

An Avenue of Approach

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### **Abstract**

What was to follow was a study conducted upon the state of Michigan to determine the state's economic status in relationship to three key economic variables: lead industry, workforce development and higher education. The intent was to capture enough data, statistics and evidence to substantiate whether the state of Michigan's economy was considered successful or not. To gauge performance, various national rankings would be compiled as meta-analysis of the three key variables would all be factored together. Study success would hinge upon the author's ability to pose a realistic research question that could be clearly answered and corroborated, serving as a type of study "premise" throughout. Any potential problems identified along the way would have an accompanying problem statement prepared and plan proposal to potentially address and or correct. The overall goal was to learn more about Michigan and any potential phenomena that the state might be dealing with economically so as to learn from it, share it with others and contribute the findings back to the field for further research.

*Key terms:* The "lost decade", talent, talent base, human capital, labor supply, unskilled labor, blue and white collar, lead industry, workforce development, employee value, "inside-out", higher education, postsecondary education, knowledge economy, employee welfare, job gains, employment gains, the "Big 3", "educational returns", master's of business administration (MBA), master's of arts and leadership (MAL), economic alignment, per-capital income, unemployment, state payroll, overall economic output, economic black hole, dependency, cycle, economic enslavement, capitalism, "Michigan mindset", TBA (to be announced), TBD (to be determined)

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I wanted to thank Dr. Michael Ball first, for setting the example as the only one I had known in our family for striving for and attaining higher education, showing others like myself that it might be possible. Dr. Ball was the nicest guy I knew and so eager to share all he had with others. So, I asked and relied upon him so much that I started to learn from him, hoping to follow in his footsteps one day, which did start to happen. Seventeen years after the fact, I returned back here to complete my master's degree and I'd like to give a lot of thanks to Dr. Ball for always engaging me throughout my pursuits along the way, all his positivity and guidance.

My "battles" or "battle buddies" equally were vital to my decision to not just return to try and complete my master's degree, but to find a way to be able to do such with little to no money. Learning more about the possibilities and protocols associated with the Veteran's Administration (VA) was profound; and, it ended up creating that one contingency I needed in the end to finish off my schooling and still survive. I thanked Jon Pierce for that all and his relentless follow up's to me and about the VA possibilities time after time – until, I was so sick of hearing about it that I finally registered with the VA too. It would later be the only source of funding that was able to get me through, all thanks to John never giving up on me or the VA as a method for my future educational completion. Also, I wanted to thank Jon Hawthorne for helping me prepare my paperwork for the VA, along with my previous supervisor Chief Dan Boyd for helping me study.

I was emotionally becoming a wreck amongst a slue of emotional and domestic challenges and trauma in my life just as I attempted to relocate out of state to beautiful North Dakota. I found out quick what really meant something to me were those people in my life I considered precious to me like Gus Pertruske, Adam Walters, Shon Hall, Robert Orr and especially Steve Pfeifer. Along with the board for my non-profit, my protégé Autumn Rux and her family, both my dogs and my Godparents the Aguilar, I had a support system that helped me through, plus a great class at University of Jamestown – Cohort 3, plus the best room-mates someone could ever have had, including Ross, Jack, Sadrac, Michael and Johnny, thanks.

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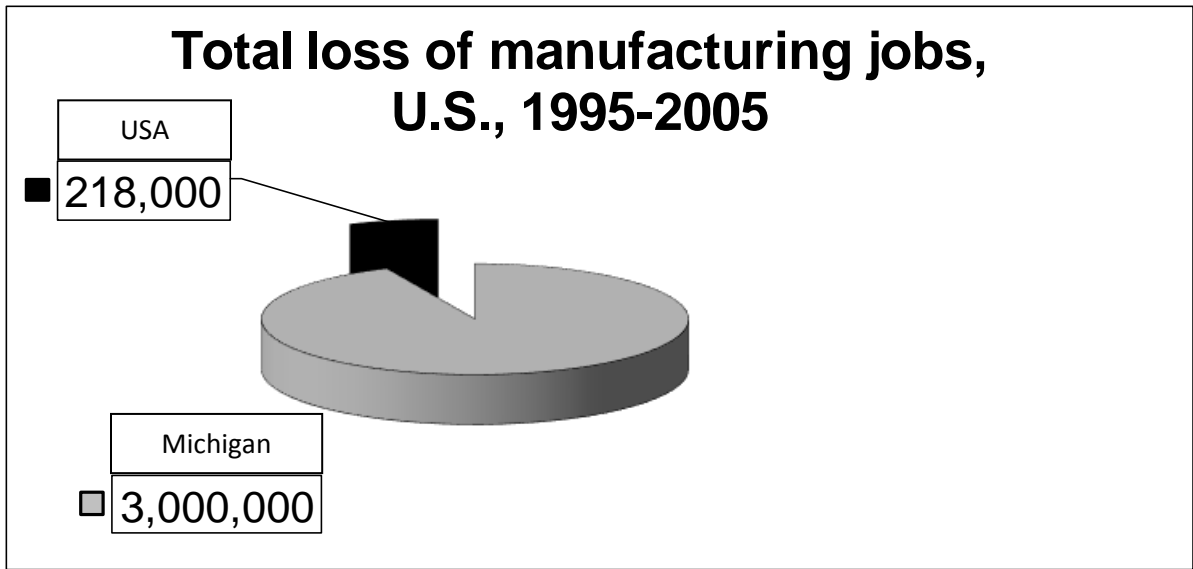


Table 1 – Total loss of manufacturing jobs, U.S. (1995-2005)

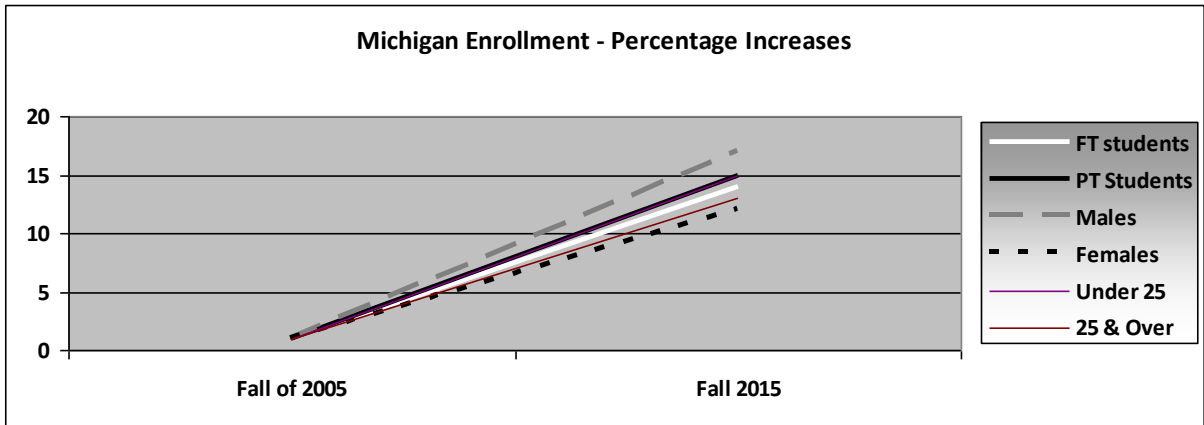


Table 2 – Postsecondary Enrollment in Higher Education in America (2005-2015)

