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Michigan public university-community partnerships prove higher education delivers services improving Michigan's economy, social services and environment

Lansing, Mich. — Officials from Michigan's 15 public universities today provided state lawmakers a glimpse into how universities are partnering with communities to bring academic expertise to key issues ranging from economic development, talent development, entrepreneurship, high speed internet delivery, environmental quality and other key job-creation activities.

The first-of-its-kind program, featuring presentations and academic-style posters displayed in the Capitol, was called "Community-University Partnerships Invested In Michigan's Future."

"Michigan's 15 public universities have come together to demonstrate their commitment to the people of Michigan, to solve the state's most pressing needs, and to showcase community-university partnerships that stimulate regional economic development, generate new business startups, invest in talent development and innovation centers, and enhance opportunities for workforce development," said Hiram E. Fitzgerald, Associate Provost for University Outreach and Engagement at Michigan State University.

Fitzgerald was a key catalyst for bringing the universities together to showcase their work. He was joined at the event by Michigan Economic Development Corporation President and CEO Michael Finney, Gov. Snyder's Director of the Michigan Office of Urban and Metropolitan Initiatives Harvey Hollins, Dan Gilmartin, executive director and CEO of the Michigan Municipal League and Michael Boulus, executive director of the Presidents Council, State Universities of Michigan.

Also engaged in the day long program, were professors and local officials from around the state who are attacking state problems with science, know-how and expertise developed by Michigan's public universities.

"Michigan's universities focus their attention on training students for opportunities of tomorrow. But they are also engaged in working with community leaders to develop solutions to concerns ranging from training entrepreneurs to protecting state waters to identifying and stimulating export opportunities," said Boulus. "Today's presentations show community engagement is a key mission for public universities, something often overlooked by state policymakers but never ignored by university leaders, administrators, educators and students."

Among the highlighted activities presented were:

- Lake Superior State University's Product Development Center, which brings students and faculty into engineering projects with local entrepreneurs and businesses that have included assembly automation that enabled UP manufacturers to pursue larger orders and add employees and engineering design and other services that helped Skate Fenders in Gaylord move a product from idea to reality.
- Northern Michigan University's WiMAX network that has helped students in rural areas gain access to high speed internet services critical to their continued education and increased local government access to broadband for police, fire, utility and community services.
- University of Michigan-Dearborn's eCities study, which examines local municipal-level factors that foster entrepreneurship and encourage economic development. More than 130 communities now participate in the study, which is shared to allow best practices to flourish.
- Wayne State University's Techtown, a 43-acre research and technology park in Midtown Detroit that is one of the world's most successful business incubators, serving to reignite the city's entrepreneur culture.
- Central Michigan University's Central Assessment Lending Library, staffed by CMU faculty and doctoral students who provide consultation, assessment and intervention materials or children with low-incidence disabilities to all public schools in Michigan.

For more information on these and other presentations, visit
<http://www.pcsun.org/michigansfuture/>

The Presidents Council, State Universities of Michigan serves as a forum for the presidents and chancellors of the Michigan 15 public universities to discuss and frame positions on key higher education finance and policy issues.

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