

LIFE AS A UNIVERSITY PRESIDENT

Many people would probably regard a university presidency as the ideal career, where one is highly admired, heavily pampered, and leads a life of luxury comparable to that of an English lord. To be sure, university presidents have many exciting experiences and meet some fascinating people. However, those contemplating such careers for the perks and luxuries should take caution, because not only are these few and far between, but they are accompanied by some serious drawbacks.

True, a university president may live in a large mansion, but for many presidents, this is more a place of work than a pleasant residence. With the increased public scrutiny of such roles, many presidential families have found themselves assuming roles of caretakers and even servants in the presidential residence, in addition to their responsibilities as hosts for university events. What about all of those perks like a box at the football games and center-row orchestra seats at concerts and theatrical events? To the president, an athletic event is a working assignment with the primary objective of raising money from donors or lobbying politicians for the university's interests. My wife, Anne, and I would generally entertain several hundred guests before each game and then invite several dozen guests to our box for the game itself. Who had the time to watch the game while entertain-

ing, persuading, and cajoling potential donors or lobbying politicians? Since we were usually at events most nights of the week (when we were in town), there was little time to attend concerts, unless, of course, we were cultivating donors in the process. Usually, we just gave our tickets away to students.

Now don't get me wrong. A university presidency can be a very satisfying assignment. You get to meet lots of interesting people, and you are working on behalf of an important social institution. But the presidency is certainly not a lifestyle for the rich and famous, as this chapter will demonstrate.

THE PRESIDENT'S SPOUSE

Although unwritten in the university contract for a president, there has long been an expectation that the president's spouse will be a full participant in presidential activities. Much like the presidency of the United States or the governorship of a state, a university presidency is really a two-person job, although generally only one partner gets paid and recognized in an employment sense. At many universities, such as Michigan, the First Lady of the university is expected to play an important role not only as the symbolic host of presidential events—and perhaps also as the symbolic mom of the student body—but in actually planning and managing a complex array of events, facilities, and staff. These responsibilities include hosting dignitaries visiting the campus; organizing almost daily events for faculty, students, and staff; and managing entertainment facilities, such as the President's House or the hospitality areas of the football stadium.

Throughout the University of Michigan's history, the spouse of the president has played an important role. Julia Tappan provided strong leadership for the frontier community of Ann Arbor and was affectionately called "Mrs. Chancellor." Sarah Angell was strongly supportive of women on campus and was instrumental in launching the Women's League. Nina Burton started the Faculty Women's Club and served as its first president. Florence Ruthven, Anne Hatcher, and Sally Fleming all played key roles in building a sense of community on campus—hosting students, faculty, and visitors. In addition to her role as a faculty member in the School of Social Work,

Vivian Shapiro provided important leadership for the university's fund-raising activities, taking the lead in raising funds to expand Tappan Hall.

This partnership nature of the university presidency continues to be important in today's era of big-time fund-raising, political influence, and campus community building. Yet the spouse's role is rarely recognized formally in terms of appointment or compensation—at least in public universities—although participation by the spouse is clearly expected by governing boards and university communities alike (just as the American public expects of the spouse in the Washington White House). The role of the presidential spouse is an archaic form of indentured servitude that goes with the territory at most universities.

Looking across the higher education landscape, there are several approaches that presidential spouses can take to this challenge. Perhaps the simplest approach is a passive one—to just sit back and enjoy life as royalty. Here, the idea is to simply show up when you are supposed to, smile politely at guests, and let the staff take care of all the details, while you enjoy the accoutrements of the position. Of course, since the perks of today's university presidency are few and far between, such a royal lifestyle has become a bit threadbare on many campuses. Moreover, giving the staff total control over presidential events can sometimes lead to embarrassment, if not disaster. But the *laissez-faire* approach is certainly one option.

The other extreme would be a take-charge approach, in which presidential spouses decide that rather than accept a merely symbolic role (with their calendar and activities determined by staff), they will become a more active partner with the president. Not only do these spouses assume major responsibility for planning, managing, and hosting presidential events, but they also sometimes become important participants in institution-wide strategy development in such areas as fund-raising and building the campus community.

A third approach that is increasingly common today is simply to reject any involvement whatsoever in presidential activities (as if to say, "A pox on you! I'm not a 'first' anything!") and pursue an independent career. Although this is understandable in an era of dual-career families, it also can be awkward at times in view of the long tradition of

university presidencies. In reality, many spouses with professional careers do double duty, participating fully in the presidency while attempting to maintain their careers, at considerable personal sacrifice. This may be particularly true, for example, of a First Gentleman, since many universities are now led by women. While many male spouses have independent careers, some have joined in partnerships with their presidential mates in advancing the interests of their university.

