

- A Brief History -

The University of Michigan's Heritage: Two Centuries of Leadership

Today the University of Michigan approaches a singular moment in its history, its bicentennial year in 2017, which will provide an important occasion to recall, understand, and honor its rich history. But this milestone will also provide a remarkable opportunity to learn from the University's past, to assess the challenges and opportunities it faces at the present, and to chart a course for its future. Indeed, since Michigan's greatest impact has resulted in part from its capacity to capture and sustain the important elements of its history while developing bold visions for the future, the 2017 bicentennial should be viewed as a compelling challenge to develop a new vision for Michigan's third century and a plan to achieve that vision.

It is hard for those of us who have spent much of our lives as academics to look inward at the university, with its traditions and obvious social value, and accept the possibility that it soon might change in dramatic ways. Although the university has existed as a social institution for almost a millennium, with each historical epoch it has been transformed in very profound ways.

The scholasticism of early medieval universities first appearing in Bologna and Paris—the *universitas magistrorum et scholarium*—slowly gave way to the humanism of the Renaissance. The graduate universities appearing in early 19th century Germany (von Humboldt's University of Berlin) were animated by the freedom of the Enlightenment—*Lebnfreiheit* and *Lernfreiheit*—and the rigor of the scientific method. The Industrial Revolution in 19th America stimulated the commitment to education of the working class and the public engagement of the land-grant universities. The impact of campus research on national security during WWII and the ensuing Cold War created the paradigm of the contemporary research university during the late 20th century.

Although the impact of these changes have been assimilated and now seem natural, at the time they involved a profound reassessment of the mission and structure of the university as an institution. This capacity for change is vividly demonstrated by the extraordinary evolution of the University of Michigan campus over the past two centuries, as evidenced by comparing the changing images of the campus over years.

The recurrent theme of the history of the University of Michigan, is the need for change in higher education if our colleges and universities are to serve a rapidly changing world. Yet Michigan's challenge is greater than simply institutional change, since throughout its history it has been one of the most progressive forces in American higher education. Michigan's unique combination of quality, size, breadth, innovation, and pioneering spirit is particularly well suited to exploring and charting a course for higher education as it evolves to serve a changing world.



The University of Michigan campus (1855, Cropsey)



The University of Michigan campus (1910, Rummell)



The University of Michigan campus (1930)



The University of Michigan campus (1970)



The University of Michigan campus (2000)



The University of Michigan campus (2010)

Michigan's Tradition of Leadership

Although Michigan is one of the oldest public universities in America, it is actually rather young institution when considered on a broader scale. After all, Harvard celebrated its 350th anniversary in 1986, and Cambridge has recently observed the 800th anniversary of its founding in 1209. Furthermore Michigan is an exceptionally modest institution. All too often we tend to pave over our past and build anew rather than enshrine our heritage, as do universities such as Harvard, Cambridge, and Bologna. As a consequence, Michigan is all too frequently seen (and portrayed) only within the limited public perspectives of conventional colleges and universities, e.g., in terms of young students, old faculties, and winning football teams.

Yet this is unfortunate, since in many ways the University of Michigan has not only provided the leadership for American higher education, but its impact frequently has extended far beyond the campus to have world-wide implications. Several examples illustrate the degree to which it has changed the world.

One can make a strong case that the University of Michigan was the first attempt to build a true university in the New World. At a time when the colonial colleges were using the classical curriculum to “transform savages into gentlemen”, much as the British public school, Michigan’s first president, Henry Tappan brought to Ann Arbor in 1852 a vision of building a true university in the European sense, which would not only conduct instruction and advanced scholarship, but also respond to popular needs. He aimed to develop “an institution that would cultivate the originality and genius of those seeking knowledge beyond the traditional curriculum, with a graduate school in which diligent and responsible students could pursue their studies and research under the eye of learned scholars in an environment of enormous resources in books, laboratories, and museums” (Peckham, 1963). Furthermore Michigan faculty members carried this broader concept of the university with them as they moved on to leadership roles at other institutions (e.g., Andrew Dixon White at Cornell, Charles Kendall Adams at Cornell and Wisconsin, and Erastus Haven at Northwestern). (Rudolph, 1962)

The University of Michigan can also claim to be one of the first truly public universities in America, created by the Northwest Territorial government in a non-sectarian spirit 20 years before Michigan was admitted to the Union. (Technically the Universities of Georgia and North Carolina were the first state universities, but they were highly influenced by the church. (Thelin, 2004) Moreover through the efforts of Henry Frieze, Michigan stimulated the development of secondary education (high schools) throughout the Midwest.

