

# THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

*Regents Communication*

Received by the Regents

January 21, 2010

## ACTION REQUEST

**Subject: Report of Faculty Death**

**Action Requested: Adoption of Memorial Statement**

The Regents of the University of Michigan acknowledge with profound sadness the death of **President Emeritus Robben Wright Fleming** on January 11, 2010, at the age of 93.


Robben Fleming was the University's ninth president, serving as president and professor of law from 1968 to 1978. With a background in labor law and expertise in dispute mediation, he had the ideal background and temperament to lead the University during this tumultuous period. With his friendly, forthright, open-minded approach, augmented by twinkling blue eyes, a disarming sense of humor, and a sincere desire to resolve conflicts in a manner satisfactory to all parties, he artfully diffused numerous potentially dangerous situations that arose during his presidency. President Fleming also will be remembered for having committed the University to set new and higher goals in its efforts to improve equal educational opportunity and access.

After stepping down from the presidency in 1978 to become president of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, he returned to the University of Michigan in 1982 as professor of law, retiring in 1985 as professor emeritus and president emeritus. Upon the resignation of President Shapiro in 1988, President Fleming graciously agreed to return once more, this time as interim president. During this period, he served not as a mere caretaker, but a leader, guiding the University through a trying year in terms of financial planning and in bringing closure to some difficult and long-standing social issues.

As the regents stated when they named the Administration Building in honor of Robben Fleming and his beloved wife and life partner Sally, "Robben W. Fleming led the University of Michigan for 11 years, through good times and bad, with caring and skill, sensitivity and humanity. ... Most of all, he brought to the University of Michigan a sense of values made concrete in the acts and choices of every day. Quietly, modestly, yet masterfully he articulated in his presidency the great goals of that process of education to which we are dedicated."

We mourn the loss of this beloved member of the University of Michigan family, and send our condolences to his children, Nancy Reckord, James Fleming, and Betsy DiMaggio, and his five grandchildren.

**Requested by:**

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
**Sally J. Churchill**  
Vice President and Secretary of the University

January 2010