# About Academic Outreach at the University of Michigan

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**Dean for Academic Outreach and Vice Provost for**

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The University of Michigan's libraries, its faculty and its expertise will soon reach out to a new group of learners around Michigan and the world through a program called Academic Outreach.

This new initiative, approved in February by the University's Board of Regents, is designed to serve people for whom existing programs are unsuitable or inconvenient, and has been made possible by the marriage of high-speed computer processors and data networks.

The concept of using these merging technologies to meet the changing educational needs of society is not so much a vision as an operational philosophy: The university recognizes that educational delivery must continue to expand beyond residential degree-oriented programs, and that we must be able to offer learning and knowledge wherever and whenever qualified people need them.

This effort will take many forms, some of which are still evolving with the technology. Certainly they will include:

- Distance learning, both for credit and not for credit, in a form more dependent on the Internet and other online networks than current endeavors.
- Development of multimedia texts, which will give our faculty a new outlet for publishing that combines words, pictures, sound and video to create truly interactive learning experiences.
- Forums for individuals on or off campus to do joint pre-competitive R&D, scientific research or artistic projects.
- Consulting teams focused on single subjects and linked digitally.
- Lifelong learning connections with an expanding university family, which includes students in K-12, alumni and the general public.

Already, Academic Outreach has launched some ambitious projects that include:

**U-M OnLine**: This recreation of the University environment in cyberspace is an attempt to build a virtual community of University alumni, friends, faculty, students and staff in a way not dependent on time or place. Loosely following the

business and operational models of commercial online providers, U-M OnLine combines basic Internet connectivity and services with unique University-related content. The largest number of potential participants in this program are University alumni around the world, more than 300,000 of them, whose ranks expand each year with new computer and Internet-literate graduates.

**U-M College Prep Program**: For years, many of the brightest high school students in the state have entered college ill prepared for the academic demands of major universities. Despite excellent grades, these students simply were never exposed to certain essential material and ideas. The deficiencies, in areas such as chemistry, biology, basic writing skills, math, computer skills, and library research skills can be addressed by many of the multimedia teaching modules created by University faculty or by ongoing, online tutorials. This program allows schools or parents to provide their high school age students with videotapes, audio tapes, CD-ROMs and Internet-based material that would improve their chances of getting into college and help insure their success once there.

These ideas all grow from a fundamental strategy for the university that's been laid down in recent years by University President James J. Duderstadt.

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      "I believe we must build a new relationship with our
students       and our graduates that will amount to a
commitment to provide       them with education through
their lives, President Duderstadt       wrote. Using an
array of devices ranging from short courses, to
distributed educational sites, to computer networks, we
should       develop programs capable of delivering
educational services to       our graduates whenever they
need it. In a sense, our alumni       should always remain
part of our organizational chart, just as       they are
always a part of the Michigan family.
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The need to provide a formal structure to help guide the University toward its future is what led to the appointment of Douglas E. Van Houweling to the recently created position of Dean for Academic Outreach. He will continue to hold the position of Vice Provost for Information Technology.

It's important to note that the Academic Outreach program will not supplant or direct the outreach offices and activities of the University's 19 colleges. Instead, it is designed to work with each college to identify new outreach opportunities, improve existing ones and be an agent for bringing together technology and educational ideas.

As the months progress, a clearer picture will emerge of exactly how the program will operate. Those operations will be shaped by the current needs of the University's deans and faculty, and they will evolve as those needs change.

One thing is certain, though, that everything Academic Outreach does will be designed to enhance the basic mission of the university to "serve the people of Michigan and the world through preeminence in creating, communicating, preserving and applying knowledge, art and academic values, and in developing leaders and citizens who will challenge the present and enrich the future."

For more information, contact the Academic Outreach Program at (313) 763-0191. Or visit our home page on the World Wide Web: http://www.outreach.umich.edu/.