

Address to the Senate and Faculty by Joseph E. Champagne President, Oakland University September 17, 1987

Members of the Senate and Faculty of the University:

I am taking the occasion of the opening meeting of the 1987-88 Oakland University Senate to share with you some concepts, ideas, concerns, opportunities and challenges that face us in the immediate future as well as in the longer term. To use a phrase coined by a prominent economist a few years ago, education today stands at the "hinge of history." All of us in the field of education, including higher education, must make sure that this hinge swings freely and that the doors of opportunity open to their fullest extent. If we do not, the students we graduate, the discoveries we unfold, and the knowledge we transmit and apply may be inadequate to the needs of our society.

For the past several years in my tenure as president, I have deliberately chosen to enhance the visibility of the University. This was done to make the people of our state aware of our great potential and to demonstrate our willingness to assist the State and people of Michigan to achieve their goals, while at the same time extol and enhance our excellence.

Last year I undertook, with the cooperation of the AAUP under the leadership of Dan Fullmer to whom I express my sincere gratitude, a series of eight faculty town meetings which were attended by the vast majority of our faculty. The purpose of these meetings was to stimulate a relatively small group dialogue and to exchange views on pressing issues that were affecting the productivity, morale, and creativity of the faculty. I found these meetings to be extremely helpful in assimilating into myself the depth of our faculty's commitment, its energy, its concerns and anxieties, its aspirations, and its feelings about how we should respond as an institution to the changing pressures of our times. Those of you who attended the meetings know that they were very free and open sessions and at times they even became quite exciting. I am pleased that so many faculty took the time to participate in these dialogues, which were a great help to me in understanding your feelings about issues that concern all of us.

As a result of those meetings and the intensity of the discussions that took place within the meetings as well as in preparation for the self-study in which we are now engaged as part of the accreditation review process, I asked our Board of Trustees to free a little of my time this summer so that I might have an opportunity to step back from administrative detail to try to take a less hurried and more thoughtful look at the issues you raised during our dialogues and at the fast-growing literature in higher education. Obviously, in the brief time that I had to spend in study and reflection,

it was not possible to find definitive answers to our problems. I did, however, have the opportunity to think about where we are and where we are going, and to identify some alternatives that might be helpful as we strive to achieve our shared objectives in pursuit of excellence.

This afternoon, I want to renew our dialogue by sharing with you some of my reflections on major issues. I hope that we can continue to explore them together as we move through the process of self-study and as we continue in the second quarter-century of our history as an institution.

In a recent book by Ernest Boyer entitled *College, the Undergraduate Experience in America*, there is an excellent statement which serves to frame much of what I feel at this time. And I quote from the book, "In the end the goal of the undergraduate experience is not only to prepare the undergraduates for careers but to enable them to live lives of dignity and purpose; not only to give knowledge to the student but to channel knowledge to humane ends. 'It is not learning,' said Woodrow Wilson, 'but the spirit of service that will give a college place in the public annals of the nation.'" To a great extent, the progress we have made at Oakland in recent years tracks the essence of this passage.

Oakland has had a long tradition of a strong and diversified undergraduate experience. In recent years, we have reemphasized the importance of a liberal education by insisting on a university-wide set of general education requirements for all of our students. The half-life of information today is measured in months. Unless we can instill in our students a broad base of understanding, a conceptual framework of knowledge, a creative thirst for inquiry, a willingness to venture and take risks, and a desire to be responsive to change, we may find that we have prepared them to fail rather than to succeed. Students in our professional and scientific programs must have good technical training, but they must have something else that is fundamentally important — an education that will prepare them to view obsolescence and change not as frustrations, but as welcome challenges to their capacities for professional and personal growth and development. If we graduate students with enormously large memory banks of facts but with little understanding of the interrelationships among those facts, we shall have turned out students who may find immediate career success, but who will likely fail the long range tests of life, citizenship, humaneness, and responsibility. We must continue the

emphasis on liberal education which has always been, more or less, the hallmark of the Oakland undergraduate experience. It is, by the way, my strong personal belief that a person who has never studied ethics cannot truly be called "liberally educated."

One of the fears I have heard expressed from time to time is that "we are becoming Oakland Tech." I do not share in this fear, not even remotely. Let me emphasize to you today, as I have attempted to do in the past, that I strongly believe in and am firmly committed to the importance of liberal education as the core of our undergraduate curriculum. I see no contradiction between technological excellence and a liberal education. Our university and our civilization must have both of these, in a synergistic relationship, if we are to survive in the contemporary world.

