THE INSTITUTE FOR COLLEGE
ACCESS & SUCCESS

2024-25

Michigan Year-End Impact Report

From Pipe Parts to Pipeline

Over the past three years, The Institute for College Access and Success Michigan (TICAS MI) team has worked to create new opportunities for students and practitioners across the state of Michigan to learn about and more actively engage in state policy discussions. Throughout this time, we have prioritized the needs and interests that students and practitioners have expressed for policy change and investment.

There is power in meeting people where they are and creating opportunities to share their lived experiences in solution-oriented ways. And there is value in being more informed and connected to the policies and investments that ultimately show up in our everyday lives and practices. Decision makers have shared with us that they better understand how their policies and investments impact our communities through the stories and data we have uplifted.

We thank you for your continued engagement and participation, which is essential to our efforts to uplift community and student voices. Without all of you—from elected officials and government stakeholders to community members and students—we would not have accomplished a fraction of what we have this year.

In the past three years, the inclusion of students and practitioners in our work has influenced and contributed to the following higher education gains:

- **Bolstering of the Tuition Incentive Program - the program** now covers more of the costs associated with mandatory fees and greater investment in the program.
- **Expanding the Michigan Achievement Scholarship (MAS) beyond tuition and fees** - Thanks to our Student Fellows' advocacy, MAS now provides a $1000 award to help cover non-tuition costs for Pell grant recipients enrolled at a community college.
- **Temporarily extending the Michigan Reconnect program to students aged 21 – 24** - This helps to reduce the gaps between the MAS (for recent high school graduates within 15 months of graduation) and Reconnect (originally for students 25+), helping students to pursue an education when they are ready and not when they are eligible for aid. We are currently supporting bills in the House and Senate to make the extension permanent.
- **Funding state aid programs with state general funds** - For years, the state's financial aid programs were being funded with federal Temporary Aid to Needy Families (TANF) dollars. In the 2024 – 25 state budget, policymakers started funding the programs with state general fund dollars, ensuring TANF dollars would go to support programs designed for families in need.
- **Increasing access to information about state aid programs** – Recently, the state has been working to improve awareness of state aid programs through new marketing and online tools, including a revamped counselor and student portals.
- **Including student progress, performance, and other key metrics in annual reports** – MiLEAP has vastly improved annual reporting on state aid programs by including key metrics, informing policymakers how programs can continue to be improved for students and families.
- **Intentionally developing strategies to remove barriers for students and increase access** – MiLEAP and other organizations have been meeting regularly to develop state strategies to streamline and expand postsecondary opportunities. Some of the topics discussed are student basic needs, transfer policies, dual enrollment opportunities, and student loans.

To build upon these wins, we will build better bridges to support student needs, transitions, and success. And we will continue to uplift state-specific data and research to inform how we can better align our policies and practices with statewide priorities. As always, we will anchor our work in listening to community and student voices, including them in our advocacy processes, and ensuring we understand how proposed solutions will impact Michigan's diverse communities on the ground.

The following themes identified by community partners during our "Year of Outreach" (Year 1) and continue to form the foundation of our work.

Community Engagement
Equitable engagement of community leaders across the state.

Policy Support
Education and training on advocacy and policy engagement in MI.

Research & Resources
Easy to understand data, research, and resources for MI higher ed policy.

Student-Centered Advocacy
Elevation of student advocates and student engagement.

Community-Informed Advocacy
Real-time issue resolution for community members facing policy, advocacy, and higher education barriers.

We use these themes intentionally to design our advocacy strategies, training sessions, publications, and student and community collaboration. As we look toward 2026, explore our 2024-25 TICAS MI policy year outcomes below, including our annual theme "From Pipe Parts to a Pipeline."

