



June 25, 2020

Thank you, Chair Keith.

I begin my remarks today by acknowledging the important discussion about racial injustice and inequality happening across the globe. This long-overdue national conversation, sparked by the deaths of Black men and women like George Floyd, Breonna Taylor and Ahmaud Arbery, highlights the need for rapid systemic change in many areas of our society — including in education. Our students, faculty, staff, alumni, friends and community members have taken to the streets and to social media to make their voices heard. I am proud to see them taking a stand as leaders, and I am proud to support them.

As we prepare the leaders of tomorrow, we have an incredible responsibility **today** to stand in support of what is right and to do what is necessary to promote justice, equality and inclusion for all. We know that education is a powerful antidote for ignorance, and education is our mission. We have the people, the tools and the resources to make a powerful positive difference in the fight against injustice. Yet, in academia, we often have a strong tendency toward the use of words and the expression of ideas. We sometimes struggle with the next step: taking action. This **cannot** be the case at CMU.

Over the past few years, we have taken many steps in our institutional efforts to address diversity, equity and inclusion, and there is still more to be done.

We now require all incoming students to participate in a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Awareness program. In addition, our general education requirements include taking classes in both racial discrimination and social discrimination. These classes are designed to help students examine their beliefs and behaviors and invites them to see the world through new and varied lenses.

We established the Institute for Transformative Dialogue, which is equipping our faculty and staff to use the powerful tool of intergroup dialogue. These conversations engage students in deep and meaningful exchanges about implicit bias, agency, access and more. This technique is already widely used in settings such as our residence halls, orientation programs, Leadership Safari, IMPACT and more.

Performance reviews for faculty and staff now include annual goals related to learning, training and development in diversity, equity and inclusion. We have created two faculty diversity and inclusion fellowships, designed to engage tenured faculty in policy development and projects that increase diversity, equity and inclusion on our campus and in our community. And, we continue to engage our entire university community in ongoing events and activities, such as cultural celebrations, lectures, panel discussions and more.

Following my remarks today, Chair Keith and I will introduce a resolution and seek approval from the Board of Trustees for support of our ongoing efforts to improve diversity, equity and inclusion at CMU. Thank you, trustees, for standing with our students, faculty, staff, alumni and friends. I am proud of these efforts, yet we can and must do more. Substantial work remains ahead for all of us, and we are going to talk about it openly and often. We **must** be transparent in addressing our challenges so that we may be effective in finding their solutions.

These important and positive steps are taking place against the backdrop of COVID-19, which has posed many significant challenges for our university community. We continue to adapt to the ongoing and frequently changing demands of operating during this pandemic. Earlier this month, our financial realities required us to make difficult budget reductions campuswide. This included employment changes for some of our faculty and staff, many of whom have made positive contributions for many years. This was especially difficult at Central Michigan University because we are a very tightly knit community, and I know many members of our university family are hurting right now.

This has not been an easy year, yet I remain optimistic that we will finish it strong. After all, even in the midst of crisis, we have seen extraordinary leadership and excellence in our students, faculty and staff.

Consider Australyah Coleman, the president of our campus NAACP student chapter. Perhaps you have seen video of her, standing on the steps of the capitol building in Lansing, using her voice to inspire others as they gather in protest and solidarity.

Or look to our researchers, who are actively participating in the search for ways to prevent the spread of viruses like COVID-19. Michael Conway from the College of Medicine and Peter Dijkstra from the College of Science and Engineering are exploring the links between fish, which are often sold in open marketplace environments, and coronaviruses that can infect humans.

Watch the interactive lesson on hand sanitizer and soap, developed by faculty member Brad Fahlman, that has been shared with about 20,000 high school and postsecondary chemistry instructors. He is helping educators teach their students how chemistry impacts their everyday lives.

And, look at how our community continues to step forward to serve others. Our College of Medicine faculty, staff and students spent days volunteering in the Midland High School shelter after massive regional flooding. Others have been working alongside health care providers statewide to assist with patient screening, medical records and more. When help is needed, CMU Chippewas step forward.

In spite of the ongoing pandemic, we continue to prepare students for success in the workplace. Our Career Development Center has hosted many workshops on virtual interviewing, and alumni have stepped forward to offer career advice to recent graduates. We have just finished mailing diplomas to more than 3,000 May graduates who are entering the workforce ready to lead, and students from every academic college are impressing their supervisors as they complete summer internships in a virtual format.

I recently accepted an appointment to serve on the Michigan Workforce Development Board, which will focus on developing policy initiatives to expand the state's workforce, economy and educational opportunities. This is critical work. Michigan has been heavily impacted by COVID-19, and families in our state are struggling. CMU has a powerful responsibility to partner with public sector, nonprofit and private business organizations to create a path forward for Michigan. We are well-equipped to do so. We prepare students with both the technical knowledge and the professional skills necessary to succeed and lead in whatever career fields they choose.

