January 2016

Dear Friend of Michigan State University:

As we begin a new year, we renew our commitment to tackling the biggest challenges and embracing the best opportunities.

As Spartans, we never stop working to innovate and improve, from finding more effective ways to teach STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) courses and instilling the entrepreneurial spark in every student to creating distinctive new collaborations for the common good.

Creating a hub for innovation

Our commitment to leading-edge education means delivering not just critical content, but also the irreplaceable immersive experiences that distinguish a top university. A new center at MSU called the Hub for Innovation in Learning and Technology will nurture student success by creating and accelerating new ways to collaborate, research, and deliver instruction. It will be a resource, in short, to reinvent what it means to learn at MSU.

To that end, we’re offering a new minor in entrepreneurship and innovation to all undergraduates beginning this spring semester. It consists of 15 credit hours from core courses, plus electives that enable students to tailor the minor to specific interests. This new option adds to MSU’s wealth of entrepreneurial resources for students, including student idea incubators, funding opportunities, and business plan competitions. As I write, 12 MSU student teams are among 64 teams from 38 colleges and universities across the country competing in the Student Startup Madness tournament, which culminates with a final competition in March at South By Southwest (SXSW) Interactive in Austin, Texas.

Setting a new standard

We’re also leveraging innovative ideas in STEM education, starting with introductory chemistry, biology, and physics courses. Faculty members are working to revise content to rely less on memorization of facts and more on understanding core ideas, scientific practices, and crosscutting concepts. Some of these faculty members were leaders in the development of the new K-12 Next Generation Science Standards adopted by 17 states, including Michigan.

Improving STEM education also is a priority for the Association of American Universities (AAU). One of the world’s most prestigious higher education associations, it comprises 62 top research universities in North America. MSU is one of eight AAU universities participating in its Undergraduate STEM Education Initiative, of which our gateway course project is a part. In October, I was honored to be elected chair of the AAU board, and I look forward to new opportunities to advocate for MSU and all research universities.

Innovating in public broadcasting

Michigan State is strengthening its partnership with Detroit Public Television in a new collaboration that aims to be a national model for providing quality educational content in public television. It’s set to begin with an initiative to provide 24/7 programming for children and families in Detroit, Lansing, and throughout the state.

MSU’s WKAR-TV will be key to the partnership, which opens exciting new opportunities for technological innovation as well as broader outreach and engagement. It also promises to become a significant platform for faculty work across several MSU colleges.

As we renew our resolution to build on our accomplishments and to be better and bolder in the year ahead, I want to convey my gratitude to you for your continued commitment to MSU. I wish you a successful and fulfilling 2016.

Sincerely,

Lou Anna K. Simon, PhD
President, Michigan State University