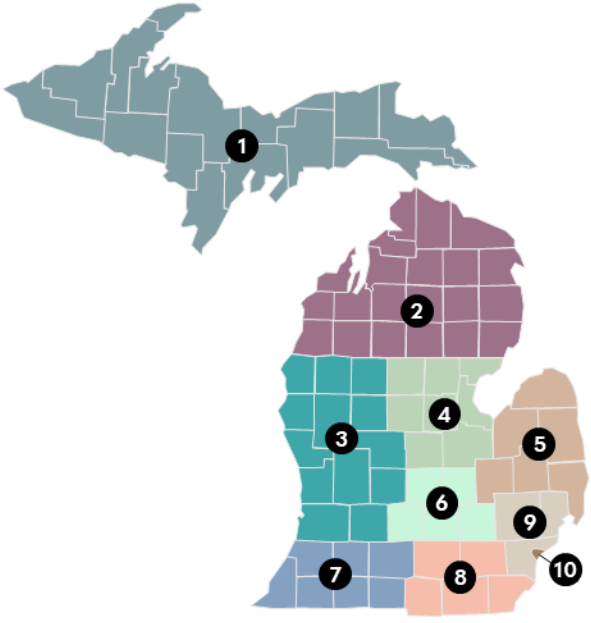
Community Engagement

In our work to make college more accessible and affordable, we focus on ensuring that any postsecondary pathway a student pursues is equitable, appropriately resourced, accessible, and presents clear steps for the completion of postsecondary credentials and quality experiences that lead to viable careers. We are also mindful of the unintentional consequences that may arise by not considering the needs and barriers of underserved communities in program and policy design.

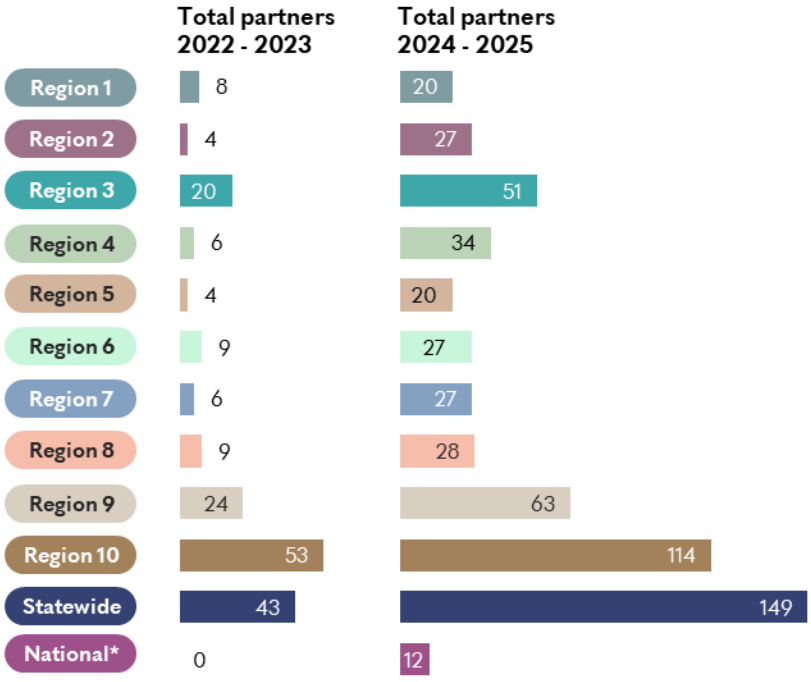
The TICAS MI team, using preexisting regional maps, divided the state into 10 regions, and set a goal to engage at least five (5) community stakeholders in each region to ensure equitable contribution and uplift of regional and community specific policy needs. **During the 2024-25 policy season, we added over one hundred new partners and stakeholders to our community.**

TICAS MI defines community partners as organizations and leaders providing direct service, support, resources, and/or strategy development for students and families. In addition to our community partners and constituents, we work together with other higher education organizations and associations, state departments, staff at postsecondary institutions, philanthropic organizations, and elected officials to achieve our goals.

Regions Engaged 2023 - 2025



Community Partners Engaged by Region.



***Statewide partners are members of organizations whose mission focuses on the state as a whole, rather than a particular community. ** While TICAS is a national organization, our national contacts reflect stakeholders that work with the TICAS Michigan team specifically.*

If you want to find ways to amplify your region's engagement in state policy strategy, feel free to contact us via our Get Connected with the Michigan Team survey.

