State Reporting Burdens

As public institutions, Michigan's state universities are accountable to citizens and policymakers. Transparency is important to demonstrate the universities' efficient and judicious use of tuition and tax dollars. Part of that transparency is accomplished through state reporting to the Michigan Legislature and the Executive Branch. However, reports do not write themselves. Every report takes time to produce, and that time is spent by university employees. As more reports are required by state government, more staff time and financial resources are diverted from the primary task of supporting the core activities of teaching and learning. MASU surveyed the state universities to estimate how many resources were going toward fulfilling state reporting obligations, finding that almost 10,500 hours went into complying with reporting requirements in academic year 2017-18. Such staff time is estimated to have cost $430,000 and is likely an underestimate of the true burden, as by FY 2021, the state higher education budget had swelled to include 23 different required reports or datasets with hundreds of data elements to be submitted to the state. A new cost impact study will be conducted after the disruption to campus operations caused by the COVID-19 pandemic subsides.

In many cases, the information being sought through mandated state reports is already publicly available. Public universities report massive annual datasets on financial, academic, enrollment, human resources, and other areas to the U.S. Department of Education and the Michigan Department of Technology, Management and Budget. Alignment between and with the two datasets reduces duplication of efforts, and eliminating competing reports and definitions also makes it easier for all stakeholders to examine public university activities.

Policy Actions:
- Reduce unfunded state reporting activities.
- Streamline state reporting requirements to eliminate wasteful duplication of efforts.
- When state policymakers are considering new reporting requirements, universities should be involved at an early stage to ensure that the desired information is possible to collect and data elements are clearly defined.

CENTRAL MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY
EASTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY
FERRIS STATE UNIVERSITY
GRAND VALLEY STATE UNIVERSITY
LAKE SUPERIOR STATE UNIVERSITY

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY
MICHIGAN TECHNOLOGICAL UNIVERSITY
NORTHERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY
OAKLAND UNIVERSITY
SAGINAW VALLEY STATE UNIVERSITY

UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN-DEARBORN
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN-FLINT
WAYNE STATE UNIVERSITY
WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY

THE MICHIGAN FIFTEEN PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES