

April 24, 2006-May 1, 2006

# Media Packet

---

- **Ferris Fest 2006: RubberBand opens for Ryan Cabrera**
- **Big Government only gets bigger**
- **Does professors' pay pale in Michigan?**
- **Exercise program aids movement after spinal cord injuries**
- **House panel advances plan for university funding**
- **Ferris receives multi-million software package**
- **Students participate in building, steel sculpture; unveiling today**
- **Ferris State honor students raise money for community library**
- **Pension costs eat up higher-ed increases**
- **Higher education lobbies for more money**
- **Senior on medical path**
- **How Big Is Bush's Big Government?**
- **Ferris chosen to participate in Political Engagement Project's Phase II**
- **Ever the fighter, Ferris' Bourdlais vows a comeback**
- **Higher ed buckles down for budget debate**
- **Walk raises money for CF**
- **Disillusioned conservatives**
- **College profs press state for more funds in next year's budget**

## **Pioneer**

April 24, 2006

### **Ferris Fest 2006: RubberBand opens for Ryan Cabrera**

**In a photo:** Ferris Fest, Roger Archibald, who started playing the guitar at age 11, was pictured performing with RubberBand at Ferris Fest 2006 Saturday afternoon at Ferris State University's Wink Arena. Below, Craig Miner, a member of RubberBand, was pictured playing the banjo Saturday at Ferris Fest 2006. A star singer and guitar player Ryan Cabrera was pictured performing at Ferris Fest 2006 Saturday at Ferris State University's Wink Arena.

## **Pittsburgh Tribune-Review**

April 24, 2006

### **Big Government only gets bigger**

The trend has been clear for a century.

It doesn't matter who's president, which party runs Congress or what our lawmakers say, promise or pretend to believe. We invariably end up with bigger, badder and bossier government.

A few politicians and pundits still worry in public about the harm Big Government does. But most folks don't realize just how big Big Government has gotten.

According to Mark Brandly, an economics professor at Ferris State University, we 300 million Americans "live under the rule of the largest civil government, measured in budgetary terms, in history."

The numbers are numbing. As Brandly wrote in an opinion piece last week for the Ludwig von Mises Institute ([www.mises.org](http://www.mises.org)), the federal government in 2006 will spend about \$2.7 trillion. That's \$7.4 billion a day, \$5.1 million a minute.

Adjusted for the 1,100 percent inflation that government monetary policy has given us since 1930, Brandly says federal spending is 27 times higher today on a per capita basis.

G.W. Bush alone has managed to increase federal spending 45 percent in less than six years. It took Clinton eight years to hike it 32 percent and Bush I's contribution was a piddling 23 percent.

To give real-world meaning to that \$2.7 trillion annual federal budget figure, Brandly says it amounts to \$9,000 per year for every man, woman and child in America.

Add state and local spending and the total bite Big, Medium and Little Government takes out of our \$12 trillion annual economy comes to \$4.4 trillion - - about \$14,700 per person a year.

Of course, over the years our great leaders have borrowed \$8.4 trillion to pay for their grand social programs and foreign misadventures. That's \$28,000 per American -- 16 times the inflation-adjusted per-capita debt load in 1930, which was \$140.

Money isn't the only way to measure Big Government's girth, however. About 3.1 million people work in civilian and military jobs for the federal government. But Paul Light of the Brookings Institution says that's not the "true size of government."

You also must count "the largely hidden work force" of roughly 14 million jobs created through government contracts and grants. Thus, the true size of the federal work force in 2002 was closer to 17 million, Light estimates.

Another 16 million or so toil for state and local governments, which means 33 million out of a national work force of 150 million -- 22 percent of us -- work for government. That's only 3 percentage points lower than in semi-socialist France.

We've gotten our Big Government for all kinds of reasons, most of them stupid, politically slimy and dangerous to our steadily shrinking freedoms. But we've also gotten it because most of our countrymen like it or profit from it.

Big Government used to be a slur -- something only liberal Democrats and socialists admitted to wanting and Republicans and conservatives pretended to hate, until they got in office. But virtually everyone in power openly loves Big Government now.

Today the Bush administration practices what Fred Barnes of The Weekly Standard has approvingly dubbed "Big Government Conservatism," which Barnes defines as the use of "liberal means -- activist government -- for conservative ends."

Nice principles, Fred. That's the kind of selfish, short-sighted thinking that makes it certain we'll be stuck with Big Government until the next killer asteroid hits Earth.

## **The Grand Rapids Press**

April 24, 2006

### **Does professors' pay pale in Michigan?**

Report claims sluggish raises could prove costly in competitive markets.

U.S. colleges and universities, including those in Michigan, need to pay more competitive salaries to faculty or risk losing talent to the corporate world - according to a professors' advocacy group.

The American Association of University Professors reported that average faculty salaries rose 3.1 percent between the 2004-05 and 2005-06 academic years. But when adjusted for inflation, those salaries actually declined 0.3 percent in value from 2004-05. It was the second year in a row that inflation-adjusted salaries declined, the report found.

Officials at area universities said they fear losing professors in some highly competitive fields, but they also say professors find benefits in being in academia rather than the corporate world.

"Our chemical engineering professors joke that the students that graduate from their program will make more in the first year of their new jobs than they do as professors," said Phil DeHaan, Calvin College spokesman.

"But there is more to a career than just salary, and the professors in that department believe there are many rewarding aspects of their jobs, and that's why they stay."

The report points out that over 25 years, average faculty salaries, adjusted for inflation, have risen by 0.25 percent compared to 34 percent for doctors, 18 percent for lawyers and 5 percent for engineers and architects.

The AAUP annual salary survey is based on compensation data collected from 1,400 institutions. The AAUP is a nonprofit group that lobbies on behalf of academic faculty.

In the report, two Michigan institutions stood out - the University of Michigan's Ann Arbor campus and the Thomas M. Cooley Law School, which is based in Lansing and has campuses in Grand Rapids and Rochester.

U-M professors had the highest salaries on average of any college or university in the state. They were paid \$125,600. Their full compensation package was \$152,300, which includes salary, health care, disability and retirement, among other benefits.

"We are competing with the very best places in the country," said Phil Hanlon, U-M's associate provost for academic and budgetary affairs.

Grand Valley State University spokesman Matt McLogan said competition for professors is sharp in some fields, including business, accounting and the health professions. But he said the university's turnover rate for professors is below average, which he said shows people like working there even though they might be able to get bigger paychecks elsewhere.

