

NOTABLE

LEADERS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

The 26 people profiled as Notable Leaders in Higher Education are administrators, faculty, researchers, board members and others at Michigan institutions worthy of a shout-out. They are advocating for and implementing changes that diversify their schools and providing safe spaces to students and community members. They are modernizing revenue streams and raising millions, establishing new colleges, improving equity through one-on-one mentoring, and implementing learning opportunities for learners of all ages. Not only that, but these leaders, who are in various stages of their careers, are launching startups, patenting inventions, and closing gaps.

Methodology: The honorees featured in this report were nominated by their peers, companies, friends and family and then selected by Crain's Detroit Business editors based on their career accomplishments, track record of success and contributions to their fields and communities. Notable Leaders in Higher Education is managed by Special Projects Editor Leslie D. Green, lgreen@crain.com. The profiles, written by Ryan Kelly, are based on the nomination forms submitted.

Next up: Do you know Notable leaders deserving recognition? Crain's Detroit Business is now accepting nominations for Notable Leaders in Employment & Labor Law and Notable Leaders in DEI. Visit crainsdetroit.com/notable-noms for details.



Richard Bierschbach

Dean and John W. Reed Professor of Law, Wayne State University

Wayne Law School's national ranking rose to 56th from 100th in six years under Richard Bierschbach's deanship,

"Richard Bierschbach stands out as the most impactful dean in over 50 years," said Wayne State Law Professor Alan Schenk. "He energized his staff, the faculty and students to achieve the very ambitious goals he set when he arrived."

Bierschbach launched new partnerships and programs, including a 'holistic defense partnership' between the law school and school of social work.

He also created additional revenue sources with a new law department for non-JD programs, like a master of studies in law degree, an undergraduate minor in law and a Bachelor of Arts in law.



Elizabeth Birr Moje

Dean, Marsal Family School of Education, University of Michigan

UM's School of Education received a \$14.7 million gift to build the Eileen Lappin Weiser Learning Sciences Center under Elizabeth Moje's leadership.

Moje also created the teaching residence portion of the school's P-20 Partnership, an education program offering pre-kindergarten through graduate school studies on the campus. The initiative, which has enrolled students in its high school and in kindergarten through third-grade classes, aims to help educate historically disenfranchised children.

"She understands that equipping the next generation of educators can not only transform the trajectory of a student's life opportunities but also lay the fundamental building blocks for long-term community health and stability," said Rip Rapson, president and CEO of the Kresge Foundation.



Sara Blair

Vice Provost for Academic and Faculty Affairs, University of Michigan

Sara Blair started the Michigan Humanities Collaboratory to examine campus strengths, learn from other campus models and train scholars. The \$10 million program also awards humanities research and scholarship grants.

Blair, whose efforts affect more than 25,000 students, also started a \$2.7 million program that uses augmented, virtual and mixed realities to teach humanities. The AVMR courses have drawn students to departments with declining enrollments.

She doubled the number of funded workshops at the Rackham Interdisciplinary Workshops, which encourages collaboration among graduate students, faculty and staff. And she helped guide investments in the city of Detroit and the University of Michigan-Flint campus to open access to underserved communities.



Bryan Boyer

Director of Urban Technology, Taubman College of Architecture and Urban Planning, University of Michigan

Bryan Boyer directs UM's new urban technology degree, a new STEM program integrating urbanism and technology instruction that has already attracted more than 80 students.

He also developed three experimental Urban Technology Prototype grants and Cities Intensive, a two-month program for students to travel and learn in various cities.

"Bryan has helped usher in a new wave in higher education that recognizes and acknowledges that technology disruption and startup culture are here to stay," said Laura Lewis, general counsel at StockX. "Bryan's accomplishment launching the urban technology degree at the University of Michigan will be a key part in the story of the state's innovation ecosystem."



Marlene Brooks

Director of Operations, Dymond Designs Beauty School

Marlene Brooks made Dymond Designs Beauty School easier to attend for working and underprivileged students.