Fortunately, in our case, Anne and I had long approached university leadership positions—whether as dean, provost, or president—as true partnerships. To be sure, Anne faced a formidable challenge when she was thrust into the role as the university’s First Lady, responsible for the myriad of events, facilities, and staff associated with the president’s role in institutional development. Beyond the responsibility for creating, designing, managing, and hosting the hundreds of presidential events each year, Anne also managed several major facilities—the President’s House; Inglis House, a large estate used for university development activities; and the reception and hosting areas at Michigan Stadium—as well as a talented staff. Fortunately, her earlier university experiences as president of the Michigan Faculty Women’s Club and through my roles as dean and provost had prepared her well for such a role. Through these efforts, she had developed considerable experience in designing, organizing, and conducting events and gained an intimate knowledge of both university facilities and staff. She also had developed a keen sense of just what one could accomplish in terms of quality and efficiency within the very real budget constraints faced by a public university.

Anne believed that since the image of the university—as well as the president—would be influenced by the quality of an event, it was important that the hosts (i.e., the president and First Lady) be involved in key details of planning the event. Furthermore, she realized that running these many events on automatic pilot would inevitably lead to significant deterioration in quality over time, a rubber-chicken syndrome. She also realized that by raising the expectations for quality at the presidential level, there would likely be a cascade effect in which other events throughout the university would be driven to develop higher quality standards. The challenge was to do this while simultaneously reducing costs. In effect, Anne launched

one of the university's early total quality management efforts in the arena of presidential events. While she was able to recruit and lead a talented staff, she also participated in all aspects of the activities, from planning to arrangements, from working with caterers to designing seating plans, from welcoming guests to cleaning up afterward. No job was too large or too small, and her very high standards were applied to all.

While Anne's direct involvement in all aspects of presidential events was perhaps unusual, there is nevertheless an expectation that the presidential spouse will be a partner in advancing the interests of the university. There is a certain inequity in the expectation of such uncompensated spousal service, and this expectation is an additional constraint placed on those seeking to serve as university presidents. But it is important to understand that even in these times of dual careers and the ascendancy of women to leadership roles, the university presidency remains a two-person job.

THE HIRED HELP

Legend has it that in the good old days, university presidents were treated as royalty: they were provided with presidential mansions staffed with cooks and servants and were driven about by chauffeurs in limousines; they traveled to exotic locations and spent their summers golfing, reading, and relaxing in their comfortable summer homes. While there are presumably still a few presidents of private universities who enjoy such perquisites (although this, too, may be a myth), the lives of today's public university presidents are far more austere. Particularly in these days of concern about the rising costs of a college education, university presidents can be swept away by public perceptions of luxury or privilege. The list of presidential casualties from excessive expenditures on residences, offices, entertainment, or stadium boxes continues to lengthen. Because Anne and I were bathed in a public spotlight in which the local newspaper routinely led attacks on the president for excessive salary, it was clear that we needed to be creative in how we handled our personal lives. Far from being pampered residents, we served more in the roles of the butler, maid, and cook.

Like many universities, Michigan requires its president to live in the President's House. This ancient facility, located in the center of the Michigan campus, is the oldest building on the university campus, built in 1840 as a home for professors and later enlarged and modified over the years by each of Michigan's presidents, until it became one of the largest and most distinguished-looking houses in Ann Arbor. Like most residents of Ann Arbor, Anne and I used to drive by the stately Italianate structure at 815 South University and wonder what it must be like to live there. From the outside, it looked elegant, tranquil, and exactly like what one would expect as the home for the university's First Family—the "White House" for Ann Arbor.

Yet as we were soon to learn after accepting the Michigan presidency, the external appearance of the house was deceptive, to say the least. Our first visit to the house after being named as president was during the course of a massive renovation project. The front yard looked like a battlefield, with trenches all around. As we entered the house, we noticed a large toilet sitting quite prominently in the middle of the dining room. The interior of the house had a rather threadbare look. The plaster walls were cracked and stained by the not-infrequent leaks in the plumbing. The carpet, drapes, and furniture dated from the 1950s. The wallpaper was taped together in many places. While earlier presidents had decorated the house with some of their own art and furniture, this had been largely replaced by rented furniture during the interregnum between presidencies. The age of the President's House posed a particular challenge, since rare was the day when something did not malfunction or break down. This disruption by repair projects turned out to be a perpetual characteristic of living and working in a house designed for the mid-nineteenth century but used as if it were a modern conference center.

There was one positive result to the extensive work done in the house prior to my presidency. Since much of the house was torn up for mechanical and fire protection equipment (an absolute necessity for a 150-year-old facility), the university had budgeted funds to patch things back together again after the heavy construction. By the time I assumed the presidency, the university's interior decorating staff was already having a field day, picking out new carpets and expensive ornamental items, such as silver tea services and custom fireplace

screens. At this point, Anne stepped in and brought the restoration project to an abrupt halt—out of concern both for the details of the restoration plan and for the dangers that might evolve from any appearance of inappropriate expenditures. Since she had a strong interest in historic preservation, she wanted to first assess the opportunities to return the house to a more elegant and timeless design.

