

STATE OF THE UNIVERSITY

WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY

Here is the full text WMU President Diether H. Haenicke prepared for his "State of the University" address presented on November 29, 1994, at the 15th annual Academic Convocation.

It has become tradition with us to cast views both into the past and into the future on this special day, when we honor the best among us. It is a fitting occasion.

As we recognize the accomplishments of individuals — their particular attainments in teaching, research and service — we should also celebrate what we have accomplished *together*, we should enjoy our progress as a community of people, and rejoice in the goals we reached through combined efforts.

At the same time, this is always a good moment to also take stock of unaccomplished items, to assess the problems we are still facing and to look at the road we shall travel together in the years to come.

Since we are so close to Thanksgiving, let us first think thankfully of what the University accomplished last year, during the academic year 1993-1994.

Again, it was a year filled with hard work by all, but our accomplishments warrant great satisfaction.

Tangible Advances

Let me begin with the most tangible advances:

1. We opened the new Kendall Center in Battle Creek, expanding our campus into our neighboring community. This exquisite building in which it is a pleasure to teach is a gift to us from our generous friends in Battle Creek.

Very soon we shall build another facility in Battle Creek, our new School of Aviation Sciences, which is strongly supported by the same friends in that community and for which we have won a \$6 million grant from the federal government.

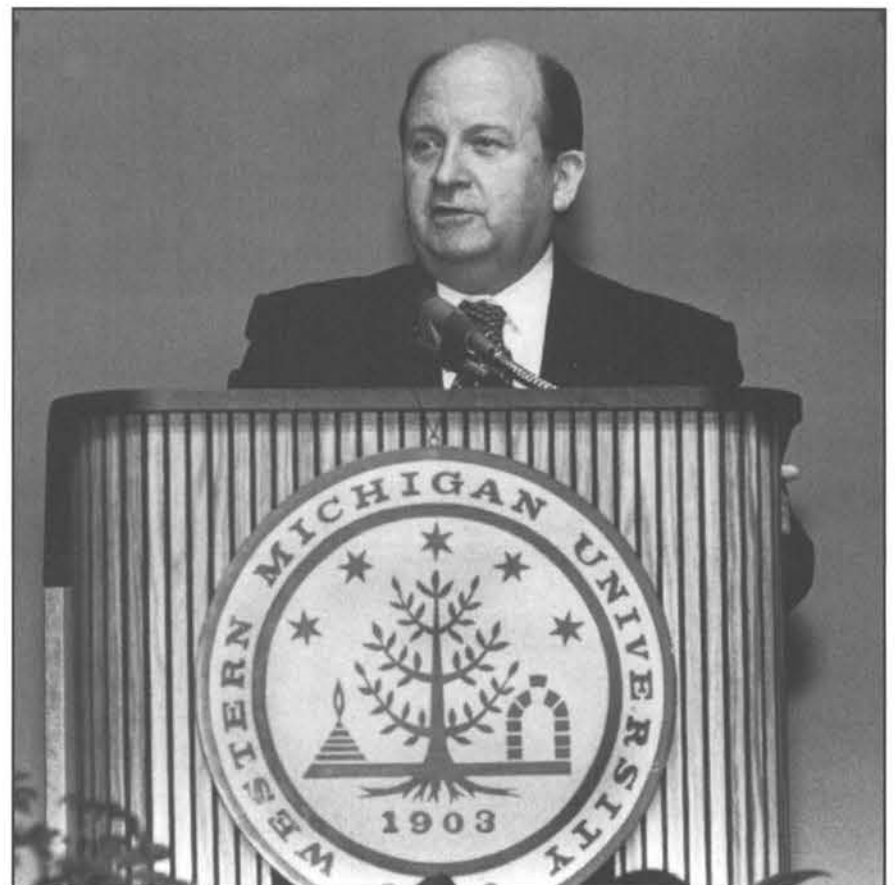
2. Our campus architects designed and built during the summer a new road leading behind Hoekje Hall into the Goldsworth Valley thus easing dense traffic in front of Henry Hall, where an attractive pedestrian area replaced a busy road.

3. Two generous alumni, the Butzbaughs from St. Joseph, made possible the creation of a fountain on the Waldo Library Plaza. The fountain was completed in time to commemorate the service of our trustees on the 30th anniversary of the founding of our Board of Trustees. The fountain was constructed entirely from private funds and donations.

4. The expanded facilities of the Student Recreation Center and the new Read Fieldhouse were dedicated last year and are a smashing success with the students and all others who go there and pay to play.