She got Dymond accredited for hybrid training, which allows parents to attend the school, turning it into the first cosmetology school in Michigan to use accredited, hybrid training.

She also got the school approved for federal FAFSA funds this year so students can receive financial aid in addition to subsidized and unsubsidized loans. Brooks works with several organizations, including MI Works, to help offset the cost of tuition for lower-income families.

The school, which she founded in 2019, has over 70 students and 16 staff members. It also has a 100% completion, placement and licensure rate.



Amanda Bryant-Friedrich

Graduate School Dean, Wayne State University

Amanda Bryant-Friedrich oversees a program that matches underrepresented undergraduates with mentors who help prepare them for graduate school.

"She has developed a culture of inclusive excellence, ensuring that graduate students from all backgrounds succeed," said Ed Cackett, chair of the Physics and Astronomy Department at Wayne State University.

Bryant-Friedrich also hosts a summer research program that brings students from historically black colleges. Under her leadership, Wayne State doubled participation in its annual research symposium and increased attendance at professional development events by 300%.

She serves on the Imagination Station board.



Rebecca Cunningham

Vice President for Research, University of Michigan

Rebecca Cunningham increased support for research expenditures by \$100 million which last year supported the launch of 16 new startups and 433 new inventions.

Cunningham led the creation of the UM Institute for Firearm Injury Prevention, Healthy Flint Research Coordinating Center, and the Bold Challenges initiative to increase cross-school collaboration.

She also led Accelerate Blue, which helps attract business leadership, progress university technology startups, and increase venture capital investments.

"As a researcher, educator, administrator and clinician, Dr. Cunningham has made an indelible mark on our society that expands far beyond our campus walls," said UM president Santa Ono.



Karl Daubmann

Dean and Chief Academic Officer for the College of Architecture and Design, Lawrence Technological University

Karl Daubmann changed the organizational hierarchies and made financials more transparent to help LTU move to a "net positive" financial position and attract new investments. He oversaw changes to recruitment, outreach and admissions that increased educational access to underserved and underrepresented students.

He also helped develop the Ballard International robotic fellowship, the start of faculty seed funding and a new approach to alumni engagement that increased alumni fundraising and support.

Daubmann teaches pro bono at LTU and serves on the board of ACE Mentorship of Southeast Michigan.

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Ahmad Ezzeddine
Vice president, Academic Student Affairs and Global Engagement, Wayne State University

Ahmad Ezzeddine grew relationships with colleges, governments and businesses that facilitated an increase in international opportunities for Wayne State students.

He created Transfer Pathways, which eases the transfer of credits from community colleges to Wayne and helps the school maintain its status as the leading transfer university in Michigan.

As a promoter of the ‘global learning for all’ philosophy, which maintains that global learning is essential to a college education, Ezzeddine introduced Collaborative Online International Learning that connects students and professors internationally. He also works with the U.S. Department of State to raise WSU’s global status.

“Dr. Ezzeddine has tirelessly advanced the university’s mission with his holistic approach to the student experience from application to graduation to life as an alumni,” said Shirley Stancato, vice chair of WSU’s board of governors.



Tim Flattery
Provost and Vice President, Academic Affairs, College for Creative Studies

Tim Flattery, who worked on several films including “Avengers” and “Wakanda Forever,” revamped the entertainment arts department, developed a new curriculum structure and started a foundations program at the College for Creative Studies.

“Tim’s experience working on over 100 Hollywood films gives him great insight into the contemporary academic and career needs of our students,” said CCS President Donald Tuski.

“A critical CCS academic leader, Tim has greatly improved the total student experience. His creativity, thoughtfulness, and inclusivity in solving academic problems have made him a wonderful partner.”

Flattery also helped the college reduce its costs, increase its facility use and grow its peer-to-peer learning.

Last year, he organized “Assesstival,” a visual exhibition of CCS’s curriculum that allowed stakeholders to analyze and contribute ideas to the college’s academic programming.