One might also consider the University of Michigan as one of the earliest examples of the American research university, with its construction of one of the three largest telescopes in the world, the first teaching laboratory for chemistry, and the first courses in new disciplines such as bacteriology, forestry, meteorology, sociology, modern history, journalism, and American literature. In fact almost every American intellectual movement from the mid-19th century onward must include some mention of Michigan (as demonstrated by the remarkable intellectual history of the University compiled by the Bentley Library in 2010 to celebrate its 75th anniversary). Beyond its impact on the traditional literature, arts, and science, the University has led in the creation of many new disciplines such as the quantitative social sciences, biomedical disciplines, engineering sciences, and policy disciplines. (Turner, 1988)

The influence of the University on the professions has also been immense. Michigan joined with Columbia and Penn in defining the paradigm for medical practice and education



One of the world's largest telescopes



The nation's first chemistry laboratory



The nation's first university hospital



The world's first programs in atomic energy



Apollo 15, the All-Michigan mission to the moon



Michigan's leadership in developing the Internet

Michigan is one of the few universities capable of changing the world!

by regarding the M.D. as a graduate degree, introducing scientific laboratories, and opening the first university hospital for clinical training. Decades later this model would be adopted to transform the rest of medicine through the Flexner Report of 1910. (Flexner, 1910)

Michigan has long been a pioneer in engineering, introducing new disciplines such as naval architecture, chemical engineering, aeronautical engineering, and computer engineering. It was the first university in the world to promote the peaceful uses of atomic energy with the Michigan Memorial Phoenix Project, leading to the world's first academic program in nuclear science and engineering. Michigan was a leader in space exploration and astronaut education, e.g., the entire crew of Apollo 15 lunar mission consisted of Michigan graduates. Through its Willow Run Laboratories, the University developed much of the technology of remote sensing including holography and the ruby maser.

More recently Michigan partnered with IBM and MCI to build and operate the backbone of the Internet from the mid-1980s until this role was transferred to the commercial sector in 1993. The University's role in advanced networking continued with its leadership in the founding and development of Internet2 during the 1990s. Today Michigan is pioneering in the digitization of the great libraries of the world and the provision of access to their collections through its leadership role in digital libraries, the JSTOR project, the Google Book project, and the HathiTrust.

Hence the approaching bicentennial of the University of Michigan will provide an important occasion to recall, understand, and honor its remarkable history. But it will also provide a remarkable opportunity to learn from the University's past, to assess the challenges and opportunities it faces at the present, and to chart a course for its future. Indeed, since Michigan's great impact has resulted in part from its capacity to capture and sustain the important elements of its history while developing bold visions for the future, the bicentennial should be viewed as a compelling challenge to develop a new vision for Michigan's third century!

Institutional Saga

Developing a vision for the future of the University of Michigan is always a challenging exercise, both because of the unusual size, breadth, and complexity of the institution and because of the important leadership role it is expected to play in American higher education. During the past two centuries of its history, Michigan has responded time and time again to transform itself—and higher education more generally—in response to the changing needs of an evolving nation.

