Getting to Work
Opportunity and Hurdles to Prosperity in Michigan

A Center for Michigan Community Conversation Issue Guide
November 2014 - June 2015
#MiVoice

Career Navigation Guide
Welcome to this Community Conversation!

Welcome! Thank you for taking time out of your busy day to participate in this Community Conversation. We are the Center for Michigan, a nonprofit and nonpartisan organization. This is our sixth statewide public engagement campaign since 2007. Today, you join more than 30,000 Michigan residents so far who have participated in this form of citizenship! The goal of today’s conversation is to gather your thoughts, ideas, opinions and priorities about the Michigan job market and how people navigate their personal paths to prosperity in our state.

Michigan’s economy was one of the hardest hit by the Great Recession, and our state’s unemployment rate is still among the highest in the country. You may see challenges and opportunities in Michigan’s economy every day – and today we want to hear about those. We’re going to ask about what you know, what confuses you or makes you fearful, what inspires you or makes you hopeful, and your vision for the Michigan job market of the future. We’ll also ask for your impressions about a wide range of ideas to potentially improve paths to prosperity in Michigan. The Center will then take what we hear in more than 150 of these conversations across the state, and amplify your opinions, priorities and ideas to our state’s leaders for further action.

Leaders Are Listening

And we know that leaders respond to the results of these conversations. The findings from previous Community Conversations, which have involved more than 30,000 Michigan residents to date, provided public momentum for state leaders to:

- Approve the nation’s largest expansion of public preschool for two years running.
- Toughen certification tests for new teachers.
- Approve deeper state investment in the “Pure Michigan” marketing campaign.
- Reform state business taxes.
- Institute reforms to save taxpayers $250 million in state prison costs.
- Stop the backslide of the traditional 180-day K-12 school year.

Your Voice Matters

The Center for Michigan is a nonpartisan organization, supporting no specific politician, or party. We pledge to serve as your bullhorn to our state’s leaders.
Let's Get Started

Our conversation today will cover one or more of three major topics:

1. Career Navigation
2. College Value and Affordability
3. Challenges to Upward Mobility

This guide will serve as your road map for today's Community Conversation. It contains:

- Researched, nonpartisan information on Michigan's classroom-to-career pipeline.
- Outlines of options for improving this pipeline, with pros and cons for each.
- Guiding questions for open discussions throughout this meeting.

To start today's conversation, we'd like to hear where you are on your personal path to prosperity in Michigan.

The next page provides some statistical information about Michigan's job market. Consider this information, as well as your personal experiences, in this portion of our conversation today. Please turn to the screen at the front of the room. We're now going to ask you a series of questions about:

- Your personal impressions of the Michigan job market.
- Where you personally see potential threats and opportunities in Michigan.
- Your vision of the future - what success in the Michigan economy looks like for you.

Use your clicker to answer the questions on the screen. You will instantly see the mood of the room. In a moment, we'll all discuss your reactions to these questions and we welcome your personal stories.

When we begin open discussion, consider these guiding questions:

- What are your hopes and fears about Michigan's economy and job market?
- What makes you confident about Michigan's future job market?
- Have you had any turning points in your job or career path? What were they? Who or what caused them?
Some Facts to Consider About Michigan’s Job Market

**Things are getting better.**

1. Many people are back to work. As of October 2014, Michigan’s unemployment was 7.1 percent. The unemployment rate rose as high as 14.2 percent at the worst point of the Great Recession in August 2009.

2. Many Michigan residents are seeking new skills to compete in the 21st Century global economy. The percentage of Michigan residents who hold an associate’s degree or higher has risen from 35.7 percent to 37.4 percent over the past five years and college enrollments have risen considerably.

3. Some Michigan residents, like entrepreneurs, are finding their own path. Each year, Michigan Celebrates Small Business honors dozens of entrepreneurial start-ups in its “Companies to Watch” program. These start-ups, in every corner of the state, find new markets, new products, new technologies, and fast-growing profits. They find prosperity through innovation.

