



February 13, 2020

Thank you, Chair Keith, and good morning trustees, faculty, staff, students and guests.

Only six weeks have passed since we resumed classes for the spring semester, but much has happened in that short period of time.

I am delighted to announce that we have just selected the first recipients of the President's and Provost's Fund for Program Innovation and Excellence. A list of the selected projects has been posted today on the Office of the Provost website.

I'd like to thank everyone who submitted a project for consideration. We were very pleased with both the quality and quantity of the proposals submitted — it made choosing among them very challenging.

Together with the Council of Deans, we reviewed more than 60 project proposals requesting more than \$13 million in support. We evaluated them on criteria including alignment with the five strategic pathways; emphasis on rigor, relevance and excellence; enhancing student experiences; opportunity for interdisciplinary collaboration; and more.

I strongly believe that the projects we have selected are transformational and will make a significant contribution to our mission and improve our ability to serve our students now and in the years ahead. I look forward to hearing from our award recipients as they begin work on these exciting initiatives.

Since our last meeting, we have also announced the formation of working groups that will address each of the five strategic pathways in our ongoing Strategic Envisioning Process. Nearly 100 faculty, staff, students, alumni, trustees and community members have agreed to serve on these committees, and I am grateful for the enthusiasm and energy they are bringing to this process.

Earlier this week, we held a strategic thinking workshop designed to help us broaden our thinking about the ways higher education can better serve the changing needs of our current and future students. I'd like to thank our partners from EAB and the co-conveners, steering committee, board and cabinet members who attended the workshop and began the bold thinking and collaboration we'll need to propel our strategic envisioning process forward.

As I have said before, this is not going to be a traditional strategic planning process. We are not making incremental, transactional changes to past plans. We are looking for ways to truly inspire innovation that will improve our quality, build our reputation and position CMU for success in all dimensions.

We are seeking bold and ambitious ways to support growth in our research, scholarship and creative endeavors. We are developing new ways to reach beyond the boundaries of our campus to engage business, government, nonprofit and other community partners.

And, importantly, we are building upon our financial stability and resources to achieve our goals.

All of our strategic pathway working groups have been meeting and several are beginning to seek input from divisions and departments around the university. We launched a new website for the process to ensure we are transparent in our work and to enable all stakeholders to easily participate.

We will be informed throughout our process by our market research. We have received some preliminary data from SimpsonScarborough, and I look forward to sharing full results with you at our April meeting.

One of the findings we'll discuss at length in the months ahead deals with career-readiness. Our research shows that our prospective students and their parents rank strong job placement rates highest among the attributes they want from a college or university. This is not a surprise: The most recent national Strada-Gallup Education Consumer Survey found that job and career outcomes are **the main reasons** Americans choose to pursue higher education.

Our strategic pathways are interrelated and interconnected. They will build on our strengths and ensure we are differentiating our institution.

Career preparation is something we do here at CMU every day, **and we do it well.**

This afternoon, hundreds of CMU students will work alongside professional mentors in McGuirk Arena as they compete in our annual ERPsim competition. They're building important technical skills and developing vital professional skills such as teamwork, communication, leadership and problem-solving. By the end of the day, some of them will have offers for internships. Some will be offered full-time jobs. Many more will receive offers from participating companies before graduation.

Consider the opportunities CMU provides students in our health professions programs: They now are able to learn, train and practice in interdisciplinary teams in our newly expanded Health Professions Building. They are using the newest equipment in cutting-edge facilities, supervised by faculty who are experts in their fields. CMU is the best place to train for the fastest-growing health careers, and we are preparing them to make a tremendous difference for their future patients in Michigan and beyond.

In health care — and in every field — we know that employers highly value employees with both depth of knowledge and breadth of experience.

That is why we launched the CMU Gold Path this fall: to help students identify and track the important skills they develop in class and through their extracurricular and cocurricular involvements. Our students can demonstrate important technical skills, and now they also can articulate how they have developed the professional skills employers want most.