Aquinas College professors were at the bottom of the local list, with professors getting \$49,800 a year. College leaders said they realize they should pay more, but are struggling to come up with the money.

"It's not acceptable, but it's the reality we face." President: Harry Knopke said. "The Board of Trustees and college community working hard to change situation, and believe are positioned to make progress in the coming years."

Cooley had the highest compensation levels for full professors in the state - \$171,100 - although its average professors' salaries were below UM's at \$120,000.

Michigan State University paid professors the third highest salaries in the state with an average of \$105,900. Add benefits and the compensation package was valued at \$138,400 in the 2005-06.

Rockefeller University, a New York school that specializes in biomedical research, ranks first in the nation, providing an average compensation package to a full professor of \$228,300. Salaries were \$172,800.

**Higher education salary levels:  
Average salaries (and total compensation) for educators at some colleges and universities**

<b>School</b>	<b>Full Professor</b>	<b>Associate Professor</b>	<b>Assistant Professor</b>
Aquinas College	\$49,800 (\$70,100)	\$41,500 (\$58,400)	\$38,400 (\$54,100)
Calvin College	\$69,300 (\$95,200)	\$59,100 (\$79,300)	\$40,000 (\$69,400)
Central Michigan University	\$84,100 (\$110,900)	\$64,900 (\$87,100)	\$52,300 (\$70,700)
Cornerstone University	\$58,600 (\$82,300)	\$49,400 (\$67,000)	\$40,900 (\$56,000)
Ferris State University	\$76,000 (\$93,700)	\$61,300 (\$79,300)	\$53,000 (\$71,100)
Grand Valley State University	\$80,200 (\$105,900)	\$61,600 (\$83,500)	\$48,300 (\$66,000)
Hope College	\$70,300 (\$93,300)	\$56,100 (\$73,800)	\$47,600 (\$62,700)
Michigan State University	\$105,900 (\$138,000)	\$76,400 (\$104,800)	\$60,200 (\$85,700)
University of Michigan	\$125,600 (\$152,300)	\$83,700 (\$105,300)	\$72,800 (\$92,500)
Western Michigan University	\$89,800 (\$133,700)	\$68,100 (\$101,400)	\$53,700 (\$80,000)

## **The Grand Rapids Press**

April 25, 2006

### **Exercise program aids movement after spinal cord injuries**

Jim Bourdlais has one firm handshake.

In his case, that's more than a winning social attribute.

Call it the fruit of hard labor.

In a January car accident, the 21-year-old former Ferris State University football player suffered a C7 neck fracture. An injury that often results in quadriplegia, the loss of movement and feeling in all four limbs, torso and pelvis.

Upon entering Mary Free Bed Rehabilitation Hospital, he had severely limited motion in his arms and hands.

Now, he shoots basketballs and lifts weights three times a week at the downtown David D. Hunting YMCA. He still cannot walk, but he wants to get back into archery this summer and will resume his studies at FSU next fall.

"I was optimistic," he said. "Once I started moving my fingers, I was like, 'Holy cow. I can move some stuff.'"

Bourdlais is making gains in a new Mary Free Bed fitness program hosted by the YMCA. He and 18 other patients with spinal cord injuries work on cardiovascular and muscle conditioning with hospital therapists who devise programs based on individual need and capability.

#### **Let's get moving**

The YMCA component is an extension of the Spinal Cord Injury Program at Mary Free Bed. Patients are admitted as soon as they are medically stable. Intense physical training and rigorous examination follow immediately.

Electromyography, a form of biofeedback, is among the tools that measure muscle tension through electrodes attached to various parts of the body. Doctors use this on spinal cord patients to detect signs of muscle response imperceptible to the naked eye.

Once they track a beat, they can focus on strengthening those muscles.

"We start therapy immediately after an injury," said Dr. Sam Ho, medical director of the Spinal Cord Injury Program. "We get people moving."

A team of therapists approaches each patient from three perspectives: physical, recreational and occupational.

The physical component involves increasing and maximizing strength and conditioning. Occupational therapy harnesses those gains and puts them to work in real-life situations--getting out of the shower, dressing, getting into bed, and so on. A recreational therapist suggests adaptive activities, such as wheelchair basketball or swimming that will further improve quality of life.

"The fact is that humans are designed to move," Ho said. "If you don't move, you deteriorate. Any time you keep a patient inactive, they're losing muscle fitness and cardiovascular strength every day."

Mary Free Bed also educates and counsels families on how to adjust pragmatically and emotionally to life after injury.

Jim Bourdlais knows his accident doesn't affect just him.

"I was too busy counseling my family to be upset about myself," he said.  
A better quality of life

Spinal cord patients need to know there is a place for them in the real world, says Jackie Wondolowski, director for the Spinal Cord Injury program.

"They might be fearful of getting back out into the community and trying things because they're not sure what's possible, or they might be self-conscious or embarrassed," Wondolowski said. "For us, this (partnership) has been the perfect vehicle to introduce our patients to a state-of-the-art fitness center where they can get around whether they are in a wheelchair or have limited mobility."

The downtown YMCA has a variety of special adaptive equipment. The arm bike has straps designed for individuals with little or no control of their hands. There is a "water chair" for anyone who wants to take a dip in the pool. All of its locker room facilities also are handicap-friendly.

"When Mary Free Bed contacted us, it really just made sense," said Sarah Gray, YMCA senior health and wellness director. "We had the right equipment for people with disabilities. It was just the right partnership."

Tamayrr Salahuddin thinks so, too.

Salahuddin was impressed with the facilities upon his first YMCA visit April 18. He was released from Mary Free Bed on Saturday.

The 23-year-old former GVSU football player was in a car accident last January and suffered a C2 neck fracture, an injury even more severe than Bourdlais'. It's the same injury that confined actor Christopher Reeve to a ventilator and wheelchair.



But because Salahuddin didn't incur as much damage to the spinal cord canal, he had a better prognosis.

He walks around with the help of a cane. At the YMCA, he used the Nautilus equipment to build his thigh muscles and biceps. He said he likes free weights better and hopes to get back on them soon.

When Mary Free Bed physical therapist Kristy Simpson suggested a set of squats, he didn't balk.

Said Salahuddin: "Sure. I'm not afraid of hard work."

## The Associated Press

April 26, 2006

### **House panel advances plan for university funding**

LANSING, Mich. (AP) - Some public universities would get state funding increases of more than 4 percent in the fiscal year that begins Oct. 1 under a plan advanced by a House subcommittee Wednesday.