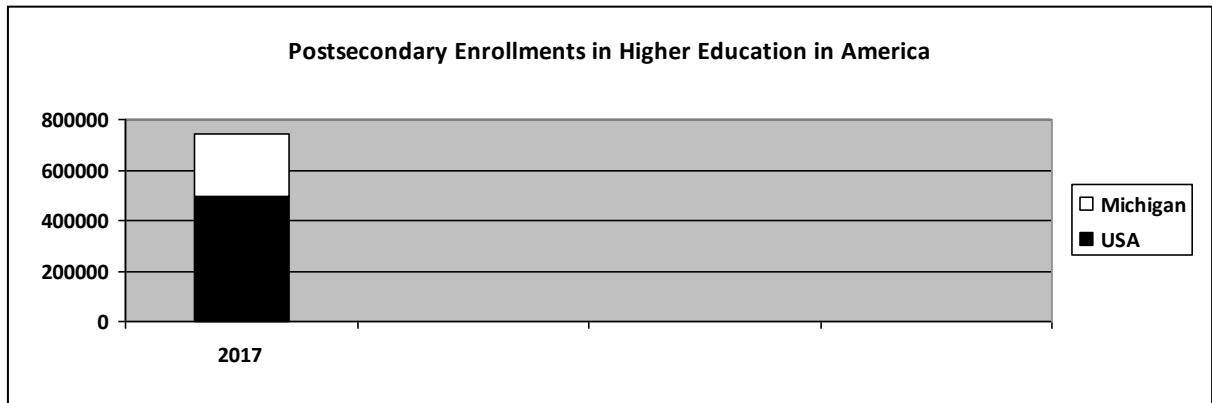


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## Introduction

A project had finally taken shape after years of questions gone unanswered, suddenly materialized and took form. The author's contention was clear: determine if the economic status for the state of Michigan was truly successful within the landscape of the American marketplace. Three key, standard variables were assigned – lead industry, workplace development and higher education, which were theorized to be able to focus a study's scope enough to measure and gauge Michigan's performance while assessing if there were any potential issues inhibiting the state's success. For any issues found, a corresponding problem statement would be prepared, along with a subsequent plan proposal to address and or correct. All hinged though believably on the project premise, which was epitomized by the following research question below.

### Research question

*“Was the state of Michigan considered economically viable and competitive within the American marketplace in terms of lead industry, workforce development and higher education? If so, was Michigan holding a commanding position to substantiate that, along with attaining an overall domestic ranking within the top 10 in the nation over the last 5 years? Or, did Michigan's economy appear to be lagging behind others in the U.S., stagnated or digressing, reflecting ratings more “middle of the pack” and 25<sup>th</sup> or below on average out of all 50 states?”*



## **Literature Review**

Countless hours of researching state records, reports, statistics and studies about Michigan's economy followed, as potential trends, patterns, dispositions or cause and effect relationships were explored to hope and explain, support or deny the author's hypothesis and or potentially answer the study's research question; project success had been leveraged upon that, and the ability to do it all efficiently. Henceforth, a meta-analysis was selected, to ensure that preference was given to empirical evidence and or studies based upon other recent, scholarly work within the field. Yet, data yields found were confusing, problematic and in need of even more information and assessment. Consequently, further review was deemed warranted to hope and clarify a problem statement while reviewing each of the three economic variables below, independently.

### **Lead industry**

To identify a state's primary industry of choice or "lead industry", what was specifically illustrated to be the most popular, largest economic employment sector according to output, jobs, total revenues and more was clear. Michigan's lead industry was manufacturing, with substantial patterns and preferences within the field of domestic automotive making, with what some titled was with the "Big 3" – aka General Motors, Ford and Chrysler. That same trend found dated back as far as the time of the "Great Depression" in fact, according to a story found by the US News and World Report.

The time was 1940 Detroit, Michigan's largest city, whereas the "D", as locals referred to it, had garnered the rank of fourth-largest city in the entire United States. Fast forward to 2015 and what was seen was that for the first time since pre-Civil War times, Detroit, with a population of 677,000, was not among even the top 20 (US News and World Report, 2017).

Those were some of the things that started to surface about Michigan, the same state that once defined 20th-century American industrial might, according to the US News and World Report (2017) once again. One local non-profit leader – Lou Glazer, head of the Michigan Future, even further reminisced on how Michigan was the same state that first put America on wheels and helped birth the modern middle class, but since had “...moved from being a high-prosperity to a low-prosperity state” (Howes, 2017); if true, what was wanted to know was how or why Michigan had started to veer off course economically.

Signs seemed to have always had been there, like when the automakers Ford, Chrysler and General Motors (GM), once more known as the “Big 3”, suddenly appeared before the U.S. Congress in November of 2008 asking for billions in company buyouts. That alone was a signal, too incidental to had just ignored the underlying emphasis and context of a potential problem; yet, people did and an industry sat idle, awaiting their fate as others just seemed to ignore what had happened. No further reports, interviews, inquiries or studies about a potential epidemic seemed to be initiated nor appear. The threat of reoccurrence just seemed to loom over the nation.

Reportedly, Michigan had first started to hit the skids as early as the years’ 2000 on, as top economic performers began to implode. It was what some called the “lost decade,” a period from 2001-2010 where Michigan lost jobs for 10 years in a row (Gallagher, 2018). During that same time, ranked by total economic output (or Gross Domestic Product), Michigan’s economy slid from ninth place (2005) among the 50 states to 12th (2018). Georgia, Massachusetts and North Carolina bypassed Michigan in the growth lane as two more states — Virginia and Washington — emerged right from behind, threatening to drop Michigan back to 14th place for the size of the state economy (Gardner, 2008).

Around the same time of the buyouts, Michigan's state's payroll fell, an inflation-adjusted 3 percent in 2005 all the way up through 2015, as the per-capita income dropped 16 percent total between the time of 1999-2015, leaving it at \$27,405. Overall, Michigan had ended up going from 4 percent above the per-capita income for the entire United States, to 8 percent below the national average (Gardner, 2008). Oblivious to numbers, naïve as to the significance or just ignorant to what "per-capita" income was, many questions and concerns ascended, including to know just how significant the economic measure of "per-capita" income was.

One professor – Charles Ballard, of Michigan State University, summed it all up in a single response: per-capita income was "...most important economic metric" (Gardner, 2008) out there. And, in 2016, the most recent year for which the government released data and ratings about the average per-capita income rates nationally, Michigan ranked 30<sup>th</sup> out of all 50 states or 31<sup>st</sup> if the District of Columbia was to be included. Other values were equally of interest too, like unemployment, something Michigan had arguably struggled with for decades in contrast to the national average, case in point below.

Michigan's unemployment rate was at 4.8 % as of February, 2018, having had dropped 14% during the recession, a time that many saw huge achievement and possible promise for the state's future accordingly. However, what many might have perceived a rebirth, positive change and or economic growth for Michigan, was not inclusive of the end result: Michigan was still lagging behind, as the end value was still below the national average in America (Gallagher, 2018). Michigan's new rank was 42<sup>nd</sup> overall according to Gallagher, which was at that same time that Forbes magazine published its own list of the "Best States for Business" in America, placing Michigan 28<sup>th</sup>.

Michigan had produced broad economic gains for both blue and white collar alike for years according to the US News and World Report (2017) and did so “in-state” for Michiganders; with a closer look underneath the hood though, it didn’t appear as if that was done without its own share of associated risks, threats and causes for concern. It was theorized in fact that as Michigan had placed such a heavy reliance on one lead industry – manufacturing, and the field of automotive making for so long – chronically, that there might be potential side effects later on. Data was compiled just the same, “changing gears” a bit to look at it in contrast to the makeup of Michigan’s actual industry first, that being the state’s workforce, which would become known here as the section of “workforce development”.

