

**Dr. Mary Sue Coleman**  
**Speaker and Honorary Degree Recipient for the Afternoon Commencement Exercises**

Dr. Coleman has served as president of the University of Michigan since 2002 and is the first woman to hold the position. Under her leadership, the university is undertaking a \$2.5-billion capital campaign for investment in scholarships, faculty and academic programs. She has also helped to establish partnerships between the University of Michigan and institutions in China and Japan, and fostered collaboration with Google to put the university's 7-million volume library online.

Dr. Coleman received her undergraduate degree in chemistry from Grinnell College and her doctorate in biochemistry from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. She specializes in research on the immune system and malignancies. She is a public policy expert on the impact of the lack of insurance.

She holds appointments at the University of Michigan as professor of biological chemistry in the Medical School and professor of chemistry in the College of Literature, Science and the Arts. Previous to UM, Coleman held teaching and administrative positions at the University of Kentucky, the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, the University of New Mexico, and the University of Iowa, where she served as president for seven years.

Dr. Coleman is regarded as a national spokesperson on the educational value of affirmative action and diverse perspectives. Before two critical Supreme Court rulings on diversity in admissions practices, she noted, "Most students coming to Michigan ... have never interacted with a person of another race in their schools or in their towns. We are in the process of introducing people to each other in a way we find enormously gratifying educationally."

Dr. Coleman is a member of the Institute of Medicine of the National Academy of Science, the American Association for the Advancement of Science, and the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. She has served on the boards of the American Council on Education, the Internet2, the NCAA, and the Association of American Universities.

**President Mary Sue Coleman**  
**University of Toledo Commencement Speech**  
**May 6, 2007**

When you tell people in Ann Arbor that you are heading south to Ohio to give a commencement address, their eyebrows go up a little.

So I assure them, “No, no, this is a friend, not a foe. Like Michigan, this university is gold and blue. This university has a rich history, a great engineering college, and remarkable students. And this university looks forward to beating Ohio State in football.”

This is the University of Toledo, and I want to thank President Jacobs and the Board of Trustees for extending me the honor of addressing the Class of 2007.

Graduates, I know it’s been hard work. The pride, the satisfaction and, yes, the relief you feel are richly deserved.

You thought this day was never going to arrive, and at the same time, it probably feels like you just began your studies.

This is a day to celebrate your many accomplishments as a Toledo student. But it is just as important a day for your families. Parents and grandparents, graduation is the proud culmination of your years of sacrifice, of love and caring. Your hair is a little grayer, your wallet a little lighter. But, hopefully, your spare bedroom will remain just that after today’s ceremonies.

Graduates, undoubtedly there were times you felt alone in your college career, but you always had the support of your family and friends. It’s important that we give credit to your loved ones for the honors you are receiving today. After all, your parents were your first teachers. Your earliest lessons came from them: Eat your vegetables. Wear your seatbelt. Watch those cell phone minutes.

Now, as you prepare to leave this point of your formal education, I have the privilege of passing on one final lesson, and it will reinforce what your parents undoubtedly told you a hundred times, either as encouragement or out of exasperation: Use your imagination!

The power of your imagination is going to be just as critical to you as the strength of the academic skills you have gained as University of Toledo students.

Imagine this: One hundred and ninety years ago, the chiefs of three American Indian tribes gathered not far from here, along the banks of the Maumee River. They signed a treaty granting some 640 acres of land for a fledgling college in Detroit, in hopes that their children might one day receive an education.

That land was the first gift to what would become known as the University of Michigan.

This connection to Toledo makes it all the more special for me, as the 13<sup>th</sup> president of Michigan, to be with you today.

Could the native tribes have imagined such a scenario, a university president returning from the school they helped establish, speaking to hundreds of exceptional college graduates who are moving forward to change our world?

That's the power of imagining the future.

