



April 16, 2020

Thank you, Chair Keith. Good morning trustees, faculty, staff, students and guests. I appreciate you joining us, even in this unusual manner, to be a part of the conversation about the great things happening at Central Michigan University.

While we have all said it too many times to count, it bears repeating that we are operating in unprecedented times. I have worked in higher education for nearly three decades, and nothing before has impacted the ways we learn, work and live in this way.

This has been a bumpy road to navigate, and we have made mistakes and learned lessons along the way. In situations such as this, there is no such thing as a perfect solution, but I believe our university community has done an incredible job of meeting the challenges head on and moving forward together.

I'd like to begin my report today by expressing gratitude to the people who have made it possible for CMU to remain open and mission-focused.

First, I want to acknowledge the tireless work of the Emergency Management group, which meets daily to guide CMU's response and address new challenges.

Every day, we are faced with new information and new issues. This group of leaders, representing every division of the university, makes decisions based on our overall focus to keep CMU open and operational. To do this, there are four key objectives: 1) to slow the spread of COVID-19 and do our part to flatten the curve; 2) Keep our community healthy and safe; 3) support the academic pursuits of our students; and 4) support our faculty, staff, students and our greater community as best as possible. This works and each decision is based on facts and information available at the time and communicated as effectively as possible.

Thank you all for continuing this important, excellent work.

I'd like to thank our faculty, who, with only a few days' notice, shifted to remote-only instruction to keep serving our students. Some went into this new modality with prior experience, some began working in the online environment for the first time. They have supported one another, shared tips and tools, and made extraordinary efforts to ensure their students' success.

I want to express my gratitude to our staff, who have been working long hours, some on campus but most remotely, to keep CMU moving forward. They ensure that CMU continues to be the most student-focused university in our state. Thank you for all that you do.

And, finally, I want to acknowledge our students, especially our seniors. Nothing about this semester has gone according to your plans, and yet you have persevered. You have shown that you are resilient and strong. I am proud of you and inspired by you.

I would be remiss if I did not also acknowledge our wonderful alumni and friends.

Since the crisis began, our alumni and supporters have contributed more than \$36,000 to the Student Emergency Fund to provide help for students who have been hardest hit. In the past month alone, we have distributed nearly \$70,000 to students in need.

We know this support will be needed more than ever in the weeks and months ahead, and we are grateful to our financial supporters for their help during this challenging time.

In my investiture remarks last year, I told you I had finally come to understand the meaning of the phrase “Fire Up Chips!” Today, it seems apropos to reflect on those words:

They are a clarion call to action, pushing us to step beyond our comfort zones so we can reach our full potential and rise together to meet challenges head on. Those three simple words sum up the spirit of this great university.

In the past 30 days, our community has come together in extraordinary ways. We have seen our friends, colleagues and fellow students rise up to meet challenges head-on. It is often said that times of adversity reveal true character, and I am proud of what these past weeks have revealed about CMU.

I would like to ask the members of this board to join me now in thanking the CMU community for their outstanding efforts and character.

We have made many changes in recent weeks to adapt to the governor’s “Stay Home, Stay Safe,” order, which was extended last week. We are doing everything possible to flatten the curve and prevent the spread of coronavirus.

At present, only about 260 students remain living in our residence halls and campus apartments. We have established a phased move-out plan, which will begin when the executive order expires, to allow students to safely return to campus to collect their belongings.

We extended remote and online-only classes through the Summer I session and have canceled or postponed all on-campus events through June 25. We will continue to monitor this situation and proactively plan for multiple scenarios, including an extension or loosening of the executive order.

This means we have had to postpone plans for our May commencement ceremonies. This was deeply disappointing for our graduating students — and for me. We continue to look for ways to celebrate their accomplishments and achievements and hope to hold a rescheduled ceremony the weekend of Aug. 15.

In every decision, our core values guide our path forward. Every choice is examined through the lens of our educational mission; our Leadership Standards; and our commitment to compassion, respect, excellence and innovation. Our goal of serving students remains priority No. 1.

We know COVID-19 is likely to change the way students feel about their ability to pursue higher education. A recent Strada poll found that roughly 60% of Americans have lost jobs, hours or income as a result of the ongoing crisis, and that will almost certainly affect how students feel about planning and paying for college. It is now more important than ever to keep education affordable and within reach for families.

Later in this meeting, we will bring forward proposals for tuition rates and creative payment options that are consistent with our culture of caring for students and our institutional values. We also propose offering guaranteed campus employment to any interested first-year student who wishes to work while attending classes, and we will work with our local business and community partners to develop additional employment opportunities for students.

We have initiated deferred payment and flexible payment plans, and we are not assessing late fees that would prevent current students from enrolling in classes for future semesters. These measures are designed to provide financial relief, a sense of security and added stability for our students and their families as they plan and pay for college. We have also implemented policies and procedures that act as an academic safety net for our students during these times. These policies give the students the ability, for example, to change courses from graded to “credit/no credit” or to withdraw at the end of the semester.

We must do — and will do — everything we can to keep CMU within reach for our current and future students. We continue to analyze opportunities to further our student-centered approach through our Strategic Envisioning process, and I look forward to sharing those elements in the near future.

It’s important to note that, while we have indeed faced challenges, we also experienced great success. I’d like to take a moment to highlight some of the outstanding work of our students, faculty and staff.

- Many of you have seen the video of the CMU MakerBot in action creating masks for health care workers or the story of our [Center for Merchandising and Design Technology](#) team sewing cloth masks. With the expertise of our faculty, CMU is leveraging our tools and technology to help during this crisis.

