2-6-2014

Senate Appropriations Testimony Notes

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1. **University funded student financial aid.** A January 2014 Wall Street Journal article focused on the substantial increase in university funded financial aid over recent years. Please provide a five-year history of university funded student financial aid for your institution and specify the impact it has on tuition rates (i.e. university funded financial aid as a percent of undergraduate tuition revenue).

**Response:** The five-year history of Western Michigan University’s contribution to student financial aid as a percentage of undergraduate tuition revenue is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>University Funded Student Financial Aid as % of Tuition Revenue</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2009-10</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010-11</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011-12</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012-13</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013-14</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Western Michigan University has had a long standing practice of increasing university funded student financial aid whenever tuition rates have increased at our university. Student financial aid to students has been historically viewed as a critical component in attracting in providing access to students in recognition of
academic merit and financial need. We recently employed the services of an outside consultant to conduct a strategic financial aid review for new students. Based on this review, WMU implemented some new financial aid packaging philosophies that better support academic persistence and address affordability to students with the greatest need. Initial results indicate an increase in the first-semester retention of the freshman cohort.

Due to budgetary pressures on our university including health care costs, uncontrollable state charges for MPSERS retirement costs, and tuition restraint mandates from the State of Michigan, it is becoming increasingly difficult to maintain the practice of annually increasing student financial aid budgets when tuition rates are increased.

1. Job Placement. Does your university track undergraduate success rates through job placement? Does the university differentiate between full-time and part-time employment, and job classification (service, manufacturing, professional, continuing education, etc.).

Response: Yes, Western Michigan University tracks undergraduate and graduate success rates through job placement. We conduct an online survey of students asking for their “primary activity” post-graduation, including; working full-time, part-time and graduate school plans. The chart below details the outcomes of our 2012-13 graduates. We do not divide responses by industry.

WMU Post-Graduation Activity Report

- WMU surveyed 5,382 students graduating with bachelor’s, master’s, and doctoral degrees between August 2012 and June 2013 with a 66% response rate.
- 87% are actively engaged; defined as full-time employment, continuing education, military service, part-time employment, self-employment, or post-graduate internship/fellowship.
- Overall, 61.46% completed an internship or experience related to their field of study. 65.18% of those working full-time, had an internship prior to graduation.
- Graduates reported employment in 41 U.S. states and outside the U.S. with 78% employed in Michigan.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Primary Post-Graduation Activity (2012-13)</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Employed full time or have accepted full-time employment</td>
<td>2,073</td>
<td>58.11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continuing education</td>
<td>485</td>
<td>13.61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employed part time and not seeking full-time employment</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>1.21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employed part time and seeking full-time employment</td>
<td>312</td>
<td>8.73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Military service</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>0.73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-graduate internship / fellowship</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>3.42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-employed: started my own business</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>1.29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteering: involved with a volunteer project or program</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>0.53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not immediately seeking full-time employment</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>1.77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed and seeking full-time employment</td>
<td>265</td>
<td>7.44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Declined to answer</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>3.17%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The full report is available here: [http://www.wmich.edu/career/planning/reports](http://www.wmich.edu/career/planning/reports)

2. **Graduation Rates.** What type of assistance is provided by the university to undergraduate students to facilitate graduation within a reasonable time period?

Highlights of our new and ongoing efforts include the following points:

- The University has recently implemented Degree Works software, providing students with a continual update and tracking of completion of courses required for graduation in their degree programs. Students can easily track their progress to degree, requirements needed for program completion, and time to graduation.

- Studies show that academic advising plays a critical role in student success. The University recently hired 10 additional academic advisors and is emphasizing proactive advising.

- The University encourages instructors to submit grades on assignments in the first three to four weeks of the semester and the midterm. Both residence life personnel and academic advisors are equipped to identify students who may be struggling and align them with the resources they need to succeed.

