

University of Michigan Flint Testimony

Chancellor Susan Borrego

Michigan House of Representatives

Appropriations Subcommittee on Higher Education

Thursday, March 9, 2017

9am

Good Morning Chair LaSata, Vice Chairs Inman and Hoadley, remaining members of this Higher Education Subcommittee, staff and guests. I am Susan Borrego, Chancellor of the best university in the state of Michigan, the University of Michigan – Flint; but of course, I'm biased.

I'd like to welcome new members of the committee and thank you and your colleagues for your continued support of the University of Michigan – Flint and our students who have not only shown strength, but resilience, much like our community, over the last few years.

This morning, I want to share with you information about our university, our accomplishments, and to respond to the committee's specific questions about students, community college partnerships and performance funding. To do so, I've organized my remarks using these three points: 1) Excellence, 2) Access, and 3) Accountability. Afterwards, I would be happy to answer any questions you have.

Before that, I first want you to know that we are pleased with the Governor's Executive Recommendation for an across-the-board increase in higher education funding. Additionally, we are especially supportive of the increase in financial aid for reasons I'll discuss later. I encourage and humbly ask for this committee's support of the Governor's recommendation.

For those who are not familiar with the University of Michigan – Flint, we were founded in 1956 with a commitment to bring a quality University of Michigan education to Flint and the surrounding area, and to students who may be placebound, and that's exactly what we've done. In the process, we've welcomed thousands of exceptional students into our classrooms, equipping them with the knowledge, experiences, and skills to make lasting contributions to their businesses, organizations, and communities. Last year, we awarded 1,855 degrees - our

largest number of graduates to date. Our University now has over 43,000 graduates, of whom 77% remain right here in Michigan. We have created a talent pipeline that has not only strengthened our university, but has strengthened our county and state with people who work and start businesses in Michigan. Our graduates live in Michigan, and raise their families here. With 10,000 students, staff and faculty, our University has a 64-million-dollar economic impact in Genesee County.

Our University is dedicated to educational excellence. While we know that perfection is not attainable, I like to think that if we chase perfection, we will catch excellence. Thanks to our 14:1 student to faculty ratio and through our focus in forward-thinking areas of study, hands on experience for our students, and competing for the best and brightest, our university continues to catch excellence on a daily basis.

We have consistently received the "Best In the Midwest" designation by US News and World Report for our in-demand degrees. We are pleased to offer to our students five schools, 205 areas of study, and 43 graduate programs which includes 18 doctoral and PhD programs. Additionally, we are proud of our emerging centers of excellence in Healthcare, STEM, and Entrepreneurship.

In 2016, we established our new School of Nursing as the fifth school on the UM-Flint campus. We are excited about the potential for new opportunities for students, and collaborations among schools, as well as within the community, that will come from this important move. Within the school, we are proud of our Veterans to BSN program that caters to our veterans who had medical experience during their military service. Additionally, we're proud to have one of two accelerated BSN programs in the state and a top-ranked online nursing program curriculum.

In the area of STEM, we've made great strides to ensure that our students are leaders in this area. As you are aware, the legislature supported our Murchie Capital Outlay project last legislative session. And again, we want to extend our thanks to you for that. Through your support, we will provide new state of the art instructional teaching labs that will foster interactive learning, increased opportunities for faculty and undergraduate student research

lab space; and student collaborative areas among many other advancements. These changes will not only foster a stronger learning environment for our students, but it will accommodate our whopping 58% increase in STEM students at the University of Michigan-Flint.

Things are steadily moving forward and we have secured all the outside and donor dollars to meet our specified match for the project. We plan to request construction authorization this spring.

Entrepreneurship will have a lasting legacy at UM-Flint with the Hagerman Center for Entrepreneurship and Innovation established by Phil and Jocelyn Hagerman within the School of Management. The Center offers students opportunities to enrich their education with experiences that take them beyond the classroom. In the past year, UM Flint was awarded an EDA grant from the US Department of Commerce. We are one of two universities in Michigan selected to serve as a regional catalyst in economic and community development. Our end goal is to transform students and faculty into entrepreneurial, innovative thinkers and doers and to fuel change in our region, and beyond.

