out of curiosity's sake:

How many of you are planning on careers in science or engineering?

How many in a profession like medicine or law?

I'm interested because of another hat I wear...

National Science Board

Education and Human Resources Committee...

Serious concern:

America is losing out in the "brain" race...

Let me explain...

When I graduated from college...

Space race with the Russians...

First to the moon...

Some were even looking beyond...

Rover Project: nuclear rockets for Mars mission

We fully expected to have a base on Mars by this time!

What happened?

America became disenchanted with science and technology...

Maybe the war in Vietnam...

Maybe the concern about the environment...

The best of our students stopped going into science...

Despite the fact that so many of you say you will go on...

only about 3% of you will major in science or engineering!

(Compared to 50% in most other nations...)

But something even more serious happened...

We seemed to forget for a time about the importance of quality...of excellence...in what we did.

Example: When I was Dean, a GM executive...

Claimed that Japanese would never beat us...

We could put a car on the showroom floor...

Only problem was that people don't buy cars by the pound...

They buy junk by the pound!

At a time when the rest of the world was picking up the pace...

America was sitting back and resting on its laurels...

We stopped demanding the best...in our schools...in our industry...in our achievements...

Now there is a real challenge for you!

Because if our nation is to get its act together again, it will be because students like you demand it!

If our schools are ever to improve, it will be because you simply will demand the best of your teachers!

If we are to regain our scientific leadership, it will be because many of you make the commitment to seek the rigorous education required of scientists and engineers.

Wouldn't it be great if during this conference many of you
decided that you simply were not going to stand for
mediocrity! That you were going to go for the
gold...for the best in the achievements of your schools,
your teachers, your friends, you nation!

Ah, well, don't let me lay too much on you!!!

Instead, let me welcome you once again to the University of
Michigan...and wish you the best for an exciting and
enjoyable conference.