



Higher Education

A Michigan Platform

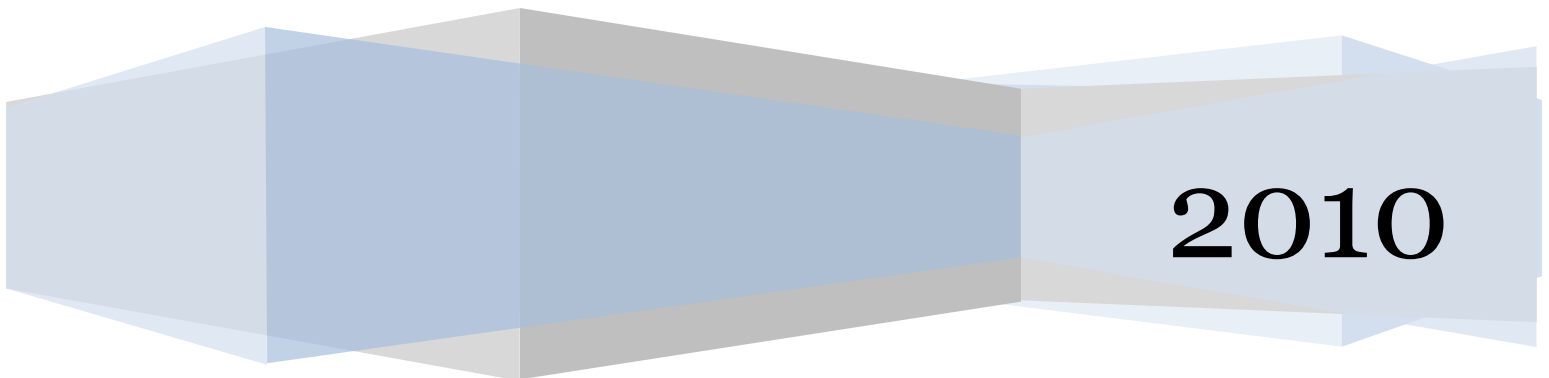



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AFT Michigan, AFT, AFL-CIO is a union of 35,000-members working in K-12 and intermediate school districts, community colleges, universities, and local government. The 97 locals extend as far south as Monroe and north to Whitefish Township in the Upper Peninsula.



Overview

Overview:

The opportunities for a quality higher education in the United States have been the envy of and model for the world. Michigan, with its excellent public universities and community colleges, has played a major role in helping to establishing that reputation.

Michigan has traditionally supported world-class research facilities; provided students with innovative, effective instruction and measurable learning; served the needs of Michigan's workforce and employers in an increasingly technical and global economy; advanced the arts and cultural life of Michigan communities and residents; and prepared Michigan citizens to participate in the civic discourse and decisions of our times. Michigan's higher education institutions collectively award over 140,000 degrees and certificates each year.

This is a wide and daunting array of responsibilities, but with respect to higher education, Michigan's citizens expect and deserve no less. We should rise to the challenges presented by Lieutenant Governor John Cherry's Commission on Higher Education and Economic Growth. The first goal of the Cherry Commission was to outline a plan to double the percentage of residents who attain post-secondary degrees or other credentials that link them to success in Michigan's new economy.

However, Michigan's traditional support for higher education has waned. The lack of sufficient State funding has not only impacted university and college programs but has also resulted in significant tuition increases that limit access to higher education. Our State's disinvestment in funding public community

colleges and universities has undermined Michigan's ability to diversify its economy. Postsecondary education is the key to economic success.

To address the higher education needs and expectations of Michigan's citizens, AFT Michigan urges consideration of the following principles and measures:

- **Opportunity and Access**
- **Quality Teaching and Learning**
- **Faculty**
- **Students**
- **Institutional Resources**

Opportunity and Access

The Issue

All Michigan citizens have a right to a high-quality education that carries them as far as their ambitions, talents, and hard work will permit. Access to post-secondary education is a central part of this right. Public higher education should be affordable to everyone. No Michigan citizen should be forced to give up on college for financial reasons or take on an unmanageable debt to attend a public community college or university in Michigan. As a *Senate Fiscal Agency* report demonstrated, when the state provided more money to fund community colleges, tuition remained stable and enrollment surged, even with a much stronger economy.