Clearly the first step in developing any vision for the future is to understand not only where we are today but from whence we came! This certainly applies to universities, which are based on long-standing traditions and continuity, evolving over many generations (in some cases, even centuries), with very particular sets of values, traditions, and practices. Burton R. Clark, a noted sociologist and scholar of higher education, introduced the concept of “organizational legend,” or “institutional saga,” to refer to those long-standing characteristics that determine the distinctiveness of a college or university (Clark, 1970). Clark's view is that “an organizational legend (or saga), located between ideology and religion, partakes of an appealing logic on one hand and sentiments similar to the spiritual on the other”; that universities “develop over time such an intentionality about institutional life, a saga, which then results in unifying the institution and shaping its purpose.” Clark notes: “An institutional saga may be found in many forms, through mottoes, traditions, and ethos. It might consist of long-stand-

ing practices or unique roles played by an institution, or even in the images held in the minds (and hearts) of students, faculty, and alumni. Sagas can provide a sense of romance and even mystery that turn a cold organization into a beloved social institution, capturing the allegiance of its members and even defining the identity of its communities.”

As Clark explains, all colleges and universities have a social purpose, but for some, these responsibilities and roles have actually shaped their evolution and determined their character. The appearance of a distinct institutional saga involves many elements—visionary leadership; strong faculty and student cultures; unique programs; ideologies; and, of course, the time to accumulate the events, achievements, legends, and mythology that characterize long-standing institutions.

Hence the first task in constructing an appropriate vision for the University of Michigan’s third century is to understand clearly its key values, traditions, and attributes. And to do this requires us to sift through the layers of the University’s history to discover and articulate its institutional saga.

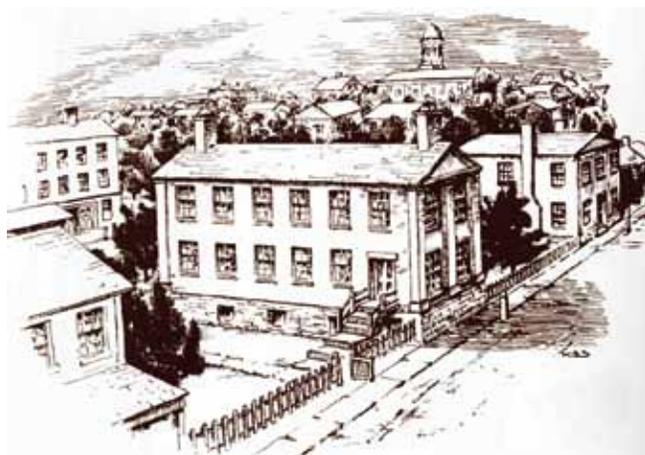
A University on the Frontier

It can be argued that it was in the Midwest, in frontier towns such as Ann Arbor and Madison, that true public universities first appeared in America. By augmenting the traditional mission of educating the young with faculty scholarship and public service to society, the emerging public state universities created a uniquely American university capable of responding to the needs of a rapidly changing nation in the 19th Century and that still dominates higher education today.

The University of Michigan (or more accurately, “the Catholepistemiad or University of Michigania”, a rather odd name coined by one of its early founders) was established in 1817 in the village of Detroit by an act of the Northwest Territorial government and financed through the sale of Indian lands granted by the United States Congress. (Price, 2003) Since it benefited from this territorial land grant, the new university was subject to the provisions of the Northwest Ordinance guaranteeing civil rights and religious freedom. But equally significant for our purposes was the Northwest Ordinance’s statement of the importance of education in the new territories: “Religion, morality, and knowledge being necessary to good government and the happiness of mankind, schools and the means of education shall forever be encouraged.” (Northwest Ordinance, 1909).

The University of Michigan can be regarded as one of the first truly public universities in America. However since it was established two decades before Michigan earned statehood (in 1837), the young university was technically not a “state” university during its early years but rather a creation of the federal government.

The University of Michigan traces its early heritage to two quite different models of higher education in 18th century Europe. Actually, the first incarnation of the Univer-



The original building of the “Catholepistemiad or University of Michigania” in Detroit, 1817

sity of Michigan (aka “Catholepistemiad”) was not a university but rather a centralized system of schools, libraries, and other cultural institutions borrowing its model from the *Universite Imperiale de France* founded by Napoleon a decade earlier. (Ruegg, 1996) It was only after the State of Michigan entered the Union in 1837 that a new plan was adopted to focus the university on higher education, establishing it as a “state” university after the Prussian system, with programs in literature, science and arts; medicine; and law—the first three academic departments of the new university.

