



Board *of* Trustees

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

September 24, 2026

Thank you, Chair Mallett, and a warm welcome to those joining us here in the room and watching online.

It is an exciting time at CMU for one big reason: our students are back!

As soon as our IMPACT and Leadership Safari signature events begin, it feels like an immediate rush of adrenaline starts coursing through campus, energizing everyone after the calmer summer months.

We are excited to share that this fall, CMU welcomed more new domestic undergraduate students and more students from Michigan. Combine that with a 4.3% increase in our second to third year retention rate – the second highest such rate in the past ten years – and our total undergraduate enrollment remains steady.

“Steady and stable” may not sound as exciting as growth, but it is actually a very good place to be this year. We are hearing from peers around the state and throughout the Midwest who have experienced significant, double-digit decreases in their entering classes.

Seeing increases of any kind – especially among new and transfer students at the undergraduate level – means we are making important progress.

We cannot control the federal policies that affect international student enrollment, but we *can* control our strategic efforts to increase domestic enrollment, and we have made some great headway.

We saw growing enrollment from our community college partners. Enrollment from the Central Bound program at Lansing Community College is up nearly 50% over last year, and enrollment from Delta College, which has a strong articulation agreement with CMU, is up more than 30% over last year. Overall, we have experienced a 3.2% increase in transfer students to CMU.

With the state's significant investment in community colleges, we know more students may choose to begin their education at one of our partner schools. We are taking steps to ensure that all community college students can make a smooth transition to CMU to continue their degree progress.

Overall enrollment at CMU will only be strengthened with the continued implementation of our Strategic Enrollment Management Plan. This is a uniquely challenging time to be implementing this plan. Over the past decade, the college-going rate among high school students nationally has dropped nearly 10%, and the college-going rate in Michigan is lower than the national average.

We are fighting a growing narrative that college degrees aren't worth the investment. That is why we are doubling down on how we showcase our mission – that CMU is defined by the success of our students and our alumni, and by our positive impact with the communities we serve – including on the local and statewide economy.

We are amplifying our Central Career Guarantee, that cements our claim that a CMU degree helps students achieve their personal, academic and professional goals. We are telling stories about students securing incredible internships and about alumni in terrific careers. We are highlighting the ways we identify and address the needs of our region and our state.

As an example, we know Michigan is facing significant healthcare provider shortages. As part of our ongoing effort to address that shortage, we launched the Bachelor of Nursing program just one year ago.

Enrollment in our Bachelor of Science in Nursing program is exceeding expectations. This fall, we are welcoming 36 students into the program. In the spring, we anticipate another 30 to 35 students joining the program. In just one year, we will have grown from 29 nursing students to nearly 100.

Looking ahead to summer 2028, we expect about 200 nursing students on campus. Those students will become the highly skilled, compassionate care providers our state so desperately needs.

Health Professions Dean Jennifer Simpson and Provost Paula Lancaster are also exploring graduate level programs in nursing and will soon begin to discuss opportunities with our accrediting bodies.

Michigan communities *need* our graduates to lead the future of healthcare. To address that critical need, we broke ground on the new home of medical education at CMU earlier this week.

Hundreds of supporters joined us at the groundbreaking ceremony for the MyMichigan Health CMU Medical Education Building, which will serve as the future home of the Covenant HealthCare College of Medicine at CMU.

Like our growing nursing program, our strong medical education program will graduate highly trained physicians that will provide competent, compassionate care for patients in the Great Lakes Bay Region and beyond.

The medical education building in Saginaw is not the only recent groundbreaking for CMU. We were thrilled on Saturday to break ground on the new Women's and Men's Golf Training Facility. When this facility is complete one year from now, it will stand as the premier golf training

complex in the Mid-American Conference and rank among the finest in the nation.

Our student-athletes are our university's ambassadors to the world. Their excellence — in the classroom, in competition and in the community — shines a bright light on CMU.

Thank you again to Rocky and Traci Ricelli and Tom and Sharon Weirich whose leadership and belief in our student-athletes have turned an idea into concrete reality.

Another important campus facility will get a much-needed renovation thanks to support from the state of Michigan. In July, the state legislature and governor approved a \$30 million investment in a total \$45 million capital outlay for the renovation of Brooks Hall.

Brooks Hall was constructed in 1964 and, since that time has been the primary home for CMU's science departments and programs. This investment will bring Brooks Hall up to meeting modern requirements for teaching, learning and research in the sciences.

Enhancements to Brooks will include modernizing classrooms, labs and the CMU Greenhouse, enhancing technology in the Brooks Astronomical Observatory, and creating a centralized home for the College of Science and Engineering's Student Success Center.

Thank you to our leaders in Lansing for their support and for understanding the positive impact the Brooks Hall project will have on students, and the valuable contributions our university makes toward the future of Michigan's economy.

Michigan representatives in Washington D.C. also supported nearly \$6 million in federal grants to support CMU's mission.

More than \$1.2 million through the U.S. Department of Education will expand access to health care education using in-person and distance learning technologies.

A \$1 million award through the Department of Agriculture will allow the Covenant HealthCare College of Medicine at CMU to provide state-of-the-art training in rural areas where access to certain specialty services and procedures is lacking.