From 2002-2007, Michigan's higher education investment has been the lowest in the nation and well under the national average of 15.1% over that same period. In the FY 2007-2008 and FY 2008-2009 budgets, Michigan's public four-year universities received a modest overall increase of 1%, with community colleges receiving 2%. In 2009-2010, community colleges received no increase whatsoever and universities actually saw a reduction of 0.4%. We can and should do better than that.

Michigan's public universities have suffered from successive cuts in state appropriations. Between 2001 and 2009, state budget cuts have reduced the average state payment per pupil by \$2,852. As a result, students have been forced to pay a greater portion of the bill as the State's level of support has dropped.

Research shows that as the percent of the population with college education rises, so do the wages for both the college educated and those NOT college educated.¹

It is no coincidence that the three most prosperous states—Connecticut, New Jersey and

Massachusetts—rank among the top five states in the educational levels of their populace.

Michigan students should have a broad variety of choices for educational advancement after high school and throughout their lives, from technical education to an associate or bachelor's degree, as well as graduate study and life-long learning.

¹"Michigan Economy in the Balance: the Case for Funding Higher Education," a presentation by Dr. Michael Bouulus, Presidents' Council, PCSUM, February 17, 2009

Action Steps

Tuition: Provide adequate State funding that does not result in spiraling tuition increases;

Funding: Necessary funding requires the State adopt a revenue structure that is fair, stable and adequate;

Up Out of Poverty: Citizens on public assistance should be able to utilize the maximum federal allowance to gain access to higher education and training, thus enabling their permanent transition into the workforce. Post-secondary education is more critical for low income students than ever, due to the state of the economy. It is important that both transportation and childcare needs be met while these students work to improve their lives for the benefit of themselves and their children;

Financial Aid Essential: Michigan has moved from being in the middle of the pack in providing state financial aid per student to the bottom of the pack. In FY 2007-8, Michigan ranked 28th among states in providing this assistance to students. The House Fiscal Agency estimates that in 2010-11, Michigan will rank in the 43rd spot, seventh from the bottom. We must do better.

Expansion of Access: Universities that currently grant applied baccalaureate programs should continue to develop partnerships with community colleges to enhance access. Additionally, Michigan's higher education institutions should continue to enhance and maintain the website containing course articulation and transfer information for all Michigan institutions. Policy makers and institutions must work to increase credential and degree completion by adult residents who have already completed some post-secondary education. Finally, to meet the needs of students and the State's economy, Michigan should continue to make progress to create, maintain and enhance its longitudinal data system to track Pre K-12, higher education and adult job training and re-employment program students in a manner that protects students privacy while producing valid and reliable data that can be generated for continuous improvement and decision-making.



Quality Teaching and Learning - Faculty

The Issue

Every student has a right to expect well-educated and prepared faculty, who are fully supported by their institutions, to provide the highest quality instruction. *Michigan colleges and universities must provide full-time, permanent tenure-track positions to all faculty who meet these high standards.*

Faculty must be personally available to students for advice and guidance. Students need opportunities to talk to their professors and advisors about their plans and ambitions, as well as their coursework and research. Technology should not be allowed to turn professors into mere faces on a screen or names on a computer. At the same time, technology should be readily available so that students have the ability to be educated in the latest advances and be fully prepared for the workforce.

Research, scholarship and creative activity are essential to the success of American higher education. For ideas to flow between students and teachers, and reach society at large, knowledge must be continually expanded as well as transmitted. Colleges and universities differ greatly in their research activity, but good teaching always draws on new scholarship, and vice versa. Scholarly and creative activity is the engines that keep America on top in commerce, medicine, science and technology. They enrich our culture and generate breakthroughs in every walk of life. Academic Freedom is essential to unfettered inquiring and progress. It must be retained and strengthened.

Action Steps

Professional Development: The State should support training in effective teaching for new faculty and professional development opportunities for all faculty;

Non Tenure–Track Impact: As a first step in assessing appropriate faculty staffing patterns, the State should conduct a study of the conditions under which non tenure-track faculty function at the State’s institutions of higher education and the impact of these conditions on student access to faculty, student conferencing, curriculum development, faculty knowledge of curriculum and accrediting agency standards, and professional development. These conditions include, but are not limited to, extremely low salaries, no health and pension benefits, no offices, no assurance of continuing employment and no opportunity to participate in university governance or course development. With over 50 percent of the teaching in Michigan’s higher education institutions done by non tenure-track faculty, such a study is long overdue;

Academic Freedom: State policy makers should oppose the deceptively named “Academic Bill of Rights” which would have the reverse impact suggested by its name. For scholarly and creative activity to continue to prosper, we must preserve the line between indoctrination of students and appropriate pedagogical authority. The best way to accomplish that goal is to continue to have all faculty rather than college administrations or the courts interpret and apply scholarly and professional standards.