Yet because the University had already been in existence for two decades before the State of Michigan entered the Union in 1837, and because of the frontier society’s deep distrust of politics and politicians, the new state’s early constitution granted the university an unusual degree of autonomy as a “coordinate branch of state government”. It delegated full powers over all university matters granted to its governing board of regents, although surprisingly enough it did not state the purpose of the university. This constitutional autonomy, together with the fact that the university traces its origins to an act of Congress rather than a state legislature, has shaped an important feature of the university’s character. Throughout its history the university has regarded itself as much as a national university as a state university, as exemplified by the declaration of its early Regents, “The doors of all its Departments are open to students from Every State in the Union, upon the same terms as to those of our own State; so that it may, in some sense, with propriety, be styled a National Institution, and every State in the Union has an interest in its prosperity.” Furthermore, Michigan’s constitutional autonomy, periodically reaffirmed through court tests and constitutional conventions, has enabled the university to have much more control over its own destiny than most other public universities. (Peckham, 1963)

Henry Philip Tappan arrived as the first president of the University of Michigan in 1852, determined to build a university very different from those characterizing the colonial colleges of 19th century America. Tappan was strongly influenced by European leaders such as Wilhelm von Humboldt, Prussian minister of education and founder of the University of Berlin, who stressed the importance of combining specialized research with humanistic teaching to define the intellectual structure of the university. (Ruegg, 2004; Clark, 2006) Tappan articulated a vision of the university as a capstone of civilization, a repository for the accumulated knowledge of mankind, and a home for scholars dedicated to the expansion of human understanding. In his words, “a university is the highest possible form of an institution of learning. It embraces every branch of knowledge and all possible means of making new investigations and thus advancing knowledge.”(Tappan, 1851)

Henry Tappan laid the foundation for defining a unique form of the American university, weaving together the classical curriculum and mental discipline of the collegiate model, the utilitarian emphasis of the newly emerging state universities, and the German university emphasis on pure scholarship. During his tenure the University of Michigan broadened the classical curriculum to include the sciences, planted the early seeds for a graduate school to distinguish postgraduate professional studies from undergraduate education, and introduced the seminar model of instruction for graduate education (Peckham, 1963).

Although premature, Tappan’s vision for Michigan in the 1850s and 1860s provided the first American model of a modern university. Hence from its founding, the University of Michigan has always been identified with the most progressive forces in American higher education. The early colonial colleges served the aristocracy of colonial society, stressing moral development over a liberal education, much as the English public schools, and based

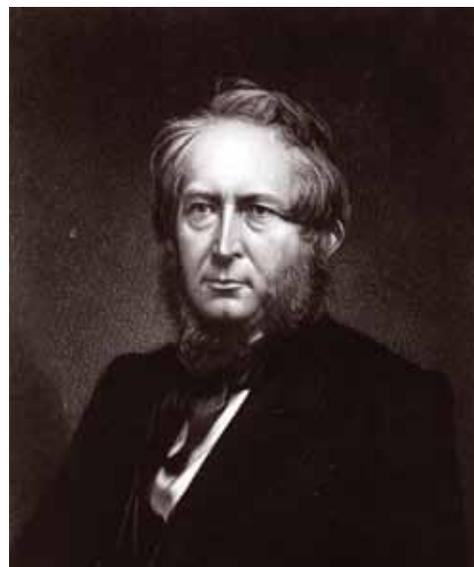
on a classical curriculum in subjects such as Greek, Latin, and rhetoric. In contrast, Michigan blended the classical curriculum with the European model that stressed faculty involvement in research and dedication to the preparation of future scholars. Michigan hired as its first professors not classicists but a zoologist and a geologist. Unlike other institutions of the time, Michigan added instruction in the sciences to the humanistic curriculum, creating a hybrid that drew on the best of both a “liberal” and a “utilitarian” education (Turner, 1988).

Michigan was the first university in the West to pursue professional education, establishing its medical school in 1850, engineering courses in 1854, and a law school in 1859. The university was among the first to introduce instruction in fields as diverse as zoology and botany, modern languages, modern history, American literature, pharmacy, dentistry, speech, journalism, teacher education, forestry, bacteriology, naval architecture, aeronautical engineering, computer engineering, and nuclear engineering. In fact almost every American intellectual movement from the mid-19th century onward must include some mention of Michigan.

