

President's Report to the Board of Trustees



February 15, 2018

Thank you, Vice Chair Keith. And welcome, trustees, faculty, staff, students and community members.

The strategic plan you approved last spring focuses on three imperatives: Nurturing student success, fostering scholarly activity, and strengthening partnerships in Michigan and beyond.

I've been reminded recently just how foundational those imperatives are to all that we stand for at Central Michigan University. So foundational, in fact, that our pursuit of them — our enduring commitment to advancing excellence — has been a part of CMU for 125 years.

Let me paint the picture.

When you watch Olympic speedskating this month, know that 2015 alumnus, Jon Burke, is one of the skaters' athletic trainers in South Korea. As a CMU undergraduate, Jon did heatstroke research with professor Kevin Miller and studied the efficacy of ice therapy on injuries with associate professor Blaine Long.

There's 1957 alum Harold Patrick, a retired U.S. Army colonel to whom I presented a plaque on Feb. 2, commemorating his induction into the CMU ROTC Hall of Fame. Col. Patrick played baseball for CMU back in the day and worked in campus chemistry labs. He then served two tours in Vietnam and received a Bronze Star for meritorious service in a combat zone. He's endowed a scholarship here, not only to pay it back, as his daughter says, but to pay it forward.

Today at CMU, we have students from multiple health-care disciplines visiting rural homes to support the health of elderly residents. Others are learning to provide much-needed assessment and service to children with autism.

And a group of Honors students has partnered with Pure Michigan to identify strategies for showing how accessible our state is to individuals with disabilities. 1997 alumna Emily Gerkin Guerrant, senior vice president of marketing, communications and public relations for the Michigan Economic Development Corp., says we'll soon see their work on Michigan.com.

Countless stories like those capture what it means to receive a CMU education. They spotlight academic rigor, hands-on experiences, a culture of support and personalized learning, and the engagement of students and faculty with businesses, communities, the state, nation and world.

Over the last six months of my presidency, the momentum for advancing excellence will continue. We'll hold fast to our focus on students, expanding their skills and expertise, developing a mindset of leadership and innovation, preparing them well for careers ... and to put their stamp on the world.

We'll break ground on the Center for Integrated Health Studies building and complete our search for a chief diversity officer. We'll make decisions on recommendations from the organizational review committees, having conducted campus feedback sessions last week.

We'll celebrate the public launch of the second and largest capital campaign in CMU history, fueled by unprecedented commitment among alumni to the support of future generations.

And of course, this board and its advisory committee will search for and hire CMU's 15th president.

All of those actions promote progress. They reflect the evolution of a great institution and the collective efforts of an active and dedicated campus community.

Two items before I wrap up today.

The first is recognition of associate professor of engineering Brian DeJong, who has been named the Michigan Science Teachers Association's 2018 College Science Teacher of the Year.

Brian, please stand up.

Brian was chosen for his innovative teaching strategies, inspiring students, demonstrating leadership, and exhibiting a passion for science and teaching.

He's been at CMU for 11 years, setting high standards, getting to know his students by name and using hands-on examples to make lessons relevant.

Among those? A Lego robot king of the hill competition, our famous Homecoming cardboard boat races, and an ethics-based game with the competing pressures of corporate profit, environmental sustainability and good wages for workers.

Brian — thank you for your energy, your innovation and your dedication to CMU students!

I'd also like to acknowledge Trustee Joseph Anderson Jr., who last weekend was honored with a lifetime achievement award during the US Black Engineer & Information Technology magazine's annual conference in Washington, D.C.

Trustee Anderson is chairman and chief executive officer of TAG Holdings LLC. His companies serve the aerospace, automotive, defense, construction and other industries that require manufacturing and supply chain management services.

He is chair of the board of directors of the Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago-Detroit Branch and serves on the board of directors of Rite Aid Corp. and Business Leaders for Michigan.

A West Point graduate, a decorated Army officer, Anderson's rise to prominence began after his role as a platoon leader in Vietnam. His experience was captured in an Oscar- and Emmy-award-winning documentary, and his military awards include two silver stars, five bronze stars, three Army Commendation Medals and 11 Air Medals.

Trustee Anderson, thank you for your service to our country, to our state as a business leader and to Central Michigan University.

The final item today responds to your request, trustees, for an update on the university's policies and practices regarding sexual misconduct and our efforts to maintain a safe environment for all of our students, faculty, staff and community members.

Horrific crimes playing out in East Lansing have brought worldwide attention to this topic, demanding that all of us redouble our efforts to be responsible, accountable and ultimately aware of what's happening around us.

Hear me when I say: Central Michigan University is committed to equal educational and employment opportunities and to the elimination of all forms of prohibited discrimination, harassment and sexual misconduct. We take all allegations of harassment, discrimination and sexual misconduct seriously.

Our goals are to educate our campus community and promote safety, prevent misconduct and its recurrence, and address its effects.

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.

Here at CMU, matters of sexual misconduct had long been a part of our Student Code of Conduct. Concerns of sexual harassment and discrimination were also previously handled by OCRIE under CMU's Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action Protocol. And then, three years ago, we were among the first of Michigan's 15 public universities to adopt a thorough and separate sexual misconduct policy that applies to students, faculty and staff.

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

It communicates clearly that such actions will not be tolerated and are expressly prohibited. The policy governs conduct that occurs on-campus, and off-campus, when the effects of the conduct relate back to, or impact the living, learning or working environments of a university community member.

All CMU employees, except those — such as counselors and SAPA advocates (I'll explain SAPA in a bit) — are considered "responsible employees," *required* to report information regarding alleged sexual misconduct to the university's Title IX coordinator.

All incoming, on-campus first-year and transfer students are *required* to complete an online training program about harassment, discrimination and sexual misconduct. Their participation is mandatory in order to register for the next semester's classes.

All faculty and staff also are expected to complete an online training program that promotes a harassment- and discrimination-free environment and outlines their Title IX responsibilities. This training, I can tell you from experience, takes two to three hours, and more than 80 percent of our staff employees have complied. We will continue to press toward 100 percent.

Our student-athletes and Athletics staff have a second online training about sexual misconduct, specific to athletics. This training started in December, and all students and Athletics employees *must* complete it this spring.

The 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 and Residence Life, Sexual Aggression Services, and University Communications.

I mentioned Sexual Aggression Services. CMU also has another, high-impact resource that has become a model for universities across the nation and used for education even in the Pentagon.

CMU's Sexual Aggression Peer Advocates was founded by faculty member Steve Thompson 20 years ago. SAPA is a survivor-centered and trauma-informed, paraprofessional student organization that serves those affected by sexual aggression. Its 24/7 services during fall and spring semesters include a confidential support line, online chat service and direct, in-person services.

Additionally, its "No Zebras. No Excuses." educational program is a staple of CMU freshman orientation. This performance-based training consists of seven vignettes that replicate situations of sexual assault, drug-facilitated sexual assault, intimate partner violence, stalking and harassment.

Steve Thompson is retired from CMU, although the SAPA program continues strong here. His company, No Zebras and More, educates and trains people throughout 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 give a damn."

Yes. We do.

Vice Chair Keith, that concludes my report.