

MICHIGAN'S TALENT PRIORITY RECOMMENDATIONS

Michigan Higher Education Attainment Roundtable

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Public Policy Associates, Incorporated is a public policy research, development, and evaluation firm headquartered in Lansing, Michigan. We serve clients in the public, private, and nonprofit sectors at the national, state, and local levels by conducting research, analysis, and evaluation that supports informed strategic decision-making.



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ABOUT

Since 2014, stakeholders across Michigan's higher education policy community have been meeting to set an agenda that will ensure at least 60 percent of working-age adults in Michigan earn a skill certificate or college degree by 2030 (Sixty by 30). The Michigan Higher Education Attainment Roundtable (MIHEART) is comprised of business, nonprofit, philanthropy, K-12 education, higher education, and government leaders passionate about attracting and retaining talent in Michigan. Since it was initiated, MIHEART has been focused on advocating for more resources to be put toward improving the talent pipeline in Michigan. The group works collaboratively to promote, advocate for, and lead policy changes that will generate improved postsecondary education and credential attainment levels in Michigan. The members of MIHEART are committed to working with stakeholders across the state, including Michigan's Governor and Legislature, to create and attract jobs and make Michigan a top ten state for educational attainment.

MEMBERSHIP

MIHEART's current membership includes key institutions and leaders committed to working together on an ongoing basis to increase attainment of postsecondary credentials of workforce value. The members include the following individuals and groups:

- Tim Sowton, Business Leaders for Michigan
- Nancy Fishman, Council for a Strong America
- Greg Handel, Detroit Regional Chamber
- Caroline Altman Smith, The Kresge Foundation
- Tina Kerr, Michigan Association of Superintendents & Administrators
- William Miller, Michigan Association of Intermediate School Administrators
- Wendy Zdeb, Michigan Association of Secondary School Principals
- Dan Hurley and Bob Murphy, Michigan Association of State Universities
- Ryan Fewins-Bliss and Jamie Jacobs, Michigan College Access Network
- Brandy Johnson and Erin Schor, Michigan Community College Association
- Scott Koenigsknecht, Lisa Seigel, and Brian Pyles, Michigan Department of Education
- Robin Lott, Michigan Department of Treasury
- Robert LeFevre and Colby Cesaro, Michigan Independent Colleges & Universities
- Lisa Hungerford, Talent 2025
- Catherine Brown and Manon Steel, The Institute for College Access and Success

MAKING MICHIGAN A TOP TEN STATE

Michigan's Talent Priority

The work of MIHEART has evolved from the Cherry Commission's seminal report,¹ which first advanced a talent agenda for higher education attainment in Michigan. The most notable goal at the time was to double the number of college graduates in Michigan during the period 2005 to 2015. Michigan did not meet that goal; however, Michigan's rate of educational attainment has steadily increased since 2009.²

The overarching goal of MIHEART remains to help the State achieve its attainment goal—*Sixty by 30*. By working to increase the number of working-age adults with an education and training beyond high school, MIHEART hopes to make Michigan a top ten education state. Michigan has made progress toward increasing educational attainment but still lags when compared to the national average (51.9%). Michigan's attainment rate is just 49.1 percent and would need to be 6.7 percentage points higher in order to be in the top ten for educational attainment.³

To reach *Sixty by 30*, MIHEART offers an update in 2022 to its “Michigan's Talent Priority Top Ten Recommendations,” which was originally released as part of a report produced by MIHEART timed to convince legislators and the governor to make talent attainment a top public policy priority.⁴ Since the release of its last report in 2019, MIHEART's primary goal has been adopted by the Governor and the Legislature.

A revised top ten list of recommendations is included in this document and offers a renewed call to action and a state-level agenda for ensuring Michiganders have the education and skills needed to succeed. The recommendations are aimed at equitably increasing college access for more Michiganders, helping students persist on an annual basis, and increasing the number of college completers.

What follows the recommendations are a series of strategy and action steps that MIHEART can advance over the next three years to close the attainment gap and policy solutions the state can take to achieve *Sixty by 30*.

¹ *The Lt. Governor's Commission on Higher Education & Economic Growth* (Lansing, MI: State of Michigan, 2004), https://www.michigan.gov/documents/CherryReportFULL_112991_7.pdf

² “A Stronger Nation: Learning Beyond High School Builds American Talent,” Lumina Foundation, 2021, <https://www.luminafoundation.org/stronger-nation/report/#/progress&nation-sort=attainment&anchor-id=nation-geo>.

³ Ibid.

⁴ *Total Talent: Equipping All Michiganders with the Education and Skills Needed for Success in the Economy of Today and Tomorrow* (Lansing, MI: Michigan Higher Education Attainment Roundtable, 2018), <https://michigancollegeaccessnetwork.app.box.com/s/zu845fljgievfvf3avllvnbgdciu5yvtvi>.

