



LOOKING BEYOND  
DECLINING HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION RATES

Presented by  
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Before the  
Michigan House of Representatives  
Appropriations Subcommittee on Higher Education

And

Michigan House of Representatives  
Appropriations Subcommittee on Community Colleges

on  
November 5, 2015

Thank you Chairman McCready, Vice Chairman Bizon, and members of the higher education and community colleges appropriations subcommittees. My name is Sue Borrego and I am chancellor of the university of Michigan-flint. I appreciate the invitation to speak with you this morning on enrollment issues, particularly from a university perspective.

As you know, population forecasts are clear.

School-age populations are declining at an alarming rate in Michigan, and we know the number of high school graduates is shrinking in the state. The western interstate

commission for higher education projects a 20-percent drop in the number of graduates in Michigan by 2019-2020.<sup>1</sup>

This drastic decline impacts college and university enrollment and many of my colleagues are working to address the impact on their college or university and the stability of our higher education system.

It is a serious issue and I appreciate your leadership in tackling it and its potential impact.

I would like to suggest that we, as a state, make a conscious *and calculated* decision to focus our energy on the aspects of enrollment we can potentially impact.

We are not going to magically increase the number of Michigan high school students.

So, it seems to me we have two primary options:

- 1) To focus on supporting more students completing high school college ready.  
AND
- 2) Attracting international and out of state students as we partner to build a stronger Michigan

You may know in Flint, downtown we have hundreds of residents living downtown and lots of others on a waiting list. These are primarily 20- to 30-year-olds who are looking to live in our community and be a part of our community.

These efforts will address our concerns about enrollment levels at our state colleges and university – *while at the same* time making the state more attractive to employers, improving salaries for our residents, curbing the tide of residents relocating out of state and opening the door for today's great young minds to become the brilliant innovators of tomorrow.

Doubling down our efforts to focus on k-20 pipelines and partnerships between k-12, community colleges and higher ed could have powerful outcomes on student success. I saw it first hand during my time in California.

The national information center for higher education reports that Michigan ranks 35<sup>th</sup> in the nation with just 18.4 percent of ninth-graders going on to earn a college degree within six years of graduation. Just to put into perspective just how big of an issue this is, the *best* completion rate nationwide is in Massachusetts and still is just 30.3 percent.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> After peaking in 2007-08 at 123,576 graduates, the state will see substantial contraction beginning in 2009-10. By 2019-20, high school graduates will fall 20% to below 99,000 and the decline is projected to continue indefinitely beyond that. ... *Knocking at the College Door*, December 2012

The picture might seem a little better if we look at the percentage of students who are going on to college immediately out of high school. Here, Michigan ranks 28th in the nation with 61.9 percent of high school seniors going directly to college after graduation.<sup>1</sup>

Let me be very clear: It's not enough to be a freshman in college. It's not enough until we graduate increasing numbers of our students and substantially impact our state's overall educational attainment level.

So, let's remember the dire statistic that brought us all together this morning: a 20-percent decline in high school graduates. A 20-percent decline.

Yet, 81.6 percent of ninth-grade students won't go on to earn a college degree.

I maintain we still can and should have increasing enrollment at our colleges and universities for the foreseeable future.

At UM-Flint You should know that nearly 60 percent of our 8,470 students come from Genesee County ... and Genesee County is home to one of the most profound declines in high school graduates statewide. So, when you talk about high school graduation declines, please understand that this is something we at the university of Michigan-flint have been experiencing for several years, not just forecasting for the future. And, less than 1 percent of Flint students graduate "college ready."

Since 2010, we have seen the number of high school graduates in Genesee county drop 10.6 percent — and since 2010 the university of Michigan-flint has increased enrollment overall by 4 percent.

I mentioned partnerships: at um-flint, we have partnered with community colleges across the state to open up the opportunity for students to earn bachelor's degrees more locally. One of our most popular programs is our RN to Bachelor of Science in Nursing, which we offer at four community colleges across the state from Alpena community college, St. Claire county community college, Wayne county community college and right down the street at Lansing community college as well as on the campus of a local hospital.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> *Student Pipeline – Transition and Completion Rates from 9<sup>th</sup> Grade to College – 2010*. National Center for Higher Education Management Systems.

<sup>1</sup> *Student Pipeline – Transition and Completion Rates from 9<sup>th</sup> Grade to College – 2010*. National Center for Higher Education Management Systems.

<sup>2</sup> At Genesys Regional Medical Center. We also offer online RN to BSN coursework at 8 community colleges and have articulation agreements with more than 20 community colleges.

Additionally, we offer online degree options in partnership with eight additional community colleges. In Flint, we are working with Mott Community College to create scholarships to reward success at Mott and increase transferability to UM-Flint — and we are very excited about the potential there.