We now have undoubtedly one of the best student recreational facilities in the country, a building that also houses a great number of very fine faculty offices, classroom space and first-rate research facilities. Very few of us realize that our Department of Health, Physical Education and Recreation is now housed in enviably beautiful and efficient space.

5. At the same time, we completed a facelift for Waldo Stadium; refurbished the stands; replaced the ice in the Lawson Arena with a new \$1 million surface; and completed the lighting of the tennis courts, the Kanley Track and the Goldsworth Valley playing fields. Our students now have sports facilities that are better than ever in our University's history.



6. The construction of the new Miller Auditorium Parking Structure, however, appeared to become a financial and public relations disaster during the first semester of its existence.

The structure looks fine and, in my opinion, has actually improved the looks of the entire site; it has certainly added to the convenience of our Miller audiences, but we made many mistakes.

Our planning studies vastly overestimated the projected usage; we did a terrible job in introducing the University community and the general public to the new facility — in short — we recently had to make significant changes and now are moving to higher usage and broader acceptance. I certainly made several big mistakes when we opened the facility but hope that the new adjustments will make the Parking Structure a welcome addition to our campus.

7. We opened — together with three partners — Michigan State University, Borgess Medical Center and Bronson Methodist Hospital — the new Unified Clinics Building on Oakland Drive. We occupy the upper two floors in this highly attractive and efficient building.

Many of our faculty who heretofore saw patients in overcrowded and overheated rooms now work in a facility that, so our faculty tell me, is among the finest in the country.

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These departments fully deserve their new quarters; they rank academically among the best we have. I delight in the progress that was made here in the areas of clinical teaching and practice.

8. Tomorrow we shall dedicate the new Irving S. Gilmore Theatre Complex, also given to us through the largess of friends in the community.



I have seen many theater departments in this country. I know of none that has finer facilities for an undergraduate theater program than ours. Students and faculty who will work in this building must think they have gone to heaven — that's how impressive this new complex is.

Special Thanks

As I let all these advancements and improvements pass before us, it behooves us to take a breath and be astounded and thankful for all that the people in this University have achieved just in this one year.

We have to thank our many donors who supported these projects; we have to thank our campus planners, the architects, the members of the Campus Planning Council and the many workers in our University who all had a part in this.

And we must thank our students and faculty for being patient throughout the many relocations and moves and inconveniences that must be endured while construction is going on.

Other Projects

Who wants to — after all these glorious openings — still hear about all the other, more mundane projects that were completed?

The massive revamping of the heating system in Sangren Hall after the staff, faculty and students experienced arctic office temperatures last winter; the new roofs on three major campus buildings: Fetzer, Sindecuse and Trimpe — all very costly and all completely unnoticed; or the new tunnel system for utilities leading to Goldsworth Valley.

With the new Science Building on the horizon, we can now look at a set of conditions in many areas of the University, where working conditions — for both teaching and research — are absolutely top flight. It must now be our determination to put into these fine buildings the best academic work imaginable. Every accreditation team that visited us in the last several years has pointed out to the provost and me the good resources available on our campus.

Good Support

With very few exceptions, we have sufficient space, extensive library and information resources and good support for teaching and research. We have not, like many of our colleagues in this country, seen dramatic cuts in our travel budgets or our research support; and we have seen regular and good salary increases year after year. In fact, recent calculations show our salary situation continuously improving over the last eight or nine years, bringing us to respectable top positions when comparing ourselves with other Doctoral I universities.

Hiring

And we have been hiring. Last year we hired over 60 new faculty and we project to hire about 70 for next fall. A whole set of new leadership talent arrived on campus to join the University: In July, the governor appointed Lori Bobbitt to

our Board of Trustees; Diane Swartz joined us as dean of students; Cathy Zenz was named registrar; Sondra Shaw took over as assistant vice president for external affairs; Jan Lyddon came on board as director of planning and institutional research; Bernardine Lacey became the director of our new School of Nursing; and, yes, we also still hire men: Phil Popple is our new director of the School of Social Work; Dan Meinert joined us as director of intercollegiate athletics; and Lance Query became dean of University libraries.

We have been, and I say it gratefully, in better circumstances than most other universities in the country.

And we have responded accordingly. Last fall, we recruited the best ever freshman class in recent memory, perhaps in the history of our school. The mean ACT score for that class was 22.8, and the class GPA average was 3.3, with almost 36 percent having a GPA of 3.5 or higher. Twenty-three percent of our freshmen ranked in the top 10 percent of their high school class. In 1988, 44 percent of our freshmen ranked in the top 25 percent of their high school class. In 1994, over 53 percent ranked that high.

