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**For More Information Contact
Michael Boulus at (517) 482-1563**

Prisons higher priority for Michigan than higher education *Michigan still falling behind in higher ed support growth*

A new report by the Pew Center on the States' Public Safety Performance says Michigan is spending \$1.19 on corrections for every \$1 spent on higher education – the second worst rating in the nation, behind only Vermont. Michigan is one of only four states spending more on prisons than on higher education.

“Michigan’s future is in college, but we are investing in prisons,” said Michael A. Boulus, executive director of the Presidents Council, State Universities of Michigan. “If we don’t properly fund higher education, we are endangering our future ability to transform and diversify our economy.”

Also released this week was a report showing that nationally, state funding for higher education grew by 7.7 percent in the 2007 fiscal year, leaving Michigan further behind. The report from the State Higher Education Executive Officers association says Michigan’s increase from the 2006 to the 2007 fiscal years was 1.7 percent. That figure includes funding for scholarships and other programs. The actual increase to state universities was 1.1 percent.

Michigan has had the lowest increase in state funding in the nation over the last five years, with a 5 percent cut in higher ed funding compared to the national average of a 24.1 percent increase, according to an analysis by Illinois State University.

“Michigan’s universities appreciate Gov. Jennifer Granholm’s proposed 3 percent increase in university funding for the 2009 fiscal year,” Boulus said. “But the cold reality is that Michigan needs to boost spending by even more or fall further behind our competitors. Research shows that in states with more college graduates, all workers – even those who do not have a four year degree – tend to have higher incomes. College education is a public good that repays state investment dramatically.”