MIHEART's Overarching Goal and Ten Recommendations

Increase the number of working-age adults with a skill certificate or college degree to 60% by 2030.

Michigan's Talent Priority "Top 10" Recommendations

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| #1 | Improve postsecondary participation and completion rates by closing opportunity gaps among low-income students, first-generation college-going students, students with disabilities, and students of color. |
| #2 | Increase the proportion of Michigan high school students that complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) annually to 75% and encourage returning students to reapply each year. |
| #3 | Increase need-based state financial aid funding above current levels by <u>\$450 million</u> ⁵ for all sectors across the full spectrum of undergraduate students, making Michigan a top-10 state in financial aid investment on a per in-state student basis. |
| #4 | Increase postsecondary institutional annual operating support by at least 1 percentage point above the rate of inflation annually. |
| #5 | Sustain investment in and expand eligibility for Michigan Reconnect, ensuring non-degreed adults who have a high school diploma, and those who left college without a degree, have an opportunity to earn a tuition-free associate degree or postsecondary certificate. |
| #6 | Allocate additional resources and align programs to support adult worker training and retraining (e.g., Going Pro Talent Fund, New Jobs Training Program, and Community College Skilled Trades Equipment Program). |
| #7 | Increase high school student participation in all forms of early college credit programs (Early/Middle College, dual enrollment, International Baccalaureate, Advanced Placement, articulated Career and Technical Education, and the College-Level Examination Program), including among low-income students, first-generation college-going students, students with disabilities, and students of color. |
| #8 | Make progress toward the goal of a student-counselor ratio of 250:1 for high schools and provide high-quality training and professional development that includes student mental health resources for existing counselors. |
| #9 | Continue progress toward multi-institutional credit acceptance between higher education institutions, associate-to-bachelor's degree transfer pathways, and secondary to postsecondary credit acceptance (i.e., early college credit programs or credit for prior learning) to make the transfer process more efficient, simplified, and transparent. |
| #10 | Elevate and scale national best practices and strategies among Michigan higher education institutions to promote equitable student persistence and completion, and help graduates attain economic independence through jobs that provide a family-sustaining wage. |

⁵ This estimate was based on the most recently available data provided by the National Association of State Student Grant and Aid Programs (NASSGAP) annual survey. Source : <https://www.nassgapsurvey.com/>.

MIHEART'S STRATEGY & ACTION STEPS

The strategy and action steps outlined below can be advanced over the next three years to close the attainment gap and advance policy solutions the state can take to achieve *Sixty by 30*. They have been collected from a variety of sources, including a survey of MIHEART members, to identify ways in which MIHEART can collectively support *Sixty by 30* and Michigan's Talent Priority "Top 10" Recommendations summarized on the previous page. The strategy and action steps are meant to be aspirational and spark action among MIHEART members. The strategy and action steps are organized by goal.

Goal #1: Improve postsecondary participation and completion rates by closing opportunity gaps among low-income students, first-generation college-going students, students with disabilities, and students of color

Over the next three years, a subcommittee of MIHEART members will:

- a. Lead a series of cross-sector stakeholder discussions with business and government leaders regarding barriers, policy concepts, and the sharing of data of where equity gaps are the greatest.
- b. Encourage implementation of intervention programming for postsecondary institutions, such as summer bridge programs, learning academies, or supplemental instruction sessions that are accessible to all students.

MIHEART will:

- c. Investigate existing data and research what current equity and achievement gaps are present in Michigan among specific subpopulations, especially students of color and low-income populations. The research will address the following question: What are the college-going and completion rates among the subpopulations, compared to white and middle-upper-income students? A better understanding of student enrollment trends for students of color and low-income students in Michigan during the past 5–8 years will be helpful (e.g., emulating what [Illinois](#) has been doing to address this issue). The goal is to bring visibility to the gaps to generate greater public understanding and backing for a major statewide postsecondary effort to rally toward closing these gaps.

Goal #2: Increase the proportion of Michigan high school students that complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) annually to 75% and encourage returning students to reapply each year

MIHEART will:

- a. Encourage the leveraging of existing state Michigan Department of Treasury data using student-level information to identify regions and communities in most need of FAFSA completion support.

- b. Conduct outreach with states that have a high school FAFSA completion requirement, as well as states that incentivize completion, to learn about advocacy and implementation—exploring equity gaps and what a requirement might look like for Michigan.
- c. Disseminate promotional materials, talking points, and/or make staff available, where and when feasible, to make presentations to high school and college students about the importance of FAFSA completion.