**Workforce development**

Between 1995-2005 the United States reportedly lost more than 3 million total jobs in one industry – manufacturing, with the state of Michigan documented as suffering the greatest loss with nearly 218,000 jobs gone.

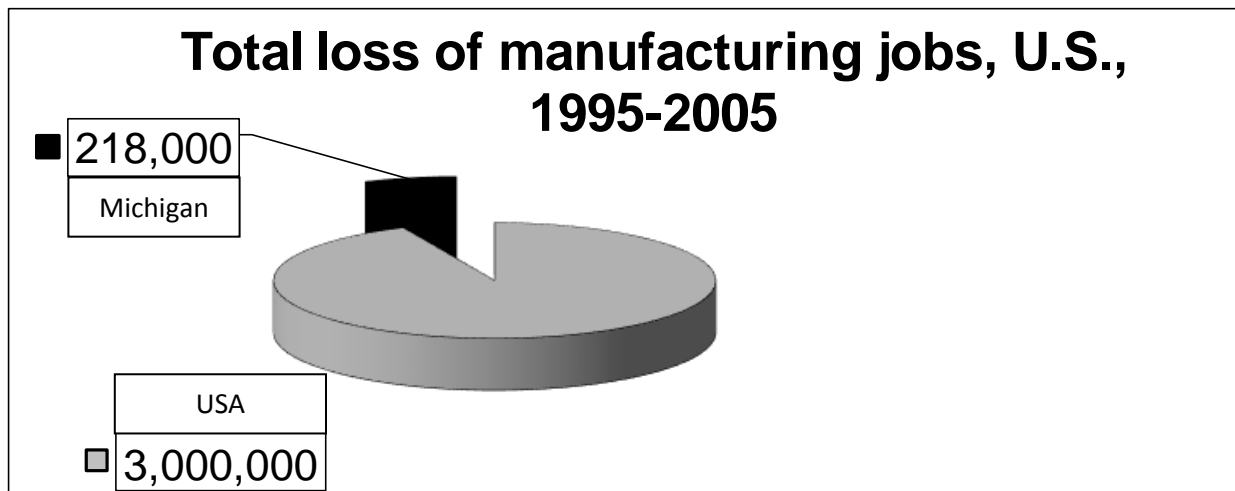


Table 1 – Total loss of manufacturing jobs, U.S. (1995-2005)

Between years 2000-2005 alone, more than one-third of the nation’s loss of manufacturing jobs were specifically seen in seven of the Great Lakes states, including Michigan, Illinois, Indiana, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin (Friedhoff, A. and Wial, H., 2006). Fast forward

to years 2005-2015 and more of the same: Michigan reported losses of 68,000 more manufacturing jobs, representing the sector's highest number of total jobs lost over time for the state, most of that being considered – unskilled labor. Health care overtook manufacturing resultantly as the new, lead employment sector in Michigan (Gardner, 2008) at that time.

A painful transition for some who recognized or remembered how factory work had laid the foundation for the state's middle class generations ago in Michigan, as people with - and without - high school diplomas made careers on automotive-related assembly lines (Gallagher, 2018). Some things had changed; some had not. General Motors Company (GM) returned to top the list in Michigan as the state's largest employer with 52,811 full-time employees as of January, 2018. Interestingly enough, the state's next largest employer was GM's own' industry competitor of the same field in automotive making - Ford Motor Company, which reported in with 48,000 more employees, followed by the State of Michigan, with 44,540 employees. Hospitals and hospital systems had dropped back down, making up the remaining 34.6 percent of the top 26 companies and organizations on the list (2018).

Michigan's largest employee increases reported during the time of January, 2017 were still in manufacturing, by Dow Chemical Company, based out of Midland, Michigan, which reported a 20.6 percent increase in Michigan employees from January 2016-January 2017. The states' preference for supplying manufacturing seemed to be matched by its own workforce's love and consistent demand for factory type work and "unskilled" labor supply, a condition that Forbes magazine went on to rank accordingly – 47<sup>th</sup> (Gallagher, 2018) as an economic category.

Michigan's "workforce" statistics and rankings raised questions but none more than the end disposition of its people. What was meant by that was that the findings reflected a pattern of non-beguiling type titles, names and descriptions for Michigan employees in manufacturing and

the field of automotive making. For example, instead of “talent” and or “talent base”, what were seen were terms like “the help”, “entry-level employees”, “labor”, “labor supply” and “human capital”. That seemed like a disconnect, one that was observed to not be reminiscent of an industry or field that might not have totally understood that its chief asset was its people.

The next subsection of “higher education” would focus in on that same ideal of “employee value” a bit more thematically. Michigan’s workforce inhabitants or “talent”, would be looked at more individually in relation to their own aptitude and career progression. That was believed to be one way to approach the overall situation internally or “inside-out”. The concept was simple: the more people were empowered and provided advanced opportunities, the greater likelihood they could achieve. And, as Michiganders could hypothetically achieve more individually, the sector they inhabited – Michigan’s workforce, could reciprocally in return, plus the state’s industry and Michigan as a whole. As a result, the next section would take that same perspective even further, considering education and training for Michiganders at advanced levels.

### **Higher education**

Understanding the significance of success in postsecondary education and college level studies was likened to almost forecasting the future of sorts, like in how it related back to a state through “educational returns” potentially later. As Michigan students would be old enough to attend college and be considered legal adults, they would be equally just as eligible to academically succeed in higher education and return to share that same educational success back within the state’s own workforce and industry reciprocally. As noted before, the theory was that the more advanced the training and education opportunities provided, the greater likelihood of student success for the future, per student, and within a workforce, industry and Michigan.

When looking at Michiganders as “students”, this section would start to investigate into those same state residents by way of certain values and factors like student composition, interests, demographics, status and more. All were all points of interest to study to hope to unlock certain trends, achievements or even possible shortcomings within the field of education in Michigan as a whole. What was wondered first, as a caveat, was how Michigan education stacked up in higher education levels versus others.

Michigan ranked 34<sup>th</sup>, according to Gallagher (2018), an overall rating received, “on average”, for the state in comparison to all other 50 in the America, at that time, in postsecondary education. Michigan’s ranking was indicative of a statewide collection during the same time period whereas student registrations for college “in-state” Michigan totaled 496,005 (Center for Educational Performance and Information, 2017), 244,751 of that reported as students enrolled within a “degree-seeking” program at a 4-year college or university in Michigan.

