

**SVSU Higher Education Testimony  
House Appropriations Chamber  
March 16, 2017 @ 9:00 a.m.**

Good Morning,

Thank you, Chairwoman LaSata, Vice-Chair Inman, Minority Vice-Chair Hoadley, and all members of the committee.

I appreciate the opportunity to speak with you this morning. I would also like to take a moment to welcome and thank our student representatives from our SVSU Student Association who have joined us in Lansing this morning. Much like you, they are very dedicated to representing their constituents!

As part of the testimony this morning, the committee has requested for a general overview of Saginaw Valley State University, along with gathering input about our thoughts for performance funding, outlining our partnerships with community colleges and finally addressing the programs that assist first generation college students with successful departure from college.

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To begin, SVSU is grateful to see the Governor propose an increase in the higher education line item and appreciates his continued investment to higher education over the past six years.

We are also very supportive of the “and / or” tuition restraint language outlined in the Governors recommendation. This language allows those institutions with historical tuition restraint to have flexibility when developing their budget model for the upcoming academic year.

We applaud the Governor and his budget team for their support. We hope to also have your support.

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SVSU is a Regional Public University located in the Great Lakes Bay Region, which comprises of Midland, Bay and Saginaw Counties. Our Region is home to 600 businesses that seek SVSU graduates each year.

These businesses range from Fortune 50 companies like:

- The Dow Chemical Company
- To family businesses, like Amigo Mobility or Morley Family Companies.
- SVSU has 8,300 undergraduate students.
- 700 graduate students
- 800 international students
- 500 student athletes
- and 170 student veterans.

More than 2,400 students live on campus in one of our various residential facilities. SVSU is proud of our high-quality facilities and student experiences.

We were named for the “best dorms” in Michigan and 20<sup>th</sup> overall nationally in 2016. This is a title we are happy to say we’ve received two out of the past three years.

SVSU athletes compete at the Division II level in the GLIAC Conference along with Grand Valley, Wayne State, Ferris State, Michigan Tech, Northern Michigan and Lake State.

As the current chair of the presidents’ council of the GLIAC, I am very proud of our commitment to scholar athletes and happy to see how athletes have a higher median average than our average student.

SVSU has retained over 80% of our 44,000 graduates in Michigan over recent years.

Our alumni go on to become teachers, nurses, police officers, members of Congress, and graduate from Harvard Law School. Some of these alumni even go onto to found their own startup companies.

Two of our alumni, **Brad Koch** and **Jesse Vollmar**, both 2011 Computer Science graduates from the Thumb, have formed their own company: “Farmlogs.” “Farmlogs” creates technology that simplifies farming. The company aims to “get timely, unbiased information to improve yield, eliminate waste, and maximize profitability of every acre.”

Their company currently operates in Ann Arbor and has been featured multiple times in the *New York Times* and *Wall Street Journal*.

In 2016, SVSU was recognized by *The Chronicle of Higher Education* as a “Great College to Work For”. Our 1,300 university employees create this welcoming and inclusive collegial environment.

From the staff person who is mowing the lawn, to the faculty member teaching a class, to the residential hall director making our students feel at home; they are the ones who deserve all the credit for maintaining our status as a great place to work.

In 2015, SVSU received the highly competitive Carnegie Community Engagement Classification. Only 7% of accredited institutions of higher learning across the United State receive this classification. We are always happy to say we share this classification with 7 other Michigan public universities. Michigan is truly above the average of their national peers when it comes to measuring community engagement.

As a Carnegie Community Engaged University we place 700 students into internships or co-ops per year. These internships range from working with Quicken Loans to those working for the State Legislature.

SVSU regularly has faculty and students who collaborate to solve Regional policy issues. An example of this, we collaborate with the Saginaw County Crime Prevention Council.

Increasing access to K-12 schools for STEM Educational activities has been a priority for our institution and Region. As part of these activities, our Dow Mobile Research Lab takes SVSU faculty and students to K-12 schools throughout the Region to educate them about the STEM fields.

And speaking of STEM, we are excited to host this year's FIRST Robotics State Championship the third week of April in our athletic facilities.

This event would not be possible without the support and partnership of **The Dow Chemical Company, Consumers Energy, and the Great Lakes Bay Regional Convention and Visitors Bureau**, among others.

Many of our activities as a Regional University have been focused on increasing leadership capacity for our fellow citizens. SVSU sponsors and facilitates yearly regional leadership programs which range from:

- **Our Hispanic Leadership Institute**
- **To our Youth Leadership Institute**
- **To our new Local Political Leadership Institute.**

Working with the business community has always been vital to the success of our institution. SVSU acts as a convener for family businesses throughout the region. Part of this is through our Stevens Center for Family Business.

We host conferences, facilitate professional development programs and offer other seminars. This brings students together with members of our business community to work together on solving problems.

Finally, the most important part of being a Carnegie Community Engaged institution is through our commitment to philanthropy and community service.

Our students lead this effort through programs such as **Relay for Life** and the **annual Battle of the Valleys** competition. In collaboration with Grand Valley, our institutions have raised over \$550,000 since 2002 for regional non-profits.