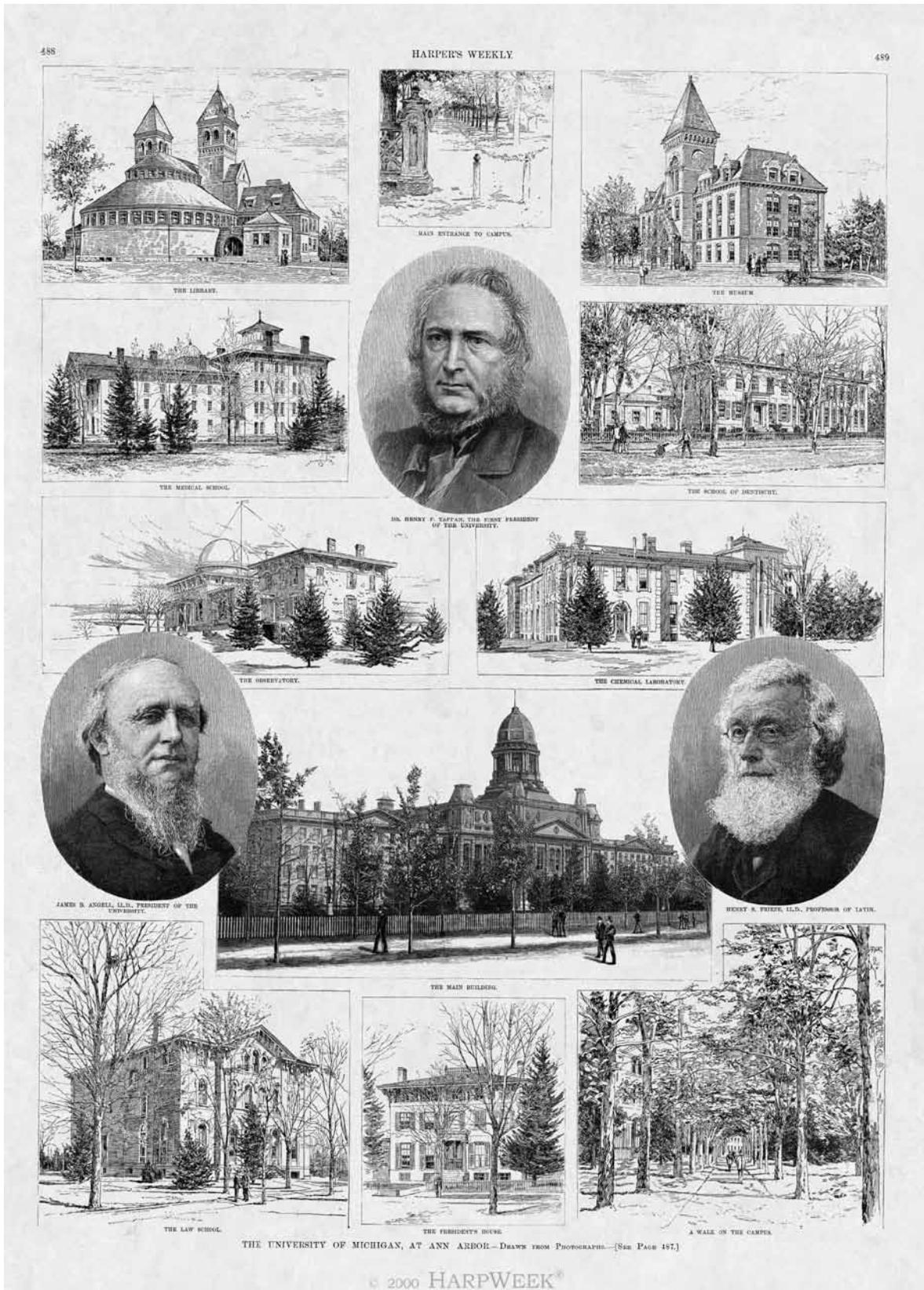
By the late 19th Century, Michigan was recognized as, to quote *Harper's Weekly*, “an institution in whose progress not a single State alone, but the whole country as well, may claim an interest” (Harper's Weekly, 1887). The magazine went on to note: “The most striking feature of the University is the broad and liberal spirit in which it does its work. Students are allowed the widest freedom consistent with sound scholarship in pursuing the studies of their choice. Women are admitted to all departments on equal terms with men; the doors of the University are open to all applicants who are properly qualified, from whatever part of the world they may come.” (Peckham, 1963)

