

# Embracing the *WORLD GRANT IDEAL*



Affirming the  
Morrill Act  
for a  
Twenty-first-century  
Global Society

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## Introduction: Higher Education's Moral Imperative for the Twenty-first Century

How should a major public university in the United States align its distinctive strengths to meet the needs and demands of a global society? How can such a university maintain and strengthen its commitment to the public good in the context of changing global dynamics? These questions have gained increased urgency in the twenty-first century—for all universities but, in particular, for the nation's land-grant universities founded under provisions of the Morrill Act of 1862. The urgent need for new ways to think about higher education as an enterprise has provoked these questions, since our nation's best universities are the foundations for building sustainable global prosperity.

Dramatic changes in society, in knowledge, and in the nature of work have created a growing need for a more highly educated, adaptive, innovative, and engaged citizenry. In *The World is Flat*, Thomas Friedman describes a twenty-first-century environment unlike that of any previous era, in which the growing ease of international travel, the rise of multinational corporations, and the pervasive reach of the Internet have expedited the flow of information and capital across borders and continents, transforming regional and national economies and cultures into a finely interwoven global fabric.<sup>2</sup>

In the flat world that Friedman describes, the processes of production and distribution have shifted; no longer confined by geographical boundaries, these processes have contributed to a decrease in the traditional manufacturing base while simultaneously seeking out and employing educated workers from multiple nations. In Peter Drucker's "knowledge society," the pace with which new ideas emerge and provide the cutting-edge advantage quickens, the half-life of existing technology's usefulness decreases, and the need for a highly adaptable and creative workforce and citizenry at almost all levels and in all sectors of the economy intensifies and broadens.<sup>4</sup> Consequently, a larger percentage of the population requires the knowledge and skills that inherently come with higher education to allow themselves to remain productive and engaged citizens in an ever-evolving social, technological, and economic environment.

Additionally, the first decade of the twenty-first century has brought issues with global ramifications to the forefront of national and international concerns about sustainable global prosperity: searching for needed forms of alternative energy; addressing climate change and resource depletion; alleviating hunger, disease, and poverty; resolving escalating cultural, regional, and ideological conflicts; and dealing with increasing disparities between the "haves" and "have nots" in a world "spiky" with uneven concentrations of assets to drive commercial innovation and scientific advancements.

*Integrating the attributes and strengths of all segments of society for the sustainable prosperity and well-being of people and nations throughout the world is a moral imperative we are called upon to share.*

*"How we address the interwoven global trends of climate change, globalization, and population growth will determine a lot about the quality of life on Earth in the twenty-first century."<sup>1</sup>*

*"Just a few places produce most of the world's innovations. Innovation remains difficult without a critical mass of financiers, entrepreneurs, and scientists, often nourished by world-class universities and flexible corporations."<sup>3</sup>*

*No institution alone can accomplish the excellence in terms of quality, connectivity, and inclusiveness that is our moral imperative in this resource-constrained environment.*

*I urge our nation's best universities to join in the journey to affirm and to extend beyond our borders the core values of the Morrill Act as the fuel and inspiration for higher education's engagement with a global society in the century ahead.*

*As a part of our covenant with society, we must consider new ways in which the world's best research-intensive universities can make a difference, independently and together, in addressing the vast societal changes influencing this new millennium.*

These global changes have created an important transitional moment for higher education, one that is redefining the nature and the context for teaching and learning; for research, scholarly, and creative activities; and for the outreach and engagement missions of our universities and colleges. The challenges now confronting the nation and the world underscore the need for higher education institutions to engage, with passion, intention, and innovation, as engines of societal growth and transformation. There is a need for a continued research and educational focus on problems that span the boundaries of disciplines, nations, and cultures. Because higher education institutions are intimately linked to societal growth and transformation, they can help create and instill both the basic and applied knowledge that provides opportunities for all peoples and nations to achieve a heightened state of social and economic well-being and sustainable prosperity.

The potential for universities to drive societal growth and development for the greater good of the world and its inhabitants has never been higher, more appropriate, or more necessary; nonetheless, no single institution can address the challenges of a world that is both flat and spiky. The strengths of our nation's higher education enterprise rests in the special distinctions each institution brings to the whole. Together, all universities can use and act on knowledge to move the world toward greater good. Collectively, we can rebalance the nation's higher education portfolio so more institutions embrace the ideals that make a difference in society and address the tensions inherent in the work we do. It is an alignment of institutions for betterment—not changing who we are as unique and distinct institutions but taking a part of who we are and using it to move beyond our current accomplishments.

In this essay, I draw on four decades of experience at Michigan State University focused on applying land-grant values to local, state, national, and international challenges. Consonant with the spirit and essence of the land-grant covenant with society, new ways in which the world's best research-intensive universities can make a difference must be considered, independently and together, in addressing the vast societal changes influencing this new millennium. **Integrating the attributes and strengths of all segments of society for the sustainable prosperity and well-being of peoples and nations throughout the world is a moral imperative we are called upon to share and lead. I identify this ideal as “World Grant” and, in doing so, urge our nation's best universities to join in the journey to affirm and to extend the core values of the Morrill Act beyond our borders, fueling and inspiring higher education's engagement with a global society in the century ahead.**

## The World Grant Ideal: From Core Values—Momentum and Resolve for the Twenty-first Century

In my years at Michigan State University, I have had numerous occasions to consider the core values that formed the basis of the land-grant university in the United States—the durability and relevance of those values over time and the remarkable resilience of the land-grant colleges and universities created through the provisions of the Morrill Act.

