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DETROIT ECONOMIC CLUB - February 13, 1989

You have listened to my distinguished colleagues from our two largest universities. Along with Wayne State, ably led by David Adamany, the activities at these three important universities claim the largest share of time and space when the Detroit media covers higher education; they, therefore, are likely to be more securely fixed in your consciousness unless you have a personal tie to another college or university. The microscope provided by sports writers alone allows us to peer more deeply than we want into the lives of athletes and coaches at large universities and keeps those institutions prominently in our minds. In Michigan there are ten additional universities and two branches of the University of Michigan. You read and hear about them some, but unless you attended one of them or have been affiliated with one, you may not have a precise vision of what they do for our society collectively or what each does separately. They are as diverse as the landscape of Michigan itself and rather strategically placed throughout that landscape. Each has developed its own mixture of academic programs, yet together they offer the citizens of the state a comprehensive curriculum, designed to deal with the complexities of a modern society and the global economy that drives it, and for the most part this curriculum is well taught. In the late 1960's a presidential candidate claimed to speak for the silent majority in our nation. Today I represent what may appear to all but holders of the purse strings a more quiet majority in Michigan public higher education.

Combined, the twelve institutions for which I speak enroll 139,947 of the 250,933 students in public universities in Michigan, or 56% of the total. Equally, if not more important, 70% of their alumni are living in Michigan. They tend to have a high percentage of graduates remain in the
state entering business and industry, teaching in the schools, working in the health care field, designing products, starting new businesses, and serving in the public sector. Add to these numbers those who had some education and training, but did not complete a degree. In special fields most directly related to the economy, engineering and business, these universities have 101,000 graduates working in our state, and we estimate that nearly 60,000 of their alumni are teaching the future generation in Michigan's public schools.

These are important figures in the economic life and social fabric of our state now and for the future. In a speech in Chicago last year the futurist John Naisbett said, "Contrary to what you've heard, the middle class in the United States is becoming larger and more affluent. And that's true as we shift all over the world to information-based economies." There is not throughout America the loss of high paying jobs and a disproportionate increase in low paying jobs. Between February 1986 and February 1987 more than three million jobs were added to the American economy. 41.5% of the jobs were managerial and professional. 46% paid more than $28,000 annually. Last year 52% of the new jobs were managerial or professional. New low-paying jobs are under 5% of the total increase in jobs. Michigan is part of this action as our Governor frequently points out.

The citizens of our state consciously or subconsciously demonstrate an understanding of the phenomenon. How? - By going to college. They know what they need in order to be a successful part of this changing economy. Do you remember when experts were predicting and planners were preparing for a substantial decrease in students at our universities? They didn't predict the effect a changing economy was going to have on people's perceptions of the education they needed for success. A higher percentage of
high school graduates sought a university degree, now between 55% and 60%, each year and increasing numbers of older adults flocked to university campuses to retrain for the brave new world. In Michigan, where did they go? - to the community colleges and the public universities. Our state ranks 9th among states in the percentage of its population who seek college level education.

Looking at the numbers and towards the future economy, what are the universities responsibilities, particularly the ones I represent today?

First: We must provide access to higher education for students of all ages whose work qualifies them for admission.

As we enter the next millenium I believe the numbers will swell. We will begin to see the results in many of our high schools of the reform insisted upon by parents and employers. When we contemplate the numbers of the Afro American and Hispanic populations, we know that more of the young from these groups will find the aspiration and the skills to seek a university degree. The nation and this state cannot afford another outcome. The conscience of each public university requires that it encourage this aspiration and insist on the development of these skills. At the same time, there will not be a decrease in the aspiration level of the white population.

Second: The universities must provide a curriculum that leads their graduates naturally into satisfying positions in the new world.

