

Board of Trustees

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

April 23, 2026

Thank you, Chair Mallett, and members of the Board of Trustees. And welcome to everyone joining us today in the room and on the livestream.

It is my pleasure to update you on many of the wonderful things happening at Central Michigan University, and what we are excited about in the days, weeks and months ahead.

Since our last formal session, CMU students have some amazing accomplishments to share and have organized and participated in some outstanding events.

Now in its 16th year, the New Venture Challenge showcased our students' creativity, entrepreneurial drive, and commitment to real-world impact. The competition organized through CMU's Isabella Bank Institute of Entrepreneurship offered seven finalist teams the chance to pitch their ideas to volunteer judges. Congratulations to all the category winners, and the Best Venture Award winners and twins Amelia and Samantha Morfe, who received \$7,500 in seed money for their venture, Linked By Twins, LLC. Leanne and I have seen them working several events over the past month so they definitely have the hustle of young entrepreneurs.

CMU's largest student-organized event is the annual Threads Fashion Show, and this year's show was spectacular. Once again, Leanne and I were blown away by the talent and event production. I would like to also congratulate the faculty advisor for Threads, Professor Ian Mull in the Department of Fashion, Interior Design and Merchandising who was recognized as a Distinguished Professor of the Year by the Michigan Association of State Universities.

There were three events just last week that exemplify who we are at CMU.

First, the Student Creative and Research Endeavors Exhibition – or SCREE – showcased the incredible scholarly work of undergraduate, graduate and medical students. It was a celebration of the innovative research and creative activity of our students, and a chance for them to share their work with the entire university community. I’m admittedly biased but I especially liked the poster presentation by sophomore and Centralis Scholar Paige Weid who is a member of my research team.

Second, in the spirit of CMU’s core value of inclusiveness, last week’s Community Legacy Ball brought us together for a night of celebrating the differences that make us a strong and welcoming community.

And third, on Sunday evening, Leanne and I attended the second annual Black Girls Rock pageant which featured eight contestants. I want to give a special shout out to the executive board of this student organization for organizing such an impressive event and to the newly crowned Miss Black Girls Rock 2026, Whitney Patterson. Whitney and the following executive board members have joined us today: Jayla Turner, Kennedy Butler, Madison Mizel, and Trinity Finch.

CMU students are once again gaining attention with national and international recognitions.

Jacob Dengate, a first-generation CMU meteorology student has been selected for the prestigious Goldwater Scholarship.

Lelaina Beauregard, a senior majoring in Math and German, was selected to receive a prestigious Fulbright English Teaching Assistant award. She will use her Fulbright grant to travel to Germany to teach English.

Ethan Conley, a CMU senior in the Honors Program majoring in International Relations and German, has been awarded the Congress-Bundestag Youth Exchange for Young Professionals Fellowship. With this prestigious fellowship, Ethan will study for a year in Germany, with a goal of one day becoming a U.S. Foreign Service Officer.

CMU’s Forensics team made history this month, winning the National Educational Debate Association’s national championship. The newly formed team outscored teams from places like Wayne State and Penn State – some of the nation’s strongest programs. Congratulations to Dr.

Ryan Corso-Gonzales and all the students who brilliantly represented CMU.

And Earth and Ecosystem Science Ph.D. student Kyle Brooks has been awarded one of only three 2026 Cooperative Institute for Great Lakes Research Graduate Research Fellowships granted nationwide.

CMU's research enterprise is robust, and it is growing. To foster that growth, Provost Lancaster has announced an exciting organizational change, shifting the Office of Graduate Studies into the Academic and Curricular Affairs unit while creating a streamlined Office of Research and Sponsored Programs.

Supporting faculty and investing in research and creative activity are important parts of priority one of our Strategic Plan.

Jennifer Schisa will continue in her role as director of Graduate Studies, and the shift in the organizational structure will be effective July 1. A search committee has been established to seek the vice president for Research and Sponsored Programs.

Student enrollment continues to be a major focus of the university, as we navigate the challenge of international student enrollment decline. While there is little to be optimistic about when it comes to international students obtaining visas to study with us, there are positive signs for domestic student enrollment at CMU.

Transfer and first-year domestic student applications have increased over this time last year, meaning more potential students want to be CMU Chippewas. While it is still early, we are currently projecting the largest increase in domestic enrollment since the 2009-10 academic year, 16 years ago.

