



Board of Trustees

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

April 24, 2025

Thank you, Chair Regis, and welcome to everyone joining us today in person and on the livestream.

I have plenty to report, as we have had a very busy and productive spring semester at Central Michigan University!

We had the pleasure of hosting world-renowned dance artist and philanthropist Misty Copeland in March.

Together, we celebrated the 75th anniversary of Finch Fieldhouse.

For the 36th year, CMU welcomed the annual Celebration of Life Pow Wow.

For the 4th year, CMU's Diversity Gala celebrated our inclusive community.

CMU's New Venture Challenge celebrated 15 years of developing and supporting student entrepreneurs.

The annual Threads fashion show was amazing.

And how could I forget investiture? Together with the Board of Trustees, we celebrated a new chapter in CMU leadership, joined by many special guests.

There are still many fun and informative events as we approach the end of the semester, and I encourage students to take the opportunity to engage in campus life.

CMU students have experienced several successes recently, continuing their winning ways.

For the second straight year, CM Life has won the national Pacemaker award for excellence in student media business. In all, CM Life earned 21 national awards at the Associated Collegiate Press National College Media Conference.

Congratulations to Sarah Cavallaro who was just awarded the Council on International Educational Exchange's highly competitive Leading Change in Latin America student fellowship. Only 100 college students in the U.S. are chosen for the program each semester. Sarah will spend the fall semester studying in Buenos Aires, Argentina. It is the kind of immersive learning experience we are striving to ensure every student has as a goal under priority one of our strategic plan.

And all 97 graduating students from the CMU College of Medicine this spring were matched with a residency program for the second straight year. They will continue their medical education with health care systems in Michigan and around the country.

There are successes to celebrate in athletics this semester as well.

CMU Gymnastics captured its third MAC championship in four years, and 19th all-time title in front of more than a thousand fans at McGuirk Arena. Congratulations to the team, and to the seven CMU gymnasts who earned academic All-MAC honors this season.

Also in athletics, we had the pleasure of welcoming Coach Andy Bronkema to head our men's basketball program. Coach Bronks – as he is called – joins us from Ferris State University where he coached for more than a decade and won a NCAA Division II national championship. We are looking forward to his continued success as a CMU Chippewa, leading our student-athletes developing a winning culture.

In recent weeks, CMU has gained more national attention through the quality of our programs.

Starting with our College of Medicine, whose mission is to meet the needs of rural and medically underserved areas. US News and World Report ranked CMU in the top 20 nationwide for placing graduates in rural areas and in health professional shortage areas. The ranking is more proof CMU's College of Medicine is meeting its mission to address the needs of Michigan communities.

Additionally, US News and World Report just ranked four CMU graduate programs among the top 100 nationwide. CMU's audiology program was ranked 29th in the nation and was ranked as the best audiology graduate program in Michigan. Healthcare Management ranked 62nd in the country, and 2nd in the state. Speech-Language Pathology came in at 74th in the nation, and 3rd in Michigan. And the publication ranked our Statistics graduate program 92nd in the nation, and 3rd best in Michigan.

Three of those four ranked programs are in the Herbert H. and Grace A. Dow College of Health Professions, who I am happy to report will be led by a new dean, Dr. Jennifer Simpson. Dr. Simpson joins us from Purdue University and brings with her a wealth of experience in academic leadership and in speech, language and hearing sciences. I would like to thank Greg Zimmerman who has done great job leading the college as interim dean since last summer.

Stepping into a larger leadership role at CMU is Dr. Shawna Patterson-Stephens, who has agreed to lead our new division of University Engagement and Student Affairs as a vice president. Currently serving as CMU's Vice President for Inclusive Excellence and Belonging, Dr. Patterson-Stephens is an experienced higher education scholar-practitioner who has led university-wide efforts to enhance policies and processes, improve campus climate, and create a welcoming, supportive environment for all students, faculty and staff.

A huge thanks again to Interim Vice President of Student Affairs Stan Shingles who is set to re-retire this summer – for stepping up when CMU needed his leadership.

Institutionally, we have a plan for success and have taken swift action this semester to bolster progress toward achieving CMU's strategic plan.

Since we know some of the best ideas to reach our goals will come from students, faculty and staff, we encouraged them to apply for a "Go Grant" to put their ideas into action. Grants range in value from five thousand to fifty thousand dollars, totaling 500 thousand dollars.

The response to the call for Go Grants greatly exceeded my expectations, with 122 applications received, with 33 submitted by students, 44 by staff, 44 by faculty and 1 that was submitted jointly by staff and faculty. Right now, Budget Director Joe Garrison, the Budget Priorities Committee and the grant review team are working hard to choose the best applications, and we will announce grant recipients in the upcoming weeks.

