

# 2018 MICU Review

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## Summary

As part of our effort to keep the Michigan Independent Colleges & Universities (MICU) Board of Directors apprised of association activities, staff worked with the Board chair and the Executive Committee to complete a review of the association's progress towards its goals. Below is a summary of MICU's results during 2017-2018.

## Major accomplishments

### Legislative advocacy

The main focus of MICU's advocacy is to ensure robust support for student financial aid and the Michigan Tuition Grant (MTG). Our goal for this year, as in the past, was to secure an increase to the MTG to a level at least equal to the overall increase in the state's higher education budget. An increase this year would represent the fifth legislative boost in a row.

For the second time since 2002, the Governor's budget recommendation included an increase to the MTG individual grant - from \$2,000 to \$2,100. This increase, however, came with a \$6 million cut to overall funding. The proposed funding cut was the result of the Department of Treasury's poor forecasting, which allowed \$6 million of funding from the prior year to go unused. We have disputed Treasury's forecasting practices, with little progress until now. On the positive side, the Governor did propose a five percent increase in individual grants and included our proposed boilerplate language that would resolve a number of technical issues.

The Senate declined to follow the Governor's recommendation and restored the MTG to its full funding of \$38 million. Additionally, the Senate increased the individual grants to \$2,400, a 20 percent increase from last year. The chamber also adopted the boilerplate language we recommended.

Similarly, the House restored full funding for the MTG and increased the individual grants by \$300, \$100 less than the Senate but \$200 more than the Governor. The next big step in the process will come after the revenue estimating conference in May. We expect the final compromise to include full funding for the MTG at \$38 million and at least \$2,300 for the individual grants.

As in past years, we also worked hard to defeat the community colleges' push to offer four-year baccalaureate degrees. No new legislation has been introduced this year to expand this authority and we do not expect any for the remainder of this year. We do expect, however, that legislation will be introduced in January at the start of the new legislative cycle. We are poised to vigorously oppose any expansion of authority and will seek to have our champions introduce legislation that will eliminate community college taxing authority if they receive expanded

degree authority. This step effectively killed the legislation in the past and we expect it will have the same effect moving forward.

Additional legislation:

This year, a package of bills was introduced by State Rep. Garcia (R-Holland) to revamp the requirements for **teacher preparation programs**. Teacher prep is one of the very few places the state, through the Department of Education's certification process, can dictate the requirements of curriculum.

The bills are problematic in that they not only have a number of new requirements regarding the actual curriculum, but also require that all teachers who "host" student teachers in their classroom be paid a stipend of \$1,000 by the student teacher's institution. Moreover, tuition cannot be raised to cover the cost. These provisions appear to be pointed at the public universities and the institutional funding they receive from the state. We have pointed out the problems with applying this provision to our members.

Even more worrisome, however, is another requirement that teacher prep programs "warranty" their graduates for two years; providing remediation or professional development in areas where the K-12 schools deem the teacher deficient or in need of additional skills. Neither of these provisions make sense and we are working to have them removed. The bills have been voted out of committee (a low hurdle) and await action on the floor. We believe House Leadership is counting votes to see if there is sufficient support (we are doing the same) and we should have a better idea of that outcome by the MICU Annual Meeting.

The Legislature also has taken up a number of bills aimed at curbing **sexual assault on campus**. Of the scores of bills that have been introduced, only a few of them are getting serious consideration by lawmakers and only a few of those will impact our membership. Additionally, both the House and Senate have included a number of new boilerplate reporting requirements regarding sexual assault in their budget bills. Those requirements only apply to public universities and community colleges. To date, our sector has been excluded from the bulk of the requirements. At the end of the day, there will be new compliance requirements, mandatory reporting, mandatory training, longer statute of limitations, etc., but as of this time, we do not see too many provisions that will be problematic. The law firm of Miller Canfield will present on the state of proposed legislation and the ongoing legal battles at Michigan State University at our annual meeting.

Another bill that has made it out of the House is State Rep. Albert's (R- Belding) legislation that requires all students who receive federal student loans be provided with **annual "debt letters"** by their enrolling institutions. The letters will allegedly attempt to provide students with details about how much debt they have incurred and what their future monthly payments may be. The bill has a number of flaws, most fundamental of which is that it is a state regulation of a federal program. Additionally, all the information is already online and available to students. The bill is in the Senate Education Committee and we do not expect it to move.

We also worked with our members to better connect with our state's Congressional delegation and state legislators. In September we hosted the first Independent Colleges Advocacy Day in

Lansing and MICU Gubernatorial Summit for the MICU member presidents. During Advocacy Day, faculty, staff, students, and presidents from MICU member institutions met with legislators and participated in advocacy activities in Lansing. During the Summit, MICU member presidents were able to engage with Governor Snyder in a conversation about higher education's connection to business needs in Michigan.

In February, we organized a series of Hill visits as part of the National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities (NAICU) national advocacy day. We prepared six of our presidents to meet with five members of Congress in one day. During the meetings, we were able to provide the legislators with data from each of our institutions and tie it directly to policy changes being debated by Congress. We believe the meetings were very effective and will set the stage for further discussion this summer when MICU again hosts Congressional roundtables.

