

Testimony (presented)
Michigan House of Representatives
Appropriations Subcommittee on Higher Education and Community Colleges

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By
James O. Sawyer, IV, Ed.D.
President
Macomb Community College

Good morning Chairman VanSingel and committee members, I am Jim Sawyer, president of Macomb Community College.

I appreciate the opportunity to provide perspective about the vital role that Macomb Community College plays in our community and region. The education and training opportunities we provide are essential to moving our residents and communities along the path to economic prosperity.

While I am going to primarily speak to Macomb's students, initiatives and programs, you can be assured that Michigan's 27 other community colleges share many of the same characteristics and challenges.

An important point to consider is that community colleges are ground zero for higher education – we are integrally connected to our communities, to our students, and to our local business

and industry partners. We are focused on community needs and align our programs to address local challenges and opportunities. We are collaborators versus competitors. We work closely with our K-12 school districts, and we partner with colleges and universities. We are focused on providing the education and training our community residents need by leveraging partnerships, sharing expertise and avoiding duplication of effort.

Macomb Community College is a large, comprehensive community college with a \$138.6 million dollar budget with a mission of education, enrichment and economic development that is delivered by 680 full-time faculty and staff, and nearly 1,140 part-time faculty and staff. The college has more than 19,000 students taking credit coursework toward degrees, offers 200 degrees and certificate programs, and is the largest grantor of associate degrees in Michigan.

We have another 12,000 students annually in workforce development, in customized employer-sponsored training and in continuing education – which are short-term programs that prepare individuals for entry into a career, such as pharmacy technician and certified nursing assistant.

The current average age of Macomb students in credit programs is 24 years old. A point to remember is that average age will rise when the economy becomes challenging and those displaced from the workforce turn to Macomb to seek training, new credentials and a pathway to sustainable employment.

Nearly 70 percent of Macomb's students attend part time, balancing other responsibilities that typically include work and family. Many of Macomb's students have limited financial means, with 28 percent of them receiving Pell grants. In total, more than 11,000 students are receiving

financial aid and approximately 390 are receiving funding through Macomb's private scholarships.

The college has two main campuses – South Campus in Warren and Center Campus in Clinton Township. We also have a Public Service Institute in Clinton Township for training police, fire and emergency medical services personnel, with specialized training facilities that include an indoor gun range and live fire tower. Our 40,000-square-foot Michigan Technical Education Center is located in Warren. It features an extensive high-bay area housing up-to-date advanced manufacturing equipment to ensure our workforce students are prepared to meet current industry standards and can hit the ground running in their new jobs.

Macomb pioneered the University Center concept, and today, more than 3,000 students pursue advanced degrees through 12 senior partners at the Macomb University Center on our Clinton Township campus. Wayne State University located their Advanced Technology Education Center across the street from our South Campus in Warren, with the direct physical pathway between the two institutions mirroring our connected degree pathways in advanced technology career areas.

We know that some see our role as providing what many define as “vocational training.” Preparing our residents for meaningful and sustainable careers is more than nursing and allied health care, culinary, graphic arts and the skilled trades. Macomb offers a robust lineup of programs to support the many fields, including advanced manufacturing, information technology, business management, social sciences, humanities and automotive sectors, in southeast Michigan. Macomb prepares students to not only enter the workforce but also to continue their education by transferring seamlessly to the 75+ programs being offered by our University Center partners.

We understand that growing and sustaining a robust talent pipeline to satisfy our region's significant need for a highly skilled, technical workforce requires more than offering the right programs. Macomb works collaboratively with business and industry and our K-12 school districts offering a variety of opportunities tailored to engage youth and enhance their awareness of careers in STEAM fields. For example, annually, our AutoSTEAM event draws 2,500 – 3,000 middle and high school students. They spend a half-day engaging in presentations and hands-on activities led by staff from FCA, Ford and General Motors, as well as a number of automotive suppliers. We also offer a related evening session for the students and their parents that also features a panel discussion encompassing representatives from local employers, Macomb students who have recently graduated and are working in the automotive sector, and current students. Typically, an additional 20 or so local companies set up tables and talk individually with students and their parents about the opportunities they offer and the skill sets they are looking for.

AutoSTEAM is supported by Macomb's Center for Advanced Automotive Technology or CAAT. Funded by the National Science Foundation to develop and deploy education and training resources for the emerging advanced mobility sector, CAAT also offers workshops to introduce and engage middle-school age children with STEAM concepts and the possibilities that STEAM career fields offer. This year, on Saturday Feb. 23, CAAT will also be hosting Engineering Day for the Girl Scouts of Southeastern Michigan, featuring hands-on activities related to engineering and technology and supported by the Society of Women Engineers Detroit, Oakland University and STEM Genius.

CAAT's latest work in driving collaboration between industry and education has resulted in a new vehicle development technician associate degree program, which kicked off just this semester. Designed in response to industry needs, with direct input from CAAT's Advisory

Board, it trains technicians to assist in building and testing prototype vehicles and vehicle systems, combining automotive, mechanical, electronic and software skills.

In fact, Macomb's efforts and ability to remain at the forefront of emerging needs in the automotive industry has not gone unnoticed outside the region and state. Macomb is one of five community colleges in the nation that offers the Tesla START program, which trains technicians for the company's service centers. Our first student cohort graduated in 2018, securing positions with Tesla.

