Legacy of Leaders

The Evolution of Education

A Proposal for a PBS Broadcast & Web Vignette Series
12/2/14

May 22, 1964. President Lyndon Johnson stands before a throng of graduates on the campus of the University of Michigan. His message to these students about to enter the world is clear:

> *"The challenge of the next half century is whether we have the wisdom to use that wealth to enrich and elevate our national life, and to advance the quality of our American civilization.*
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> *Your imagination and your initiative, and your indignation will determine whether we build a society where progress is the servant of our needs, or a society where old values and new visions are buried under unbridled growth. For in your time we have the opportunity to move not only toward the rich society and the powerful society, but upward to the Great Society."*

While Johnson's speech spoke to the very real needs of a country struggling to find unity in a changing culture, his decision to unveil this new domestic agenda at one of the nation's leading institutions of higher education cannot be overlooked. If we are to foster a better world, a happier and more rewarding civilization, that pursuit begins with education.

In so many ways, the Great Society *is* a university. And over 200 years, the University of Michigan has borne leaders in every discipline that have shaped our lives in a multitude of ways, but always on a clear path that began in a classroom. *Legacy of Leaders* is a proposed short-form documentary series to air on Detroit Public Television (DPTV) throughout 2017 as part of a multimedia effort of recognize 200 years of the University's role as an educator and institution in the state, nation and world.

Spread over 8-10 broadcast and web vignettes, *Legacy of Leaders* will not simply be an anecdotal, this-date-in-history review of major moments in the University's timeline. Each vignette will attempt to track the evolution of how the institution ignited the sparks necessary for world-changing minds, attitudes and accomplishments from the 19th century through the new millennium. Even the earliest stories of the University's origins will not just deal with sepia-toned recollections, but will trace the repercussions of those events into our contemporary times and the future.

Each vignette will be presented in a one-minute broadcast version that can run on DPTV during prime-time and weekend station breaks. These short versions will redirect to DPTV's *Legacy of Leaders* On Demand website, where viewers can watch full-length 6-7 minute versions that go more in-depth on each subject. These web versions will also be made available to the University to use on their website, and can ultimately be pieced together as an hour-long program special to air on DPTV. Depending on the University's desired roll-out strategy, a new vignette can air every month starting in January 2017, culminating in the airing of the broadcast special in the fall.

Examples of subjects include, but are not limited to:

- *Different Cultures* – Attending the University of Michigan is a multicultural experience for any student, and even in its deepest origin stories the school recognizes the different cultures in its roots. As part of the Treaty of Fort Meigs in 1817, 1,920 acres were ceded to the "college of Detroit" for either use or sale. While the University eventually settled in Ann Arbor, it has never forgotten its Native American roots. While the 1970's saw court cases over how the proceeds of the original land grant should have been used, in the past 40 years the University has taught courses in the Ojibwe language, built a Native American studies discipline inside their American Cultures department and dedicated a plaque on central campus recognizing the original gift. Even today, students on campus have translated "The Victors" into Ojibwe, testament to the University's recognition and understanding of other cultures.

- *Social Justice/Minority Experience* – From accepting Madelon Louisa Stockwell as its first female student in 1870 (the first university in the state to do so) to its leading recognition of minority students, through its role in the Civil Rights movement of the 1960s and LGBT issues on campus today, this vignette will trace the University's role as a leader in social justice concerns and equality for all people as echoed by Johnson's 1964 commencement speech.

- *Medicine* – In 1869 the University established the nation's first university-owned hospital. This vignette will trace the development of the University of Michigan Medical School and hospital, from its earliest pioneers to some of the greatest minds, Nobel Prize winners and advancements to come out of the school, the originator of the modern medical curriculum, up through the stories of tomorrow's doctors who are being educated in the school today.

- *Chemistry & Public Health* – The first building at a state university designed and equipped solely as a chemical laboratory is built at Michigan in 1856, and this vignette will trace some of the major, world changing accomplishments that were made at the University or by its graduates, such as Thomas Francis' work on the influenza, the conquering of polio by Francis and Jonas Salk, and Alumnus Jerome Horwitz, an organic chemist at Michigan Cancer Foundation, who synthesized the drug AZT in 1964, which is used to fight AIDS. This will culminate at a look at the chemistry labs today and what breakthroughs and advances are yet to come.

- *Exploration & New Frontiers* – The University has always fostered a spirit of exploration, either on this world or beyond. This vignette will follow some of the alumni who sought to understand to world outside of their own, from Joseph Beal Steere's five-year exploration around the world starting in 1870, to the student-led mission to establish the Peace Corps, the University's legacy of NASA astronauts (including Edward H. White, the first American to walk in space during the Gemini Four mission in 1965) and up to some of today's students who are getting the inspiration necessary to be the explorers of tomorrow.

- *Literature & The Arts* – World-changing is not limited to advancements in science and politics. The University has also been a cradle of creativity in literature and the Arts, mostly exemplified through the Hopwood Awards program, started in 1931.

Bequeathed by playwright Avery Hopwood, a 1905 graduate, the awards have encouraged some of the novelists, poets, playwrights and screenwriters who have changed the way we look at our world, including Frank O'Hara, Jane Kenyon, Robert Hayden, Arthur Miller and Lawrence Kasdan. The awards are still handed out twice a year to those students who have received the education and inspiration necessary to be the future laureates of their art.

- *Education & Activism* – Since introducing the seminar method of teaching in 1871, the University has always recognized the importance of healthy and open debate in a great education. Starting with the earlier classroom experiences on campus, this vignette will follow the evolution of educated debate on campus and how that spirit helped establish the University as a center of activism in the 1960's and 70's, including the concert to free John Sinclair in 1971. It is an emphasis on the importance of argument and differing points of view that continues in University seminar classes today.

- *Technology* & *Communication* – Since the first program in computers & communication science was established in 1960, University programs and alumni have also been involved in changing our society through technology and advancements in communication, from the development of time-sharing computing in the form of the Michigan Terminal System in 1967, Tom Knoll's development of digital photography and Photoshop in the 1980's, through Larry Page's creation of Google and Tony Fadell's invention of the iPod in the 2000's, higher education has resulted in some of the technological tools that have redefined how we go about our everyday lives, including today's students who may be dreaming up technology now that we can only begin to imagine.

Ultimately, these suggested categories are just an example of the stories we wish to tell, and as we continue into production, we will be open to additional examples of how the education received at a major university leads to the world-changing thinking that the University has produced for 200 years. In addition to providing content for the vignettes, and archival interviews we do with students both past and present will be made available to the Bentley Historical Library upon the project's completion in order to establish and preserve a living history of some of the University's more remarkable achievements.

In the end, though, the ultimate message we want to convey is that through higher education, we have the power to work towards that Great Society envisioned by President Johnson in 1964:

> *"The Great Society is a place where every child can find knowledge to enrich his mind and to enlarge his talents. It is a place where leisure is a welcome chance to build and reflect, not a feared cause of boredom and restlessness. It is a place where the city of man serves not only the needs of the body and the demands of commerce but the desire for beauty and the hunger for community.*
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> *It is a place where man can renew contact with nature. It is a place which honors creation for its own sake and for what it adds to the understanding of the race. It is a place where men are more concerned with the quality of their goals than the quantity of their goods.*
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> *But most of all, the Great Society is not a safe harbor, a resting place, a final objective, a finished work. It is a challenge constantly renewed, beckoning us toward a destiny where the meaning of our lives matches the marvelous products of our labor."*