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## **MI Business Leaders: Research universities are key to maintaining solid economic recovery, growth**

*State institutions compare favorably to strongest U.S. research clusters*

**DETROIT**—As Michigan emerges from this year’s pandemic-induced recession, its largest research universities are poised to play an essential role.

This is the finding of a study released today by Business Leaders for Michigan, which reviews the economic potential of research universities in general, as well as the specific entrepreneurship and development work being done at Michigan’s University Research Corridor (URC) institutions - Michigan State University, the University of Michigan, and Wayne State University.

“When it comes to fully restoring our state’s economic health and returning to our Road to the Top Ten, Michigan’s research universities are a powerful engine for growth,” said Doug Rothwell, President and CEO of Business Leaders for Michigan. “In addition to the daily work they do to help build a dynamic, skilled workforce, they also are incubating new technologies and ideas, accelerating innovation, and making specific connections to support the communities they serve.”

The study analyzed the achievements of major research universities in three key areas, and found Michigan’s institutions stack up well when compared to other top U.S. clusters:

- **Talent:** University partnerships with employers, entrepreneurship programs, and talent programs, including experiential education, makerspaces, and workforce development programs
- **Innovation:** National innovation rankings; technology transfer and research and development (R&D) expenditure data; and innovation programs, including incubators, accelerators, capital access, and technical assistance programs
- **Place:** High-level extension efforts (where applicable), research parks, and place programs, with a focus on community development engagements

“While each university uses its own approach, which is born out of institutional culture and tailored to meet the unique needs of the communities it serves, collectively they are delivering potent economic assets. And many of them have the ability to be absolute game-changers,” Rothwell said. “As a state, we need to lean in on the work we do with our research universities during this time of unprecedented change and opportunity.”

Other significant report findings include:

- Given their strong individual and collective performance in talent, innovation, and place, the Michigan URC cluster's performance is strong.
- Most of the institutions studied mentioned economic development goals in their strategic plans, but several universities, especially Wayne State, have centralized and prioritized them.
- Some university economic development offices are effectively leveraging their relationships with a wide variety of private- and public-sector partnerships to create mutually beneficial engagements.
- The talent programs we identified primarily focus on entrepreneurship and experiential education, and there may be more opportunities for leading research universities to play a role in this space moving forward.
- Innovation is the most robust area of programming for these research universities—in fact, they represent many of the top investors in R&D nationwide. While all of the universities have formalized their technology transfer efforts, several, including U-M, have a superior ability to catalyze the discovery of new technologies and drive the creation of new companies and commercial products.
- While place-based engagements are the least common programming type identified, they often have the greatest opportunity to deliver well-rounded economic impact. MSU and other land grant universities use their extension services to expand expertise and work with local communities.

Formed in 2006 to strengthen its affiliated universities' impact in the state and region, [Michigan's URC](#) fosters research collaborations, connects industry to innovation and increases economic prosperity while making Michigan attractive to business and talent by training the next generation of highly-skilled, in-demand workers.

Business Leaders for Michigan collaborated with [Public Sector Consultants of Lansing](#) to research and deliver the report, which is available at [BusinessLeadersforMichigan.com](#).

### **About Business Leaders for Michigan:**

Business Leaders for Michigan, the state's business roundtable, is dedicated to making Michigan a "Top Ten" state for jobs, personal income and a healthy economy. The organization is composed exclusively of the chairpersons, the executive leaders of Michigan's largest companies and universities. Our members drive nearly forty percent of the state's economy, generate over \$1 trillion in annual revenue and serve nearly half of all Michigan public university students. Find out more at [www.businessleadersformichigan.com](#)