

The approaching 2012 sesquicentennial of the signing of the Morrill Act provides an occasion to celebrate the enduring power of the land-grant vision of higher education as an instrument of individual, social, and economic transformation in this nation.

The Morrill Act of 1862 created a new type of higher education institution in the nineteenth century.

Now, the most pressing need in higher education is to encourage universities to evolve in ways that align them more effectively to advance the public good—to affirm the ideals of the Morrill Act and its core values through each institution's commitments and actions, regardless of its roots.

I invite you to learn more about what I call the *World Grant Ideal* and to share your comments and ideas at:

[worldgrantideal.msu.edu](http://worldgrantideal.msu.edu).



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## Embracing the *WORLD GRANT IDEAL*



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

## Revolutionary Roots

In 1855, Michigan State University began a bold “local experiment” that opened the doors of higher education and soon became a model for the nation—a validation of the worth of empowering ordinary people through education.

The result was nothing short of revolutionary.

With eyes on Michigan, Congress passed and President Lincoln signed the Morrill Act of 1862—giving each state the means to establish a “land-grant” college. The first major legislation by the federal government to make higher education a public benefit, it resulted in heightening the quality of life and contributing value to society through the creation and dissemination of knowledge—advancing and transforming the nation’s well-being.

Nearly 150 years later, the United States faces vast new economic, social, and cultural changes and challenges as part of a global society—resource depletion, climate change, uneven distribution of economic assets and educational opportunities, poverty, and disease. And, once again, there is an urgent need to think about how higher education can meet these challenges and make a difference.

Although the needs have changed, the core values that are exemplified by our land-grant institutions—quality, connectivity, and inclusiveness—are more relevant than ever and are at the heart of our ability to respond to the challenges of our time.

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. This is the *World Grant Ideal*.

## The World Grant Ideal

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.

It is not so much a movement but a natural alliance of universities, each with distinctive strengths, recognizing their affinities and working in parallel—and together—to change the character and direction of higher education.

The *World Grant Ideal* is 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. And it recognizes that fundamental issues unfolding in one’s own backyard link directly to challenges occurring throughout the nation and the world.

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.

As partners aspiring toward the *World Grant Ideal*, research universities can knit together networks across the country and around the world that recognize the power of working collectively to define problems and priorities. Collaborating informally as a network of institutions with common values, universities pursuing the *World Grant Ideal* can offer models of how to work more effectively as agents 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 and include those who cannot be heard because of disadvantaged circumstances. 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.

## The Journey Continues

It is toward this vision that Michigan State University has been striving for more than 150 years, and others are encouraged 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.