Another strategy has been in reaching out to high schools to open up the pathway to college. Dual enrollment programs allow high school students who are ready for the rigors of higher education to enroll at UM-Flint while still in high school. They take our courses taught by our faculty and earn college credit. We now have partnerships with 27 schools in four counties and also operate several early colleges. We are expecting a 56-percent increase in the number of dually enrolled students next year.<sup>1</sup>

We also have actively increased our recruitment of international students. You may have seen us featured recently in a New York Times piece.<sup>2</sup> Just a decade ago we had just 54 international students. Now we have 720. Just looking since 2010, we've tripled our international students. Many of our international students live downtown on or near campus — adding vibrancy, culture and dollars (about 13.5 million annually) to our community.

Perhaps most importantly, we responded to the needs of our community to offer even more graduate degree offerings and with that our graduate enrollment has increased 26.7 percent since 2010. We create programs that are in demand in the state and around the world, including the state's only Ph.D. in physical therapy. Our largest graduate degree program is computer science, which has seen a 44-percent jump in enrollment in the last three years.<sup>3</sup>

At the University of Michigan-Flint, we also have worked to increase enrollment and retention by increasing financial aid by 13 percent this year and launching a three-year \$40 million fund-raising campaign — half of which is dedicated to extraordinary student support for award both need-based and merit-based aid.

Ultimately, I hope you see from my testimony today that there are approaches to addressing enrollment declines. One aspect of an achievable solution that is good for students, good for colleges and good for the state is making higher education accessible. We all know cost is a major concern for all of us in making college an option to more families.

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<sup>1</sup> Includes DEEP and early colleges. Enrollment is 415 this year, expecting (conservatively) 650 students next year, including the addition of Carman-Ainsworth Early College.

<sup>2</sup> “International Students find the American Dream ... in Flint.” New York Times. <http://ow.ly/ULQHe>.

<sup>3</sup> Master of Science in Computer Science & Information Systems has 283 students enrolled as of fall 2015.

I'm not going to wax on and on about state support for higher education. You are members of the appropriations committee and I trust well aware of all of the statistics surrounding that. Instead, I would like to leave you with a message:

Making college accessible is an investment, a worthy one, and one that the state of Michigan needs now more than ever.

Thank you again for this hearing. Thank you for considering this issue and for allowing me the opportunity to speak with you today.

I am happy to answer any questions.

