



## President's Report TO THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

February 11, 2021

Thank you, Chair Studley, and good morning to all who are joining us virtually today: our trustees, students, faculty, staff and others.

Just over one year ago, we learned of the first cases of COVID-19 in the U.S., and next month marks a full year since CMU first shifted our operations in response to the growing pandemic. This seems an appropriate time to reflect briefly on all we have accomplished together.

Our College of Medicine students have been on the front lines of the pandemic response, first assisting with COVID-19 testing and now administering vaccines. Students from our health professions programs have partnered with our local health department to assist with contact tracing efforts. University leaders and members of the Emergency Management Team have closely monitored rapidly-changing guidance and adjusted university operations to allow for in-person, on-campus living and learning while adhering to best practices for health and safety.

Our faculty adapted to new teaching and learning modalities while still providing our students personal attention and guidance — a hallmark of Central Michigan University. They continue to offer outstanding opportunities for hands-on and experiential learning, and forge deep connections between and among their students.

Staff have demonstrated incredible innovation and creativity in their efforts to serve and support students, including developing new ways to build community in a virtual environment and safe options for life in our residence halls, meal delivery, academic advising, mental health support and more.

And, our students have shown **incredible** resilience in the face of adversity. Instead of giving up or giving in, they showed up for classes, in-person and virtual, ready to work hard. They committed to wearing masks and maintaining safe distance to protect others. They found ways to stay connected with friends, to participate in their registered student organizations and to engage in their classes.

We say that CMU Chippewas set the leadership standard and exemplify a Fired-Up attitude in all they do, and the proof of that is on display **every day**.

## **Spring update**

Unlike some of our peer institutions, CMU was once again able to safely reopen for on-campus, in-person living and learning. Beginning the semester with one week of remote classes provided time for students and faculty to return from the winter break while limiting in-person interactions following travel home.

As in-person learning began in January, we also resumed co-curricular and extracurricular activities, reviving student Life at Central. Multicultural Academic Student Services hosted an outstanding virtual peace service and a week of programs and activities to honor Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. And although some events must still be held virtually, CMU is offering more opportunities for students to participate in activities in person. For example, University Recreation is offering small group fitness classes and, during our first spring wellness day last week, dozens of students enjoyed a snowshoe hike sponsored by CMU's Program Board and the Department of Recreation, Parks and Leisure Services Administration.

And, in all we do, we continue to prioritize health and safety.

## **Vaccine update**

Many of CMU's front line medical workers, including teams at CMU Health and third- and fourth-year medical students, have received their first COVID-19 vaccination. We are partnering with the health department to identify and provide contact information for individuals who are eligible, or will soon become eligible, to receive a vaccine.

It is important to note that the schedule for prioritization and distribution of vaccines are determined by the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services and led by our local health department. Our goal at CMU is to facilitate vaccination access to every student, faculty and staff member who wants a vaccine when it is their turn to receive it, as established by the state and local health department.

We know many employees and students are eager to be vaccinated, and understand that waiting can be very frustrating. As it stands currently, the majority of our campus may be eligible to receive vaccines sometime later this year.

We also know that circumstances can change quickly, however, and so we are closely monitoring new guidance and updates on the availability of vaccines. In the meantime, we are doing all we can to support our local health department with distribution. We are providing space in our freezers for vaccines, we continue to assist with contact tracing, and next week, CMU will provide a venue and staff support for two vaccination clinics on our campus. These clinics are appointment-only events for individuals receiving their second dose of a vaccine and are not open to the broader community.

We are honored to play a role in our community's fight against COVID-19, and we will continue to do everything we can to slow the spread of the virus.

As we await vaccines for our campus community, we are doubling down on our health and safety protocols, including wearing masks and practicing social distancing, as well as encouraging all students, faculty and staff to participate in surveillance testing. Now that

one of the new COVID-19 variants has been detected in Michigan, we must be vigilant in our efforts to protect ourselves and our community.

We know these efforts are effective. Since Jan. 4, we have had only 31 positive cases of COVID-19 in our community, representing only 0.23% of our campus population. In addition, the positivity rates of our close-contact and symptomatic testing, as well as the positivity rates of our surveillance testing, are below the recommended thresholds.

