

Board of Trustees

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

February 17, 2022

Thank you, Chair Studley.

With my report today, I would like to address some of the current issues impacting the university, provide updates on our strategic priorities, and share some of the good news from around our community.

Proposed state of Michigan budget

Earlier this month, Gov. Whitmer released her proposed 2023 budget, and we were pleased to see increased support for higher education included in her priorities.

At CMU, we see daily the transformative power of education on individual lives and communities, as well as its impact on the state's economic health. We applaud this planned investment in Michigan's future.

However, we know the budgeting process is just beginning, and that this package now moves into the state legislature for discussion and revisions. We will continue to work with our state leaders to advocate for increased and equitable public support for Central Michigan.

Enrollment and our budget

State funding and public support will be vital for our university as we continue to address ongoing financial challenges.

As expected, declines in enrollment this year have impacted our overall budget. University leaders are currently reviewing budgets and developing proposals for a variety of possible scenarios. They also are adjusting budget projections for next year based on enrollment trends.

We have made no final decisions related to current-year budget adjustments at this time; however, we will need to move swiftly to address our fiscal realities. We will continue to communicate any necessary changes with the university community as soon as possible, while also ensuring we provide adequate resources to accomplish our strategic priorities.

Updates on diversity, equity and inclusion

One of our most important strategic priorities is our commitment to increasing and promoting diversity, equity and inclusion at CMU.

In June of 2020, this board passed a Resolution Affirming CMU's Commitment to Social Justice and Equity. With this action, CMU was given clear direction to pursue the development of policies and practices that would continue to foster and promote an inclusive, welcoming and supportive environment for every member of our university community.

Through our Strategic Envisioning Process, and with the work of many university stakeholders, we are carrying that charge forward with the development of a multiyear Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Strategic Plan.

Today, I would like to share a few updates on this important work.

Led by Dr. Shawna Patterson-Stephens, the University Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Council is reviewing 10 years' worth of data with the aim of identifying up to five areas of focus for CMU. In the next two months, the council will begin to identify and outline these priorities, as well as strategies, tactics and outcomes for each goal.

Dr. Patterson-Stephens also initiated a series of listening sessions, inviting students, faculty, staff and others to share their perspectives, input and lived experiences. The next student listening session will be held next week, and an additional faculty listening session, co-hosted by the Multicultural Diversity Education Committee and the Faculty Association, is in the works.

Other projects underway include efforts to reimagine ways CMU represents the Native and Indigenous experience on our campus and in our community; the finalization of the Lived Name and Pronoun policy; the development and implementation of the Diversity Advocate program; and much more.

We will host the university's first-ever Diversity Gala, Friday, April 29, a celebration hosted in conjunction with our annual Campus Diversity Symposium. Both events are open to every member of our university community — including members of the Board of Trustees, and I invite you all to attend.

We are committed to our promise to create a culture in which every person feels seen, heard, secure, respected and valued. We look forward to continuing to share our progress toward these important goals and this vital work.

Update on Global Campus programs

In addition, as part of the university's Strategic Envisioning Process, we have been reimagining the ways we deliver our Global Campus programs.

With the help of the Strategic Pathway #5 workgroup and multiple ad-hoc committees that have included faculty, staff, students and community members, we are developing an "Innovation and Online Learning" platform to position CMU for current and future success.

Through competitive analysis, we are assessing the right locations and modalities to offer various programs, as well as prioritizing opportunities to scale current CMU programs for immediate and measurable growth.

We are considering options to suit the needs of many student groups, including dual-enrolled students, traditional first-year students, transfers, individuals looking to enhance their skills,

lifelong learners and others. We are looking for ways to build upon our existing infrastructure to enhance and accelerate our delivery options.

As we do so, we also are evaluating our internal processes for assessing prior learning and experience so we can fully value what our post-traditional adult learners bring into their CMU journeys.

And, in all these efforts, we are leveraging existing K-12 and community college partnerships to create clear pathways to both CMU's main campus and Global Campus programs.

To date, this planning has focused on repurposing and retooling existing Global Campus resources; however, future growth in this area will require additional strategic investment.

Washington Commons

As noted today, we also are investing in strategies that will drive enrollment in our main campus programs. We know housing is a key deciding factor when students consider which university to attend, and we must acknowledge CMU has not been competitive with our peers in this area.

To date, our efforts have included renovations of existing spaces, such as Carey Hall, and these have been very popular.

We know students are eager for more independent living options, and the proposed project offers an exciting opportunity to reimagine the residential student experience and support our aggressive enrollment strategy.

