

**President George E. Ross**  
**Testimony to the Senate Subcommittee on Higher Education**  
*Feb. 19, 2015*

Good afternoon.

I'd like to welcome Senators Schuitmaker, MacGregor and Hertel to Central Michigan University. Thank you for choosing our campus to host today's hearing.

Also with us today is Senator Judy Emmons, who represents us in Lansing.

I'd like to recognize our, trustees, cabinet members, senior leadership team, faculty, staff and students who are in attendance.

Today, I'll talk about the state of Michigan, about its residents and families, about its future, and about education — the critical link that empowers our residents and families to shape the evolution of this great state.

You will meet two CMU students and the head of CMU's accounting department. They exemplify the individuals who add value to the state's investment in Central Michigan University.

Among Michigan's 15 public universities, there are those that serve a significantly national and global population ... that attract a large number of students from across the country and world ... whose graduates then return to spread out across the globe.

There also are universities that serve a largely homegrown population and who transform Michigan youth into the leaders of tomorrow — leaders who remain committed to Michigan communities, Michigan residents, Michigan families and Michigan businesses.

Central Michigan University is one of those. Each year, about 95 percent of our students hail from this Great Lakes state. And when they graduate, about 76 percent opt to stay here and make a difference — they stay in Michigan, because they ARE finding jobs here.

I occasionally hear people still refer to CMU as a teachers' college. And it is a worthy profession in which we take great pride. We lead the state with the most teacher education alumni in Michigan, and we graduate more master's in education students annually than any other university in Michigan.

However, to call us a teachers' college is to ignore the other 96 percent of who and what we are. For we also have students such as James Hasbany (Has bain eee), of Grand Rapids, who aspires to be an astronaut. And Paris Schofield, (Sko field) of Saline, who is becoming a marine biologist.

Our students and alums go on to be military generals, neuroscientists, nuclear physicists, doctors, microbiologists, biochemists, forensic accountants, engineers, entrepreneurs, journalists — and politicians who shape public policy.

That's the short list, but you get the idea. CMU is a lot more than a teachers' college. We've built much here, on a foundation that dates back to 1892.

And our success the past 122 years reflects a commitment to serving our students well. We believe firmly in accountability and metrics — including those tied to performance funding from the state. We also believe firmly in making higher education accessible and affordable to those determined to *put their stamp on the world, whether they become CEOs, entrepreneurs, physical therapists or leaders of nonprofits transforming our communities.*

Gov. Snyder's proposed budget, which includes a 3 percent restoration of funds taken from CMU over the past few years and \$28 million additional dollars for Michigan's 15 public universities, is welcome news.

With Gov. Snyder's proposed restoration of appropriations, state funding would be less than what CMU received in 2008-2009. It's important to note that if CMU operated on state funding alone, we would serve our students for only 62 days.

State funding today accounts for 17 percent of our operating budget, while once upon a time it was 75 percent. This decrease clearly means that students and their parents carry a heavier burden.

Still, CMU has maintained the lowest cumulative tuition increase of all of Michigan's public universities for the past five years.

I mentioned metrics earlier, and I'd like to return to those for a minute. At CMU, the percentage of expenditures on institutional support put us among the top 20 percent of our Carnegie peers in the nation.

And our percentage of funding spent on administration is the lowest in Michigan, which means we lead the state in the percent of dollars spent on education, but we have increased our university funded financial aid for students to a record \$61 million.

We also are encouraged by the proposed cap on MPSERS payments. Last year, CMU returned \$11.9 million to the state of its \$79.1 million in appropriations because of the MPSERS program, which involves just 360 of our employees.

We also are a dedicated and strategic partner to the state and its communities.

CMU is the administrator of a \$10 million grant from the Environmental Protection Agency to protect the Great Lakes coastal wetlands.

Working with nine other universities and three government agencies, our research helps protect the Great Lakes and the tourism they attract, in addition to a \$7.5 billion sport and commercial fisheries industry that supports 80,000 jobs across the Great Lakes Basin.

When the EPA committed to restoring thousands of coastal wetlands last year, its leaders turned to CMU to map how, when and where that would happen.

