

Board of Trustees

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

September 22, 2022

Thank you, Chair Studley.

Before I begin my report, I would like to officially welcome two new CMU leaders into our community. Dr. Nancy Mathews joined CMU as our new provost and executive vice president on August 1. Dr. Renee' Watson also joined CMU August 1; she became CMU's vice president for student affairs.

Both leaders have already demonstrated a strong commitment to our students, faculty and staff. They have shown themselves to be interested, accessible leaders, asking questions and truly listening to others. They have shown a willingness to make difficult decisions in compassionate ways. I know they will help to guide our university forward in new and exciting ways.

Welcome, Dr. Mathews and Dr. Watson.

I also want to acknowledge another outstanding CMU leader who is stepping into a new role. Jennifer Cotter has been a vital member of CMU's Advancement team for 16 years and is currently our executive director of development. Her leadership and passion for CMU are evident, and I am pleased to announce that she has agreed to serve as CMU's interim vice president for advancement.

Jenn, thank you for your continued work to grow our university's culture of philanthropy.

I also wish to recognize Marcie Otteman, our executive director of alumni relations and constituent engagement. Over the past year, she has worked tirelessly alongside Jenn Cotter to co-lead our advancement and alumni efforts. This was a tremendous undertaking, yet she approached it with the same enthusiasm and Fired-Up Attitude she demonstrates in everything she does. She is truly the heart and soul of our outreach efforts.

Marcie, we are grateful for all you do. Thank you for your continued leadership and passion for CMU.

Now, I am thrilled to begin this report with some good news about enrollment. As I shared with our faculty and staff during the first week of classes, this year, for the first time since 2014, CMU

welcomed a larger incoming class than last year. Compared to this time last year, preliminary statistics show that we welcomed:

- 2,029 new first-year students, an increase of approximately 6%
- 838 new transfer students, an increase of nearly 8%
- 1,191 new graduate students, an increase of 42%

It is important to note that these figures not only represent a year-over-year increase, they also are significant jumps when you consider the magnitude of prior year-over-year declines. Enrollment rates for new students had been declining at rates of more than 8%, and sometimes as high as 16%, over the past three years. Therefore, this year's increase represents an incredible leap forward for CMU.

Within our first-year students, there was an increase both in the numbers of students from Michigan and in the number of Black, Indigenous and Students of Color. We also welcomed one of our largest groups of international students, around 600 new students joining us from nearly two dozen countries; this is the largest increase in international students in over a decade.

And these are outstanding students. CMU did not lower our standards to increase enrollment; instead, we pursued intelligent, service-oriented scholars and leaders who are FIRED UP about their academic goals. You can feel their energy on our campus — they are excited to be here, and we are honored they chose our university as their academic home.

As we rebuild our classes this year, overall enrollment remains lower – but only by about 5.6%. Compared to the overall enrollment declines of the past, which ranged between 10% and 11% over the past three years, this is considerable progress. And, while enrollment numbers will not be finalized and reported until later this semester, they provide the good news we have all been hoping to hear: Our efforts are making a difference.

Over the past few years, we have undertaken a university-wide effort to turn around our enrollment trends. All of us have played a role in our efforts to reach out to prospective students and their families and to welcome them into our community of scholars and leaders. Some made personal phone calls or sent personal emails to students. Some attended recruitment and outreach events, like the Maroon and Gold dinners and our CMU & You Days. Some helped to promote the university on their social media and within their networks of friends, neighbors and colleagues.

And all of us worked together to ensure that CMU's reputation for excellence continued to grow, in the classroom and through our co-curricular activities and student services. Please know that your passion, dedication and hard work are making a difference for our university. Thank you for all you continue to do.

I would like to add a special note of appreciation for our staff on the student recruitment and retention, admissions, and communications and marketing teams.

Innovation and excellence are core values at CMU, and these teams set the leadership standard for modeling those values this year. Many of our outreach and recruitment practices were out of date. Instead of simply “doing what we've always done” and continuing to watch our enrollment dwindle, our staff chose to innovate. They chose to embrace new technologies and new ways of communicating with prospective students and families. They adopted a new communication

platform, called Slate, which allows CMU to communicate more personally and frequently with prospective students.

They reached into new communities to recruit students, and held new, more personal events to engage them. They “leaned in” to social media to meet students where they go to research schools. They pursued new, creative approaches to our brand and marketing materials, leading to increased brand recall among our target audiences, increased favorability among students and their parents, and the third-largest applicant pool in the state of Michigan. And, importantly, they engaged our entire university community in these efforts so that each of us could play a meaningful role in this endeavor. They chose to pursue excellence, and we are seeing the results of their determination.

As a campus, we took on an audacious challenge and, at times, it felt like we were trying to turn around a cargo liner in a canal – we all remember what that looked like. Yet, as a university community, we did it. Please join me in recognizing these teams and our university-wide efforts on this significant accomplishment.

As we celebrate this success, we already are looking ahead to next year. We will not waste the momentum we have achieved — we are building upon it now. Already this year, we are seeing more applications coming in than at the same time last year. We are launching a new fall marketing campaign and preparing for strong outreach to prospective students during Michigan’s free college application month in October.

Earlier this month, we hosted a large, exciting CMU & You Day for prospective students and their families. Nearly 2,000 people joined us on campus for activities including academic program and student service events, student panel discussions, and the football game.