Our focus on student success and service to our community remain at the forefront of our Strategic Envisioning Process. Our five strategic pathway groups have continued to meet virtually this spring and have been an important source of feedback as we continue to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. I have asked each group to provide long-range planning statements; short-term action steps; and a set of one-year, two-year and three-year goals before the end of 2020. And, even ahead of that deadline, we are already implementing some of their proposed initiatives.

Noting that many internships and study abroad programs had to be canceled this summer, we recognized a need to help students stay focused on their career and academic goals. Our Summer Extra Credit program provided summer financial awards for students who enrolled in classes. More than 1,300 students benefited from the program, helping them stay connected with CMU and on track for graduation.

Like our students, our faculty, staff, alumni, volunteers and community partners are pursuing a future for CMU based on rigor, relevance and excellence in all we do. I look forward to sharing additional updates in the months ahead.

Indeed, we already are being recognized for excellence at national and international levels. This year, Central Michigan University has been recognized **twice** by the Council for Advancement and Support of Education.

First, we are the recipients of a 2020 CASE Educational Fundraising Award — a first for CMU. The award recognizes Overall Improvement in a Public Research/Doctoral Institution with an endowment less than \$215 million. This is an outstanding achievement.

We owe this recognition to the continued efforts of our Advancement Board and Campaign Steering Committee. Their leadership resulted in significant increases in philanthropic support over the past three years. I am grateful to our loyal alumni and donors who have given generously to support our students and our mission. I also want to recognize the team in our Advancement and Alumni Relations offices. Their hard

work and passionate dedication to CMU are helping us keep CMU accessible and affordable for students and families. Congratulations and thank you.

Next, our University Communications team won an international CASE silver Circle of Excellence Award. Their story package, “CMU is Deep into Great Lakes Research,” was chosen from among more than 2,700 entries from schools from more than 500 institutions in more than 25 countries. I would like to recognize Paul Henderson, Gary Piatek, Adam Sparkes, Jeff Johnston and Erick Fredendall for their exceptional work to showcase CMU’s important work protecting and preserving the Great Lakes. Please join me in congratulating our outstanding CMU communications team.

Provost Mary C. Schutten was recently appointed to serve on the NCAA Division I Committee on Infractions. This independent body decides infraction cases involving NCAA member institutions and their employees. Above all, she will uphold the integrity of the NCAA, protect students and serve as an ambassador for CMU. Congratulations, Provost Schutten.

I also am pleased to introduce Nicholas Long, who will serve as CMU’s next vice president of finance and administrative services. Nick comes to us from the University of Texas system, where he served as assistant vice chancellor of budget and financial planning. In his former role, he was responsible for oversight of a \$21.7 billion budget encompassing eight universities and six health institutions throughout the state. I look forward to working alongside him to maintain CMU’s strong financial position. Welcome, Nick!

We would not be welcoming Nick if we also were not losing a trusted member of our team. As you all know, Barrie Wilkes will be retiring at the end of this month after nearly three decades of service to Central Michigan. He has been instrumental in many of the university’s successes, including the creation of our College of Medicine, construction of our Biosciences and Education and Human Services buildings, and more. I have relied on his counsel and expertise often, and will miss his steady presence in leadership meetings. Please join me in thanking Barrie.

We also will soon welcome our students and faculty back to campus and fully resume in-person operations, including face-to-face instruction. I am looking forward to the energy and enthusiasm that will come with the return of our students, and I believe we will have an exciting and successful semester.

I would like to commend the members of the Emergency Management Team for their excellent work to prepare our campus for the fall semester. This group, which included leaders from every division of our university, has been meeting nearly every day since mid-March and has done extensive and thorough planning to make sure we are able to operate as safely as possible.

Last week, this group launched our Fired Up for Fall website to provide our community with guidance to stay as healthy as possible at CMU. I encourage everyone to visit the site — you will find the answers to many of our most frequently asked questions as well as information about mandatory self-screening and other personal safety practices.

We **all** share the responsibility to protect ourselves and others, and we will hold each other accountable for adhering to these new policies and procedures. Without a doubt, this semester will look different than previous semesters at CMU. You will see people wearing masks or face coverings in buildings. Classrooms and shared spaces will be arranged to maximize social distancing. Meetings, activities and events will move forward in new formats, including virtual formats.

Things will be different, yet the **most important** parts of the CMU experience will remain the same:

- We will still focus on the individual success of every student.
- We will continue to foster strong relationships between and among students, faculty and staff.
- We will pursue rigor, relevance and excellence in our academic and cocurricular activities.
- And, most importantly, we will embrace and embody our core values.

I challenge **every** member of our campus to reflect daily on the values that infuse our mission, our vision and our culture: integrity, respect, compassion, inclusiveness, social responsibility, excellence and innovation. I ask each of you to consider this question: How will **YOU** make this year the best yet for CMU?

Thank you, Chair Keith. This concludes my report.