

# Board of Trustees

## PRESIDENT'S REPORT

April 20, 2023

Good afternoon, Trustee Oliver, and good afternoon to everyone joining us here in the Bovee University Center and all those watching on the livestream.

I want to begin my remarks today by highlighting some of the outstanding individual and team accomplishments of our students, faculty and staff. The last two months have been *absolutely filled* with big wins, honors and recognitions, propelling several of our students, faculty and staff members into the statewide, nationwide and even the world spotlight. While there is not time to list them all, I wanted to share a few recent achievements.

Senior Annabelle Fortine has been awarded a prestigious Fulbright English Teaching Assistant Grant. Annabelle is earning her degree in elementary education and will use the Fulbright to live and teach in Bulgaria for 10 months. She is one of just 2,000 students in the country awarded the Fulbright to conduct research and teach English abroad. Annabelle is currently completing her student teaching and was unable to join us today, but we wish her well all the same. Congratulations Annabelle!

Next, we want to recognize juniors Xander Ault from Belmont, Michigan and Ishani “Izzy” Gaidhane from Canton, Michigan. Xander and Izzy have each been awarded prestigious Goldwater Scholarships that support students pursuing careers in STEM fields.

It is the first time ever that CMU has had **TWO** Goldwater scholars. Let me put this in perspective. In the state of Michigan this year, there have been five Goldwater scholars. We have two of them here at CMU.

Xander is double majoring in Astrophysics and Mathematics and has been doing outstanding physics research with faculty mentor Marco Fornari. Izzy is double majoring in Biochemistry and Mathematics and has been conducting research on antibiotics with faculty mentor Ben Swarts. Although Xander is currently in class, Izzy was able to join us

here today. Izzy was a speaker at one of our committee meetings yesterday and gave an outstanding presentation.

Please join me in congratulating them both on becoming Goldwater Scholars and following their research passions at CMU.

Senior Dakota Keblbeck from Standish, Michigan has earned the prestigious National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellowship. Dakota is a first-generation, non-traditional student who is part of our McNair Scholars Program. He found his passion in our Department of Physics researching neutrino particles with faculty mentor Matt Redshaw.

The NSF grant will help Dakota pursue his Ph.D. in physics at Colorado School of Mines where he plans to be a mentor, encouraging outreach to historically underrepresented groups in STEM. Dakota also is attending class at this time, but we wish him the best in his future endeavors.

We learned this week that for the first time ever, CMU has **TWO** recipients of the national Boren scholarship for undergraduates. Elijah Joki and Elizabeth Valicenti are being honored with the recognition which supports students who study less commonly taught languages in world regions critical to U.S. interests, and who plan careers in federal service.

Congratulations to Elijah and Elizabeth on their outstanding dedication to academics and leadership on our campus.

Awards like this have an incredible impact on the credibility of an institution. These awards do not come easily; they require hard work from our students, and require mentorship and guidance as well.

I need to acknowledge the tremendous work of Dr. Maureen Harke, the director of the CMU National Scholarship Program.

Maureen, please stand.

Maureen has been tireless in her efforts to mentor and work with these students to build on the talents they have and to help them be competitive in these national efforts.

Maureen's dedication to lifting up students and supporting their academic and research goals is invaluable and greatly appreciated. Maureen is the one that puts us on the national stage.

Thank you, Maureen!

Jennifer Nottingham, Executive Director of Recreational Programs and Student Activities, has been honored with a regional award from the National Intramural-Recreational Sports Association. Jen's leadership and extraordinary dedication to student affairs, while also serving in leadership roles with the Michigan Intramural-Recreational Sports Association, benefit the student experience at CMU.

Jen, thank you so much — not only for your leadership, but also for being a valuable member of our community and making a big difference in students' lives. Please give a round of applause to Jennifer Nottingham.

CMU faculty are also receiving major and well-deserved recognition.

Dr. Benjamin Swarts' work in the Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry earned him this year's Mid-American Conference Outstanding Faculty Award for Student Success. Ben is an outstanding educator, researcher and mentor who is more than deserving of this all-conference award.

The Michigan network of the American Council on Education has awarded Dr. Maureen Eke the Distinguished Woman in Higher Education Leadership Award. In her 28 years at CMU, Maureen's work as a scholar, researcher and global citizen have contributed to recognition on the regional, national and international levels. She is a perfect example of what it means for women to lead in higher education.

I would also like to congratulate this year's recipients of the President's and Provost's Awards for Outstanding Research and Creative Activity. Dr. Jennifer Schisa from Biology and Dr. Kirsten Weber from Communication were honored with President's Awards. Provost's Awards honored Dr. Chanseok Jeong from Engineering and Technology, and Heather Trommer-Beardslee from Theatre and Dance. Their work is a point of pride for CMU.