The House funding plan, in general, is more generous than plans endorsed by the state Senate or proposed by Gov. Jennifer Granholm. But a few universities, particularly Wayne State University, could come out worse under the House proposal than the other plans.

The plan was endorsed by the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Higher Education's Republican majority. Democrats were upset the subcommittee scheduled a vote before it finished hearing testimony from presidents of four schools who aren't scheduled to appear before the committee until next week.

The subcommittee's plan would give higher education about \$10.6 million more for university operations than Granholm's proposal, according to House Republicans.

The House plan will go to the chamber's Appropriations Committee for consideration, where it could be subject to change. The higher education funding proposal then would have to be negotiated with representatives from the Senate and the Granholm administration.

Rep. John Stewart, R-Plymouth and the subcommittee's chairman, said the House plan is designed to boost investment in Michigan's future work force.

"Michigan is suffering economically. That's why this plan is vital in making sure that Michigan students are prepared to succeed in the global marketplace upon graduation," Stewart said in a statement.

Central Michigan University, Ferris State University, Grand Valley State University, Oakland University, Saginaw Valley State University, the University of Michigan-Dearborn, the University of Michigan-Flint and Western Michigan University would get funding increases of more than 4 percent under the House plan.

Michigan State University would get a 3.6 percent increase. The University of Michigan in Ann Arbor would get a 3.5 percent boost.

Eastern Michigan University would get a 2.9 percent increase, followed by Michigan Technological University (2.1 percent) and Lake Superior State University (1.9 percent).

Northern Michigan University would get a 0.3 percent increase. Wayne State would see a reduction of 1.9 percent, which alarmed the Granholm administration.

"We're obviously very concerned with what the House does as far as funding for Wayne State," said Greg Bird, a budget department spokesman for the Granholm administration.

Stewart said the House funding formula is based on enrollment, degrees granted and research. Other factors include curriculum strengths and unique features of each university.

The Senate and Granholm plans would give the state's big research universities - the University of Michigan, Michigan State and Wayne State - 2 percent increases.

The other 12 schools would get varying increases. There are differences between the Senate and Granholm plans.

## Pioneer

April 27, 2006

### **Ferris receives multi-million software package**

BIG RAPIDS-More than \$20 million worth of product development software was given to Ferris State University recently by UGS Corp.

UGS, a creator of product life-cycle management (PLM) software, granted FSU 50 seats, or license, of their software, valued at \$450 per seat.

“This is a very sophisticated piece of software,” said Mark Hill, a professor of CSD drafting and tool design at Ferris.

The software takes a product from the sketch table through the prototype construction all in one program, Hill explained.

“Anything it takes for an entire product to be created... renderings, animation, marketing, prototype... It does everything in a virtual world,” he said,

For example, a new engine can be virtually built and tested on the computer to show engineers where weak spots or flaws in the design exist before there is a tangible prototype, Hill said.

In addition to the opportunity to use state of the art software in the classroom, each student in a program of study using UGS software will get a student version valued at \$10,000, he added.

“The student version is very powerful,” Hill said.

Ferris students using the software have the opportunity to develop a familiarity with Unigraphics products before they enter the workforce. Hill described Unigraphics as a “world leader” in PLM software development.

“Many major companies (use it). Nissan recently standardized on this software,” Hill said. We’re hoping other FSU departments will work with it too- the manufacturing program and so on. It should be just like Nissan- when you send a design to the machine tool people, they should be on the same software.... That’s what we want to do at Ferris.”

This concept of universal software throughout a company is known as “seamless manufacturing,” Hill said.

Hill wrote the grant application for Ferris to receive the software. He downplays his role in the process, instead promoting the school’s reputation as a factor in the UGS decision.

“They’re big on Ferris because we’re the No. 1 design program in the country,” he said.

## **Pioneer**

April 28, 2006

### **Students participate in building steel sculpture; unveiling today**

BIG RAPIDS - The Ferris State University College of Technology and the department of Construction Technology and Management are hosting an unveiling ceremony for the Structural Steel Teaching Sculpture at 1 p.m. today (Friday) in the quad located directly east of the Granger Center for Construction and HVACR on the university's Big Rapids campus.

While the sculpture typically is donated to a university by a steel fabricator, Ferris' Structural Steel Teaching Sculpture is the first in the nation to be built entirely by students with faculty and staff assistance.

The project has been managed by students of the construction department's honor society, Sigma Lambda Chi, built by students from welding technology, and completed with help from students, faculty and staff from across campus.

The sculpture was designed by Dr. Duane Ellifritt while he was a professor of structural design at the University of Florida to address the difficulty students had visualizing a three-dimensional detail connection from two-dimensional figures in books.

The American Institute of Steel Construction began promoting the sculpture as a visual aid for students in 1986. The sculpture now may be seen at more than 130 colleges and universities across the United States.

## **Pioneer**

April 29 & 30, 2006

### **Ferris State honor students raise money for community library**

In a photo, "Fund-raising:" The Ferris State University Honors Program hosted a benefit variety show on behalf of the Big Rapids Community Library on March 23.

Pictured were, honor students Ashley Grutter, Big Rapids Community Library Librarian's Assistant Patricia Oldfield, Bret Muter and Sarah Lundgren.

The students presented Oldfield with a check for \$409.80 to purchase new material for the library's collection.

## **Lansing Bureau (Associated Press)**

April 30, 2006

### **Pension costs eat up higher-ed increases**

LANSING -- A hike in pension costs next year for seven of Michigan's public universities and all 28 community colleges will wash away much of the first state funding increases in five years, school officials say.

After four consecutive years of cuts, Gov. Jennifer Granholm has recommended increases of about 2 percent for higher ed institutions. But college officials say in most cases, that increase won't even cover a jump in mandatory state retirement contribution fees.

"It certainly is a burden on higher education in the state," Ferris State University President David Eisler said of retirement expenses. Ferris students pay \$600 to \$700 a year in tuition just to cover those costs.

He estimates his university will be charged \$1.2 million more next year in payments to the Michigan Public School Employees Retirement System (MPSERS).

That cost alone is more than the governor's proposed \$843,900 increase for Ferris.

Pending legislation would hike Ferris' state appropriation by \$875,400 in the Senate or \$2 million in the House. The final number will be a compromise between the Legislature's and the governor's proposals.

Eastern Michigan University President John Fallon recently told a legislative committee that it would take a 5.5 percent hike in tuition next year just to cover the anticipated growth in retirement costs.

"We think it's an unfunded mandate, and it's become increasingly irascible to deal with," Fallon said. "These are runaway costs."