And there is encouraging progress being made on addressing enrollment and retention with CMU's Strategic Enrollment Management Plan.

Our plan contains four strategies with dozens of initiatives aimed at improving enrollment and retention. As of March 31st, implementation of the plan was 41% complete, which, given that we are only three months into the launch of the plan, is particularly impressive. I want to thank the University Transformation Office for creating a dashboard so we can track progress on the implementation of the plan

We successfully launched the Central Career Guarantee, and you likely have seen the ads on television, online and billboards throughout the state promoting the initiative that backs up our claim that a CMU degree will lead to a successful career.

Our SEM plan is also gaining buy-in from the entire university community. We asked faculty and staff to pitch in, and their response was impressive. More than 50 people volunteered to join several project teams working to meet the plan's priorities. Thank you to all those who stepped up.

The Covenant HealthCare College of Medicine at CMU has many reasons to celebrate, starting with once again earning national recognition for training physicians who serve where they are needed most.

The newly released U.S. News and World Report for Graduate Medical Schools ranked the college among the top institutions in the country for making an impact in rural and underserved regions.

Out of the 172 schools surveyed nationally, the college ranked in the top 10 (#9, up from #13) for placing graduates in underserved areas and in the top fifteen (#13, up from #20) for placing graduates in rural communities.

The increase in rankings is a testament to the fact that our graduates are living our mission and making a commitment to serving vulnerable populations in designated health professional shortage areas.

We are also celebrating progress on Advancing Health Together, our planned shift of medical education to Saginaw.

As we speak, a schematic design for the new building is underway with architectural engineering firm HDR. We have selected Clark Construction as the lead construction manager for the project and will move forward with them upon approval of this board.

Last year, the Board of Trustees charged me – with the support of the University Transformation Office – with developing a framework to effectively implement the many significant organizational changes necessary to set CMU on a course for future success as defined by our mission.

These changes include our Strategic Enrollment Management plan, changes to CMU Online, replacement of CMU's Enterprise Resource

Planning system, and ongoing implementation of our Strategic Plan, among many other efforts.

We have developed the CMU Change Roadmap to provide an operational framework for how CMU prioritizes, implements, and sustains complex change. The roadmap defines what the university will focus on changing over time and why those changes matter. It ensures CMU is focusing on the right work at the right time without overextending the institution.

The CMU Change Roadmap is the result of broad engagement across the institution. Last year, the University Transformation Office hosted several Change Roadmap sessions with senior leaders, faculty, staff, and other key groups, with participation from 350 individuals. There was also university-wide participation through an anonymous form to encourage candid input.

The resulting themes, priorities, and recommendations were reviewed by the Change Champion Network and a representative cross-section of senior leaders.

The Change Roadmap will be enabled through an implementation plan, which translates the roadmap into actionable, initiative-specific plans. While the roadmap defines the institutional changes we are prioritizing, the implementation plan outlines how a specific change will be achieved including timelines, tasks, milestones, and roles.

The implementation plan will be completed by a Change Roadmap Governance group. This will establish a clear structure that ensures decisions are made, owned, and carried through in alignment with the university's established Leadership Standards.

Thank you to Darcie Wilson, CMU's Chief Transformation Officer, for helping to develop the Change Roadmap. I believe it is another example of the value of creating and elevating a University Transformation Office to the enterprise-wide level.

CMU is among the first universities in the nation to adopt a University Transformation Office at this level. I recently had the privilege of sharing our experience as a leader in this area in a guest column for the national online publication *University Business*, explaining how adapting private sector tools like this can make universities more agile in an increasingly competitive environment.

CMU is a leader and innovator when it comes to meaningful change, and it is all in support of our mission of student success.

Exam week is nearly here, and our students are working hard to finish the semester on a positive note.

Please join me in wishing them good luck on exams, and an early congratulations to the 2,468 students who will proudly graduate with CMU degrees and certificates in two weeks. I am excited – as always – to celebrate our graduates at commencement ceremonies on May 8th and 9th.

Commencement serves as much more than a celebration of individual achievement. It showcases the power and the value of a Central Michigan University degree.

As Michigan's number one Opportunity University, we take immense pride in the access we provide, with tuition rates that remain among the lowest in the state to ensure a world-class education is within reach. When you couple that commitment to access with the tremendous success our graduates experience, it is clear that CMU offers a terrific return on investment.

CMU graduates are the living embodiment of our mission, proving that when you provide a clear path to success, our students not only walk it, they lead the way.

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