The best way to obtain excellence is to understand the steps it takes to get there firsthand. Students often tell our faculty that they come to the University of Michigan-Flint because we provide them the hands-on experience to use what they've learned in the real world. Our nursing students will tell you about their experience performing lead testing and blood draws of Flint children in partnership with the Genesee County Health Department. Our student teachers can share with you their experiences of experience in classrooms a full year before their peers begin student teaching. University of Michigan-Flint accounting students share their skill handling tax preparation for community members. And in a unique twist, our physical therapy students have created the PT Heart Clinic at the North End Soup Kitchen in Flint that provides physical therapy services to help patients manage pain, improve strength, and prevent and treat injuries.

Excellence is not only found in our academic areas, or in the hands-on opportunities created. It's in our students. We are actively competing for and attracting Michigan's best and brightest. Last year, we dedicated our own resources to create a pool of guaranteed Merit Scholarships.

Students with a 3.25 or higher grade point average with a 24 ACT or 1160 SAT can receive up to \$7000 in guaranteed scholarship dollars. In our first year, 231 incoming freshmen took us up on the offer.

While we are proud of our push toward educational excellence, it means nothing if students can't access it. Whether first generation, new traditional, online, transfer or dual-enrolled students, we have a number of significant initiatives to ensure that no matter where or in what condition a student begins, they can thrive and persist at UM-Flint.

We have a large population of First Generation College Students. For these students, we've created an office of Educational Opportunity Initiatives. Our EOI program provides the advising, supplemental education, and college readiness support, and the hands-on encouragement and attention these students will need to be successful at each stage of their academic career.

One of the strongest examples of our dedication to our first generation students is our Promise Scholars program. These students from across the region are provisionally admitted to UM-Flint based on their high school GPA and test scores. Despite lower high school GPA's and test scores, these students demonstrate strong potential to obtain a 4-year degree, with the proper support. That support has led to nearly 40% of our promise scholars achieving a 3.0 or higher during the fall semester. Our 100% retention of our 2016 Promise Scholars is proof that this program is working.

You'll notice that when I mentioned our various groups of students, I used the term "New Traditional Student." Think of our veterans who choose to attend college after their term of service, or perhaps those students who decided on college late in life; or what about those who are the breadwinners and caretakers for their families who must work while attending school. It is more common than not that these students attend all of our campuses. At UM-Flint, nearly 35% of our undergraduate students are 25 years of age or older. These students often provide a depth of knowledge and real-life experience that enriches our campus community.

We not only focus on our new traditional students and our first generation students, but we've worked tirelessly to ensure that you can access a quality UM-Flint education even if you can't be physically on campus. We are a university that meshes quality education with innovative

delivery. Seventeen percent of our degrees are entirely online. Our online bachelor, graduate, and graduate nursing education programs have been consistently ranked by *US News and World Report* as three of the top in the country.

Equally important, we are leaders in our partnerships with community colleges. Last year, 53% of our first time attendees at the University were transfer students. We have entered into 37 articulation agreements with community colleges which would allow a student to apply credits earned in specific programs toward a UM-Flint Bachelor Degree. These programs include 15 community college nursing programs, 10 community college applied science programs and 12 community college business administration programs. These reach throughout Michigan, from Alpena and Petoskey to right here at Lansing Community College.

Additionally, we are proud that our university has excelled in the dual enrollment arena. We have partnered with 19 area high schools at 12 sites to offer classes for high school students. Currently, there are 688 students enrolled in these classes. Moreover, we have created three early colleges: Genesee Early College, Carman Ainsworth STEM Early College, and Grand Blanc Early College. In total, these students have earned 4,307 college credits that they can take with them anywhere. It's a huge savings for them and their parents.

And that's really the name of the game. We want to make a quality higher education experience affordable for all of our students. Nearly 77% of our students receive some form of financial aid and 41% of them receive the Pell Grant. We know that many of them, even with the financial aid, must work to close the financial gap that financial aid doesn't cover. That often creates a decision of not how many credits they need to take to stay on track, but how many credits they can afford to take in a semester. Therefore, where we can help with opening our doors to transfer students, or supporting dual enrollment initiatives, or dedicating over \$9 million in student aid in our budget, we will. We are accountable for ensuring they have access to an excellent education. And we take that seriously.

Speaking of accountability, as the Chancellor of this university, I believe in the importance of accountability for our university. When the performance funding formula was introduced, it was to provide a way for all universities to be held accountable on four common elements: Six-

year graduation rate, total degree completions, institutional support and the percentage of students receiving Pell Grants. We are sincere in our belief that to be good fiscal steward of the dollars you provide to us, we must support students' successful completion of their degree.

