

**Testimony Presented to the State of Michigan
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Higher Education**

**University of Michigan-Flint
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It was the best of times, it was the worst of times; it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness; it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity; it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness; it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair; we had everything before us, we had nothing before us; we were all going directly to Heaven, we were all going the other way.

Charles Dickens
A Tale of Two Cities

Good morning Chairman Stamas and members of the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Higher Education. I am Jack Kay, interim chancellor of the University of Michigan-Flint. This is the second time I have had the honor of testifying before this subcommittee, and I thank you for the opportunity to talk about our wonderful university, our campus community, and the city of Flint. As a student of political communication I know that the demands and challenges facing you, our elected officials, have never been as difficult as they are today. We live amidst troubled waters and citizens look to you for the perfect solution to the perfect storm. I admire your dedication, commitment, service, and concern for the public good. Thank you for your consideration and support of the state's public universities and for the great work that you do on this vital subcommittee.

The line by Charles Dickens from *A Tale of Two Cities*, "it was the best of times, it was the worst of times," is among the most famous lines in world literature. Today I will share a story about two cities, not London and Paris, but Flint, Michigan and Flint, Michigan. I will not focus on the Flint of yesteryear, but will talk about the Flint of today and tomorrow.

Media consumers can come to no other conclusion but that Flint is experiencing the worst of times. A *Detroit News* article from 2005 boldly proclaimed "The Fall of Flint" in its headline. Scores of newspapers and magazines have published Flint's rankings on such scales as the "misery index," the crime standings, and the unemployment ratings. News commentators lead stories about Flint with the number of General Motors and Delphi jobs lost. On and on, we are told we live in desperate times.

Higher education in Michigan is also, according to many, experiencing the worst of times. We hear that young talent, the graduates of our state's universities, are leaving the state in record numbers, about the small percentage of Michigan parents who tell their children that education beyond high school is essential, and about those who feel there is no future in Michigan. Just last week, a report by the Pew Center showed that Michigan is one of only four states to spend more on prisons than on colleges and universities. Last year when a number of states provided double-

digit percentage increases to their universities and the average increase nationwide was 7.5%, Michigan ranked forty-ninth out of fifty, according to The Center for the Study of Education Policy. Looking at five-year and ten-year trends, Michigan ranks last in percentage increase to higher education, and was the only state to report a negative number for the last five years.

Even if Governor Granholm's proposal to increase support to public universities is enacted, funding at the University of Michigan-Flint will be below what it was at the start of this century. A *Flint Journal* editorial on February 20, 2008 points out that the budget allocated to state universities "runs counter to the state's supposed goal of doubling the percentage of college graduates in Michigan over the next decade ... spending, even in these uncertain times, ultimately comes down to priorities. Michigan has made it clear that higher education isn't one of them."

The University of Michigan-Flint is operating under extraordinary budget constraints. Since 1987, our state funding has plummeted from 67% to 30%. In the meantime, healthcare and energy costs have skyrocketed—costs over which we have minimal control. In 2007 alone, we experienced a 6% increase in utility charges, a 10% increase in healthcare costs, and an 11% increase in system maintenance contracts.

Can we conclude anything other than "it is the worst of times?"

But, there is another story to tell: the story of Flint not broadcast by the media. This other Flint is a city experiencing the best of times, a city in which the University of Michigan-Flint is proud to be at the center. Today's Flint is a city based in wonderful partnerships that not only show hope but demonstrate results. Block after block of our downtown is experiencing rebirth, thanks to the great work of the Genesee County Land Bank, the Uptown Development Corporation, the Downtown Development Authority, the Community Foundation of Greater Flint, the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, the Ruth Mott Foundation, the University of Michigan-Flint, and many other partners. Flint is bringing in businesses and strengthening existing treasures such as the Cultural Center, places of worship, water resources, and colleges and universities.

Now, thanks to very dedicated and smart citizens, Flint is transforming from "vehicle city" to "college town." Currently, there are approximately 30,000 people in Genesee County enrolled in one of the four colleges and universities based in Flint. That figure ranks Flint with Princeton, New Jersey in number of college students. Flint also has a cultural center that is the envy of even larger cities, with a wonderful symphony, a wide array of theatres, and a great art institute.

The University of Michigan-Flint contributes mightily to the local economy. In 2007, the campus spent more than 40 million dollars on payroll, providing over 900 jobs to local residents, and spending more than 10 million dollars for goods and services. Our faculty and staff serve Flint and surrounding communities in various roles, from mayors and township trustees, to volunteers for the United Way and community food banks, to coaches in youth sports programs. Over 80% of our alumni stay and work in Michigan.

This academic year we welcomed the largest group of students in our history—we are now 6,900 students strong due to substantial growth in first-time students and in graduate programs. We are

completing a state-of-the-art renovation to our oldest campus building, French Hall, thanks to the generosity of the State in providing capital outlay funding that made the project possible. Our first student residence hall will open in August, transforming our commuter campus and the surrounding downtown forever. We have partnered with school districts to improve educational opportunities for K-12 students. This year, we partnered with the Flint Institute of Arts to establish the College Town membership program, offering fulltime students and faculty free access to a world-class cultural facility in our community

A steadfast commitment to academic excellence is the core of our mission. A vigorous effort is underway at our university to reform general education requirements to meet the needs of today's knowledge-based economy. In the last year, we have added several new undergraduate programs, including a Bachelor of Science in Biochemistry. Responding to other market forces, we have implemented the Pilot Nursing Program, which helps meet the demand for well-trained nurses by greatly expanding the Bachelor of Science in Nursing degree to a year round program for individuals with a bachelor's degree in another field. We have partnered with Lansing Community College in a program that will also increase qualified nurses.