Closely related to our Great Lakes research, let me thank you again for the \$30 million capital outlay that is helping to fund construction of a \$95 million Biosciences Building. This will advance our research and teaching capabilities in STEM-related disciplines — further advancing the education of students as they prepare for existing and emerging careers in Michigan.

And I would be remiss not to mention CMU's Herbert H. and Grace A. Dow College of Health Professions, where we train audiologists, physician assistants, speech-language pathologists, athletic trainers, physical therapists and hospital administrators, the majority of whom remain in Michigan.

The same with our College of Medicine. As the nation's 137th medical school prepares to enroll its third class, CMU has attracted 4,603 applicants for 104 openings.

Established to address a growing shortage of physicians, our future doctors — 90 percent of whom in the first two classes are from Michigan — are being trained to practice in central and northern Michigan. It is in these communities — in medically underserved rural and smaller urban areas — where the physician shortage will be most acute.

At the end of the day, it's all about student success.

Barbara Buehler is from Delton. She is one of just 56 medical students in the country to have earned a National Health Service Corps Scholarship for their plans to make a difference in medically underserved communities.

Barbara is one of the co-leaders of the Health and Nutrition student interest group, she organized the Red Cross blood drive earlier this month, and she's quick to volunteer for CMED activities, such as helping at the local food pantry.

I think you'll see her passion as she tells her own story.

### **Barbara's comments**

Thanks, Barbara.

Engineering is another area of growth and prominence at CMU. We are on the radar of corporate leaders like Ford, GM, the Dow Chemical Company and others who actively recruit our engineering students.

In fact, Bosch scheduled an impromptu visit to CMU last fall after learning of our students' impressive second place national victory in the Louisville Society of Automotive Engineers Baja car competition.

Not only were we second in the nation, our team was the No. 1 competitor from Michigan, defeating those other state universities that like to think they've got the engineering market cornered.

Senior Kyle McPherson, of Galesburg, is one of our engineering students. He just completed an internship project with Master Craft, where he helped create the center console for a \$1.3 million, state-of-the-art boat that can clip along at 62 miles per hour.

You have pictures of the boat in front of you. It was unveiled last week at the Miami International Boat Show, where it was hailed as having the world's best new center console and received special recognition because of the Coast Guard and military technology used to design the strongest hull on a watercraft.

### **Kyle's comments**

Thanks, Kyle.

CMU's faculty are among the best in Michigan — arguably among the best in the world.

I'd like to introduce you to Chad Stefaniak. Chad is a 2002 CMU alum, who earned his master's and Ph.D. at the University of Alabama. He went off to teach at Oklahoma State and came back to lead our accounting apartment in 2013.

Brigham Young University ranks Dr. Stefaniak 15th in the world in his area of experimental audit research and among the top 5 percent globally in all accounting research disciplines.

Dr. Stefaniak?

### **Stefaniak's comments**

**Thank you, Chad.**

**Did you catch the connection between these three speakers? They're Michigan natives. They're leaders. They're dedicated to serving this great state and its residents, businesses and communities.**

**In my book, that makes them pretty special. What's more, they're the norm here at CMU.**

As I conclude this afternoon, I encourage you to consider a funding formula that follows students equitably no matter where they go to college. I urge you also to reward those universities that educate primarily Michigan residents and produce alumni who choose to stay here and make a difference.

Michigan's performance funding metrics are a good start. Let's take them further. Let's finally address a per-student funding disparity that ranges from \$2,800 to \$8,100 per student among Michigan's 15 publics.

As the fourth largest — and almost third-largest — university in Michigan, CMU is fifth from the bottom at \$3,600 per student. I don't believe for a minute that you think students at CMU are worth nearly \$5,000 less per person than their peers at Wayne State.

You have a difficult task in developing a budget in a state that faces many economic hurdles, and I thank you for your support. An investment in higher education and returning funding to historic levels is an investment that benefits the entire state.

Higher education is a catalyst that fuels economic recovery. Higher education fosters the critical thinking of students who will lead our industries and organizations of tomorrow.

Please join me in advocating for Michigan's youth, helping transform their lives with a university degree — so they can go forth and ***put their stamp on the world.***

I'd be glad to answer questions.