Actually, this turned into one of those teachable moments that educators so enjoy. First, it provided a case study in how university staffs relate to the first family. “Don’t you worry about these things. We’ve maintained the President’s House for decades and we knew just how it should look. So why don’t you folks take a long trip someplace, and when you return it will all look just like new?” Well-intentioned paternalism, coupled with a good dose of “Well, I told you so . . .” and “The new president is not going to get his way with our house!”

However, it also gave us an opportunity to demonstrate the Duderstadt style. “Just because it isn’t broken doesn’t mean that it’s right! Humor us. Let us try it a different way and see if we can improve things.” With the help of some of the Plant Department people—the carpenters, electricians, painters, and plumbers who were to become some of our best friends through their frequent visits to the house—Anne stripped off the old carpets and wallpaper and exposed the true majesty of the house. Original quarter-sawed oak floors. Hand-crafted trim and molding. Donations of furniture were sought from several of Michigan’s fine old companies. When the work was completed, and the dust settled, the house had been restored to its earlier elegance, while the total cost of the restoration project was actually less than the amount budgeted originally simply to replace the carpeting in the house (\$100,000).

This experience demonstrates a very important lesson for university presidents. While the efforts of staff to serve the president are usually very well intentioned, they can become very dangerous when accepted with benign neglect, particularly in public institutions. Expenditures on ceremonial facilities—such as the president’s home, football box, or office—should always involve the approval of the trustees and ongoing review by the president, since the president must eventually bear the burden of public scrutiny for these expenditures.

A closely related issue concerns the staffing of presidential activities. While there was no shortage of staffing, there were serious concerns both about quality and cost. Anne inherited a staffing cadre of over a dozen people, including an assistant to the president for special events, a secretary to the First Lady, a facilities and grounds manager, cooks and housekeepers for both the President's House and Inglis House, and a crew of gardeners. It was clear, however, that in an era of budget pressures and public accountability, considerable restructuring was necessary. By merging the management of the President's House, Inglis House, and presidential events, Anne reduced the number of staff by half and the operating budget even further. Key in this strategy was the use of local caterers to handle most presidential events. By developing close working relationships with the best caterers in Ann Arbor, then having them compete against one another in terms of quality and price, Anne and her team were able to get exceptionally high quality at highly competitive costs.

Although it took several years of natural attrition and job redefinition, Anne managed to build an outstanding team of talented and creative staff who were hardworking and dedicated. Not only did the quality of presidential events rise sharply, but these standards soon propagated to other activities for the university's advancement. This result would prove critically important to the upcoming fund-raising campaign.

Still, these efforts were not enough. We soon realized that the only way we could walk the tightrope between cost containment and quality of events was to accept personal responsibility for many of the roles that in earlier years had been handled by staff. We shopped for our own groceries and cooked our own meals, so that we could dispense with a cook. We did our own laundry and cleaned our living areas in the President's House, so we could reduce housekeeping expenses. We used our own furniture for those areas where we lived, and we augmented university furniture in public areas of the house with our own items, to make the house a home. We drove our personal car for most of our trips. Recalling the legend about Michigan State University's John Hannah (see chapter 7), I stopped using the university driver for trips about the state and began to drive myself

about in one of the oldest Fords in the university fleet. We even paid for our own moving expenses, both when we moved into the President's House and when we moved out eight years later.

Needless to say, this parsimonious style imposed additional time, labor, and personal financial burdens. It also led to a rather strange life, in which we lived alone and largely responsible for a gigantic house (14,000 square feet) that had been maintained throughout most of its existence by professional staff—a manager, cook, housekeepers, gardeners, and so on. Yet we managed to reduce very significantly the operating expenses of the President's House. Perhaps more important, we removed any possibility that we could be targeted for living a life of luxury at the expense of the public, although that did not stop the local newspaper from trying to create the false impression that we did.

Security was another particular challenge. Since the house was so visible (similar to the White House in Washington), people with an ax to grind with the university or just mad at the world in general would be drawn to the house as a symbol of whatever angered them. All too frequently, those showing up at the house posed some security risk. Since we were usually alone in the house, we had to be very careful in how we handled access. We were advised by campus security not to answer the door during the evening, unless we were expecting someone or could determine who was at the door.

While protesting students rarely targeted the house directly, there were occasions when demonstrations against one tyranny or another would show up on the doorstep. Since many of the protests would march down the street passing right in front of the house, it was common for groups to stop to give the president a few blasts as well. Perhaps the most annoying such incident occurred during the protests over establishing a campus police force and a student disciplinary policy. (Michigan came quite late to these common university practices.) Several hundred students chanting "No cops, no code, no guns!" marched up to the front porch, installed a podium with a sound system, and began a series of speeches about how the president was trampling all over student rights. The students then decided to demonstrate their anguish by symbolically burying students' rights in the

front yard, digging graves and placing crosses. Finally, as night approached, about one hundred students set up tents on the lawn and spent the night.