Ferris and Eastern are two of seven universities state lawmakers in 1945 required to join the MPSERS system, which mainly covers teachers and other K-12 school employees.

The others are Central Michigan, Western Michigan, Lake Superior State, Michigan Technological and Northern Michigan universities.

The costs are rising each year, even though no new university employees have entered the system since 1996. Workers hired since then instead get a 401(k) program that requires a university match of about 12 percent.

Rising retirements costs are also a challenge for community colleges, where contributions to the Michigan Public School Employees Retirement System have gone from 14.87 percent of salary last year to 17.74 percent of salary next year.

"We just can't sustain this," said Bob Partridge, executive vice president of business and finance at Grand Rapids Community College. He said retirement costs will likely jump \$800,000 next year, while the governor's budget proposal will give his college increases totaling \$325,000.

Partridge said his college supports pending legislation that would end the defined-benefit retirement system and go to a more cost-controlled defined-contribution system. Another bill would open an optional 401(k) program to part-time instructors, who now are mandated to go into MPSERS.

Likewise, at Delta College, retirement costs are expected to rise by \$460,000 while the governor's proposed increase is \$258,300, said Debra Lutz, vice president of business and finance.

"To put it simply, the retirement system is on a train track ready to crash," said Lutz, who is president of a group of community colleges business officers. "We would like these issues dealt with sooner rather than later."

While community colleges retirement costs will go from 14.87 percent of salaries last year to 17.74 percent next year, the biggest jump was for universities. Pension costs jumped from 8.76 percent of salaries last year to 9.95 percent this year. But they will rise to 13.35 percent next year. Costs of health care are added to that and vary by university.

Chris DeRose, director of the Michigan Office of Retirement Services, said the cost increases are driven by the lingering effect of poor performing investments several years ago during a downturn of the stock market. Additionally, a \$350 million reserve was depleted over the past three years to offset a rise in pension costs.

The "MPSERS seven" were plunked into the school retirement system in 1945 by a state law, according to a report from Ferris State University.

Wayne State, the University of Michigan and Michigan State University were not required to join, nor were five universities created since this.

In 1975 health care for retirees was added as an obligation in addition to pensions, and those costs have been projected to rise dramatically into the future.

Between 1974 and 1992, universities share of the retirement costs were capped at 9 percent of salary, with the state picking up any amount above that. Since then, the costs have been shifted entirely to the universities.

The House Appropriations subcommittee on higher education last week voted to add \$1.7 million to offset the rising costs of MPSERS for the universities. It was the first time lawmakers have acknowledged that growing cost.



"This was an issue out of fairness that we needed to take a look at," said state Rep. Jerry Kooiman, Grand Rapids, a member of the subcommittee.

Margaret Trimer-Hartley, spokeswoman for the Michigan Education Association, which represents school employees and some workers at the universities, said Michigan is suffering from the same problem major corporations have in trying to keep promises to retired workers.

"We have to figure this out. It isn't a local problem, it isn't a state problem. It's a problem at the national level with potentially grave national consequences."

A proposed fall ballot issue supported by the MEA and other school groups would cap the percent of retirement and retirees' health care at 14.87 percent of salaries into the MPSERS fund by school districts, community colleges and universities. Critics say that would push the costs onto the already strapped state with no identified source of funding.

## **South Bend Tribune**

April 30, 2006

### **Higher education lobbies for more money**

Universities, colleges buckle down for state budget debate.

LANSING - Ferris State University professor Bob Eastley crawled out of bed before sunrise one day last week to travel to the state Capitol.

Eastley and dozens of other representatives from colleges and universities across Michigan gathered to lobby state government for more money. They've heard a lot of talk out of Lansing about how important higher education is to Michigan's future, but say they haven't seen a lot of cash to back it up.

"Education is the foundation for everything we do in the next 10 years," said Eastley, who teaches engineering to construction management students at the Big Rapids university located about 120 miles northwest of Lansing. "We are at a crucial time in our economy, and the state needs to recognize the importance of higher education."

College and university funding could be a hot topic as debate heats up for the budget year that begins Oct. 1.

Just over 24 percent of Michigan residents 25 and older had at least a bachelor's degree in 2004, below the national average of nearly 28 percent, according to estimates by the U.S. Census Bureau.

That's something lawmakers and Gov. Jennifer Granholm say they want to change to make the state - which had the nation's third-highest unemployment rate in March - more attractive to potential employers.

But tax revenues, hurt in recent years by Michigan's sluggish economy, have not provided much discretionary cash for state government to invest in higher education or anything else.

State funding for Michigan's 15 public universities this fiscal year is about 10 percent less than it was in the 2002 fiscal year, according to the nonpartisan House Fiscal Agency.

Public universities have increased tuition and fees in response to the declining state funding. The average cost for a full-time students' tuition and fees - more than \$6,800 this year - has jumped more than 35 percent in the past five years.

Higher education officials say they drew attention to their budget concerns by initially backing a potential ballot measure calling for mandatory annual education funding increases equal to at least the education inflation rate.

But universities recently dropped out of the coalition, saying they could make a persuasive case for their funding without calling for guarantees which could harm the state's overall budget process.

Those topics formed the undercurrent of last week's mini-rally and lobbying effort led by Rep. John Stewart, R-Plymouth.

Stewart, chairman of a House subcommittee for higher education appropriations, is backing a \$1.78 billion overall funding proposal that would give universities and colleges about 2.5 percent more money for operations and financial aid in the upcoming fiscal year.

The House subcommittee proposal is about \$36 million more than proposed by Democrat Granholm. The House plan is about \$500,000 more expensive overall than a plan proposed by the Republican-led Senate.

The House and Senate also want to provide more money for grants to students at private colleges than Granholm does.

The Granholm administration questions where the House will find the cash for its plan. Greg Bird, a spokesman for Granholm's budget office, said the governor won't support a budget balancing plan that could cripple "the social safety net" to pay for other programs.

"What we've seen so far from the House is the 'tax cut-and-spend' portion of their budget," Bird said. "There will have to be some tough choices."

House members have said it's still early in the budget process and they will review several options to pay for their budget priorities.

Stewart said university funding should be a top priority.

"Universities are the jet engines, the fuel of our economy," Stewart told rally attendees last week. "Higher education is the essence of recovery for Michigan."

Stewart urged college students, employees and administrators to lobby their lawmakers on the budget bill.

Sean Dobbs, a Lake Superior State University student, did just that at last week's rally. He carried a university flag to the Capitol steps.

"Sometimes it's hard for some of the schools to get the support they deserve," Dobbs said.