Over the past two years, our Career Development Center has transformed its services, allowing students to begin exploring career possibilities from the moment they enroll at CMU. The center offers skill and interest assessments, mock interview practice, resume workshops, and individual career coaching. Students can even receive free professional clothing from the First Impressions store in the University Center to make sure they look as career-ready in person as they do on paper.

We have great stories to tell about the many ways we prepare students for success, in their professional lives as well as in their personal lives. CMU faculty and staff do far more than simply help students land great jobs; they also provide invaluable guidance and support through life's challenges.

Students nationwide increasingly report feeling nervous, anxious, overwhelmed and even depressed. College can be stressful, and that stress is magnified when students face challenges meeting their basic needs.

In 2019, CMU distributed more than \$150,000 in financial support through our Student Emergency Fund and supplied thousands of pounds of food through the Student Food Pantry.

Last month, we launched two new initiatives to assist students struggling with food insecurity: a meal swipe program and a \$1 meal program. These ideas came from a collaboration of our university ombudsperson; students; and staff from our Volunteer Center, Student Food Pantry, Residence Life and Auxiliary Services. To date, more than 470 students have received a block of free meal swipes, and we now offer \$1 meals in the Down Under Food Court twice a week.

We also are taking additional steps to address student mental health. In January, we worked with the Academic Senate to move forward a proposal for a fall wellness break for students. We will work with faculty and staff to set the dates for a short break in the month of October and look forward to sharing the dates with you soon.

We continue to look for innovative ways to support our students' health and well-being. I appreciate our community's commitment to helping them succeed on their personal and educational journeys at CMU.

Now, I'd like to take a moment to recognize some outstanding students, faculty and staff.

First, I'd like to recognize the work of graduate student **Julio Velasco** and the staff of the **Multicultural Academic Student Services** office for events they orchestrated to celebrate Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. The annual CommUNITY Peace Brunch, march and vigil brought together hundreds of students, faculty, staff and community members. It was a much-needed reminder of how powerful we are when we stand together to honor diversity and inclusion. Thank you, Julio.

Next, I'd like to spotlight a group of students and faculty whose passion for sustainability led to positive outcomes for our community.

Last November, students **Eric Urbaniak** and **Magkena Szemak** and their faculty advisor, **Rebecca Uzarski** partnered with our neighbors from the Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe to address food waste. They began a food recovery project at the Andahwod Elder Care Center that has diverted more than 6,000 pounds of food waste away from landfills through a partnership with a regional composting company.

Eric and Magkena worked with students at the Tribal College and reported on their project's success to the Tribal Council. This project had a wonderful cultural exchange component that is equal in importance to its positive impact on our environment.

At this time, I'd like to present Eric, Magkena and Dr. Uzarski with a small gift in recognition of their work. The shirts, embroidered with "CMU Sustainability," are a token of our thanks for your leadership.

We talk often about the importance of hands-on learning, and several of our faculty are empowering their students to build their skills *and* their resumes.

Heather Trommer-Beardslee, artistic director of the University Theatre Dance Company, and **Steve Berglund**, chair of the Department of Theatre and Dance, took eight students to Japan in December to perform alongside world-renowned dance company Masashi Action Machine. The group spent months developing choreography and rehearsing for the performance in Nagoya. Our students can now add international dance performance to their resumes. Congratulations and thank you!

Amy Carpenter Ford, who coordinates clinical experiences for CMU's aspiring teachers, sent 100 CMU student writing coaches into elementary school classrooms around mid-Michigan last fall. By helping children develop their writing skills, our students get phenomenal classroom experience, preparing them for their future roles as teachers. Thank you, Dr. Ford, for helping students apply their knowledge in these real-world settings!

We are beginning 2020 with a renewed commitment to rigor, relevance and excellence in all we do at CMU. I believe the year ahead will be exciting and productive, and I look forward to sharing our continued progress with you in April.

Chair Keith, this concludes my report.