



For Immediate Release  
May 1, 2018

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## **Michigan residents say state should boost higher education funding to keep tuition low, poll shows**

*Nearly 80 percent say a four year education from a Michigan public university is a good investment*

LANSING, Mich.—A new poll shows Michigan residents want the state to invest in higher education to keep tuition low, and that more than 80 percent of parents with high school students believe their child will receive at least a four-year college degree.

The phone survey, conducted for the Michigan Association of State Universities by Glengariff Group in early April, asked 600 residents across the state their views on higher education. A large majority – 78.8 percent – said they would support a significant increase in state funding for Michigan’s 15 public universities to keep tuition low for in-state students, with 54.5 percent strongly supporting that notion. Only 14.5 percent opposed that statement.

Government has a responsibility to ensure all qualified students have an opportunity to earn a degree, even if they can’t afford it, nearly two-thirds (65.8 percent) of those surveyed said. Ninety-five percent also agree that public universities are important to the state’s economy.

Their reason for backing increased state funding? Michiganders know it’s vital for the future. Asked “how important is it today for someone to have a four year college degree in order to have a good career or a good job?” nearly 90 percent said it was important, with 47.5 percent indicating that it is “very important.”

“Michigan’s 15 public universities enjoy strong support from our state’s residents, and their message to lawmakers is clear: Make higher education a priority when it comes to setting the state’s budget,” said Daniel Hurley, president and CEO of the Michigan Association of State Universities. “It was remarkable to see how many parents of high school students expect to see their children go to college. Overall, citizens recognize those with a four-year degree get better paying jobs and enjoy more rewarding careers than those who do not earn degrees.”

Residents say the state should fund higher education, not pile that responsibility primarily on the backs of students and parents. Asked if the state should adequately fund Michigan’s public universities to make sure they continue their tradition of excellence in education while keeping tuition low for Michigan students or if current budget shortfalls mean it is the student’s responsibility to pay for an even greater portion of their college education, even if it means taking out larger student loans, 75.8 percent said the state should step up and invest more. Only 16.7 percent said that because the state has cut taxes and financial support for higher education, students should be more responsible for the costs of college, including taking on more debt.

Many parents surveyed put a high priority on their children finding careers with rewarding work – even more than higher earnings. Asked what was most important to them about their child’s future career, 42 percent said “finds the work rewarding,” compared to 8.3 percent “always has a steady job” and 8.3 percent “makes good money.” And 68 percent of parents said they are saving as much as they can toward their child’s college education, compared with 20.7 percent saying they will leave it to their child to finance an education.

“Parents get it. They know college is vital to their children’s future – and they are investing in their child’s education. It’s important that they get more help from the state,” Hurley said.

In 2001-02, Michigan state government invested \$1.94 billion in higher education. This year, the investment is just \$1.63 billion, even though enrollment has grown significantly. If the state had just increased the 2001-02 investment by the rate of inflation, it would be spending \$2.75 billion on higher education – more than a billion dollars above the current budget.

**Some highlights from the survey:**

**Do you support or oppose a significant increase in state funding for Michigan’s 15 public universities to keep tuition low for in-state students?**

Strongly support	54.5%
Somewhat support	24.3%
Neither support, nor oppose	2.7%
Somewhat oppose	6.5%
Strongly oppose	8.0%
Don’t Know/ Refused	4.0%

**I am going to read you two statements. Please tell me which ONE comes closer to your personal opinion.**

75.8% The state needs to adequately fund Michigan’s public universities to make sure they continue their tradition of excellence in education while keeping tuition low for Michigan students.

16.7% Because budget deficits are forcing a cut in state funds for most programs, it is the student’s responsibility to replace state funding cuts to public universities by paying higher tuition, even if it means taking out big student loans.

**Michigan should continue to provide adequate taxpayer funding to public colleges and universities to ensure that all students can afford to go to college.**

Strongly agree	53.0%
Somewhat agree	26.7%
Neither agree, nor disagree	3.0%
Somewhat disagree	7.0%
Strongly disagree	9.5%
Don’t Know/ Refuse	0.8%

**Government has a responsibility to make sure every qualified person has the opportunity to earn a college education, even if he or she cannot afford it.**

Strongly agree	41.8%
Somewhat agree	24.0%
Neither agree, nor disagree	3.0%
Somewhat disagree	11.8%
Strongly disagree	17.3%
Don't Know/ Refused	2.0%

**How important is it today for someone to have a four year college degree in order to have a good career or a good job?**

Very important	47.5%
Somewhat important	39.7%
Not very important	6.3%
Not important at all	4.2%
Don't Know/ Refused	2.3%

**Asked of parents of junior high or high school students:**

**Thinking of the oldest child you may have, what is the highest level of education you think they will achieve?**

High school graduate	4.1%
An associate degree	5.9%
A skilled trades certificate	2.4%
A four year bachelor's degree	47.9%
A master's degree	27.2%
A doctorate	8.3%
Won't graduate high school	1.2%
Don't Know/ Refused	3.0%

**When it comes to your child's future career, which of the following is the MOST important to you?**

That your child finds the work rewarding.	42.0%
That your child gets a good education.	12.4%
That your child has a clear path from school to a job.	10.7%
That your child makes a difference.	10.1%
That your child makes good money.	8.3%
That your child always has a steady job.	8.3%
That your child maintains low student loan debt.	5.3%
That your child is challenged by the work.	1.8%
Don't Know/ Refused	1.2%