



President's Report TO THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

September 24, 2020

Thank you, Chair Keith. Good morning, trustees, faculty, staff, students and guests. Thank you for once again joining us virtually for today's meeting. I begin my remarks today with a message of gratitude for our faculty, staff, students and community members.

The past seven months have been filled with both challenges and successes for CMU as we adapted quickly to the realities of COVID-19. Our rapidly changing circumstances forced us to cancel or postpone many campus events, activities and traditions. Our response often meant adopting new practices and processes that were unfamiliar. The experience has often been, at times, overwhelming.

In spite of the ongoing difficulties, our faculty and staff have made it possible for us to continue to serve students with excellence as we carry out our mission of education, research and service to the community. I could not have asked for better colleagues during these months of uncertainty, and I ask you, our Board of Trustees, to join me in recognizing their efforts today.

I would also like to thank our students. In this year of the "Great Pivot," you have been asked to change everything about the ways you live and learn at CMU. Your fall semester is not unfolding as many of us had planned or hoped, yet you have maintained enthusiasm and pursued your goals with determination. I am truly proud and grateful for your passion and tenacity.

Finally, I wish to recognize our students, faculty and staff of color. As we continue to immerse ourselves in the national conversation about race, equity and justice, you have taken on the roles of educators, supporters, protestors, advocates and more. You have raised your voices and raised awareness about some of the most pressing issues of our time. This is vital work, and I know it also can be exhausting. I want you to know I am — we are — listening. We hear you, and we support you.

This summer, I began meeting with a group of students, self-named the Antiracism Committee, who put forward a call to action to address challenges at CMU. At around the same time, I invited student leaders from across campus to serve on the President's Student Advisory Network, which also is dedicated to identifying and proposing

solutions for some of our students' concerns. They have raised many questions and shared their perspective on a variety of campus issues, and I am grateful for their insight, advice and, most importantly, their support.

Following the Board of Trustees' Resolution Affirming CMU's Commitment to Social Justice and Equity, which passed in June, we committed to serve as a leader in the national response to the complex issues of racial inequality and injustice. And as I stated earlier this month, now and looking into the future, CMU **will** become an antiracist university. Our work is already underway, and will involve every member of our university community. The path forward is not short, but it will be productive and will lead to lasting, positive change for CMU. I am proud to make this important journey along with you.

We are now ending our sixth week back on campus during this unusual fall semester. Beginning in early September, we have seen a sharp decline in the number of positive cases of COVID-19 within our campus community. I attribute this success to the sustained efforts of students, faculty and staff to protect themselves and others by wearing masks, practicing social distancing and embracing CDC best practices for health and safety.

We must also acknowledge the hard work of our Emergency Management Team, College of Medicine, and CMU Health teams, who collaboratively launched a daily screening app for symptoms of COVID-19, on-campus COVID-19 testing, and a new surveillance testing program. Together, these three initiatives will help us more closely monitor trends in the virus and empower us to rapidly address changes within our community.

We have adopted a pooled testing methodology used by many large universities and organizations to monitor the virus among asymptomatic individuals at CMU. We anticipate that implementing this process, which will involve testing hundreds of people, will lead to an increase in the number of positive cases reported on our campus. We are prepared for this outcome and will continue to work with the health department to manage these cases.

I am grateful for our neighbors in the Mount Pleasant community for their partnership. Welcoming thousands of students back to campus raised some concerns, yet with support from local leaders, businesses and organizations, I feel we have fared well thus far. I look forward to working alongside them in the months ahead.

As I mentioned, many of our campus events and activities, including fall sports, were postponed due to the ongoing pandemic. Last weekend, I met with the other presidents representing the Mid-American Conference schools to examine the possibility of a fall football schedule. Recent advancements in COVID-19 testing, which allow for more rapid and reliable results, as well as new protocols, are driving these discussions. In all our decisions, the safety and health of our student-athletes, coaches, community members and others will remain of utmost importance. Although we have not yet reached a decision in the matter, we will continue the conversation, and I will update our community as we proceed.

As we consider our plans for athletics, now and in the future, I am pleased to announce we have selected Amy Folan to serve as CMU's next Zyzelewski Family Associate Vice President and Director of Athletics. Ms. Folan joins us from the University of Texas at Austin, where she led the Longhorn Foundation, the fundraising arm of Texas Athletics, through six of its most successful fundraising years. She served as president and board member of the National Association of Athletics Compliance and also as a member of the Fellows Program of the Division 1A Athletics Directors Association. She currently serves on the executive committee of the Sports Management Institute.

I look forward to working alongside Ms. Folan to build upon our tradition of excellence.

In fiscal year 2019-2020, Michigan appropriations were held back \$9.8M. And, until earlier this month, we anticipated a substantial decrease in support for the 2020-21 academic year. After the legislature undertook its budget efforts in earnest after Labor Day, we received word that appropriations for the year ahead would likely be flat. And, just yesterday, the Michigan House and Senate passed the higher education budget, and CMU will receive a very modest increase due to the Indian Tuition Waiver program.

However, our financial future remains uncertain. Although there is never a comfortable time to address ongoing budget challenges, it is imperative to act now to address our financial situation and model. Earlier this year, we engaged in a university-wide review of our budgeting and spending practices to ensure the university has the resources necessary to carry out our vital educational, research and service mission.