"We need to draw attention to it."

## **Education funding, tuition trends**

State appropriations for higher education in Michigan have declined as Michigan's sluggish economy hampers the state budget.

A look at how appropriations for the state's 15 public universities, financial aid and related programs have changed in recent fiscal years:

FY 2002: \$1.926 billion

FY 2003: \$1.845 billion

FY 2004: \$1.697 billion

FY 2005: \$1.669 billion

FY 2006: \$1.734 billion

Tuition and fees have increased at Michigan's public universities as state aid has declined.

The average cost for a full-time student who is a state resident at a Michigan public university in recent fiscal years:

FY 2002: \$4,943

FY 2003: \$5,388

FY 2004: \$5,953

FY 2005: \$6,128

FY 2006: \$6,874

## South Bend Tribune

May 1, 2006

### **Senior on medical path**

Brandywine student's career choice shaped by father's illness.

NILES -- Mike Martyniuk's two bouts with cancer shaped his oldest daughter's career choice.

From an early age, Nicole Martyniuk took a keen interest in the medical profession.

"I knew I wanted to help people," the 17-year-old said.

But when she became skittish at the sight of blood, she altered her medical path.

"Pharmacy was the next-best thing," said Martyniuk, a Brandywine High School senior.

She plans to study pharmacology at Ferris State University next fall in its honors program.

"I want to work in a hospital or do clinical research and develop experimental drugs," she said.

When Martyniuk was a sixth-grader, her father began his second battle with cancer.

This time it was in the lymph nodes in his neck. The first battle was a few years earlier, when he developed cancer in his sinuses.

He underwent chemotherapy and radiation in his nasal passages during his first treatment. Later he had surgery at the University of Illinois when the cancer appeared in his lymph nodes, Martyniuk said.

At 48, Martyniuk's father is "doing good," she said. "He's a strong person." Apparently Martyniuk is not much different.

She played softball for three years until a quadriceps injury sidelined her last year.

This year she played varsity volleyball and is trying her hand -- well, arm -- at shot-put on the track team. She spends some mornings coaching freshmen at Brandywine Middle/High School in gym class as a teacher's assistant.

Then she interns at Walgreen Drug Store's pharmacy in Niles for about an hour each day.

Pharmacy Manager Ida White said Martyniuk brings energy and intelligence to her job, learning the operations of a pharmacy. "When she comes here she gets straight to work," said White. "We couldn't get a better student."

Most afternoons Martyniuk heads to the Berrien County Math and Science Center at Andrews University, where she takes Advanced Placement calculus and organic chemistry.

"It's been tough with four and five hours of homework, but I know next year it'll pay off," she said.

## **Mackinac Center for Public Policy**

May 1, 2006

### **How Big Is Bush's Big Government?**

When teaching economics I sometimes find it beneficial to use government budget data to apply the lessons of economics to our current political circumstances. The students tend to be surprised at the size of our government, the amount of tax revenues that we "pay," and the amount of government debt.

The following numbers get the point across.

We, in the United States, live under the rule of the largest civil government, measured in budgetary terms, in history. Federal spending alone in fiscal year 2006 is expected to be over \$2.7 trillion, which means the federal government spends \$7.4 billion a day or \$5.1 million in every minute of the year. This is 815 times the level of federal spending in 1930.

Things have been getting worse recently. In the first five years of the Bush regime, federal spending increased 45 percent. Readers of Mises.org may remember that they were warned about Bush's fiscal irresponsibility before he took office.

For comparison's sake, during the eight Clinton years nominal federal spending increased 32 percent, and under Bush I federal spending increased 23 percent in four years. In the 2000 election, Bush II promised to shovel money into all sorts of programs - and he's kept that promise.

Since 1930, in addition to the spending increases, the feds also drove prices up more than 1,100 percent, according to the Consumer Price Index. Also, we should suspect that these inflation numbers are low since government officials have an incentive to underestimate inflation.

If we adjust the spending numbers to account for this inflation, real federal spending is 65 times larger than it was in 1930. The U.S. population has more than doubled since 1930 and if we take the population changes into account, real per capita spending is 27 times higher than in 1930.

In estimating real federal spending I'm not dismissing the effects of inflation, nor am I absolving the state of its complicity in driving prices up. These calculations are simply an attempt to give us some idea of the growth in government and the attendant loss of our liberties over the last several decades.

This \$2.7 trillion in federal spending breaks down to \$9,000 per capita or more than \$36,000 for the average family of four. If we add in all state and local spending, then total government deprecations (a term Murray Rothbard used to describe the greater of government spending and government receipts) are currently over \$4.4 trillion or about \$14,700 per person annually.

Since 1959, government deprecations, in real terms, have increased at an average annual rate of 4 percent. That kind of spending will buy a lot of votes.

A significant portion of this spending is being financed with government borrowing. In 1930, the per capita debt load was \$140 per person. The current federal total debt level is \$8.4 trillion, which works out to around \$28,000 per person.

In short, the per capita debt load is 200 times larger than it was in 1930. Adjusting for inflation, the real debt per capita is still over 16 times more than it was in 1930.

Federal government debt increased \$553 billion in fiscal year 2005 alone. That's more than \$1.5 billion of additional debt per day and over \$1 million of borrowing per minute for every minute of the year.

The interest on the debt in 2005 was \$352 billion or more than \$1,100 for every man, woman and child in the country. These interest payments are roughly equal to 37 percent of federal income tax revenues.

Much of this debt is owed to the Federal Reserve. U.S. taxpayers are on the hook for \$758 billion of government securities that are held by the Fed. So, on average, every person in the country owes the Fed about \$2,500.

Tax revenues and borrowing have financed all sorts of interventions. Since 1959, we have suffered from the Great Society, the war on poverty, price controls, increasingly burdensome environmental regulations, the establishment of the Department of Education and its increasing federal control over local schools, Federal Reserve created recessions, agricultural price supports, minimum wage laws and energy policies that keep oil and gasoline prices high.

There's more. We've also had labor policies that increase the costs of hiring workers (driving down their take-home pay), trade restrictions and trade agreements that give the feds control over our international trade, massive increases in the welfare state, the drug war, endless pork barrel spending and the prosecution of businessmen for political gain.

One way to see the harm of government intervention is to realize its effects on our standard of living. The deprecations of the state reduce the incentives to be productive, destroy our capital base and have a negative effect on economic growth. From 1959 to 2005, adjusting the numbers using the implicit price deflator, real Gross Domestic Product increased an average of 3.37 percent annually.

