

Margaret Ann Riecker

President Wilson-Oyelaran, it is my great honor to present to you Margaret Ann (“Ranny”) Riecker, who is widely recognized for her civic and philanthropic efforts.

Ranny heads one of the largest foundations in Michigan, the Herbert H. and Grace A. Dow Foundation, which was established in 1936 in memory of her grandfather who started The Dow Chemical Company. Ranny also serves as Chair of a second family foundation, the Harry A. and Margaret D. Towsley Foundation, named for her parents. These foundations have awarded over half a billion dollars to projects ranging from conserving 271,000 acres of land in the Upper Peninsula to health and human services in Midland. Her grandmother and mother began these institutions, so Ranny not only extends the generational thread of philanthropy, but also continues her family’s legacy of progressive, dedicated women.

Ranny is a strong supporter of higher education through her foundation roles and personal volunteer efforts. As an alumna and Trustee of Carleton College, she is dedicated to the philosophy of private, liberal arts education. Kalamazoo College has been fortunate to partner with her and the Dow and Towsley Foundations over the years. Ranny’s commitment to science education is exemplified in awards that supported construction of the Dow Science Center, a facility that serves our biology and chemistry programs with distinction, as well as through the establishment of two endowed professorships in the sciences, one of which I am honored to hold.

Additionally, Ranny served on the Board of Central Michigan University for 18 years. She also has an extensive history with the University of Michigan, where her parents received their undergraduate degrees and where her father attended medical school and embarked on a teaching career in pediatrics and post-graduate education. Ranny has held key leadership positions with the University, including on the President’s Advisory Group, the Leadership Council of the Center for the Education of Women, and the Gerald R. Ford School of Public Policy Committee.

Collaboration is one of Ranny’s hallmarks, and her ability to build relationships led her to become one of the founding members of the Council of Michigan Foundations, an association of grant making organizations working together to strengthen, promote, and increase philanthropy in Michigan. Public policy also is at the forefront of her interests, and, thus, she has been very active and effective in state and national political spheres. Through her involvement with the Ford School, as well as the Center for the Education of Women, she hopes that young leaders will be trained to use civility and problem-solving in governmental discourse.

To comprehend a need and to respond – this defines a leader. On this day, we commend Ranny Riecker for being an agent of change in our world.

Dr. Jan Tobochnik, *Herbert H. Dow II Distinguished Chair in the Natural Sciences*
Kalamazoo College Commencement, June 14, 2009