Dear Students, Faculty, and Staff:

The first semester of the 2019-20 academic year at UM-Flint is a busy and productive time for the campus community. There is much to highlight and reflect upon as we move forward towards final exams, commencement and the holidays. I am pleased to share with you an update on the most significant developments, as well as some next steps in the new year.

**Reaccreditation Visit by the Higher Learning Commission**

Earlier this week, UM-Flint hosted the visiting team from the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) as part of our 10-year reaccreditation evaluation. This regional accreditation process is at the core of self-governance of American universities. It requires institutions to engage in authentic self-reflection and assessment, as well as to document their commitment to professional standards and continuous improvement. This week’s HLC visit represents countless hours of preparation across the institution. I thank every one of you who were involved in this important effort, with special appreciation for Associate Provost Stephen Turner’s leadership as our Accreditation Liaison Officer. Members of the U-M Board of Regents took time to participate in the visit as well, and I am grateful for their input in this process.

The accreditation visit allowed me to delve deeper into the last decade of progress at UM-Flint. Our [Assurance Argument](#) highlighted many of the university’s strengths. A common theme in the document is the high level of engaged learning happening across the institution and the region. Impressive examples tell the story of faculty and students working alongside community members as they collectively address the pressing concerns of our city and neighborhoods. The Carnegie Classification recognition of UM-Flint as a community-engaged institution is a testament to the dedication of our faculty and staff to greater Flint.

Woven throughout this document is evidence of the unwavering commitment of UM-Flint faculty and staff to our students and their success. From mentoring programs housed within both student and academic affairs units; to funded opportunities for student research; and a continual focus on achieving optimal alignment of our programs and services to best serve student needs. These activities demonstrate just some of the ways UM-Flint is fulfilling the mission of an urban regional comprehensive university. We have much to be proud of, thanks to the hard work of our dedicated and top-notch faculty and staff.

Many thanks to those who took the time from their busy schedules to attend the sessions with the HLC team. From the four open forums to discussions that focused on a variety of issues, the HLC team and faculty, staff, and students discussed the university from every
angle including our efforts concerning diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). This will continue to be a priority for all three University of Michigan campuses.

The HLC team complimented our institutional effort both in preparing the materials and organizing the visit. I expect to receive accreditation results early next year, and they will be shared widely so that we can make best use of their insights and recommendations. We must be organized, innovative, and prepared to continually make progress on our shared goals. Although the HLC process asks us to reflect on the past decade, it also tasks us with looking forward with a renewed commitment to our students, the campus, and the community.

**Opportunities for UM-Flint**

Tomorrow, I will mark 100 days at UM-Flint. During these first weeks on campus, I have been invigorated by the ideas and energy of the people and places of this community.

When I accepted the position of Chancellor, I was well aware of UM-Flint’s potential as a significant economic driver in the region. The university is one of Genesee County’s largest employers, with an economic impact of approximately $58.2 million annually in purchases, payroll, and funds released to students. In fact, 49% of our annual spending stays in Genesee County. Every degree earned at UM-Flint increases the number of people with a college degree in the county, changing both the demographics and dynamics of the community.

Across the nation, universities are being asked to lead partnerships that play a central role in regional development and social mobility. Last week’s announcement by President Mark Schlissel of the [Detroit Center for Innovation Partnership](https://www.umflint.edu/campus-news/2023/03/06/detroit-center-for-innovation-partnership) is an example of this type of 21st century town, gown and industry trifecta. I believe technological innovations will not only shape the future of work, but also contribute to the community-engaged university of the future. Currently universities are producing new knowledge at a faster pace than ever before. However, as curators of knowledge, universities are also designed to be thoughtful and slow-moving. The challenge facing higher education is to find ways to preserve what has worked well for centuries yet be more responsive to the needs of the present day and future learners.

UM-Flint is uniquely poised to meet the needs of the 21st century – for both students and employers. This is reflected in both the HLC Assurance Argument and in the confidence placed in us by our community. I am inspired by conversations with faculty, staff and students, as well as with our alumni, business and community leaders. We are well-situated to match new academic programs to the emerging workforce needs of the region and the state. We will do this by continuing to prepare our students with a well-rounded education rooted in the liberal arts that will prepare them for the challenges of the 21st century. We have the power to attract businesses in important areas such as healthcare, manufacturing, business systems and more to Genesee County. As a regional comprehensive university, our mission compels us to manifest these opportunities for the common good.
Next Steps
As many of you know, I have decided to forgo a formal installation ceremony. Instead, I would like to invest the institutional resources—time, energy and finances—to position UM-Flint for the task ahead.

Early next semester, I will organize a town hall to share my initial thoughts about future possibilities for UM-Flint. I am hopeful it will lead to more conversations internally and externally and help us identify areas of importance and growth for the next decade and beyond. The town hall will be held on **Wednesday, January 22 at 10 a.m.** Please attend if your schedule allows. The location and other details about the town hall will be released in the coming weeks.

By January, I expect we will have completed the search for the Vice Chancellor for University Advancement and getting ready to launch the search for our next Provost and Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs.

Some of the most valuable time I spend on campus is meeting and learning about each of you and how you contribute to our university. I enjoy spending time with our campus community, talking about the future of our university. As always, I welcome your comments by email or in person during faculty/staff breakfasts at the Ross House and during my open office hours.

In closing, I believe UM-Flint is at an inflection point in its history. While we have some challenges, we also have unique opportunities to seize and lay the foundation for an exemplar 21st century regional comprehensive public university. In doing so, we will help in the revitalization of the region, educate more students and prepare them with skills for success in the workplace, in family life and in service. I look forward to doing this work with all of you.

Thank you for reading this rather long message. I am grateful for all you do for our students and UM-Flint.

Go Blue!

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