Consider the possibility that government interventions reduced real economic growth 1 percent annually during this time. If there had been an additional 1 percent per year economic growth since 1959, then real GDP would currently be 55 percent higher than it is. The 2005 GDP of \$12.5 billion would have been \$19.3 billion. The



median family income is estimated to be \$44,389. A proportionate increase in this statistic results in a median income of \$68,800.

In this scenario, a worker with a salary of \$44,389 who is losing 35 percent of his salary to taxes has a tax liability of \$15,536. After paying the various types of taxes he gets to keep only \$28,853 of his salary. With the extra 1 percent growth per year since 1959, if that worker represented the average, his gross salary would be \$68,800 and he would get to keep all of it.

It is conceivable that the \$4.4 trillion of annual deprecations could have caused more than 1 percent annual damage to our economic growth since 1959. What are the implications of a 2 percent negative impact on GDP? If the absence of interventions had added an additional 2 percent annual growth, this would have resulted in 141 percent more output today.

The 2005 GDP would have been over \$30 trillion and the median family income would now be \$107,000. The worker described above with the \$44,389 gross salary and the \$28,850 of after tax pay, would have an income of \$107,000. The deprecations have reduced his net income by 73 percent.

The point here is that we cannot precisely know the magnitude of the damages that intervention has on the economy, but we do know that those damages compound over time, resulting in significant negative effects on our prosperity.

Those of us making the case for liberty have logic, history and morality on our side. Government intervention is immoral and should be stopped for that reason alone.

However, the economic costs of the intervention are also important. Part of the appeal of freedom is that it leads to tremendously higher standards of living and these numbers show that government interventions that cause seemingly small amounts of harm, over time, impoverish a society.

Mark Brandly teaches economics at Ferris State University and is an adjunct scholar of the Mackinac Center for Public Policy, a research and educational institute headquartered in Midland, Mich.

## **Pioneer**

May 1, 2006

### **Ferris chosen to participate in Political Engagement Project's Phase II**

BIG RAPIDS - Ferris State University was one of eight institutions in the United States selected to participate in the second phase of the Political Engagement Project, sponsored jointly by the American Association of State Colleges and Universities, the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching and The New York Times, Ferris Vice President for Academic Affairs Dr. Michael Harris said.

The goal of the Political Engagement Project initiative is the development of pedagogy and research that is focused on increasing political awareness and involvement among undergraduate students. Phase I of the Political Engagement Project was designed to enhance student political engagement through individual courses. Phase II is designed to achieve that goal on a campus-wide basis.

"The emphasis behind the program is to impart the importance of political involvement within the community as a major goal of university education," said Richard Griffin, a professor of Social Sciences at Ferris. "It is our business to educate tomorrow's leaders to become responsible citizens."

The major distinction of a Political Engagement Project course is that it does not require creation of a new course or the complete overhaul of an existing course. Rather, the project requires only that at least one of the course objectives will serve to improve student political engagement in relation to course material by exposing students to real events and players in a political arena.

Examples of relevant activities include guest speaker series, attendance at governmental meetings, travel to events away from campus and utilization of current media resources in addition to or in place of texts.

"Ferris students report less engagement with civic and political issues than the national average," said Anthony Baker, an associate professor of Social Sciences at Ferris. "We can complain about the students, or we at the university can renew our efforts to get them personally connected to their society and the issues of public policy that will impact their lives."

Currently, more than 30 faculty representing eight colleges and 20 degree programs have expressed interest in participating in this program, beginning with the 2006-07 academic year, Harris said.

This widespread indication of interest will allow Ferris to take a leadership role in the project by moving the initiative to include a wide variety of disciplines, including Construction Management, Criminal Justice, Automotive Services, Reading, Health Care

Systems, Pharmacy and Optometry in addition to the more traditional Social Sciences disciplines.

"The response from the faculty has been amazing," Griffin added.  
The Ferris Political Engagement Project is coordinated by Griffin and Baker.

Administrative support for this project will be provided by University College Dean William Potter and his staff.

Planning meetings are scheduled Monday through Wednesday and will be followed by a Political Engagement Project team trip to a national conference in Snowbird, Utah, in mid June. Further information about the Political Engagement Project is available by contacting Baker at 591-2753, Griffin at 591-2761 or Potter at 591-2428.

## **Pioneer**

May 1, 2006

### **Ever the fighter, Ferris' Bourdlais vows a comeback**

GRAND RAPIDS - In the blink of an eye, Jim Bourdlais had seemingly his whole world flipped upside down.

So many of the little things the 6-foot-5, 239-pound former Ferris State football player took for granted - like walking and the ability to care for himself exclusively - were taken out of his hands Jan. 15, 2005. It was that day Bourdlais, barely in legal adulthood, was involved in a serious car accident that left him with a broken neck. The Newberry native suffered a "C7 neck fracture" which doctors say usually results in quadriplegia.

The prognosis for the former honorable mention all-state selection was bleak as he began his road to recovery at Mary Free Bed Rehabilitation Hospital in Grand Rapids.

Bourdlais, who arrived at Mary Free Bed as a quadriplegic - unable to use his arms, hands and legs - had no idea how much he was soon to learn about himself and life.

"You learn a whole lot about yourself and a whole lot about life when you go from being a college football player to having to learn how to use your arms and hands and learn how to take care of yourself all over again," said the 21-year-old Bourdlais, who thanks to his high level of athleticism, played both tight end and defensive tackle at Ferris.

"I knew one thing ... I knew I wasn't about to give up."

Bourdlais first arrived at Mary Free Bed as a quadriplegic, but he was determined he would not leave as a quadriplegic. In addition to his work at Mary Free Bed, Bourdlais also is working out at the David D. Hunting YMCA in downtown Grand Rapids. The Hunting YMCA and Mary Free Bed are in collaboration to offer exercise programs that assist people in recover from spinal cord injuries.

According to Mary Free Bed, most spinal cord injuries are suffered by males under the age of 40 and by people who tended to be physically active. "The Y is an awesome place to be if you're using a wheelchair because all of the machines are pretty accessible," said Bourdlais, a football honorable mention All-Upper Peninsula Dream Team choice, who also lettered in basketball and track and field at Newberry. "You can even take a wheelchair into the pool."

Bourdlais has been an inspiration for many of the other patients at Mary Free Bed as his refuse-to-give in philosophy has proven infectious.

