


# Oakland University makes bold, timely appeal to legislature to fix funding inequities for public university students

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In an inspirational appeal to galvanize support for the state's public university students, Oakland University President Ora Hirsch Pescovitz unveiled "[Strive for 45: Invest in Student Success](#)."

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The campaign aims to achieve greater funding equity for state universities, with additional funds to go directly to reduce student debt and increase graduation rates while making significant inroads to improve accessibility to higher education.

“Instead of considering funding to higher education as an expenditure, we need to recognize that higher education is an investment in our students — an investment that pays dividends as measured by the health of our citizens and the health of our economy,” said President Pescovitz.

“Higher education needs both more funding and a more equitable funding model,” she said.

In the last two decades, funding discrepancies among the state’s 15 public universities have grown wider, making the annual state funding allocation more and more unfair, said Pescovitz, who noted Oakland is the lowest-funded, yet one of the fastest-growing universities in Michigan.

“Strive for 45” appeals to legislators, the governor and Michigan’s business, civic and philanthropic leadership to establish a floor funding of \$4,500 per student as the first step in addressing a broader inequity in higher education funding.

Currently, Oakland receives \$3,069 per student, and is last in state funding. At the top of the list is a state university that receives \$9,000 per student. Oakland is also far below the 15-state university average of \$5,546 per student.

State support for higher education has declined to the point where spending in Michigan comprises only 4 percent of state expenditures, compared to a 50-state average of 10 percent, which ranks Michigan 44th, according to the National Association of State Budget Officers report from fiscal years 2017-2019.

In addition to Oakland University, other institutions to benefit from an increase in floor funding include Grand Valley State University, University of Michigan-Flint, University of Michigan-Dearborn, and Saginaw Valley State University, all of which currently receive less than \$4,500 per student.

Setting the floor funding at \$4,500, said President Pescovitz, should not come at the expense, nor diminish the financial condition of the state’s other public universities that make important contributions to the educational, cultural and economic development of Michigan.

There is historical precedence for a funding floor in education. In 1999, the state legislature established a funding floor of \$4,500 for state universities. Also in the 1990s, the state recognized the need for K-12 floor funding, and over time, has changed the model to level the playing field by providing more equitable support for K-12 students throughout the state’s school districts.

In addition to addressing student debt, additional monies from raising the funding floor would be used to increase need-based financial aid and scholarships, add faculty and adviser positions and improve the student-to-faculty ratio, upgrade classrooms, and increase student employment and research initiatives.

During his State of the County address, Oakland County Executive Dave Coulter announced the higher educational initiative, “Oakland 80.” As the largest state university and transfer destination in the region, Coulter noted Oakland will be playing a major role in achieving the goal of having 80 percent of adults in Oakland County with a post-secondary degree by 2030.

For more information, please visit [“Strive for 45.”](#)

