To the Members of the College Community:

I am taking the liberty of writing to all of our students, including our students abroad, as well as to all members of the faculty, faculty emeriti, and staff concerning our present plans for the renovation and expansion project of the Upjohn Library. It is the Board of Trustees’ present intention to move forward with the renovation of the existing library following the plans that have been laid out so carefully by Dean of the Libraries and Information Services Lisa Palchick. Advised by our architects and consultants, the College will close the present library building officially on Commencement Day 2004. The moving and/or removal of the houses on Academy and Bulkley Streets may precede the closing of the library itself. Because of recent modifications in the timetable, worked out between Vice President Ponto and our contractor Miller Davis, we now believe that the renovated and expanded Upjohn Library Commons will reopen in the early winter of 2006, well in advance of our previous estimates of the time necessary for the construction and for moving the collection and staff into the new facility.

Dealing with renovating and expanding library space is considered to be one of the most logistically difficult projects an academic institution can ever undertake. Learning and research do not come to a halt while an institution’s library must be closed in order to be improved. We will be relocating the library staff, the media staff, and the computer services staff into temporary offices on campus, primarily in Hicks. The portion of the library holdings used most often by members of the College community (approximately 70 percent of the present collection) will be available within a short turnaround. The least used 30 percent will be stored off campus and will not be available during the interim. Our colleagues at Western Michigan University have also agreed to be very cooperative with our faculty, staff, and students. Additionally, the resources of the InMICH consortium and traditional interlibrary loan services will continue to be available in order to meet individual needs of faculty, staff, and students.

It is our present intention to have well-lighted and secure study space available for the members of the student body in the Stone Room throughout the entire period of the library project.

In addition, we are aware of the importance of having community gathering spaces for our students, faculty, and staff on campus. Because the library will need to occupy the space that currently houses the Quadstop and the Daily Grind in Hicks Center during the construction period, we have tried to think creatively about how to nurture a sense of community, especially among our students, both in the short and long terms. In the short term, new gathering spaces have been designated in Hicks for use during the construction phase. These are the current President’s Dining Room and, when needed, the President’s Lounge. Among the long-term solutions is a new community gathering space being planned for the Upjohn Library Commons. The word “commons” was deliberately selected as part of the new facility’s name to underscore the fact that the library should be considered the center of the campus community.
All of us who have been involved in the planning stages for this considerable College project readily understand the inconvenience that the project will cause. That fact, however, cannot deter us from moving forward on what might well be the College’s most important capital project of this century.

I hope that each of you has been able to see the architects' renderings of the project as well as the model on display near the circulation desk of the library. The Upjohn Library Commons, when completed, will be a remarkable contribution to the life of the mind as that art is practiced here at our College for decades to come.

Yours sincerely,

James F. Jones, Jr.
President

C: Board of Trustees
Tim Casai, Architect, TMP Associates