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Michigan House vote opens door to higher costs, duplication and waste in community colleges

The Michigan House of Representatives today voted to encourage Michigan's community colleges to duplicate four year degree programs already available at Michigan's 15 public universities, or programs that the university presidents have said they are prepared to initiate if there is sufficient interest.

"At a time when the state is continuing to dramatically reduce its support for higher education in general, it is a waste of limited resources to encourage two-year colleges to add the professors, administrative support, laboratory space and other expenses necessary to provide accredited four year degrees," said Michael A. Boulus, executive director of the Presidents Council, State Universities of Michigan.

"We are very disappointed that the House has decided to erase the long-standing distinction between community colleges, which offer two year degrees, and universities, which offer four year degrees," Boulus added.

The House Legislative Analysis Section has stated that this legislation will increase operating costs at community colleges, leading to unnecessary increases in tuition, higher property taxes or cuts in services to other students. And it is likely that community colleges seeking to cut corners will offer unaccredited degrees to students, who will find that they do not lead to future employment. In Ohio, Owens Community College is under investigation for failing to maintain an accredited nursing programs, which prevents graduates from gaining employment.

"We hope that the Senate will realize that Michigan cannot afford 28 more four-year colleges at a time when it is failing to adequately support the community colleges and public universities it has. We already have begun discussions with key members to block this wasteful legislation in the Senate," said Boulus.

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.pcsun.org.

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