### **Planning for fall**

As we adapt to our changing circumstances this semester, we also are planning ahead for summer and fall. We continue to adhere to local and state health department orders limiting in-person gatherings and events, and we imagine those will continue until a significant percentage of the population has been vaccinated. To that end, certain events and activities will remain virtual, and summer study abroad programs have been canceled.

Provost Schutten convened a committee of faculty, staff and student leaders to discuss plans for the fall semester and, based on their recommendations, we have finalized the academic calendar for Fall 2021.

Faculty will start the semester with a week of preparation beginning Aug. 23, and classes will begin Monday, Aug. 30. The calendar includes a two-day fall wellness break, as well as Thanksgiving break, with classes ending Dec. 11. Exams will be held Dec. 12-17, and we will honor commencement Dec. 18, 2021.

This schedule reflects both our current circumstances related to the ongoing pandemic as well as a variety of factors impacting living and learning for students.

### **Strategic Envisioning**

COVID-19 has had, and will continue to have, a tremendous impact on our university and on the landscape of higher education. Yet, even as we focus on the immediate needs of the moment, we continue the important work of planning for our future. Although the pandemic has posed unique challenges for our university, it also has presented us with an extraordinary opportunity to rethink what our university can, and should, be moving forward.

Members of the five Strategic Envisioning Process workgroups have continued to meet and have brought forward a set of initial recommendations to be shared with the university community. Over the next several weeks, we will present an interim report on the Strategic Envisioning Process to various stakeholder groups, and I will give an overview of our progress and plans during the State of the University Address on Wednesday, March 3.

Our intent with this process is to set long-term goals and develop strategies that will enable CMU to achieve truly transformational change. By the time we reach 2030, we expect to enhance our national reputation for excellence in both teaching and research; provide rigorous, relevant and excellent programs that serve the needs of our students

and other stakeholders; stabilize enrollment, with steady and predictable growth; and secure a sound financial future for CMU.

The Strategic Envisioning Process is designed to be iterative, and will involve several years of implementing and testing recommendations; adjusting our approach and measuring our success; and revising our goals and actions. At the same time, we will continue to set and pursue one-year, three-year and five-year goals for critical focus areas including recruitment and retention, fundraising, finance and budget, and more.

### **Budget**

As we move forward with strategic envisioning and plans for fall, we also must address our fiscal realities.

At present, we expect that state appropriations for higher education will remain stable, with no anticipated increase or decrease. Based on current projections and assuming no significant changes in the months ahead, we are projecting a decrease in tuition revenue of approximately \$15 million, or just under three percent. At the same time, we are planning for cost increases in some areas, including faculty and staff compensation and benefits.

In order to fund the priorities identified in our Strategic Envisioning Process and to continue our vital educational mission, we will begin a budget reallocation and prioritization process this year. As many familiar with higher education finance know, the RCM budget model is often insufficient in times of declining resources and uncertainty. Therefore, we have suspended use of the RCM model during this budget reallocation process and are considering alternative budgeting models.

We will provide an opportunity for more in-depth discussion of ongoing budgeting and finance efforts during the April meeting of the Board of Trustees.

### **Achievements and accomplishments**

CMU is home to some of the world's finest educators and researchers, and they frequently receive accolades and recognition from their students, peers and professional organizations.

This month, Dr. Kumar Yelamarthi, director of the School of Engineering and Technology and professor of electrical and computer engineering, has been named College Science Teacher of the Year by the Michigan Science Teachers Association. The award is given in recognition of Dr. Yelamarthi's commitment to provide creative, hands-on learning opportunities, often in a team-based setting, and for the guidance and support he offers his students. As his nominator noted, Dr. Yelamarthi truly "puts in his best effort to make sure his students excel."

At the end of last year, the Mid-American Conference presented Dr. Holly Hoffman, from the Department of Human Development and Family Studies, an Outstanding Faculty Award for Student Success. Dr. Hoffman supports and develops students inside and outside the classroom, often attending their sporting events and academic presentations, as well as leading volunteer activities and study abroad programs. In the

MAC news release announcing the award, Dr. Hoffman was recognized for exemplifying “the commitment to student success, support for inclusion, and appreciation for the MAC core values that are at the heart of this award.”

We recently announced the recipients of this year’s President’s and Provost’s Awards for Outstanding Research and Creative Activity. I would like to acknowledge these outstanding faculty for their contributions to the development and distribution of knowledge.