Fortunately, we decided early in the presidency to keep our own house as a refuge for those times when we needed an escape from the headaches of living in the President's House. We not only kept our house fully furnished and operational, but we actually maintained it as our official residence (for mail delivery and such) throughout our tenure in the presidency. The peace and quiet and simplicity of our old home was very reassuring—and only ten minutes away.

Certainly one of the most disconcerting aspects of a major university presidency—particularly a university located in a small town—is the intensely public life one must lead. To Ann Arborites, the residents of the President's House were every bit as much public figures as those in Washington's White House. Every aspect of the presidential family's lives was subject to public scrutiny, particularly by the local media. While we eventually got used to this public visibility in Ann Arbor, it frequently was disconcerting when folks would come up to us elsewhere (e.g., in California or Washington or London or Paris) and ask, "Aren't you the president of the University of Michigan?" While I was hosting an alumni group on a trip one fall to Egypt, a young man approached me in front of the Sphinx to exclaim, "Hey, it's President Duderstadt! Mr. President, do you know who won the Michigan-Illinois game yesterday?" (I did. We didn't.)

It is little wonder that many of today's university presidents believe that the stresses of the modern presidency are simply too intense to add the burden of requiring the president and family to live in a ceremonial university house and therefore be on duty 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Some universities are moving away from requiring presidents to live in a president's house and are instead allowing them to purchase—and, in some cases, actually helping them to finance—their own home a short distance from the campus. This gives the president's family some measure of privacy. It also allows them to maintain equity in rapidly inflating real estate marketplaces.¹

During my tenure as president, however, we were required to make the President's House our home, and so we did for the eight-

year term of my presidency. While we never really felt at home in the house, we did everything we could to restore and maintain the elegance of the facility. When we finally moved out of the house on July 1, 1996, we made certain that it was left in spotless condition for the next president. Despite the inevitable repair projects that would continue, we were confident that we had left the President's House in perhaps the finest condition of its long history (just as we hoped we had left the university).

A TURN ABOUT THE UNIVERSITY CALENDAR

Just as does the university itself, the life of a university president revolves around the calendar, changing with the seasons. After the hot, humid doldrums of a Midwestern summer, excitement begins to build in late August, as students begin to return to campus. The fall is a time of beginning and renewal, as new students and faculty arrive on campus, bringing the excitement of new beginnings. The energy and activity level are high, with community celebrations such as football weekends, alumni reunions, Homecoming, and fall traditions such as apple picking and trips to the local cider mills.

As Labor Day approaches, streets become crowded, parking disappears, and one of the most traumatic moments in a college education begins: the "Great Dropoff." Parents bring their young students to the university, moving them into residence halls and away from home for the first time. I always made it a point to speak to the parents of new students, to reassure them that their sons and daughters were academically talented and would be carefully nurtured by the university. Both Anne and I would participate in welcoming activities, such as hosting a Good Humor ice cream wagon in front of the dorms as tired parents moved in their excited students, presenting a freshman convocation to convey to new students a few words of advice (usually ignored, of course), and holding an array of welcoming events for new graduate students and new faculty. I always used to tell parents that there was only one college event more traumatic than the Great Dropoff. It was that moment, following commencement, when, just as parents swell with pride, their graduating students happen to mention their intent to move back home until deciding what to do next.

Universities are places where tradition is important, and there are always many traditions during the beginning of a new academic year. During my years as dean and provost, Anne and I had long been accustomed to hosting a fall kickoff event to get the new academic year under way. Anne had been particularly creative in designing novel ways and interesting venues to get the new academic year off to a good start—a dinner hosted on the stage of one of our theaters or in a gallery of our art museum, “Dining with the Deans and the Dinosaurs” at our museum of natural history, and even a brunch in our new solid state electronics facility (complete with clean-room suits). In our presidential role, we felt such events were extremely important to build the necessary spirit of teamwork among deans and executive officers.

The spectacle of college football is a celebration of the joys of fall. A football Saturday is a community experience, drawing tens of thousands together in a festival designed to celebrate more the wonders of a fall weekend than the game itself. While most of those attending the game probably draw some excitement from the game, many are probably not fans, at least in the intense sense that one finds in such sports as basketball and hockey. Some come to enjoy the spectacle, the tailgate parties, the bands, and the crowds. Some have a more social interest in seeing friends. Still others are there simply because it is the thing to do on a fall weekend. After all, how else can they participate in conversations later in the week if they have missed the game?

Everything was always too busy in the fall, particularly for the Office of the President. Activities that had been suspended for the summer would come alive once again, demanding time and attention. No matter how much time one spent getting ready for the new term, it never seemed enough to cope with the demands and the challenges. Although it usually took several weeks for the first crisis to develop, sometimes it was earlier. Perhaps the endgame of the summer state budget process in Lansing would have gone amiss, requiring days of follow-up effort with state government to repair the damage through supplemental appropriations. Sometimes Washington would spring a new surprise on the university—for example, a new scheme for cutting the amount of research grant support or a congressional inquiry. With new students came new issues that could rapidly dominate the

agenda for campus activism. Even the regents would occasionally pitch in, returning to their first meeting after the August recess with new demands or accusations, particularly in an election year when positions on the board were at stake.

