

B. Joseph White: Resilience in Action – Part 2 of 3

Situation

B. Joseph White was wholly supportive of the University of Michigan's Board of Regents' decision in its election of the new president for the university. Mary Sue Coleman, the regents' choice, was to become the first female president in the 185-year history of the University of Michigan. During the final month of his interim presidency, he dedicated himself to achieving a flawless transition to the new president.

On July 18, 2002, two weeks before the elected president was to take office, White and his wife, Mary, were thanked by the regents for their service during the previous eight months. Following a dinner at historic Inglis House in Ann Arbor, White delivered the following remarks, which he titled "On Disappointment" to the assembled regents and executive officers of the university.

The Speech

It is kind of you to recognize and thank Mary and me for our service to the university through the interim presidency.

I had the opportunity earlier today to express my thanks to the regents and executive officers for the opportunity to serve and work together. Thank you, also, to Erika Hrabec, my assistant, who is a real university treasure.

I want to add a special thank you to Larry Deitch for two reasons. First, chairing a board is never easy, and being the first chair of a board that has existed for 150 years is a special challenge. Larry, I admire the job you've been doing and the positive precedents you are creating. Second, Larry delivered to me the news about my not being selected as our next president. I've delivered such news many times to people in the last 20 years. It's an awful job and, like any job, it can be done poorly or well. Larry did it very well. He was honest and he was caring. I appreciate it.

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