



Office of the President

Robert O. Davies became the 15th president of Central Michigan University Sept. 1, 2018. Following a unanimous appointment by the CMU Board of Trustees, Davies immediately undertook a listening and learning tour to assess challenges and identify opportunities to strengthen the university.

Throughout his 30 year career in higher education, Davies has set the leadership standard for improving student success and inspiring a commitment to lifelong learning. Immediately prior to his arrival in Michigan, Davies served as president of Murray State University in Murray, Kentucky. He also previously served as president of Eastern Oregon University. Over the course of his career, Davies also held leadership roles in university relations, alumni relations and advancement.

A strong believer in the transformative power of education, Davies has made increasing enrollment and degree attainment key priorities at CMU. After more than a decade of enrollment declines, and recognizing the many challenges facing universities nationwide, Davies expanded CMU's marketing, outreach and recruitment efforts. This included venturing into new markets, bolstering CMU's presence in key underserved markets, and launching the "We do" brand, which focuses on hands-on experiential learning, career readiness, and real-world results. At the same time, he prioritized student retention and success initiatives designed to increase graduation rates; these include proactive multi-semester advising, new mentoring programs, and expanded support services for students such as the Student Food Pantry, financial wellness coaching and counseling.

Following these efforts, CMU saw the year-over-year increases in new first-year student enrollment in 14 years, as well as increased enrollment among transfer and international students. And, in 2023, CMU's First Destination Survey shows nearly 94% of CMU alumni are employed, entering a service program or pursuing additional education within six months of graduation — placing CMU among the top of public universities in the state for successful outcomes.

Davies maintained his focus on student success through one of the most turbulent periods in higher education history: the global COVID-19 pandemic. Under Davies' leadership, and with partnership and support from the Central Michigan District Health Department and other community institutions, CMU remained open for in-person living and learning opportunities throughout the entire year, shifting to remote-only learning only for a brief period when mandated by state leaders. With health and safety as top priorities, CMU was able to offer on-campus experiences for students while also maintaining a low number of positive cases compared to other institutions of higher education in Michigan. At the same time, the university kept tuition flat to minimize financial burdens for students and families while also increasing scholarships and financial aid.

Now, after leading CMU through the final stages of its prior strategic plan, Davies initiated a process to engage the community in developing a new multi-year strategic plan. Keeping student success at the forefront of its goals, the Board of Trustees approved the new strategic plan in September, 2023. It aims to clearly differentiate CMU from other institutions in Michigan in meaningful ways and showcase the unique value CMU offers the students and communities it serves.

In addition to his position as CMU's president, Davies also serves as board chair of the Central Michigan University Research Corp., a business incubator with locations on CMU's campus in Mount Pleasant, as well as in Bay City, Midland and Saginaw. CMURC is the top SmartZone in the state for job creation and companies formed. Davies also serves on the CMU Medical Education Partners board of directors and is a member of the board of directors for the Great Lakes Bay Regional Alliance, Midland Business Alliance and the Parade Company.

Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer appointed Davies to serve on the Michigan Workforce Development Board in 2020, with reappointment to a four-year term in 2023. The board is a panel of state leaders focused on increasing access to education, creating jobs and growing the economy statewide. Davies' participation on the board aligns with CMU's priority to offer education focused on real-world results that meet the needs of students and employers.

In 2021, Davies was appointed the Mid-American Conference representative on the NCAA Division I Presidential Forum and became chair of the NCAA Division I Committee on Academics. He also accepted a position on the Board of Trustees at The Children's Foundation, supporting pediatric research and education initiatives to improve the health of children in Michigan.

Davies received a Bachelor of Science degree in management from the University of Nevada, Reno. He also holds a Master of Business Administration degree in finance and marketing from the University of Oregon and a doctoral degree in higher education administration from the State University of New York at Buffalo. He attended the prestigious Harvard Institute for Educational Management.

Davies and his wife, Cindy, have one daughter, Katie, a recent CMU graduate who is now completing her master's degree at the university. The Davies enjoy cheering on CMU Chippewa student-athletes and attending outstanding student performances at the CMU School of Music, University Theatre and more.