



Michigan Legislature

**House Appropriations Subcommittee on
Higher Education and Community Colleges**

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Representative Ann Bollin, Majority Vice Chair
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Testimony Presented By:

**Domenico Grasso
Chancellor**

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Good morning Chairman VanSingel and members of the subcommittee.

I would like to thank you for the opportunity to appear before you to provide an overview of the University of Michigan-Dearborn, share information about student, faculty and staff accomplishments and talk about the impact we are making throughout Michigan.

First, I would like to introduce myself. I am Domenico Grasso and I have the privilege of serving as the sixth Chancellor at University of Michigan-Dearborn. Before taking this position last August, I have served as Provost at the University of Delaware, Vice President for Research and Dean of the Graduate College at the University of Vermont, and the Founding Director of the Picker Engineering Program at Smith College, the first engineering program at a women's college and one of the few in a liberal arts college in the United States.

This is a bit of a homecoming for me and my wife, Susan. While I earned my Ph.D. in Environmental Engineering at the University of Michigan, Susan grew up in metro Detroit, also earning a degree from the University of Michigan. We also have family living across the state.

I was drawn to UM-Dearborn because of its strong academic reputation, its dedicated and accomplished faculty and student body, and its commitment to the continued reinvention and advancement of the state.

My background is similar to that of many students on our campus. I was the first in my family to attend college and also served in the United States armed forces. My parents instilled in me the importance of an education and a commitment to serve others. These qualities hold true for many UM-Dearborn students.

This is an exciting time to join UM-Dearborn as the university celebrates its 60th anniversary, enrollment growth, new programs and facilities, and a continued pursuit of excellence in teaching, research and community impact.

Since our founding in 1959, we have been shaped by a history of interaction with business, community, government and industry. The result is a STEM focused, comprehensive university offering more than 100 undergraduate, graduate and doctoral degrees, as well as

hands-on experiential learning within four colleges: Arts, sciences, and Letters; Education, Health, and Human Services; Engineering and Computer Science; and Business. We are dedicated to supplying the state with well-educated and creative thinkers, as well as entrepreneurs, small business owners and innovators who are prepared to lead.

UM-Dearborn is committed to making a Michigan degree accessible to students of varying means, strengthening student-learning experiences through research, intense classroom instruction, internship and co-op opportunities, and aligning curriculum and research with industry and community needs. This commitment is carried out in a culturally diverse and inclusive setting, reflective of today's work and living environments.

I would now like to share information about our most important strength – our students. You will find this information and other important facts and figures about UM-Dearborn in your folder.

With nearly 9,500 students currently enrolled, we continue to experience small but consistent growth. In fact, we have experienced gradual enrollment growth since 2014. While growth in “first time in any college” students and transfer students has been a factor, both improved retention and graduate enrollment have been the primary drivers.

Within this growth, it is important to note the incredible 131% increase in enrollment experienced within our College of Engineering and Computer Science. Since 2010 the college has gone from 1,560 students to 3,600 today. By percentage of total enrollment, UM-Dearborn has the second largest engineering school among Michigan's public universities. We are also very proud to share that women comprise 20 percent of the college's enrollment.

This year, 94 percent of our undergraduate students are Michigan residents, coming to us from 47 counties in the state. Of the total student body, inclusive of graduate and doctoral students, 39% of our students transfer to us from a community college or other university, we enroll 9% of our students from other countries and 5% from other states.

UM-Dearborn continues to hold high standards for students wishing to attend. The fall 2018 freshman class had an average GPA of 3.6.

UM-Dearborn's highly qualified undergraduate students come from varying backgrounds:

- 38 percent are first-generation college students
- 43 percent are PELL eligible
- 44 percent have dependent-care responsibilities
- 75 percent work while earning their degree

Regardless of family financial status and educational history, UM-Dearborn is focused on ensuring the success of every single student. The university provides a broad range of assistance to facilitate graduation within a reasonable time period. With nearly two in five students being the first in their family to attend college and more than half working at least 16 hours per week, the university has developed programs to support student success.

In an ongoing effort to ensure that students are aware of these resources, the university developed a website, [Success@Dearborn](#), that centralizes all available university resources. Student success initiatives include: a strengthened advising system, which begins the day students arrive on campus for orientation, early-warning systems faculty use to track and alert advisors if a student is struggling with classwork, revamped general education requirements and better communication surrounding the cost savings to students if they complete their degrees in four years.

