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**Nov. 4, 2010**

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**Michigan parents value higher education far more today than 2005,  
new statewide survey shows**

*Now is not the time to further cut higher education, PSCUM says*

Michigan parents are getting the message that higher education is the key to their children's prosperity, according to a new statewide telephone survey for a variety of interests, including the New Economic Initiative, Your Child and The Detroit News.

The survey, by Mitchell Research, builds on a 2005 survey that raised serious questions about the value Michigan families put on education. For instance, in 2005, barely half – 54 percent – of the parents interviewed agreed with the statement that "everybody should get a college education." But in the 2010 survey, 76 percent of those interviewed said everyone should attend college.

Similarly, the public now seems more aware of the value of higher education. When asked if they agreed with the statement "people who have a college education are usually better off than people who don't," 78 percent agreed in 2010 – up from 63 percent in 2005.

One of the more disconcerting findings of the 2005 survey was that only 27 percent of parents said getting a good education is "essential" for getting ahead in life. Now that's up to 37 percent, with another 52 percent saying it is "very important."

"The message that we now live in a knowledge economy and getting a college degree is vital to getting ahead is gaining traction here in Michigan," said Michael A. Boulus, executive director of the Presidents Council State Universities of Michigan, which represents the 15 public universities in Michigan, and a member of Your Child. "Our state is in the bottom third of the nation in college attainment. Research shows the path to prosperity for an individual and a state goes through college. High income states in our nation have a high percentage of people living in them with a college degree."

The survey of 500 persons was conducted among households where at least one school age child was currently living, from Sept. 22 to Oct. 14, 2010.

"This survey is particularly important given recent major cuts to state support for higher education," said Boulus, noting that per student state support has dropped by more than \$2,500 a student when adjusted for inflation. "The message should be loud and clear to lawmakers and Gov.-elect Rick Snyder as the 2011 budget is prepared – higher education is a vital and growing priority to families, and to our state's future. Now is not the time to cut higher education further."

Boulus noted that 90 percent of Michigan freshmen attending college anywhere in the U.S. stayed in Michigan – one of the highest percentages in the nation, according to the U.S. Department of Education's National Center for Education Studies. "We have quality educational institutions that are helping keep our best and brightest in Michigan. Cuts in funding jeopardizes that quality, and that will result in fewer college educated residents, fewer entrepreneurs, and a poorer Michigan economy," Boulus said.

The survey showed parents are increasingly expecting their children to attend college, with the percentage of parents saying their child was "likely" to go to college growing from 60 percent to 77 percent.

Other key findings:

- Asked "how far in school do you want your child to go," 69 percent said "masters, doctorate or law school," and 24 said "bachelor's degree." That compares with 42 percent "master's" and 37 percent "bachelor's" in 2005.
- 59 percent said it's more important for their children to take hard courses than to have a good grade point average.
- 80 percent disagreed with the statement "Education is useful up to a point, but it's possible to have too much."
- Only 21 percent agreed "you can make a decent living with just a high school education," down from 28 percent in 2005. And the 2010 survey found that only 21 percent agreed with the statement "high-school dropouts are often as productive as any other members of society."
- Most parents think college will be affordable when their child enters. Asked "Whether or not your child actually goes to college, how affordable do you believe college will be, or would be, for a person like your child, when he/she is of an age to go?" 52 percent said it will be affordable; 20 percent said it will not be affordable and 27 percent said they were unsure.

*The Presidents Council, State Universities of Michigan serves as a forum for the presidents and chancellors of the Michigan 15 public universities to discuss and frame positions on key higher education finance and policy issues. You can learn more about the Presidents Council at [www.pcsum.org](http://www.pcsum.org).*