The Morrill Act was the first of many federal policies to democratize higher education and to make colleges and universities instruments of advancement for the nation’s well-being. President Lincoln signed the bill into law to create a higher level of knowledge in a nation that was coming to have increasingly high demands for scientific and technical foundations in the workforce and to advance the economy. In signing the Morrill Act, he looked beyond the immediate and pressing challenges then at hand to consider how best to prepare the nation’s citizens for the future. The land-grant concept was a prime exemplar of a trend that accelerated through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries—a drive to expand the university curriculum by imparting a more practical emphasis to higher education and extending its benefits beyond the elite social and economic classes. The genius of the land-grant commitment to educational access of the highest quality lies in the melding of the liberal arts and sciences with the practical and the applied.

Of equal importance to its transformative power, the land-grant philosophy stressed the need to convey the findings and benefits of research-based knowledge directly to the public and to engage with those outside the academy as partners in the creation and implementation of knowledge.

Directed by these philosophical imperatives, the land-grant colleges came to exemplify a set of distinct values:

- **Quality.** This is a commitment to propel an institution’s strengths to their fullest capacity, to develop programs of highly regarded research and education across the applied technical and liberal arts disciplines—recognized as being good enough for the proudest and open to the poorest—providing a solid basis for analytical thinking and continued learning across multiple fields of knowledge to ensure an educated and skilled citizenry.
- **Inclusiveness.** This is a commitment to make programs of higher education broadly accessible to all who seek to advance themselves through knowledge, to create a learning community that fosters both intellectual and personal engagement leading to enhanced understanding, respect, and the celebration of differences from the conviction that the skills and knowledge derived from such engagement prepare individuals for meaningful and productive lives as workers and citizens.

*The ideals of Morrill and Lincoln beckon us still: “I would have higher learning more widely disseminated.”<sup>5</sup> Our institutions should be “the public’s universities.”<sup>6</sup>*

*Our values define the contributions we—as individuals, as universities—make to society.*

- *Connectivity.* This is a commitment to work in collaboration with a range of partners both within and beyond the academy; to work across boundaries of nations, cultures, fields of study, and institutions to create and to apply new knowledge to solve the most difficult societal problems; and, in most cases, to participate with others in the cocreation of knowledge through direct engagement with local communities whose challenges emphasize particular elements of the problem or problems that have larger global dimensions and to forge and sustain connections where none previously existed.

*The language used to describe our core values changes to reflect the character and challenges of particular times and places. However, the essence of the land-grant core values is at the root of our commitments to learning, discovery, and engagement.*

*In a world as interrelated and complex as ours, it is increasingly difficult to imagine any significant challenge in the context of a single location.*

These core values strongly resemble the way we conceive of them at Michigan State University today. Although the language used to describe these core values over the past 150-plus years reflects the character and challenges of particular times and places, quality, inclusiveness, and connectivity have nonetheless remained remarkably consistent philosophical foundations and commitments among land-grant institutions. They are values that motivate the provision of educational opportunity; the commitment to inclusiveness across perceived social, economic, cultural, and racial boundaries; the funding of education and research programs to address the practical needs of a state, a region, and the nation; and the commitment to work directly **with** communities, businesses, and individuals through outreach and service, drawing on the full potential of available natural, economic, and human resources.

In the broadest sense, the challenges confronting the United States as it approaches the second decade of the twenty-first century parallel those challenges that led to the passage of the Morrill Act nearly 150 years ago. Knowledge and information, particularly in science and technology, are growing at a rate faster than ever recorded in history. The needs of this decade—and each passing decade—are ever in flux and require an educated populace to understand and to address them. Boundaries and borders—geographical, cultural, financial, and political—that once separated nations and continents have become increasingly permeable, bringing once-remote issues to our doorstep. Comprehensive social and national challenges call for solutions that incorporate insights from particular places and different fields of knowledge to address specific problems in local areas, states, the nation, and the world.

Further, in a world as interrelated and complex as ours, it is increasingly difficult to imagine any significant challenge in the context of a single location; nothing occurs in a vacuum. The current financial crisis confronting the United States is by no means confined to its own borders; it penetrates the economies of virtually every nation. The complex challenges of environmental sustainability have profound and direct impact on particular regions of this nation and each of its states; they are also challenges we share with nations and continents throughout the world. While solutions may be identified and pursued in local, state, and national contexts, ultimately these actions must become part of a combined effort to address challenges facing humanity in every setting. It is vital that

universities and world leaders build upon this interconnectedness as they work to address societal problems, recognizing that societal issues are no longer just provincial problems confined by borders but issues with far-reaching impact and import.

“Globalization,” the term popularly used to define these changes in how the world operates, is not a one-way flow across borders and cannot be viewed that way; instead, globalization must be conceived of and understood as a multidirectional flow of interaction and engagement in which experts from various disciplines and locales work together to form solutions that merge and utilize the strengths of each contributing party. Global forces play out in local contexts, even as local situations mediate and help reshape these global currents.

Higher education institutions of all kinds must be involved in both directions of this flow: by facilitating the dynamic flow of students into new learning venues (e.g., study abroad) and in welcoming international students and scholars; by adopting borderless collaborations and partnerships within and across domains of research and scholarship; by engaging in problem-solving outreach in communities at home or abroad—with governments, businesses, and service organizations as well as other universities, without focusing on “who’s in charge” but looking for solutions utilizing traditional academic strengths along with the hands-on understanding espoused by the local participants; and by graduating educated persons who are able to function effectively in a world unconstrained by state, regional, and national boundaries.

The *World Grant Ideal* is grounded on the principles inherent in the land-grant tradition adapted to address the challenges of the twenty-first century and beyond. Universities like ours have not been “granted” the world in the sense that individual states were granted tracts of land by the Morrill Act as a resource to support the establishment of land-grant institutions in the United States. Rather, the *World Grant Ideal* recognizes that fundamental issues unfolding in one’s own backyard link directly to challenges occurring throughout the nation and the world. The *World Grant Ideal* not only recognizes this seamless connection but also actively grants to the world a deeply ingrained commitment to access and utilization of the cutting-edge knowledge required to address these challenges.