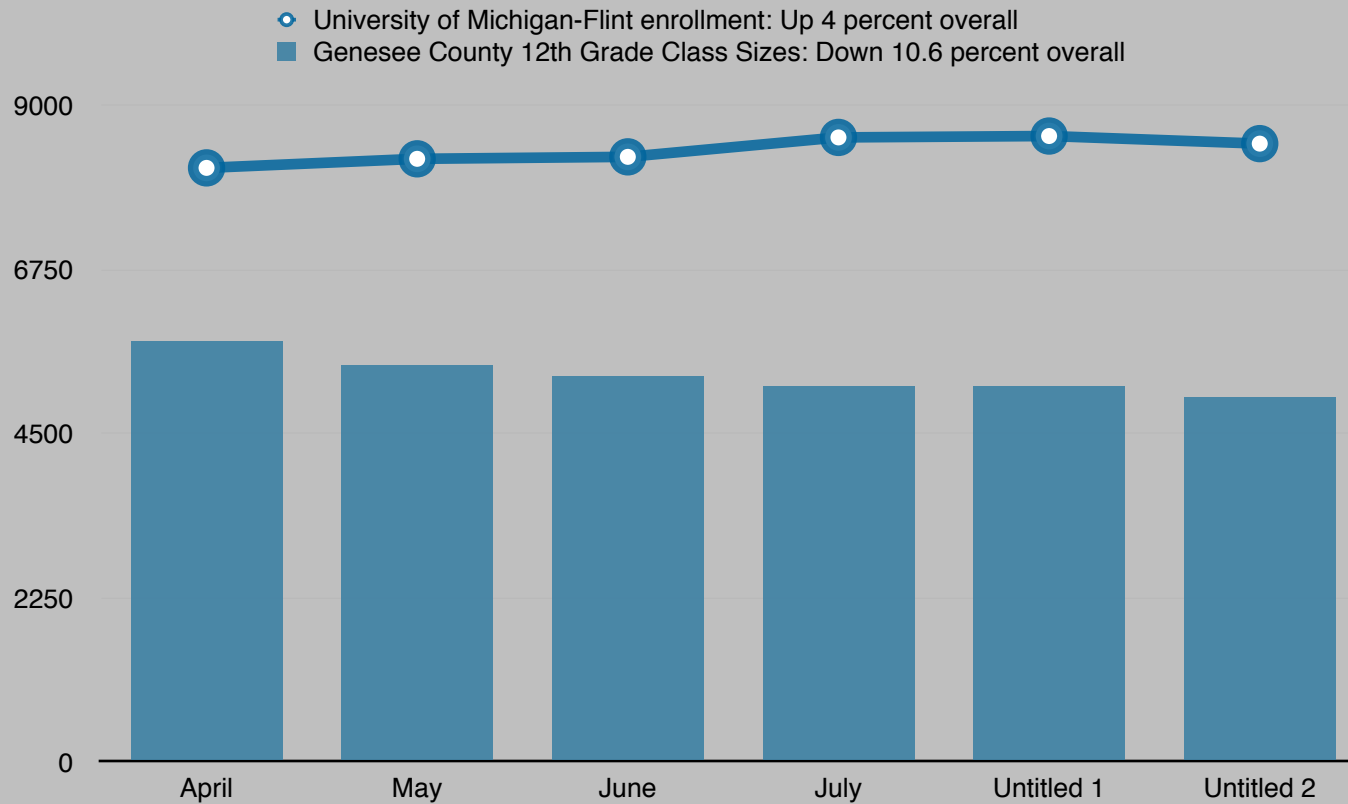


## Key facts for consideration

- The number of high school graduates is expected to drop 20 percent in Michigan by 2020.
- Making college accessible is an investment that the state of Michigan needs now more than ever.
- Increasing the number of college graduates impacts our state's ability to attract employers, wages and quality of life for our residents, stabilize our population, and create innovators of the future.
- We should work to continue to attract international and out-of-state students.
- The entire K-20 pipeline is important and we need to develop partnerships focused on student success between K-12 schools, community colleges and universities.

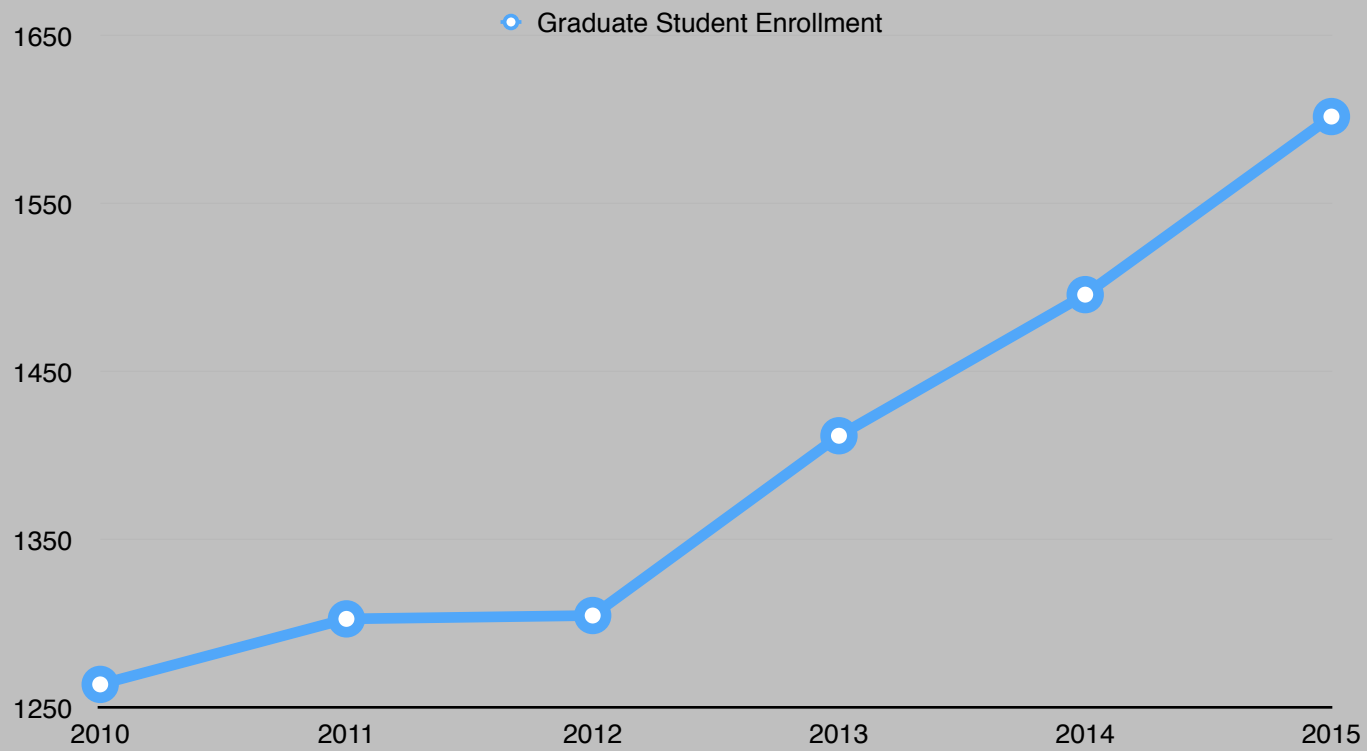


# UM-Flint enrollment; Genesee County grads





## Graduate student enrollment







# International Student Enrollment Growth