The University of Michigan-Flint has also ramped up its commitment to preparing students for STEM careers, Science, Technology, Engineering and Math. A new opportunity for students introduced in the last year is the 2+3 Engineering degree program that allows students to begin studies at the University of Michigan-Flint and transfer directly to the prestigious College of Engineering at our sister campus in Ann Arbor. Our commitment to STEM extends to our most recent capital outlay request of nearly \$21 million dollars to renovate the outdated labs and classrooms of our Murchie Science Building.

Our outstanding Graduate Programs reached a new milestone this year, with more than 1,000 students enrolled. We continue to expand our offerings. We welcomed the first students in the new Technology in Education Global Program, a program that requires an international experience and emphasizes the role of technology in improving education.

The workforce of Genesee County has for many years been one of skilled labor, not four-year and professional degrees. To help our local workforce adjust to industry changes, we have our Bachelor of Applied Science degree program that offers a university degree completion program to graduates with associates degrees in traditional skilled trades fields such as mechanics and electronics.

The University of Michigan-Flint has long provided a welcoming and successful environment for nontraditional students who, for various reasons—their families, jobs or personal crisis—find themselves in a position to return to school to get their degree in order to retool to secure a fulfilling and lucrative career. We have many former assembly line workers who are pursuing life-changing degrees. The average age of our students is 26. We know how to reach and teach these nontraditional students. That is why we were so pleased when Governor Granholm launched Return to Learn in November 2005. In response to the Governor's initiative, we developed a Return to Learn Center, focused on the individual.

To understand our commitment to building a workforce for the knowledge economy, I share with you the stories of two of our extraordinary students, each with a very different experience at the University of Michigan-Flint.

First, I want to tell you about Cathy Zaremba, a non-traditional student who returned to the University of Michigan-Flint to learn. Cathy is 50 years old, and the mother of a college graduate. Cathy has a passion for photography and computers, which makes our Bachelor of Applied Science perfect for her. Juggling the demands of family with her busy school schedule, the campus culture of the University of Michigan-Flint made it possible for Cathy to pursue her career. With classes both on campus and online at times that are convenient for her, plus outstanding attention and instruction from our excellent faculty, Cathy has a grade point average of 3.7, and will graduate this December. Cathy is a true “Return to Learn and Earn” success story. She found at our university an environment in which to thrive and now feels prepared to start her own business combining her knowledge of computers and photography.

Second, I want to tell you about Darius Jamerson, a Genesee Early College student. After the Cherry Commission called for the establishment of early colleges for high school students and the Michigan Department of Education provided seed money, the University of Michigan-Flint welcomed the invitation of Genesee Intermediate School District Superintendent Tom Svitkovich to partner with area hospitals, colleges, and the GISD to create one of the few early colleges in the nation based at a four-year university. Genesee Early College is in its first year as a school on the campus of the University of Michigan-Flint and operated by the GISD where students with interest in the health professions earn their high school diploma and up to 60 transferable college credits by the time they graduate. A friend encouraged Darius to apply to Genesee Early College. During his first semester, along with his regular high school courses, Darius took college-level philosophy and biology. Darius has found an environment where he can thrive and get an incredible jumpstart on a university education. Darius intends to be a real-life “CSI” investigator. He has learned a valuable lesson in personal responsibility. As he explains, you have downtime between classes. You cannot waste time—instead you have to use it wisely. That sense of responsibility that Darius has acquired is priceless, and we are proud of his success at the Genesee Early College.

A Tale of Two Cities takes place on the eve of a revolution. Today, at the University of Michigan-Flint and in our surrounding community, the revolution has started. In spite of hardship, we are not merely surviving. We are thriving. In many ways, we are experiencing the best of times at the University of Michigan-Flint. Even with tremendous budgetary constraints, we remained committed to making a college education affordable and accessible by keeping the tuition increase for the 2007-2008 academic year one of the lowest at Michigan public universities and devoted a record number of dollars to student financial aid. This action required university leadership to make difficult fiscal decisions, while maintaining the integrity and high standards of our university.

On behalf of Cathy, Darius, and all 30,000 students in the Flint community, I urge our elected leaders and our policymakers to invest in education and in our cities. Study after study demonstrates the relationship between a highly educated workforce, the draw of vital cities to young talent, and economic prosperity.

Without bold and decisive action, we risk brain drain and loss of business and industry. But you have the power to make a difference by making higher education and our cities a priority. At minimum, I urge this subcommittee to support the Governor's proposal for funding higher education. There is nothing less than the future of our state that is at stake, and the future of students like Cathy and Darius. Let us work together to make Michigan the number one state in the nation for support of higher education. If we make that commitment, new businesses, more jobs, and stronger communities will emerge and prosper.

Please help us continue "the best of times." We enjoy great partnerships that are moving Flint forward. Increased support from the state is essential to make a lasting difference. Imagine the possibilities if the University of Michigan-Flint received 67% of its funding from the state as it did in 1987, not the 30% it received in 2007. Just think about our current capital outlay request to renovate the Murchie Science Building. If that is approved, it will create 300 jobs locally. Take it a step further and imagine funding a capital outlay project for each of the 15 public universities. That would create approximately 17,000 jobs in the state, meeting the goals of economic viability and being competitive in the knowledge economy.

Our inspiration is Cathy, Darius, and all of our students of "college town." Our motivation is a better campus and community that will attract families and keep our talented young people here. Working with our community partners, and our State Legislators, we can leave the worst of times behind and embrace the best. Imagine—the headline of "The Fall of Flint" being replaced with "Flint—The Best of Times." Your leadership can allow this to happen.