Winters in Michigan can be harsh. The temperature usually drops below freezing by Thanksgiving and rarely surpasses this threshold again until March. Storms sweeping across the Great Lakes can be ferocious. But more typically, a Michigan winter is wet and overcast. The phrase “good, gray Michigan” is apt. It is just the kind of season when one wants to stay at home and curl up in front of a warm fire.

Yet when students and faculty return to campus after the holiday season, the focus is on serious matters: classes, research, and artistic projects. Winter days are short with darkness falling by mid-afternoon, and while the Great Lakes moderate the temperature, Ann Arbor is usually wet with overcast skies. Winter sports provide some distraction, but trudging through the snow to a basketball game or hockey match on a bitterly cold night can be a challenge.

To students, the challenge is to make it to spring break and perhaps an escape to warmer climates. To the faculty and staff, winter is a time for the work necessary to sustain the University of Michigan’s reputation as one of the leading universities in the world.
Winter