



Office of the President

December 11, 2025

Ms. Jen Flood
State Budget Director
111 South Capitol
P.O. Box 30026
Lansing, MI 48909

Dear Director Flood,

For more than 130 years, Central Michigan University has been committed to meeting the needs of Michigan. When we opened our doors in 1892, we were educating and preparing the teachers and business leaders the state desperately needed. Today, we are proud to continue that legacy as we prepare leaders to serve in the state's highest-demand and fastest-growing workforce sectors, ranging from education and engineering to healthcare and cybersecurity.

More than 80% of the "Hot 50 Jobs" in Michigan require a bachelor's degree or higher, and more than 85% of Michigan counties are health professional shortage areas – those who need physicians, nurses, physician assistants and other providers whose work requires a degree. At CMU, we're proud to support the state's "60 by 30" goal. We are working to ensure every Michigan student has the chance to earn a degree, find meaningful work, and contribute back to their communities. In fact, it's our mission: *Central Michigan University is defined by the success of our students and alumni, and by our collective impact with the communities we serve.*

As one of only four public Opportunity Universities in Michigan, CMU provides Michigan students and their families access to an outstanding education at one of the state's lowest undergraduate tuition rates with one of the state's highest career outcomes rates. The Carnegie Classifications of Institutions of Higher Education selected only 16% of all colleges and universities nationwide to receive this "Higher Access, Higher Earnings" classification.

We welcome students from all of Michigan's 83 counties, and 98% of our full-time undergraduate students receive financial aid. We have made access and affordability key university priorities. We reach into rural and underserved communities, working alongside high schools and community colleges to ensure that all interested students can envision a path to degree attainment. We have substantially increased our partnerships with community colleges to improve the transfer process. For example, the first-of-its-kind "Central Bound" partnership with Lansing Community College allows students to enroll at both LCC and CMU simultaneously, with access to academic programs and key support services at both institutions for the entirety of their college journey.

And a CMU degree pays off for our graduates. 94.3% of our graduates are employed, pursuing additional education or engaged in military or service within six months of earning their degree, and CMU graduates earn 26% more than the national median salary within two years. CMU has strong existing partnerships, and is developing new relationships, with employers in key growth areas in Michigan to ensure our graduates are prepared for career success. For example, CMU and the CMU Research Corporation (CMURC) have launched a National Security Consortium, connecting students and faculty with organizations dedicated to strengthening national defense. Our academic programs engage alumni and business leaders in advisory councils, and we offer students access to dozens of career exploration and employer networking events annually.

CMU graduates don't just experience career success, they lead – in their fields and in their communities. CMU was one of only four Michigan institutions named as a “Best College for Future Leaders” by TIME Magazine. The Sarah R. Opperman Leadership Institute at CMU offers every student opportunities to discover and develop their leadership potential, and faculty and staff in every program provide mentoring, leadership development, career exploration and skill building experiences. Among our more than 252,000 alumni are more than 150 flag officers in the U.S. Military; numerous presidents and CEOs; local, state and national political leaders; successful entrepreneurs; non-profit leaders; and educators.

We are continuing to strengthen and grow academic programs that meet Michigan's greatest needs, and we are enhancing support services necessary for student success, such as career counseling, mental health services, physical healthcare, and academic support. All of this requires significant investment of resources, and CMU relies on the support of our state leaders to keep degree attainment accessible and affordable for students and their families.

Together with our peer institutions in the Michigan Association of State Universities, we are requesting continued support for higher education through ITEMS funding, increased appropriations for operations, and strengthening of the Michigan Achievement Scholarship program, which has been a boon for our students. In the attached document, we provide responses to your questions and additional information about efforts underway at CMU to strengthen career readiness and academic excellence.

We know that college provides significant individual and public benefits, ranging from greater wealth, improved health, increased civic engagement, and stronger communities. We appreciate your continued investment in improving access and affordability in Michigan higher education.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Neil MacKinnon", with a large, sweeping flourish extending from the end of the name.

Neil MacKinnon, Ph.D.
President

State Funding Considerations

1. In prior budgets, one-time funding has been allocated through ITEMS or temporary operations increases. What considerations guide your institution's approach to planning and utilizing one-time State funding?
 - a. Do you have recommendations for how the State should distribute one-time funding across universities? Are there alternative approaches beyond base operations increases that could better support institutional needs?