Some 288 new freshmen entered the Lee Honors College, representing the largest class ever in the 32-year history of our honors college. They have an average score of 27.3 on the ACT and an average high school GPA of 3.85. Thanks, you people in the admissions office, and thanks to all of you who assist them.

And we try to support our students with financial aid as best we can. Some 17,658 students received financial support in 1993-1994. A total of close to \$80 million was spent for that purpose: \$25 million in gift money; \$16 million in work study/institutional employment; and only \$39 million, less than half, was handed out in loans. Of that \$80 million total, \$14 million went to graduate students, over 3,000 of whom received aid, mostly in gifts and work support.

And the work of our faculty is flourishing. Every program up for inspection by national review teams won new accreditation or reaccreditation: all programs in engineering, all art programs, all blind rehabilitation programs, the physician assistant program, the graduate athletic training program, counseling psychology, clinical psychology and school psychology.

Faculty research is flourishing. When I came here, I was determined to read all faculty publications, at least in those fields that relate to my own general area. I still appreciate, very much appreciate, the articles and books that my colleagues send me, but it has now become impossible to do more than peruse most of them; such is the proliferation of scholarship and artistic endeavor.

Much excellent work is done in each of our colleges, in education, in arts and sciences, in health and human services, in the Haworth College of Business, in the fine arts and in engineering.

Most of what we do cannot be grant-supported. All of us who have worked outside engineering, the natural sciences and the health sciences know that we in the humanities, the arts or some of the social sciences can only in small measure contribute to the sponsored research income of the University. But these contributions to the artistic and intellectual work of our University are equally welcome and cherished.

The research office reports almost \$17 million last year in sponsored program funding, and projects \$20 million for this current year. Who would have thought that we could do that just five years ago?!

Our faculty concluded deliberations that took several years and established a new general education curriculum that won wide University support. Important and time consuming work is currently being done to revise courses, to restructure departmental offerings and to implement the new curriculum in the near future. All those who managed this Herculean task deserve our gratitude.

Two new schools were created: the School of Aviation Sciences, to be located in Battle Creek, which has the

Outstanding Freshman Class

Financial Aid

Faculty Flourishes

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General Education

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Labor Relations

potential of becoming one of the leading training sites internationally for pilots, airport personnel and flight mechanics; and then our new School of Nursing with a carefully crafted, very modern baccalaureate degree in nursing. Some of the best people in the country put their minds together to design this curriculum for the future.

Lastly, a comment on labor relations at Western. Few great universities in America have faculty unions, with some big city campuses as the possible exception. Our faculty chose, almost 20 years ago, to form a labor union, a difficult model in any professional setting.

Union-management relations are usually controversial, seldom collegial, never cordial. It is the very nature of such positioning that without disagreement, without contentiousness, there is no need for such a set-up. When good situations exist, controversy is occasionally artificially created because too much harmony or trust may bring into question the very existence of the structure.

At Western, we tried and succeeded to deal with each other on a basis of respectfulness. We brought to successful conclusion three major labor agreements — with the police officers, the faculty union and AFSCME — hard work for the negotiators on both sides. And again the University stood out in our state as an institution that can reach agreements in-house and relatively amicably, without the shrill noises that often accompany negotiations at our sister institutions. We should be very proud of this fact and we thank the teams on both sides of the table for their work.

Other Accomplishments

My remarks could easily go on for several hours, were I to mention all the accomplishments of our students, the many honors won by our faculty who were appointed to office in their professional organizations, who won local and national prizes and recognition, who spoke at conferences, read papers, chaired meetings, or who published important articles, chapters and books, or who excelled in artistic endeavors or teaching.

Nor can I, without taking up much time, tell about all the work done by our staff colleagues who keep whole departments and colleges moving, our students fed, housed and tended to, and our offices and buildings clean and operational. Their daily effort is greatly appreciated and well noted.

Challenges and Opportunities

But there must be time left to speak about some of the major problems that face us as we walk into the next year. Surely, there is much unfinished work to do, much controversy left about issues and many unanswered questions still on the table.

Diversity

Let me note some of them. Like every other American campus, we are beset by much controversy about race relations and so-called “diversity” issues.

The general atmosphere is not good. Much is being done and much is being said, but even more is left unsaid, because emotions on the issue run deep, and most of us fear being misunderstood, misquoted or unfairly labeled with thoughtless and hurtful epithets.

Our public discourse on race matters is no longer a free and liberating exchange. Rather, we sermonize, moralize, condemn each other; we talk more than we listen. In short: I believe we are stuck in a rut of non-communication, miscommunication and in the emerging practice of “emotion-based reasoning.”

