



Board *of* Trustees

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

June 26, 2025

Thank you, Chair Regis, and the entire Board of Trustees.

A special welcome to Trustee David McGhee, who joins us for his first formal session after the Governor appointed him to the board in May. Trustee McGhee is a CMU alumnus, earning his Master of Science in Administration with us.

David's commitment to community engagement and mentorship strongly resonates with Central Michigan University's mission, vision, and values. His background in political, nonprofit, and higher education organizations will undoubtedly enrich our Board with a fresh and valuable perspective.

Welcome back to CMU Trustee McGhee!

I also would like to recognize Board Vice Chair Denise Williams Mallett, who is publishing a book titled "The Village Effect." It has a powerful message for women who "lead, love and carry it all." Congratulations Vice Chair Williams Mallett!

Let's take a moment to look back at what's been happening at CMU since our last meeting in April.

In May, we celebrated CMU's Spring 2025 graduates with *five* commencement ceremonies. In all, 2,498 students graduated – with 1,371 students receiving their bachelor's degree, 835 students receiving a master's or specialist degree, and 189 earning a doctoral degree, including 97 new medical doctors.

For the 51st year, CMU welcomed the Michigan Special Olympics State Summer Games to our campus, and the thousands of wonderful athletes, families and volunteers it brings. Chair Regis and I were delighted to welcome the games to campus, speaking at the opening ceremony. Our partnership with the Special Olympics highlights our commitment to inclusiveness, and we believe our community is enriched when we embrace individuals of all abilities.

The student food pantry has officially made its move into Robinson Hall, providing a tremendous resource for students all year around. I encourage you to visit the pantry and see the great job Symantha Dattilo and our Volunteer Center are doing to help students who are experiencing food insecurity.

And new student orientations are nearly complete on campus. It's wonderful to see groups of eager students walking the campus and preparing to join us in the fall.

Now in my eighth month serving as CMU's president, I continue to introduce myself to the university community, explore potential partnerships, meet decision makers and donors, and get to know our Fired-Up alumni and supporters across the state and country.

In April, I testified before the Michigan House Appropriations Subcommittee on Higher Education. I shared with lawmakers many of the ways CMU is preparing our students for success in high demand careers in Michigan, strengthening our economy and communities.

Earlier this month, I spent time with some impressive CMU alumni working for the Dow Corporation in Midland – where over 750 CMU alumni have careers. Along with Trustee Jeff Stoutenburg, College of Business Administration Dean Chris Moberg, and several faculty members, we discussed current and future collaborations, including those in finance, I.T., supply chain management, and research and development.

I spoke about a research interest of mine – work-life balance – on CMU's Search Bar podcast last month. On the podcast's 50th episode, I discussed the balancing act between personal and professional life, the importance of mentorship and other insights on finding work-life harmony.

First Lady Leanne and I also had the pleasure of meeting terrific alumni and supporters at receptions in Traverse City, Grand Rapids, Raleigh, North Carolina and on Monday evening in metro Detroit. We are making

another stop next month in Metro Detroit and look forward to meeting more alumni who are so passionate about CMU.

CMU students and recent graduates have been earning prestigious national awards, allowing them to study internationally.

The U.S. Department of State this spring awarded seven CMU students the Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship – bringing our all-time total to 87 Gilman recipients. Gilman Scholars are undergraduate students with high financial need who study abroad and return to the U.S. with the global networks and foreign language skills needed to support America’s economic and national security interests.

Senior Calvin Older is in the country of Georgia this summer to continue his intensive language study through the American Councils for International Education’s Advanced Russian Language and Area Studies Program.

Amyah Seybert, who earned her bachelor’s degree in Elementary Education in May, received a prestigious Fulbright Award and is in Bulgaria teaching English.

Cara Neidenbach, a recent CMU graduate with a Bachelor of Science in education, will take her teaching skills to Germany this fall with a Fulbright grant.

Our faculty also secure prestigious recognition that advance their research.

Dr. Mona Sirbescu, a professor in the Department of Earth and Atmospheric Sciences, has been awarded a prestigious fellowship from the Research Foundation – Flanders, one of Belgium’s most competitive international mobility programs. She is currently at one of Europe’s leading research institutions, advancing groundbreaking research into the formation of lithium deposits.

At the cabinet level, I am thrilled to welcome incoming Vice President of University Communications and Chief Marketing Officer Harlan Teller. He takes the role starting August 1st, bringing with him decades of success in higher education and corporate marketing and communications. We are excited to work closely with Harlan to strengthen our already strong marketing and communications efforts.