- A 2013 pilot project was implemented by the College of Arts and Sciences with the goal of identifying students attending freshmen orientation who may be determined to be academically at-risk based on survey responses to non-cognitive factors. Students who were determined to fall within at-risk
levels based upon their responses to the survey were required to make five contacts per semester with an academic advisor, with at least two of these contacts in a one-to-one meeting. The results of this survey are being analyzed with the intent to make this a campus-wide effort this year.

- Students who begin college as undecided on a major have lower graduation rates than students who declare a major. The Exploratory Advising office at WMU places registration holds on student accounts for those students who are undecided until they meet with an academic advisor for course and program planning.

- As an institution, WMU is developing more accelerated graduate degree program options. These options allow students to double-count selected courses in their senior year for both an undergraduate and a graduate degree. This encourages students to complete two degrees, the baccalaureate and the master’s degrees, within five years, thus providing an incentive for graduation.

- In fall 2013, each incoming student was assigned to an advisor of record to provide students with a single source for degree process and final degree decisions.

- A faculty member with counseling experience has been assigned to help our Center for Academic Success Programs and Career and Student Employment Services provide career advice to undecided students. The faculty member will also work with the instructors of our First Year Experience course to provide career counseling for first year students.

**Under Development:**

- Mental health issues have a broad impact on the student success and development each year. To that end, WMU is investigating ways to modify
the fall semester in hopes of providing an additional break during the semester to reduce student stress and anxiety.

- Initial work has been done on what is tentatively being called the Bronco Plan. This will be a visual timeline of important steps and milestones students should anticipate and implement in each of their four years that will improve their chances of graduation and success.

- The College of Arts and Sciences is implementing a retention component including a term-appointed academic advisor who will work with the "at-risk" population of undergraduates, a part-time data specialist to track and document the effectiveness and impact of multiple retention efforts underway in the college, and several peer "success coaches" who will work in tandem with the CAS professional advisors to perform group advising. In addition, the college is offering college-specific First-Year Experience sections, two "Academic Recovery" sections for students on academic probation, and plans to implement additional supplemental instruction sections for high difficulty courses.

3. **Performance Funding.** Increases provided to universities over the last two fiscal years have been distributed based on a performance funding model. Please provide your assessment of the current model, including:

   a. *Should the formula include an equity/foundation allocation based on per student funding?*

   b. *Should the formula incentivize universities to have a higher percentage of students that are Michigan residents?*

   c. *Should the formula revise the graduation rate to be based on graduations within four years instead of six, or should this metric be removed from the performance funding model?*
d. Your recommendations regarding any other modifications to the current formula.

Response: a. The current funding formula rests on the assumption that the funding for each university was appropriate given each university’s mission, mix of academic programs, and student profile. Yet that assumption was never tested. While we think the current model is on the correct path of identifying the universities by their Carnegie classification, the existing per student funding within those classifications varies widely and should be considered further.

b. Michigan needs to have greater participation in higher education by its citizens. With the current demographic trends of smaller high school graduate cohorts, the challenge for Michigan’s universities is to have a larger percentage of a smaller number of graduates to attend college. To do this we need to reach out to more students who aren’t on the traditional “glide path” to go on to achieve a post-secondary degree. At Western Michigan University we know that 30% of our traditional age entering students are from families where neither parent has attended college. There are populations that have traditionally been underrepresented in higher education. One of those are students aging out of the foster care system. WMU’s nationally recognized Sieta Scholars program reaches out to students from the foster care system that may need additional support resources to realize a higher education. There are things we can and should do to increase the number of Michiganders in higher education, but it will need additional resources to be successful. If the focus and measures is solely on a student’s residency we are missing the strategic mark of increasing the breadth of our young people who strive to achieve a higher education but need support and encouragement from the institutions established to help them.
c. There is no question we need to measure how well universities meet the mark of having our students be successful. A student may come to WMU, subsequently transfer to one or more institutions, and graduate. That student is successful and we are proud we had an important role in that student’s success. Yet because that student’s degree came from another institution, the current method of measuring graduation rates tallies that student as a failure on WMU’s watch. The transfer student is essentially lost in the reporting requirements, as they are not counted.

d. We recommend the legislature adopt one of the metrics originally recommended by the Business Leaders for Michigan, the percentage of the students receiving Pell grants. Again, providing access to populations that have a strong desire to attend post-secondary institutions but may require additional resources, whether financial or advisory in nature, is critical.