"His attitude, in going through this kind of adversity, is something that really has been amazing to me," said Ferris State head coach Jeff Pierce, whose younger brother, Bill, is a 6-foot-4, 259-pound tackle for the Bulldog football team. "His attitude has been an inspiration to so many of the other patients there and to his teammates here at Ferris State

with the positive nature of his attitude even going through all of the things he has had to go through.

"The people at Mary Free Bed have told us how much he has done to inspire so many of the other patients there and how he has motivated people."

Bourdtais is intolerant of negativity. "Jimmy is not the kind of person who is going to sit around feeling sorry for himself and the things he is going through," Pierce added. "He is the type of person who is going to get back up, get active and do everything he can to fight back and be as positive a person and have as positive an attitude as possible."

The family Bourdlais has built, during his time at Ferris State, certainly did not forget about him and made a relentless effort to do all it could do to assist. Ferris' Athletics Department, in conjunction with the school's Student-Athlete Advisory Committee (SAAC), held a fund-raiser (Feb. 11), to offer financial support for the Bourdlais family. In all, about \$2,000 was raised during a Ferris State home hockey game against Notre Dame at Ewigleben Ice Arena, to assist with health care and other costs related to his injury.

"Jimmy and his brother Bill have been great ambassadors for the institution and this is an opportunity for us as a department to help a couple of our own family-members," Ferris Athletics Director Tom Kirinovic said. "We will appreciate any support that can assist the Bourdlais family in their time of need."

The money raised has provided a major assist to the family as it has allowed Robyn Bourdlais, the mother of Jim and Bill, to spend time with her son during his recovery. For Jim, having his mother, brother, girlfriend (Ferris State volleyball player Keagan Krauss) and so many others around has helped fuel his inspiration not to give up or throw in the towel.

"They have all been here quite a bit and they've all been so supportive and that has helped me a lot," Bourdlais said. "My mother is here quite a bit, my brother comes down a lot and my girlfriend is here a lot ... it means a lot to have so many people here to visit me and talk to me on the phone ... it really has meant a lot to me.

"My teammates (from Ferris) have been `unbelievable calling me` and coming down to visit me ... they've been amazing."

Loved ones have been able to witness Bourdlais' progress with their own eyes.

"I came in here as a quadriplegic and now I've progressed enough that I'm now a paraplegic," said Bourdlais, who also spoke of his appreciation of the efforts of the staff at Mary Free Bed for helping him during his recovery and rehabilitation. "I'm going to keep working and keep working to continue to get better and better."

That all begins with attitude.

'I've always had the attitude that stuff happens and that God has a plan for you, Bourdlais said. "I may not get to play football again, but I know I'm going to be back there in the fall and I'm going to talk to coach Pierce about doing what ever I can to help the team ... even if I'm doing something in the press box ... I definitely want to be back involved with the team and back in football."

Bourdlais, who has a dual major in applied biology and civil technology, plans to resume his academic career at Ferris State in the fall 2006 semester.

He hopes his progress can serve as an inspiration to others.

"I would tell anyone who is going through this to keep looking up... it can't get any worse so there's only room for improvement," said Bourdlais, whose doctors refer to him as the "miracle paraplegic" for his fast progress in regaining the use of his hands and arms. "It took me some time, but now I'm working hard at it and making a progress.

"I would tell anyone going through this to not give up."

## **Pioneer**

May 1, 2006

### **Higher ed buckles down for budget debate**

LANSING (AP) - Ferris State University professor Bob Eastley crawled out of bed before sunrise one day last week to travel to the state Capitol.

Eastley and dozens of other representatives from colleges and universities across Michigan gathered to lobby state government for more money. They've heard a lot of talk out of Lansing about how important higher education is to Michigan's future, but say they haven't seen a lot of cash to back it up.

"Education is the foundation for everything we do in the next 10 years," said Eastley, who teaches engineering to construction management students at the Big Rapids university located about 120 miles northwest of Lansing. "We are at a crucial time in our economy, and the state needs to recognize the importance of higher education."

College and university funding could be a hot topic as debate heats up for the budget year that begins Oct. 1.

Just over 24 percent of Michigan residents 25 and older had at least a bachelor's degree in 2004, below the national average of nearly 28 percent, according to estimates by the U.S. Census Bureau.

That's something lawmakers- and Gov. Jennifer Granholm say they want to change to make the state - which had the nation's third-highest unemployment rate in March - more attractive to potential employers.

But tax revenues, hurt in recent years by Michigan's sluggish economy have not provided much discretionary cash for state government to invest in higher education or anything else.

State funding for Michigan's 15 public universities this fiscal year is about 10 percent less than it was in the 2002 fiscal year, according to the nonpartisan House Fiscal Agency.

Public universities have increased tuition and fees in response to the declining state funding. The average cost for a full-time students' tuition and fees - more than \$6,800 this year - has jumped more than 35 percent in the past five years.

Higher education officials say they drew attention to their budget concerns by initially backing a potential ballot measure calling for mandatory annual education funding increases equal to at least the inflation rate.

But universities recently dropped out of the coalition, saying they could make a persuasive case for their funding without calling for guarantees which could harm the state's overall budget process.

Those topics formed the undercurrent of last week's mini-rally and lobbying effort led by Rep. John Stewart, R-Plymouth.

Stewart, chairman of a House subcommittee for higher education appropriations, is backing a \$1.78 billion overall funding proposal that would give universities and colleges about 2.5 percent more money for operations and financial aid in the upcoming fiscal year.

The House subcommittee proposal is about \$36 million more than proposed by Democrat Granholm. The House plan is about \$500,000 more expensive overall than a plan proposed by the Republican-led Senate.

The House and Senate also want to provide more money for grants to students at private colleges than Granholm does.

The Granholm administration questions where the House will find the cash for its plan. Greg Bird, a spokesman for Granholm's budget office, said the governor won't support a budget balancing plan that could cripple "the social safety net" to pay for other programs.

"What we've seen so far from the House is the 'tax cut-and spend' portion of their budget," Bird said. "There will have to be some tough choices."

House members have said it's still early in the budget process and they will review several options to pay for their budget priorities.

Stewart said university funding should be a top priority. "Universities are the jet engines, the fuel of our economy," Stewart told rally attendees last week. "Higher education is the essence of recovery for Michigan."

Stewart urged college students, employees and administrators to lobby their lawmakers on the budget bill.

Sean Dobbs, a Lake Superior State University student, did just that at last week's rally. He carried a university flag to the Capitol steps.

"Sometimes it's hard for some of the schools to get the support they deserve," Dobbs said.

"We need to draw attention to it."



