

**Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Higher Education Hearing
Central Michigan University
George E. Ross, President
February 22, 2018**

Good afternoon, Chair Schuitmaker and Senators Hertel and MacGregor.

I bring you warm regards from Central Michigan University, our 23,000 students, nearly 3,000 faculty and staff, and our quarter of a million alumni.

We appreciate Governor Snyder's recommended funding increase, and thank *you* for the past seven years of reinvestment in higher education. We applaud your leadership.

Yet, we also note that Michigan ranked 20th in per capita state fiscal support of higher education in 2001, compared to 43rd today. In 2001, average state support was nearly \$10,000 per student. Today, it falls shy of \$5,400.

We at CMU believe that if our Great Lakes state wants a shot at the next Amazon Headquarters 2-type project, we must fuel our economy by investing in students and families pursuing degrees.

At CMU, we have managed our budget carefully in order to maintain — for the past eight years — the lowest cumulative tuition increase of any Michigan public university. Simultaneously, under my watch as CMU's 14th president, we have increased financial aid and scholarship funding by 87 percent.

We support students with more than \$61 million in university-funded scholarships each year and distribute more than \$300 million in private and federal funds. About 85 percent of all CMU students receive some form of financial assistance.

CMU is celebrating its 125th year serving the great state of Michigan, founded in 1892 by business leaders determined to fill a teacher void in the state's schoolhouses.

Today, we also are leaders in Great Lakes research. We are leaders in providing health care, with a focus on underserved rural and urban areas. We are leaders meeting the needs of corporations, producing engineers, marketers and communicators, accountants, sales professionals, and information systems experts.

Nearly 90 percent of our on-campus students are Michigan natives from all 83 counties. Most choose to stay here after they graduate, contributing to Michigan's economic rebirth.

A report released in December puts CMU's statewide economic impact at \$1.2 billion in fiscal year 2016. The Anderson Economic Group showed CMU accounts for the creation of nearly 12,000 Michigan jobs.

Rob Vallentine, global director of corporate citizenship for [The Dow Chemical Co.](#) and president and executive director of [The Dow Chemical Company Foundation](#), applauded CMU's economic impact during a news conference. He noted that CMU was founded five years before Dow, and that we've essentially "grown up together."

The report measures the impact of our faculty, staff, students and alumni. It captures the impact of our affiliates, including:

- [CMU Medical Education Partners](#), a partnership with [Covenant HealthCare](#) and [St. Mary's of Michigan](#) in Saginaw to provide clinical education for CMU medical students and medical residents from around the country. They, in turn, improve the health of thousands of residents and families.
- Another affiliate is the [CMU Research Corp.](#), a business incubator funded by the Michigan Economic Development Corp., and No. 1 in terms of jobs created and companies formed. It has facilities in Mount Pleasant, Bay City and soon in Saginaw.
- The third affiliate is the [Institute for Excellence in Education](#), which supports school improvement processes at more than 1,400 schools in 25 states.

Education. Partnership. Impact. That's been our story for 125 years.

Most important is what it's like to be a Central Michigan University student.

Most students begin before classes start, at Leadership Safari. This national model program, created 21 years ago at CMU, is a five-day immersion into how to be successful in college and life. It shows students how to be leaders — regardless of age, job title or economic status.

After Safari, their orientation includes a presentation called No Zebras, No Excuses. This is another CMU-originated program that teaches students not to be bystanders, but to look around, speak out and help each other in matters of sexual assault and harassment.

CMU students are reminded during orientation about the online training they will complete that focuses on sexual misconduct, including healthy relationships, substance abuse, sexual aggression and bystander intervention. This training is mandatory in order to register for their second semester classes.

And then, classes begin. At CMU, faculty and staff are actively engaged with students. Even as freshmen, students have opportunities to do research and engage in active learning. They're taught almost always by faculty – not teaching or graduate assistants. They're coached to get involved with student organizations, study abroad and do internships.

Many of our freshmen live in residential learning communities, with students pursuing similar areas of interest. In these "communities," students study together. They explore careers. They meet with faculty, alumni, and experts from the field.

Sounds pretty cool, doesn't it?

It is.

Here's a look at how it plays out.

- CMU's first class of medical students, nearly 85 percent of whom are Michigan natives, graduated last May and all 62 physicians were placed in residencies. Nearly half of those residencies are in Michigan, upholding our mission of providing much-needed medical care in areas such as central and northern Michigan and in Flint, Saginaw and Detroit.
- Central's 10th class of mechanical and electrical engineers also graduated last year, and like our physician assistant, physical therapy, audiology and speech-language pathology alumni, have a nearly 100 percent job placement rate.
- Our faculty and about 90 students a year conduct research on the world's largest supply of fresh water, having received \$20 million from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to monitor and assess Great Lakes coastal wetlands.
- Two physics faculty have received \$4.8 million from the U.S. Department of Energy to solve a long-running challenge in molecular modeling. Their efforts will engage CMU students.