Throughout its history, the University of Michigan has also been one of the nation's largest universities, vying with the largest private universities such as Harvard and Columbia during the 19th and early 20th centuries, and then holding this position of national leadership until the emergence of the statewide public university systems (e.g., the University of California and the University of Texas) in the post-WWII years. Today its Ann Arbor campus is the largest in the nation—indeed, in the world—in facilities (30 million nsf) and budget (\$5.5 billion/year). The University continues to benefit from one of the largest alumni bodies in higher education, with over 500,000 living alumni. Michigan graduates are well represented in leadership roles in both the public and private sector and in learned professions such as law, medicine, and engineering. Michigan sends more of its graduates into professional study in fields such as law, medicine, engineering, and business than any other university in the nation. The university's influence on the nation and the world has been immense through the achievements of its graduates.

Michigan students have often stimulated change in our society through their social activism and academic achievements. From the teach-ins against the Vietnam War in the 1960s to Earth Day in the 1970s to the Michigan Mandate in the 1980s, Michigan student activism has often been the catalyst for national movements. In a similar fashion, Michigan played a leadership role in public service, from John Kennedy's announcement of the Peace Corps on



President Henry Philip Tappan



The University of Michigan in 1887, as depicted in the famous article in Harper's Weekly

the steps of the Michigan Union in 1960 to the AmeriCorps in 1994. Its classrooms have often been battlegrounds over what colleges will teach, from challenges to the Great Books canon to more recent confrontations over political correctness. This spirit of democracy and tolerance for diverse views among its students and faculty continues today.

Nothing could be more natural to the University of Michigan than challenging the status quo. Change has always been an important part of the university's tradition. Michigan has long defined the model of the large, comprehensive, public research university, with a serious commitment to scholarship and progress. It has been distinguished by unusual breadth, a rich diversity of academic disciplines, professional schools, social and cultural activities, and intellectual pluralism. The late Clark Kerr, the president of the University of California, once referred to the University of Michigan as "the mother of state universities," noting it was the first to prove that a high-quality education could be delivered at a publicly funded institution of higher learning. (Kerr, 1963)

Interestingly enough, the university's success in achieving such quality had little to do with the generosity of state support. For the first half-century following its founding in 1817, the university was supported entirely from its federal land grant endowment and the fees derived from students. During these early years, state government both mismanaged and then misappropriated the funds from the Congressional land grants intended to support the university (Peckham, 1963). The university did not receive direct state appropriations until 1867, and for most of its history, state support has actually been quite modest relative to many other states. In fact, today (2011) less than 5% of its support comes from state appropriations, a number likely to continue to drop still further in the years ahead.

The real key to the University's quality and impact has been the very unusual autonomy granted the institution by the first state constitution. The University has always been able to set its own goals for the quality of its programs rather than allowing these to be dictated by the vicissitudes of state policy, support, or public opinion. Put another way, although the University is legally "owned" by the people of the state, it has never felt obligated to adhere to the priorities or whims of a particular generation of Michigan citizens. Rather, it viewed itself as an enduring social institution with a duty of stewardship to commitments made by generations past and a compelling obligation to take whatever actions were necessary to build and protect its capacity to serve future generations. Even though these actions might conflict from time to time with public opinion or the prevailing political winds of state government, the university's constitutional autonomy clearly gave it the ability to set its own course. When it came to objectives such as program quality or access to educational opportunity, the University of Michigan has always viewed this as an institutional decision rather than succumbing to public or political pressures.