## **Pioneer**

May 1, 2006

### **Walk raises money for CF**

BIG RAPIDS - Cloudy skies and occasional rain did little to dampen the enthusiasm of the walkers who showed up Sunday afternoon at Hemlock Park to help raise money for Cystic Fibrosis research.

According to Jody McKay, the foundation's director of special events, this is the first year such a walk has been held in Big Rapids. A group of Ferris State University students, she says, initiated the event.

"Ferris State University has a respiratory group," McKay said. "The students in that group wanted to do something in the community to raise funds for Cystic Fibrosis. This is the first time we've done anything like this here, so any money we raise we'll be happy with."

Nicole Wicks, another organizer of the event, said that about 30 people had signed up for the walk, mostly online, where information about the event has been posted since January.

Wicks added the foundation hosts seven similar walks around Western Michigan throughout the year.

Walkers followed a route beginning at Hemlock Park north to North-end Riverside Park and back again.

Those who raised \$100 or more received a T-shirt commemorating the event. Little Caesar's of Big Rapids provided free pizza at walk's end.

## **Pittsburgh Tribune Review**

May 1, 2006

### **Disillusioned conservatives**

Who could have imagined five years ago that George W. Bush would be paving the way for a Hillary Clinton presidency?

By delivering a "foreign policy disaster" in Afghanistan and Iraq, writes Angelo Codevilla in the April 2006 issue of *The American Spectator*, a conservative magazine, "Bush ended up enabling Hillary Clinton to pose as America's defender."

Bush "will leave America less committed to its own cause than he found it and beset by greater dangers," argues Codevilla, a fellow at the conservative Claremont Institute and a professor of international relations at Boston University. "His presidency has taught the wrong lessons about war, peace and the world. Because of him foreigners will fear us less and resent us more."

Focusing on excessive government spending rather than foreign policy, Stephen Moore, senior economics writer for *The Wall Street Journal* editorial board, reaches a similar conclusion about how Bush and his GOP allies in Congress are unintentionally smoothing the way for another Clinton presidency: "If Republicans continue to grow government at their current reckless pace, don't be surprised if Hillary Clinton wins the White House in 2008 running to the right of Republicans on fiscal responsibility."

In "How Big Is Bush's Big Government?," Ferris State University economics professor Mark Brandly, an adjunct scholar at the libertarian Ludvig von Mises Institute and the conservative Mackinac Center for Public Policy, reports on how growth in federal spending has snowballed, particularly under Bush II: "Things have been getting worse recently."

In the first five years of the George W. Bush regime, federal spending increased 45 percent. For comparison's sake, during the eight Clinton years nominal federal spending increased 32 percent, and under Bush I federal spending increased 23 percent in four years."

Average spending increases per year, in other words, were 6 percent during the presidency of George Bush Sr., 4 percent during Bill Clinton's terms, and 9 percent under Bush II.

Moore points to a report by the House Republican Study Committee that shows the federal budget would be in balance today, with a zero deficit and zero borrowing, if only Congress had simply held the increases in spending to the rate of inflation since 1998, even with George W. Bush's tax cuts.

Instead, the federal government's debt increased by \$553 billion in fiscal year 2005.

That's more than \$1.5 billion per day in new red ink. The price? Last year as a nation, we paid \$352 billion in interest payments on the accumulated federal debt, nearly a billion a day, or some \$4,400, on average, for every family of four in the country in 2005.

The \$352 billion in interest payments on the federal debt in fiscal 2005 was equal to nearly 40 percent of last year's federal income tax revenues. Increasingly, in short, we're working and paying taxes for past profligacy, mismanagement, corruption and waste.

If Bush and the Republicans in Congress continue to enlarge government and debt at their current unrestrained rate, Hillary Clinton will be set up to say, correctly, that there won't be much left of our paychecks, won't be much room left for the private sector, unless there's a fundamental change in course.

What's gone now is the winning Reagan coalition. "The post-Reagan GOP governing philosophy has made peace with big government," contends Moore. "Six years into the George W. Bush presidency, the conservative movement and the Republican Party itself are suffering a nervous breakdown. What does it mean to be a Republican? In many respects George W. Bush has redefined the party in ways that conservatives can only watch in horror."

On the war, as with Bush's reckless fiscal performance, there's no shortage of conservative criticism. "When we started this magazine, we knew that the war was unwinnable," says Taki Theodoracopulos, founding editor of *The American Conservative* magazine. "Bush and the neocon gang have turned Iran into the most important power broker in the region."

Iran's enemies, the Taliban and Saddam, have been defeated by American military might, and the ungrateful mullahs haven't even bothered to thank the Bushes, Kristols, Frums, and the rest of the bums who cheered us down the Swanee."

How deep is the disenchantment? "Even conservative voters are starting to doubt the benefits of continued Republican dominance," reports W. James Antle III, senior writer at *The American Conservative*. "Many of them fear that their party is embracing exactly what it once promised to destroy."

## **Lansing State Journal**

May 1, 2006

### **College profs press state for more funds in next year's budget**

Ferris State University professor Bob Eastley and dozens of other representatives from colleges and universities across Michigan gathered last week to lobby state government for more money.

They've heard a lot of talk out of Lansing about how important higher education is to Michigan's future, but say they haven't seen a lot of cash to back it up.

"Education is the foundation for everything we do in the next 10 years," said Eastley, who teaches engineering to construction management students at the Big Rapids university.

College and university funding could be a hot topic as debate heats up for the budget year that begins Oct. 1.

About 24 percent of Michigan residents 25 and older had at least a bachelor's degree in 2004, below the national average of about 28 percent, according to estimates by the U.S. Census Bureau.

That's something lawmakers and Gov. Jennifer Granholm say they want to change to make the state - which had the nation's third-highest unemployment rate in March - more attractive to potential employers.

But tax revenues, hurt in recent years by Michigan's sluggish economy, have not provided much discretionary cash for state government to invest in higher education or anything else.

State funding for Michigan's 15 public universities this fiscal year is about 10 percent less than it was in the 2002 fiscal year, according to the nonpartisan House Fiscal Agency.

Public universities have increased tuition and fees in response to the declining state funding.

Last week's mini-rally and lobbying effort was led by Rep. John Stewart, R-Plymouth, who is chairman of a House subcommittee for higher education appropriations. He backs a \$1.78 billion overall funding proposal that would give universities and colleges about 2.5 percent more money for operations and financial aid in the coming fiscal year.

The House subcommittee proposal is about \$36 million more than proposed by Democrat Granholm. The House plan is about \$500,000 more expensive overall than a plan proposed by the Republican-led Senate.