- Students from the College of Medicine have been volunteering in a variety of ways: assisting at [screening and testing sites](#), volunteering with local hospitals, and working remotely to call on patients and assist with medical charts.
- Faculty, students and [alumni from the College of Education and Human Services](#) are helping teachers around the state with webinars, tips and tools for teaching in the new remote learning environment.

Everywhere you look, there are CMU Chippewas making a difference in communities impacted by COVID-19.

There's also great news on the academic front.

Once again, CMU students are being recognized for excellence on the national and international stages.

- Two seniors in the College of Business Administration became the first from CMU to win a [prestigious international finance competition](#). They were also the first team of only two people to ever win the competition. Jake Aymen and Eric Scott, both members of the CMU Michigan Finance Scholars program, beat more than 10,000 participants from more than 200 schools worldwide to win the National Investment Banking Competition of Canada.
- [Austin Konkell](#), a junior math major from Warren, Michigan, recently received a Goldwater Scholarship, becoming only the third student from CMU to win such a prestigious award. When asked about his plans for the future, Austin said he hopes to become a caring university professor like those he's had at CMU. Congratulations on this outstanding achievement.
- [Meghan Dyer](#), a senior majoring in secondary English education, and Anastasia Bjork, a senior majoring in health administration, have been awarded Fulbright awards. When it is safe to travel, Meghan will head to India, and Anastasia will go to Finland. These two honors students will be wonderful ambassadors of CMU abroad. Please join me in congratulating them both.

We also celebrated success with our fourth-year medical students at [this year's Match Day](#). It wasn't quite the ceremony we've held in the past, but we were able to gather virtually as our students opened their envelopes and celebrated their next steps. Nearly half will remain in Michigan to complete their residencies, and 75% matched with primary care programs. Three even matched into military residencies. This is truly news to celebrate – congratulations to all our future physicians.

Leadership remains central at CMU.

Jake Hendricks and Lyndi Rose have served as our Student Government Association president and vice president for two years. They have demonstrated incredible leadership through some challenging issues and also overseen the development of new exciting programs and resources for students.

Jake and Lyndi: Thank you for all you have done for our university community. I have enjoyed working alongside you to keep Central Michigan University focused on the needs of our students. Thank you for your years of service and good luck with your next steps.

I'd also like to welcome our new Student Government Association leaders. Incoming president, Katie Prebelich; vice president, Brett Houle; and treasurer, Tife Ogungboye. All three have previously served the SGA: Katie was press secretary, Brett was membership director, and Tife served as special events committee chair. All three are exceptional leaders who have demonstrated passion for CMU and serving this community. I am looking forward to partnering with you in the year ahead.

Congratulations!

I also would like to acknowledge the retirement of an important CMU leader: Scott Strong. Many of you know Scott from his work with the audit committee; he has served CMU for five years as our director of internal audit. Scott will retire April 17, and we will greatly miss his leadership and professionalism.

Please join me in thanking Scott for his service.

With Scott's retirement, I am pleased to introduce Beth Heller Timmerman who will officially assume this role on Monday. Beth joins us from role as a leader in the health services internal audit area at the University of Michigan. Beth also has extensive history working at the State of Michigan in various Internal Audit leadership roles. Beth is a proud graduate from CMU.

Manuel Rupe, who has served as CMU's general counsel since June 2009, has accepted an offer to serve CMU in a new and important role.

Beginning July 1, he will become associate dean of legal affairs for CMU's College of Medicine, overseeing many of the important partnerships, agreements and activities of the college and CMU Health. This role will be vital to the future success of the college, and I know Manuel will be a great asset to Dean Kikano and his team.

We will begin a search for a new general counsel immediately. For now, please join me in thanking Manuel for his excellent service and congratulating him on this exciting new position.

Now, turning to enrollment: While it has presented many new challenges, COVID-19 has not slowed our aggressive efforts to boost enrollment.

Jennifer DeHaemers has accepted our offer to become our first vice president for student recruitment and retention. She will join us June 1 and has already set her sights on increasing our recruitment and retention efforts.

A campuswide partnership recently launched two Facebook groups to help future students and families connect and engage with CMU. I've really enjoyed learning more about our Class of 2024 from their online discussions, and we are developing stronger relationships with parents and families.

We also recently launched virtual Fire Up Friday events on Facebook Live. Admissions directors, representatives from each of the colleges and leaders from across campus participate in these digital discussions, answering questions in real time for prospective students.

Our orientation sessions also are moving to an online format. I have been very impressed with the efforts of our Enrollment and Student Services team to engage with students virtually in creative ways.

Last week the Academic Senate voted overwhelmingly in favor of a revised transfer policy that will position CMU to be first in the state for transfer recruitment. Transfers now represent the largest pool of potential future CMU Chippewas, and this policy change, coupled with our enhanced marketing and recruitment efforts, scholarship opportunities and support for students, will make us a very attractive choice for them.

There is still much more to do, but our early efforts are paying off. To date, we have seen significant increases in the number of applications as well as in the number of admitted students. There is no question that we are moving in the right direction.

I believe that, as we move forward with these efforts, as well as our rebranding campaign and new website, we will continue to see our numbers grow.

I reluctantly temper this excitement with the understanding that the events of this past month will likely have a significant impact on our enrollment and operations. We know there will be challenges to our bottom line — we are not sure yet to what extent.

We already projected budget reductions as a result of declining enrollment — we must be prepared to make fiscally responsible, yet possibly difficult, choices in the months ahead. I want to reassure you that we will do everything possible to avoid passing along expenses to our students.

Students remain our No. 1 priority, and we will continue to passionately pursue rigor, relevance and excellence in all we do.

One final note: Thank you.

Thank you to the members of this board for your continued support of CMU. Thank you for supporting our students, our faculty and our staff. I am grateful for your leadership and your partnership.

Chair Keith, this concludes my report.