

State Reporting Burdens

As public institutions, Michigan’s state universities are accountable to citizens and policymakers. Transparency is important to demonstrate the universities’ efficient and judicious use of tuition and tax dollars. Part of this transparency is accomplished through state reporting to the Michigan Legislature and the Executive Branch. However, reports do not write themselves. Every report takes time to produce, and that time is spent by university employees.

In many cases, the information being sought through mandated state reports is already publicly available. Public universities report massive annual datasets on financial, academic, enrollment, human resources, and other areas to the U.S. Department of Education (the “IPEDS” dataset) and the Michigan Department of Technology, Management and Budget (the “HEIDI” and “STARR” datasets). Alignment between and with the two datasets reduces duplication of efforts, and eliminating competing reports and definitions also makes it easier for all stakeholders to examine public university activities.

To this end, the state universities and MASU are very appreciative of the overhaul of the boilerplate language reflected in the FY2024 state budget. Under the leadership of the State Budget Office, many duplicative or unused reports were either eliminated or streamlined, saving the universities administrative costs, and in turn saving money for students. Attention now turns to ensuring that this common sense and efficient budget language remains intact and to prevent a return to the prior bloated reporting burden.

Policy Actions:

- Reduce unfunded state reporting activities.
- Maintain the current streamlined state reporting requirements that eliminated wasteful duplication of efforts.
- When state policymakers are considering new reporting requirements, universities should be involved at an early stage to ensure that the desired information is possible to collect and data elements are clearly defined.