



For Immediate Release
Jan. 26, 2016

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Michigan Community College Association campaign advocating mission creep is misleading potential supporters

LANSING, MI—A new campaign by the Michigan Community College Association (MCCA) to gain support to turn the state’s 28 community colleges into four-year-degree granting institutions fails to inform the public that such a move will result in higher property taxes for residents and higher tuition for community college students and their families.

The MCCA has initiated a campaign, complete with a web page, urging local business leaders to support SB 98, which would allow community colleges to issue bachelor’s degrees, promoting it as a “local talent” issue.

The MCCA campaign ignores a nonpartisan House Fiscal Agency memo saying such an expansion “would serve to increase operating costs of state community colleges that elect to offer the select baccalaureate program.” Any school expanding to four-year status would require higher local property taxes, higher tuition, additional state funding or a combination of all three.

“We are disappointed to see such a critical omission in the PR push by the community college association. Anyone supporting SB 98 must be aware that it carries a significant price tag for local businesses, families and students,” said Daniel Hurley, president and CEO of the Michigan Association of State Universities. “Willfully ignoring this reality is lacking in transparency, to say the least. Senior citizens, many of whom are on fixed incomes, will see property taxes on their homes rise to pay for this bloat.”

By duplicating already-existing four-year programs available at the state’s public universities, community colleges will incur costs for additional faculty and support staff, additional administrative demands, meeting expensive accreditation requirements and more. Capital expenses related to equipment and facilities would likely also be incurred.

Michigan’s public universities already offer students at many community colleges an opportunity to gain a four year degree through classes on campus or through online programming. The universities have pledged to meet the needs of students at any community college, providing there is real demand for the degrees desired.

“SB 98 would be an inefficient use of state resources,” said Hurley. “Allowing community colleges to offer bachelor degrees will result in creating 28 additional four-year degree granting institutions in Michigan, representing an enormous legislatively directed expansion of institutional mission creep through a mass duplication of existing programs and services.” To learn more about why allowing Michigan’s community colleges to offer four-year degrees is bad public policy, visit masu.org.

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