Quality Teaching and Learning - Students

The Issue

Students must be held to high standards of achievement. Today, too many students are coming to college unprepared to handle college-level work. Colleges and universities have established hundreds of programs and incurred significant costs to bring students up to par, but the *real* solution is to raise public school students' achievement levels.

Michigan's higher education institutions must become full partners in Pre K-12 education reform, working closely with the schools to raise high school curriculum, graduation and college entry standards.

A college's own program of study must be coherent and challenging, with high grading standards. A certificate or degree from an occupational or academic program should always be a mark of achievement and readiness to assume new responsibility.

In addition, students must be given access to the technology and skills they need in today's information age. It is unacceptable to create classes of "have" and "have-not" colleges when it comes to training in technology.

Action Steps

State Funded Partnerships: The State should endorse and fund Pre K-12 education reform measures for partnerships between Pre K-12 systems, community colleges, and four year institutions in teacher training;

State policy should encourage and support policies that assist in creating PreK-16 partnerships that align curricula, match student progression from one grade level to the next through demonstrated mastery of specific skills or knowledge, and coordinate testing requirements from elementary school through college.

Many State initiatives for educational reform have targeted dual credit, dual enrollment or concurrent enrollment programs to enable high school students to earn college level credit in course work offered at the high school or community college. These programs may be part of a larger effort to sequence secondary and postsecondary education curricula, or may simply offer advanced placement courses to high school students. In particular, AFT

²*Building a Profession: Strengthening Teacher Preparation and Induction*, an American Federation of Teachers' publication, outlines such reform and is available upon request.

Michigan supports a current year blended school aid membership for pupils in their first year at an early/middle college. Additionally, it is important for the State to develop a comprehensive pre-school through postsecondary student data system so that students' success can be tracked throughout their education.

Restore Higher Education Functions to the Michigan Department of Education:

To ensure ongoing, coordinated, and productive partnerships among school districts and higher education institutions, State agencies, which provide services and scholarships to higher education, should not be diffused across State government. Further steps should be taken to restore functions to the Michigan Department of Education. Restoring higher education functions to this department is consistent with the State Board of Education's constitutionally mandated role as "the general planning and coordinating body for all public education, including higher education...."

³*Successful Collaborations between High Schools and Community Colleges*, ERIC Digest, by Pam Schuetz, 2001.

Quality Teaching and Learning - Institutional Resources

The Issue

The vast majority of campus resources should be directed, not to administration, but to the classroom and activities that support student success and enhance the economic future of the State. This is not just a matter of compensating faculty and researchers and buying supplies. It is equally important to provide adequate support to the front-line staff who, among other things, see that students are registered properly, taking the right courses, and receiving financial aid; to specialists who operate college libraries, communication systems, and laboratories; and, now more than ever, to those responsible for campus health, safety and security.

Action Steps

Resources: To assess the appropriate allocation of resources in higher education, the State should conduct a longitudinal study of the changing allocation of resources by the State's institutions of higher education to full-time faculty instruction, part-time/ adjunct faculty instruction, instructional administration, instructional clerical support, general administration, general administration clerical support, and other support services;

NCAA Mandates: The State should conduct a study on the impact of mounting and ever-changing North Central Accrediting Agency mandates on each higher education institution's human and fiscal resources;

Economic Priorities: When the State does not adequately fund community colleges and universities, it creates a disincentive for them to expand offerings in high demand health and technology fields. Not only does this limit students prospects, but also it negatively affects the State's economy;

Technology: The State funding of two-year and four-year institutions should take into account the spiraling costs of instructional technology, management information systems, and the electrical infrastructure supporting instructional and support services. These must be continually updated to provide quality instruction and process student data;

Campus Safety Measures: State support for campus safety, including fire and emergency services, needs to be fully funded. Communities that have extraordinary costs as a result of hosting public universities should not have to draw away dollars for campus safety that ought to be spent on instruction.

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