UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN
REGENTS' COMMUNICATION
Item for Information

Subject: Faculty Governance Update

The following is the Convocation Address given by Kate Barald, SACUA Chair, on September 1, 2011.

On behalf of the all of the faculty members of the University of Michigan, I, too, would like to welcome you, the class of 2015, to the university. By all measures---academic credentials, breadth of life experiences, athletic skills, history of community service, diversity-- this is a truly superb class—and we look forward to working with you and learning a lot from you.

With the approach of the bicentennial of the University's founding in 1817 in Detroit and its move to the Ann Arbor campus 4 years later in 1821, you have now become part of a nearly 200 year movement of scholars, researchers and practical thinkers, whose lives enter a new phase today. You will leave in a few unbelievably short years to take your place among the almost half a million living alumnae/i. You will join them and those from the previous 200 years, in making vitally important contributions around the world.

Having worked with over 300 undergraduates in my own research laboratory over the 30 years I have been here, I can confidently predict that very few if any of you, will be the same person on graduation day that you are today.

Why? Because Michigan is more than a great research university. It TAKES a university in the very fullest sense of the description—and the unique partnerships you will create between you, your mentors and your fellow students to become that person who will leave here in 4-5 years prepared to enter the next active phase of your life. If you take advantage of the extraordinary interdisciplinary opportunities Michigan provides both inside and outside the classroom--and its extended cyberspace—you will prepare yourself to become an educated citizen scholar with a strong practical background and inspired goals who can do whatever you choose for your future.

But Michigan provides more than a university experience or discipline-specific training. Its community is wonderfully enriched by opportunities to make those connections—both scholarly and personal—that lead to what I've come to think of as the "AH HA!" moments, when you make intellectual connections that open whole new possibilities in problem solving and a life work. One of my undergraduate professors, the anthropologist Frederica DeLaguna once said that education MUST be more than the process of getting what is in the notebook (or I suppose today it would be the laptop) of the professor into the notebook of the student without going through the head of either one!"

Find the serendipitous connections:

That course in probability and statistics along with playing intramural sports and watching the games with friends will help you calculate the odds that U of M will end up in the final four during March Madness.
A practical grounding in fluid mechanics, which will make the course final less stressful can be helped even more by an 18 hr stint working on the solar car team.
Learning Spanish or Vietnamese or Chinese or Latin vocabulary can be done while volunteering in the local public schools
… or helping with a reverse science fair as a part of the Neuroscience Brains Rule program….
Starting your own company while taking a run through the Arb with your business partner-- can lead to another Google, one of the founders of which is a Michigan grad.

Join a choral group, the marching band, the film society; volunteer as the student representative on one of the university faculty committees—financial affairs, research policies, budget studies--teach someone to juggle, teach a child or an adult to read, take part in a medical, basic science, engineering, physics or psych research program, volunteer for the food bank, volunteer at the brand new Mott Children's hospital, become part of a social work study, an outreach program, a Psychology study, an archaeological dig in Michigan's thumb, a marketing study in Economics or business, a law advocacy program, a webmaster, participate in a French language only meal program at a local pizza place, join the Life Sciences Orchestra, work at the Hands on Museum, take a junior year or a semester abroad, immersing yourself in a whole new culture—get informed in more than just your major. Enrich that major in surprising ways unique to you.

Michigan is full of resources that are available to enhance your academic experience, develop your practical skill sets and opportunities for local, national and international outreach (cultural, service-oriented, scholarly). Build an enriched portfolio that reflects your talents. There are opportunities for participation in service organizations and clubs, international tours with musical organizations, orchestras, artistic endeavors, global health programs, infrastructure enhancement programs, entrepreneurial ventures and international partnerships. These opportunities enrich the Michigan undergraduate experience by allowing YOU to craft any unique combination you can think of.

We, the faculty, are here to help you-- but also to learn from you.

The Michigan undergraduate experience can be likened to assembling a large and complex jigsaw puzzle—but one in which you shape the pieces and how they fit together as well as determine where they belong. Welcome to Michigan!

Submitted on _____ by _____

Tom Schneider