CMU appreciates all state support (base and one-time funding), and we utilize these funds to provide excellent educational opportunities for our students, as well as to develop the state's talent pipeline. Base funding increases are critical to provide stability to the institution with respect to ongoing operational commitments in collective bargaining agreements, and to lessen the direct impact of inflation on wages, benefits, and goods/supplies, which allow CMU to be an affordable educational provider for students, parents and supporters. We encourage the State of Michigan to provide a base operational increase in the upcoming budget cycle that integrates the most recent one-time payments into the operational base of the institution, and to provide additional base support to combat inflationary pressures, since tuition restraint language for the upcoming year has already been set before knowing the full impact of inflation.

One-time funding, such as ITEMS funding, provides flexibility in addressing the most pressing needs across our campus with intentionality; these needs typically focus in three main areas: deferred maintenance on structurally sound buildings and grounds, technology enhancements to benefit students, and safety enhancements such as security cameras and access controls. CMU has equipped nearly 40 buildings on our campus with access controls that allow the institution to lock down campus quickly in the case of an emergency. All residential and academic buildings will be completed by the end of this fiscal year.

The cost of maintaining and preserving our infrastructure continues to grow. Institutions like CMU that have been serving the state for more than 130 years have significant deferred maintenance costs. Creating an allocation method for one-time funding that recognizes unique differences among the public institutions would allow the state to invest in public infrastructure while also strengthening the state's economy through construction projects. Many CMU buildings have served the campus for more than 50 years. The buildings have been well maintained, are structurally sound, and function well. In some cases, mechanical and electrical systems are functioning successfully beyond their projected useful lives. The average age of our buildings is 48 years old, with a total anticipated deferred maintenance cost of \$343M.

Campus infrastructure includes our information systems and our campus network. CMU has made significant investments in our campus network thanks to one-time funding from university reserves and state funding. One of our biggest technological needs moving forward is a modern enterprise resource planning (ERP) software. Our current ERP system is at the end of its useful life, and a new solution will likely cost over \$50M. State support for large infrastructure purchases allows us to focus operational resources on students and keep college affordable.

One large capital infrastructure project that would greatly benefit our students is the approval of CMU's capital outlay project request to renovate Brooks Hall. This building serves all undergraduate students pursuing degrees in science and health-related programs. This renovation will upgrade the facility for modern teaching and learning standards, upgrade HVAC equipment for greater energy efficiency, and significantly reduce deferred maintenance throughout the facility. We urge the state to approve this project request, so students are well prepared for important careers of today, and the future.

Federal Changes for Higher Education

2. There are many changes for Higher Education on the federal level that have created uncertainty around the nation. The passage of H.R.1 introduces new federal accountability standards, expanded IPEDS reporting, and the Workforce Pell program.
 - a. How is your institution preparing for new federal performance and reporting requirements tied to completion, earnings, and loan outcomes? What challenges do you anticipate with expanded IPEDS data collection, and where could State data systems help?
 - b. Describe the impact of the creation of Workforce Pell has at your institution. Which of your certificate or short-term programs may qualify for Workforce Pell? What opportunities or challenges do you see in implementing it?
 - c. Outside of new State funding streams, are there state-level policy or budget mechanisms that the state of Michigan could adjust to help universities navigate federal changes?

CMU believes in accountability and was recently recognized as one of only four public institutions in the state to be classified as an Opportunity University by Carnegie. This designation recognizes the positive return on investment for a CMU degree, measuring our institution based on the access we provide to students and their expected career outcomes. This classification comes from sources including the National Center for Education Statistics Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (or IPEDS) and the U.S. Department of Education's College Scorecard, among others. Data reporting is very time consuming and any new reporting will create additional work and costs for the university. We believe balance is needed between additional reporting requirements and resources to fulfill such reporting requirements.

Data reporting relating to gainful employment and financial value transparency as well as new requirements such as the Admissions and Consumer Transparency Supplement (ACTS) survey have caused significant workload increases for many campus offices that are already running lean operations. The ACTS survey requires unit record level information about applicants, admits, and enrolled students at all levels (undergraduate, graduate, and medical students). We do not believe any state systems can assist with the new federal requirements, but we recommend being mindful of state reporting requirements, especially in light of growing federal requirements.