Much action is taken; much money is spent. Some of you may have read about the report by the Michigan Civil Rights Commission about our hiring progress between 1984 and 1993: minorities in the work force up from 11.3 percent to 15.5 percent; minority faculty up from 66 to 125, a rise from 7 percent to 10.7 percent; executive minorities up from 7

percent to 10.7 percent; executive females from 18 percent to 22.9 percent; female faculty from 262 to 446, a change from 27.4 percent to 38.1 percent.

Is it enough? Who defines what is enough? Are the pools of qualified applicants already big enough to do more? A thousand questions can be asked in this regard, and each question will yield different answers, depending on whom one may ask.

My own answer is this: We shall steadily continue on the path we have chosen and which has lead us to the success statistics I quoted above. Heated accusations and undue pressure shall not make us hesitate. For the work we do, we need excellent *people*, not *statistics*. We need to search for these excellent people wherever they are, and we will not endanger our progress by overlooking any pool of applicants that can make its unique contribution to our University.

The tensions about race and diversity will continue in our University community, just as they will continue for many years in our society in general. Looking impartially at the issues and the results in recent elections, I do not believe that our nation has found a common consensus yet on this issue.

True, it has become commonplace to “celebrate” diversity. But few will admit that diversity not only means the coming together of people from diverse ethnic and racial origins. It necessarily also means great diversity of opinion; often incompatible diversity of behavior, taste and lifestyle; or clashing diversity of moral and social conventions.

In short: Diversity in and of itself can easily separate, and is apt to create great tension and dissension. Those who wish to celebrate diversity must also be willing to live with its natural side effects, which are non-conformity, and constant debate and disagreement.

Diversity is not easy. In fact, it is darn difficult. And it cannot be decreed from up high as a virtue to be accepted by everyone without occasional objection or rejection.

Since we decided to pursue diversity on our campus, because many of us believe that our future society is going to be diverse, whether we like it or not, we must also accept that there will be among us continued contention and disagreement. As a University, we simply have to live with that.

We had great dissension about the statement on racial and ethnic harmony that I penned more than six years ago. The “statement” served us well for many years and was appropriate for its time. However, when it was perceived by some to be an impediment to free speech on campus, I immediately appointed a special commission to review the statement. That committee has now reported back to me advising that there should be a statement, but that it should be altered substantially to be made more inclusive and to be put in accordance with current legal practice. However, the committee itself chose not to formulate such a new statement but only made suggestions what it should include.

So we are exactly where we were seven years ago: without such a statement, and in the middle of a debate of how to formulate it.

I was astounded to learn that of the 30,000 people on our campus fewer than 150 came to the three different public forums or made their opinions known in writing.

On another front, Professor Lew Walker and a committee of five are looking into charges of alleged racism in one of our sports teams. What of this is perceived, alleged or real, Dr. Walker and his team are asked to determine.

Yes, race relations remain a virulent issue on campus, and our only hope is a reasoned approach, good faith, constant dialogue and a willing effort of all to listen to the other side with an open mind.

While I believe that only time will gradually lead us forward in race relations, I think we need immediate and broad discussions regarding another serious situation on campus, namely projected enrollment declines.

Steady Progress

Race Relations

Enrollment

“It will take an all-out effort for the entire University to achieve these goals, from the president to the teachers in the classroom, to the groundskeepers, the cooks in the food lines and the clerical staff.”

International Recruitment

Those in the know, and many faculty and staff colleagues have worked on these problems, realize that general demographics dictate the picture in our state.

But some institutions are still growing. Why not we? To get answers, I appointed two ad-hoc commissions, one on recruitment, chaired by Stan Henderson, and one on retention, chaired by Richard Wright.

Excellent work was done by both groups, and I have decided to merge the two ad-hoc commissions into a combined smaller task force that shall stay active until certain goals will be achieved. I would like to see the overall institutional enrollment on-campus and off-, undergraduate and graduate combined, to hover around 25,000 — without lowering our now elevated admissions requirements — a path some other institutions in the state have chosen to boost their enrollments.

Further, I would like to see our overall retention rate dramatically increased from the current 48.5 percent to at least 60 percent. We are losing 20 percent of our freshmen to attrition, also unacceptable, I think. This figure must also be dramatically improved.

While the committee correctly points out that these figures are not “horrible” and quite in keeping with national norms, I find them horrible nevertheless and not good enough for our University.

It will take an all-out effort for the entire University to achieve these goals, from the president to the teachers in the classroom, to the groundskeepers, the cooks in the food lines and the clerical staff. All of us have to work hard to make this campus a friendly and helpful one where all students, once admitted, have a good chance to advance and graduate.