Another exciting way we will meet the strategic plan's priorities is the creation of the University Transformation Office. This dynamic unit is charged with providing guidance and direction to university initiatives. I'm thrilled that Darcie Wilson has agreed to be CMU's inaugural Chief Transformation Officer, driving organizational change and empowering innovation.

As I said at my investiture: it isn't just a new unit – it is a bold commitment to executing CMU's vision with greater speed, efficiency, and impact.

As we make changes at CMU, we are monitoring changes at the federal level that affect universities across the country. These actions are related to diversity, equity and inclusion programs; the elimination or downsizing of federal agencies; funding limits for research; immigration policies; and more.

Despite the number of actions taken, none have yet resulted in clear guidance for universities like CMU.

CMU has formed a Policy Compliance and Communications Committee to monitor actions that could impact our university community. Provost Paula Lancaster and I have been sending weekly emails to keep the university community updated and provide resources that may help students, faculty and staff navigate these uncertain times.

We also created a federal policy, order and directive update page on the university website as a resource for anyone trying to understand the current situation and how it relates to CMU.

Academically, we are continually adjusting program offerings to ensure they are relevant in a rapidly changing job market. I am thrilled to share a few of the new degree and certificate programs that will begin this fall.

The Applied Artificial Intelligence minor imparts skills needed to develop, evaluate, and integrate artificial intelligence into software applications. It was designed with more than just the computer science or data science student in mind. Having a solid understanding of how AI is trained and evaluated helps students understand the strengths and limitations of the AI applications they will encounter in their career, no matter their major.

A new Indigenous Studies for Social Studies Educators undergraduate certificate provides students with an opportunity to gain a better understanding of Indigenous histories and cultures in and outside of

Michigan. Certificate holders will be more knowledgeable about Indigenous history and intentionally teach about Indigenous histories, especially as related to Michigan. Students pursuing this certificate will take courses in History, Ojibwe, and Anthropology.

A new undergraduate certificate and minor in Casino Gaming Operations are designed to complement business-focused majors and help students stand out in competitive job markets – without adding semesters to their degree plans. The program includes courses in professional selling, event management, and casino operations – emphasizing business strategy, customer experience, and cross-department coordination in integrated resort settings.

Both the minor and certificate are designed to complement business-focused majors and help students stand out in competitive job markets – without adding semesters to their degree plans.

These new programs and credentials reflect CMU's commitment to applied learning, professional development, and meaningful career preparation.

Having relevant programs that help students prepare for a successful career helps CMU attract more students. As always, we are paying very close attention to student enrollment and retention, and there are some developments.

To more intentionally boost our enrollment turnaround at CMU, we have begun the process of implementing a strategic enrollment management plan.

We have selected a national firm with expertise in strategic enrollment management plans – SEMWorks – to develop a plan tailored to CMU. This fall's recruiting cycle will incorporate parts of the plan.

SEMWorks has the resources to take a deeper look at not just how CMU enrolls students but what external challenges it faces in recruiting domestic and international students. I have witnessed, firsthand, the value of an SEM plan at two other universities. Once developed at CMU, I believe it will provide a roadmap to enrollment growth by identifying priorities and where investments should be made.

As work continues to grow the number of students at CMU – 2,498 graduating students will cross the stage and earn their degrees at commencement ceremonies in just three weeks!

We have again invited a graduating student to share their thoughts as speakers at each of the undergraduate, graduate and College of Medicine ceremonies. We also are inviting alumni guest speakers to share their wisdom with our graduates on their big day. It will be an exciting time, and a terrific reminder of why we do what we do here at CMU.

In closing, I would like to share a story that again demonstrates how supportive our university community is, and how amazing our students are.

Last week, as part of Greek Week events, CMU fraternities and sororities held a Mock Rock dance-off competition in McGuirk Arena. Altogether, they raised \$35,000 that will support the important work of the Isabella County Child Advocacy Center. That's the kind of thing that makes a president proud.

But there's more. I attended the event and unknowingly dropped \$40, which a student saw and returned. The student, Selah Gervais, could have easily pocketed the money but instead did the right thing and returned it.

It has been said that one's true character shows when no one is watching. Selah showed her true character and lived out our leadership standards in a very tangible way.

Selah is with us here today with some of her family from Canada. Selah, if you would please come forward, I have a certificate of commendation for you.

This commendation is presented to Selah Gervais in recognition of putting CMU's core value of integrity into action. Thank you, Selah.

Actions like these speak to the character of our students and give us all a reason to believe our future is a bright one.

Chair Regis, this concludes my report... and Fire Up Chips!