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Independent Higher Education in Michigan – A Wonderful State Asset



A recent issue of Crain's Detroit Business (Vol.25, No.6; Feb. 9 – 15, 2009) contained an article in its Focus on Business Education section entitled, "Road to Recovery." That article was a report on some of the initiatives underway in Michigan institutions of higher education aimed at assisting individuals who have lost their jobs in the continually deepening recession in our region.

Prominent in that article was the "Recovery Starts Here" initiative launched by Lawrence Technological University in December. Lawrence Tech is offering 50% tuition grants at both the graduate and undergraduate levels in this initiative. These grants will be made available to as many as 200 undergraduate students and as many as 200 graduate students who have either recently lost their jobs, or are the children of parents who have lost their jobs – at a cost to the institution of up to \$3 million.

If you have been reading my CEO Corner pieces over the past nine months, you have seen multiple examples of how Kettering University also has been focusing resources and effort on academic, research and outreach programs that will help build a new "back to the future" economy in the region. Many of these programs are being executed in collaboration with Federal, State and local entities; and Kettering students and members of the faculty are starting new businesses; see this recent article on Kettering student entrepreneurs [at this link](#).

What do Lawrence Tech and Kettering have in common? They are both independent technological universities in Michigan with a strong sense of good corporate citizenship; and they are two of about 30 independent colleges and universities (some with multiple campuses) in Michigan that are a collective asset for the State that contributes positively to the State's economy in many ways. Edward O. Blews, Jr., president of The Association of Independent Colleges and Universities of Michigan (AICUM), says that the Michigan independents bring more than 11,000 non-resident students to our State each year, and they save the State's tax payers more than \$370 million dollars a year as they educate nine times that number of Michigan residents - many of which are retained in Michigan solely because of the existence of these independent colleges and universities. AICUM estimates that the Michigan independents exert more than \$6.6 billion per year of positive economic impact on the Michigan economy, but the true figure is probably higher because of economic activity such as that mentioned above.



President Stan Liberty

Michigan, as a matter of good public policy, wisely provides tuition grants to resident students who enroll in Michigan independent institutions and who can demonstrate qualifying financial need. These tuition grants do not exceed \$2,100, a figure far less than the average state subsidy of \$5,776 per student enrolled in public universities. The return on investment in these 40,000 students is obvious. It is even greater when you consider the additional infrastructure costs that the State would incur if these students were to be absorbed into the State's public institutions. Michigan's independent colleges and universities currently have physical infrastructure estimated to be worth more than \$3.5 billion.

As you can see, the independent colleges and universities of Michigan collectively are a wonderful asset for the State, and they will continue to play an important, productive and valuable role in Michigan's future.

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