

Lessons to be learned from Bollinger's leaving the U-M

University of Michigan President Lee Bollinger is headed off to New York to become president of Columbia University.

His departure is a real disappointment. Bollinger was extremely popular.

A full-blown intellectual but personally warm and congenial, he taught an undergraduate course in the First Amendment, tirelessly defended the university's affirmative action admission policies and spurred the \$200 million Life Sciences Institute.

To me, a defining anecdote took place after Michigan defeated Penn State in 1997. As thousands of students milled around the president's house on South University, Bollinger spontaneously

invited them in: "Tonight, this is your home, too," he told the group. Afterward, Bollinger told me the students had been polite and well behaved. "When you treat people with courtesy, you get courtesy back," he said.

After having been courted – and ultimately spurned – by Harvard, Bollinger announced he wasn't a candidate for the presidency of another institution. But Columbia went after him big time and, evidently, Bollinger and his wife, Jean, realized they were "facing a life-changing, life-course type of decision" and decided to take the Columbia offer.

The University of Michigan is one of our prime assets. And when an extremely popular president decides to leave U-M after only four years in office, it's worthwhile reflecting on what can be learned from the episode.

Some are saying the Board of Regents had trouble getting its act together in time to make Bollinger a big salary offer to keep him in Ann Arbor.

Frankly, I think the Bollingers decided they were going to New York, and that was that. No counter offer from the Regents would have made much difference.

That said, however, it's worth considering the situation faced by great public universities like U-M. During my time on the Board of Regents, two presidents – Bollinger and Harold Shapiro, who went to Princeton in 1998 – have left Michigan for the Ivy League. Certainly, the Harvards, Princetons and Columbias of the world reek with prestige, but they're not that much grander than

the University of Michigan.

So what's going on? In part, I think, it's a compensation issue, both internally and externally. Bollinger is paid \$325,000 at Michigan, while football coach Lloyd Carr makes more than \$1 million. Does that disparity really reflect the comparative contribution of the two positions? George Rupp's salary as president of Columbia is reported to be \$500,000, and most Ivy League presidents are paid far more than most public university presidents. In running an Ivy League school that much harder than heading a great public university?

I've been at the table when compensation packages with U-M presidents were being negotiated. The plain fact is that public university trustees are scared of paying their presidents what they're worth. They don't want to antagonize the state legislature – or the news media or the know-nothings in our communities – by paying their presidents big salaries in public funds.

But the old axiom – "You get what you pay for" – holds true for university presidents as in most,

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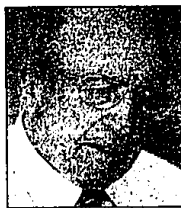
everything else. Running a university as big, complicated and good as the University of Michigan is a very tough job. It calls for a person of remarkable skills and experience.

And such qualifications are very much in demand around the country. Earlier this year, the Regents discussed a solution to this problem: Create a private endowment fund to supplement public funds to bring presidential salaries up to market. A couple of well-meaning alumni promptly said they'd donate the whole sum.

Having an endowment makes sense. But contributors should be anonymous. No university wants a few wealthy contributors, no matter how well intentioned, to own a piece of the president.

Beyond the specifics of presidential compensation, we all – legislature, media, Regents, know-nothings – need to realize that maintaining the U-M as a magnificent institution requires identifying, recruiting, paying and motivating the very best people in the country to lead it. If we don't, we're going to find the University of Michigan becoming just another way station on the career resumes of able and talented educational leaders.

Phil Power is the chairman of the company that owns this newspaper. He was a Regent of the U-M from 1987-1998. He welcomes your comments, either by voice mail at (734) 953-2047, Ext. 1880, or by e-mail at ppower@homecomm.net



Edward McNamara

State control of Metro Airport a big mistake

Detroit Metro Airport is undergoing a huge transformation. Shortly, we will open a new \$1.2-billion terminal increasing safety and comfort of travelers, a sixth runway to reduce flight delays and a new south access road, making us one of the few airports with direct access off two major interstate freeways. All this is after 12 years of work by the Wayne County administration, Northwest Airlines, the Department of Transportation, and Congressional leaders.

Unfortunately, these stunning improvements at Metro Airport and the years of vision, planning and hard work that make them a reality have been forgotten in what has become an embarrassing game of political football.

A state Senate committee led by Sen. Glenn Steil (R-Grand Rapids) has introduced a bill that would take the airport management away from Wayne County – which has been managing Metro for 70 years – and turn it over to the state. This maneuver is being pursued for political gain at the expense of the flying public.

We are living in a time that should be about partnership, not divisive political advantages. Our priority right now should be safety and security for all travelers, not Republicans from the west side of the state trying to take over the airport.

The simple truth? State government politics has no place at Detroit Metro Airport.

The need for Metro Airport expansion began in the 1980s after Republic and Northwest Orient Airlines merged to become Northwest Airlines. Northwest established a "hub" at Detroit Metro.

The impact on the southeast Michigan economy was incredible. Northwest added more non-stop flights to and from Detroit, creating thousands of jobs and opportunities and stimulating growth in hotels, restaurants, ground transportation firms and related businesses.

International air traffic took off. Daily non-stop flights were added to overseas destinations, providing travel to Europe, Africa, the Middle East and Asia. This international traffic created jobs. Today, almost 700 foreign-owned companies operate in the this area. More than 80 percent are headquartered in countries served by airline service from Detroit Metro.

We knew very early in our administration that Metro Airport's design would not handle the volume of air traffic a "hub" brings. For more than 10 years we worked with the airlines, federal government, congress and the White House to secure funding needed to build a new terminal. The Metro terminals designed to handle 10 million pas-

sengers annually saw airplane traffic increase each year to 35 million travelers last year!

We invested millions of dollars and made hundreds of improvements to keep pace with growth, but the strain showed.

Making Detroit Metro one of the greatest airports in the world was a top administration priority. Today, our plans and promises are ready to fulfill that goal.

But, it won't happen if there is a state takeover.

For two years we have spent too much time and money fighting an unnecessary political battle in Lansing. It has been distracting us from executing expansion plans and running the day-to-day operations of one of the busiest airports in the nation.

We have made some mistakes along the way. But, we have learned and strengthened management and operating procedures. None of the mistakes justifies the drastic upheaval proposed by the Senate.

How would a state takeover affect the public? Delays and red tape. Major expansion elements would be held up and the opening postponed. An unprecedented level of bureaucracy would stifle progress, impede simple projects and delay implementation. We may see vendors and businesses back out of contracts because of the politics of the situation and the bureaucracy it creates. Air travel costs could increase to compensate for state oversight committee cost overruns, delays in project estimate approval, and could risk cost changes in the marketplace.

Recently we established a Stakeholders Committee to review contracts, budgets, policies and other issues at Metro Airport. This group reflects partnership, leadership and smart business practices. This broad-based group will include representatives of the airlines, airport concessions, labor unions, Michigan Bureau of Aeronautics, and the chamber of commerce. The committee can audit any activity at the airport and recommend changes to airport policies, procedures and goals.

If the Senate's goal is to prevent future mistakes, this new Stakeholder Committee should more than adequately address its concerns. But, if the motives are more political than practical, the power grab for control of the airport will bring Detroit Metro's long-awaited expansion to a grinding halt and create an instability that this region cannot afford right now.

Edward H. McNamara is the Wayne County Executive.

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