**But it's not exactly the glory days.**

1. Manufacturing jobs, long the road to the middle class, are more limited and lower paying. Michigan lost nearly 423,000 manufacturing jobs in the Great Recession. Some of those jobs have returned, but many others may never come back.

2. Overall, wages aren’t what they once were. In 1982, Michigan’s median wage was the 4th highest in the country, but following a massive loss of manufacturing jobs, Michigan’s ranking had fallen to 24th by 2012. For example, veteran line workers in the auto industry make more than $28 an hour, but entry level workers make just under $16 an hour.

3. At the root, Michigan’s core talent pipeline – its K-12 education system – is struggling. In terms of academic achievement, Michigan’s K-12 students are not keeping pace with the growth in academic performance in leading states or other leading countries.

4. Some Michigan residents are struggling in the new economy. In some communities, such as Detroit and Flint, nearly half of all adults have low basic skills for the workforce, and struggle to get jobs. In these two communities, reported unemployment rate is 17 percent.

5. Michigan workers don’t have the right skills to fill current job openings. Right now, there are some 75,000 job openings in Michigan in fields such as information technology, health care, and engineering. But employers often say they have trouble finding truly qualified applicants.
CAREER NAVIGATION

Consider This:

Some Facts to Consider About Career Navigation in Michigan

Beginning in high school, there are potential potholes on the path to prosperity for Michigan residents.

1. Many high school graduates are not prepared to succeed in college. Only one out of every five high school graduates in Michigan are deemed fully college ready in all four major subject areas (English, math, reading, and science).

2. Fewer youths are gaining solid work experience. In 2000, nearly 50 percent of 16-19 year olds in Southeast Michigan were employed. In 2012, that number dropped to 27 percent – putting metro Detroit among the worst regions in the nation for youth employment.

3. There are 706 students for each school counselor in Michigan. That’s the fifth highest student-to-counselor ratio in the nation. Counselor workload is often dominated by basic needs – emotional and family problems, disciplinary issues, etc. – and administrative duties – scheduling, test administration, etc. – rather than career and college advising.

4. Many schools have software to aid in college and career navigation. Two-thirds of Michigan middle and high schools use Career Cruising software, which includes career interest assessment tools and occupational profiles that describe required education and training, typical working conditions, and expected earnings. However, it is unknown whether the majority of these districts use the software beyond the initial creation and review of student Educational Development Plans in middle school.

For students who reach college, success is far from guaranteed, and failure is expensive.

1. Paperwork stumps many right out of the gate. Completing financial aid paperwork is, for many, a first step toward college success. Yet 45% of high school seniors in Michigan do not complete this complex federal “FAFSA” form. Michigan ranks 25th among the states on FAFSA completion. The FAFSA is seen as an important tool for obtaining financial aid and is strongly correlated with college enrollment.

2. What you don’t learn in high school comes back to bite you in college. Nearly one out of four Michigan college students take remedial courses. Essentially, remedial courses are high-school level studies at college prices. Students earn no credit toward degrees or credentials for remedial courses. Remedial “do-overs” cost Michigan college students more than $100 million per year in tuition. Nationwide, about 40 percent of students enrolled in remedial courses drop out before ever taking a college-level course.
3. Students are flocking to Michigan colleges, but many are not graduating. More than 37 percent of Michigan adults have an associate’s degree, a bachelor’s degree, or higher credentials. That’s up from 35.7 percent five years ago. Six in ten high school grads enroll in a two- or four-year college. Yet many students pay tuition, or take on the long-term burden of student loans, and don’t complete their college studies. Only 52 percent of Michigan community college students obtain an associate’s degree, earn a certificate, or transfer to another institution within six years of first enrolling. Just 54.8 percent of Michigan public university students obtain a bachelor’s degree within six years of first enrolling.

4. Choosing a career path takes time—and money. Approximately 75 percent of all students who enter undergraduate programs nationwide change their major at least once before graduation. Each change in direction can slow the path to college completion and add significantly tuition and student loan costs.

5. Like their high school peers, college advisors are significantly outnumbered. The national average ratio of college students to academic advisors is 375 to one.
To continue this conversation, we seek your impressions and personal experiences in navigating career choices in Michigan.

