



Michigan League FOR Human Services

---

CELEBRATING 100 YEARS OF RESEARCH AND ADVOCACY

Date: March 27, 2012

To: Members of the Senate & House Appropriations Subcommittees on Community Colleges

From: Karen Holcomb-Merrill, Policy Director

Re: Community Colleges Budget

As you consider the FY 13 Community Colleges budget, we ask you to consider the expansion of performance-based funding for community colleges. The Michigan League for Human Services supports the concept of performance-based funding for community colleges and was glad to see it in the governor's budget recommendation. Unlike the Higher Education budget, however, the recommendation for Community Colleges has only one metric: three-year average completions in critical skills areas, defined as scientific, technological, engineering, mathematical, and health-related fields.

The League is concerned that such a narrow focus on credentials awarded in critical fields does not do justice to the fact that community colleges serve a large number of students that are low-income, nontraditional or both. In fact, it could lead to community colleges "creaming" the best students and devoting fewer resources to helping low-skill students succeed. Nontraditional students often have families and jobs that make college challenging, and low-income students are often at a disadvantage as well. One study shows more than half of community college students need some form of remediation. A metric based on the success of students in remedial (developmental) education, or for year-to-year persistence, could ensure that such students are served by the schools set up for them.

In light of the many funding cuts to community colleges in recent years, the League also recommends stronger state investment in our community colleges and that performance funding come from new funding rather than baseline funding. In this way, community colleges will continue to have the incentives for targeting low-skill and low-income populations without having to make painful cuts to their operating budgets.

In conclusion, we support the expansion of performance-based funding and recommend that it come from new funding rather than baseline funding. If you have questions about the League's position, please feel free to contact me.