

President's Report to the Board of Trustees



April 29, 2016

Good morning. And welcome, trustees and audience members.

Before we get started, I would like to take a moment to introduce Bob Martin, our new vice president for advancement. Since joining CMU in February, Bob has met with a number of key donors and set aggressive goals for the advancement team. Welcome, Bob.

Just one week from today, we will begin two days of commencement ceremonies for nearly 3,500 students as they become alumni of Central Michigan University. They — and those who come after them — are the reason for everything we do at CMU. They are the focus of every decision we make.

You see, we, too, have a responsibility to put our stamp on the world. And we do so through actions that support CMU students and families, faculty and staff, alumni, and residents of Mount Pleasant, the Great Lakes Bay Region, the state of Michigan and beyond.

That responsibility is significant today, as we discuss tuition rates for the coming academic year. We are grateful for the partial restoration of funding we expect from the state this year, yet CMU will remain significantly below the \$90 million in annual appropriations we received 15 years ago.

State funding allows CMU to operate just 61 days of the year. The rest is largely borne by our students and their families. This truth overshadows our deliberations, as we fully understand the personal impact our decisions have ... on every single one of our 27,000 students.

Among those students this August will be what our admissions team estimates will be close to 3,500 new freshmen. The challenge to reach this goal remains tough, as the Michigan high school graduating class continues to be smaller than it has in past decades.

Even coming close to 3,500 would be a testament to our admissions and marketing teams, as well as to our faculty and staff. Recruitment today involves the entire campus community, especially as students and parents become ever more engaged as consumers.

They access volumes of information online, yet they also are influenced by word of mouth and by the academic excellence, sense of community and personalized service they sense when they visit our campus.

Speaking of academic excellence, I have a few highlights to share with you:

The peer review team from the **Higher Learning Commission** was here Monday and Tuesday, meeting with hundreds of faculty, staff, students, alumni and community members. Following these conversations, they spent much of Wednesday writing their report. Their visit was momentous, as this accreditation attests to the quality of the entire university and the educational experiences we create for all students, inside our classrooms and beyond.

Thank you, trustees, and to each member of the CMU community who took the time to share insights with the team. The visit culminates more than 18 months of work on campus and will conclude with a final decision about our ongoing accreditation later this year.

Also on this front, I am happy to report that our **physician assistant program** has received full accreditation through 2024, continuing a long tradition of recognized excellence in health care.

I also would like to recognize **Dr. Dale-Elizabeth Pehrsson**, professor and dean of the College of Education and Human Services, who has been chosen one of 33 fellows through the American Council on Education. Her selection reflects the caliber and leadership of all CMU faculty.

ACE represents more than 1,600 of the nation's colleges and universities. This highly competitive fellowship prepares individuals to meet the evolving challenges of today's higher education landscape. During her fellowship year, Pehrsson will visit a number of universities to study how they are advancing pedagogy, enhancing career and college readiness, and managing government relations.

Dr. Dale has been with CMU four years and is helping her college advance its leadership in academic areas such as teacher preparation, fashion merchandising and design, and interior design, to name just a few.

You will hear from Dr. Dale in a bit in her role as one of two co-chairs of our Online Academic Program Committee, created a year ago at the direction of this board.

On the topic of our online and satellite-location offerings, I am pleased to report that we will launch six new programs this fall. Those are:

- Master's in Health Administration;
- Master of Arts in Special Education;
- Two new concentrations in our Master of Science in Administration program — project management and training and development;
- A technical and professional writing certificate; and

- A deafblind intervener certificate — the second in the nation — for paraprofessionals and individuals who work with and support deafblind children.

These programs represent an important increase in our offerings, affirming that while on-campus education will always be the focus of CMU, we must supplement it with satellite and online degrees for those who need other options.

I have two other campus updates before we move on to personal recognitions.

First, we will announce the creation this coming week of an enterprise risk management committee, in keeping with trends in higher education and across the corporate sector. This group will complement the efforts of Scott Strong, our internal audit director, ensuring that we are prepared to address matters that could challenge the entire university.

Second, an in-depth review of our campus diversity and inclusion climate is well underway. The Barthwell Group, a nationally recognized minority and woman-owned firm from Detroit, recently conducted a series of focus groups and individual interviews with students, faculty and staff. This input, along with findings from a campuswide survey this fall, will help to identify concrete next steps to ensure that CMU is, indeed, an inclusive community of scholars.

And finally, I'd like to recognize three individuals for their leadership on a national and global level.

Manuel Rupe, our vice president and general counsel, has been appointed to the board of directors for the National Association of College and University Attorneys, effective this June. He was nominated by his peers through the Legal Officers Committee of the Michigan Association of State Universities, a group he has chaired since 2012. He has been a member of the national association nearly 15 years and has served as a speaker, moderator and discussion leader during NACUA events. Congratulations, Manuel.

Next, I would like to introduce Holland senior Alyssa Shepard, who has been awarded a Fulbright Study/Research Grant for a graduate degree at the University of Leicester in the United Kingdom. The Fulbright Program is the largest U.S. international exchange program offering opportunities for students, scholars and professionals to undertake international graduate study, advanced research, university teaching, and teaching in elementary and secondary schools worldwide. The program is designed to "increase mutual understanding between people of the United States and people of other countries."

Alyssa will be joining one of the premiere cancer research programs in the world, exploring cancer cell molecular biology and investigating ways to increase the accuracy and sensitivity of breast cancer detection methods. A [Centralis Scholar](#), she has been participating in research under the guidance of CMU biologist Michelle Steinhilb and last summer worked at the Van Andel Research Institute in Grand Rapids. Congratulations, Alyssa.

Finally, I would like to recognize Rothbury junior Kristopher Kieft, who has been awarded the first Goldwater Scholarship in Central Michigan University's history. Kristopher, an Honors student majoring in biology, was one of 252 scholars chosen from a competitive pool of more than 1,100 national nominations. The Barry Goldwater Scholarship Program was created to encourage outstanding undergraduate students to pursue research careers in science, technology, engineering and mathematics.

Kristopher began conducting research in 2013 under the guidance of CMU microbiology faculty member Michael Conway and has presented his research twice at the Student Research and Creative Endeavors Exhibition. He also has co-authored several articles awaiting publication in professional academic journals. After completing his bachelor's degree, he plans to pursue a Ph.D. and wants to be on the front lines of emerging virus research. Congratulations, Kristopher.

Chair Opperman, that concludes my report.