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NEW REPORT: Michigan's public universities generate nearly \$45 billion in economic impact, fueling jobs, innovation and growth statewide

LANSING, Mich. — Michigan's public universities are a powerful and diverse economic force, generating nearly \$45 billion in net new economic activity each year, supporting more than 129,000 jobs, and contributing over \$7 billion in state tax revenue, according to a new independent economic impact study released today by the Michigan Association of State Universities (MASU).

Key findings from the study show that in fiscal year 2024:

- Michigan's 15 public universities generated **nearly \$45 billion in net new economic activity**, driven by university operations, student spending and alumni earnings. That's nearly 28 times the state's 2024 appropriation of \$1.6 billion for these institutions.
- Public universities supported an **estimated 129,311 jobs statewide**, including nearly 64,000 net new jobs that would not exist without these institutions. These institutions collectively employed nearly 27,000 faculty and 70,000 staff, the majority of whom work and live locally.
- The 1.6 million living alumni of Michigan's public universities generated **more than \$15 billion in incremental earnings** due to having graduated from one of these institutions.
- University-related economic activity produced **more than \$7.1 billion in state tax revenue**, from personal income tax, sales and use tax, and transportation tax paid by employees, students and alumni living in Michigan.
- Michigan public university graduates **earn nearly twice as much as peers without a college degree**, averaging \$91,073 for ages 25–34, compared to \$46,272 for high school graduates.

Research Universities for Michigan (RU4M) shared additional analysis highlighting the distinct role of Michigan's four R1 research universities — Michigan State University, Michigan Technological University, the University of Michigan, and Wayne State University — as statewide economic and innovation assets whose collective impact extends to every county in the state. RU4M institutions conducted more than **\$3.44 billion in academic research**, attracting billions of dollars in federal and industry research funding from outside the state. This research generated more than \$950 million in economic activity in Michigan.

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[Anderson Economic Group](#) completed the analyses using fiscal year 2024 data.

The scale of Michigan's public university impact is hard to overstate. To put it in context, some of the most visible economic forces in entertainment and sports generate huge activity — yet still don't match the annual economic contribution of Michigan's public universities. For example, Taylor Swift's Eras Tour was [estimated to generate roughly \\$9 billion in economic activity](#) over two years across 19 nations, and [the NFL's total revenues topped \\$23 billion in 2024](#), driven by media rights, sponsorships, and game-day activity.

"These findings make clear that Michigan's public universities are not just educating students — they are fueling the state's economy, strengthening communities and positioning Michigan to compete nationally and globally," said **Rick Koubek, president of Michigan Technological University and chair of the MASU Board**. "Whatever the need, Michigan has a public university to meet the challenge."

"This study affirms what I hear from our students and employers every day: Healthy public universities are the key to unlocking the potential of Michigan's talent base and turning around the state's population decline," said **Philomena Mantella, president of Grand Valley State University and MASU Board vice chair**. "Investments in public universities not only change the lives of our residents, they also pay long-term dividends, driving innovation and entrepreneurship to fuel a brighter future for Michigan."

"Michigan's research universities are critical engines for discovery, talent attraction and commercialization," said **Kevin Guskiewicz, president of Michigan State University and chair of the RU4M Board**. "Our R1 institutions bring billions in federal and industry research funding into the state, translate discoveries into real-world solutions, and help Michigan lead in areas like health care, mobility, energy, and advanced manufacturing."

Business and industry leaders say the findings reinforce what employers experience every day.

"Every day, Michigan's hospitals and other health care enterprises work side by side with public universities to train the doctors, nurses, and health care professionals our communities rely on," said **Brian Peters, CEO of the Michigan Health & Hospital Association**. "Those same partnerships also drive research that leads to new treatments and better care, strengthening both our workforce and the health of Michigan families."

Technology and innovation leaders echoed the importance of sustained investment in higher education.

"Michigan's ability to compete in the digital economy depends on a strong partnership between universities and industry," said **Ronia Kruse, president and CEO of Optech Solutions and co-founder of Digital Lakes**. "Our public universities are producing the talent and ideas that help companies grow, innovate and stay rooted in Michigan."

The release of this study comes as state policymakers begin work on the 2026 legislative session and budget process, underscoring the role of public higher education as a high-return investment in Michigan's workforce, research and development ecosystem, and long-term economic competitiveness.

"This study underscores a simple truth," Koubek said. "Investing in Michigan's public universities isn't just good education policy — it's smart economic policy."

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About the Michigan Association of State Universities

The Michigan Association of State Universities (MASU) serves as the coordinating board for Michigan's 15 public universities, providing advocacy and fostering policy to maximize the collective value these institutions provide in serving the public interest and the state of Michigan. For more information, visit masu.org.