As UT students, did you imagine that by the time you graduated, your alma mater would become Ohio's third-largest public university, with a medical school and a research portfolio designed to infuse this region with new ideas and new jobs?

With every push forward that the University of Toledo makes – and it is taking impressive steps – your diploma grows in prestige. As alumni, you can add to that luster with your own accomplishments. It is up to you – and your imagination – to determine just how bold those achievements will be.

You are entering a world unlike the one your parents knew. It's different even from the world of five years ago, when you were in high school. It is a place that is growing remarkably smaller, and more competitive, every day.

Thomas Friedman, the Pulitzer Prize-winning columnist for the *New York Times*, refers to this phenomenon as the flattening of the world. What he means is that we are more connected than ever.

This is his argument: We first became globalized when nations exercised their military might and built empires. Multinational corporations continued this shrinking of the globe by opening new markets, and seamlessly moving goods and services throughout the world. Today, because of staggering advances in technology, it is the individual – not a nation or a corporation – who has the power to single-handedly affect change.

Anyone, anywhere, can collaborate with – or compete against – someone else 6,000 miles away, and have an impact.

Friedman says this flat new world, “Makes it possible for so many more people to plug and play, and you are going to see every color of the human rainbow take part.”

That means you, as a strand in this human rainbow, must be absolutely fluorescent with your beliefs, your creativity, and your imagination.

So run for public office. Propose an impossible hypothesis – and collect the data to substantiate. Ask the hard questions or support a cause. Stand up for what you believe in, and for what is right.

Show the world you have a University of Toledo education with all the critical thinking that comes with it.

Twenty years ago, HIV/AIDS was a death sentence and AZT was just a collection of letters in the alphabet.

Fifteen years ago, a digitized book was unheard of. Ten years ago, the iPod did not exist. And five years ago, the human genome had yet to be fully mapped.

Research, technology and experimentation led to these advances. But imagination fueled them. Einstein said imagination is more important than knowledge. That tells me your imagination, combined with your UT experience, will be an unstoppable force for tomorrow.

As a college graduate, you have an obligation to create a better future. Society has invested in you as a student, and now awaits the return of your ideas and inventions. We are in dire need of great minds that are eager to collaborate and create to find solutions to problems that sometimes seem overwhelming — crises like global warming, terrorism, and racial intolerance. We absolutely need your passion, your creativity, your skepticism and your intelligence.

More than anything, we need your vision for a better world.

So imagine. Imagine a Midwest that is the envy of the country, with a robust biotechnology industry and high-tech firms built upon the manufacturing ethic that shaped us. Your university is helping to lead the way as a member of the Regional Growth Partnership for northwest Ohio. With nearly \$12 million in new money from the state, this partnership is enlisting entrepreneurs who are eager to re-energize and re-imagine the regional economy.

Imagine an America committed to adequate health care, full equality, and environmental stewardship. Picture second-to-none downtowns, healthy neighborhoods, and fully funded public schools. Your education carries with it the problem-solving we sorely need. The College of Arts and Sciences promotes creativity. University College embraces flexibility. These skills have never mattered more. And the College of Education's commitment to training science and math teachers for our urban schools will help this picture become reality.

Envision a more compassionate world, so that we may all say goodbye to disease, poverty and war.

Will it be hard? Yes. Will you sometimes fail? I can guarantee it. And yet all of this, and more, is possible, with your dedication, your collaboration, and your vision. The lessons you have learned, from your faculty and from each other, give you the knowledge and the confidence to approach both the opportunities and the threats of tomorrow.

As you walk away from the comfort and security of a campus you have known for years, something exciting awaits you — what Shakespeare called “life's uncertain voyage.”

Today you say goodbye, ready to take on the world and everything it will throw at you. As much as you plan, and prepare, and sketch the map of your future, you do not know what awaits you or what directions your life will take.

That is the promise of graduation. And that is the potential of imagination.

You are the University of Toledo, and you are the future.

Imagine that.