Education and Training

Providing policy training to education leaders and stakeholders has become a pillar of our work. We have expanded our efforts to include technical support (analyzing and editing policies) and providing updates on policy developments. We have also differentiated our training into 1) Policy and Advocacy Skill Development and Enhancement and 2) Awareness Training (breaking down proposed bills and policy recommendations). Our expanded education, training, and technical support activities are detailed below.

Requests for Support

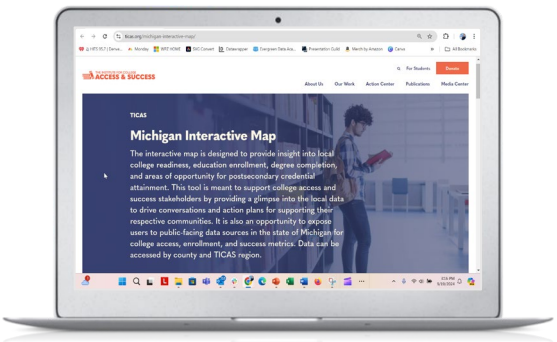
- We received 26 requests from partners to lead a training or webinar or provide support on advocacy. Over 1,200 attended a training or webinar led by a member of the TICAS MI team. This is up from around 400 participants in 2023 – 24.

Skill Development & Awareness Building Trainings

- We led a total of 19 trainings this year, including our first webinar.
- Six of these trainings were specifically designed to help participants develop key advocacy and data skills. At least 3 of these training sessions were for students. About 125 people attended these trainings.
- Thirteen trainings were to help participants build awareness of current policies and political and practical contexts. About 1,100 people attended these trainings, up from around 300 in 2023 – 24.

Technical Support

- There were 7 overall requests for technical support which include but, are not limited to: reviewing current policies and research on a particular issues, interpreting current policy language and interpretations, recommending new bill language, making recommendations for effective implementation, and making strategic partner and community connections to better inform state policies.

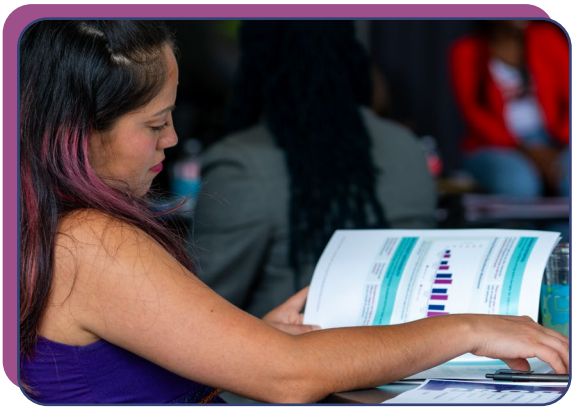


- Five of these requests were to review and weigh in on policy issues, including removing student test scores from high school transcripts, increasing student access to basic needs resources, and continuing to improve the state financial aid programs.

TICAS Michigan Data Training

Last year, our partners told us they wanted more opportunities to learn about state data tools. **In June, the TICAS MI team hosted our first webinar on accessing Michigan specific data.** We invited experts from the state of Michigan's main education data hub (MI School Data), the Michigan Department of Lifelong Education, Advancement, and Potential (MiLEAP), and TICAS to help folks find and navigate publicly available and Michigan-specific data tools. 150 practitioners and community partners across the state of Michigan registered for the event and about 80 attended. If you would like to review the materials or recording from this event, please reach out to the team's Program Manager, Manon Steel, at msteel@ticas.org.

Research and Resources



Remaining mindful of the community and legislature's desires for easy-to-follow research materials that clearly identify issues and solutions, we continue to prioritize creating publications and resources that are informative and engaging for the novice, expert, and everyone in between. **With the support of TICAS leadership, our communications team, and research team, we produced a variety of products, including:**

Interactive Map and webpage with access and success data by county and region

- We have expanded internal data points to include community- specific outcomes for Black and Hispanic populations in MI.

- We are seeking to enhance our interactive map to provide more disaggregated data by county that could help inform support and decision-making at the local level.

13 Policy Publications including:

Quarterly newsletter

- We began including "Did You Know?" and "Federal Update" sections featuring race-based data outcomes in MI and updates from the federal space.
- We are transitioning to providing the resources that were found in our newsletters more consistently on our website through toolkits, a community events calendar, and through updates to our interactive map.