Even with all of the activity, fall is a pleasant time at the university. Michigan falls are glorious, with bright blue skies, the color of the turning leaves, and moderate temperatures. There is always a sense of optimism, the excitement of returning students and faculty, the hope of a winning football season (since Michigan usually does well during its early, nonconference season), the enthusiasm of returning alumni and friends.

However, as the skies turn gray and the leaves disappear, more serious matters begin to take hold. Student activists have defined their agendas and developed their strategies, and campus demonstrations begin. One can always depend on a crisis developing in one academic unit or another—a faculty revolt against a dean, the raid of an outstanding scholar by a competing university, a serious budget problem. The local newspapers run out of national or regional news to report and turn their attention to stirring up controversy about (or within) the university. Perhaps most demoralizing of all, the football team would sometimes be upset by Michigan State or Ohio State.

Winters in Michigan can be rugged. The temperature usually drops below freezing by Thanksgiving, where it remains until late March. An Alberta clipper sweeping across the Great Lakes can be ferocious. But more typically, a Michigan winter is wet and overcast. The phrase “good, gray Michigan” is apt. It is just the kind of season when one wants to stay home, curled up in front of a warm fire.

The focus during winter at Michigan is on serious matters: classes, research, politics, and student protests. Yet there are also basketball, hockey, and a number of other indoor sports. And, on not infrequent occasions, there is the joy of a holiday season concluding in the warm sunshine of a New Year’s Day in Pasadena.

During my presidency, Anne and I, like many other members of the central administration, were ready to collapse by the time the Christmas holidays approached. Yet even during the holiday season, we had little respite. From Thanksgiving to Christmas was the season of holiday events and receptions. Anne was always particularly busy,

since she was responsible for numerous activities associated with the holiday season. She first had to decorate both the President's House and Inglis House for the countless events scheduled for the month of December. Here, Anne had to steer a careful course between creating an appropriate spirit of the season and yet not having the season labeled as any particular religious experience. She was finally reduced to explaining that trees and wreaths were, in reality, pagan symbols of the winter solstice from prehistoric times (although my electric train under the tree in the President's House was a pagan rite of more recent origin).

However, the real impact of winter on life at the university sets in when students and faculty return after New Year's. Since Michigan is high in latitude and on the western edge of the eastern time zone, not only are the days short, but darkness falls by midafternoon. Although Michigan's proximity to the Great Lakes prevents long periods of subzero weather, it is usually wet, and the skies are always overcast. Winter sports provide some distraction, but trudging through the snow to a basketball game or hockey match on a bitterly cold night is a challenge.

Not surprisingly, after a few weeks, there are the first signs of cabin fever—or perhaps sunlight-deficiency syndrome. People become more irritable. The frequency of complaints increases. The newspapers become more hostile. And much of this eventually finds its way to the Office of the President. During my presidency, I found that one could be certain that February and March would also be the peak times for student activism. Usually, it took several weeks for campus politics to regain momentum after the holidays. But by February, protest leaders would have created a fever pitch of concerns—although, of course, the issues would change every year. This fever would generally peak during the February regents' meeting, which usually provided the opportunity for maximum public visibility. Fortunately, the week of spring break would follow in early March. But after break, even though the weather was not quite as bitterly cold, Michigan remained in winter's grip, the campus remained irritable, and protest movements could be easily reignited.

There were usually several distractions that kept such politics from coalescing into a crescendo. First, if the basketball or hockey team was

nationally ranked, students could look forward to the NCAA tournaments, March Madness, the Final Four, or the Frozen Four. Second, Michigan's unusually short winter term left very few weeks for building major political movements before the period of final exams and commencement. It is sometimes rumored that the reason the university shifted in the 1960s to a trimester system in which the term ends by May 1 is that the faculty wanted to get students out of town before warm weather brought the potential for real disruptions. While this is not true, it also is not a bad idea.

In contrast to the rest of society, the university approaches spring with mixed enthusiasm. Certainly, the end of winter and the transition from gray slush to green growth is welcome. Yet spring also signals the approaching end of the academic calendar, commencement, and the departure of students and faculty. Academic administrators turn to the serious business of budgets and state politics.

Spring is a very brief season in Michigan. In late April, the thermometer finally moves above freezing. It then keeps right on going into the seventies and eighties, so that by early May, summer has arrived. The tulips bloom, leaves appear on the trees, and students graduate and leave—all in the space of a few weeks. Hence, my spring memories as president of the university are few and brief: the blooming of the peony garden in the Arboretum, the May Festival when the Philadelphia Orchestra spent a week performing at the university, spring commencement—that is about it.

