THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN
REGENTS COMMUNICATION
ITEM FOR INFORMATION

RE: James Duderstadt and the Faculty Reflect on Two Centuries of Leadership, Envision Many More to Come

The quality and reputation of a great university resides in the engagement and strength of its faculty, so says, James J. Duderstadt, University Professor of Science and Engineering and President Emeritus of the University of Michigan. As head of the University's Bicentennial Project, President Duderstadt works from that assumption in framing the upcoming celebrations, slated for formal takeoff in 2015, and reaching fruition in 2017. As a consequence, his strategy is to elicit a high degree of faculty engagement in the bicentennial celebration, positioning it as a rare opportunity for the faculty to take a leadership role in defining the university to the largest possible public audience.

Centering the bicentennial around the faculty might at first blush seem to be a strategic mistake: after all, the university has myriad different offices, divisions, and bureaus dedicated to burnishing the university's public profile. Yet for Duderstadt, that is precisely the problem. Too often, he surmises, the various PR offices within the institution ventriloquize the faculty, admittedly in part because the faculty often prefers to be left to perform its own duties of world-class teaching, research, and service. Yet there's a deeper problem behind that, according to the former president (and undoubtedly according to the Interdisciplinary Committee on Organizational Studies, ICOS, which specializes on such issues): that as a large, complex, and highly articulated institution, the University of Michigan is, in practical terms, a tangle of entities, offices, factions, and interest groups all vying for influence and precedence. As a consequence, in the best of outcomes, the University's image is that of a finely-detailed plaster saint, the product of a highly-professional PR office that hews to the leading-edge norms of the advertising industry; in the worst, it's a muddle of academics, athletics, and business partnerships.

When he places the faculty at the center of efforts to define the university across the decades, President Duderstadt not only validates a core voice within the institution, he identifies the group whose professional roles most closely align with the university's mission. From the moment a faculty member arrives on the University of Michigan campus, she is informed that her success will hinge on the pursuit of excellence on three separate vectors, research, teaching, and service. By leading world-class research teams, UM faculty create the knowledge base for Michigan's economic prosperity and cultural leadership; by using innovative methods to teach brilliant students, the faculty helps build both the workforce for the knowledge economy of the future and the capacities for judgment and leadership to make that future more durable and better rooted; by serving the university community and the wider world, faculty members define the core mission of the University itself: to serve the state and the world in order to improve both. The state's economy is in dire straits at the moment, and if we

are to have a second act following our role as an industrial powerhouse of the twentieth century, becoming the knowledge-based economy we all envision, the bases for that transformation will come from the research, teaching, and service of the University of Michigan's faculty.

As the University of Michigan approaches the threshold of its third century of world-class academic leadership, the faculty stands next to President Duderstadt as it sizes up its duties to the state and to the world. It accomplishes those tasks thanks to the support of the myriad different parts of the institution, encompassing everything from athletic achievement to medical miracle-making, from bibliographic bounty to student services. In the twenty-first century the faculty will deliver on the promise not only to be the leaders and best, but to produce the leaders and best as well.

(Submitted December, 2010)

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 questions of educational policy.