

# Appendix I:

## Public Education in Michigan: The Public Good

Thomas J. Haas, Chair

The importance of education has long been recognized in Michigan, including before Michigan was granted state status. The Northwest Ordinance passed in 1787 by congress, created a compact between the original states and the Northwest Territory, which included Michigan, in which “schools and the means of educational shall forever be encouraged.”<sup>156</sup> When Michigan adopted its first constitution in 1835, two years before it achieved statehood, using slightly different language but the same concept, Michigan encouraged education and intellectual and scientific pursuits in its constitution, even requiring funding for the promoted pursuits not only at the K–12 level but also for universities.<sup>157</sup>

Although the funding mechanisms have since changed, the Michigan Constitution has provided that education and schools shall be promoted in every iteration of the constitution and continues to do so today. Mirroring language from the Northwest Ordinance, in 1908 and in the current constitution, the people included the mandate that “[r]eligion, morality and knowledge being necessary to good government and the happiness of mankind, schools and the means of education shall forever be encouraged.”<sup>158</sup> And like Michigan's first constitution, Michigan chose to not only express such encouragement but also to fund K–12 (which is provided at no cost) and maintain universities in the current constitution.

Indeed, this concept was so important that the delegates of the Constitutional Convention of 1961–1962 considered the language found in Article VIII, § 1 as the first substantive proposal before the convention. A delegate from the education committee linked the language back to the Northwest Ordinance and asked that the language be adopted in as well, “not only because of the historic significance of the language but because of the importance...of the development of education in our state of Michigan.” Another delegate expounding upon the history of this provision stated:

It is therefore within this historic tradition that we consider this section today. It is within the realization that our basic liberties and our very foundations are rooted in an educated society as was foretold by our forefathers hundreds of years ago. It is fitting and proper that the purpose of education be the first item submitted for your consideration. There is no doubt that it has been one of the first items of government since we have known that institution on these soils. For us, the people of Michigan, the [Northwest Ordinance] was our first and most basic constitution. And its proper concern with religious freedom, the bills of rights and education is a living testimony to the wisdom of its writers.

As shown not only in the constitution's plain language but also in the testimony surrounding its adoption in the most recent Constitutional Convention, the importance of education has been recognized as fundamental and vital to Michigan and its citizenry since its inception.

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President Thomas J. Haas is Grand Valley State University's fourth president.

During the past 35 years, Tom Haas has been a tenured faculty member, department chair, dean, vice president and president. Just prior to his appointment in 2006, Haas was president of the State University of New York Cobleskill. In addition to his appointment as president of Grand Valley, Haas has also been appointed professor of chemistry in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences.

He is a 1973 honors graduate of the U.S. Coast Guard Academy. He then earned a Master of Science (MS) in chemistry; another in environmental health sciences from The University of Michigan. Haas also holds a MS in human resources management from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute (Troy, NY) and a Ph.D. in chemistry from the University of Connecticut (Storrs, CT). Fellowship experiences in higher education include Yale University Faculty Fellow and an American Council on Education Fellow at Western Michigan University. He completed executive leadership programs at Harvard University. He was recently recognized with an honorary degree, Doctor of Science, by Kingston University in the UK and a second from Cracow University of Economics in Poland. He is a retired Captain after over 23 years of commissioned service in the USCG.

Haas is an internationally recognized expert in hazardous material transportation, strategic planning and higher education leadership, and has published numerous articles in a variety of journals.

He is active in the community serving on a number of boards including Michigan Campus Compact, Talent 2025, Van Andel Institute Graduate School, Spectrum Health Hospitals, Citizens Research Council of Michigan, Grand Rapids Medical Education and Research Center, The Right Place, Economic Club of Grand Rapids, What's Next (for Grand Rapids) and Grand Rapids Opera. He is a member of the Grand Rapids Rotary Club, consultant and evaluator for North Central Association Higher Learning Commission and the immediate past Chair of Division 2, NCAA and Member of Great Lakes Intercollegiate Athletic Conference. He is former chair of the Michigan Public Universities Presidents Council.

Haas has professional and personal ties to Michigan. Haas is married to Marcia (Knapp) Haas, who is a native of Union City and a graduate of Albion College. They have three children and four grandchildren and have other family living in Grand Rapids.

Grand Valley State University attracts more than 25,000 students with academic excellence, first-rate faculty, and state-of-the-art facilities. Grand Valley is the comprehensive university for the state's second largest metropolitan area and offers 78 undergraduate and 28 graduate degree programs. It has campuses in Allendale, Grand Rapids, and Holland and centers in Muskegon, Traverse City and Detroit. The university's focus on a strong liberal education fosters critical thinking, creative problem solving, and cultural understanding. Through personalized learning enhanced by active scholarship, Grand Valley accomplishes its mission of educating students to shape their lives, their professions, and their societies.