This unrelenting commitment to academic excellence, broad student access, and public service continues today. In virtually all national and international surveys, the university's programs rank among the very best, with most of its schools, colleges, and departments ranking in quality among the top ten nationally and with several regarded as the leading programs in the nation. Other state universities have had far more generous state support than the university of Michigan. Others have had a more favorable geographical location than "good, gray Michigan." But it was Michigan's unusual commitment to provide a college education of the highest possible quality to an increasingly diverse society—regardless of state support, policy, or politics—that might be viewed as one of the university's most important characteristics. The rapid expansion and growth of the nation during the late 19th and early 20th centuries



Leadership in medical education



The first nuclear reactor on a college campus



Leadership in engineering education



A leader in computer development



Leadership in the performing arts



Kennedy's Peace Corps speech at Michigan

The University of Michigan has always been a pathfinder in higher education.

demanded colleges and universities capable of serving all of its population rather than simply the elite as the key to a democratic society. Here Michigan led the way in both its commitment to wide access and equality and in the leadership it provided for higher education in America.

Particularly notable here was the role of Michigan President James Angell in articulating the importance of Michigan's commitment to provide "an uncommon education for the common man" while challenging the aristocratic notion of leaders of the colonial colleges such as Charles Eliot of Harvard. Angell argued that Americans should be given opportunities to develop talent and character to the fullest. He portrayed the state university as the bulwark against the aristocracy of wealth. This commitment continues today, when even in an era of severe fiscal constraints, the university still meets the full financial need of every Michigan student enrolling in its programs. (Rudolph, 1962)

The university has long placed high value on the diversity of its student body, both because of its commitment to serve all of society, and because of its perception that such diversity enhanced the quality of its educational programs. From its earliest years, Michigan sought to attract students from a broad range of ethnic and geographic backgrounds. By 1860, the regents referred "with partiality" to the "list of foreign students drawn thither from every section of our country." Forty-six percent of the university's students then came from other states and foreign countries. Michigan awarded the first doctorate to a Japanese citizen who later was instrumental in founding the University of Tokyo. President Angell's service in 1880-81 as United States Envoy to China established further the university's great influence in Asia.

The first African American students arrived on campus in 1868. Michigan was one of the first large universities in America to admit women in 1870. At the time, the rest of the nation looked on with a critical eye, certain that the experiment of co-education would fail. Although the first women students were true pioneers, the objects of intense scrutiny and some resentment, by 1898 the enrollment of women had increased to the point where they received 53 percent of Michigan's undergraduate degrees, roughly the same percentage they represent today.

In many ways, it was at the University of Michigan that Thomas Jefferson's enlightened dreams for the true public university were most faithfully realized. Whether characterized by gender, race, socioeconomic background, ethnicity, or nationality—not to mention academic interests or political persuasion—the university has always taken great pride in the diversity of its students, faculty, and programs. Its constitutional autonomy enabled it to defend this commitment in the face of considerable political resistance to challenging the status quo, eventually taking the battle for diversity and equality of opportunity all the way to the United States Supreme Court in the landmark cases of 2003. In more contemporary terms, it seems clear that an important facet of the institutional saga of the University of Michigan would be its achievement of excellence through diversity.

The Michigan Saga

What might be suggested for the University of Michigan institutional saga in view of the university's history, its traditions and roles, and its leadership over the years? Among the possible candidates from Michigan's history are the following characteristics:

The “Catholepistemiad or University of Michigania” (the capstone of a system of public education)

The flagship of public universities or “mother of state universities”

A commitment to providing “an uncommon education for the common man”

The “broad and liberal spirit” of its students and faculty

The university’s control of its own destiny, due to its constitutional autonomy providing political independence as a state university and to an unusually well-balanced portfolio of assets providing independence from the usual financial constraints on a public university

An institution diverse in character yet unified in values

A relish for innovation and excitement

A center of critical inquiry and learning

A tradition of student and faculty activism

A heritage of leadership

The leaders and best” (to borrow a phrase from Michigan’s fight song, *The Victors*)

But one more element of the Michigan saga seems particularly appropriate during these times of challenge and change in higher education. It is certainly true that the vast wealth of several of the nation’s elite private universities—e.g., Harvard, Yale, Princeton, and Stanford—can focus investments in particular academic areas far beyond anything that Michigan or almost any other university in the nation can achieve. They are capable of attracting faculty and students of extraordinary quality and supporting them with vast resources.

