

Board of Trustees

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

February 12, 2026

Thank you, Chair Mallett, and welcome to everyone attending here in the University Center and those watching via the livestream.

We are off to a great – and often very cold – start to the Spring 2026 semester at Central Michigan University. We have been able to literally plow through some snow and bitterly cold weather, only closing one day for safety's sake.

Despite the chill, most of the wonderful events during our Martin Luther King, Jr. week went on as scheduled, inspiring members of our campus and community to continue the legacy of inclusivity and justice of which Dr. King dreamed.

At the CommUNITY Peace Brunch, we enjoyed powerful speeches from students, staff, and from alumna and former Congresswoman Brenda Lawrence. Thank you to the team from Multicultural Academic Student Services, who also organized many other events aimed at building community and honoring Dr. King's legacy.

Since the last formal meeting of the Board of Trustees, we have selected a leader for CMU Online. Dr. Kaleb Patrick is now officially the Vice President of CMU Online after serving in the role on an interim basis since January of 2024. I look forward to working with Kaleb and his team on the Online Transition Project and growing our program offerings and partnerships.

We have a solid foundation to build our online offerings, as CMU just ranked in the top 150 universities in the United States with the best online bachelor's programs, according to U.S. News and World Report.

CMU is also now better positioned to focus on the strategic exploration, governance and university-wide integration of artificial intelligence. I am pleased to announce that Ben Andera, our executive director of academic research and computing, has added the role of special advisor for artificial intelligence to his CV.

In this new role, Ben will guide a coordinated approach to AI adoption and ensure that new AI tools are implemented ethically, securely, and effectively. Thank you to Ben for accepting this important responsibility.

In Athletics, I am thrilled to report that CMU women's basketball notched a victory at Western Michigan a few weeks ago. And it was not close. Congratulations Coach Haynie and the team for the win and representing CMU so well.

Meanwhile, CMU's men's basketball team is becoming a cohesive group under the leadership of Coach Bronkema. The team hosted the fourth annual Toilet Paper Toss game and won in dramatic fashion in front of a packed McGuirk Arena crowd.

Our student-athletes' hard work and their dedication is not limited to competition. During the fall semester, our student-athletes also donated 2,196 hours of service to the community while achieving a school-record 3.45 grade point average. This marks the 54th consecutive semester student-athletes have achieved a cumulative GPA over 3.0. Well done!

Female student-athletes at CMU will now have more opportunities to grow personally and professionally thanks to a generous grant from The Bob and Renee Parsons Foundation, founded by alumna Renee LaBelle Parsons and her husband, Bob Parsons. The \$350,000 grant enables CMU Athletics to launch EmpowHER Leadership, a women's student-athlete program designed to cultivate confidence, resilience, and career

readiness through mentorship, experiential learning, and community impact. The donation was announced at CMU's National Girls and Women in Sports Brunch – hosted by First Lady Leanne and Director of Athletics Amy Folan. We are grateful for the Parsons' generosity and interest in helping CMU student-athletes succeed.

In January, we made the exciting announcement that for the next two years, CMU Football will play Eastern Michigan at Ford Field in Detroit – we're calling it our MotorCity MAction! These games will be a tremendous way to showcase CMU's engagement with the city of Detroit, and to strengthen the relationships we continue to build in the region. We know CMU Chippewa fans, including our dedicated alumni, will show up in force to show their maroon and gold pride on game day.

In Detroit, and throughout the entire state, CMU is doing its part to address the problem of low teacher retention.

A recent study found that Michigan is losing teachers at an alarming rate. Last school year 8,000 teachers entered the profession, but 7,900 left it.

CMU is part of a new cohort within the Education Preparation Provider Collaborative along with four other university partners. Together, we are supporting new teachers by providing mentorship opportunities to help them overcome the challenges that may overwhelm teachers at the start of their careers.

Most of you know that CMU began its history as a normal school for teachers – we're proud to continue the legacy of preparing educators to serve our state.

Part of living our mission is pursuing our strategic goals and priorities. The Go Grants program is an important part of engaging our entire university community in that effort. Since the program was announced at my first 100 days event last year, Go Grant initiatives have fueled progress on all four priorities of the strategic plan.

On Tuesday, at a Go Grants Symposium, we took time to learn from the 2025 grant recipients – about their successes and lessons learned. Thank you to everyone who participated in this amazing showcase.

It is clear we are doing exciting and valuable work that is moving us closer to achieving the goals of our strategic plan. That is why I announced a round two of funding for the Go Grants initiative – to build on our momentum this year and get more students, faculty and staff involved.

The selection process will be similar to last year, with the Budget Priorities Committee reviewing and approving applications. The proposal submission window is open now through March 17 on the university's website.

While we internally examined the progress made through Go Grants at the symposium, those outside of CMU are also looking to us as an example of innovation.

Dr. Kevin McClure, the author of “The Caring University”, said small grant initiatives like this, that are open to the entire campus, help units advance their goals while also advancing strategic priorities. He said it makes pursuing the strategic plan more of a shared experience and can be an opportunity to encourage collaboration across units. That is what we are experiencing with Go Grants at CMU.

A note that Dr. McClure will be visiting our campus on March 20th. He will be the keynote speaker for a leadership retreat with the President's Cabinet and Provost's Advisory Council, spend time with members of the Employee Value Proposition Steering Committee and Human Resources, and give a public lecture at 1:00 p.m. in Opperman Auditorium titled “The Caring University: A Roadmap to Reimagining the Higher Education Workspace.” I invite everyone to attend and learn more about how we can pursue making CMU a model of the caring university.

Turning to our enrollment situation at CMU, we have Spring 2026 numbers from the student census taken on January 22nd. We found that undergraduate enrollment is up by 100 students year over year, but overall student enrollment has decreased, again as a result of changes for our international students.

Unfortunately, only a small fraction of the 650 international students who deferred to the spring semester were able to secure a visa to join us at CMU.

While we are disappointed, we are certainly NOT giving up.

To help us welcome more students to CMU, implementation of the CMU Strategic Enrollment Management Plan is well underway in 2026.

Perhaps the boldest strategy in the plan is the new Central Career Guarantee. With its launch, CMU became the first public university in the state of Michigan to offer undergraduate students a promise of employment or acceptance into graduate school within six months of earning their college degree.

The Central Career Guarantee contributes greatly to the university's mission. We know that steps like meeting regularly with academic advisors and success coaches, actively participating in class and campus life, and intentional next-step planning help students stay on the path to graduation and help graduates become successful alumni.

CMU's mission statement says we are defined by the success of our students and alumni. The Central Career Guarantee is an extension of that mission and powerfully demonstrates our commitment to ensuring that our students become successful alumni.

The momentum we have built in the opening weeks of 2026 is undeniable, and we will keep it going. From our pioneering Central Career Guarantee to our strategic plan progress and Strategic Enrollment Management Plan implementation, we are positively shaping CMU's future.

We are building a stronger Central Michigan University, together. Thank you for your continued leadership and dedication to our mission.

Chair Mallett, that concludes my report... and Fire Up Chips!