World Grant is a concept, a way of understanding how a research-intensive university can adapt to a changing world while helping shape changes that will be hallmarks of our future. It is not an absolute threshold that Michigan State or any similar university will cross at a given time. In large, complex organizations, not every unit progresses in the same way or pursues the same course in aligning its strengths with a changing world. World Grant is a directional aspiration, an intentional journey, as the land-grant mission of the nineteenth century aligns its core values and strengths to meet the societal needs of the twenty-first century.

*“Globalization implies a deep interconnectedness with the world economically, politically, and culturally. It is a process characterized by increasing economic openness, interdependence, and integration in the world economy. While internationalization presumes an international market controlled in varying degrees by nations, globalization presumes a world market, one that is beyond the reach of the nation state.”<sup>7</sup>*

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## The World Grant Ideal: Relevancy, Meaning, and Impact for Today and Tomorrow

*The World Grant Ideal is a concept, a way of understanding how a research-intensive university adapts to a changing world while helping to shape changes that will be hallmarks of our future.*

Meeting and addressing the challenges of this century will require that higher education institutions in the United States contribute to two important goals. First, we must educate for the jobs of the future as well as the present, creating graduates who become learners for life, capable of adapting to changes in the processes and nature of work in a global economy. Second, we must continue to create, disseminate, and apply knowledge that drives economic development and creates jobs locally and globally. It is the combination of both significant job creation and an educated citizenry that will move our nation toward a more sustainable prosperity and, ultimately, lead the world in solving problems of global scale and consequence—problems that link all nations. Education is the key to developing jobs that not only employ the world’s population but also employ it to the betterment of all citizens and the planet.

A World Grant frame of thinking seeks to overcome a pervasive dilemma facing higher education institutions: How can universities prepare graduates and produce knowledge to meet the needs of today’s economy while remaining attentive to new developments on the horizon? At the same time, how can they maintain the agility to reshape themselves as institutions to meet the societal needs of the future as they prepare their students for the jobs of tomorrow?

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The actions we must take—for the nation as a whole to meet the challenges of this century—require that a greater share of the U.S. population attains a college degree. There is national urgency in creating a more educated population—an urgency that requires higher education to forge new relationships and develop new effective initiatives across the full educational and life-span continuum. At a time when other nations are aggressively taking the same kinds of actions that were stimulated in the United States by the nineteenth-century Morrill Act (investing in higher education, creating universities, and expanding the proportion of the population with a university or college degree), education attainment levels in the United States remain flat. Even as other nations adopt the U.S. approach to educational access, our nation is losing momentum for the vision of an educated citizenry. The cohort of Americans aged 35 and older has attained greater levels of formal education than the group aged 25 to 34; for the first time in decades, a younger population in the United States is less well educated in the aggregate than its parents’ generation.<sup>8</sup> The wide disparity in literacy and numeracy skills among our school-age and adult populations has been documented as one of the most significant forces our nation must address if we are to more positively shape our future.<sup>9</sup> For institutions pursuing the *World Grant Ideal*, creating a more educated population means a continued and expanded commitment to enrolling and ensuring the success of students from a full range of cultural, ethnic, and socioeconomic backgrounds, particularly those who represent the first generation in their family to attend college.



That said, institutions pursuing the *World Grant Ideal* today cannot just increase the number of graduates in the United States. They must commit themselves to move beyond what I call the “tyranny of the more”—the practice of producing more graduates without helping ensure that those graduates have acquired relevant skills to work productively **and** contribute to a vital and effective society. Universities that set about to fulfill the *World Grant Ideal* must work with business, industry, and government officials to ensure that graduates have opportunities to find meaningful and fulfilling employment to contribute to the vitality and well-being of a global society. The World Grant institution pursues a vision to work in innovative ways, both in creating jobs for economic development and in increasing the educational attainment of its citizens. The *World Grant Ideal* embodies the commitment to educate citizen-scholars whose value is calibrated not just by their earnings but also by their contributions to the betterment of the world.

*We are committed to moving beyond the “tyranny of the more”—the practice of producing more graduates without helping to ensure those graduates have acquired relevant skills AND find places to work productively and contribute to a vital and effective society. If graduates cannot find work and careers, and if graduates cannot contribute more broadly to society as well as be successful in future environments, we have failed in our covenant with society.*

### **The World Grant Ideal: New Combinations of Strengths and Agility—Assets, Alignments, and Attitudes**

To engage successfully in this century and beyond, a university aspiring toward the *World Grant Ideal* must build a unique combination of strengths and agility, combining its academic resources in ways that allow it to contribute value in an array of settings and circumstances. It must serve the current needs of existing constituencies while simultaneously casting an attentive eye to developments that will require new solutions to emerging, often unforeseen, societal needs. The future must be continually present in its sight lines.

In his classic study, *The Innovator’s Dilemma*, Clayton M. Christensen outlines a pattern in which leading for-profit firms have ultimately failed because they focused too exclusively on current demand for existing products while overlooking the impact of an emerging, “disruptive technology” on the long-range market. (The advances leading to the development of ever-smaller computer disk drives provide an example; each successive wave of advancement to a smaller disk size ultimately caused firms heavily committed to the earlier, larger sizes to fail.)<sup>10</sup>

*The World Grant Ideal advances the compelling responsibility to be both disruptive and incremental—to be responsive to the urgency of the “now” while simultaneously anticipating tomorrow’s problems.*

In the *World Grant Ideal*, the analogy to disruptive technology illustrates a greatly expanded frame of reference that introduces new global challenges and calls on an institution to align its capacities in different ways. Without abandoning their commitment to those they currently serve, universities pursuing the *World Grant Ideal* must be capable of reframing their approaches to knowledge creation, use, and dissemination as changes occur in the environment and as demarcations between nations, cultures, and fields of study become increasingly blurred. Propelling the *World Grant Ideal* is a responsibility to be both disruptive and incremental—to be responsive to the urgency of the “now” while simultaneously anticipating tomorrow’s problems. Pursuit of the disruptive and the incremental

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*Alignments make possible new combinations of knowledge and new approaches to solving problems, drawing on and integrating data and methods from multiple fields of study.*

recognizes the value of engaging in research for which there is not an already-known purpose, an understanding unique to universities and many of the contributions they have made to significant—often serendipitous—advances.

