

Melot: Will Mich. gain passion for learning?

Michigan Future has plan for growth; anyone care?

Lou Glazer and Don Grimes have a simple analysis for what has happened to Michigan in the last decade:

Jobs that require high levels of education are still around. Jobs that don't are vanishing.

Michigan has long relied on the latter to drive its economy and it remains poorly positioned to rely more on the former.

In their terminology, Michigan is looking more like Alabama and less like Minnesota. And that's bad because Alabama's per-capita income is about \$10,000 less than Minnesota's. Alabama also has a 20 percent higher unemployment rate and a 50 percent higher poverty rate than Minnesota.

"There is a clear pattern across the country that the states, and most importantly metropolitan areas, with the most successful economies are those that are concentrated in the knowledge-based sectors: primarily health care, education, information, financial services and insurance, and professional and technical services," they wrote.

Michigan Future, Inc., which Glazer heads, has a five-point prescription to get the state moving. Alas, Michigan doesn't seem eager to accept the advice:

- "We need to place a much higher value on learning, an entrepreneurial spirit and being welcoming to all."

Michigan wants veteran teachers to retire. It has gutted its college scholarship programs. And it's on track to cut higher-education funding in its next budget.

- "Ensuring the long-term success of a vibrant and agile higher-education system. This means increasing public investments in higher education."

In 2001, the Legislature was providing aid to colleges at a rate of \$6,869 per student. In 2009, the figure was \$5,705.

- "Creating places where talent - particularly mobile young talent - wants to live. This means expanded public investments in quality of place with an emphasis on vibrant central city neighborhoods."

In 2003, Gov. Jennifer Granholm got all hip about "Cool Cities." For a Lansing event, academic Richard Florida was brought in. "Technology, talent and tolerance are the keys to cool cities, and he said welcoming gays and lesbians, immigrants and people of color has to be part of the mix."

The Cool Cities program quickly morphed from a bid to attract young grads to urban areas into an attaboy for downtowns from Alpena to Holland, Davison to Houghton.

Oh, and in 2004, Michigan passed one of the nation's most restrictive constitutional amendments against legal recognition for same-sex relationships.

- "All of education needs reinvention. Most important is to substantially increase the proportion of

students who leave high school academically ready for higher education."

On May 28, the LSJ reported, "Approximately one-third of those who took LCC's assessment tests last fall didn't score high enough to place in its most basic math course, which covers material generally taught in middle school. About a quarter couldn't place into its most basic levels of reading and writing."

- "Developing new public and - most importantly - private sector leadership that has moved beyond a desire to recreate the old economy and continue the old fights."

Watched what's gone on at the State Capitol lately?

What do you think? Write Derek Melot, Lansing State Journal, 120 E. Lenawee St., Lansing, MI 48919. For past columns, visit www.lsj.com/columnists.

Additional Facts

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