

Community Colleges



General Overview

Since 1914, Michigan's community colleges have served the higher education needs of the citizens of this State. Grand Rapids Community College, established in 1914, was the first publicly supported two-year college in Michigan. By 1941, nine "junior" colleges were established as part of school districts. The singular purpose of these junior colleges was to provide the first two years of a baccalaureate program. Although freshman- and sophomore-level instruction continues to depend on community colleges, the mission of these institutions has broadened to address other social and economic needs of the community they serve.

In 1947, the President's Commission on Higher Education brought the idea of "community junior colleges" into the mainstream of higher education when the Commission defined the community college:

"Whatever form the community college takes, its purpose is educational service to the entire community, and this purpose requires a variety of functions and programs. It will provide college education for the youth of the community, to remove geographical and economic barriers to educational opportunities and discover individual talents at low cost and easy access. In addition, the community college will attempt to meet the total postsecondary needs of its community."

The comprehensive community college that has evolved in Michigan was founded upon three basic elements:

- 1) equitable access to educational services for all persons in the community;
- 2) the removal of geographic and economic barriers that prohibit persons from benefiting from the service; and
- 3) the reasonable opportunity for the individual to discover and develop his or her talents at low cost.

The Michigan Constitution of 1963, Public Acts 193 and 287 of 1964, and Public Act 331 of 1966 are significant in terms of today's community colleges in Michigan. The Constitution provides for a State Board of Education whose duties include "leadership and general supervision over all public education...." and conducting general planning and coordination, which includes advising the Legislature as to the financial requirements concerning this responsibility. The Constitution also created a State Board for Public Community Colleges to advise the State Board of Education concerning general supervision, planning, and annual appropriations for support of the institutions. Further, it provides for locally elected boards that supervise and control the colleges. Michigan's 28 community colleges receive revenue from three main sources: tuition and fees, local property tax revenue, and State appropriations.