An institution in this mode must conceive of its individual strengths as a dynamic whole, a set of attributes capable of being reformulated expeditiously, with a high degree of spirit and resolve, to address emerging societal needs. Just as the human brain creates new linkages and patterns of interaction among its cells in forming new knowledge, a complex, research-intensive university must create new pathways within its own capabilities not only to meet but also to anticipate emerging societal needs in varied domains.

I believe that the unique combination of strength and agility characteristic of any university aspiring to the twenty-first-century *World Grant Ideal* belongs to one of three major kinds: **assets**, **alignments**, and **attitudes**.

**Assets** center on institutional capacities that allow a research-intensive university with land-grant values to address societal challenges. A university that pursues the *World Grant Ideal* should possess each of these assets to some degree:

- *Strength in research, scholarly, and creative activity.* It must be a producer and cocreator of knowledge and endeavors at the frontiers of creativity, innovation, and discovery; one that attracts distinguished faculty from throughout the nation and the world and has a strong track record of success in the competition for external research funding.
- *Breadth of academic disciplines.* It must be an institution that offers a full array of highly regarded academic programs, ranging from the applied and professional fields to the humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences that constitute the traditional liberal arts disciplines.
- *Comprehensive international reach and engagement.* It must be a world-class, research-intensive university that engages directly with people, communities, businesses, nongovernmental organizations, and governments throughout the nation and the world.

**Alignments** create new value and make possible new combinations of knowledge and new approaches to solving problems, drawing on and integrating data and methods from multiple fields of study:

- *Lowered and permeable boundaries between disciplines and organizational units.* A university that pursues the *World Grant Ideal* must be one that builds alliances with public and private partners as well as other higher education institutions across academic disciplines, regions, nations, and cultures to solve problems requiring the creative synthesis of various fields of study.
- *Focus on new and evolving societal needs.* It must take account of its essential capacities and its collective direction, being attentive to external changes that indicate where its strengths and expertise should focus and how best to engage those strengths, with whom, and for what outcomes.

- *Connection between local and global issues.* It must conceive of the societal needs it addresses in a state or regional context as integrally related to issues and perspectives in national and international settings; it must be an institution that does not make absolute delineations between domestic and international challenges in its own organization and approach to world problems but, instead, regards these two domains as expressions of challenges facing all nations and cultures.
- *Partnerships at home and abroad.* A university in this mode must be capable of building and sustaining effective working relationships and establishing a presence in other parts of the world through arrangements that confer mutual benefit and foster heightened understanding and goodwill between nations and cultures.

**Attitudes** grounded in a can-do spirit of hope motivate and focus energies on improving the individual and collective well-being of society—locally and throughout the world:

- *Commitment to make world-class programs, cutting-edge knowledge, and faculty available to interested learners regardless of economic circumstances.* Universities that pursue the *World Grant Ideal* must combine the strengths of a research-intensive university with a commitment to educational access, opportunity, and success for all students.
- *Commitment to global understanding.* It must commit itself to instilling global competence and understanding through, for example, study abroad, language learning, two-way intercultural engagement, knowledge of world histories, and comparative studies.
- *Commitment to fostering inclusiveness.* It must seek out and celebrate inclusiveness within and across nations; work to attract a faculty, student body, and staff from a broad array of cultural, ethnic, and racial backgrounds; and respect cultural differences in its interactions with constituencies in the United States and throughout the world.
- *Commitment to mutual empowerment through engagement, outreach, and service.* A university in this mode must directly engage with and for society by bringing expert knowledge to bear on local problems in both rural and urban settings, domestically and internationally, and by engaging directly in programs and research that mutually empower its partners to achieve their own goals and realize their full potential.
- *Commitment to modeling democratic values.* A university that pursues the *World Grant Ideal* models itself on the spirit and strengths of democratic values: committed to freedom of thought and peaceful expression, to open debate in the pursuit of knowledge and understanding, to inclusion of people of all backgrounds and circumstances, to respect for different points of view, and to openness in the processes of decision making. It must be an institution that embodies a view of public education as an instrument and reflection of

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*The more widely educated the population, the more widely dispersed are opportunity and access to the benefits of prosperity*

the spirit of democratic values and makes cutting-edge knowledge accessible to people from a broad spectrum of economic, cultural, and educational backgrounds. Such a university helps instill a capacity for independent thought, critical analysis, the compelling expression of ideas, and sound ethical judgment. Such a university makes its discoveries and knowledge openly available. Transparency in what we do and how we do it and open access to our discoveries reflect and reinforce democratic values.

## The World Grant Ideal: What it Means in and for the Twenty-first Century—Sustainable Global Prosperity for the Common Good

*The World Grant Ideal is one of hope. Throughout this nation and the world, there are many people who have dreams but lack even the opportunity to give voice to their visions, let alone frame and pursue goals that make it possible to realize their full potential.*

Beyond the values it helped instill through the ensuing decades, the Morrill Act constituted the first major legislation by the federal government to make higher education a public good, broadly available to those who sought such programs and services—heightening the quality of life and contributing value to society through the creation and dissemination of knowledge. The power of the Morrill Act can be seen in the ripple effect it had on stimulating other significant acts of federal policy through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, including a second Morrill Act (1890), from which several of today’s historically black colleges emerged; the establishment of the National Science Foundation and the National Institutes of Health, which made universities major centers of scientific research beginning in the mid-twentieth century; the GI Bill, which made higher education an engine of opportunity for soldiers returning from World War II; the creation of tribal colleges and community colleges through the late 1950s and 1960s; and the establishment of the Pell Grant Program and other programs through which the federal government became a major provider of financial aid to those with need, making higher education more accessible to a broader cross section of the population. Just as the Morrill Act was an important catalyst in its time for other important changes in society, so is the potential impact of the *World Grant Ideal* in our era.

