THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN
REGENTS COMMUNICATION
ITEM FOR INFORMATION

Subject: Cultural Branding

The Ann Arbor area is an eminently desirable place to live. We know it and enjoy the rich cultural and academic resources easily available. But when we attempt to lure new faculty (and their partners) to join us in this community, this fact is not as well known as it might be, especially on the two coasts and overseas. Thus, while we doubt that we can really convince a person who cannot imagine life without an ocean an hour's drive away that lakes also contain water, we should still do what we can to build and promote partnerships throughout our community to enhance the national visibility of the cultural scene in southeastern Michigan. This builds on

- what is offered each year by the University Musical Society,
- that the University Art Museum is being expanded to twice its size,
- that the Kelsey Museum of archeology is receiving a major face-lift,
- that the School of Art and Design has opened its gallery on South State Street,
- that the Hopwood [writers] program has received significant new development support, and
- that the Knight-Wallace program is bringing extremely talented journalists to town.

Indeed, there is already so much going on within the University that the development of a new "cultural website" to supplement the list of events in the Record is a small, but useful step that can be taken without great expense. But more should be done and more is within our grasp. The community hosts splendid music programs, authors such as Elizabeth Kostova (*The Historian*) and Travis Holland (*The Archivist's Story*) enrich the community, artists like Mark Tucker brighten the community and bring joy to all as giant puppets parade through town for the Festifools, while Anthony Elliott's splendid Michigan Youth Orchestra adds to the splendid local music programs.

If we look to the future, and look to ways to make Ann Arbor an even more obvious national destination, it is to programs like Mark Tucker's Festifools and Anthony Elliott's Youth Orchestra that should be strengthened, for these seek to link the University's strengths with those of the community as a whole. Many clever, innovative and celebrated ideas have their genesis outside the realm of the University —Zingermans, for example, was founded by University of Michigan graduates, not by the University. The University should support, collaborate and promote similar local initiatives. The Office of Technology Transfer strengthens the local economy by moving innovation that starts within the University to the public sector; a newly-formed Office of Cultural Enrichment would serve to build symbiotic relationships with local artists and groups, linking them with University individuals or organizations, and promoting both nationally. Much of the infrastructure to develop such an office exists and such an office would enable us to do more to involve community artists, writers and theatrical groups in the planning of events. The more prominent the local cultural profile, the more likely this national visibility becomes, for cultural enhancement is a form of economic enhancement. The

response of a visitor to Ann Arbor should be that “it’s a nice place to visit, and a desirable place to live.”

(Submitted September, 2008)

Regents’ Bylaw 4.04. The Senate Assembly shall serve as the legislative arm of the senate…The assembly shall have power to consider and advise regarding all matters within the jurisdiction of the University Senate which affect the functioning of the University as an institution of higher learning, which concern its obligations to the state and to the community at large, and which relate to its internal organization insofar as such matters of internal organization involve general questions of educational policy.