Our success initiatives are laser focused on improving the university's six-year graduation rate. UM-Dearborn has the sixth-highest six-year graduation rate among the state's 15 public universities - a rate that is higher than the state average. I am proud to share that the graduation rate between our PELL students, the most socioeconomically disadvantaged group of students, and the rest of our graduates is closer than any other public university in Michigan.

While we have improved in the six-year graduation rate, the university is not satisfied with its current performance and has made the improvement of this metric to exceed peer institutions in the top 20 percent a top priority. We know we can do better, and we will.

In the 2018 Academic Year, UM-Dearborn conferred 2,186 degrees. While we take pride in the number of degrees we confer, we also gauge our success on how well our students do in obtaining their goals after graduation. One measure of this involves an annual survey of our

graduates. Our 2017 student survey results show that 90 percent of our graduates who completed the survey achieved their post-graduation goals, with 77 percent having accepted employment, 10 percent attending graduate school and 3 percent doing an internship or co/op. The survey, with data from 49 percent of our 2017 graduates, showed that of those who responded, 91 percent of those who accepted employment were staying in Michigan to work and live – an outstanding return on investment by the state.

The starting salaries graduates earn can also measure the success of our efforts. Results from a recent report from the U.S. Department of Education's College Scorecard show that UM-Dearborn graduates have the 4th highest starting salary among Michigan's 15 public universities – nearly \$3,000 above the state average.

While the success of our students is critically important, so too is ensuring access to an affordable college education. UM-Dearborn recognizes the financial challenges the majority of our students face.

Each year we work hard to keep tuition increases low, carefully balancing the need for an affordable education while providing students with access to the high-quality faculty, courses and facilities needed for a Michigan degree. Since 2009, on average, the university has been able to reduce its annual expenditures by more than \$730,000 a year. A detailed report of our cost savings can be found in your folder.

Now that you have a broad understanding of who our students are, I would like to dive a little deeper to share a few examples of what makes UM-Dearborn a critical partner to the region and our state.

In general, UM-Dearborn provides a pathway for highly qualified students, from families of varying means and educational experience, to succeed by offering an exceptional Michigan degree at a cost that allows them to graduate with less debt, while obtaining a high-paying job within Michigan and beyond. I believe this is the uniqueness and power of a regional campus. Regional universities make a real difference in the communities they serve.

While we enroll students of varying means, we do consider the university to be one that offers an education that helps elevate graduates to prosperity. Our students come from an average household income of \$60,100. Upon graduation their average starting salary is

\$48,600, already nearly meeting the average annual salary in the state of Michigan of \$50,388. These graduates are equipped with a Michigan degree, setting them up for future success and better financial prosperity.

In order to offer our graduates the opportunity to succeed, the university must be able to adapt. UM-Dearborn was born out of a request and gift from industry; it should not be a surprise, then, that UM-Dearborn continues to have extremely close relationships with its industry partners. Through these partnerships, we are able to adapt to industry's needs quickly.

Local industry is embedded with the direction of our College of Engineering and Computer Science. The college has two advisory boards consisting on industry leaders that meet regularly to discuss their current talent needs as well as future trends. Our other three colleges also have industry and community-based advisory boards that are critical and necessary to the success of our university and students.

Recently, at a Center for Automotive Research conference in northern Michigan our engineering dean and faculty heard a presentation from a company located in Walled Lake, Michigan, that concerned the difficulty design firms in Michigan were having recruiting industrial design engineers. Following the conference, a group from the college toured the company and learned that, while Michigan has a plethora of industrial designers, there is a shortage of those with an in-depth knowledge of engineering. Following internal discussions and an external review of similar programs at other engineering schools across the country, the college introduced a master's degree in human-centered design that includes courses in three of the university's four colleges.

I share these examples because it is important and essential that non-STEM courses and perspectives are included in solving today's complex problems.

Another example of industry advised academic program changes includes the recent addition of the interdisciplinary Doctor of Engineering degree program in automotive systems and mobility at UM-Dearborn. Set to begin this fall, the program will serve the needs of working engineering professionals by focusing on engineering practice and application, problem solving skills and innovation to prepare graduates for technical leadership roles in today's automotive and mobility industry.