Summer is a strange time on university campuses, with most students and faculty gone, many campus facilities closed, and campus life in a dormant state. For most university faculty members and students, summer is a welcome break from the hectic pace of the academic year. Many faculty scatter to the winds, traveling about the globe, combining scholarly work and traveling vacations. Even those who stay in Ann Arbor to work on their research generally slow their pace a bit and try to take a few weeks of pure vacation.

Long ago, or so I am told, summertime was also a time of rest and relaxation for university presidents. Many had summer places, to which they would retreat to read, write, and relax during the summer months. It was also a time to travel abroad, to fly the university flag in far-flung locales and be wined and dined by local alumni. Michigan

president Harlan Hatcher once boasted to me that he had played golf in every city where the university had an alumni club.

But from my perspective in the 1990s, it was hard to imagine that such peaceful summers had ever existed for university presidents. In the fast-paced world of state and federal politics, summertime in the 1980s and 1990s was the time when the critical phase of the budget process occurred. May, June, and July involved nonstop negotiations—with governors, legislators, and regents—to pin down university funding and determine how it would be distributed. During times of limited resources, this period was particularly stressful. Many were the long days I spent in Lansing pleading the university's case for an adequate appropriation or attempting to persuade contrarian regents about the importance of charging adequate tuition levels to sustain the quality of the institution. The Detroit-to-Washington shuttle also became a familiar experience for me as Congress and the administration worked their way through appropriations bills with major implications for leading research universities, such as Michigan.

This political period required intense effort, involving long hours and seven-day workweeks. It also required constant vigilance, since a slight shift in a vote from a legislative conference committee or an inane comment to the press by a maverick regent could blow the strategy apart. As a result, by the time the July regents' meeting was completed, the executive officers were usually on the verge of collapse and looked toward the month of August for a well-deserved break—usually as far away from Ann Arbor as they could get. Unfortunately, the same was not true for the president.

August was always a traumatic month for me as president, since I was frequently left quite alone to protect the university from the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune. For example, early in my presidency, the challenge was an ongoing political struggle to prevent the governor from eroding the university's autonomy by attempting to control its tuition levels. As chair of the President's Council of the State Universities of Michigan, it was my role to lead a bitter yet successful struggle to resist the governor's efforts to control tuition. This fight usually came to a head in August, following the state legislature's approval of the appropriation bill, when the governor's staff would begin to pressure the presidents and governing boards to roll back

tuition increases. Hence, I would spend much of my time in August on the phone coordinating the efforts of the other universities to stand up to this intimidation. Much of the time, I was the only one left in the fort to carry on the fight, while others were on vacation. This was a lonely battle, but one in which defeat would have seriously damaged the university. In the end, Michigan managed to win each time—much to the consternation of the governor and his staff.

LIFESTYLES OF THE RICH AND FAMOUS

One of the most fascinating aspects of a major university presidency involves the people that one meets and hosts on behalf of the university. During our presidency, Anne and I hosted several presidents, numerous distinguished guests from the academy, corporate leaders, celebrities, and even a god. Several examples illustrate the entertainment of the rich and famous.

Although she was just recovering from bronchitis, Anne organized a reception at the President's House for Leonard Bernstein following his concert with the Vienna Philharmonic in honor of his seventieth birthday. The guests, mostly students from the School of Music's conducting program, began to arrive around 11:00 p.m., but Bernstein did not arrive until 12:30. After a couple of large scotches, he warmed up to the students (who were drinking nonalcoholic punch, of course). At one point, he went to the piano and began to play some of his Broadway compositions, singing along with lyrics a bit more bawdy than one is used to hearing. At about 2:30, Bernstein decided to go out on the town, and off he went, followed by a dozen students, looking for a bar.

The evening before Michigan retired Gerald Ford's football jersey number, we hosted a formal dinner for him and Mrs. Ford, attended by Governor John Engler and the real celebrities, Bo Schembechler and Steve Fisher. President Ford suggested that Michigan's retirement of his football number meant almost as much to him as being president.

Many celebrities were key volunteers for the Campaign for Michigan. Mike Wallace agreed to be one of the cochairs of the campaign and played a critical role not only in the New York fund-raising

efforts but also in hosting the campaign's major kickoff events. He also made an important contribution to fund the facility housing the Michigan Journalism Fellows Program, named the Mike and Mary Wallace House.

In 1994, the university had the privilege of hosting Dr. Jonas Salk, in recognition of the fortieth anniversary of the announcement of the successful tests of the Salk vaccine. Many of Salk's former collaborators and a large number of polio survivors visited the campus for the event, which was sponsored in part by the March of Dimes.

One of the most interesting events hosted in the President's House was a reception for the Dalai Lama, who was visiting the campus to receive the Wallenberg Medal. Of course, the Dalai Lama is the most revered figure in Tibetan Buddhism, regarded by the faithful as the fourteenth reincarnation of Siddhārtha and as a living god. The visit itself required some careful planning, since the Dalai Lama does not eat or drink after noon. Anne arranged for a small tea ceremony using hot water, so that we could first meet and chat with His Holiness for several minutes before introducing him to the many guests. He was charming, and the discussions ranged from theoretical physics to Tibetan flowers. He presented the guests with traditional Tibetan silk scarves. Then, after a receiving line, we rode with him over to Crisler Arena for the Wallenberg Lecture. It was quite an occasion.

