

## **Remarks by U-M president Mark Schlissel**

Oct. 31, 2014

Good afternoon and thank you for coming.

This morning I accepted the resignation of Athletic Director David Brandon.

Dave feels that it would be in the best interest of our student-athletes, the athletic department and the university community if he moved on to other challenges and allowed the important work of the department and university to continue without daily distractions. And I agree with this decision.

I have spoken regularly with Dave over the last few weeks, and we both want what is best for Michigan Athletics, which is to be able to pursue the highest levels of excellence in all aspects of our programs, to support our 931 student-athletes, and to enhance the strong bond that athletics has helped the University foster with our students, alumni, and fans.

I believe Dave has always had the best interests of the University of Michigan in his mind and his heart.

He is fiercely dedicated to all of our student-athletes, regardless of their sport or their background.

During his nearly 5 years as our AD, he worked to ensure their well-being and their academic and athletic success, with programs and facilities that helped them grow as individuals and teammates and to succeed as students.

For many years, Dave's commitment to Michigan has touched many other parts of the university as well.

He co-led the campaign that raised funds for the construction of the new C.S. Mott Children's Hospital, and he and his wife, Jan, personally donated \$2 million towards the creation of a neonatal intensive care unit. Dave has also provided support for the arts on campus, for student scholarships and for many other academic and educational priorities.

Dave also served on the Board of Regents from 1999-2006.

And of course Dave's first connection to U-M was as a student-athlete himself, when he played football under Coach Schembechler and earned his undergraduate degree.

There is no doubt that Dave loves the University of Michigan, and he wants to see us move forward and succeed.

I thank him for his long service and lifelong commitment to Michigan.

I have appointed Jim Hackett to serve as the interim director of athletics.

The interim appointment is effective immediately and would become formal with approval by the Board of Regents at their next meeting.

Jim is a highly experienced and respected business leader, a man of integrity, and a devoted member of our Michigan community.

He was a student-athlete and graduated from U of M in 1977.

From 1994 to 2013, he served as chief executive officer of Steelcase, Inc., the office furniture company based in Grand Rapids.

He led the company as it transitioned from traditional manufacturing to an innovative global company, and now brings that success and experience in heading a complex organization to his interim role here.

I am also very impressed with his interpersonal skills, and his longstanding commitment to serving the university.

Jim is on the board of trustees of Northwestern Mutual Life and the boards of directors of Ford Motor Company and Fifth Third Bancorp.

Perhaps more importantly, he currently serves on boards of advisors to U of M's Gerald R. Ford School of Public Policy and our Life Sciences Institute.

I am confident that Jim will immediately begin the process of moving the department forward, including working closely with me to develop a plan to identify and recruit Michigan's next permanent athletic director.

To our alumni and others in the Michigan family, I want you to know that we are working to establish the right balance between academics, the competitiveness of our athletic programs, their financial stability and the athletic traditions we hold dear.

To our students and student-athletes, I want you to know that the University of Michigan is behind you, always.

To our fans, I want you to know that we value your support, your input, and your spirit.

Recent events have only reinforced my belief that it is important to listen to and engage in dialogue with all of our stakeholders.

It is clear that Michigan Athletics helps unite us as a community.

It has an enormous reach, but I have seen first hand that the connections it fosters are deeply personal.

These connections cross state and national borders, they span decades, and they are shared up and down through the generations.

And the force that has this amazing power to join us together – the connective tissue if you will – is the heartstrings of the Michigan faithful.

At a recent Fireside Chat I had with students, a student in the crowd further illustrated this point for me.

She had lived in a major city in another state, but she could always count on hearing “Go Blue” when she walked down the street wearing her Michigan sweatshirt on a Saturday morning in the fall.

Those moments – those uniquely Michigan moments – take place because of our strong sense of community, and before I turn it over to Jim, I invite everyone in our community to help us as we begin a new chapter in the wonderful history of Michigan Athletics.

I hope we can join together as we move forward to preserve and enhance the qualities that make us truly special, for the ultimate benefit of Michigan Athletics, our students, and our great University.

Thank you very much.