

Provost Gealt's testimony to House and Senate committees on higher education

March 10, 2016

Governor's budget proposal/Legislative question:

Gov. Snyder's proposed budget is welcome news as the 5.2 percent restoration of funds takes higher education back to 2011 funding levels. Given the issues the state is facing, from roads to the water crisis in Flint, this commitment to higher education is significant.

You've asked that I first talk about *how new degree programs are created at Central Michigan University to respond to market needs and how existing programs are phased out to save money and reallocate resources.*

Academic prioritization was one of the first projects Dr. George E. Ross initiated when he became president of CMU five years ago.

The purpose of the academic prioritization process was to provide the university with solid data to make strategic decisions in the allocation of human and financial resources. Our goal was to analyze how the university can better focus for the future and make CMU more responsive in academic areas of strength and emerging interest.

The yearlong review examined approximately 350 academic programs. Since then, 97 programs have been eliminated.

At the same time, prioritization has allowed us to advance high-demand programs. We have invested an additional \$6 million and hired 33 new faculty for programs such as physics, health administration, neuroscience, psychology, speech-language pathology, counseling and special education, biochemistry, engineering, and environmental studies.

Additionally, the Math Assistance Center was expanded to provide increased services, and we've continued to invest in new teaching laboratories, including six active learning classrooms and research facilities.

Which brings us to the process of developing new programs.

Proposed new programs at CMU must identify potential student interest and enrollment and demonstrate employer demand for professionals in the field.

We ask if the program will attract quality students and if our faculty can deliver a program of national caliber to meet the needs of the local, state and regional economies.

Here are just a few examples of new programs introduced in the past couple of years.

- We added an online Master of Health Administration degree and established a Doctor of Physical Therapy cohort in the Upper Peninsula, where students take courses simultaneous with those in Mount Pleasant.

- A newly created Ph.D. in environmental and ecosystem sciences will produce experts to oversee interdisciplinary research projects for the Great Lakes.
- And to meet critical needs in Michigan's K-12 schools, CMU has enhanced its offerings to include the Ph.D. in educational leadership and the Doctor of Education Technology.

Beyond new programs, our academic prioritization efforts guide our efforts to enhance existing programs that are in high demand and meet evolving educational needs. For example:

- Capitalizing on the CMU Biological Station in Lake Michigan, our Great Lakes Research Institute engages CMU students from all the sciences in applied research to safeguard the largest body of fresh water in the world. The EPA has entrusted us with \$20 million over the past six years to collect research information used by the federal government to restore coastal wetlands.
- Notably, we've also been a pioneer in distance learning since 1971. Today, distance learning allows students in greater and greater numbers to take online classes, whether they are located in Mount Pleasant or North Dakota or are on a Naval ship in the middle of an ocean. Our work in online programs will continue to expand, and in fact, our online enrollment has increased 369 percent since 2007.

The bottom line is this: It used to be that a university's academic programs were what they were. Today, conversations occur every single day on campus about what students need to be successful, what businesses need to be successful, and what degree programs will best meet those needs.

About CMU:

About 95 percent of our students come from Michigan and 78 percent stay here when they graduate. They are homegrown, intelligent leaders who believe in Michigan's future.

Nearly 125 years ago, CMU was established to prepare teachers. There were 31 students in that first class.

Today, we have 27,000 students. Our mission is to foster personal and intellectual growth among students, preparing them for productive careers, meaningful lives and responsible citizenship in a global society.

CMU will complete construction of its \$95 million Biosciences Building later this year — a facility supported by the Legislature with a \$30 million capital outlay contribution. Thank you. I hope you'll join us when we have a grand opening for this amazing building, which will advance Michigan's research and teaching capabilities in STEM-related disciplines.

The biosciences facility will benefit many disciplines, including our College of Medicine.

This college was created after the medical community in Saginaw approached us with the idea. Their concern was a growing shortage of doctors, which is anticipated to reach as high as 6,000 physicians in Michigan by 2020 — in just four years.

Even in Mount Pleasant, home to one of the state's largest universities, residents now report that their doctors are referring them to urgent care when they need same-day attention. And sometimes, their wait at the urgent care centers lasts three to five hours.

The College of Medicine, which prepares doctors who are committed to serving residents in rural and medically underserved communities where the shortage of physicians is greatest, has just finished interviewing applicants for its fourth class.

We received more than 5,000 applications for 104 slots.

Of our current medical students, 85 percent are from Michigan and 15 percent of the third class are underrepresented minorities.

I mentioned earlier the development of a homegrown pool of leaders, and I'd like to share a couple of stories of how Michigan employers are tapping into this resource.

- Ford Motor Co. has named CMU a premiere institution — one of 20 universities in the world designated as a top recruiting school. In fact, more than three dozen CMU students will visit Ford headquarters in April for the first insider's look among premiere universities at one of the world's largest automotive manufacturers.
- Another example — CMU is the North American leader in SAP certification, thanks in part to the university's two-week SAP Academy which leads more CMU students to achieve the coveted TERP10 certification than the next three highest-ranked institutions *combined*.

In fact, our SAP educational efforts are so exceptional that CMU hosts an annual competition where 200 students use SAP software to solve a mock business problem. For 35 companies — including General Motors, Consumers Energy, Dow Chemical, Blue Cross Blue Shield and 3M — the event has become a highly competitive, onsite recruiting event. Our students literally receive job offers on site, during the event.

Kevin Riedy, a senior from Livonia, walked into this year's event as a competitor and walked out with a job at Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan.

I end with one, simple question: what is this hearing all about?

It isn't about "appropriating" dollars and cents for an institution. It's about investing in our youth and the future of our state. I point to the positive outcomes that will follow your funding decisions: our students and more than 212,000 alumni who are putting their stamp on the world in incredible ways.

In closing, per-student state funding ranges from \$2,800 to \$8,200 at Michigan's 15 public universities. CMU students receive an investment from the state of \$3,600 each ... the sixth lowest. I urge you to find a way to change that funding method, so undergraduates at all institutions receive equal support.

I also note that if CMU were to live on state appropriations alone, we'd close our doors after 61 days. The impact on our students and their families, who must bear much of the rest of the burden, is obvious.

Rest assured, we are taking concrete measures to help them. To enhance access, we have increased financial aid by \$6 million in each of the last three years, to a total of \$61 million annually. In fact, CMU has increased financial aid by 67 percent over the last five years.

CMU is committed to being a good partner with the state and its residents. Our cumulative tuition increase has been the lowest in Michigan the last six years. We're a total of 28 percent below what the state-mandated tuition caps would have allowed since they were implemented four years ago. That's 28 percent lower than what you would have allowed, because we take seriously our responsibility and commitment to students, their families and the state of Michigan.

We will continue that trend again this year.

Thank you for the opportunity to share my thoughts. I'd be glad to take questions.