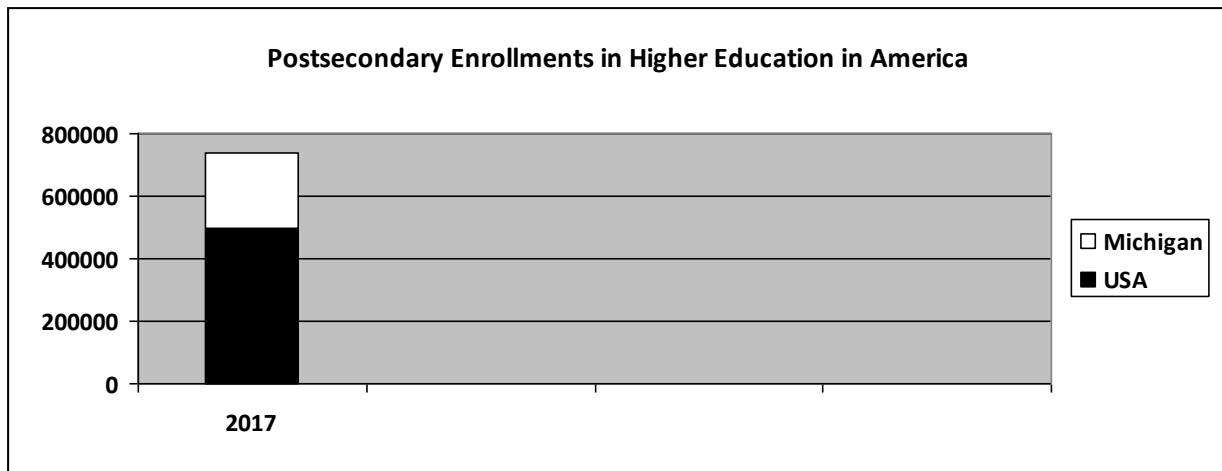


Table 2 – Postsecondary Enrollment in Higher Education in America (2017)

Looking at the numbers, it was wondered what others felt too about the importance of higher education in Michigan, especially at it related to the future economic status in contrast to Michigan’s future outlook, which was why the following quote was added: “increasing degree attainment in Michigan was critical to achieve the goal of raising household income for all.”

(Michigan Future Incorporated, 2017, p 2). Recalling the last section about workforce development, whereas “per-capita” income was reportedly believed to be a main variable of consideration, suddenly a plausible relationship had appeared.

Others in the field had corroborated the assertion from Michigan Future Incorporated that education and industry were interrelated or supposed to be and not existing independent of one another within the larger economic landscape. But, all indications for Michigan showed otherwise, with little to no real signs of alignment between the two areas in-state, showing data yields that further refuted any indications of interdependence between again - education and industry. Suspicions rose as did the necessity to investigate the situation further. But, for then what was needed was to learn more about higher education as it related to field composition, like demographical data about students’ ages, genders, degree preferences along with their respective class sizes, percentages, enrollment and notable increase or decreases over time.

Between fall of 2005 to fall of 2015 in Michigan, student enrollment in postsecondary education increased across the board, including 14% for full time students, 15% for part-time, 17% for males, 12% for females, 15% for students under age 25, 13% for those over (Snyder, Brey and Dillow, 2018).

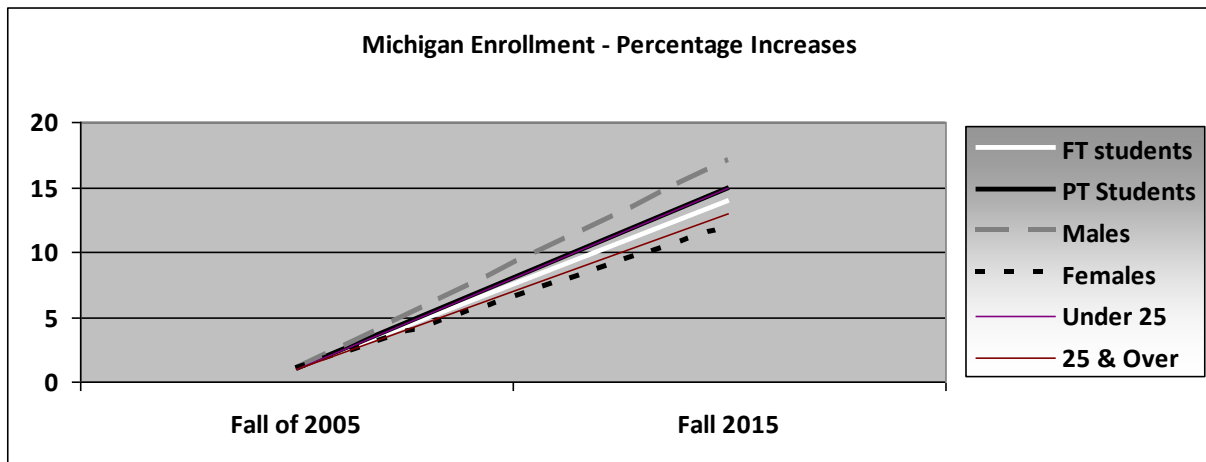


Table 3 – Michigan Enrollment – Percentage Increases (2005-2015)



And, those weren't the only increases reported at the postsecondary levels over the last decade.

From both 2004–05 and again in 2014–15 (the last year of actual data), the number of degrees conferred increased at all levels in Michigan, although the state itself only earned a ranking of 32nd nationwide for adults with a four-year degree or more (2018). Associate's degrees completed "in-state" rose 46% higher in 2014–15 than in 2004–05, as the number of bachelor's degrees rose by 32%. Gallagher (2018) reported that of all Michigan residents in fact, 27% total held bachelor's degrees (during those time periods reported) as the number of master's degrees rose by 31%. What was wondered was what specific fields of concentration were most aptly sought by all students, not just Michiganders alone, but across the entire U.S. and at the graduate levels especially.

It was the MBA or master's of business administration; that was what CBS News had found through its own research in their special aired as "Money-watch" (2017). Specifically, the MBA had been reported to be the most sought after degree in the United States, one that had captured single-handedly 22.3% of the total degree market domestically, including 14.3% for males, plus 11.4% for females (O'Shaughnessy, 2010). Another source corroborated CBS news' findings further by stating that graduate business programs were the most popular master's degrees in the country; and, as online educational opportunities grew, that it was no surprise that the popularity of web-based master's degrees in business had equally grown at nearly the same pace as campus-based programs (Best Colleges, 2017). That same source went on to note that the MBA was most popular, but that there still were other options out there too in business at the graduate levels too.

That's when things first started to heat up as the study's proposal finally took shape after hearing affirmation that there were other options to the MBA. What was wondered though was if the MBA was so successful and competitive nation-wide within the field of business, then why wasn't the state of Michigan. In other words, Michigan students sought after the MBA just as much on average as students from all other states in America, graduated at the same rates and were tracked to had completed those same degrees both in-state and remained in-state thereafter to enter Michigan's workforce and industries for decades. So, why wasn't business in-state Michigan just as successful and competitive as the degree that had trained them?

To the author, whether the MBA was considered the most popular or sought after degree by Michiganders, especially at the graduate level, was interesting but immaterial. There was no proof that if business education was doing well, that commerce would too, as Michigan seemed to have proven as of late within its lead industry of "manufacturing". What was theorized was that if business education was truly aligned to the current state's needs, constantly evolving, in tune with the ever changing tides of a global market place, changes in technology and the need to be striving for constant economic growth through increased education and training, that there was still hope; but, that would be contingent on Michigan to be ready for it, for change.

It was important to see what could be done from afar, as somewhat of an observer, advocate and believer in business and education for Michigan, to merely identify some viable options for the state to consider and explore themselves for the future. That was how the master's of arts and leadership (MAL) was first identified as an opportunity, since higher education in-state continued to show signs of growth, but the Michigan did not. Michigan didn't appear to be benefitting from its own investment in business education arguably. So, change seemed more than warranted along with identifying some other options to the MBA for the future.

Consequently, the MAL was explored further and expound on more in the section of “theory and analysis” below.

### **Theory and Analysis**

With the literature review complete, all results were tallied and expressed with a few things readily apparent and some things still not. Outstanding concerns, confusion or remaining questions were hence moved to the respective section of “questions”, with notes placed about any possible shortcomings associated in another section titled “data limitations”, both to follow. For all the rest of the study findings, it was found that enough evidence was found to substantiate the study premise and continue on to look specifically at what those results were for the areas reviewed in contrast to how the research question was posed about them, which was next.