A special thank you to Ari Harris and Abby Dean who have been leading University Communications during the search for our new vice president.

CMU is now nationally recognized as providing an education that is accessible, affordable and impactful. Carnegie classified CMU as one of just four public Opportunity Universities in Michigan, and one of only 27 universities in the nation classified as both an R2 research institution *and* an Opportunity University.

CMU ranked among the very best in Michigan for providing students both access to higher education *and* a pathway to a well-paying career.

We are accessible due to CMU's undergraduate tuition rates being among the lowest of four-year universities in Michigan, and we offer a wide range of grant and scholarship options. 90% of full-time undergraduate students at CMU receive a grant and/or scholarship.

The result: CMU students graduate with an average federal student loan debt that is more than \$11,000 less than the national average.

The Opportunity University designation also highlights that our students graduate with the knowledge, skills and experience necessary for a great career. CMU's Career Outcomes rate is nearly 95%, and our graduates earn 23% more than the national median salary for college graduates within two years of earning their degree.

Being recognized by Carnegie as the highest scoring Opportunity University in Michigan shows that when students invest in their future at CMU, there is a tremendous return on that investment after they graduate.

We expect more students to consider CMU for their education because we are increasing access and preparing our graduates for in-demand, well-paying careers – and we are developing a Strategic Enrollment Management Plan to build on our enrollment growth.

This month, our SEM Works partners held meetings with the Enrollment Management Committee, campus enrollment leaders, Academic Planning and Analysis, as well as deans and college leaders to vet preliminary enrollment goals through 2029 and develop high impact enrollment strategies. In the next two months, committees will be formed to fully develop the strategies and identify the resources needed to implement the strategies.

It is an exciting time for research at CMU, with the launch of our Translational Accelerator that uses partnerships between researchers and industry to support scientific research.

The Translational Accelerator is administered through the CMU Research Corporation and will benefit faculty research by forming partnerships with industry to take research from the lab and apply it to real-world applications.

It will prepare students to be workforce-ready through hands-on research. It will advance economic growth by producing useful innovations for companies and industries. It also helps address challenges resulting from shifts in federal funding that could limit student and faculty research.

Supporting the accelerator's work is a group of Innovation Ambassadors comprised of faculty researchers representing a wide variety of disciplines.

The inaugural group of 18 faculty innovation ambassadors is charged with driving a mindset shift across campus to promote entrepreneurial thinking and real-world uses for research. College of Science and Engineering faculty member Dr. Anthony Chappaz will lead the Innovation Ambassadors and serve as Chief Scientific Officer for CMURC.

The Translational Accelerator strengthens our research endeavor by creating more hands-on learning opportunities for students, supporting our faculty in their innovative pursuits, and ensuring that CMU research continues to make an impact well beyond campus.

After a tremendous response to our call for Go Grant applications in the spring, we awarded 27 mini-grants to initiatives that will accelerate our progress toward achieving the goals of CMU's strategic plan.

We were so impressed with the ideas of our students, faculty and staff that we increased the pool of funding available to allow us to support additional projects – up to \$575,000.

Among the winning proposals were initiatives to support faculty research and professional development, increase the efficient use of technology, strengthen partnerships and engagement between CMU and the local community, boost CMU spirit, enhance crisis preparedness and improve campus facilities.

Joe Garrison and I had a blast awarding oversized checks to the grantees, and work on many of the Go Grant initiatives is already underway with the speed and clarity we had imagined when designing the funding mechanism.

We plan to host a symposium in winter 2026 to allow each of the Go Grant recipients to share their experience and the progress of their work.

Leaders across campus have been focused and working hard to align spending with our strategic priorities and creatively using our resources more effectively.

That work will be reflected in the budget proposal we bring before the board today, which includes NO budget reductions for the first time in eight years. The proposed budget also includes strategic investments in our outstanding academic programs and student supports.

I am proud that CMU has met the budgeting challenges of the past few years by finding creative and collaborative ways to do more with less, without compromising the quality education and experiences we provide.

It is an exciting time for CMU, and I am grateful to be leading the effort to energize this institution for increased growth and success.

As we advance this university together, we continue to meet our mission of preparing CMU students for great success and to make a positive impact in Michigan communities, and beyond.

Thank you, Chair Regis. That concludes my report... and Fire Up Chips!