Yet Michigan has one asset that these universities will never be able to match: its unique combination of quality, breadth, and scale. This enables Michigan to take risks far beyond anything that could be matched by a private university. Because of their relatively modest size, most elite private universities tend to take a rather conservative approach to academic programs and appointments, since a mistake could seriously damage a small academic unit. Michigan’s vast size and breadth allows it to experiment and innovate on a scale far beyond that tolerated by most institutions, as evidenced by its long history of leadership in higher education. It can easily recover from any failures it encounters on its journeys along high-risk paths. This ability to take risks, to experiment and innovate, to explore various new directions in teaching, research, and service, enables Michigan’s unique role in American higher education. During a time of great change in society, Michigan’s most important institutional saga is that of a pathfinder and a trailblazer, building on its tradition of leadership and relying on its unusual combination of quality, capacity, and breadth, to reinvent the university, again and again, for new times, new needs, and new worlds.

Here perhaps we should be more precise in our choice of descriptors: *Pathfinders* are those who identify new directions; *trailblazers* explore the new pathways; *pioneers* build the roads along the new paths that others can follow; and *settlers* occupy the new territory. (Cherry Pancake, 2003) Hence we suggest that Michigan should be viewed first and foremost both as a pathfinder and a trail-blazer, identifying possible paths into new territory and blazing a trail for others to follow. Michigan has also been at times a pioneer, building roads that others could follow (e.g., the Internet).

Whether in academic innovation (e.g., the quantitative social sciences), social responsiveness (e.g., its early admission of women, minorities, and international students), or its willingness to challenge the status quo (e.g., teach-ins, Earth Day, and the Michigan Mandate), Michigan’s history reveals this pathfinding and trailblazing character time and time again. Re-

cently, when Michigan won the 2003 Supreme Court case concerning the use of race in college admissions, the general reaction of other colleges and universities was “Well, that’s what we expect of Michigan. They carry the water for us on these issues.” When Michigan, together with IBM and MCI, built NSFnet during the 1980s and expanded it into the Internet, this again was the type of leadership the nation expected from the university.

Continuing with the frontier analogy, while Michigan has a long history of success as a pathfinder, trailblazer, and occasional pioneer, it has usually stumbled as a settler, that is, in attempting to follow the paths blazed by others. All too often this leads to complacency and even stagnation at an institution like Michigan. The University almost never makes progress by simply trying to catch up with others.

Michigan travelers in Europe and Asia usually encounter great interest in what is happening in Ann Arbor, in part because universities around the world see the University of Michigan as a possible model for their own future. Certainly they respect—indeed, envy—distinguished private universities, such as Harvard and Stanford. But as public institutions themselves, they realize that they will never be able to amass the wealth of these elite private institutions. Instead, they see Michigan as the model of an innovative university, straddling the characteristics of leading public and private universities.

Time and time again colleagues mention the “Michigan model” or the “Michigan mystique.” Of course, people mean many different things by these phrases: the university’s unusually strong and successful commitment to diversity; its hybrid funding model combining the best of both public and private universities; its strong autonomy from government interference; or perhaps the unusual combination of quality, breadth, and capacity that gives Michigan the capacity to be innovative, to take risks. Of course, all these multiple perspectives illustrate particular facets of what it means to be “the leaders and best.”

The institutional saga of the University of Michigan involves a combination of quality, size, breadth, innovation, and pioneering spirit. The university has never aspired to be Harvard or the University of California, although it greatly admires these institutions. Rather, Michigan possesses a unique combination of characteristics, particularly well suited to exploring and charting the course for higher education as it evolves to serve a changing world.

And it is this unique character as a pathfinder, trailblazer, and pioneer that should shape the University’s mission, vision, and goals for the future. They best capture and enliven the institutional saga of the University of Michigan. And these are the traits that must be recognized, honored, and preserved as the University enters its third century.