Variables of lead industry, workforce development and higher education all showed signs of performance type issues, concerns and or potential problems for Michigan. That was readily apparent during the prescribed times of said study and within the context of how the research question was posed, aka – no overall state ranking of “top 10 or above in the nation” was earned by Michigan over the last 5 years, or even thereafter. The variable of higher education seemed to reflect growth in-state while Michigan did not; corresponding rankings reflected those results for higher education individually and the state of Michigan collectively.

The decision was to construct a problem statement with the intent of to find out why, why did Michigan appear to no longer be performing economically successful within its own lead industry of manufacturing, through its own in-state workforce and also within the field of education too, all over the same time periods. Those were the answers hoping to be unveiled and answered by the problem statement posed, in contrast to how the research question was again phrased.

**Problem statement**

Michigan's economy didn't appear to be growing, economically viable, nor reflecting any conspicuous signs of change or adaptation for the demands of a 21<sup>st</sup> century market economy of the future. Upon more careful review of state records, statistics and longitudinal studies, it appeared that Michigan had developed some type of "industry-driven", economic dependency upon manufacturing to the state's own detriment - since that same reliance was found to be contrary to Michigan's own business model, preparatory services and future progression. Meaning, education and industry didn't appear correlated, working together for the better good of the state, which was alarming since education flourished and grew but Michigan did not.

**Methodology**

A mixed-method approach was utilized to gather, analyze and assess all data findings of said study, ranging from published reports, periodicals, scholarly journals, census data and more. To strengthen the validity of the overall project, interviews were completed qualitatively, coupled with limited amounts of further observation over time, both directly and indirectly, although not coded for measurement purposes here due to time restraints (to follow under "data limitations" later).

**Questions**

It was believed that to pose a meaningful research question would be predicated on the notion of first identifying a meaningful issue in which to explore. That happened here, arguably, after years and years of observation, theorizing and experience within the field and state itself, the author was finally of the opinion that it was important enough to study an issue such as societal economics for the state of Michigan. What was found though was not at all conclusive; so, as alluded to earlier, this section was formed as a means to explore further any of the author's

premeditations or remaining questions felt, along with any new ones discovered along the way up till this point.

Questions ranged from the amount of validity and reliability the end study might have since it was more quantitatively composed versus qualitatively tested, to - how success was to be measured or measureable beyond that of just attempting to get the final answers to the specific research question. In addition, there were questions about time, resources and the ability to remain within the scope of said project with such a large issue potentially. Subject matter, along with the data available in the field were concerns, along with if such was not found to be current enough to truly make enough impact. And lastly, the largest question was the amount of reception and interest a study such as this could garner. In other words, in a pro-union, known to be pro-automotive making type state for years, if said study here was read, reviewed and or released in-state, would residents even want to read it, or refute to just attack it?

Did Michiganders know about the economic status of their state and just didn't care or understand the long term effects of industrial downsizing, job relocations overseas, the emergence and reliance on computers, technology and robotics within the field of manufacturing of the future and in-state? What then? Were those same people too native to "see the forest through the trees" or to have believed that "denial was a river in Egypt?" What if Michigan's workforce had been made "unskilled", fabricated over time like the factories in which they worked? Would these same people, Michigan's workforce, be able to accept a short-term trade off and further sacrifice to return to school for example instead of collecting a paycheck in contrast? What if Michiganders, on the majority, within manufacturing, couldn't afford change?

That became the author's own question and battle within himself to accept, that Michigan had possibly "dug its own grave" by relying solely on an industry that had created a type of

reoccurring cycle of sorts, intra-state over time, to Michigan's own peril, one not allowing a potential escape route. In the mind of the author, manufacturing in Michigan had started to become lessoned to that of an "economic black hole" of sorts, even though previously it had truly helped build the same state's economy – in Michigan. Seeing the status of where it all was at present in contrast to where it was previously and forward into the future, the final questions was this: was it worth it?

### **Data limitations**

Questions turned answers as data transitioned to measureable results for the most part, including the documented support that was needed to justify said study and or its success. But, the study here was not without its share of shortcomings. Many questions remained unanswered, many more outside the scope of further investigation and some considered vital but lacking the necessary documentation to support their arguments. Because the study was not a university type funded project, that was believed to be a large limitation, especially upon the hopes of future study replication since no actual focus group testing, study or qualitative type analysis could be further afforded at that time. Reliability and validity were left in question as a result, with the only hope that similar research in the future had the funding to address and correct that data limitation.

Bias was considered another potential data limitation as it was theorized to be a realistic threat to study success since the writer hailed from the same state of the study focus – Michigan, along with being a recent graduate of an ongoing master's of arts and leadership program, which was to serve as the foundation for the study proposal – to follow. That wasn't taken lightly, the fact that the author had an inside look and even first-hand information about the situation concerning the economic status of Michigan. It was theorized though that in the end it would all

come down still to the author's ability to try and walk the line between what had been seen, known and learned about the situation through his own lens and experience, to still present it along with all other competing information as objectively as possible.

In the end, it was all left in the hands of the reader to decide, to have made up their own minds about what they had read or learned here. Only they, the audience, would know what they were to do next, like to research the situation further to corroborate or question the study findings, continue the study farther into the future to progress the situation even more or do nothing. As it related to change, it seemed to be somewhat contagious in Michigan to not question or seek change within the lead industry of Michigan's manufacturing, especially in automotive making. But, this study still tried to at least pose an interesting argument to question that stigma or "status quo" going forward, both for the sake of progress and economic success of Michigan.



## **Discussion**

Actual commentary, criticism and uncorroborated statistics found were retained till here, including any incidental ideas, information, data and future forecasts that lacked supporting documentation. All would finally have their own time, place and emphasis together in this section, along with the author's own insights into his thought process throughout, complimented by that of public opinion. It was important to note that as all these things came together in this one section because many sources and source information just couldn't be verified, like from where the data had originated from, if it was recent, reliable, valid, based upon other studies or other empirical evidence. Resultantly, any of those same results alluded to previously within the literature review section were prefaced for a reason, but to be expressed here too.

### **Author perspective**

It was feared that over time the greater the supply and accessibility to more work within the manufacturing industries in Michigan had created a cycle. All Michiganders were reportedly given equal opportunity and consideration thankfully, as work was plentiful, provided with no pre-employment qualification, to have become known as "unskilled" work, types of labor and labor practices. Competitors couldn't equal it, what Michigan manufacturers had achieved. As an industry, manufacturing in Michigan had done its job, had won – always, and basically seemed like it had done its own "homework" of sorts realizing the one simple fact of business: provide steady supply to meet or exceed demand, or create it. Michiganders took it in, voluntarily, and consequently remained at that same "unskilled" level for decades within the manufacturing industry in Michigan. And so, as times changed and the world evolved, that was believed why Michigan's economy could not, in any of the three economic variables measured, especially within its workforce, its employees, people, "talent" and residents of the state.

## **Public Opinion**

U.S. Federal Bureau of Labor Statistics reported that many basic production jobs were “declining by 2026” (Gardner, 2008). Maybe that was why Howes (2017) wrote that the underlying effects of technology had left human labor in its wake; that was written when describing Michigan’s workforce and their status in-state. Others, like Amazon, cited concerns specific to Michigan’s workforce and the “type” of labor supply the state provided, citing that as the reason why the city of Detroit was left off its – Amazon’s, list of finalists for consideration of its second headquarters to be placed in Michigan. Others were a bit more critical, writing that Michigan’s economic status was a result of its people’s own affluence, arrogance and complacency, according to the US News and World Report (2017).

