Dear Colleagues,

Yesterday, I began my new role as the University of Michigan provost. I’m excited and energized by the incredible work going on across campus—and by the possibilities and the challenges, in front of us. Our focus on academic excellence, our public ethos, and our unwavering commitment to diversity and access combine to make UM one of the world’s preeminent universities. I am both proud and humbled by the opportunity to serve as provost, and I look forward to working with you to make this great university even stronger. As I take on the responsibilities of provost, I want to share with you my thoughts about the path ahead of us.

**Innovation in Learning.** UM has extraordinary students, who come to Ann Arbor to work with faculty who have deep expertise in many different fields of knowledge, supported by smart, dedicated staff. Our students benefit from a breadth of activities: engaged, interactive experiences in the classroom, in the laboratory, in studios, in discussion sections and office hours; projects, papers, and performances on which they receive individualized, expert critiques; research opportunities, clinical placements, internships and service learning experiences; and rich interactions with other students. These learning experiences are transformative for our students, enabling them to develop the knowledge, skills, and confidence that they need to be leaders in the 21st century.

Experiential learning guided by faculty with deep expertise is essential for our students. Yet experiential learning is expensive, and funding for higher education is highly constrained today. So we must innovate: we must look to new practices and new ways of using technology that enable us to become more efficient, precisely so that we can afford to maintain and enhance our experiential learning opportunities. This fall, I will host town halls where faculty and students can brainstorm together about opportunities in this space.

**Innovation in Research.** Because of both our broad excellence, which spans many disciplines, and the extent to which we embrace interdisciplinary work, UM is extremely well positioned to make headway on some of the most complex societal challenges that exist today. We are addressing big issues such as the relationship between human and environmental health, the effects of poverty and inequality, human migration and its global effects, needed improvements to K-12 education, and the development of new forms of creative expression. We will continue to support that work through innovative mechanisms such as M-Cubed and the Third Century Initiative. As a great research university, we will emphasize transformational research and collaborative work that addresses global challenges.

**Commitment to Affordability.** More than a century ago, President Angell proclaimed that the University of Michigan should provide “an uncommon education for the common man.” Our commitment to that vision is steadfast, and is the reason we focus intensely on issues of affordability. We have invested heavily in financial aid, so that today, the cost to attend UM is actually less than it was in 2004 for the typical undergraduate
student from Michigan from a family with low to moderate income. We have achieved this in a period in which the state has dramatically cut our funding, by implementing a variety of cost containment efforts that have already reduced our annual expenses by $265 million dollars. These efforts have enabled us not only to expand financial aid, but also to preserve and enhance the quality of our academic programs, for example through the hiring of 150 additional faculty members. But the financial challenges to higher education are large and persistent, and we will need to do more. We will emphasize administrative and infrastructure efficiencies, and look to alternative sources of revenue, while protecting the excellence of our core academic activities.

**Commitment to Diversity.** UM is recognized for its commitment to fostering a richly diverse campus community and this commitment guides our work every single day. As we recruit students, faculty, and staff, we seek people with diverse backgrounds, intellectual perspectives, and life experiences, because we know that a diverse campus provides a richer learning environment for our students, and that diverse groups produce better solutions to the kinds of challenging problems that are the focus of our research. We will continue to do everything we can to secure the benefits of diversity while working within the parameters of the law, and we will strive to make our campus community even more welcoming and inclusive for all of its members. I invite and welcome your good ideas on furthering diversity and inclusiveness on campus; please don't hesitate to email me with your suggestions.

I came to UM in 2000, attracted by the outstanding scholars who would become my colleagues, by the smart and engaged students I would teach, and by the talented staff who hold everything together. Thirteen years later, I am so happy that I made the right choice in coming here, and I am so grateful to have the opportunity serve UM in the role of provost and to work with you all.

Sincerely,

Martha