Good morning, colleagues:

Yesterday, our campus welcomed the University of Michigan Board of Regents for their October meeting in our Northbank Center Ballroom.

I welcomed the Regents to our beautiful campus by telling them a bit about our Industrial Savings Bank-turned Northbank Center building – a historic architectural landmark of the city of Flint. I went on to say how that building and so much of the UM-Flint campus could not have been possible without the support of the Mott family, specifically William S. White who passed away last week.

It was very important to recognize the impact Mr. White had on our campus and the city of Flint. Not only did he help create pathways to education for thousands of students, but he was at the forefront of supporting the growth of this campus, from projects like the First Street Residence Hall, the Murchie Science Building, and, obviously, the William S. White Building which bears his name. We are deeply saddened that he is no longer with us.

I also spoke to the Regents about several updates from our campus. As a result of a $950,000 grant from the C.S. Mott Foundation, we will renovate the aging wall structures and the AV and sound systems in the Riverfront Event Center. With the new Flint Hilton Garden Inn opening next year, this state-of-the-art conference and meeting venue will draw more national events to downtown Flint and help drive up the economy in the years to come.

I mentioned to the Regents that as we seek new sources of revenue, we will strive to cut operating costs where possible. I shared with them our campus-wide energy cost savings. Through the good work of our in-house skilled trades unit, we have reduced Central Plant electrical costs by almost 9% compared to last year by optimizing the electrical demand year-round. Optimal scheduling in the University Tower and Northbank Center resulted in energy usage savings of 23.98% and 6.87%, respectively.

And all exterior lights on campus are now LED, resulting in a reduction of cost by 37% as compared to conventional lighting. We expect more savings as the Riverfront Residence Hall is currently being retrofitted to a new controls system in partnership with Consumers Energy’s Smart Buildings program.

I acknowledged Tim Barden and Richard Hamilton (both on the President’s Commission on Carbon Neutrality Advisory Committee), our in-house skilled trades unit, and the leadership in Facilities and Operations for this cost savings.
Finally, I highlighted the UM-Flint Chemistry Club and our American Chemical Society (ACS) Student Chapter, which has received the “Outstanding Student Chapter” awards – ACS’ highest recognition – nine times. Only 3 percent of all ACS student chapters in the nation have received the Outstanding Student Chapter Award.

The Chemistry Club has also been awarded two Green Chapter Awards from the ACS Green Chemistry Institute bringing national recognition to the department’s new Bachelor of Science in Green Chemistry, the only one in the country.

During the past year alone, members of the Chemistry Club have presented demonstrations in 56 science classrooms in schools throughout Genesee County. Hats off to the Chemistry Club’s advisors, Dr. Jessica Tischler, Associate Professor of Organic Chemistry, and Monique Wilhelm, Laboratory Manager, and their team of dedicated students.

Speaking of talented and dedicated students, I want to thank Nickxit Bhardwaj, our Student Government President, who gave the student presentation at the Regents meeting. He spoke passionately about the student life experience at UM-Flint and the opportunities to improve it.

Thanks as well to Ben Gaydos, chair and associate professor of design in our Department of Art and Art History. His faculty presentation, “Community Design Studio at UM-Flint,” was not only an illustration of the fine work being done by our faculty, but served to underscore the importance of the arts and provide a timely linkage to the presidential arts initiative announced earlier this month by President Schlissel.

I also want to offer my congratulations to the nine appointees listed below, approved by the Regents, to serve on our UM-Flint Citizens Advisory Committee. This committee was established to advise the chancellor on matters bearing on the university's responsiveness to the needs of the region.

- Ja’Nel Jamerson
- Heidi Magyar
- Sue Peters
- Linnette Phillips
- Tyler Rossmaessler
- Todd Slisher
- Ezra Tillman, Jr.
- Greg Viener
- Bob Waun
Drs. Emily Feuerherm, associate professor of English, and Bénédicte Veillet, associate professor of Philosophy, were appointed to the UM-Flint College of Arts and Sciences Executive Committee. Dr. Feuerherm will serve a three-month term while Jeannette Stein is on sabbatical, and Dr. Veillet replaces Shelby Newport after her move to Associate Provost and Dean of Undergraduate Studies.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, I want to thank all members of our campus community who attended the Board of Regents’ Open Forum in the UM-Flint Theatre. We heard a range of ideas on boosting student success, working together with UM-Ann Arbor and UM-Dearborn, and increasing enrollment. Important topics such as student support services, mentorship, and marketing and recruitment strategies were mentioned. I believe conversations like this one will be key for us as we develop a shared vision and pathway for our future.

These are highlights from the Regents visit to Flint yesterday. The full board agenda is available here.

This important annual event on our campus would not have been possible without the good work of many staff members from many units. Special thanks to Jennifer Hogan and her team from Event and Building Services, Chief Ray Hall and his team from Public Safety, and Dru Doran in the Chancellor’s Office.

With my very best wishes.

Go Blue!

Deba Dutta
Chancellor

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