Charles Ballard, an economist at Michigan State University, had this to say about the amounts of job loss specifically seen and reported for Michigan over the years, especially as a reflection of the status of Michigan’s workforce: “...a lot of those were in the auto industry - had gone away". "If they hadn't, they were certainly endangered (Gardner, 2008). If you lived in Michigan and still held out for hope that new factory jobs would bring high pay and middle-class benefits back to the state, Ballard attested that it was time to reset expectations, as that scenario was no longer going to happen - at least if that vision involved workers with no education beyond high school (Gardner, 2018). Differently, this was found: places in the knowledge economy would require young people to be more educated, not less, to compete with their mind, not their back (Howes, 2017).

Despite all job losses for Michigan’s workforce, manufacturing remained a major driver of the economy of the Great Lakes region (Friedhoff, A. and Wial, H., 2006), although manufacturing job losses were a major reason for slow, overall job growth, and sometimes

overall job losses in the Great Lakes metropolitan areas. Still, employment gains in high-wage, advanced service industries, which occurred in all but one of the 25 metropolitan areas studied, were not large enough to offset the loss of manufacturing jobs in most other areas and industries (Friedhoff, A. and Wial, H., 2006), that including Michigan.

The mass middle class used to be high-paid factory workers (Gardner, 2018). Today though, a lot of those (unskilled) jobs aren't high-paying (2018) at all. The real problem for Michigan, was that both political parties still touted bringing factory jobs back as a solution for residents wanting more middle-class job options, without outlining the skill levels (2008) associated, and neglecting the possibility of attracting and developing other new, white collar or technical “skilled” type jobs, employment and alternatives.

As for Michigan’s relationship with manufacturing and state’s love of automotive making, the US News and World Report (2017) wrote that the American automotive industry had to adjust to global trends and events which - for a time, decimated the U.S. economy. Affecting the state of Michigan arguably more than most, the threat of reoccurrence seemed equally an important consideration going forward, although the U.S. News and World Report hadn’t mentioned that, nor anyone in the state of Michigan from what was researched and studied here.

Change seemed warranted for Michigan, something newfound where people understood the current state of Michigan’s economic status in contrast to what the state could become in the future. That would mean development, more training, education and a shift in leadership focus in not just business, but training, business education and economic values and legislation, a comprehensive plan and investment. But, it was all believed to start at the employee levels, those making the conscious decisions first about what vocation they had selected and or what

education in which they pursued or neglected too. From there, it was up to have been up to employers also to have placed more emphasis on training, ongoing education, career progression and valuing Michigan's workforce as true "talent", those best to be enabled to enact change in the future, to have been "...inspired to reach their true potential." (Best Colleges, 2017, p.4).

Higher education in Michigan for some, like Gallagher (2018), was found to remain below average, something that others cited as a clear decline in state achievement (Blanchi, 2017). In fact, Ann Arbor-based non-profit - Michigan Future announced the findings of a report about Michigan's educational structure titled "Improving Student Outcomes from Education, Birth to College." In that report was offered several proposed adjustments on how to better prepare students for future careers, such as the proposition of overhauling educational priorities and pushing for higher education (2017). The report, reviewed by Michigan Future's president – Lou Glazer, also denoted the volatility of Michigan's economy to note.

Postsecondary education returns had skyrocketed over the past 40 years in-state Michigan according to Michigan Future Incorporated in April, 2017, citing that college degrees in general, and four-year degrees in particular, had been considered almost pre-requisites to have entered the middle-class (2017). Did supply equal future demand though for Michigan? The National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) indicated yes, as student enrollment at degree-granting institutions for higher education in Michigan were reported to expectantly set new records from fall 2020 through fall 2026.

Specifically, between fall 2015 to fall 2026, higher education in Michigan enrollment for students under age 25 was expected to grow by 17 more percent, compared with 8 percent more for students age 25 and over (Snyder, Brey and Dillow, 2018). And, that pattern was expected to continue in the coming years (2018) too: "All business fields were projected to grow over the

next several years, careers that typically required an online organizational leadership master's degree were projected to increase at equal or faster rates, than positions that required only a bachelor's degree. In some fields, such as human resources and administration, leadership positions were projected to grow at rates four times faster than specialist positions" (Best Colleges, 2017, p 3).

With all these things above in mind, what was to follow in the next section were some ideas for the future that could hypothetically meet that same student supply in Michigan for higher education, by trying to adapt the requisite training to meet those same students' needs, but that of Michigan. That would mean finding a degree program that could bridge almost between education and industry in Michigan specifically, doing something believably different than had even been seen in-state, hence eliminating the MBA from further consideration consequently (because after reviewing current business practicum for in-class and online MBA offerings, there still lacked any noticeable changes from past offerings, no changes found).

What was believed needed was something new, different and unique, able to be personally tailored to the given situation and or university's needs that could help get industry and higher education in-line, working together for the better good of Michigan economically in the future. With that in mind, the other selectee found was identified to be the best fit for Michigan going further – enter the MAL at graduate level for the future of Michigan with a corresponding plan proposal to follow below.

### **Recommendations**

First, it was recommended to study the economic status of Michigan further. To truly learn how to best address and correct a situation so complex, it was theorized that what was needed were vast amounts of greater, long term resources and budgeting to conduct more qualitative type testing in the future here, including that composed of focus groups. That would mean an investment, one that could not only afford to contribute and conduct more research within the field but that could also couple that theoretical idea with some actual application in the meantime. Consequently, what was also recommended – second, was a plan to help Michigan in the short to mid-term that could start eliciting change and progress. To help Michigan and its people, the “talent”, to evolve was believed imperative, which meant more training and education type offerings, especially field specific within “business” were recommended here and at the graduate level.

### **Plan proposal**

It was proposed to start a new MAL program at a select university – TBD, in the future within the state of Michigan. Whatever university in Michigan interested and correspondingly selected, would be considered that “host” school, set to provide all necessary resources, facility use, program oversight and measurement, with another institution to be brought in called the “deliverer” to form a type of co-operative program with. The deliverer would provide the program administration for the first two years, to include all course content, classes, scheduling and instructional personnel to note, whether as an “online” method, which was suggested, through an “in-class” option or a mix of both through a hybrid type methodology. Total expenses would be shared between the “host” institution and the program “deliverer” over the duration of that same 2 year type of “test period” so as to observe, make notes, acclimate and assess.

To note, the MAL was proposed to be offered and or administered in multiple phases contingent on program approval at each stage. In other words, the overall project proposal was actually broken up into four basic phases starting here, with Phase I – Concept Approval, in which interest and input were both set to be gathered and gauged to see if subsequent phases were even warranted to continue on. For more details about other subsequent phases of the MAL plan proposal or components there, various information was additionally enclosed here, to include the MAL – Interest Survey (Appendix I), the MAL – Fact Sheet (Appendix II), hardcopy handouts of the actual “visual presentation of the MAL - Project Proposal – “Transforming Business Leaders” (Appendix III) and more.

### Conclusion

To summarize, the state of Michigan was studied to determine the status of its economy through three main variables: lead industry, workforce development and higher education. Data, statistics, state ranking, various ratings and reports were all conferred, along with that of public opinion to determine if Michigan's economy was truly performing or not - project success would depend on it, as would leveraging the ability to answer the following research question below.