Research Data Fact Sheets and Briefs

- We published three fact sheets uplifting data particularly related to college access, affordability, and success for Hispanic/Latino, Black, and adult students in Michigan.
- We also published an overview of the culture of higher education in Michigan and the continued value higher education offers Michiganders.

Statement responses and fact sheets on relevant MI policy issues

- We began this year by publishing a playbook which outlined our theme for the year and our policy priorities.
- We continued to produce one-page fact sheets for each of our policy priorities that depict which of these priorities were included in the executive and legislative budget proposals.

Student Advocates and Student Voice

This year, we continued developing a community-based, student-centered policy coalition and MI student advocacy opportunities for more inclusive policy discussions.

Community-Based Coalition

We continue our work to develop a high-functioning policy coalition centered on shared goals that stem from the needs of students and families. Collaborative and thought sharing spaces for higher education in MI are currently entity-centered (e.g. state, institutions, and businesses). Representation centering the needs of students, families, and on-the-ground stakeholders has become increasingly important to ensure the early inclusion of those who stand to be most impacted by decisions as well as those charged with the responsibility of implementing state policy.

Our Student-Centered Policy Advocacy Coalition (SC-PAC) is a group of student-centered community leaders working either for policy-based organizations in MI or on-the-ground service and resource providers working to affect change in students' education and career trajectories. This group is currently comprised of about 30 active members representing over 20 focus areas:

- Business
- Policy
- College Access Service Providers
- Local college access/attainment networks (LCANs)
- Adult Support
- Foster/Displaced Youth
- Teachers
- Hispanic/Latino Community
- Out of School Program Providers
- Basic Needs
- On Campus Supports
- College Success Service Providers
- Promise Zones
- Student Scholarship Providers
- Statewide Community Outreach
- K-12 Leadership
- TRIO
- Students
- Native & Indigenous Students
- Rural Communities
- Leaders of Color
- Regional Representation
  - Norther MI
  - Southwestern MI
  - Southeastern MI

The members of SC-PAC are committed to teaching, learning, collaborating, and contributing to policy organizations like TICAS that identify and advocate for effective higher education policy solutions. At the foundation of SC-PAC is a belief that the most effective way to improve student/family outcomes is through collaboration and inclusive policy design. We are seeking to add members in unrepresented focus areas (e.g. advocates for students with disabilities). We have compiled notes from our strategy conversations into a workbook, documenting conversations among experts about what strategies have worked in their communities and inspiring continued reflection on practice and policy.

This year, we worked with community stakeholders to create a set of community norms that foster open, honest, and respectful dialogue and create the foundation for active collaboration. The SC-PAC also developed a list of ten policy goals for the next few years.

SC-PAC Policy Goals

Access

1. Every student must participate in at least one postsecondary-focused education course as a high school graduation requirement (AP, IB, dual enrollment, early-middle college, or career technical education). If the program/course is sanctioned by the school, it must be count towards credits for high school graduation.
2. Increase utilization of state financial aid programs by high school graduating class (i.e. Class of 2026), disaggregated by population. Close the demographic gaps of state program utilization.
3. Increase FASFA completion rates for high schools with higher economically disadvantaged student enrollment.
4. Increase the number of school counselors and counseling support advisors in the state.

Affordability

5. Reduce the net cost of attendance for Pell eligible students at public institutions to below federal loan maximums.
6. Increase postsecondary attainment for Michiganders utilizing basic need resources (e.g. housing voucher programs, TANF, SNAP, Medicaid, childcare subsidies).
7. Create state outreach investments to connect current college and skilled trade students on state public benefits to resources that minimize stop out/drop out.