4. Transferability of Core College Courses. Pursuant to language in the State School Aid Act, a committee was formed to improve the transferability of core college courses between community colleges and public universities on a statewide basis. Will your university be implementing the agreement that was reached by that committee? If not, please provide the reasons?

Response: Yes, we signed the Michigan Transfer Agreement on December 17, 2013 and in process of implementing its components and informing our campus and prospective transfer students.

5. Harassment policy. Please provide a summary of the university's harassment policy in terms of protecting students, and protecting faculty?
Response: Western Michigan University has numerous policies, rules, and procedures in place to protect students, faculty, and other members of the University community from harassment and to address harassment should it occur. WMU’s Board of Trustees has passed important policies relating to protection of students, faculty, and staff, including on harassment. WMU’s policies on non-discrimination, duty to report criminal acts, programs and activities involving minors, and whistleblower/non-retaliation are examples of such protective policies. President Dunn has emphasized the importance and obligation for the university community to report situations in which someone may be victimized. WMU has established a hotline (“EthicsPoint”) which permits individuals to report (including anonymously) instances of harassment and other violations.

The University Student Code governs the behavior of students. Provisions within the Student Code expressly prohibit harassing behavior by students. For example, one article prohibits “[m]aking obscene or harassing telephone calls, sending obscene or harassing letters, email, or using any medium to communicate in an obscene or harassing manner.” That same Article also prohibits “[p]hysical abuse, verbal abuse, threats, intimidation, harassment, coercion and/or other conduct which threatens or endangers the health, well-being, or safety of any person.” The Student Code is enforced by a full-time Office of Student Conduct which investigates and adjudicates alleged violations. In addition, the collective bargaining agreement between Western Michigan University and WMU Chapter of American Association of University Professors prohibits “. . . any exploitation, harassment, or discriminatory treatment of students,” and requires faculty to “not discriminate against or harass colleagues.” The Human Resources Policies and Procedures Manual covers other University employees and prohibits “[a]busive, threatening or coercive treatment of another employee, student, or member of the
In addition, all University employees, students, and faculty are specifically prohibited from engaging in sexual harassment or other prohibited discriminatory harassment consistent with applicable state and federal law, and WMU’s Office of Institutional Equity is involved in enforcing this policy. WMU has multiple other mechanisms in place, as well, to effectively deal with acts of harassment.

6. **Governing Board Expense Travel and Reimbursement Policies.** Please provide the university's policy regarding reimbursement of costs for governing board members and families. Also provide the level of review required for expense submissions. Include per diems provided for meetings, and any set limits (maximum allowable expenses) for items such as meals, hotel, and other travel costs.

**Response:** Western Michigan University trustees abide by the same travel expense and reimbursement policies that are standard for all WMU employees. We do not have a specific travel/reimbursement policy for governing board members or their families. Our trustees do not travel extensively outside of the routine travel from their homes to Kalamazoo for Board meetings. Only on rare occasions are hotel arrangements made as meeting obligations typically occur over the course of a single day. If we have an informal session the night before the formal session (we have done this three times during this past year) the university has covered the hotel costs, while the dinners have been hosted by trustees. Our trustees do not travel on university business outside of the country. One of our new trustees attended an Association of Governing Boards conference in California, and her reimbursed charges were $390. The Secretary of the Board of Trustees reviews and approves trustee expense accounts with oversight and signature
approval by the Vice President of Business Affairs. Per diems are not offered for Board meeting attendance and allowable travel costs are again standard for all WMU employees.