Here we need to step up the interaction between the university and the professions that make up our economy and society. I will be surprised if a wholesale restructure of university curricula is required, but the closer academe comes to those who work the vineyard, the more likely changes will occur in the way the university prepares people for the vineyard. Because of the cost of higher education, we, the professionals responsible for the universities, should find ways to discard what is no longer needed,
alter when necessary what is, and hold fast to that which is essential for high quality learning and research.

Third: Each University has a responsibility for research and public service.

In the past little was required in the way of research from our public colleges and universities except from the major research universities. The need to compete in manufacturing, the demand for sophisticated information systems, the complexity of local government, all keep the telephones ringing and the fax machines gorging and disgorging at the smaller universities. The major universities should be encouraged and protected as they pursue basic research. The regional universities will have to take on more of the applied nuts and bolts research and consulting that emerges from the business and industry in their areas because the majors cannot do it all and proximity has its advantages. I predict that each university will increase as a center of expertise in some fields related to its area's economy, and many universities will continue to find ways to link themselves to one another, sharing information and talent as they help propel Michigan's economy forward.

With 70% of our graduates remaining in Michigan, combined with those from Michigan, Michigan State, and Wayne, we represent the largest source of our state's professional and business expertise for the future. We as a group are one of the major players in Michigan's future. How well we do our job will be one of the important factors in the state's success or failure.

Early in the 19th century Napoleon said, "Public instruction should be the first objective of government." If our Michigan economy is to succeed, we had better make public instruction, kindergarten through the university, a high priority. First, the people have to believe it, then the leaders
will. Second, the schools and universities have to deliver what they promise in pedagogy and research. People are willing to pay for what they must have, and we in education had better provide it. Presently we may be in a period where making our case is more rather than less difficult.

First, there is taking place a demystification of higher education. As more people enroll in universities, the more familiar they become. Weaknesses as well as strengths are exposed. There is more disappointment along with the increase in success. People are better able to evaluate and less in awe.

Second, universities, like all institutions, do not change easily. They are likely to respond initially to new conditions and demands in a negative or at least fumbling manner. This is not universal, but frequent enough to hurt our case.

Finally, the decline of socialism and the welfare state manifests itself in a strong anti-tax movement in our country. As these sentiments work their way through our society, the demand for lower taxes and the desire for services still needs a reasonable resolution. That is the climate in which we live as we speak to you today.

As a Council we share with you today a proposal we have made to enhance our universities so that we may help minorities fulfill their aspirations, so that all who should be educated in our universities will have a place ready for them, that the curriculum we offer will prepare them for what you have to offer, and finally that we will be engines of our economy where business and industry can seek the assistance they need to propel them forward.

In the last decade state appropriations have not kept pace with inflation. Buying power from state dollars actually decreased by 4.5%. Currently we rank 31st among the states in appropriations to public higher education
as a percent of tax revenue and 26th in appropriations per student enrolled in public institutions of higher education. This is not where Michigan used to be. To accomplish what we believe we must, we are suggesting that the state consider appropriating to the universities each year for 5 years beginning in 1990 an increase equal to inflation plus 3 to 3½%. We then would be well on the way to recovering what we lost in the devastating recession, and preparing for the tasks of the next century.

Our objective today is to raise your consciousness about Michigan's public universities. Combined, fifteen of us, we are a 3 billion dollar business, yet we are a fairly independent lot. Of all the states, we are the free enterprisers of higher education, each with our own Board of Control, but we are coming together. I think for the right reason, we are trying to find a way we can function together to bring Michigan effectively into the 21st century. As the cooperation level improves amongst ourselves, we seek also more cooperation with you and those you represent. We need to know what you think we should be doing. We need a compact for Higher Education; a compact between business, industry, and higher education so we educate the right people for the right places, so we work on the right problems.

Linking education with the health of the state and the economy is an ancient concept. Diogenes said over 2400 years ago, "The foundation of every state is the education of its youth." We can expand that to include all the people in our modern state. By working together, you can keep us alert and more effective, and we can give you worthy women and men to build on your heritage.