Pages 4 and 5 provide some statistical information about career navigation in Michigan. Consider this information, as well as your personal experiences, in this portion of our conversation today. Please return your attention to the screen at the front of the room. We’re now going to ask you a series of questions about:

- Your personal understanding of the Michigan job market and how you obtain information about it.
- Your sense of potential strengths or weaknesses in Michigan’s career navigation environment.
- Your vision of the future - what success in the Michigan economy looks like for you.

Use your clicker to answer the questions on the screen. Once again, you will instantly see the mood of the room. In a moment, we’ll all discuss your reactions to these questions and we welcome more of your personal stories.

When we begin open discussion, consider these guiding questions:

- How do you find information about jobs and the skills, training and education you need to get them? How about your family members and friends?
- Who or what is most helpful when you explore the type of work you might want to do? Who or what has helped your family and friends?
- What resources do you wish you had when exploring the type of work you might want to do?
**OPTION 1:** Require high school counselors to be specifically certified in college choice, financial aid, and career counseling.

**THE IDEA:** A recent proposal in the Michigan Legislature would require high school counselors to earn and maintain this certification to work in public schools.

**PRO ARGUMENT:** High school counselors regularly report that they are inadequately trained for college readiness counseling. In particular, they feel that the training they receive in their college programs for advising high school students on college choice and financial aid is inadequate. Adding this certification requirement could intensify attention to students’ college access and navigation needs by better equipping school counselors to help students and families successfully navigate the confusing process of selecting a school, gaining admission, and obtaining financial aid.

**CON ARGUMENT:** The legislature should not specify which courses should or should not be offered in counseling or any other college curriculum. To carve out a requirement for one aspect of counselor training is to set it apart as more important than any other. Besides, the Council on Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs standard requires that college students studying to be school counselors be taught how to “design, implement, manage, and evaluate transition programs, including school-to-work, postsecondary planning, and college admissions counseling.” Instead, we should be encouraging the development of continuing education programming for school counselors on these issues specific to college choice, financial aid, and career counseling.

**OPTION 2:** Increase access to college and career advising in Michigan high schools

**THE IDEA:** A nonprofit group called the Michigan College Access Network is test driving this idea, and they recently placed three dozen young advisors in 50 Michigan high schools with the specific mission of improving financial aid and college-entry advising. Michigan is one of 14 states that places College Advising Corps members in high schools.

**PRO ARGUMENT:** School counselors are stretched thin. In Michigan high schools, there’s one counselor for every 700 students – the fifth highest ratio in the country. Counselors currently spend most of their time dealing other issues beyond college counseling – discipline and behavioral problems, family emergencies, drug/alcohol issues, etc. Having a dedicated force of college-specific advisors could improve college selection, families’ understanding of financial aid, navigation of the application process, and, ultimately, college attendance and completion.

**CON ARGUMENT:** Adding college-specific counselors or advisors in every high school would be expensive. Providing dedicated college counselors or advisors in every public Michigan high school could cost close to $38 million per year. Such added expense would have to be funded through cuts, efficiencies in other education programs, or tax increases.

**OPTION 3:** Require specific curriculum regarding college, training, and careers for high school students

**THE IDEA:** Some counseling and career navigation experts argue that many of today’s students and families are ill-prepared for the complex college and career choices students face. High college drop-out rates and slow starts to careers after college are blamed, in part, on a lack of knowledge about the economy and job market and lack of personal discernment skills. High school students who receive explicit instruction in the unwritten rules of career and college selection fare better.
The next portion of our discussion seeks your feedback on numerous ideas for improving career navigation in Michigan. Pages 7 and 8 briefly outline some of these ideas as well as arguments for and against them.

**Consider This:**

**PRO ARGUMENT:** Requiring students to learn about the economy, job market, and how better to develop personal success strategies in high school could lead to better, more focused, personal choices after high school and eventually lead to more student efficiency, and higher college completion rates.

