February 2015

Dear Friend of Michigan State University:

Ten years ago, I assumed the presidency of Michigan State University. Since then I’ve been pleased to send you periodic updates about developments on campus and beyond. As an institution deeply engaged with its stakeholders, Michigan State places great value on maintaining connections with friends like you.

It’s an important era for higher education. There are heightened public expectations and debate over the way universities respond to social issues, the future of athletics on our campuses, and the way we deliver value to our students and society. As president of a world-class research university that is also an athletic powerhouse, I have served and will continue to serve in a variety of national leadership roles that help shape the future for MSU and institutions like it.

In mid-January, I concluded two years as chair of the NCAA Executive Committee. During that time the committee helped map, and pressed for urgency in moving forward, the association's broad-based reform agenda. Next, I’ll be increasing my involvement with the Association of American Universities as vice chair. I’m honored to serve this group of top research universities, communicating its priorities, needs, and contributions to policymakers and others.

Wins with impact

Michigan State’s amazing come-from-behind victory at the Cotton Bowl on New Year’s Day—our fourth consecutive postseason bowl game win—may be the most visible MSU athletic accomplishment of the year, but it doesn’t stand alone. The women’s cross-country team won its first national championship, with four runners finishing among the top 21.

And then there are the quieter wins that have a significant impact for many years to come. In December, Congress approved a federal budget bill that included the full $90 million requested for continued construction of the Facility for Rare Isotope Beams on the MSU campus. This $730 million project, set for completion in 2022, recently took a solid step toward construction with some big concrete pours. Some 2,700 cubic yards of concrete were delivered in approximately 300 loads for the underground tunnel that will be the heart of FRIB—where heavy ion beams will smash into nuclei to create rare isotopes.

On January 9, President Barack Obama announced MSU as home to the Michigan Center of Excellence of the newly formed Institute for Advanced Composites Manufacturing Innovation. This national consortium is supported by a five-year, $70 million grant from the U.S. Department of Energy. MSU is the primary academic partner in Michigan, where work will focus on advanced fiber-reinforced polymer composites important in reducing weight in vehicles.

To boost research capacity on another front, we recently launched a first-of-its-kind center to study the effects of agriculture on human and animal health. The Center for Health Impacts of Agriculture links MSU’s renowned agriculture and food security research with its three colleges of medicine—Human Medicine, Osteopathic Medicine, and Veterinary Medicine—to address growing global health concerns including antimicrobial resistance, agricultural development and economic effects related to increased cases of malaria in Malawi, Africa; and health risk assessment and nutrient regulation policies.

Invested in tomorrow

Michigan State makes a critical difference in the lives of individuals through discovery and application of research. We also have an immediate impact on the lives of tens of thousands of students each year. In September, we announced our membership in the University Innovation Alliance, a group of 11 large research institutions that have come together to increase the rate at which students from all backgrounds graduate from college. The effort is supported by six major funders. MSU’s unique Neighborhoods initiative is at the core of our work in this area.

It was extremely gratifying to see the Spartan community come together in October to launch the public phase of the university’s capital campaign, Empower Extraordinary. It kicked off at the Wharton Center for Performing Arts to music commissioned for the occasion, written by Tony Award-winner and MSU alumnus William David Brohn. View the performance and explore stories that bring to life how giving to MSU transforms lives and makes possible new horizons of discovery.

As always, this is just a sampling of the tremendous activity and accomplishment at our vibrant university. I encourage you to visit and subscribe to MSUToday for more. Thank you again for your support of Michigan State University.

Sincerely,

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