We completed phase one of this process over this summer and will complete phase two by the end of this semester, likely early December. Part of this process will move CMU away away from unsustainable practices, such as deficit spending and the use of carry-forwards to balance budgets within academic programs and service units.

All vice presidents and directors in every division are required to determine their priorities and seek opportunities to increase efficiencies. We also will be moving to a multi-year budgeting process to improve planning and accountability. As part of these efforts, Provost Schutten is leading an academic program prioritization process, and Nick Long is doing the same for our service units.

Throughout the year, this Board has asked us to consider which programs would drive enrollment and innovation at CMU, and to prioritize those which clearly demonstrate CMU's commitment to rigor, relevance and excellence.

As we recently discussed with our Council of Chairs, this means we must focus on and invest in high-demand programs that meet the needs of our stakeholders: students, community partners, employers, families and more. We must identify and promote the niche programs unique to CMU that attract students and add value to our university community. And, we also must consider programs that may need to constrict, so budget dollars can be allocated strategically. This aligns with our Strategic Envisioning Process's first pathway, and is necessary to ensure our success now and into the future.

At the beginning of the month, we launched CMU's new brand. The "We Do" brand was driven by months of extensive market research and hard work by our University Communications team, and it captures the essence of who we are as a university. It tells our story of powerful mentoring relationships, hands-on and experiential learning, leadership and sense of community. I hope you will all like, share and retweet our most recent ad!

As part of our ongoing efforts to better reach our prospective student audiences, we also are engaged in a complete overhaul of our cmich.edu website. Our current site relies on outdated technology and is often "user-unfriendly." We are working with a nationally recognized agency to redesign every aspect of our largest digital presence and anticipate the new site will be ready in March 2021.

I discuss each of these projects in greater detail in my annual report.

As it became clear that the COVID-19 pandemic would impact college enrollments nationwide, we adjusted our enrollment projections for fall 2020. Although our final enrollment numbers are not yet confirmed, we are, to date, quite close to our predictions for credit hour registrations.

There also is good news in our retention rates. We are on track to achieve a nearly 80% first-to-second-year retention rate, significantly exceeding last year's rate of 74%, and among our Multicultural Advancement and Lloyd M. Cofer Scholars, the rate has risen to 99%. I also am pleased to share that, once August graduates have been finalized, our six-year graduation rate will be nearly 65%, up from last year's rate of only 60.9%.

While there is still significant room for improvement, these figures demonstrate we are making progress in our goals. We will continue to emphasize student supports and services that empower students to persist to commencement.

In my president's annual report, which we will discuss at the end of this meeting, I outline in greater detail many of CMU's achievements over the past year. However, I would be remiss if I did not take this opportunity now to recognize and congratulate some of our students, faculty and staff.

First, I want to recognize CMU's School of Accounting, which this month celebrates its 50th anniversary. The School, together with the College of Business Administration, also received reaccreditation from the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business International, the world's largest business education alliance.

Next, CMU's mechanical engineering technology and industrial engineering technology programs also received accreditation this month. The Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology, which previously accredited CMU programs in computer, electrical and mechanical engineering, provides assurance to employers that CMU students have the strong technical skills and knowledge to enter the workforce.

CMU also continues to build upon our partnership with University Pediatricians to improve children's health in Michigan and beyond. With recent grants and endowments from The Children's Foundation, we recently established the CMU Clinical Research

Institute. Our faculty and students will engage in clinical and translational research to address medical issues ranging from childhood cancers to blood disorders and more.

We also continue to serve children and families with our research in the areas of social media use and digital addiction. Funded by a grant from The Children's Foundation, faculty member Sara Domoff is working with hundreds of middle school teachers and students in the Upper Peninsula to avoid cyberbullying, dangerous content and other issues associated with heavy use of digital devices.

As we continue to navigate the challenges of the pandemic, CMU also is supporting K-12 teachers. Remote learning poses many new challenges, and the CMU Center for Excellence in STEM Education is providing ongoing support with digital tools, lessons and more.

Finally, I want to recognize three faculty members who have recently received Fulbright Scholar Awards. These prestigious international awards further our connections with other countries and are vital to CMU's mission to create and share new knowledge.

Scott deBrestian earned the Fulbright award in art history. He will travel to northern Spain this spring to document the architecture, history and archaeological remains of the medieval capital of the Kingdom of Navarre.

History professors Lane Demas and Jennifer Liu received Fulbright awards to conduct research and teach in Taiwan. Professor Liu will explore secondary education in China and Taiwan during the World War II era, and Professor Demas will teach courses in U.S. and African American history at a university in Taipei.

These awards are an acknowledgement of their excellence in both teaching and research, and raise the profile of Central Michigan University. Thank you all, and congratulations.

I have kept my opening remarks brief today with the expectation of sharing additional good news with you in my annual report. In closing, I would like to simply reiterate my gratitude to the Central Michigan University community. Our students, faculty and staff have weathered unprecedented challenges this semester, yet they continue to passionately pursue our mission, vision and values. I am truly honored to serve them and lead them, and I am proud of what we have accomplished together thus far.

Chair Keith, this concludes my report.