Because of Michigan's prominence as an institution, not a year passed without numerous command performance events. Many of these involved commencements in which the university awarded honorary degrees to distinguished visitors. On some occasions, these took on national importance, such as when the university gave honorary degrees to President George Bush and Barbara Bush and to First Lady Hillary Clinton. In both cases, the honorees actually spent only a short time on campus, arriving just before and leaving just after the commencement ceremony. However, preparing even for these short visits was a Herculean task.

ON THE ROAD

There are times in a university president's life when one begins to feel as if the drill for each morning is to be handed an airline ticket and

told that the car to the airport is waiting. Travel is no stranger to university presidents and their spouses. Whether it is fund-raising, visiting alumni, attending meetings, lobbying, or simply flying the university flag, the life of a president is always on the go. I once developed a hypothesis that there were, in reality, only about 500 people in the nation who traveled all the time and that most of these were university presidents. We always ran into each other at airports. One good measure of travel mileage is elite customer status with airlines, generally requiring 75,000 miles or more each year. I once earned this status simply by traveling back and forth to Washington (on about 75 round-trips) for National Science Board meetings.

Compounding the calendar complexity of leading a university are a number of other commitments. It is customary for presidents of major universities to serve on a variety of public and private boards. Not only do such service activities benefit a university through the contributions their leaders make to such efforts, but they also add to the experience and influence of the president.

During my presidency, I participated in many such activities: the Big Ten Conference, the executive committees of such higher education organizations as the Association of American Universities and the National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges, the Presidents Council of the State Universities of Michigan, the executive council of the National Academy of Engineering, and so on. I also served as a director of two major corporations. However, my most significant and demanding service activity was on the National Science Board, a national body consisting of 24 leading scientists and engineers appointed by the U.S. president and confirmed by the Senate to be responsible for both the National Science Foundation and the development of broader national science policy. Appointed to consecutive six-year terms by Presidents Reagan and Bush, I was elected chairman of the National Science Board during the early 1990s. In this role, I was responsible not only for the operation of the board and the oversight of the NSF but also for the supervision of a staff of roughly two dozen professionals. In a very real sense, I had a second demanding chief executive job in national science policy, beyond the myriad responsibilities of the Michigan presidency. It was always an interesting mental transition to shift gears from the issues

swirling about the campus or Lansing when I set aside my Michigan president's hat and donned my federal hat to worry about congressional committees or White House policy or international relations.

Yet another demanding responsibility that I held during my UM presidency involved the Big Ten Conference. During the early phase of my presidency, my primary role was just protecting the university from conference actions, since I did not yet have sufficient seniority to be in a leadership role. In later years, my seniority increased to the point where I became a member of the executive committee of the Big Ten Conference, first as chair of its finance committee and then finally as chair of the board of directors. In these latter roles, I found myself spending a great deal of time on conference matters—for example, restructuring the NCAA from an association into a federation, representing the Big Ten during its centennial year, and negotiating with the Pac Ten Conference over the Rose Bowl relations. Although the day-to-day management of conference activities rested with the conference commissioner, I, as chair, had the executive responsibility to keep on top of matters. This was another job-related overload unseen and certainly unappreciated by most.

The president and his or her spouse also serve as the official representatives of the university in numerous organizations. Since the University of Michigan is generally regarded as a leader of public higher education in America, Anne and I were expected to play a significant leadership role in many of these organizations. While this provided us with many opportunities, it also imposed very significant responsibilities and time commitments on the president.

The Association of American Universities (AAU) is the most important of the higher education associations for a Michigan president to be involved in, since it is a presidents/spouses-only organization representing the top research universities in the United States and Canada. Since both presidents and spouses are involved together in its activities, it is also a very important mechanism in building personal relationships among the leaders of various universities. While the AAU meetings held during my presidency did deal with some important issues, their real value was to provide an opportunity for informal discussions of higher education and to build a network among the presidents. Perhaps the only disconcerting aspect of the

AAU was its tradition of publishing each year the names of the 60 presidents, ranked by longevity. The turnover in this group was quite extraordinary. By the time I stepped down, I ranked eighth in seniority among the AAU presidents. Furthermore, there were only three presidents left on the list who had served more than 10 years.

There were numerous other organizations that met on a regular basis and required presidential participation. They included, to name only a few, the National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges, the American Council on Education, the Council of Presidents and associated Committee on Institutional Cooperation of the Big Ten universities, the Business–Higher Education Forum, and the Presidents Council of the State Universities of Michigan. Needless to say, the meetings of these and similar organizations kept the calendar full and the travel load heavy.