If CMU should have any programs in the future that are impacted by Workforce Pell requirements, we will need to ensure the programs meet the criteria for "in-demand jobs" and "employer needs." We would also need to complete calculations for credit hour to clock hours. In general, CMU's undergraduate certificates should qualify for clock hour conversions. CMU will continue to monitor these requirements as programs evolve and fulfill any requirements at that time.

Regarding state-level policy adjustments, we feel it would be helpful to reduce administrative hurdles within state aid programs. Michigan has many separate programs with varying regulations, eligibility rules, and required steps, which creates a significant administrative burden. Streamlining or aligning these processes would allow institutions to better manage the substantial federal aid processing and reporting changes already underway.

Student Enrollment and Supports

3. The Michigan Achievement Scholarship, established in 2023, awards an estimated 76% of public university students up to \$5,500 per year towards cost of attendance.
 - a. What trends, if any, have you seen in first-time enrollment from academic years 2024, 2025 and 2026?
 - b. How do you see the Michigan Achievement Scholarship impacting students on campus? As the first MAS cohort nears degree completion, what can you share about their academic progress and outcomes? Have you identified any emerging trends in completion rates among these students?

CMU greatly appreciates the state's commitment to students and families with the ongoing support of the Michigan Achievement Scholarship. This initiative has improved overall access to higher education and positively impacted Michigan residents and their families by making college more affordable. This initiative has also assisted in mitigating declines in Michigan's college-going rate, which will have positive lifelong effects for recipients. CMU experienced growth in the number of students who were eligible for the Michigan Achievement Scholarship in academic years 2024, 2025, and 2026. Nearly 900 new entering students received the scholarship in academic year 2024, and just over 1,200 new entering students received the scholarship in academic years 2025 and 2026.

While it is too early to share data on completion rates among these students, CMU's retention rates have increased for first-to-second year students and second-to-third year students. This is likely due in part to the Michigan Achievement Scholarship, as well as enhanced student support systems we have invested in over the past few years, such as proactive academic advising, career development services and mental health services. We anticipate that students receiving the Michigan Achievement Scholarship will also have lower student loan debt upon graduation. CMU has seen the positive impact of the Michigan Achievement Scholarship and recommends the continuation of the program moving forward as well as incremental annual adjustments to the scholarship amounts to assist in keeping up with overall inflation.

Five Year Plans

Higher education institutions are constantly evolving to meet the needs of current and future students, employers, and the communities we serve. While the number of high school graduates in Michigan continues to decline based on demographic data, research studies regarding future job requirements reflect that the percentage of jobs that require a bachelor's degree or higher will continue to grow over the next five years.

CMU is uniquely positioned to serve adult learners well, with a long history of doing so, and we continue to see enrollment growth within this student population. We continue to develop relevant academic

programs, certificates, and professional development offerings for online delivery to meet adult learners where they live and work.

CMU recently signed a first-of-its-kind agreement with Lansing Community College to establish a dual-admission and co-enrollment agreement named *Central Bound*, where students will benefit from coordinated advising, shared resources, and the full support of both institutions. CMU recently secured a State of Michigan grant to expand the Central Bound program to additional community colleges, and we look forward to being an educational partner of choice in many geographic areas across the state. We believe in making undergraduate degrees accessible for learners that are place bound due to other commitments, and we are dedicated to supporting them as their careers and educational needs change.

CMU also launched the *Fire Up! Forward* initiative for high school students, which complements dual enrollment coursework offered by community colleges. Instead of offering entry-level general education courses as dual enrollment options, *Fire Up! Forward* provides high school students with an opportunity to engage in coursework that introduces them to a discipline not offered through community colleges. These are introductory courses in disciplines like nutrition and dietetics, athletic training, fashion design, and many others. This unique program aims to spark intellectual curiosity, increase the overall number of students that choose to attend higher education in Michigan, and has an end goal of recruiting students to CMU upon graduation.

Higher education transforms lives, and college degree holders enjoy significantly higher lifetime earnings, improved health outcomes, lower rates of unemployment, and increased career satisfaction, among other benefits, and they are more likely to be engaged in their communities as volunteers and philanthropists. CMU is proud to be part of this transformational mission for Michigan residents and continues to be committed as a strong partner with the State of Michigan in achieving its 60 by 30 goal.