

UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN-FLINT
50TH ANNIVERSARY GALA
NORTH BANK CENTER
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Chancellor

At 50, the University of Michigan-Flint is a very young campus. To keep it in perspective, the University of Bologna, Italy, the oldest in continuous operation, was founded in 1088. It is 918 years old. Oxford, in England, is 839 years old. Harvard is 370 years old. And the University of Michigan, the baby of the oldies, is only 189 years old. So our campus cannot lay claim to ancient traditions. In fact, the definition of tradition at UM-Flint is “any practice or event that is performed three years in a row.” If it is performed five years in a row, we call it a “venerable tradition.”

Being so young has its disadvantages, especially in fundraising. Our alumni base is relatively small, and most of our alumni have not **yet** amassed the great fortunes they will some day share with their alma mater. But we are patient. And we have faith. On the other hand, we can bring to our birthday celebration members of our first graduating class, something that the University of Bologna, Oxford, Harvard, and even Ann Arbor cannot do. Thankfully, because, as a rule, people are not very festive after their 200th birthday.

Being young is not as important as being youthful. And UM-Flint has the energy, the creativity, the ambition, the faith in the future that is inherent in a youthful institution. Last year we adopted a strategic plan— that is, a guide to the future— that defined our mission as the blending of three values: academic excellence, student centeredness and engaged citizenship. The importance of each of these values is enhanced by its embrace of the other two. Let me call your attention to the third one, engaged citizenship, because it is not a staple of academic mission statements. It is critical for us, because we value our commitment to our community. We are proud to be part of one of the best universities in the world, the University of Michigan. And we are just as proud to be the University of Michigan-**Flint**.

I have said on other occasions that Flint is a city whose best times are in the past and in the future. As far as I am concerned, that good future has already begun. Stroll down Saginaw Street— better yet, take a guided tour of downtown— and you will see the signs of a city that is beginning to rise again: the renovated facades, the historical arches, the construction equipment, the “opening soon” notices. And if your eyes wander toward the river, they will relish the view of the beautiful campus of the University of Michigan-Flint, **50 years young**, reassuring all of us, the neighbors of this community, that the future will be better than the present and even than the past, because there is an

educational institution in the middle of it all, anchoring, encouraging, inspiring, shining like a beacon of hope.

Thank you.