**CON ARGUMENT:** Changing school curriculums is a complex, controversial, and expensive task. Adding additional requirements on today’s high school students may require longer school days and higher instructional costs – to the tune of many millions of dollars per year. These added expenses would have to be funded through cuts, efficiencies in other education programs, or tax increases.

**OPTION 4:** Hold Michigan’s public community colleges and universities more accountable for the results of their career guidance and job placement services

**THE IDEA:** Some states, including Michigan, are experimenting with pay-for-performance funding for public community colleges and universities.

**PRO ARGUMENT:** Adding a pay-for-performance requirement related to career guidance and job placement services could incentivize public community colleges and universities to intensify focus on students’ career success after graduation.

**CON ARGUMENT:** The current pay-for-performance funding model in Michigan accounts for a very small portion of overall funding to Michigan community colleges and universities. And, because state funding accounts for only a small portion of institutional budgets, even drastic pay-for-performance models could have a limited effect on how community colleges and universities operate.

**CAREER NAVIGATION**

**Pros & Cons of Possible Changes to Michigan’s Career Navigation System.**

The next portion of our discussion seeks your feedback on numerous ideas for improving career navigation in Michigan. Pages 7 and 8 briefly outline some of these ideas as well as arguments for and against them.

Consider these pro-con arguments, as well as your personal experiences, in this portion of our conversation today, and use your clickers to tell us what you think of these ideas.

We’ll then get a chance to discuss these ideas, as well as other suggestions you may have.

When we begin open discussion, consider these guiding questions:

- Who’s responsible? Which stakeholders should take the lead on making any changes you want to the career navigation system in Michigan?

- At what cost? If Michigan were to improve its career navigation system, who should pay for the improvements? Are you willing to pay?

- What’s missing here? What are your additional ideas for improving career navigation in Michigan?
**Glossary**

**Apprenticeship**: A training program designed to teach a new generation of practitioners a trade or profession with on-the-job training and often accompanying study or coursework.

**Basic skills**: The foundational skills needed to obtain and retain a job in today’s economy, including reading, writing, math, and digital literacy.

**Career Technical Education**: Courses that integrate core academic knowledge with technical and occupational knowledge. In the past, these courses were sometimes known as vocational education.

**College**: Training after high school which results in a valuable credential, including professional/technical certificates and academic degrees.

**Community college**: A post-high school educational institution that grants primarily associate’s degrees and vocational certificates. Community colleges are public institutions, and receive funding from both state and local governments.

**Entrepreneur**: An individual who starts a business or organization. This person is responsible for developing the business model and resources needed for the organization to succeed.

**FAFSA**: The Free Application for Federal Student Aid is an application that must be completed by all students who hope to be eligible for federal student aid, including work study and student loans.

**Private college or university**: A post-high school educational institution that grants bachelor’s degrees, and in some cases, associate’s and graduate degrees. Private colleges and universities are not public institutions and do not receive funding from state government.

**Public university**: A post-high school educational institution that grants bachelor’s degrees, and in some cases, associate’s and graduate degrees. Public universities are public institutions, and receive funding from state government.

**Skilled labor**: Individuals trained with specific skills, knowledge and abilities for a particular field.
Thank You & Next Steps

Thank you so much for sharing your thoughts and priorities about paths to prosperity in Michigan!
Keep the momentum you built today going in the following ways:

1. **Spread the word.**
   Contact us at engage@thecenterformichigan.net to tell us about other groups of people who would like to participate in a Community Conversation. We’re seeking additional participants, as well as groups to host discussions, all over the state.

2. **Participate in Part 2!**
   This fall, we’ll be organizing a second round of Conversations on the topics we discussed today. The Center will take the impressions and priorities you shared today, and look for models and potential ideas for acting upon those priorities. In Part 2, we’ll be asking for your feedback on those ideas. We’ll be in touch to invite you to participate next summer.

3. **Stay informed.**
   Subscribe for free to Bridge Magazine, the Center for Michigan’s online news magazine at www.bridgemi.com. Bridge’s in-depth, data-driven reporting will help you better understand the complex issues facing our state.