The *World Grant Ideal* calls for extending the spirit and core values of the Morrill Act into the twenty-first century and around the globe, which, I believe, means

- Leading with a humbleness of attitude and a “can do” spirit of hope that allows the university to form partnerships and pursue problems of a kind that may not bring the greatest accolades on the scales of institutional prestige but that, nonetheless, accord a positive benefit and help address broad societal challenges;
- Bringing an institution’s research and creative capacities across disciplines to address a range of compelling societal issues;
- Creating access to cutting-edge knowledge and world-class quality education, regardless of a one’s ability to pay;
- Working directly with individuals, communities, and organizations in the tradition of university outreach and engagement;

- Graduating empowered individuals who actively join their voices with others to attain an impact beyond what any one voice might have imagined or achieved alone, enhancing and growing social capital within a region, a nation, and the world;
- Leading the way in taking time to listen to perspectives that differ from one's own, including taking the time to worry about what happens in the lives of individuals and the communities in which they live and work and to consider how one might improve a specific or community situation;
- Holding ourselves and others to the highest standards of intellectual rigor while engaging with individuals and communities;
- Working across academic disciplines to combine the strengths of the humanities, social sciences, and the natural and applied sciences to combat complex problems requiring more than one approach;
- Paying attention to and accepting new responsibilities for the learning and knowledge needs of the very young, elementary- and secondary-age children and youth as well as the workforce and senior populations;
- Empowering people and providing them with an opportunity to accomplish their own goals and to contribute to society in ways that would not have been available to them otherwise.

As the spirit and core values of the Morrill Act extend into the twenty-first century and around the globe, there are three hallmarks of the *World Grant Ideal* that deserve special attention. These hallmarks are dominant themes that not only define the aspiration of the *World Grant Ideal* but also identify the outcomes for a university striving to be more engaged in making a difference locally and globally. These hallmarks of definition and difference are the **penetrating of societal, disciplinary, and institutional boundaries**; the **cocreation of knowledge and solutions**; and the **coprosperities of our individual states, nation, and the world**.

### Penetrating Societal, Disciplinary, and Institutional Boundaries

Meeting the challenges of the present and future entails a blending of perspectives and approaches that engages not only across societal boundaries, but also across the full range of academic disciplines and types of institutions and organizations. Solving problems of global proportions requires the combined thinking and actions of the natural sciences, the social sciences, the humanities, and the professional disciplines. Education and research communities must enter more readily into collaborative efforts to address problems that require the tools and knowledge of more than one field of study. From the outset, land-grant institutions founded under provisions of the Morrill Act emphasized a blending of the arts and sciences with programs of practical and applied knowledge. A university in pursuit of the *World Grant Ideal* seeks not just to provide training for today's jobs; it seeks to produce educated and engaged thinkers and citizens—people of all academic backgrounds who understand issues in terms beyond their own specialties and who contribute to the development of knowledge that helps solve tomorrow's problems.

*Solving problems of global proportions requires the combined thinking and actions of the natural sciences, the social sciences, the humanities, and a blend of the liberal arts and sciences and professional disciplines.*

*It is at the intersection of the natural world and human behavior that some of our most vexing challenges reside, mediated further by our individual and collective beliefs about ethics and values.*

*Not overbalancing toward the technical is a serious challenge for the kinds of institutions we need to have for the twenty-first century.*

*A university in the World Grant model is one that sees citizens not just as the beneficiaries of its knowledge but also as partners in its cocreation.*

*People fuel the success of the twenty-first century economy through partnerships that advance knowledge and transform lives. This is the power of community around critical social issues.*

The *World Grant Ideal* facilitates the ability of every academic discipline to reach beyond its own discourse community, engaging its conceptual tools and knowledge to address problems that concern the world community at large. The forces and demands of specialization that tend to yield the greatest rewards in the academy can easily undermine the potential for engaging the full capacities of a research-intensive university in pursuit of shared goals. In addition, budgetary pressures confronting states and their public universities often reinforce the natural tendency of academic disciplines and higher education institutions to retreat into the relative security of their own internal discourse, practices, and traditional missions. This tendency must be resisted.

The *World Grant Ideal* embodies a commitment to draw the separate academic disciplines and institutions outside the silos of their internal conversations—to create a new conversation that speaks with a collective voice to address challenges confronting all nations and cultures. Every field of knowledge and all kinds of higher education institutions need to participate in this discussion to create a financially robust and culturally literate population that can understand what it means to participate in a democracy.

In the natural sciences, fulfilling the terms of World Grant entails a willingness to work in collaboration with other specialties both within and beyond the sciences to discover and apply solutions to complex problems of global scale and consequence. In the social sciences, the *World Grant Ideal* underscores the need not just to engage in national and international policy development but also to apply knowledge directly in the context of communities, organizations, schools, and families to foster thinking and behaviors that help achieve solutions to global challenges of sustainability in addition to the challenges of achieving economic and social prosperity, intercultural understanding, and mutual accord. In the humanities, the *World Grant Ideal* stresses the need to bring the power of arts and culture to affirm the values that define us as human beings and help an institution remain true to its founding vision, linking ideas and understanding with functional progress in a complex society. The creative vision of ideas, the expressive power of language, the explorations of form and perception conveyed through the visual arts, the passion and discipline of technique that invest the performing arts—all are vital elements of any community that celebrates the value of learning and knowledge.

