

# Wharton's year: a little of everything

Note: On Feb. 15, Clifton R. Wharton Jr. will be officially inaugurated as MSU's 14th president in a private ceremony preceding the annual Faculty Convocation. Below is a review of Wharton's first year as MSU president.

"First, I believe in the centrality of the person — the individual. Second, I believe that every man is entitled to an equal opportunity to accomplish his fullest potential. Third, I believe . . ."

And so it began — the first year for Clifton R. Wharton Jr. as head of Michigan's largest university.

In office just 18 days, the new MSU president delivered his "inaugural" address to the Faculty Club Jan. 20, 1970, articulating "a few of my basic beliefs — beliefs which have affected my decisions and actions in the past and therefore will in the future."

Wharton told the 400 assembled guests: ". . . I believe that the heart of education is scholarly creativity." But he added: "Fourth, I believe that education and educational institutions are central agencies for change."

And so it began — a critical year for MSU, in a time of transition, with a new president, a black president, in an era when average presidential tenures have rapidly dropped from eight to five years.

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BY MID-YEAR, a Michigan editor said that President Wharton had "moved swiftly and effectively to gain control of the vast and complex institution which he heads."

At the same time, the president himself remarked to a UPI reporter: "I've had the works — demonstrations, sit-ins, student riots — there's been everything you could conceive of. We even had one wildcat strike." (MSU bus drivers struck for four days in the winter, crippling campus transportation).

"This is one of the most total jobs I've ever run across. You are in demand at all times for every conceivable kind of decision."

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BUT THE FIRST year has seen development of an agenda of positive action programs which should profoundly affect the institution:

- The President's Commission on Admissions and Student Body Composition, 25 appointed members including faculty, students and alumni, which held six public hearings throughout the state and is now preparing its recommendations to be handed to President Wharton at the end of this term.

- The Brookover Report, a document of anti-discrimination policies which reaffirms MSU's commitment to "no discrimination on the basis of race, creed, ethnic origin or sex" and sets up procedures for investigating and remedying claims of bias. With its adoption by the Board of Trustees Feb. 28, two agencies were created: a Committee Against Discrimination and an Anti-Discrimination Judicial Board.

- A Student Advisory Group, a dozen acknowledged student leaders who meet monthly to confer with and advise the president and his staff on policy matters.

- The first four of 12 Presidential Fellows, a Rockefeller Foundation-funded

project patterned after the White House Fellows Program. It will involve talented students and young faculty members directly in university administration.

- New line of communication with students, faculty and the community, through such means as "lounge dialogs," informal visits to student residence halls with Mrs. Wharton; a weekly column, "Presidential Perspective," where Wharton answers questions about the University, its policies and himself; "Presidential Forum," a half-hour weekly television program with President Wharton as host.

- New prominence for the fine arts, achieved with the help of Mrs. Wharton, who conceived the idea of hanging a revolving exhibit of faculty art works in Cowles House.

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CONFRONTATION politics added their share of problems for the new president.

The first such incident occurred on the night of Feb. 19 when, in the wake of an Illinois federal court verdict on the "Chicago Seven," groups of students and other youths smashed store windows on East Grand River Avenue. The groups dispersed after an early-morning confrontation with President Wharton with Mrs. Wharton at his side, on the steps of the Union.

More serious turmoil began May 1, again triggered by events largely outside the jurisdiction of the University. These clashes began as anti-ROTC and anti-Cambodia protests and resulted in window smashing in some campus buildings.

On May 6, following the news of four students dead at Kent State University, there was a call for a strike by some students who demanded that the University be shut down. Classes were formally suspended for one day to permit discussions of the issues at a "teach-in," but the University did not accede to the strike call or other demands.

Sporadic vandalism, sit-ins and rallies continued until May 19 when the arrest of 132 persons in the Union for illegal trespassing brought an end to the University's spring campus unrest. (A few of those 132 were later acquitted; charges against the others were dropped.)

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IN JUNE, concurrent with MSU's 110th annual commencement, President Wharton summed up his first six months by praising the greatness and the academic excellence of the University whose stewardship he had undertaken. But he spoke of the task ahead to turn youthful skepticism into understanding and violent dissent into constructive change:

"This task is not ours alone. Many must participate. Parents cannot expect a university to do or undo in four years the influences of the first 18. Alumni cannot reject their university because the newer generation does not conduct itself as was done in the 'old days.' Office holders and persons in responsible positions must show by their own examples that the 'hypocrisy' which youth professes to see in their elders is not the credo on which our society is based. And students have a responsibility to live within the rules which govern the University."

Meanwhile, during his first 12 months in office, the president gave 45 major addresses (almost one a week), 25 "minor" speeches and in the process visited practically every corner of the state from Marquette to Grand Rapids, from Alma to Ypsilanti, meeting with alumni and other groups.

Not without his share of honors and pleasant duties, too, Wharton received four honorary doctor of law degrees (from the University of Michigan, Wayne State University, John Hopkins and Central Michigan) and conferred at least a dozen on other distinguished persons, including MSU alumnus and Nobel laureate Alfred Day Hershey. His alma mater, Boston Latin School, named him "man of the year."