That being said, we are not satisfied with our numbers and know that there is room for growth. Under my leadership over the last two years, we have put a strategic enrollment plan in place to create 360-degree wrap around services to change these numbers. And it's my goal to come back to you in two years and show you a positive change in these numbers, as we've started to do already with the Promise Scholars, Merit Scholars and others. But we also deal with the reality that often students are not academically prepared for college.

This year, 18% of our incoming Fall 2016 class had to take some form of remediation and most of that was in math. Therefore, most of their first semester freshman year is spent remediation classes which do not count toward graduation requirements. And that's before they even make it to their required general education classes. This immediately places students behind in obtaining their degree. While we could play the blame game and ask how it got that way, the reality is that on the postsecondary level, we don't have the time to do that. This is simply an unfortunate reality that we have to face. So my hope is that we don't forget about our student who may take a little longer to get "college ready."

The reality is that our students don't always neatly align with first time freshman, six-year graduation metric. It doesn't count all the students who transfer to UM Flint from other institutions – we have more first time transfers than freshmen. More importantly, it doesn't capture all success outcomes. For example, we have built successful 2+2 programs with high volume in engineering. Students who start and UM-Flint and transfer to Wayne State or MSU or Ann Arbor should be considered successes, not count against us on our graduation metric.

I hope that when we determine the ultimate worth of an institution, we don't forget about our students who may take longer to graduate because they're simply dealing with the challenges of finances for school, but have a desire to finish; or those "New Traditional" students I've talked about who are the breadwinner, the parent, or the caretaker who may need to delay

educational pursuits because life happens. When we're looking at holding universities accountable for the success of students, let's not forget about these groups.

While we're accountable to the legislature, we're also accountable to our surrounding community which is the birthplace of so many of our students.

Throughout the Flint Water Crisis, we have seen a resiliency and renewed interest in public service among our students. Our students and faculty have not shied away from the issue, but have instead embraced it with increased service efforts, increased philanthropy, and increased academic pursuits to ensure that this tragedy does not happen to another community.

We've created a new partnership with the Healthy Flint Research Coordinating Center. This new initiative brings together a central coordinating group of colleagues from community-based organizations, UM-Flint and Ann Arbor campuses, and Michigan State University. We are working together to identify the most pressing needs, effectively coordinating activities, and sharing information as we work toward the best possible health outcomes for the community.

Speaking of health outcomes, we know that there are significant health consequences of lead poisoning. This is ever so apparent in our littlest and most vulnerable citizens, our children. At the University, we saw that need and decided to create a much-needed public impact.

This fall, we opened the expansion of the Cummings Great Expectations Early Childhood Center which is an extension of our nationally recognized early childhood development center. With support from many partners in the Governor's Office and in this legislature, we were able to innovatively and quickly expand early childhood education. We partnered with the Flint Community Schools and today, nearly 200 children from 3 months to 5 years are enrolled in a comprehensive program that provides attention to the nutrition, physical health, mental health, education, and familial resources these children will need to be successful going forward. Research shows that early interventions and high-quality education can mitigate the effects of lead poisoning. Our schools of Education & Human Services, Nursing, and Health Professions and Studies are working together with the community to provide exceptional support for these children.

That's all good news, and I'm proud to share that with you, but I'd be less than transparent if I said that this hasn't taken a toll on not just our community, but our university. To protect our campus community, the University has spent over \$500,000 to handle this health crisis to date. I'm sure that you would agree that planning for lead in water is not typically counted in the cost of doing business, but we knew we had to keep our students, faculty and staff safe. Prior to the water crisis, we were on pace to have 10 consecutive years of increased enrollment. However, upon the onset of the water crisis, we've experienced a 3-4% drop in enrollment which we expect will reduce our revenues this year. However, earlier I mentioned resiliency, and that's what we've been - resilient. We will continue to plan for the future because we cannot settle for today's condition when we can focus on tomorrow's promise.

Madam Chair, we are a university of vision and action. We serve those who may have once thought that the dream of a college education was illusory – much like I did as a young, emancipated teenager. If it wasn't for those who saw potential in me, who ultimately helped me see potential in myself, I wouldn't be in front of you today. That's why I'm so passionate about education and educating our diverse student population. Many of them are just like me, but I know what they can achieve because I was once where they are. It's my sincere belief that the University of Michigan-Flint is at the right place, at the right time to make a significant difference. With your help, I know we can accomplish that goal. I am happy to take any questions you may have.