### Cocreating Knowledge and Solutions

A key element of the *World Grant Ideal* is a unique kind of partnership—a partnership designed to cocreate knowledge in relationships not just among academic disciplines or even other higher education institutions but also with local industries and businesses of a region and with government agencies in a home state, in communities, or in any number of settings throughout the world. A university in this mode does not enter partnerships with the thought that it has all the right answers or knows assuredly which questions to ask. Instead, it brings a commitment to global engagement and a comparative, researched perspective



that provides insight into how others are approaching similar challenges in other parts of the world—and then listens to its partners’ ideas on how to address the questions being considered, ultimately creating a solution or solutions through intellectually rigorous cooperative investigation of the problems being addressed.

To be successful in this work, a university must have the ability to enter into a relationship with a partner who may lack the credentials of the academy but possesses a nuanced cultural or technical knowledge about a particular place or circumstance. To work effectively in this capacity, a university must foster a sense of reciprocity that allows it to work in conjunction with others in ways that are not patronizing or condescending—derived from an understanding that the university itself can learn from the engagement, just as the partner organization or community can learn from the university. A university in the World Grant model is one that sees the individual practitioner not just as the beneficiary of its knowledge but also as a partner in the creation. More than most major research-intensive universities, it is likely to engage the culture and understanding of people and local communities in the pursuit of new knowledge and understanding, learning from others to discern the interrelated elements of a problem to the fullest extent. By entering into partnerships of this kind, a World Grant university helps provide communities, businesses, and individuals with the knowledge and tools to succeed. In the cocreation of knowledge, the *World Grant Ideal* works from the bottom up—from the grass roots—just as concertedly as it does from the top down.

### Coprosperities of Our Individual States, Nation, and the World.

A university in the land-grant tradition runs the risk of seeming to abandon its founding mission of serving its home state by engaging with nations and cultures beyond its own borders. As a university aspires toward the *World Grant Ideal*, it cannot forget its roots. In our case, the state of Michigan, for example, now has the highest unemployment rate in the nation. Some may ask whether a public or land-grant university has any business extending its reach beyond the urgent needs that exist within its state’s own boundaries. The actual questions should parallel the following: How can Michigan State University help the people of Michigan now and in the future? How can MSU help Michigan and its citizens understand that their own long-term survival depends on a strong world economy—and that Michigan can contribute and benefit from actions that strengthen nations beyond their borders in ways they cannot yet easily visualize?

My answer to these questions is that any state that seeks to be prosperous in the global economy of the twenty-first century must extend its vision outward to understand the larger context of its own challenges and opportunities; it must reach beyond its own borders to engage problems on a broader scale. In a global society, we cannot adhere to a protectionist view of knowledge and capacity building that deems a university’s involvement in other settings as a zero-sum equation that deprives residents of the home state. From its earliest iterations, the land-grant university has embraced the principle that knowledge gained in one

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*Time and again and across sectors, we have learned the benefits of coprosperity. Indeed, coprosperity feeds individual prosperity in the world of ideas, the economy, scientific discovery, and human values and vice versa. World Grant global engagement is an essential bridge feeding both coprosperity and individual prosperity at home and elsewhere.*



setting should be widely disseminated to advance the public good; the lessons learned from the university's involvement in one context should be made available to those of similar circumstances in other places, within and beyond a given state. The distinctive contribution of a university in the land-grant tradition is its commitment to work with people in their own settings; in doing so, it imparts the ability to be innovative and succeed—in the home state and beyond. The benefits of a university's work in international settings are reciprocal. By engaging with other nations and cultures, we take the university to the world; at the same time, we bring the world to the university and to the state. The resulting richness of new insight, enhanced understanding, and goodwill confers benefits to all parties, including the communities, businesses, and individual citizens of the university's own state.

*The World Grant Ideal makes real the case that in the flat world of a global, knowledge-driven economy, states and regions are increasingly dependent on the capacity of their universities to access global markets and human capital and recognize that knowledge grows—not only flows—between people beyond place-bound constraints.*

In reaching beyond a state's borders, an internationally recognized, research-intensive university in pursuit of the *World Grant Ideal* contributes substantially to the well-being of the state and its residents, helping to make the state a citizen of the world.

### The *World Grant Ideal*: Challenges of Pursuing Our Moral Imperative

Not every university pursuing a *World Grant Ideal* is likely to respond in the same way to the challenges of the twenty-first century, and some within such institutions may feel the effect of these challenges more directly than others. Yet there is no institutional role that is not affected in some way by the increased permeability of boundaries between institutions, academic disciplines, and political and geographic borders in a flat world. In our time, the boundaries have been lowered in what were once regarded as discrete fields of study, just as the boundaries between higher education and society have become more fluid and interactive. The challenges of the present and foreseeable future will require different institutions and people in varied institutional roles to think across organizational domains and to find opportunities to link their expertise with that of others in addressing common issues and problems. A *World Grant* perspective reduces the demarcation between “yours” and “mine,” helping a university see the challenges looming in different parts of the world as directly related to local circumstances. The *World Grant Ideal* underscores the need to improve universal well-being in a sustainable manner in order to build a growing sense of “ours.”

*A World Grant perspective reduces the demarcation between “yours” and “mine,” helping a university see the challenges looming in different parts of the world as directly related to local circumstances. World Grant underscores the need to improve universal well-being in a sustainable manner in order to build a growing sense of “ours.”*

Very often the contribution of a university engaged with the *World Grant Ideal* resembles that of assist leaders in an athletic contest or in an organization—members of the team on the court or in the places where they live and work who help create the conditions that make it possible for others to “score.” Assist leaders know that the primary credit for the achievement will go to the one who ultimately makes the “point.” The *World Grant Ideal* describes an assist-leader institution as one that confers added value to a given project and its goals without necessarily adding dramatically to its own reputational and financial bottom lines.