Some of those students who take the lead for both the Relay for Life and the Battle of the Valleys competition are with us today and sitting behind me.

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At Saginaw Valley, we strive to continually improve upon our high quality academic programs. SVSU has more than 90 academic programs which range from

finance to engineering to nursing.

Many of our individual academic programs are also professionally accredited, ranging from our College of Business & Management to our College of Education.

As the needs of college students continue to change, we work to stay ahead of those needs. Originally, in 1963, our institution primarily worked with non-traditional, commuter students. Over the years, our students have become more traditional and residential.

However, SVSU continues to meet the needs of both traditional and non-traditional students. We do this by offering flexible learning formats through hybrid and online education. We also work to meet the needs of our students by trying to understand how they best learn.

As an institution, we made the decision to launch a renovation of our library in 2015. We are working to transform the building from a repository for books into a community for learning and mentoring resources.

The new library will have expanded breakout rooms for group / seminar learning, more resources for academic achievement, as well as various other tools that will help students learn and graduate from college.

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SVSU has remained the most affordable public university in Michigan for over 20 years. Our tuition is under \$10,000 per year and \$300 per credit hour. We are the only public university in Michigan to be under both thresholds.

We are dedicated to remaining affordable, as affordability opens access to those high achieving students who struggle to find the financial resources to attend college. As a publicly funded university, it is important to be accountable to the State of the Michigan for the funding we receive.

And we agree that performance metrics should assist with remaining accountable to the State for those public funds.

We applaud the Governor, along with the members of this committee, along with your Senate colleagues for setting this framework in place.

We also thank the Business Leaders for Michigan for taking the lead with assisting in developing the first model for higher education performance funding in Michigan.

We do ask for the committee to consider examining the categorization of institutions for comparison within the performance metrics.

Categorizing institutions based upon “Carnegie Classification” levels is a good start. However, there are many other variables used by other States, such as North Carolina, to consider when categorizing institutions. A sample of this framework is available in your packet.

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Saginaw Valley State University has a rich tradition of partnering with Community Colleges. In fact, SVSU was chartered at our regional sister institution, Delta College.

Delta wanted to explore 4-year baccalaureate programs and the stakeholders of our community came together to petition the State to charter a public university to serve the needs of our Region.

Since 1963, we have continued to be a strong partner with Delta College and we maintain a reverse transfer agreement with Delta. Along with Delta, we also maintain various partnerships with:

- Kirtland Community College
- Mid-Michigan Community College
- Mott Community College and
- St. Clair Community College to name a few.

We work with these colleges to assist with meeting the workforce development needs of our region. For example, we have a RN-to-BSN program with both Delta and Kirtland Colleges. While this program is popular, we have still have empty seats in the program.

We also work to maintain specific agreements for credit hour transfers between our institutions, which do not conflict with the accrediting body for SVSU or our partnering community colleges.

SVSU remains open and willing to have discussions with community colleges about how to collaborate and make higher education more affordable and accessible, while maintaining high quality standards for all students.

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Working with first generation college students is a priority for our team at SVSU. As a first-generation college student myself, I attended Schoolcraft Community College before transferring to the University of Detroit. I was one of five kids in my family to receive a college degree.

As a non-traditional college student, I worked while completing my undergraduate

studies. Like many of our students at SVSU, it took me more than 4 years to complete my undergraduate degree, so I understand many of the barriers that our students face on a daily basis.

At SVSU, we first pride ourselves on a small average class size of 22 students. This is important, as our faculty usually know the names of all the students in their class.

Our faculty are also dedicated to working with our students inside and outside of the classroom and the community. We always take pride in the fact that many of our faculty are highly engaged outside the classroom and act as advisors to student organizations, or participate in various functions around campus.

Beyond small class sizes and dedicated faculty, our institution also has many various programs developed to assist students. These various programs range from **an on-campus writing center to tutoring centers** that focus on a multitude of disciplines including math, physics, biology and chemistry.

And as mentioned earlier, these tutoring centers now have one central location in our library.

SVSU is also dedicated to maintaining affordability and access to those first-generation students. We have worked diligently to make college affordable for many first-generation college students.

Our efforts have assisted with working with various foundations to set up and join different scholarship programs, including:

- The Saginaw Promise Scholarship
- Bay Commitment Scholarship and
- Detroit Promise Scholarship.

Our dedication to affordability and financial aid for first generation students has increased access to many students who are currently enrolled at SVSU.

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In closing, SVSU is dedicated to remaining affordable for all students within our region and throughout the State of Michigan.

Again, we thank the Governor for his recommended increase to the higher education line item and we also appreciate the tuition restraint language. We hope that you agree.

Thank you to the committee for your time and I'm open to any questions you might have.

## APPENDIX A

Variables taken under consideration for categorization of institutions for performance funding:

- The size of an institution (FTE enrollment)
- Full-time / part-time enrollment numbers
- Distribution of degrees by level (associate, bachelors, graduate, professional)
- Program mix (especially by the involvement of high-cost programs such as health professions and engineering)
- Research emphasis (dollar volume of research and the ratio of research to instructional expenditures)
- And selectivity of students (open admissions to highly selective).