Macomb has aggressively pursued available grant funding to connect community members with sustainable employment that supports families that at the same time develops a talent pool to sustain and grow local business and industry. MAP+ is a joint initiative between Macomb and Grand Rapids Community College to increase and strengthen the apprenticeship pipeline, funded by a five-year \$3.9 million grant from the Department of Labor American Apprenticeship Initiative. The goal to create 667 new apprentices was reached within the first 2 ½ years. We continue to work on apprenticeships by offering shorter-term programs such as 12-18 month industrial manufacturing technician programs. Through this effort, Macomb also developed an industrial readiness certificate, which consists of pre-apprenticeship training classes that teach foundational skills needed in the skilled trades, apprenticeship or advanced manufacturing careers. It prepares students for these career pathways and identifies for employers qualified candidates for work-based learning opportunities.

Macomb is also actively engaged in the State of Michigan's Going PRO Talent Fund. So far, in Macomb and St. Clair counties, 31 projects have been approved, with over half of the companies' involved designating Macomb Community College as the training provider. The college is also working in partnership with Macomb/St. Clair MiWorks, and the Macomb County

Department of Planning and Economic Development to engage a consortium of local employers and help them tap the talent fund to support employee training and retraining to fill their talent needs.

However, Macomb's focus is not solely on career preparation or workforce programs. Our academic programs and transfer are an equally important aspect of our mission. For some of our residents, Macomb Community College is the only access point to a bachelor's degree, whether it be due to limited financial resources, level of academic preparedness or personal commitments that limit geographical mobility. In fact, the goal of more than 50 percent of the students who enroll in Macomb's credit courses is to transfer to a senior institution to complete a bachelor's degree.

Early College of Macomb, a partnership with the Macomb Intermediate School District, provides nearly 640 students with a jumpstart on college while in high school. Macomb Early College students participate in a three-year, career-focused program taking an integrated sequence of high school and college courses, with no out-of-pocket cost for tuition, fees and books. Students finish high school with college credit in the bank; get a head start on earning a degree and gain understanding of how to be a successful college student. Early College of Macomb is the largest Early College program in the state and the only one that includes career discovery by requiring a job shadowing/and internship component. Macomb also has nearly another 800 high school students taking coursework through dual enrollment programs.

Macomb actively engages in improving the mechanisms and processes for our students who transfer to complete their bachelor's degree. This ranges from bringing the programs directly to our community to our University Center, as well as through our University Partnership Advisory Council or U-PAC, in which we meet several times a year with senior executives of our 14 primary

transfer partners to identify opportunities to improve transfer student success. In fact, this partnership has also led to a study, funded by a Kresge Foundation grant, in which we have taken a deep dive into the experience of Macomb transfer students to identify the characteristics that make transfer students successful. We found that 77 percent of Macomb students who transfer to one of our U-PAC partners graduate. We've developed a better understanding of our students' choices and challenges, and we are looking at ways to address common transition issues and improve the success rate. We are also sharing this work and lessons learned broadly.

We are equally committed to improving degree pathways for Macomb students with our university partners, which has significant impact on college affordability, student debt and successful advanced degree attainment. Our goal is to position students to earn their degree, regardless of their starting point. We are working collaboratively with our partners to meet our collective students where they are, while harnessing each partner's unique institutional strengths and resources to foster their success. Macomb's agreements with key partners – Oakland University, Walsh College and Wayne State University – are going well beyond where the Michigan Transfer Agreement is headed in allowing transfer up to 60 credits. Our most recent agreements are allowing up to 70-90 transfer credits.

But is not enough to look at what we offer. Access alone to high-quality programs doesn't automatically translate into success. Another critical factor is to look at who our students are and what they need to be successful. And, the reality is that we see a growing number of students who need more support and services to help them move forward toward their degrees.

Many of our students are not ready to perform college-level work when they first arrive. Our Reading and Writing Studios helped 1,500 students during the past year in meeting the challenge

of writing for academic purposes, and reading and comprehending college-level texts through one-on-one consultations, workshops and reading groups.

A rising percentage of our students also face barriers and obstacles that can derail their ability to continue in school - that have nothing to do with their academic preparedness or their commitment and persistence to their education. In fact, some of our students struggle to meet basic living expenses such as rent, transportation and food while in school. In response, Macomb developed the Student Options for Success (SOS) program that connects students with community and public benefit organizations that can assist with living expenses while in school. The college also offers limited emergency assistance funds for one-time, unforeseen financial emergencies where a small amount of funding can make a long-term difference for the student. The college also has a food pantry that receives strong support from staff and students.

Macomb also has the privilege to be the educational provider of choice for nearly 1,500 students who are veterans, currently in the service or a military-connected dependent. Our Office of Veteran & Military Services provides a network of services and resources backed by deep relationships with local, county, state and federal assistance programs.

A key strength of the office is its ability to reach out to find assistance for students for resources that transcend their educational needs through a collaborative network of county, VA and veteran service organizations. The Michigan Veterans Affairs Agency has named Macomb Community College as a certified Veteran-Friendly School and awarding the college gold-level recognition for the fourth consecutive year.

As I hope this overview of Macomb Community College has demonstrated, we are committed to providing affordable, high-quality education to position our residents for transfer to complete an advance degree or directly connect to meaningful workplace opportunities. Fostering the success of our students and our community is our priority.

In doing this important work, the college has a tremendous economic impact on the community. A recent study by EMSI concluded the college had close to a billion dollar economic impact on Macomb County. One of every 26 jobs in the county can be attributed to the college.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today. I would be happy to answer any questions.

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