For the concept of the *World Grant Ideal* to gain the traction necessary for creating meaningful and relevant impact, it must offer a compelling vision in which a university's faculty, staff, and administrators can imagine a future of continued professional growth and engagement. Regardless of the words or models used to describe a university's direction, there are ways to pose questions to faculty, staff, students, and administrators to invite consideration of the relationship between present work and that of the future. For example, efforts at Michigan State University suggest such questions:

- What core elements of my work—pertaining to my field of study or to the operational elements of my department or unit—are likely to change as my university meets the evolving challenges of society in the twenty-first century? What elements do I expect will remain constant?
- As changing societal needs place different expectations on my university, what new relationships might my department or unit develop with others within or beyond the university? What new partnerships do I need to form? How might I work differently with others as changes occur in my discipline, in the populations we serve, or in the societal needs we help address as part of a university?
- What steps should I be taking now to prepare for the changing mix of challenges and opportunities confronting my university and our society in the twenty-first century? With whom should I start working? How can I explore new directions in my scholarship? What tools should I be using to keep pace with public and scholarly discussions in my field of study?

Concerns that may arise for some faculty are that the directions that a university pursues as it strives toward the *World Grant Ideal* may not always be those that attract the greatest academic visibility and acclaim. Far too often, the greatest accolades in higher education go to those who produce highly visible and well-funded discoveries—for example, the seminal policy framework or publication in a peer-reviewed venue that gains wide acclaim, enhancing the recognition accorded to a research-intensive institution and its individual faculty members. Direct engagement with those in need is not generally regarded as a pathway to great reputation. Some argue that no matter how valuable and important a university's contribution may be to those in a particular setting, working concertedly as cocreators of knowledge with individual states, communities, businesses, and citizens carries the risk of reputational obscurity. The *World Grant Ideal* challenges us to engage in both highly visible and well-funded discovery and direct engaged scholarship for the purpose of beneficial applications.

At its core, the *World Grant Ideal* is not about dominance or status. It is about comprehensiveness, caliber, impact, and the values of inclusiveness, connectivity, and quality. It is about helping people and communities—local, national, and global—to realize their dreams and to make their dreams bigger.

The *World Grant Ideal* is about intellectual rigor in all that we do—in teaching and learning, in discovery and creative endeavors, and in our outreach and

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engagement. It adheres to and advances the added value of peer review and a world-class standard of excellence that expects the same high quality of work in the laboratory, classroom, and the most remote community—in our face-to-face as well as our technologically mediated connections. Adhering to high standards of intellectual rigor must characterize all of this, regardless of short-term reputational effects.

*Keeping centered on possibilities rather than becoming paralyzed by “buts,” the World Grant Ideal for the twenty-first century embraces the “genius of the and” as the fuel for forward momentum, even in the face of seemingly impossible circumstances.*

In pursuit of the *World Grant Ideal*, a public, research-intensive university in the land-grant tradition would not regard the production of knowledge that changes ideas and influences practice in the field as antithetical to engaged outreach in the mode described above. A university in the *World Grant Ideal* is not bound by what James Collins and Jerry Porras call the “tyranny of the or” in their study *Built to Last*, which analyzes qualities of organizations that have sustained their vitality and relevance to society for more than 100 years. The *World Grant Ideal* for the twenty-first century embraces what Collins and Porras call the “genius of the and.”<sup>11</sup> On the one hand, in pursuing the *World Grant Ideal*, a research-intensive university will very likely undertake hundreds of millions of dollars of sponsored research from the federal government and other sources. At the same time, such a university will be both directly and indirectly engaged with businesses and individual citizens—of its home state, the United States, and nations throughout the world. The *World Grant Ideal* does not consider research and publication as ends in themselves; they are the foundations of knowledge and thought on which to build in directly serving the needs of people in many settings. It is the combination of research and engagement that holds the greatest potential to address local and world challenges.

*The inherent tension between core land-grant values and the quest for institutional prestige must itself become a source of creative energy for institutions pursuing the World Grant Ideal, motivating their drive for expanded solutions that empower members of a community or region to address and to solve their local problems, to create and realize dreams—and in so doing, to effect solutions to similar problems in settings throughout the world.*

The *World Grant Ideal* is about thinking *and* doing. It is about creating a “tipping point,” much like Malcolm Gladwell’s epidemiological phenomena of societal change in which little things make big differences.<sup>12</sup> Thinking and doing create potential for tipping points that enhance the contributions that major public, research-intensive universities with land-grant values can make in the twenty-first century.

There are inherent tensions in creating tipping points from new combinations of “ands.” At its core, the *World Grant Ideal* offers a means of reconciling what can seem to be insurmountable differences between quality and access, research and outreach, the liberal arts and applied knowledge, and institutional rankings and engagement with partners in the cocreation of knowledge. These tensions are no less pronounced in the twenty-first century than they were in the twentieth and nineteenth centuries. Any public university that pursues a research-intensive mission feels the attraction—and the obligation—to succeed in terms that the academy itself has defined. We cannot think that the standard metrics used to gauge the success of research-intensive universities do not apply to us. We must continue to measure our effectiveness by the amount of externally sponsored research our faculty conduct, the number of publications and citations they produce, and the national and international fellowships and awards they receive

and by the caliber as well as the cultural, racial, and international inclusiveness of our student body. These are necessary frameworks of accountability, but they are not sufficient. New metrics are needed that give evidence to the value added by universities engaged in building sustainable global prosperity beyond their own bottom lines of finances, fame, and fortune.

Not only are new metrics needed for considering the contributions of universities to the common good, but new paradigms for understanding the evolution of the nation's different colleges and universities from their founding missions in the context of the twenty-first century must also be created. The paradigm of the *World Grant Ideal* recognizes that 90 percent of the core activities and the aspirations of any university or college in this country have evolved to be very similar. The new paradigm provides a framework for how an institution aligns the capacities of its remaining 10 percent, that is, the cluster of commitments and actions that confers its distinguishing features. It is about how an institution works and the unique balance of its different kinds of work that create distinction. The paradigm of the *World Grant Ideal* suggests that distinction will be created by where on the international spectrum an institution falls, what kind of a role it will play in economic development, what it will add, and what capacities it will develop as it continues to evolve.