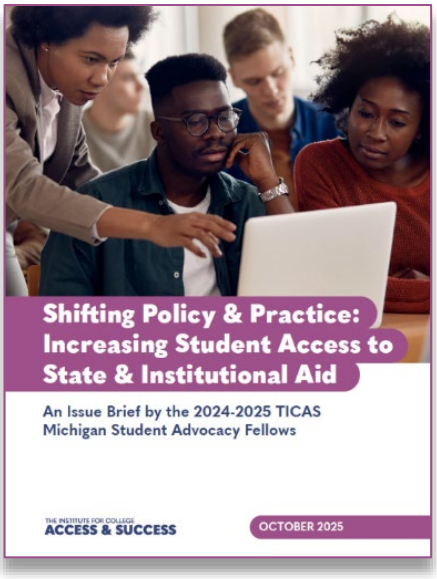
SC-PAC Policy Goals Cont'd.

Success

8. Increase college completion rates for every Michigan institution.
9. Increase the percentage of students by high school graduating class (i.e. Class of 2026) completing a postsecondary degree or credential within 6 years of high school graduation.
10. Increase college persistence by graduation class, improving equity gaps across student demographics (including parenting students and low-income students) with direct support and resources.

Student Advocacy

Our second cohort of the Student Advocacy Fellowship program ended with a powerful impact again this year. This program is a paid opportunity for students to learn about Michigan policy and identify a state-level higher education policy issue to research and advocate for during their year as a fellow. The selected fellows represented various backgrounds: high-income to low-income, students of color, traditional and adult-aged students, 2-year and 4-year enrolled, and students who pursued alternative programs. We required that all students were graduates of Michigan high schools to inform state policy that impacts their trajectory and successful completion of postsecondary opportunities.



The 2024-25 cohort focused on improving communication of student support services and basic needs resources to increase uptake. Like last year, the students completed a research project to better understand how Michigan students and practitioners learn about state and institutional resources. The goal of this project was to help better inform state and institutional communications to students and practitioners, to create better connectivity and maximize the use of these resources. Through this project, our fellows surveyed and interviewed students and practitioners across the state of Michigan; they received 215 survey responses and completed 31 interviews.

In addition to these efforts, students met with state policymakers, scholarship providers, and members of the Michigan Department of Lifelong Education, Advancement, and Potential to help improve the communication of state resources to students. **Their feedback was incorporated into the state Barriers to Bridges student basic needs report and recent updates to the MI Student Aid website.**

Real-Time Policy Priorities

Our community partners stated that while they understand policy investments and efforts are happening at the state-level, it is rare that these are "felt" or fully realized on the ground. Stakeholders are navigating so many complexities to learn about and access new resources that they are unable to actualize their potential benefits. **In recognizing the need to better connect the community with resources and streamline access, we will continue to work with key higher education stakeholders focused on long-term, system-level changes centering equity and the needs of students, while also uplifting specific barriers identified by the community to improve policy implementation.**

Like last year, our community partners and SC-PAC members helped identify which policy priorities we would work on over the next policy season. Thirty-seven partners uplifted a total of 14 potential policy priorities. Our SC-PAC members voted on these priorities, resulting in a list of five policy issues. In addition to the issue identified by the student fellows, we worked on a total of six policy priorities during the FY2026 policy season related to affordability, access, and success.

5 of 6

policy priorities were represented in part or fully in the final budget.

Five of the six priorities were represented in part or fully in the final budget or via administrative changes. Specifically, the budget included investments in FAFSA completion programming, streamlined state financial aid, and student success and wraparound supports. Additionally, it included critical investments in both K-12 and higher education operational funding, the popular and effective school lunch and mental health programs, and improved data management and transparency, allowing advocates like TICAS to more effectively understand the impact of state programs and investments.

Given the sustained success of this approach to advocacy, we will continue working with our community partners and SC-PAC members to select our upcoming FY2027 priorities. At the same time, our work with higher education stakeholders on system-level policy change efforts continues unabated.

While this impact report is only a snapshot of TICAS MI highlights in 2024-25, it illustrates the continued growth of our engagement and the effects of our collective efforts. We thank you for your feedback and continual presence. Without it, we cannot actualize a much-needed new approach to higher education policy development and decision-making in Michigan. Your voice and your presence matter and decision makers value the ability to better understand how they can best support those they serve. Let's continue onward!

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For more information on how to get involved, please complete our Get Connected with the Michigan team survey. We will meet you where you are—there is a seat at the table for everyone no matter your background.