CMU junior Aaliyah Howard was named a 2023-24 Newman Civic Fellow. The prestigious national fellowship recognizes Aaliyah's outstanding commitment to creating positive change through public leadership. Congratulations, Aliyah!

Busakorn "Piao" Satipanya, senior in CMU's Public Health program, has been selected to become a Public Health Officer in the U.S. Air Force. Piao's important work during the COVID-19 pandemic as part of our response team was vital to CMU's screening and tracking efforts. Congratulations to Piao on her next step, and we wish her all the best as she continues to represent CMU extremely well.

The National Newspaper Association has selected a CMU freshman as Michigan's representative in the Washington Fellowship program. Masha Smahliuk from Ukraine

has been an outstanding reporter for CM Life and an extremely involved student on campus. She will continue to learn and grow with the help of this prestigious honor. I also wish to thank the students and staff at CM Life for mentoring her and providing her this opportunity. Congratulations, Masha!

This was just a small sample of the awards and achievements received by our outstanding students, faculty and staff.

I would now like to share with you the latest on CMU's strategic planning effort. In February, I updated you on the Strategic Planning Team's progress in scheduling targeted engagement sessions for CMU stakeholder groups. These efforts included groups such as the Academic Senate, the Student Government Association, individual colleges, alumni, donors, and the greater community.

Over the last 60 days, more than 40 strategic engagement sessions were held with those groups, resulting in more than 200 pages of input that the Strategic Planning Team continues to evaluate and distill. However, they already are identifying several themes emerging that align with the strategic envisioning process and the five pathways.

Though not finalized, among the emerging themes is a focus on empowering high-impact learning experiences that prepare students for careers with hands-on experiential learning and personalized support. It emphasizes CMU's commitment to student success, our commitment to leadership development, and our commitment to serving communities in Michigan and beyond.

We are encouraged that the hard work of the entire strategic planning team will result in an actionable, functional strategic plan that will truly make a significant difference in CMU's legacy.

The team plans to share the first round of themes in an open session next week, incorporate feedback and share a draft of goals with the Board of Trustees in June. Their goal is to engage the campus community in August with multiple validation sessions and present a final draft of the strategic plan to the board in September for approval.

I would like to take a moment to thank some of the individuals supporting this process behind the scenes. Erica Peters and Alex Snyder have put in countless hours to assist with the coordination and record-keeping of this effort, and we are *immensely* grateful for their help.

Alongside the strategic planning process, Provost and Executive Vice President Nancy Matthews is leading an academic visioning process. Over the next six months, we will be using scenario planning to imagine the future of higher education and CMU's leadership role in it.

Faculty and staff are currently completing a survey to help identify the most relevant drivers of change that will shape the academic vision. The result will be a useful tool to ascertain the relevancy and effectiveness of CMU's academic offerings, while also recognizing opportunities for growth.

An important part of planning is allocating resources strategically and transparently. This is key to improving the budgeting process.

We have been working to replace our old RCM budget model with input from stakeholders across campus for more than a year now. I would like to thank everyone who has helped to guide this process with a goal of increasing clarity and transparency, along with greater collaboration.

Improved budget modeling also includes the ability to forecast as far as three years ahead to enhance our ability to anticipate changes and better plan for CMU's future. Currently, our budget team is working on ways to effectively communicate information about the budget model to the university community.

A critical part of any higher education budget is enrollment, and so I have an update today on CMU's student enrollment projections.

Despite a challenging environment, we continue to see positive signs regarding enrollment. Deposits, orientation registrations and housing contracts are up over this time last year for first-time, non-transfer college students. Applications, admissions and deposits from this same student group from Michigan are also experiencing an increase from this point compared to last year. Our efforts to attract transfer students are also showing amazing results. Transfer student enrollment for fall of 2023 is higher than at this point last year.

This while the retention rate for freshmen who started in the fall of 2022 has improved slightly from the previous year.

CMU continues to gain strong momentum when it comes to enrollment. Our recruiting, marketing and communications efforts continue to help us meet our enrollment expectations.

I appreciate the creative work of our admissions team, who are working hard to ensure we attract students to come here to CMU. I also want to thank the numerous faculty, staff, students and alumni who have attended our Maroon and Gold dinners, and who have participated in other events and engaged in strategies to increase our pool of admitted students to a larger pool of enrolled students.

I would like to turn now to the budget.

Budget concerns continue for CMU, as they do for almost every public university nationwide. We are not alone in facing the challenges of achieving robust enrollment while also navigating uncertain federal and state funding and the headwinds of inflation.

While we have experienced increases in the number of incoming students, and we have *significantly* reduced the gap, it has not been enough to replace larger graduating classes. Students are also coming to CMU with more credit hours complete, resulting in fewer credit hours and more students graduating in four years or less. Graduating sooner is certainly a good thing, but it does impact our overall enrollment numbers. This also has played a role in our budget picture.

