

# MICHIGAN HIGHER EDUCATION 2016 PUBLIC POLICY AGENDA

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Serving nearly 300,000 students annually, the state's 15 public universities serve as integral partners with government, business and industry, and the philanthropic and non-profit sectors to build a better Michigan. *They are public institutions serving the public interest.*

The high-quality and global reputation of Michigan's public universities are rooted in the state's unique form of higher education governance. State constitutional autonomy granted to the universities allows the gubernatorial-appointed and popularly-elected governing boards of these institutions to ensure strong accountability and stewardship of key fiscal, academic and other policy matters.

Representing the collective views of the state's public universities, the policy statements presented in this Michigan Higher Education Public Policy Agenda represent a guiding framework within which these institutions can successfully fulfill their missions while ensuring public accountability, academic quality and fiscal stewardship. The statements are tailored to Michigan and its unique policy-setting context, and are reflective of current issues being discussed in the state's public policy domain. This guide to higher education policy issues can serve as a resource for ensuring that Michigan's 15 public universities continue their historic achievements in shaping the state's rich legacy while fully realizing the promise of its future.

## HIGHER EDUCATION STATE POLICY PRIORITIES

### COLLEGE AFFORDABILITY

#### State Operating Support

- Increase state operating support for Michigan's public universities to maintain college affordability.
- Promote a state higher education funding model that provides sufficient, predictable and sustained public university operating support.

#### State Performance-based Funding

- Continue the utilization of a state performance-based funding system in which formula refinements involve input from public university leaders and that awards state appropriation allotments that support the missions of individual institutions.

#### State Student Aid Programs

- Increase state investment in need-based student aid programs that promote access for low-income students.
- Boost the share of state financial aid directed to students attending the state's public postsecondary institutions, which are generally more affordable.

## **Tuition-Setting (Tuition Caps/Tuition Price Controls)**

- Eliminate the use of legislatively-imposed tuition price controls, which impinge Michigan's public universities' ability to maintain affordable net costs of attendance, to strategically invest in programs designed to boost student outcomes, or to make other strategic investments as evaluated by the institutions. Caps on tuition prices, particularly when the state does not appropriate reasonable levels of university operating support, inhibit these institutions' ability to meet state educational attainment and economic goals.
- Reinforce recognition that full authority in setting tuition policy at Michigan's public universities is best determined locally and lies with the governing boards of these institutions.

## **CAPITAL OUTLAY AND ASSET PRESERVATION**

### **State Investment in Campus Facilities and Infrastructure**

- Create a state capital outlay process that is conducted annually, is consistent and predictable, and provides the public investment needed to ensure continued world-class academics and applied research at Michigan's public universities.
- Reinstitute state payments for infrastructure, technology, equipment, and maintenance at university facilities, helping these state institutions lengthen the lifespan and functional utility of the state's investment for many more years.

## **STUDENT SUCCESS**

### **Rigorous Postsecondary-aligned K-12 Education Standards**

- Promote state-led collaboration among all stakeholders along Michigan's elementary, secondary and postsecondary education continuum to ensure that academically rigorous standards are available to guide instruction for all K-12 students.
- Continue state-led reform in developing a comprehensive and high quality system for assessing student learning.

### **Teacher Preparation and Professional Development**

- Promote collaboration between institutions and state officials to strengthen collegiate teacher preparation and professional development programs.
- Caution against using student test scores in evaluating teachers, and teacher preparation and professional development programs.

## **COLLABORATION VERSUS DUPLICATION AS THE MODEL FOR MICHIGAN PUBLIC HIGHER EDUCATION**

### **Community College Bachelor's Degrees**

- Oppose legislation that authorizes Michigan's community colleges to offer four-year degree programs.
- Reinforce the respective and distinct missions of the state's public universities and community colleges, and promote continuance of the historical model of programmatic collaboration, not duplication, between the two higher education sectors.

## Seamless Student Transfer

- Support voluntary efforts to refine a streamlined, simplified and transparent process by which students can ascertain the transferability of credit-bearing courses from and among the state's community colleges and its public universities.
- Promote recognition that—with an emphasis on two- and four-year degree program alignment and the maintenance of rigorous academic standards—final determination on discipline-specific credit acceptance lies with university departmental faculty.

## CAMPUS SAFETY

### Campus Sexual Assault

- Ensure that any state legislation that seeks to address issues related to campus sexual assault complements existing or impending federal legislation and is grounded in the following principles: respect for the wishes of the victim, proactive support to students, and fairness for all involved in a given incident. In addition, such legislation should maintain the longstanding educational nature of the university discipline system.

### Guns on Campus

- Oppose state legislation that seeks to diminish or eliminate institutional authority to regulate guns on campus.

## UNFUNDED STATE MANDATES

### Michigan Indian Tuition Waiver

- Advocate for the state to fully fund its mandated Michigan Indian Tuition Waiver program.

## ACADEMIC GOVERNANCE

### Institutional and Faculty Expertise on Academic Matters

- Educate stakeholders on the benefits of the principles of academic freedom.
- Oppose state efforts to micromanage academic decisions regarding admissions criteria, the faculty, curriculum and instruction at public institutions.
- Oppose legislative interference with research and the academic peer-review process.

## INSTITUTIONAL GOVERNING BOARD AUTHORITY OVER CAMPUS OPERATIONS

### Board Oversight of Fiscal, Personnel and Operational Issues is Essential

- Promote understanding and recognition among stakeholders of the authority governing boards have over public university strategic and operational matters.