Goal #3: Increase need-based state financial aid funding above current levels by \$450 million for all sectors across the full spectrum of undergraduate students, making Michigan a top-10 state in financial aid investment on a per in-state student basis

MIHEART will:

- a. Advocate for stimulus dollars to be allocated to significantly fund a needs-based aid program for a multi-year cohort of students.
- b. Promote actions that lead to greater access, equity, and efficiency in current financial aid programs—ensuring that needs-based funding is predictable, dependable, and standardized.
- c. Advocate for the consolidating of existing needs-based aid programs and adding considerably more funding—creating a simplified, well-funded, sustainable, and highly visible state aid program.
- d. Identify potential revenue sources for student financial aid and the allocation of funding into a broad student financial aid program with no merit component.

Goal #4: Increase postsecondary institutional annual operating support by at least 1 percentage point above the rate of inflation annually

MIHEART will:

- a. Advance the value of postsecondary education and the importance of increased operating support with the legislature.
- b. Bring visibility to the state's labor market forecast and demand data, which highlight the need for higher education attainment.
- c. Work collaboratively for support with external groups regarding the value of postsecondary education and the impact of increased operating support.
- d. Encourage business groups to back this goal with supporting rationale and advocacy action.

Goal #5: Sustain investment in and expand eligibility for Michigan Reconnect, ensuring non-degreed adults who have a high school diploma, and those who left college without a degree, have an opportunity to earn a tuition-free associate degree or postsecondary certificate

MIHEART will:

- a. Promote ongoing, sustained funding for the Michigan Reconnect state tuition assistance program for adults enrolling in credentials of value up to associate degrees.
- b. Advocate for the expansion of Michigan Reconnect. This may need to be a limited period in case the one-time dollars expire and should include opportunities to support transfers to four-year institutions.
- c. Advocate for a broad, targeted, communications strategy on investing in Michigan Reconnect through a dedicated funding source.

Goal #6: Allocate additional resources and align programs to support adult worker training and retraining (e.g., Going Pro Talent Fund, New Jobs Training Program, and Community College Skilled Trades Equipment Program)

MIHEART will:

- a. Advocate for increasing the current \$50-million cap on outstanding contracts to meet increased demand for the New Jobs Training Program.
- b. Work with the State to finalize the definition of a “high-quality non-degree credential” and align these programs to only produce credentials that “count” toward *Sixty by 30*.

Goal #7: Increase high school student participation in all forms of early college credit programs (Early/Middle College, dual enrollment, International Baccalaureate, Advanced Placement, articulated Career and Technical Education, and the College-Level Examination Program), including among low-income students, first-generation college-going students, students with disabilities, and students of color

MIHEART will:

- a. Support the expansion of online opportunities for students to participate in early college credit activities, expanding the geographic reach of these programs.
- b. Study data that are currently available and seek to advance dual enrollment in an equitable way.
- c. Challenge every high school to become an official CLEP testing site and provide them with incentives to do so.
- d. Call for more state resources to address barriers to enrollment and expansion of dual enrollment programs if a community college is not close to a high school to offer dual enrollment courses or set up an early/middle college.

Goal #8: Make progress toward the goal of a student-counselor ratio of 250:1 for high schools and provide high-quality training and professional development that includes student mental health resources for existing counselors

MIHEART will:

- a. Advocate for the placement of additional college advisors in high schools under the supervision of school counselors where staffing shortages exist. There is a need to differentiate and clarify the roles and emphasize the need for both.
- b. Call for more funding for additional school counselors on a sustained basis and have funds earmarked for this cause.
- c. Support legislation to provide financial support to school districts in order to maintain acceptable student-counselor ratios.

Goal #9: Continue progress toward multi-institutional credit acceptance between higher education institutions, associate-to-bachelor's degree transfer pathways, and secondary to postsecondary credit acceptance (i.e., early college credit programs or credit for prior learning) to make the transfer process more efficient, simplified, and transparent

MIHEART will:

- a. Continue to support the expansion of MiTransfer Pathways implementation and maintenance of the 10 current pathways.
- b. Advocate for adequate support for community colleges, public universities, and independent colleges to provide timely and appropriate advising and student supports for transfer students.
- c. Use available data to help determine and share existing programs that are providing Michigan students the strongest value in terms of earning credits or credentials while in high school and support them.

Goal #10: Elevate and scale national best practices and strategies among Michigan higher education institutions to promote equitable student persistence and completion, and help graduates attain economic independence through jobs that provide a family-sustaining wage

MIHEART will:

- a. Work with state-level leaders and the philanthropic community in seeking to establish an incentive fund to reward institutions for success in implementing Complete College America and other research-based college-completion strategies (e.g., offer grants to institutions to establish or expand programs that address the barriers specific to their students).
- b. Identify essential experiences for high school students and families that lead to connections with postsecondary institutions that inspire postsecondary pursuits, including college visits, open house events, career-interest programming, and information sessions.
- c. Engage in further conversation with the College in High School Alliance (CHSA), which includes national organizations involved in sharing best practices involving college success.



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