The 2021 President’s Award recipients are Tanya Domina, from the Department of Fashion, Interior Design, and Merchandising, and Dr. En-Bing Lin, from the Department of Mathematics.

- Professor Domina’s nomination reflects a scholar of international prominence, scholarly productivity, and industry partnership. In addition to her co-authorship of the seminal text *U4ia for Apparel Design*, her innovative work with 3-D body scanning and thermal manikins has garnered strong support from federal agencies and international industries alike.
- Dr. Lin’s work is characterized by exceptional contributions to many high impact journals, and a culture of mentoring and graduate student support. His research areas include wavelet analysis and applications, bioinformatics, complex geometry and data analysis. He also serves as associate editor or on the editorial boards of six research journals.

The 2021 Provost’s Awards are presented to Dr. James Gerhart from the Department of Psychology and Dr. Abu Amin from the Department of Finance and Law.

- Dr. Gerhart is described as a beloved teacher and mentor in Psychology. He is known for a strong record of scholarly publication and external grantsmanship. Notably, he rapidly pivoted his research in recent months to respond to both community and regional impacts from COVID, offering insight into posttraumatic stress.
- Dr. Amin is recognized for his superb contributions in the areas of corporate governance, CEO compensation, board structure, and finance. Among his litany of high impact publications are articles published in journals with an acceptance rate of only 5%. His conference and seminar presentations reflect a scholar of national and international gravitas.

These faculty exemplify our goals of rigor, relevance and excellence in teaching and research, and, through their efforts, raise the profile of our university. Thank you for your outstanding service to our students and our community.

As I mentioned previously, our staff has shown remarkable creativity and innovation in the face of challenges, and I would like to highlight two recent award-winning examples.

The Council for the Advancement and Support of Education recently awarded CMU's Alumni Relations team a grand gold award in the special event pivot category for the 2020 GrandparentsU event.

GrandparentsU is a wonderful CMU tradition that — in normal years — brings together multiple generations of CMU Chippewas for three days of on-campus fun and learning. This year, the pandemic made the overnight stays in the residence halls, use of campus facilities and in-person activities impossible, so our alumni team got creative to ensure this event could continue in pandemic times. With a mixture of mailed activity packets, virtual interactive sessions, a private Facebook group and more, the event allowed alumni and future students to enjoy all the fun of GrandparentsU from the safety of their own homes — and it was an outstanding success.

CMU's University Communications team also received an award from CASE — a silver award for a communications pivot for the “Can Do” campaign launched in spring 2020. Created and launched in only one week, the campaign showcased our commitment to students and their families during the economic uncertainties of the pandemic. In addition to being an uplifting and inspiring message, it also was effective, leading to an increase in applications gained in a period of overall enrollment declines.

Congratulations — and thank you — to both teams.

CMU is committed to being a leader in sustainability, and our efforts are led by a passionate group of students, faculty and staff. In recent years, their work has significantly reduced food waste and carbon emissions while increasing recycling and environmental stewardship.

As a result of their hard work, we recently received a gold rating from the Association for the Advancement for Sustainability in Higher Education. Our success was measured through the Sustainability Tracking, Assessment and Rating reporting process, and the gold rating continues through 2024.

Our campus is a cleaner and greener place today thanks to these passionate individuals. Congratulations on this important achievement.

I also want to thank our alumni, donors and friends for their extraordinary generosity at the end of 2020. On December 1, or “Giving Tuesday,” our community contributed more than \$265,000 to support student success at CMU — nearly \$100,000 more than our original fundraising goal.

Those gifts have a direct and meaningful impact for students, and will benefit programs like our Student Food Pantry, Student Emergency Fund and the new Finish Up Chips scholarship program.

On behalf of our students, faculty, and staff, I wish to extend deepest gratitude to everyone who made a gift during a very challenging year.

### **Closing thoughts**

We will be feeling the impact of COVID-19 for many years. 2021 will continue to pose challenges for our university community as we navigate new changes and obstacles;

however, we have demonstrated again and again that we are more than capable of adapting and succeeding.

The pandemic is tough, but we are tougher. We are a community known for our Fired-Up attitude and resilience. We have set a course for an outstanding year at CMU, and I look forward to sharing updates on our successes with you in the months ahead.

Chair Studley, this concludes my report.