*“Was the state of Michigan considered economically viable and competitive within the American marketplace in terms of lead industry, workforce development and higher education? If so, was Michigan holding a commanding position to substantiate that, along with attaining an overall domestic ranking within the top 10 in the nation over the last 5 years? Or, did Michigan's economy appear to be lagging behind others in the U.S., stagnated or digressing, reflecting ratings more “middle of the pack” and 25<sup>th</sup> or below on average out of all 50 states?”*

Through a mixed-method approach and analysis, review of the study commenced with a brief introduction, followed by the announcement of the research question above, which seemed to serve as the premise for the study overall. From there, all quantitative data and statistics were compiled and expressed within the literature review section, looking at key areas previously identified like industry, where Michigan's largest employer – General Motors (GM) was first learned, along with the state's lead industry, which was in manufacturing. There was an indisputable preference and trend within the field of automotive making for Michigan identified also, which was not surprising.

What was considered most significant to learn about industry in Michigan was that there were other economic metrics, methods of measurement and evaluation already used within the field nationally in the United States. And, those same metrics had not been pre-identified before



study initiation here. Hence, they were rigorously assessed and researched further, so as to assess the source, quality, reliability and validity; they all were found to be official and incorporated. It was not only vital to learn of those same four metrics, but to see the accompanying values and rankings for Michigan nationally in contrast to other states from within those values, which was reportedly as follows: overall economic output (12<sup>th</sup> – 2018), state payroll (\$27,405 – 2015, 3% drop), per-capita income (30<sup>th</sup> – 2015, down 16%, 8% below national average) and unemployment (42<sup>nd</sup> – 2018, 4.8%, below national average). The results about Michigan's industry didn't seem to be reflect success in any of the four categories above nor within the first variable assigned of "industry". The next variable up hence was "workforce development".

Michigan's workforce or "workforce development", delved farther into industry by looking more distinctly at the people in which composed it, the "talent" as they were referred to here, the employees and labor supply for Michigan industry. What was learned about Michigan's workforce was that the "majority" were identified as "unskilled", having a preference towards factory work as documented statistically throughout Michigan's manufacturing industry and within the field of automotive making; what was most significant to learn about it though was the amount of jobs lost there over time - 3 million total jobs lost domestically, 218,000 just in Michigan alone which was believed to be the largest loss suffered by one state.

Higher education was the last variable to be assessed upon Michigan's economic performance within the literature review section, which reflected various results about postsecondary education and academic results for Michiganders in-state. A plethora of information was found, including long term – longitudinal type studies, various other statistics, data and reports based off meta-analysis and more; and, all were readily accessible from lead educational agencies at both the state and federal levels.

Specifically, what was seen for higher education was information about students' status, enrollment (496,005), annual increases, graduation rates, demographics, degrees conferred, amount of students registered in degree-seeking programs at an in-state university (244,751) and importantly, the most popular or "in-demand" degrees preferred by students, especially at the graduate level, which was the MBA or master's in business administration, for both males and females, that had managed to capture 22.3% of the entire degree seeking market, the largest percentage.

Learning what degrees were most popular for not just American students, but for Michiganders was significant to for a few reasons. For one, it was recalled that business was the same field that the state of Michigan was believed to have been experiencing a preponderance of problems with over time. Consequently, a problem statement quickly took form acknowledging that fact, as a corresponding plan to address and or correct equally was designed. And two, learning what degree was the most popular across the nation at the graduate level – MBA, was equally significant to learn because the plan proposal was beset on making a recommendation for a business type degree for the future that was able to evolve over time, was newfound, different, unique and hence, not the same course content that had been potentially contributing to the chronic problems Michigan had been experiencing for years.

What was most significant to learn about higher education in Michigan was that education seemed to be flourishing and growing, but the state was not, economically. That was considered a dichotomy in need of further study thus. In the meantime, there appeared to be some sort of disconnect or lack of correlation between higher education and industry in Michigan, what was to become known here as a lack of "economic alignment" of sorts. Identifying that lack of correlation as a problem in fact, the problem statement articulated it as

the plan proposal prepared to assess and address it further. Regardless, Michigan's higher education earned the overall ranking nationally of 34<sup>th</sup> in higher education, which still failed to make the top 10 nationally ranking in the U.S. to have the state be considered as economically successful.

With the literature review section completed, what followed was the theory and analysis section. This was where the problem statement was first unveiled, basically hypothesizing that Michigan had developed some sort of economic dependency on that same lead industry - manufacturing, which was not allowing the state the ability to truly grow and develop as a result. Again, as education showed signs of growth, Michigan did not, which was identified as a problem because of a potential "dependency" and lack of development there with Michigan's unskilled workforce within industry. The previous theory of "economic alignment" seemed to be reinforced, as more evidence and examples of how Michigan industry and education seemed to not be co-existing, interdependent upon each other nor working together for the better good of Michigan was exposed.

The methodology section followed, which remained at a constant throughout the study as being once again a mixed-method approach of qualitative analysis, coupled and supported by even more quantitative assessment and expression. After that, the section of "questions" was up, which delved into review of various questions left unanswered by the time of study completion. Other questions considered relative but outside the scope of said study and even some unrelated that lent scale, background or perspective about Michigan's economy and history were still included in this section along with some originating directly from the author.

To ensue was the section titled "data limitations", where the author shared many examples of things that held the project up, were missed or missed for a reason, were not

substantiated but needed to have been, or were just considered a hindrance to overall project reliability, validity and success; and, there were many. For one, there were very little qualitative data found or qualitative analysis used over the course of the study, including focus group type observation, survey or testing. Consequently, the project was felt almost compromised at times due to the fact that some study results could not be coded, verified, re-tested and thus replicated in the future. That was considered significant, as further research was believed to still be needed to try and strengthen that study weakness and data limitation for the future.

A discussion section was included at this point, one enabling potentially more “open” type conversation from the author and within the realm of public opinion. The section itself was separated from that of the actual literature review section as time went on, which was considered to be a truly significant move or shift that was not pre-planned in advance. What that did was something interesting though as it allowed a dedicated space, emphases, time and priority for any information, data or commentary that was deemed relevant and applicable to be included, even if it was not factual, proven or substantiated, like future forecasts, rankings from unknown sources and other opinion found in non-scholarly type periodicals and the Internet. All were still included to allow all an overall perspective to be still presented for the reader.

To finish up was the recommendation section last, where a plan proposal to add on a newfound master’s of arts and leadership (MAL) practicum and co-operative for the future was finally proposed, coupled with a brief program overview, supplemented by other program information and literature to be found here in the study Appendixes.

What was considered most significant about the plan proposal was the amount of fresh perspective it brought, the hope it created for the future for Michigan in business by considering something different finally in how business could be approached going further as it related to the

methods studies and or even applied later in the field conversely. Forging an argument that the MBA may not have been truly the best fit anymore for Michigan economically took center stage as the MBA was later dropped from further consideration for the plan proposal here. What was made room for was the MAL, which substantiated evidence of the ability to provide more of what the state of Michigan needed for the future, including more effective training, education, leadership and perspective. The final determination for the MAL was made after learning of the MAL's versatility to be personally tailored to the educational institution's own needs, the adaptability to keep up with current and future trends to transition further over time, something the MBA refused to acknowledge or consider doing, to "evolve".

Lastly, as the study was completed the largest questions that still remained were these: was the study successful? A subjective type of interpretation, indeed, but broken down further the author felt a couple things imperative to know by the time the study was concluded, like this too: was the research question answered? Was the problem statement considered valid? Was the plan proposal delivered in a way that was believed to be realistic and effective? And, did everything presented contribute back to the field for further investigation and study? Up to the audience to decide all that for themselves, but the author did decide to lend his own perspective too, which was to follow next.

