

Access, Affordability, and Excellence

An Interview with
Michael V. Drake, M.D., President, The Ohio State University



The iconic Oval at The Ohio State University campus in Columbus, Ohio

EDITORS' NOTE Dr. Michael V. Drake assumed his current post in June of 2014. From July 2005 to June 2014, Dr. Drake served as chancellor of the University of California, Irvine. He also served as a Distinguished Professor of Ophthalmology (School of Medicine) and Education (School of Education). Prior to serving as UC Irvine chancellor, Dr. Drake served for five years as vice president for health affairs for the University of California system. He also spent more than two decades on the faculty of the UC San



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Francisco School of Medicine, ultimately becoming the Steven P. Shearing Professor of Ophthalmology and senior associate dean. Dr. Drake is an alumnus of Stanford University (B.A.) and UC San Francisco (M.D.), and holds three honorary degrees. He is an elected member of both the National Academy of Medicine and the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and serves in leadership roles for the Association of American Universities, Association of Public and Land-grant Universities, American Talent Initiative, University Innovation Alliance, National Collegiate Athletic Association, and BIG 10. In 2015, Dr. Drake was appointed to the board of the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum, Inc.

INSTITUTION BRIEF For 147 years, The Ohio State University (osu.edu) has been the stage for academic achievement and a laboratory for innovation. The University's Columbus campus is one of America's largest and most comprehensive. As Ohio's best and one of the nation's top-20 public universities, Ohio State is further recognized as a top-rated academic medical center and a premier cancer hospital and research center. As a land-grant university, Ohio State has a physical presence throughout the state, with campuses and research centers located around Ohio.

When this opportunity presented itself, what made you feel it was the right fit?

I had a long career of working with people from Ohio State so I had great respect for its mission and people and the importance that Ohio State has in higher education broadly. I had a positive opinion of the university and its place in the world of higher education.

Second, I had been at the same connected series of institutions for a while and I had been very lucky and things had gone well, but I was excited to do something in a different place at a different

time. I also had wonderful conversations with people I would be working with at the university.

When you came in, how important was it to focus on taking the time to communicate your vision to those who had been there?

There was a great opportunity, but the challenge was to do things differently in order to help the university fulfill its potential. I felt there were things we could do that would allow us to be an even better example of ourselves. That required being able to envision what that would be and then being able to communicate with those who could help make it happen.

Will you describe the 2020 Vision, especially its focus around access, affordability, and excellence, which is such an issue today?

When we speak of access, affordability, and excellence, we mean all three at the same time. Our focus is to work every day to improve the excellence for our students and faculty to help them achieve their goals while broadening access and improving affordability for our students and families.

What efforts are you making in regard to diversity and inclusion, and do you need metrics in place to track those efforts?

When we speak of excellence, we mean inclusive excellence. Our universities – of all places – must welcome and celebrate all individuals, regardless of race, class, culture, orientation, or identity. In our labs and classrooms, diversity sparks innovation, strengthens cultural understanding, amplifies creative work, broadens scholarly benefits to society, and produces more competent workers and thinkers.

The Ohio State University has a significant role within the community. Why is that so important?

Ohio State is a land-grant public university founded to provide educational opportunity for the sons and daughters of those living across the state. Also, through research and discovery, our faculty and students develop and share knowledge to improve the quality of life for the community and region.

Connectivity and having a positive impact on the community are parts of our founding mission and are very important for us. Making an impact that our community can see and feel is critical.

Are you working on providing stronger opportunities for prospective students from lower- and middle-income families?

Yes. We all see that the most competitive and successful universities have programs to provide opportunities for students from the lower half of the income distribution. But we find those students are underrepresented for a variety of reasons. Through the American Talent Initiative, many universities are working together to try to help each other do a better job of attracting, retaining, and graduating these students, which is critical for the future of our country.

The University Innovation Alliance is another higher education initiative in which we are partnering with colleagues to make opportunities available for lower-income students and working together to increase retention and graduation rates.

These are parallel efforts and both are focused on helping more people reach their human potential.

What is the Comprehensive Energy Management Project?

We have entered into a partnership with ENGIE North America and Axium Infrastructure to lease our energy distribution systems, improve the sustainability of our campus, and support our academic mission. This public-private partnership will help us reach our long-term sustainability goals and represents the largest single investment in Ohio State's academic mission in our history.

Ohio State has a firm goal to improve energy efficiency by 25 percent over the next 10 years, which will reduce our carbon footprint, and our partners are incentivized through this agreement to ensure that we are more energy efficient.

The partnership also includes a series of provisions for internships and professorships, as well as additional areas in which the partners will invest. For instance, they will contribute \$50 million to an energy, sustainability, and innovation center so we will have a combined research and technology commercialization hub that we will build at Ohio State. They are also making an upfront payment that we can add to our endowment and use to support our academic mission broadly.

We live in a world where disruption is constantly taking place and jobs are going away. Is the educational experience being properly transformed to prepare young people for the careers of tomorrow?

The world is continually changing and, as an internationally significant university, we are competing globally for talent that is going to go out into that world. We have to prepare our students for a future that we can only imagine. ●