While we create new programs, based on industry need, we are also dedicated to programmatic review to ensure that courses are not offered if enrollment cannot sustain them. Last year, after a robust review and discussion, the College of Arts, Sciences, and Letters discontinued its liberal and general studies programs which were outdated and had been declining in enrollment. The result was the introduction of a new integrative studies program with an updated curriculum aimed at matching student and employer interest.

The strength of our academic programs is ensured by the innovativeness and seriousness by colleges maintaining their curricula. Our students not only receive a quality education but are exposed to many experiences that fuel their personal passions and allow them to lead after graduation.

The university continues to conduct consequential research, with expenditures on research projects totaling nearly \$21 million over the last three years. I'd like to share two examples of some of our current research:

1. A faculty and student research team are using parts within a high-powered, military-grade riflescope to harness the power of ultraviolet light to differentiate between types of tissues. Turning the riflescope into two separate medical devices, one functioning more like a traditional microscope, while the second wouldn't require any tissue samples at all; a medical practitioner could, for example, simply hold the device over a person's skin, take a scan and get a detailed readout of what a particular tissue is made of. This technology would provide a non-invasive analysis with results provided within a half hour, as opposed to extracting a tissue sample typically requiring overnight analysis.
2. With autonomous vehicle technology moving at lightning speed, there is increased concern surrounding security. Faculty and students are working on developing cybersecurity solutions for autonomous and connected vehicles. The goal of this project is to develop robust, computationally efficient, and practical solutions to message authentication and intrusion detection for connected and autonomous vehicles. Further, we have a team developing solutions for real-time integrity verification of sensor data. This project aims to develop security solutions for all sensor types, such as LIDAR, RADAR, camera, ultrasonic and GPS.

The impact UM-Dearborn has on the state and its citizens is immense. In order to maintain and grow our relevance into the future, we must adapt. Understanding this, I am leading the university in a year-long strategic planning process. The goal will be to further define who we are and where we need to be in order to continue to provide a high-quality education to Michigan's students, while fueling the talent pipeline necessary for industry. In addition to addressing continuing demographic challenges, the university also needs to explore better ways at attracting those who have taken some college courses but do not have a degree. UM-Dearborn is committed to adapting and working with our partners to support the governor's goal to increase the Michigan citizenry with a post-secondary credential to 60%. I look forward to talking more about the results of this process with you in the future.

Finally, I would now like to take a moment to discuss the Performance Funding Formula. In general, UM-Dearborn supports the metrics as a good way to distribute funding increases through the appropriations process in a fair and equitable way.

Overall, I am encouraged by the outcomes UM-Dearborn has realized. While the state's metrics may run parallel to the goals of the university, the funding formula process has spurred additional thought into creating programs that not only benefit our students and university, but also help the state achieve its goals. Our efforts are working. Since the performance metrics were introduced, UM-Dearborn's total points awarded within the formula have doubled from four to eight, with the university improving in three of the five categories.

However, while we have doubled our points within the metrics, it is important to note that we are by no means satisfied with our performance in some areas. UM-Dearborn will continue to develop, assess and implement programs to improve upon each metric, regardless of whether or not we receive additional funding.

This year, the \$26 million appropriation received from the state accounts for 17% of UM-Dearborn's operating budget of \$150 million, the remainder is tuition and fees. Tuition at UM-Dearborn is directly linked to the amount of funding we receive from the state. We do not have a large cash reserve, endowment or alumni with the financial capacity to fundraise at substantial levels in order to stave off sizeable cuts in state funding. 72% of UM-Dearborn's approximately \$55.7 million endowment is dedicated to student scholarships.

While the \$2 million in yearly endowment revenue received is critical to the university, it is by no means something we survive on as it equates to just \$211 per student in additional yearly revenue. Cuts in operational support by the state will not only impact tuition, but the university's ability to continue graduating career-ready students that by and large stay in the state following graduation.

Overall, I am proud of our students, our efforts to make a college degree affordable and obtainable to students of varying means, and the partnership we have established with the state of Michigan.

I thank you for the opportunity to address the subcommittee and I welcome any questions you may have.