- Students in our neuroscience labs engage in the study of brain disorders, thanks in part to a faculty researcher who received a \$2.25 million National Institutes of Health grant.
- Other students provide advanced hearing and balance diagnostics, hearing aid services, cochlear implants, and speech and language therapy.
- Some visit rural homes to support the health of elderly residents.
- And others provide much-needed assessment and service to children with autism.
- Information systems students often receive job offers on the spot during our SAP software management simulation competition, which brings more than three dozen corporations to campus. CMU is North America's No. 1 generator of SAP certifications.
- A group of CMU Honors students has partnered with the Pure Michigan campaign to identify strategies for showing how accessible our state is to individuals with disabilities.
- And then there are student-athletes, who at CMU ... really are students first.
 - Cooper Rush graduated last May as one of our most successful quarterbacks ever, with a 3.89 GPA in actuarial science. Last summer, he made national headlines as he used his brains and his athleticism to earn a spot with the Dallas Cowboys.
 - Jaeda Robinson is a junior guard on our women's basketball team, with a 3.93 GPA in biomedical science and neuroscience.
 - Reyna Frost, a standout junior forward, is an honors physics major working to become an astronaut.
 - And John McCarty, a men's basketball forward, is an Alzheimer's researcher at CMU. He will graduate this May, then attend the Yale School of Medicine physician assistant program.

That's how we roll, with academic excellence, personalized learning, leadership opportunities, hands-on experiences, a strong sense of community and an extraordinary network of support.

Finally, I will update you on our policies and practices regarding sexual misconduct.

Hear me when I say: We at CMU are redoubling our efforts to be responsible, accountable and ultimately aware of what's happening around us. We are committed to equal educational and employment opportunities and to the elimination of all forms of prohibited discrimination, harassment and sexual misconduct.

CMU was one of the first universities, in the early 1970s, to establish what is today called OCRIE — our Office for Civil Rights and Institutional Equity.

At CMU, matters of sexual misconduct had long been part of our Student Code of Conduct. Sexual harassment and discrimination concerns also were handled under our Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action Protocol. Three years ago, we were among the first Michigan public universities to adopt a thorough and separate sexual misconduct policy that applies to students, faculty and staff.

It outlines how we proceed when we learn of allegations of dating violence, domestic and intimate partner violence, sexual assault, sexual exploitation, sexual harassment, stalking, and retaliation.

It communicates clearly that such actions are expressly prohibited. The policy governs conduct on-campus ... and off-campus, when its effects relate back to or impact the living, learning or working environment of a university community member.

All CMU employees, except those such as counselors, are considered “responsible employees,” *required* to report information regarding alleged sexual misconduct to our Title IX coordinator.

As noted earlier, all incoming, on-campus first-year and transfer students are *required* to complete an online training program in order to register for the next semester’s classes.

All faculty and staff are expected to complete online training that promotes a harassment- and discrimination-free environment and outlines their Title IX responsibilities. This training, I can attest from personal experience, takes two to three hours.

Our student-athletes and Athletics staff complete those trainings plus a mandatory *second* online training specific to athletics, as required by the NCAA.

Bottom line: We are serious. We are actively engaged in keeping our campus safe. Our policies are strong. Collaboration is frequent among many offices, including the Office of Civil Rights and Institutional Equity, General Counsel, Human Resources and Faculty Personnel Services, the CMU Police Department, Office of Student Conduct, Student Affairs, Residence Life and Sexual Aggression Services.

Earlier, I mentioned No Zebras, No Excuses. It’s part of our Sexual Aggression Services, is a model for universities nationwide and has been taught in the Pentagon.

CMU's Sexual Aggression Peer Advocates was founded by faculty member Steve Thompson 20 years ago. SAPA, as it's called, is a survivor-centered and trauma-informed, paraprofessional student organization. Up to 50 students a year work under the guidance of full-time professional staff to provide 24/7 services, including a confidential support line, online chat and in-person support.

Steve Thompson is retired now, although SAPA continues strong at CMU. His company, No Zebras and More, educates people around the world.

Thompson calls CMU, "a campus that cares." He says, and I quote, "SAPA gives comfort even to survivors who never reach out. They know there are a whole bunch of people on this campus who care."

Yes. We do.

Chair Schuitmaker, that concludes my report.