

State-Institutional Collaboration in Strengthening Teacher Preparation

As is the case in most states across the country, enrollment in undergraduate teacher preparation programs in Michigan had been declining in recent years. A combination of factors account for this, including: demographics (decreasing number of high school graduates), finances (Michigan public school districts have struggled with funding, leading to diminished hiring of new teachers), uncompetitive salaries, poor working conditions, and the stress associated with the COVID-19 pandemic. Collectively, these influences have led to a drop in interest in the teaching profession. Many students who do graduate with teaching degrees are accepting employment opportunities that are out of state, despite severe teacher shortages in many regions of the state. Further, leading professional organizations, including the American Statistical Association, have cautioned against the use of student test data in assessing teachers in the face of all these challenges.

Fortunately, bipartisan support in 2022 led to the creation of the [MI Future Educator Fellowship](#) program, which provides a \$10,000 scholarship annually for up to three years for up to 2,500 students enrolled in teacher preparation programs. The [MI Future Educator Stipend](#) was also created, providing \$9,600 in compensation to student teachers. These programs have made it more affordable for the state's young adults to enroll in an educator preparation program and to pursue a career as a K-12 teacher in Michigan.

Policy Actions

- Promote collaboration between institutions and state officials to strengthen collegiate teacher preparation and professional developments programs.
- Caution against using student test scores in evaluating teachers, and teacher preparation and professional development programs.
- Continue state investment in the MI Future Educator Fellowship and MI Future Educator Stipend programs to encourage young adults to pursue a career in the K-12 teaching profession.

Healthcare Programs and Clinical Education

The COVID-19 pandemic has taught all of us how vital health care workers are to the ongoing functioning of society. But similar to the teaching profession (see above), Michigan's hospitals and clinics are not able to stabilize the job market fast enough. With fierce competition for professionals, salaries are rising quickly, clinicians are departing for other markets, and areas of the state are being underserved. Michigan's public universities are trying to grow the pipeline of health care professionals as quickly as they can, and health profession majors have been among the most popular on campuses for many years. However, the chokepoint in producing health care professionals does not involve access to campus classrooms or laboratories, but rather, access to clinical

education slots, where students engage in hands-on education and training under the guidance of a preceptor. Preceptors are working health care clinicians who are giving back to their profession by making the linkage for students between the classroom and the patient. For a variety of reasons, including growing overall demand for health care professionals, hospital productivity models, preceptors burning out during the pandemic, and competition from other out-of-state students, clinical slots are becoming increasingly difficult to arrange. Campuses are increasingly being asked to pay for access to these clinical slots, which only leads to an arms race among institutions and passes the cost on to the student. Additionally, Michigan has stricter licensing regulations for its health care workers which requires more clinical education than surrounding states. The public universities have the capacity to increase cohort sizes by hundreds of students per year to work in our hospitals, clinics, and offices – but doing so will require increased access to clinical education.

Policy Actions:

- Provide tax incentives to preceptors and regulatory changes that create more clinical education opportunities for students.
- Align Michigan's health practitioner licensing requirements with those of surrounding states.