### **Concluding statement**

The project was considered an overall success. Bias was minimized, as thereby a believably objective representation about the economic status for the state of Michigan was shown. The research question was asked and answered as not showing any evidence of Michigan earning rankings specifically within the top 10 in the nation overall, on average, for the time

periods covered, nor within the key economic areas of concern: lead industry, workforce development and higher education over the last 5 years in question.

Moreover, the problem statement appeared valid, as the state of Michigan did appear to have a sort of economic reliance upon manufacturing, proven by reflection of state records which clearly noted manufacturing as lead industry for Michigan and along with the majority of the workforce found to be within that realm. And finally, the project proposal was determined to be realistic, given the amount of leeway it allowed a host institution that a typical MBA did not. Resultantly, Michigan was not found to be economically successful, but with the addition of the MAL program for the future, was believed to be a first step in the right direction to start changing that economic status potentially in the future.

A central theory was that education and industry in Michigan were not correlated. In other words, both did not appear to be working together for the better good for the state. In the name of progression, it was believed that Michigan had voluntarily proven a reliance upon factory type work that was deemed “unskilled”, easily dispensable, unreliable and debilitating, creating a reoccurring cycle for Michiganders that was possibly inescapable. Michigan seemed stuck in the mud with no road map to further growth or upgrading considerations to have been found. The state either needed help, money or glasses believably.

### **Final thoughts**

It just didn't make sense hearing Michigan lawmakers still trying to make promises of finding and providing even more factory work in the future for the state anymore. Was that to continue to feed the dependency created, bandaid and triage the problem instead of fixing it? That question sadly, would not be answered here. But, one thing that was believed could in the future was the simple idea to consider a change by way of legislation in Michigan, one that could

garner at least a lot more believable job security, commitment by employers long term and continuity overall until real economic recovery was felt back in Michigan once more.

Simply put, it was hoped that in the future Michigan would consider dropping its “At-Will” status for employment in-state, which was the law that allowed employees to be fired, let go, laid off and or dismissed without notice, and instead consider enforcing some type of contractual work obligations between employers in industry with their “talent base” or workforce. Couple that with an investment over time in the plan proposal for the MAL to start making positive change, getting education and industry finally correlated to work together, plus Michiganders willing to make more educated decisions about how newfound, “skilled” and “technical” employers and work were to be attracted to Michigan for which to partake, and yes, growth could ensue. The cycle of dependency could be broken finally in Michigan and possibly get the state progressing.

## Appendix I

### MAL - Interest Survey

*Disclaimer: the following is an unofficial questionnaire to be administered to undergraduates at a respective university so as to gauge students' future plans of possibly going on for further graduate studies. It, the survey, can be administered in-person, by email, fax or returned via normal U.S. postal service as long as the student's return contact information can later be validated.*

#### Questionnaire

1. Is your currently enrolled as an undergraduate actively enrolled and completing a degree?
2. Is your current major within a business field (aka economics, business, administration or something else applicable)?
3. Are you considering furthering your education at the graduate level?
4. Are you aware of the differences between a master's of business administration and a master's of arts and leadership at the graduate level?
5. Were you aware that a new master's of arts and leadership program was being proposed at your university for the future?
6. If a master's of arts and leadership was approved for your university in the future, would you be interested to know more information about it?

Student completing the questionnaire

First/last name \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Cell/Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Return all survey's to the following: Camp Tisdale, via Shane Tisdale, [shane.tisdale@uj.edu](mailto:shane.tisdale@uj.edu), mail to 5859 W. Saginaw HWY, #235, Lansing, MI. 48917, Fax to: (517) 321-1756 or call (517) 282-0651 for more information



## **Appendix II**

### **MAL – Fact Sheet**

#### **Background**

The online master's in organizational leadership is similar to the MBA in that it prepares graduates for management-level positions within an organization, but organizational leadership focuses more on personnel management strategies, workplace psychology, and communication. An MBA, by comparison, hones skills in analytical decision making, quantitative methods, and business strategy. Many modern organizations seek out managers who work with staff members on an emotional level. Most online master's of organizational leadership degrees teach students about ...the value of employee welfare. (Best Colleges, 2017).

#### **Mission Statement:**

Identify the need and address it; if already being addressed, assess it. If it can be further developed, supplemented and improved, find ways to do that. Study, research and work relentlessly to either identify, find or create newfound ideas, options and unique ways to lead the way and show others that education is key and that training, learning and newfound ways of thinking will save us, like those provided through higher educational offerings. Evolve, welcome in change, adapt and strive to progress, not just to “keep up” but to lead the way to show others it can be done, like through addressing society's need for the master's of leadership program.

#### **Overview**

##### Phase I – Concept Approval

Introduce idea behind starting a new MAL program through visual presentation – either online viewable or downloadable upon request, to gauge interest and gather any additional input, ideas or considerations to allow further plan development and needed changes to warrant the

next phase. Share the MAL – Interest Survey (Appendix I) to do this, along with leaving contact information and the MAL – Fact Sheet (Appendix II)

### Phase II – Program Host/Testing

If concept approval was awarded, officially present and review the actual program offering more specifically, for the future and accompanying information and specifics for hosting of a new, MAL, online offering at a university in Michigan – TBA, starting off as a satellite offering, hosted by the Michigan university for the first two years, to be used as a time of further assessment, evaluation and learning about how the MAL online offering works, to make notes and plans on if the host institution would like to thereby host their own MAL program for the future (Phase III, to follow. pending interest and more information available then – upon request)

### Phase III – Program Adoption/Offering

If Phase II testing was a success, consider Phase III here of adopting the MAL program officially to the college and offering it themselves in the future as the end goal, either online, in-class or a mixture “hybrid” option.

### **Measurement**

- Enrollment – numbers, gross and future increases possibly, tracked
- Retention rates – returning students, alumni, until course completion
- Tuition – dollars raised/registration revenues
- Publishings – student or teacher - throughout
- Referrals
- Survey results – and program satisfaction rates
- Performance evaluations and appraisals – program/faculty/staff
- Course/program assessments

- Test/quiz scores/marks/grades – cumulative GPA
- College input/feedback/satisfaction – Staff, Faculty, Administration
- Program growth and development – increased budgeting, awards, thanks
- Ranking – program – nationally, including accreditation
- Graduation rates
- Awards – students, program, and or faculty and or staff, kudos, achievements
- Graduates’ success, other to note and alumni
- Graduate employment upgrades/promotions etc.
- Job placement rates – post graduation

**Contact info.**

Program POC/Proposer: Shane Tisdale, Master’s of Leadership, U.J.,

Shane Tisdale, 4309 W. Saginaw HWY, #4, Lansing, MI. 48917

Cell: (517) 377-5339 or Phone: (517) 282-0651

Email: [tisdales@mail.lcc.edu](mailto:tisdales@mail.lcc.edu) or [shane.tisdale@uj.edu](mailto:shane.tisdale@uj.edu)

**Budget**

Cost/Expenses: TBD (pending total amount of credits/course assigned/approved, at 3 credits each), \$150,000 estimated to adopt full program and offer alone

### Appendix III

#### MAL – Project Presentation

**Slide 1** (complete handout packet “available upon request” and viewable online at the following also: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9jCN6q\\_ILSw&t=124s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9jCN6q_ILSw&t=124s))



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**Appendix IV**

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(future spot for sample curriculum or syllabus)

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