The modern public university has a responsibility to prepare citizens to be flexible and creative as well as productive. Perhaps this dual responsibility is not so strong in the private institution as it is in the public institution. We, at public universities, are agents of the State and of the people. If we lose sight of our responsibilities to the society, we will fail that society and we will predestine many of our students to needless future frustration and to unfulfilled dreams, aspirations, and goals. Our students come to us for two principal reasons: to become prepared for life and to become prepared for careers. The latter is the predominant preoccupation of most entering students and it is not until later in life that the former is recognized as really the critical dimension of the undergraduate collegiate experience. We must meet both needs if we are to be true to society as a whole and to our students specifically.

Leadership in society does not come from the technocrats, but rather from those in whom seeds of initiative, seeds of creativity, and seeds of humanity are instilled and reinforced during their college years. We cannot be true to this dual mission unless we have the resources to accomplish both parts of it. We can best obtain these resources by visibly demonstrating that we can help to provide the means by which our society progresses. The scope of our curriculum must be comprehensive and broad-based because the ability to respond to change is, in the final analysis, what our society thrives on. But it also must include sound professional training, because technical skills too are necessary for dealing with change and for both individual and social success.

Let me try to put this in the context of Oakland University. One of the great challenges the state of Michigan faces is in the diversification of its economic base in order that the automotive driven industry's cycles

may be less debilitating and less volatile. If we can succeed at this as a state, we can make possible a stronger quality of life for our people and, in turn, a more stable resource base for our educational institutions. In order to achieve this kind of economic stability, we must apply the brain-power of our universities to the solution of this economic challenge. No other institution of society has more brain-power, more creativity, or a greater ability to help meet the challenges of our times than do our universities.

Let me quote from a recent report on issues in higher education by the American Association of State Colleges and Universities: "As the information age continues, America's single greatest resource may well be the brain-power of its college and university faculty members." The responsibility is clearly ours and we have the talent to meet this responsibility. Our emphasis on public service at Oakland is directly related to an institutional response to social expectations and needs. It is not my desire as president of Oakland University that we simply become a technical consulting assistance organization for local public and private enterprises. Public service is both an end in itself and a means to an educational end. I believe that the talents, skills and expertise of our institution must be shared with those private and public organizations that will help our graduates fulfill their goals, help our state advance and help our nation regain its position of leadership in a very competitive global economy.

Equally important, as we share our brain-power and resources and as we apply the talents and skills that we possess to the immediate problems of the environs of our university, we, as an institution, grow as we emerge from the laboratory of the classroom and campus into the laboratory of life. Public service activities provide a reinforcement of the concepts we learned and are learning, of the research that we undertake, of the instruction that we render, and of the scholarly material that we publish and apply.

We at Oakland are not interested in speculative economic development. The Technology Park was not conceived of as a purely economic venture for Oakland University. Such a concept would be outside the role and scope of our mission. Rather, it was conceived of as an opportunity for all of us, as a university community, to share our knowledge, to reinforce what we have learned and teach, to give our students an excellent opportunity to apply their learning while they learn and to provide an opportunity for our researchers to apply their findings in what we commonly call "technology transfer." Many of our most prestigious public institutions achieved their greatness because they responded to the challenges set forward by the Morrill Act of 1862, which began the land grant college movement. That movement saw these institutions involve themselves directly in the major social, technological, and economic problems of their time. Our recent initiatives similarly must be viewed as a means to an end; the end being the fulfillment and enrichment of our academic mission. If I ever thought that ventures with

which we have become associated, such as the Technology Park, would constrain our ability to be creative, would make us subservient to outside special interests, would narrow our focus, or would inhibit our autonomy and freedom, then I would recommend that we abandon these ventures immediately.

At a speech at this summer's annual meeting of the Council for Advancement and Support of Education, President Derek Bok of Harvard in emphasizing the importance of university public service said that institutions of higher education need to concentrate more on public problems and less on their own financial problems. Frankly, we at Oakland must concentrate on both. More and more universities are recognizing and accepting the breadth of their social responsibilities.

It is not enough in the eyes of society that we merely graduate students. Institutions such as Oakland must provide an added dimension, one that is visible, meaningful, and clearly in the public interest. It is important that we service the students whom we graduate for a lifetime of opportunity, and that we service the institutions with whom these graduates become affiliated so that these institutions may continue to prosper, develop, and provide the opportunities and initiatives for growth in our graduates. The opportunities for enrichment of our faculty through direct interactions with the private sector have never been greater, for the private sector today needs American higher education more than it has ever needed it before. Brain-power has replaced muscle-power as the predominant force of industry. Investment in human capital has never been greater. This is especially true in Michigan as our manufacturing economy faces problems that could render it obsolete. What a challenging opportunity we have for ourselves as faculty members, not only with the transmission and development of new knowledge, but also with the opportunity to test and temper our theories in the crucible of practice.

