



Supporting Special Olympics Michigan

June 25, 2019

Friends and colleagues,

I had the privilege at the end of May of experiencing for the first time a highlight of summer on Central Michigan University's campus: the Special Olympics Michigan State Summer Games.

I met many of the nearly 3,000 Special Olympics athletes in attendance, and seeing their enthusiasm, drive and positive attitude is truly inspirational. The buzz on our campus and the commitment of our entire university community to these athletes are incredible.

Through all of the excitement however, rumors surfaced that Central's partnership with and dedication to Special Olympics Michigan is ending, and the games will no longer be held at CMU. To that I say: No, it's not. Our partnership, while evolving, remains fully intact. Central Michigan University and our faculty, staff, students and alumni remain a proud, leading partner, actively supporting the organization, its athletes, and their families, coaches and friends.

Yes, SOMI leaders have informed us they're considering moving their headquarters off of our campus. To this point, SOMI and CMU leaders continue to work together on addressing issues and developing solutions that would keep the headquarters here on our campus.

Both SOMI and CMU leaders also are 100% committed to ensuring future Special Olympics athletes experience what tens of thousands before them have at the State Summer Games here on our campus.

At CMU, our team works to ensure costs for the games on campus remain as low as possible for Special Olympics Michigan. SOMI works very hard throughout the year to raise sponsorships and conduct other fundraising efforts to cover a majority of these expenses as none of the athletes are charged to participate.

I am proud of our more than 100 CMU staff members who work before, during and after the summer games' busy three days on campus, ensuring the best experience for the athletes, families and coaches. As a commitment to the State Summer Games, CMU underwrites and waives a large portion of the costs and does not financially gain from hosting the State Summer Games.

We host the State Summer Games because of the sense of community that is established, the experiences provided to our students and the opportunity to support an amazing event for incredible individuals.

Since the very first games on our campus in 1973, faculty and staff volunteers from nearly every CMU academic unit and service area have united in support of Special Olympics athletes. Many of

you donate funds and spend time supporting the athletes every year, and you are joined by hundreds of students and alumni.

You — our faculty and staff — have contributed nearly \$315,000 during the past 17 years alone to SOMI through our annual employee fundraising campaign. Our students also actively engage, as volunteers and interns, and throughout the year they play a key role in CMU's leadership in Unified Sports. This also does not include the hundreds of faculty, staff, students and CMU alumni who volunteer and support the State Summer Games and other SOMI activities.

One other item of discussion related to Special Olympics is that last May, as a continuation of multiple previous discussions, Central clarified Special Olympics Michigan's status as a fully independent Michigan nonprofit corporation. Just as SOMI makes all of its own hiring, compensation, fundraising and event decisions without CMU oversight, so, too, should it logically be the employer of its employees. The ending of this co-employment relationship, however, did not affect our overall partnership and commitment to work together.

The bottom line is that Central Michigan University is committed to maintaining its longstanding relationship with Special Olympics Michigan. We are working with SOMI leaders — who share this commitment — to ensure the partnership, while evolving, becomes even stronger and better for those who we both serve.

Thank you for all you do to support the Special Olympics Michigan athletes year-round and welcome them to campus for the State Summer Games. I look forward to continuing this proud, decades long tradition on our campus.

Be well,



Bob Davies, Ph.D.
President
Central Michigan University