Probably the most interesting and enjoyable higher education gathering was the least visible: the Tanner Group. This group consisted of the presidents and spouses of the leading universities in the world: Harvard University, the University of Michigan, the University of California, Stanford University, Yale University, Princeton University, Oxford University, Cambridge University, and the University of Utah (which was the home institution of the benefactor, O. C. Tanner). The presidents and spouses served formally as trustees of the Tanner Trust, which sponsored the Tanner Lectures on Human Values at each of the institutions. They met for several days in late June, at either university campuses or world-class resorts. Beyond the enjoyment of the surroundings, participation in the Tanner Group offered one of the few opportunities not only to build friendships with presidents of other institutions but to discuss in a candid and confidential way the trials and tribulations of university leadership.

Needless to say, the time available for rest, relaxation, and recreation was limited. Anne and I used what little spare time we had available to balance the wear and tear of the presidency with physical exercise. We had both become dependent on jogging for maintaining both physical condition and sanity. In other university roles, we had been able to set aside convenient times during the day for this activity. However, the time demands of the presidency forced our exercise earlier and earlier in the day, until eventually we were up well before

dawn and over at the varsity track (or the indoor track) to work out at 6 a.m. or so. We became familiar companions to various other early birds: the “Dawn Patrol” of wounded football players doing their obligatory mile, the ROTC students, and various other masochists.

A MATTER OF STYLE

Each presidency is characterized by a distinctive style that, over time, tends to affect—or infect—the rest of the institution. Contributing to this style are the way the president approaches the challenge of leadership; the nature of the president’s working relationships with students, faculty, and staff; the spirit of teamwork the president inspires among other university leaders; and even the character of university events. Since both Anne and I had grown up in a small, Midwestern farm town, we generally tended to approach our roles in an informal, unpretentious, and straightforward fashion. We both realized that we came from peasant stock, and we viewed ourselves very much as commoners thrust for a time into the complex and demanding roles of public leadership.

Of course, we brought our own quirks and patterns to our roles. I tend to be one of those folks who always has to have lots of balls in the air, although I will drop a few from time to time. Perhaps a more appropriate circus metaphor for my management style is the juggler who starts a whole series of plates spinning on sticks, jumping quickly from plate to plate to keep them spinning together. As UM president, I would launch a series of activities, assigning the responsibility for each to a member of my leadership team. For example, I might initiate a project to secure capital outlay funding from state government or an effort to better integrate academic learning with student housing or a scheme to go after a major federal research laboratory. Once each project was launched, I would generally move ahead to another activity, only checking back from time to time to see how things were going. I rarely strove for perfection in any particular venture. Rather, I felt that, at least for such a large, diverse, and complex institution as Michigan, it was better to keep lots of things going on than to focus on any one agenda.

By contrast, Anne is a detail person. She focuses her attention on

only a few matters at a time and is not satisfied until they have met her standards of excellence. Whether her concern as First Lady at Michigan was a major renovation project (e.g., the President's House or the Inglis House), the photographic book she helped design for the university, or a special fund-raising event, Anne's standards were very high. Just as my spinning-plate style kept the university in high gear, Anne's insistence on excellence rapidly propagated across the campus.

ALWAYS SOME DOUBTS

Sometimes Anne and I would wonder whether we had taken on too much, whether there was any way to reduce the number of our commitments, whether we could streamline our presidential calendar. In the end, we concluded that streamlining was probably impossible, as much due to the nature of the presidential position as to our own personalities. Over time, a university president accumulates roles and responsibilities much like a ship accumulates barnacles. As one becomes more visible as a university leader, opportunities arise that simply must be accepted as a matter of responsibility. Our experience was that the number of new roles put before us always seemed to outnumber the number of old roles that we managed to complete.

Perhaps this is one of the reasons why the tenure of the modern university president has become so short. The inevitable accumulation of the barnacles of multiple roles so weights down the presidential ship that it eventually sinks. Eventually, it must be replaced by a fresh president, a clean ship, unencumbered as a relative unknown by the array of obligations and duties that build up over years of service.

During my ten years in the central administration as provost and president, Anne and I never really had a true vacation. We did manage to get away on several university trips—more precisely, expeditions—to exotic places, such as China and Eastern Europe. But even on these trips, we were representing the institution and usually working on its agendas. Although the times made it impossible for us to ever take an extended vacation during our presidency as had our predecessors, we sometimes were able to escape for a few days. But we were never more than a phone call or an e-mail message away from the demands of the university. Many were the times when I had to fly

back to handle a quick emergency. Even when we were able to get several days' distance away, the time was frequently filled with phone calls, e-mail messages, and faxes. Rare indeed was the day when we could set aside university problems or demands. This inability to decouple from the university, to regain our strength, eventually played a key role in our decision to step down from the presidency.

So, what was the personal life of a university president like? Once, after a long discussion of the past year's wear and tear by the presidents of the Tanner Group, Neal Rudenstine of Harvard passed me a note with a quote from Robert Frost that perhaps best expresses it: "Happiness makes up in height for what it lacks in length." Both of us were coming off rough years.