

INTRODUCTION

PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES

Michigan has 15 public 4-year universities located throughout the state. These institutions range from those having large undergraduate, graduate, and professional student populations to one with a student population of just under 3,000. Michigan universities participate in complex academic and research activities, provide undergraduate programs in the liberal arts, and offer specialized areas of studies such as engineering and vocational-technical programs. Together these institutions of higher education offer comprehensive and diverse programs.

Higher education enjoys a relatively autonomous structure in Michigan. The Constitution of 1963, authorizes the boards of control of the individual public universities to supervise their respective institutions and to control expenditure of institutional funds. Three of the public 4-year universities are supervised by individual boards of control elected by the voters of Michigan while each remaining public university is governed by a board of control appointed by the governor.

COMMUNITY COLLEGES

Michigan's 28 community colleges provide: 1) higher education opportunities to citizens for whom the cost, location of state universities and private colleges, or academic entrance requirements are barriers to attendance; 2) job training and retraining opportunities, including vocational, avocational, and nondegree courses and programs that may not be offered by other institutions; and 3) services that enhance the economic, cultural, intellectual, and social life of the community.

The Constitution of 1963 provides: "The legislature shall provide by law for the establishment and financial support of public community and junior colleges which shall be supervised and controlled by locally elected boards." This constitutional provision also established an eight-member State Board for Public Community Colleges to advise the State Board of Education in its general supervision and planning for community colleges. The creation and operation of community colleges are governed by Public Act 331 of 1966.

Michigan's public community colleges are located throughout the state. Two colleges are located in the Upper Peninsula, six in the northern Lower Peninsula, and the remaining 20 in southern Michigan. Over 80% of Michigan's 9.8 million citizens live in a community college district.

Although traditionally offering 2-year programs, the Legislature enacted Public Act 495 of 2012 to allow community colleges to grant baccalaureate degrees in cement technology, maritime technology, energy production technology, and the culinary arts.

INDEPENDENT COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

Michigan's independent colleges provide a variety of specialized education opportunities and environments that complement public education offerings. They offer certificate and associate degree programs; church-affiliated programs; baccalaureate programs, including liberal arts and teacher education; and graduate/professional programs leading to postgraduate degrees in many disciplines. Independent colleges are required to offer programs leading to a degree or offer two or more years of courses for transfer to a degree-granting Michigan institution of higher education recognized by the state.

Independent colleges and universities are recognized by the State Board of Education when they have been incorporated under Public Act 327 of 1931. The State Board of Education ensures that the articles of incorporation clearly define the educational activity of the proposed corporation and that specific limits are defined. Any unincorporated nonpublic colleges are also brought under the authority of the State Board of Education to establish minimum requirements for degrees or awards.