And more than \$3.5 million through the U.S. Department of Commerce will help the CMU Research Corporation strengthen academic and industry partnerships, while developing research into national security technology. The funding will support infrastructure to create jobs and research opportunities and help CMU create strategic partnerships across Michigan.

We are deeply grateful to Congressman John Moolenaar, Congresswoman Kristen McDonald Rivet and Senator Gary Peters for securing this vital federal funding that invests in programs and research that furthers CMU's mission of making a positive impact with the communities we serve.

And speaking of government support – I want to give a shout-out to a very special CMU student who is playing a role in shaping federal policy.

Gracie Merrick is a member of our women's cross country and track and field team who competes in multiple events, including the discus, shot put, hammer throw and javelin. Last week, she represented not only CMU, but the entire Mid-American Conference, at an event on Capitol Hill about the future of collegiate athletics.

My wife, Leanne, and I had an opportunity to meet Gracie at a track event that CMU hosted in the spring, so I can confirm she is an amazing young woman. By the way, she holds the third-best discus throw in program history. Thank you for representing us so well, Gracie!

Our students – who become our graduates – are our most significant success story.

Graduates of CMU's Counseling master's program make a positive impact in the lives of their clients and their families, and now the program has gained more national attention.

The Counseling program was selected to receive the 2026 Association for Counselor Education and Supervision Robert Frank Outstanding Counselor Education Program Award. This national award recognizes innovative and exemplary program development in the education and supervision of counselors and is a well-deserved honor.

Innovative can also be used to describe some of the efforts underway at CMU this fall.

The Artificial Intelligence Advisory Board is looking for new ways to help students, faculty and staff engage with emerging technologies ethically and effectively. The Change Roadmap Governance Council is developing new tools to help CMU evaluate its decision making and risk tolerance, and to seek more efficiencies in our processes. And CMU has been adding new academic programs and certificates, as well as enhancing and strengthening existing programs.

The annual U.S. News & World Report Best College Rankings were announced this week, and once again, CMU climbed the ranks in several categories. Our overall rank among national universities climbed 21 spots to 262 in the nation. Of the top public universities, CMU climbed 14 spots this year to number 143.

Thank you to all of the faculty, staff, and students working to improve CMU's standing in these very visible national rankings.

This summer, we finished another year of record fundraising, generating nearly \$83 million for CMU programs, real-world learning, scholarships and facilities that prepare students to excel professionally and personally. The momentum has continued into this new fiscal year, where we have set a new first-quarter record in fundraising.

Our donors invest in CMU because they believe in our mission. Our alumni give back because they understand the tremendous power of a CMU education. These gifts are not just philanthropic commitments – they are votes of confidence in our university.

When prospective students and their families see alumni coming back to campus to volunteer their time and talent, and when they see donors step up to establish scholarships and to invest in programs, they understand that *this* university can help them achieve their goals.

We are deeply grateful to our donors and supporters, and we have just launched a comprehensive campaign that highlights their impact.

Forge the Future launched on Friday with a gala that brought together CMU's most fervent supporters to light the campaign on fire. The enthusiasm for the many ways to support our students and this university through Forge the Future is truly inspiring, and I know our future is brighter having such generosity and passion pushing CMU forward.

One of my proudest moments of the evening was standing onstage with members of the national campaign steering committee as we announced that the campaign has already raised more than \$237 million in its quiet phase.

To put that in perspective, we have already raised more than double the amount of CMU's most successful previous campaign, and we are *just getting started*.

As I spoke with attendees that night, I heard so many stories about the CMU experience and its life-changing impact. Many shared stories about our dedicated faculty and staff.

As we seek to strengthen our university through the campaign, we are also working internally to strengthen our culture.

Earlier this month, I was grateful to be part of a campus-wide conversation organized by the provost's office about our workplace culture and our employee experience. The *Caring University in Action* event facilitated important discussions around how we progress toward becoming a Caring University, using principles outlined by Dr. Kevin McClure in his book of the same name.

Each of our faculty and staff members chose to bring their talents, intellect, and energy to this university. They deserve a workplace that honors that commitment – one where they feel seen, supported, and energized to do their finest work.

Taking cues from the Caring University, we are also defining our value from within the organization. We surveyed our faculty and staff and, with their input and ideas, developed a comprehensive Employee Value Proposition, something that speaks directly to their experiences of life at Central.

And we will once again honor the staff that go above and beyond to make CMU a wonderful place to live, work and learn. Nineteen staff members will be recognized at the 2026 Staff Excellence Awards next week. These are 19 individuals, chosen from a record 117 colleague nominations, who greatly strengthen our university. They also remind us that excellence is about the positive impact we can make in the lives of others.

Finally, we are preparing to welcome alumni back home to Central for Homecoming Weekend, October first through the third. As always, we have many events planned to celebrate CMU and the friendships formed here over the years. Congratulations to Sarah Rowley Opperman and the Honorable Dan Opperman, who will lead the festivities as this year's Homecoming Grand Marshals. Their immeasurable dedication to CMU has supported the success of thousands of students, and for that we are forever grateful.

Whether welcoming our newest students to campus, breaking ground on transformative facilities, securing vital state and federal investments, or launching our historic Forge the Future campaign, CMU is moving forward with purpose and momentum.

Thank you, Chair Mallett and members of the Board of Trustees, for your steady leadership, partnership, and dedication to CMU. I look forward to working alongside you as we continue this important work.

Thank you.