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Report: Region must attract college-educated

By [Sherri Begin](#)

Michigan dropped an unprecedented 10 spots to 26th in U.S. per-capita income rankings between 2000 and 2006, according to a report released today by **Michigan Future Inc.**

President Louis Glazer and his fellow researcher on the report, Don Grimes, a senior research specialist at the **University of Michigan's Institute of Labor and Industrial Relations**, say that Michigan's dramatic drop in such a short period is tied to the number of people in the state who don't hold at least a bachelor's degree.

The year 2000 "was sort of the end of an era of high-paying jobs with low college-education attainment," Glazer said. The drop is "even stronger proof" that talent is the main driver of the economy, he said.

In both the 2000 and 2006 rankings of college attainment, Michigan ranked 34th in the percentage of the U.S. population with a four-year college degree or higher, according to **U.S. Census Bureau** information, Glazer said.

He predicts that if Michigan remains in the mid-30s in those rankings, the state's ranking in per-capita income eventually will drop to the mid-30s as well.

"The two will get aligned," Glazer said. "The premium we got for low-paying jobs historically is disappearing.

"It's the basic theme: You get paid for your education attainment," he said.

The full report, "Michigan's Transition to a Knowledge-Based Economy: First Annual Report," is available at www.michiganfuture.org.

With the proof of Michigan's continued economic struggles is a bit of good news.

Between 2001 and 2005, Michigan added about 47,000 higher-paying jobs in the health care and higher education industries.

About 30,000 of those were added in metro Detroit, with much of the rest coming in the Grand Rapids area, according to the report.

"What's most valuable in the research we did in both the New Agenda report we did in 2006 ... and now this report is to help people understand who's successful nationally and what success looks like nationally," Glazer said.

"If you look at the places across the country that are doing well economically ... they have high concentrations of talent," Glazer said.

Of the top 10 states in per-capita income rankings, eight of them are also in the top 10 for both concentration of knowledge-based industries and percentage of the population with a four-year degree, according to the report.

To attract talent, Glazer and Michigan Future advocate investments in five areas: the arts, research universities, mass transit, downtown and near downtown neighborhoods and green or outdoor spaces.

While metro Detroit is making some progress on investments in downtown neighborhoods and green spaces through projects such as the **Community Foundation for Southeast Michigan's Greenways**, the region is lagging in the other three areas, Glazer said.

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"One of the characteristics of places around the country that are succeeding is an active corporate leadership focused on investments in those five things," he said.

The **Detroit Regional Chamber** is focusing on many of the same things Michigan Future suggests to attract and retain talent, said President Dick Blouse, who also is a member of Michigan Future's board of directors.

"But (Michigan has) to go through the structural reform and then dedicate those dollars," he said.

"The business community is tapped out on taxes," Blouse said.

"We've got to reallocate how we spend money at the state level, and ... then we can put more money into those things" Michigan Future suggests are key to attracting and retaining young talent, Blouse said.

Sherri Begin: (313) 446-1694, sbegin@crain.com

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