During the past several years we have devoted much time and effort to a capital campaign and we've achieved a great deal of success in this effort. The purpose of the campaign was really twofold: to raise money to remedy deficiencies in our resource base; and to be able to tell our story and to have it recognized by the willingness of institutions, corporations, foundations, and individuals to invest in us. If they believe in our future and our potential, they should commit to us. And they have responded! Our campaign has nearly completed the first capital phase of \$10 million. The largest component of that campaign was the funding of the library whose total project goal was \$11.5 million. Construction of the library will begin this year. Of this amount, \$9 million will be devoted to construction and renovation and \$2.5 million to acquisitions. While we have reached our \$11.5 million library goal, we must not stop there for the enrichment needs are significant. I have heard frequently and clearly about the problems that many of you face with inadequate library resources, and we have attempted to respond with a more adequate facility and a greater funding base to relieve collection deficiencies.

We must continue, however, in the response.

This initial achievement of \$11.5 million for the library would not have been possible had we not been able to demonstrate that Oakland was being responsive to the immediate and long-term needs of the region and the State. The lever necessary to achieve full funding was in place and it succeeded. If we do our part, others will do theirs to assist us in our needs. We cannot function in isolation and expect support.

Let me conclude this part of my discussion with you today by reemphasizing the commitment that I, as president, have toward the values of a liberal education and toward the importance of the application of knowledge to the pressing needs of a society that is looking to us and demands a response. I am fully convinced, that, if we do not respond, private sector institutions will respond in place as documented by a recent publication of the Carnegie Foundation entitled: *The Corporate Classrooms*. In this study it was demonstrated that American industry today is spending over \$40 billion annually to educate its work force, not simply to train them in the traditional sense of occupational training, but rather in corporate-based educational programs. The fear that I and others have is that if we allow this educational component to be taken away from our universities because they haven't responded, many programs provided to our future leaders could become too narrow in focus to provide the basis for flexibility and creative leadership that this society so desperately needs. In summary, if we don't respond as appropriate to our institutional roles and missions and legitimate societal expectations, others will. If others respond, we may lose control over critical aspects of societal development, namely, education and the advancement of knowledge. We must maintain the traditions of the academy, but we must do so with a flexible and creative response to the information age upon us.

I wish to turn now to a discussion of the self-study we have begun as part of our accreditation review in the winter of 1989. I have asked Shelly Appleton, one of the most respected members of the faculty and administration, to serve as the self-study coordinator. He is operating directly out of the office of the Provost to insure full academic support. Assisting Shelly is a very distinguished and representative group of faculty and staff — and one Honors College student — who serve as the general steering committee. In addition to this steering committee, there are a number of committees and subcommittees which will look at all aspects of university life.

The North Central Association lists four basic evaluative criteria upon which the accreditation review must be based.

1. The institution has clear and publicly stated purposes consistent with its mission and appropriate to a post secondary educational institution.

2. The institution has effectively organized adequate human, financial, and physical resources into educational and other programs to accomplish its purposes.

3. The institution is accomplishing its purposes.

4. The institution can continue to accomplish its purposes.

I have no doubt that we shall do well in the accreditation review process. For Oakland is an institution which has had a history of dedication to quality instruction, scholarly research, timely public service, and cultural pursuits.

The self-study process is a two-year process, having begun last spring and culminating in the spring of 1989. This current academic year is the critical year for the self-study process and a draft report must be completed by Spring. The burden is on us, you and me, to prove that we are as good as we believe we are. The Steering Committee under Professor Appleton's leadership has developed the basic process which we will follow in consultation with the North Central Association. I fully support its efforts, approach, enthusiasm, and determination to produce a self-study document which will be representative of the strengths of the institution and which will serve as the basis for a more coordinated and well defined planning process in the years ahead.

Since our last accreditation review and self-study process in 1978-79, this institution has passed through a difficult period. It was one in which resources were curtailed resulting in some programmatic cutbacks, but one which, more significantly, left us with a strained resource base. Our success in recent years is directly attributable to the dedication, energy, and quality of our faculty and staff. You and I both know that we are significantly underfunded by the State. Yet, while we are underfunded, we have been doing an excellent job of fulfilling the mission of the institution and meeting the mandates imposed upon us as a public university.

I have pledged my enthusiastic and whole hearted support to the Self-Study Steering Committee in order that the process may be complete and accurate and that its results will not only serve as the basis of a reaffirmation of our accreditation but will become the cornerstone of a more intensive planning effort. Through this effort, we will more deliberately and precisely define our objectives and strategies for the future with a clear recognition of the problems we face as an institution. All of you will be asked to participate in one way or another in the accreditation review process. I urge your wholehearted support of the work of the Steering Committee and its subcommittees. Without your cooperation and dedication, we will not be able to achieve the type of self-study we seek and need.