During that same weekend, we hosted our annual Family and Friends Weekend. Hundreds of current CMU parents, supporters and families joined us in Kelly/Shorts Stadium to cheer on our student-athletes as they soundly defeated Bucknell. It was amazing to see them sitting in the stands with their students and wearing maroon and gold!

Our incredible campus is our strongest recruiting tool. I am grateful to the maintenance, facilities and custodial staff who keep it beautiful, and I thank all the faculty, staff and students who contributed to giving a Fired-Up welcome to our visitors and future CMU Chippewas.

We also are engaging our graduates in exciting ways. Last week, to commemorate CMU’s 130th anniversary, we invited our university stakeholders to make a gift in support of our students, support services and academic programs. More than 1,400 Fired Up supporters made a gift, raising \$430,199 for initiatives including the Sarah R. Opperman Leadership Institute, the Student Food Pantry, our Ignite First Generation Student Scholarship fund and the Finish Up Chips scholarship. This was our largest-ever giving week at CMU, and the funds raised will have a direct and immediate impact on students this academic year.

At CMU, we lift each other up. In this campaign, our alumni, donors and friends chose to reach out to lift up our students in truly transformational ways. We are fortunate to have their passionate support.

We are seeing positive momentum in enrollment and in philanthropic support; we also are growing in reputation.

CMU was also once again included in US News and World Report's "Best National University Rankings" and in the organizations' "Best-of" lists for our programs in undergraduate business, computer science and engineering.

There has been a great deal of conversation among higher education leaders about the relevance and importance of these rankings, yet we know they remain an important consideration for many prospective students and their families. Among Michigan's public universities, CMU ranked fourth behind University of Michigan Ann Arbor, Michigan State and Michigan Tech. We are proud to be in elite company among our state's finest institutions.

In addition, this year was the first time CMU has been included in the QS World University Rankings. This is one of three major international university ranking systems. It takes into consideration factors such as academic peer review, citations per faculty, employer reputation and more. It is a major step forward for our university, and I commend our faculty for their efforts to create and share new knowledge that makes an impact worldwide.

Earlier this week, the International Festivals and Events Association awarded CMU the Gold Pinnacle Award for Best Event Management Bachelor's Degree — for the second time. Students in the event management program gain tremendous real-world experience planning, organizing and executing a wide range of events during their years at CMU. They graduate ready to lead in this dynamic, exciting field.

Event management alumni are working in great careers around the world, showcasing the skills, knowledge and experience they gained here at CMU. It is no wonder we're No. 1 yet again. Congratulations to the students and staff in the Recreation and Event Management program on this wonderful accolade.

We will continue to climb in these rankings, and others, and grow the reputation of our institution as we continue to pursue rigor, relevance and excellence in all we do.

We are on an exciting path, and our continued success will require us to carefully examine the goals, objectives and operations of our institution.

Central Michigan University was established 130 years ago to meet Michigan's need for teachers and business leaders. Over the course of many decades, the needs of our state — and the needs of our students — have changed. The great tradition of our institution has been the ability to adapt to meet those needs.

Over the past several years, we have made a concerted effort to adapt to these changes and to take bold steps to rethink how we pursue our threefold mission of education, research and scholarly activity, and service.

As an example, we discussed in yesterday's health care committee meeting that we must expand offerings in our opportunities for health care professionals. Following meetings with stakeholders throughout the state, we have identified several opportunities, including increasing the cohort size of our physical therapy and physician assistant programs, and expanding our nursing program to include a four-year residential degree program.

Work to clarify the feasibility of these steps is underway, and we will report back on our progress as we move forward.

Our work does not end there. Our current strategic plan, Advancing Excellence, will expire at the end of this year, and this is an ideal time to reflect on our vision, mission, values and strategic plan.

Since 2019, we have been laying the groundwork for this new plan with our Strategic Envisioning Process. The five pathways we established through that process have already led us to make exciting changes to our operations, including the establishment of CMU Innovation and Online. Now, we can build upon the excellent work already in progress as we develop a new strategic plan to lead CMU forward over the next five years.

Our Trustees have charged us to think boldly and creatively, and to set SMART goals for our university community – goals that are specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and, importantly, time-bound — and that will distinguish and differentiate CMU. We will rely on the same model of Strategic Design Thinking that has guided us over the past three years, and we will build upon the work already underway in our five strategic pathways.

And, in the weeks ahead, we will engage our university stakeholders — including students, faculty, staff, alumni, community partners, donors, legislators and more — in the development of our strategic goals and tactics. We will provide updates on our progress in each of the upcoming Board of Trustee meetings, with the goal of presenting the new strategic plan in June.

As part of this work, we will continue efforts to improve diversity, equity and inclusion within our university community. This effort, led by Dr. Shawna Patterson-Stephens will lead to specific recommendations for action and assist in the development of goals, strategies and tactics for CMU's multi-year Diversity Strategic Plan. Beginning in October, our community members will have the opportunity to hear more about their work already in progress and to provide feedback.

There is a great deal of work being done. It is vital work that will empower CMU and the members of this community to achieve incredible outcomes. An undertaking of this magnitude would not be possible without the right team.

Every day, I am grateful for the passion, dedication and determination of our faculty and staff, and the enthusiasm and commitment of our students. This month marks my fourth anniversary as CMU's president. I have been reflecting on the journey we have taken together since 2018 — all the challenges we have faced and the obstacles we have overcome, as well as the achievements we have celebrated.

As I close my remarks today, please allow me to say thank you to this outstanding community of learners and leaders. It is an honor and a privilege to continue to serve you.

Chair Studley, this concludes my report.