

Greetings for the new academic year – September 17, 2004

To the UM-Dearborn community,

I write this afternoon to offer my welcome to all of us--faculty, staff, and students--as we slip into the agreeable rhythms of the fall semester. We have celebrated the start of the new academic year in a variety of ways--the Freshman Convocation, the orientation for new faculty, the Faculty Senate retreat, and Wednesday's "Greetings to the Faculty" at the Henry Ford Estate. And we have experienced the pleasure of rejoining old friends, encountering our students, and meeting new members of the staff and the student body. Now we have the satisfaction of engaging in teaching, learning, and discovering in the many ways that make the university such a great place to be.

As I have had conversations with colleagues across the campus this fall, the theme of engagement has cropped up again and again: engagement of our faculty and staff with our students, engagement of our students in the stimulation of their studies, and engagement of all of us in the many ideas and problems that fascinate us within our disciplines and across our disciplines. Real learning and real growth of knowledge require these forms of intensity and connection, and it is a source of pride for all of us that we have cultivated a campus that values these connections. I look forward to some of the good opportunities we will have in the coming year to engage in stimulating interdisciplinary discussions together--the MALS symposium on interdisciplinarity, the "History of Mobility" conference that will take place on campus in November, the visit to campus by the philosopher Onora O'Neill in the winter, and some other exciting events that are in the planning stages.

The engagement, dedication, and teamwork of staff all over the campus are critical to our success in recruiting, retaining, and educating our students. I have seen, as so many of us have, the remarkable willingness of staff all over the campus to work together to handle the large challenges (and small!) as we prepared for the opening of the academic year--the final efforts to accommodate transfer students around Labor Day, the good work in the deans' offices and the registrar's office to finalize course registrations, and the efforts that were expended in moving faculty offices out of the CASL Annex. Thanks to everyone!

I look to the coming year as one in which the campus will be able to take some important steps forward. The University of Michigan-Dearborn is in a highly opportune position to increase its impact in our region and within the University of Michigan as a whole. President Coleman shared her strategic vision for the future of the University of Michigan last spring, and the principles that she articulated are highly consistent with the best ambitions of this campus. It is now appropriate for us to reflect on our past, to survey our strengths and our relationships with the people and issues of southeast Michigan, and to formulate a focused vision of our directions for the future. I am looking forward to discussing this challenge and opportunity with you in the coming weeks and months.

Sincerely,
Daniel Little