During the course of the self-study, we will have an opportunity to demonstrate our strengths and reexamine our weaknesses. The combination of recognizing our strengths as well as our weaknesses will serve to provide this institution with the basis for moving forth into the 1990s and beyond. We know and feel the pride of our accomplishments and how keenly we recognize the problems and resource constraints which keep us from even greater achievements. Faculty at the eight town meetings I mentioned before were quick to

point out the frustrations that we share daily as we try to achieve what is expected of us with resources that are often inadequate to the task.

Let us take this opportunity to articulate well what we are doing to sharpen an already intensive planning process within most academic units. Some units are planning their programs and their future more formally than others. Some are using rather sophisticated techniques to help to find their place in the role and mission of this institution. Whether the planning process is formal or informal, we must document our efforts at self-examination. We must show how institution-wide efforts such as CAMP (Commission on Academic Mission and Priority), SUAMP (Student and Urban Affairs Mission and Priority Commission), and the Chipman Commission on University Excellence have brought us closer to a more realistic program base in order to achieve our mission with quality, relevance and excellence. We must show that the planning efforts of the various departments, when finally put together into a meaningful mosaic, do indicate that Oakland is an institution straight on course with a firm rudder well in hand.

I know that some of you have felt or currently feel that we appear to be moving in several directions and that we are more opportunistic than coordinated in our institutional development. This is the time to document our many efforts and we ask the Steering Committee and the subcommittees to weave together the various pieces of planning, in which most of you are engaged, into a fabric which accurately portrays the strength of this institution. What a magnificent opportunity this process also affords us to truly focus on the direction our future will take. Our plans will build upon our strengths, on our tradition and history, on the goals of the various academic units, and on the aspirations of each of our faculty members and staff. They must take seriously into account the needs of our students and of the society in which we live. In so doing, we shall offer our students an education of high quality that will serve them well throughout their lives. We will also assure that our faculty members remain at the cutting edges of their disciplines, competent and dedicated to their pursuit of instruction, scholarship, and service.

Let us use the self-study process to raise meaningful questions about who we really are and where we want to go. So many questions must be addressed in the months and years ahead, questions as to the appropriate mix of graduate versus undergraduate study, of the type and extent of research to which we commit ourselves, of the purpose and nature of our public service engagements, and of the involvement of our faculty, staff, and students in these important social interventions, to cite just a few.

We must look at the nature of our changing student body, a student body which is becoming older and more part-time in character and whose higher educational purposes may be more specific than in the past. Because rapid changes are taking place within our disciplines, we must examine how we will evaluate

our programs in the future, and how we can encourage our faculty and staff to develop themselves to keep pace with these changes. We must redefine our role in continuing education, for lifelong learning is playing a greater and greater role in our society and becoming more and more complex as the educational base of our society increases.

We must address the issue of minority access, retention, and academic success. Without a commitment to equal educational opportunity for all people, we will inevitably fail in our mission as a public institution of higher learning. We must examine the nature of our relationship with other segments of society, since it is only through cooperative interaction with these entities that a financial and programmatic resource base can be found.

These are but a few of the basic educational issues we must explore as we work our way through the self-study process and beyond. If the self-study document serves only as the basis upon which our accreditation is reaffirmed, then, we shall have shortchanged ourselves tremendously. But, if we use the document and the process to institute a dynamic ongoing and sophisticated process of institutional planning involving all segments of the university, we shall have achieved a significant milestone in Oakland's brief history. To this end I pledge my vigorous and strong support. And I ask that each of you make the same commitment.

As a result of my conversations with our faculty and colleagues last year and my reflections this summer, I feel that we have achieved excellent recognition in the external arena. This success will allow me to devote more personal attention to examining a number of aspects of internal university life and administrative organization, while I continue to expand the external relationships necessary to the future success of this institution. I will attempt to reinforce those relationships already established, but also, and with great pleasure, to involve myself more in the affairs of the broader academic community. I found our faculty town meetings of last year rewarding and plan to spend more time continuing our dialogue in a variety of ways.

I look forward to this academic year as we put ourselves under the microscope of self-study for analysis and as we take the results from this analysis and lay the groundwork for the future of Oakland. We shall do this together with enthusiasm and with the knowledge that all of our aspirations cannot be met due to our very constrained resource base, but also with the knowledge that our determination to succeed can compensate for many of the resource limitations we face. It is not my role to define alone the future of Oakland. It is our role to do so together. While I will continue to seek opportunities and resources, together we will define what programs we will pursue, what initiatives we will take, and what responses we will make to the social and educational needs of our society. Your scholarship and your dedication are the keys to our success. I seek your help and guidance for the sake of our students and all of us both now and in the future.

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