

President's

Report to the Board of Trustees



June 29, 2017

Thank you and good morning, Chair Weideman. Good morning, trustees, faculty, staff, students and community members.

We meet today with the latest unexpected episode in our history still fresh in our minds. We have seen again that our dedicated employees will rally tirelessly to overcome significant challenges. And we know, without a doubt, that the Central Michigan University community is strong and resilient.

Late last Thursday evening, the effects of what would be 5 to 7 inches of rain were becoming evident. By 1 a.m. Friday, crews were actively addressing flooding in several buildings. By 5:30 a.m., the decision was made to delay our opening ... and by 9:30, we knew it would be impossible to open at all.

As more than 90 roads across the county were closed to traffic, at times with gaping chasms where pavement and bridges used to be, more than 75 CMU employees labored to address damage to more than 50 buildings, tunnels, storm systems and campus roads.

Those who've worked here for decades said it was like the flooding of 1986 — only worse.

As work to address the aftermath continues, I extend sincere appreciation to Jonathan Webb, associate vice president for facilities management. Less than a year after joining CMU, Jonathan coordinated our response with great calmness and great leadership.

I also extend deep gratitude to all of the employees who worked around the clock to protect, stabilize and repair our campus. Your efforts exemplify the CMU spirit, and you've proven once again that our university will face tremendous obstacles from time to time ... and always rise above them.

This meeting's agenda is an especially important one.

Trustees, today you will consider an operating budget of nearly \$485 million. It is a conservative budget that requires diligence and wisdom across the university.

It is a budget that is focused solidly on students and on the provision of extraordinary educational experiences that prepare them for successful careers and for success in life.

It is a budget that continues CMU's ranking as a major, national university, with recognized excellence keeping pace with student and state needs, including in business, health care and STEM programs.

As part of the budget, you will review and set tuition for the coming year, and it is with unwavering confidence in your dedication to students and their families that I predict CMU will have the lowest cumulative tuition increase of all Michigan public universities for the *eighth* year in a row.

The *lowest cumulative tuition increase of all Michigan public universities* eight years running. That's significant.

We *could* have increased tuition more — 30 percent more over those eight years. We could have ignored students and taken that easy way out.

Instead, we've held the line. For students. And for their families.

I'm proud of that.

We've done the hard work and aligned and adjusted our budget by 4 percent over the past two years. On the other side of that, is the fact that **96 percent of our budget remains intact**. CMU remains financially strong. In fact, analysts with firms such as Moody's and Barclays say Central ranks among the most financially strong universities in the nation.

We all can — and should — be proud of that.

You'll also consider this morning an essential update to our strategic plan, which will guide our actions beyond this, our 125th year, for five years through 2022.

This plan, developed with input from hundreds of constituents, outlines three imperatives:

- Nurturing Student Success;
- Fostering Scholarly Activity; and
- Strengthening Partnerships in Michigan and Beyond.

These imperatives will have us assessing the university's organizational structure for the first time in two decades in order to enhance student success. They will have us reducing our undergraduate degree requirements to 120 credit hours so that more students can graduate in four years and with less debt.

The imperatives will advance research and scholarly activity, and they will emphasize partnerships with businesses, nonprofits and civic organizations. Through these relationships, CMU students, faculty and staff will put an ever bigger stamp on the world. Their efforts will benefit partner organizations and communities while positioning students to stand above their peers, to understand their responsibilities as leaders, and to excel in their careers.

A strategic plan is a compass that guides our actions in the short- and long-term. A **bold** strategic plan — which I believe ours is — goes beyond the status quo to cement an evolving path of high-impact leadership.

You also will consider revisions to the bylaws of our Advancement Council and the Board of Trustees. If approved, our Advancement Council will be singularly focused on major fundraising

— on raising additional resources in support of our academic mission. At the same time, an investment subcommittee will be created as part of this board’s finance and facilities committee.

While less obvious in its impact than a strategic plan, this decision is big. Under the leadership of Bob Martin, our advancement team, which includes the Advancement Council, will have its second record fundraising year in a row. The Advancement Council is more actively engaged than ever.

This proposal will continue the upward trajectory of our advancement efforts as we take swift and visionary action to dramatically elevate financial support of CMU and our students.

Before I wrap up — and before Central Michigan University’s 124th year concludes tomorrow — I’ll mention a few highlights of the past year that speak to CMU’s educational strength and stability.

- First: CMU is completing the modernization this summer of Grawn Hall, the oldest operating building on campus, first opened in 1915, 102 years ago.
- Second: We are investing about \$4 million this summer in labs, equipment and educational technology to enhance learning.
- Third: We are launching five new online programs this fall, in entrepreneurship, public administration, early childhood development, fashion merchandising and design, and information systems, including a track in cybersecurity.
- Fourth: CMU graduated about 5,700 students this year.
- And finally, we received renewed accreditation for our legacy program — teacher education. This achievement reflects the vast work completed by faculty and staff and affirms our leadership as a national university.

These are but a few examples of the continuing progress at CMU. In the words of a former trustee, this is “the good stuff.”

Chair Weideman, that concludes my report.