### Organizational effectiveness

This year brought additional changes in personnel. Kathy Hoag, our long time administrative assistant, retired and we shifted her compensation resources to a new position, Director of Member Services. Shannon Price has been hired for this position. Shannon previously worked for the state as Deputy Director for Student Scholarships and Grants. Before that, Shannon worked for Baker College of Jackson as Director of Student Services. Her experience with financial aid administration, particularly with the MTG, along with the relationships she has built with our members, are extremely valuable to MICU. We are very excited to have Shannon on board to provide an increased focus on developing and implementing member service programs.

MICU continues its efforts to modernize our organization and create a culture of management by best practices. We continually develop internal process and procedures in this effort and have recently completed our first audit. I am happy to report that we received an unqualified opinion. We did request that the auditors review our business practices and internal controls, and they have made a few minor suggestions that we will be implementing in the coming year.

With the adoption of our strategic plan at the end of last year, we have turned our attention to implementation and the development of success metrics. Going forward, we will apply the new metrics each year and build a scorecard for members to measure our success.

### Member services

As stated above, we have hired a full-time member services director to lead the expansion of member services by growing our current programs and increasing the number of members who participate in the programs.

MICU's long-standing **Workers' Compensation Self-Insurance Pool** returned over \$500,000 in excess premium to the program's members for a total of \$25 million since the inception of the fund.

The **MICU Property/Casualty program** is now in its third year. We have recently moved through the renewal process for many of the participants with no premium increases. We continue to

meet with members not currently participating in the program with the intent to double the membership over the next year. If we are successful, we will then pursue moving the program toward self-insurance much like we have done with great success in our Workers' Compensation Fund.

**Our Long-Term Disability/Life Insurance program** continues to be strong with renewals coming in on par with last year's premiums. Additionally, we are in the process of developing new products to offer through this program.

We are deep into the process of adding a **403(b) Multiple Employer Pension Plan (MEP)** with 16 members participating in the data design phase of the implementation process. With the pricing information we have, costs to participants are expected to be reduced by at least half. Additionally, institutions will be relieved of at least 50 tasks from the finance and HR offices and the new MEP Board will take over much of the fiduciary responsibilities (as well as the liability). This summer we will hold an all-day boot camp for interested members to provide more detailed information on the 403(b) MEP.

MICU continues its relationship with **ScholarBuys**, bringing low-cost Microsoft products and free IT training to members. This year, we added Adobe to our product line-up.

For several years now, MICU has hosted a **professional development institute** for the college and university president executive liaisons. This event continues to be a well-attended and well received by the members. This event will continue in 2019.

During summer 2017 we kicked off the **Institutional Research & Effectiveness (IR/IE) Work Group**, which has continued to meet and outline several goals for the future. Also this year, MICU staff brought together a **Communications, PR, and Marketing Work Group** that will meet quarterly.

Additional programs that MICU has established with vendors to develop the best collaborative agreements available are:

- Budget Control Procurement Platform
- CampusLogic
- BoardBook
- Purchasing Card

MICU continues to explore and develop additional member services that will save our members time, money, and angst and will continue to bring these services forward.

### Additional activities

We constantly seek out ways to expand our impact on education policy and have dramatically boosted our use of data to drive toward that goal. This year we have produced several reports, collected new data, provided information for advocacy efforts to members, and worked closely with member institution staff to create several work groups adding to the services already provided by MICU. These additional efforts include:

- Students At-A-Glance One-pagers: an infographic one-pager is available for each institution, each Congressional district, and the sector as a whole. This data and research has been used in our advocacy efforts both in Lansing and D.C. to help policymakers learn more about our sector and members and speak to our policy goals.
- Independent Indicators: a biweekly infographic communication to legislators highlighting data and metrics about MICU members. A section was also added to the @MICU newsletter so that all those registered to receive the newsletter also receive the data. This communication is widely distributed with a strong open-rate and positive feedback from policymakers and staff.
- Compliance data related to Title IX was collected and reported to the State of Michigan on behalf of MICU members. MICU continues to provide this compliance-related benefit each year.
- Compliance with State of Michigan 2017-2018 Budget requirement that all institutions share meningitis vaccine information with students. MICU worked with the Department of Health and Human Services to create a one-pager flyer for each MICU member that ensures compliance with this legislative requirement.
- CEPI training: MICU coordinated an all-day training for member institution staff to learn more about soon-to-be-required student-level data reporting to the Center for Education Performance and Information (CEPI). Additional trainings are planned for later in Summer 2018 as well as in early 2019.
- New sections of the MICU website were created to highlight the data and research provided by MICU for use by members. These sections include research reports, one-pagers, and the biweekly Independent Indicators graphics. Also added to the website is an updated Member Services section.
- MICU Safety & Loss Control Symposium: MICU, in partnership with Marsh, coordinated a symposium for members to discuss safety strategies and insurance tips within higher education. This event is hosted annually and is free to all MICU members regardless of participation with the Marsh programs.
- MiTransfer Pathways: in partnership with the Michigan Community College Association and the Michigan Association of State Universities, MICU is supporting the statewide initiative to replace the Michigan Transfer Network and build multi-institutional associate to bachelor's degree transfer pathways. MICU has convened faculty from member institutions to focus on four disciplines-business, biology, criminal justice, and psychology. This is a three-year project and will continue through 2020 with additional areas of study.

## Conclusion

MICU continues to improve its position both internally and externally. Our legislative push for additional student financial aid has been very successful and we continue to build support for our members with officeholders and policymakers. As in the past, I am honored to serve as MICU's president and look forward to another year of opportunities for our membership.