Yesterday, the board heard a presentation on the proposed Washington Commons project, an apartment-style residential community that would be housed in the center of campus.

This represents a significant change for our campus community, and so we want to include student, faculty and staff perspectives in the design phase.

I fully respect the comments made here today and comments that have been sent to the president's office. It is clear we need to communicate better, and I want to be clear: We are listening and hearing your concerns.

Staff from Facilities Management and Residence Life will be setting up a series of town hall meetings for faculty, staff and students to learn about the proposed project and to contribute their perspectives and suggestions, and importantly, to provide solutions. I hope you all will plan to attend. We will work to move forward together.

University highlights

We firmly believe in the strength of our academic offerings, which comes from outstanding faculty who are recognized and celebrated nationally for their research and teaching.

Larry Lemke, chair of the Department of Earth and Atmospheric Sciences, was named the 2021 Educator of the Year by the Michigan Section of the American Institute of Professional Geologists.

Dr. George Kikano was recently appointed to the governing boards of both the Educational Commission for Foreign Medical Graduates and the Foundation for Advancement of International Medical Education and Research.

Other faculty are serving communities by sharing expertise and context on a wide range of complex issues. For example, within the last few weeks:

- Political science faculty member and chair David Jesuit has offered perspective on the escalating Russia-Ukraine crisis.
- Logistics faculty member Mark Spieles helped to explain rising inflation and its impact in Michigan and the U.S., and discussed the impact of the protest that blocked Ambassador Bridge.
- Religion faculty member Sara Moslener shared context on the changing religious landscape in America.

Many are also sharing knowledge through the publication of new books, papers and even the exciting new field of educational games.

Andrew Wehrman, faculty member in the Department of History, has a new book, “The Contagion of Liberty” that currently holds the No. 1 spot on Amazon.com’s “new releases in the history of medicine” category.

CMU’s Center for Learning through Games and Simulations launched the first game ever published by CMU Press. The game, “Monumental Consequence,” invites players to decide if art is worth dying for in times of war. It is the first publication of the Scholarship and Lore: Games for Learning Series.

Whether they are sharing knowledge in the classroom, in the media, in their publications or in exciting new games, our faculty are truly setting the leadership standard for rigor, relevance and excellence.

Emphasizing real-world results

With our academic offerings and in all our student-centered programming, we focus on real-world results — including graduate opportunities, research and career outcomes for students.

Last month, CMU was recognized as a National Center of Academic Excellence in Cybersecurity by the National Security Agency. This prestigious designation from the NSA is a boon for our students, giving them an important leg up as they apply for careers in this rapidly growing industry.

During the fourth annual CMU Sales Challenge, more than 80 students and over a dozen corporate partners came together for a skill-building and networking event, which included professional development sessions and a variety of competitions.

Just last week, more than 100 students and 42 employer mentors competed in the 10th annual ERPsim, which allows teams to compete in a business simulation in real-time. Many students received offers for internships and even full-time employment following their participation in the event. Our partners at Blue Cross Blue Shield hired five students that day, which I know will be of interest to Trustee Heath!

And, finally, CMU’s Career Development Center is hosting a variety of skill-building and preparation programs for students, including the recent “Suited for Success” career fair, the “Fit for Hire” series, dining etiquette workshops and “Coffee with a Career Coach” virtual meetings. And of course, my favorite event is “Tying Ties with President Davies.”

Our goal at CMU is to prepare our students for success in both their personal and professional lives. Our faculty, staff and student groups are providing ample opportunities for students to achieve both.

Celebrating our commitment to lift each other up

I want to close my remarks today with a reflection on our university community's incredible culture of caring and compassion.

We have come through nearly two years of emotionally, mentally and physically exhausting challenges. While the pandemic continues to pose obstacles, we have demonstrated time and again our ability to face them head-on and to rise together in the face of adversity. Every day, we see evidence of compassionate teamwork in action as we take on the most difficult and taxing of tasks.

Today is National Random Acts of Kindness Day, and our community will be celebrating with a "Delight-FULL" event in the University Center later this afternoon. However, at CMU, acts of kindness are not limited to specific dates; kindness is part of our culture. Compassion is a constant.

Random acts of kindness occur EVERY day here, carried out by students, faculty and staff members who genuinely care for one another.

I am proud to be part of this wonderful, caring community, and I am grateful to everyone who contributes to our culture of inclusiveness, respect and compassion.

Chair Studley, this concludes my remarks.