4. **Follow the Conversation’s progress.**
   Throughout this round of Community Conversations, we’ll be posting updates, as well as our findings from these discussions. “Like” us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/thecenterformichigan and follow us on Twitter and Instagram using @CenterforMI. Continue to share your ideas for improving Michigan’s paths to prosperity using the hashtag #MiVoice.

5. **Make Michigan better through service.**
   Visit www.thecenterformichigan.net for a link to Volunteer Michigan’s online volunteer match tool. You can search for volunteer opportunities in your own community.

**ABOUT THE CENTER FOR MICHIGAN**

The Center for Michigan is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit and nonpartisan think-and-do tank. The Center was founded in 2006, and our work is defined by three verbs: Engage, Inform, and Achieve.

**Engage:**
We are the state’s leading practitioner of nonpartisan public engagement. We make citizenship interesting, convenient, and meaningful though interactive, small-group Community Conversations, large town hall conferences, phone polling, and online engagement tools. This public engagement can, and does, lead to actual policy change.

**Inform:**
Bridge, our online news magazine, focuses on the “how” and “why” of Michigan current events. Our differentiated, in-depth, data-driven reporting accentuates—and partners with—traditional publishers increasingly focused on the “who,” “what,” “where,” and “when” of the 24-hour news cycle. Positive policy change growing out of Bridge’s journalism, while rare, is among the highest forms of social return to the Center’s investors.

**Achieve:**
We take the findings of our public engagement campaigns and Bridge journalism and seek to get things done for Michigan. Some examples of positive change: 1) The nation’s largest expansion of public preschool, two years running; 2) Some $250 million in savings from prison system reforms; 3) Stopping the erosion of the traditional 180-day K-12 school year; 4) Approval of tougher certification tests for new teachers; 5) Deeper investment in the Pure Michigan marketing campaign; and 6) Reform of state business taxes.
STEERING COMMITTEE MEMBERS

The Center has been fortunate to attract a group of distinguished Michigan citizens to serve on its Steering Committee. They include:

Richard T. Cole,  
Chair Emeritus Department of Advertising, Public Relations and Retailing, Michigan State University

Paul Courant,  
Harold T. Shapiro Collegiate Professor of Public Policy, former Provost and University of Michigan Librarian

Paul Dimond,  
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Steve Hamp,  
Chair, Michigan Education Excellence Foundation and the New Economy Initiative

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Professor of Journalism, Wayne State University, and Senior Political Analyst, radio station WUOM

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Cynthia Wilbanks,  
Vice President for State Relations, University of Michigan

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More than 150 people who have contributed $25-$999
DATA SOURCES

Opening Discussion: Facts to Consider

Unemployment rate: http://milmi.org/cgi/dataanalysis/ AreaSelection.asp?tablename=Labforce

Manufacturing jobs lost: http://bridgemi.com/2012/01/pulse-quickensemich-manufacturing/


Job openings in Michigan 2010-2020: https://cew.georgetown.edu/recovery2020


Entrepreneurs: https://www.michigancelebrates.biz/past-winners/2014-mcsb-award-winners/

Michigan college graduation rates: http://strongernation.luminafoundation.org/report/#michigan


K-12 performance: http://bridgemi.com/2012-michigan-scorecard/#4

Career Navigation: Facts to Consider

College readiness: http://www.act.org/newsroom/data/2012/benchmarks.html


FAFSA completion: http://www.edcentral.org/filling-fafsas/


College enrollment and completion: http://www.micolleageaccess.org/about/dashboard ; http://bridgemi.com/2014/07/the-five-year-four-year-degree/ ; http://www.michigan.gov/midashboard/0,1607,7-256-58084_58245_58248---,00.html

Changing majors: http://dus.psu.edu/mentor/2013/06/disconnect-choosing-major/

College student to academic advisor ratio: http://bridgemi.com/2014/07/dude-wheres-my-advisor/

Career Navigation: Pros and Cons


http://advisingcorps.org/


http://www.nacacnet.org/issues-action/LegislativeNews/Documents/StudentCounselorRatios.pdf


(The average Michigan high school teacher is paid $55,050 per year; the average annual salary of Michigan school and career counselors is $53,610.)