Ultimately, the *World Grant Ideal* is not about institutional origins or pedigree; rather, it is a paradigm for how higher education institutions in the United States can prepare to meet the needs of the future. World Grant provides a set of ideals by which universities of all kinds can address the pressing societal needs of the nation and the world in the twenty-first century.

## The *World Grant Ideal*—What We are Called upon to Do and the Power of We

The sesquicentennial of the Morrill Act in 2012 provides a fitting occasion to celebrate the enduring power of the land-grant vision of higher education as an instrument of personal, social, and economic transformation in this nation. The Morrill Act created a new type of higher education institution in the nineteenth century. In this current age, the most pressing higher education need is to encourage existing universities to change in ways that more effectively advance the public good—to affirm the ideals of the Morrill Act and its core values of quality, inclusiveness, and connectivity through each higher education institution's commitments and actions, regardless of its historical land-grant affiliation.

My vision is that an alignment of energies and commitments can begin to arise among a range of universities and colleges as each works in its own way to contribute to the fulfillment of the *World Grant Ideal*. My shorthand for such a phenomenon is the “power of we”—much like the work Jonathon Tisch pioneered on the power of partnerships.<sup>15</sup> As partners aspiring toward the *World Grant Ideal*, we can knit together networks across the country and around the world that recognize the power of working together to define problems and priorities,

*The World Grant Ideal is independent of institutional type or societal sector. It is not place bound, nor is it biased by privilege without responsibility. It places the urgency of the now in the context of the future.*

*Just as the Morrill Act was an important catalyst in its time for other important changes in society, so is the potential impact of the World Grant Ideal in our era.*

*I invite others to join in this journey—to boldly affirm and to courageously extend beyond our nation's borders the core values of the Morrill Act.*

without designating winners and losers and without being dependent on structures of authority, control, and power. Working informally as a virtual network of institutions with common values, universities pursuing the *World Grant Ideal* can embody this power of we, offering models of how to work more effectively as an agent of empowerment, helping individual learners, communities, states, and nations address challenges interwoven with the global fabric of our time. At the core of the *World Grant Ideal* is the commitment to give voice to those who cannot be heard because of disadvantaged circumstances. A key strength of the *World Grant Ideal* is to make positive differences for the “have nots” as well as the “haves.” It is the notion of outreach to individuals and the communities in which they live, very much like the commitment that formed the basis of the land-grant mission in 1862.

*We cannot relinquish ourselves to the “tyranny of the sames.” Ultimately, the World Grant Ideal is one that counters a strong current of conformity flowing throughout much of higher education—a current that draws institutions to emulate the model and practices of the nation’s most elite research-intensive universities.*

I conceive of the *World Grant Ideal* not so much as a movement but as a natural alliance of universities, each with distinctive strengths, recognizing their affinities and working in parallel to change the character and direction of higher education. In time, a collection of universities in pursuit of the *World Grant Ideal* could create tipping points, offering through their actions a model of higher education that differs in important respects from the mainstream of motivations and actions that characterize many institutions today. As higher education institutions, we cannot relinquish ourselves to the “tyranny of the sames.” Ultimately, the *World Grant Ideal* is one that counters a strong current of conformity flowing throughout much of higher education—a current that draws institutions to emulate the model and practices of the nation’s most elite research-intensive universities. World Grant offers an alternate vision, pursuing a different tack through the flow of that current—a vision to engage the strengths and capacities of a research-intensive public university to interact concertedly with others in the places where they work and live, linking the distinctive contributions of academic disciplines, nations, and cultures to address problems of global scale. World Grant offers a vision that could ultimately change the course of the river itself—a power for not only reshaping today but also shaping the future.

*To make a positive difference in global well-being requires a vision beyond ourselves.*

The *World Grant Ideal* views societal problems not only through the lens of the Morrill Act values but also with a new kind of intensity—an intensity for working together by using our different roles and strengths to expand the possibilities for effective solutions. For example, colleges and universities across the higher education continuum have developed an abundance of different initiatives to influence K–12 education. But, what has yet to be accomplished is to align these different roles and initiatives to collectively yield more positive learning outcomes across the entire system. We have yet to break the old habits of inching slowly forward program by program. Rather, working together we must develop new ways of combining the different “fixes” being proposed to cocreate more effective and sustainable solutions. Within the intensified engagement of the *World Grant Ideal* lies the potential to generate the quantum phase shift in K–12 teaching and learning needed in this nation and around the world.

Urgent moral imperatives are never realized without enormous investments of intellect and passion, of energy, and of focus and determination. The *World Grant Ideal* is not only a declaration of national purpose, it is also a renewed national commitment to act on the moral imperative that all kinds of higher education institutions must work individually and collectively to meet the needs of a global society in ways that strengthen the social commitment to the public good in the context of changing global dynamics.

It is toward this vision that Michigan State University has been striving for more than 150 years. I invite others to join in this journey—to boldly affirm and to courageously extend beyond our nation’s borders the core values of the Morrill Act as inspiration and fuel for higher education’s engagement with a global society in the century ahead. We have an opportunity to influence societal development to a degree not seen since Abraham Lincoln signed the Morrill Act nearly 150 years ago. It is a journey requiring passion and commitment. It is a journey for which we are ready as we engage to make positive differences in global well-being beyond ourselves. It is through our institutional legacies of who we were created to be, who we are, and what we have accomplished that we are now granted a linked opportunity and responsibility to create sustainable global prosperity that goes well beyond the finances and fortunes of any single institution, state, or nation. This is the heart of the *World Grant Ideal*.

*It is through our institutional legacies of who we were created to be, who we are, and what we have accomplished that we are now granted a linked opportunity and responsibility to create sustainable global prosperity that goes well beyond the finances and fortune of any single institution, state, or nation.*



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