Over the last four years, we have been able to offset some of the budget challenges with funding from the Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund. That federal program is ending, necessitating a budget reduction on our part. It is important to note that the reductions we need to make this year are not as extensive as last year.

As we consider what reductions to make to the budget, we are doing so with our strategic goals and priorities in mind. We have asked the university's senior leaders to undertake the *difficult* task of developing scenarios for reductions in their divisions. While doing so, they are considering the impact of any reduction on our students to avoid harming the quality of their academic and other pursuits.

The Strategic Budgeting Advisory Council will review proposed reductions in May, with a goal of having them finalized in June. As we make the appropriate and strategic reductions now, while still investing in areas that help us grow and meet our projections, next year's reductions will be even smaller.

If we adhere to our plans, it will also set us on a path toward no necessary reductions by fiscal year 2025-26, and possibly a slight budget surplus. This is all to say that we are looking good at Central Michigan University on many fronts.

I am pleased to report that the financial support of CMU alumni and friends continues to be strong.

University Advancement and Alumni Relations indicate that overall fundraising has increased and is trending ahead of last year by about 4-percent. Advancement surpassed its cash goal for this fiscal year during the third quarter, trending up more than 28-percent from this time last year. Alumni giving is also showing strength, with the most recent Alumni Gold membership campaign blowing past its goal and enrolling more than 500 donors in March.

Strengthening our relationships with alumni and other donors is yielding increased support for CMU.

As I come to the end of my remarks, I would like to remind everyone that there is *no place* quite like CMU in the springtime. After we trudged through some delays and closures due to spring snow and ice storms, our campus is blooming again.

Our students' minds are blooming and growing as well. There are so many spring events and activities to engage our students, from hands-on learning opportunities to cultural events, and competitions and exhibitions.

I would like to share a few examples of what "WE DO" looks like at CMU.

In March, CMU's Office of Native American Programs once again organized and hosted the vibrant, annual Celebrating Life Pow Wow. Our partners in the Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe and Indigenous people from around the country celebrated and shared their culture and traditions with our students, faculty, staff and community.

CMU's College of Medicine matched 99 fourth-year medical students with residencies where they will continue their medical training. Match Day was another milestone on the journey toward successful careers in medicine for our tremendously talented class of 2023. More than half will stay in Michigan for their residency, furthering our commitment to health care in the state.

CMU's College of Business Administration hosted their annual ERPsim competition, partnering nearly 200 students with mentors from companies to work through business scenarios. They demonstrated the ability to be flexible, to work collaboratively under pressure, and to communicate well – the important professional skills our employer partners say are most needed.

This month, CMU's Student Creative and Research Endeavors Exhibition showcased the work of undergraduate and graduate students exploring their passions with the support of CMU faculty. SCREE is a chance to celebrate the work of students by sharing it with the university community.

On Saturday, the student-organized Threads Fashion Show celebrated its 25<sup>th</sup> year, back live and in-person. The event was *truly impressive*, not only because of the creativity on display, but also because of the incredible cooperation of more than 100 students. I have been told this is the largest fashion show in the state of Michigan, with more than 700 people attending and more than 100 people watching online.

Students from the Fashion Merchandising and Design Program, Broadcast and Cinematic Arts, and several other academic areas worked together to produce a highly entertaining event and gain valuable real-world experience.

A highlight of this year's show was their focus on inclusiveness and accessibility in fashion. I would like to acknowledge our students and faculty for making this important concept part of the Threads event.

The New Venture Challenge showcases the entrepreneurial mindset of students. Participants have been working for months to develop and pitch business ideas for actual start-up funding. CMU's Isabella Bank Institute for Entrepreneurship hosts the program, which culminates tomorrow with final pitches and awards.

CMU student-athletes continue to thrive in competition and in the classroom. Gymnastics just won the MAC championship. Baseball, softball, lacrosse are all at the top of the standings at the moment, and our women's golf and track and field teams are also competing at the highest level.

They also are doing so in the classroom, with numerous student-athletes graduating with 4.0 GPAs. They are continuing a more than 40-semester-streak of earning an average GPA of 3.0 or higher.

The dedication it takes to pursue success in athletics and academics is truly inspiring, and our student-athletes do it all with a Fired-Up attitude. As always, our goal is to help our student-athletes achieve a championship ring on one hand and a diploma in the other.

Finally, as you may know, the highlight for me comes in about two weeks. I look forward to welcoming our graduating students, their families and supporters to commencement.

This is a particularly special ceremony for me. 2,413 of our students will earn their degrees and set off from CMU for the next part of their journey, including *one who shares my last name*.

I am *confident* they are equipped with the knowledge and skills to become leaders wherever they go. I hope many of our faculty, staff and supporters will join us in McGuirk Arena to celebrate their success.

Chair Oliver, this concludes my report.