James Forger
Dean, College of Music, Michigan State University

James Forger led the campaign to fund the Billman Music Pavilion, a \$37 million expansion of Michigan State University’s College of Music. The pavilion increased the school’s rehearsal and practice space by 40%.

He worked with health and diversity advisers to maintain use of the pavilion during the pandemic while transitioning MSU’s classes online.

Forger also established Community Music Schools in East Lansing and Detroit, which provide music programs, classes and music therapy to over 2,500 children and adults weekly.

“Jim’s dedication to students, faculty and staff is remarkable,” said Ann Marie Lindley, senior director of development at the MSU College of Music. “He has tirelessly promoted diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging and made outstanding contributions by establishing a highly regarded College of Music and two community music schools that make music accessible to all.”



Lisa Frace
Senior Vice President, CFO and Treasurer, Michigan State University

Lisa Frace is modernizing financial management at MSU with a new budget model and exploring advanced methods to issue bonds through such things as blockchain technology.

“Lisa’s transformative leadership ignited MSU’s financial management transformation, elevating financial understanding, strategic thinking, and a unified vision supporting long-term success,” said Melissa Woo, executive vice president for administration and chief information officer.

Frace guided MSU’s \$500 million century bond issue last year that provided strategic investment funds and was completed in just 90 days. Frace and her team manage MSU’s \$3.2 billion operating budget.

“Her ability to think strategically and foster collaboration across the institution has created a comprehensive understanding of the institution’s overall financial health which aligns resources with the university’s academic mission,” Woo said.



Domenico Grasso
Chancellor, University of Michigan-Dearborn

Domenico Grasso helped increase University of Michigan-Dearborn’s graduate rate with a new financial aid model and restructured tuition plan that saves students money.

He oversaw a 100% increase in external research funding, a 100% increase in the university’s reserves and a 55% endowment increase that included the second-largest gift in the school’s history.

Grasso appointed the first chief diversity officer, started a group aimed to improve campus culture and created the Inclusive Excellence Fellows program that encourages faculty to find solutions to campus inclusivity.

He also developed the Go BLUEprint for Success, which gives students input on campus decisions.

“Beyond the accomplishments, which are many, in (his) first term . . . what resonated with me is how (Grasso) made people feel,” said UM President Santa Ono. “We’re inspired by (Grasso), by this campus and by (Grasso’s) leadership.”

DYMOND DESIGNS

BEAUTY SCHOOL

Where Beauty and Education Meet.

Congratulations

to Marlene Brooks and the entire Dymond Designs Beauty School Team for being acknowledged as a Notable Leader in Higher Education. We appreciate the educational services that you provide for the community and surrounding suburbs.



Greg Handel
Vice President, Education & Talent, Detroit Regional Chamber

“Greg’s leadership and ability to build and manage a cross-sector collaboration created an effective and much needed focus on the importance of higher-education attainment in the Detroit region,” said Oakland University President Ora Pescovitz. “He and his team have brought together educators, business, government and philanthropic partners to begin addressing this critical issue.”

To increase secondary training and education in the region by 60%, Greg Handel established Detroit Drives Degrees, a group dedicated to reducing the racial equity gap of college students.

Handel also oversees Detroit Promise, which provides college scholarships to Detroit high school graduates. He helped start the board, which generates \$4 million per year toward the scholarship.

The chamber has helped over 6,000 students enter college tuition-free in the last 10 years.



Richard Koubek
President, Michigan Technological University

Richard Koubek is leading Michigan Tech’s goal of becoming a top-10 public university for engineering degrees granted to women. Within 25 years, he wants the student population at Michigan Tech to become 40% female.

Koubek also hired the school’s first vice president for diversity and inclusion and the first general counsel.

He helped launch the College of Computing in 2019 and recently met with students, faculty, and community members to develop MTU’s goals and priorities.

“Rick sets the highest of standards for himself and his team,” said Linda Kennedy, co-founder of Panagos Kennedy PLLC. “His leadership inspires a drive to exceed those high standards.”

Koubek serves on the Michigan Association of State Universities and InvestUP boards of directors.