Open Letter to Dr. Lou Anna K. Simon
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The Ban on Preferences: What's the Big Deal - II?

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MSU has provided valuable leadership for all of Michigan, in the aftermath of voter approval of Proposal 2's ban on "affirmative action programs that give preferences on the basis of race, gender, color, ethnicity, or national origin." In the November 15th memorandum from Provost Wilcox and Vice President Poston to University leadership, quoting your statement, a clear and encouraging posture has been struck.

In particular, when you commit yourself to maintaining policies and practices of inclusion, while adhering to the rule of law, you point the way toward Michigan's successfully using this latest event as a means to build community and to continue repairing the injuries caused by past social practices.

I applaud your reassuring students and employees against unnecessary anxieties. Although it is unlikely that the University operates in violation of the law, it would not be the innocent parties contracted to the University who would be liable for any possible violation. And neither could their circumstances be reversed on account of it. Now is the time for us to clear the air, as you are doing by bringing the facts of what transpired in California and Washington to bear on the analysis. In that way we can liberate members of the MSU community, and those beyond, from unjustified anxieties induced by political campaign claims that were hyperbolic at best.

No, California was not decimated by the passage of Proposition 209. Yes, affirmative action is alive and well in California. Yes, dedicated programs to attract women into science remain active in California. Yes, young girls still play soccer and women still receive publicly funded breast cancer screening in California.

You have demonstrated what leadership in the State of Michigan should mean, and in doing so you inspire us. As you know Toward A Fair Michigan called for a special workshop to be held on December 8th in order to plan for a state-wide response to the ballot initiative however it might have turned out, and we did so before the vote was even cast. We shall use the workshop to formulate approaches not merely for complying with the law but for ensuring the continuation of progressive practices in Michigan. We will happily draw on your good example, for you, like Lincoln, have listened to the "better angels of our nature."