

**Remarks of Senator John F. Kennedy University of Michigan,  
October 14, 1960, University of Michigan, Student Union  
Building Steps, Ann Arbor, Michigan, Date: October 14, 1960**

Transcript

I want to express my thanks to you, as a graduate of the Michigan of the East, Harvard University.

I come here tonight [static] ... but I am delighted to have the opportunity to say one or two words on this campaign which is now coming into the last three weeks.

I think in many ways it is the most important campaign since 193[? static], mostly because of the problems which press upon the United States, and the opportunities which will be presented to us in the 1960s. The opportunity must be seized. And the judgment of the President, the vigor of the executive, the cooperation of the Congress, through these I think we can make the greatest possible difference.

[Interpolation by broadcast announcer: He challenged the assembled students to work for the United States. And then he mentioned the fact that it was getting quite late and all should go to bed.]

How many of you who are going to be doctors, are willing to spend your days in Ghana? Technicians or engineers. How many of you are willing to work in the Foreign Service and spend your lives traveling around the world? On your willingness to do that, not merely to serve one year or two years in the service, but on your willingness to contribute part of your life to this country, I think will depend the answer whether a free society can compete. I think it can! And I think Americans are willing to contribute. But the effort must be far greater than we've ever made in the past.

And, therefore, I am delighted to come to Michigan, this university, because unless we have those resources in this school, unless you comprehend the nature of what is being asked of you this country can't possibly move through the next ten years in a period of relative strength.

So I come here tonight to go to bed! But I also come here tonight to ask you to join in the effort....

This university... this university... this is the longest short speech I've ever made and I'll, therefore, finish it! May I just say in conclusion,

that this college, this university, is not maintained by its alumni, by the state, merely to help its graduates have an economic advantage in the life struggle. There is certainly a greater purpose, and I'm sure you recognize it. And, therefore, I do not [apologize for? static] asking for your support in this campaign. I come here tonight asking your support for this country over the next decade.

Thank you.

(Note: Presidential Candidate John F. Kennedy arrived on the Ann Arbor campus of the University of Michigan in the early morning of October 14, 1960. In historic impromptu remarks on the steps of the Student Union he asked the assembled students, if they would be willing to volunteer in assisting underdeveloped foreign countries. This is now widely regarded as the beginning of what was to become one of President Kennedy's most enduring legacies, the Peace Corps.)