

Buckeye Nation

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



The seal of The Ohio State University on its campus in Columbus

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 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 (immediate past chair), Association of Public and Land-grant Universities (chair), American Talent Initiative, University Innovation Alliance, National Collegiate Athletic Association, and BIG 10 (chair elect). In 2015, Dr. Drake was appointed to the board of the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum.



Michael V. Drake

INSTITUTION BRIEF For 149 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 leading and one of the nation's top-20 public universities, Ohio State is further recognized for its top-rated academic medical center and a premier cancer research center. As a land-grant university, Ohio State has a physical presence throughout the state, with campuses and research centers across Ohio and an Extension program serving every county.

What have been the keys to The Ohio State University's success?

We have a very cohesive community – our staff, faculty and students – as well as the families that consider Ohio State part of their family tradition.

We're focused on creating opportunity and being the best that we can. Our last campaign was called "But for Ohio State." The way the sentence goes is, "But for Ohio State, I would not be able to..." If it were not for the university, I would not be who I am. Everyone's story was different, but they would all say, "But for Ohio State, my life wouldn't be what it is." We appreciate having that positive effect on people.

It's great to be a part of Buckeye nation.

How much does the issue of access and affordability to an education concern you and is the right dialogue occurring to address this issue?

It's very important to us. Access, affordability, and excellence are themes we speak of all the time. The value that our community feels reflects their Ohio State experience.

People are really excited to come here. We, as a public institution, know that Ohioans in particular can aspire to be Ohio State students or have their children come here, and that they can reasonably expect to afford it, and that the overall experience will be outstanding. It's our mission to make sure those things are true and make sure that there is enough need-based aid to make us even more affordable.

We have done a lot of outreach to all 88 counties in Ohio with a variety of programs that make us known, and that create a pathway for students, particularly first-generations or those who otherwise might not have a well-worn path to us.

These are things we think about all day, every day.

How critical is it within The Ohio State University to have an innovative approach to teaching and learning in order to prepare the next generation of leaders for the jobs of the future?

To remain relevant, a world leading university is required to be surfing the cutting edge of innovation all the time.

We have to have adaptability as part of our DNA and be able to see and prepare for, and help create, the future.

Recently, I talked with people about new ways to do the things we have been doing over the past decades and how to make them

better. We have been talking about planning the university and the community of today for the tomorrow of 2030. These are all things that are part of our mission.

Will you discuss how valuable it has been to have The Ohio State University College of Medicine as part of the school?

We are a comprehensive university and appreciate the opportunities that gives us. Medicine is a big part of our contribution to the community.

We do three things in the medical care arena: we're a medical college, so we educate the next generation of clinicians and medical scientists; we are a research university, so we work on developing solutions to today's problems so that we can help people here and beyond live more productive and fulfilling lives; and then we are a major provider of health services and healthcare for our community. This year we will have roughly two million patient encounters of one type or another, and those are a critical part of who we are as a university.

How important is the University's relationship to the city of Columbus and what do you view as The Ohio State University's role within the community?

We were founded as a land-grant university just under 150 years ago. It was a part of our founding mission to educate the sons and daughters of the people of this broader community in those disciplines that would allow them to contribute to the elevation of the quality of life of our region (and beyond) when they graduated. That is still part of our mission and we have tried to hold true to this every day.

The city has been a critical partner to us. If we are doing our work effectively, we are engaged with issues that matter to the city in ways that help it to be a better place to live; so we strive to remain very involved in the city.

We also feel very involved in the state of Ohio. We feel a kinship and are compelled to do what we can to improve and support the quality of life throughout Ohio.

Ultimately, we feel very much a part of the entire U.S. and, as a major national university, we believe our policies and procedures and those things that we are good at help to elevate the discourse among our colleagues nationwide.

This is our mission. It's who we are. ●