Our concentrated efforts in international recruitment will help us in this regard, although my recent trip through parts of Asia opened my eyes to the fact that we are recruiting in a heavily competitive field, not only recruiting against other highly attractive American universities with a better climate, but now also against many Asian universities which experience enrollment declines just like we, and who are beginning aggressively to attract students from other Asian countries to their schools.

I shall distribute the retention and recruitment commission reports soon to the appropriate groups on campus and to our trustees so that they can be discussed widely and properly.

Doctoral Strategies

Another area of concern among many faculty, particularly those in graduate departments, are our strategies for advancement in the Ph.D. granting departments.

We all know how much progress we have made here in recent years. With our growing academic strength we have initiated many new doctoral programs, which now total over 20. That is double the number of 10 years ago.

The planning by our departments was excellent. The implementation is somewhat more difficult. We are hampered by lack of experience with many of us taking up Ph.D. level instruction or dissertation direction for the first time. We have no national basis for recruitment yet since our programs are new and unknown because they are untested. Once they have earned prestige, recruitment will be better and easier. Only time will help here, and we must be patient.

Resource allocation is another issue for debate. Should all new programs be handled equally? Should some advance quicker than others? Should outside market forces dictate our strategies? How many doctoral students represent a “critical mass” in each individual program? Should all our faculty be “graduate” faculty? Many more questions are possible.

In the meantime, many discussions in which I personally participated have taken place. Because of the newness of this initiative on campus and because I claim considerable experience on every level with Ph.D. programs, I intend to involve myself more than I usually do in academic areas in this particular venture. As an experienced dissertation adviser and former chairman, dean and two times chief academic officer in advanced research institutions, I hope I can be of

good counsel in this important phase of our institutional development.

Strong academic departments granting advanced degrees are a *sine qua non* for our general institutional advancement. In my opinion, we need to achieve the status of a Carnegie Research II university by the turn of the century.

Why that? Life in our academic institutions has become more competitive than it ever was as far as I can think back.

Think of this, in our own state, Michigan State was a much belittled institution when I came to Michigan in the early '60s. Wayne State was struggling for state and national recognition and was considered a poor person's school for people who couldn't afford to go elsewhere. Neither school got any respect from Ann Arbor. Today both MSU and Wayne State have emerged into nationally recognized Research I universities.

Michigan Technological University was recently advanced by the Carnegie Commission from the status of Comprehensive I institution to Doctoral II. Their declared goal is to advance further and to do so quickly. Oakland University wishes to advance to our current level by the time the next Carnegie classifications come out in eight to 10 years.

Several national universities which were until recently classified together with Western as Doctoral I recently advanced to Research II institutions. Among them are: the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, Brigham Young University, the University of Houston, Rice University, the University of Notre Dame, Kent State University and Ohio University, to name only a few.

Many universities moved up from Comprehensive I and Doctoral II to our own unchanged status of Doctoral I. We are still a Doctoral I university, the same that we have been for over 20 years. Although we are no longer the same university, our classification has not changed.

In the future, we need to concentrate on the things we do very well, but we also have to assume additional attributes to advance to the next level of national recognition. For this University, this is Research II status.

There is no standing still in our field, we all know that. Universities are dynamic institutions; they develop and advance and compete, or they fall quickly behind.

We are developing the facilities for a major university campus. We are providing the resources for scholarship and research. Every year, we are recruiting excellent faculty on a national level. Our students are getting better every year.

We have developed a research plan for the institution that can bring us to the next level of accomplishment. We have the ability for advancement, and we can do it if we have the will.

Let me mention a final concern. Many of us confess to great pride in our devotion to teaching, in our insistence that teaching well is most important to us. With all my enthusiasm for advanced studies and research, I will always hold that teaching is the bedrock of our activities, and I believe that we will severely disappoint the citizens of this state, our alumni and our students if we ever forsake the hegemony of teaching.

Therefore I will, as long as I can, advocate strongly that we not forget the primary importance of teaching, especially on the undergraduate level. The departments and the colleges have to nurture this culture on every level; it should remain the basic strength of Western, no matter how far we go with our advanced graduate orientation. This I firmly believe.

I am grateful to those of you who come to the annual convocation to hear of the University's accomplishments and to listen to my views. I remain impressed with what this campus achieves year after year. I hope I am adequately expressing my admiration and gratitude to all the many hard-working people on campus who make Western such a success.

I look forward, together with all of them, to yet another year of hard and rewarding work and to many more successes in our future.

Carnegie Research II

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Teaching

Thanks Again