

## Guest commentary: Immigrants can help revitalize Michigan

Guest Column — 25 June 2013

By Sara Graham/Global Lansing

Michigan State University and its surrounding community of Lansing-East Lansing are among the Top 10 for largest international student enrollment in the United States. Each fall, more than 6,500 international students — 1,800 of whom are new to the university — arrive in East Lansing. And these growing numbers are boosting other figures — economic ones.



(courtesy photo/used under Creative Commons license)

In 2012, international students contributed \$213 million to the local economy, according to a study done by the Office for International Students and Scholars.

Other comparable communities in the Midwest have expressed hope in attracting immigrants in an effort to help rebound from their population loss over the past five years. Conversely, the Lansing region was one of only two regions in the state to see population growth on the 2010 census — a statistic that was likely affected by the growth of the international student population.

At the recent meeting of similar immigrant-friendly advocates the topics of attraction and retention were heavily stressed. Being home to Michigan State University, the Lansing region has had no problem attracting international talent. Retaining this talent pool, on the other hand, isn't so easy.

The **Global Talent Retention Initiative of Michigan** has been working to track the numbers of students who have received job offers and internships after graduation. Prior to GTRI asking for this data, this information was not regularly tracked.

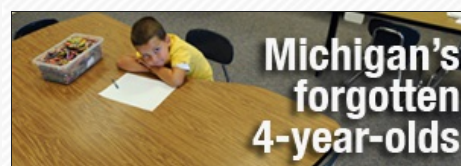
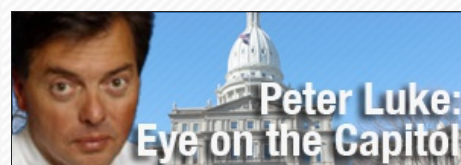
Global Lansing, led by the Lansing Economic Area Partnership (LEAP), is a volunteer committee launched in 2012 as part of a growing movement of similar economic development initiatives across Michigan and the Midwest. On June 6-7, Global Lansing joined its counterparts Global Michigan and **Global Detroit** to help launch a **Global Great Lakes Network** at a two-day event in Detroit. Representatives from similar efforts in Cleveland, Pittsburgh, Dayton, Columbus, Indianapolis, St. Louis and Toledo convened to discuss ways to collaborate and learn from each other.



Sara Graham is director of talent and communications at the

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This kind of new global diversity on our campuses offers wonderful opportunities to connect us to the world — and also requires some adjustments for us to be able to integrate them into our communities. In recent years, our community has begun developing strategies to attract, welcome, and retain this international talent base. This is not limited to international students, but also includes residents, business owners and refugees (currently, there are more than 10,000 refugees living in the Lansing region).

Lansing Economic Area Partnership and is the project manager for Global Lansing.

This past fall, the Global Lansing program “The Getting Started Fellowship” was granted \$20,000 from the Michigan Economic Development Corporation to match international students with local businesses for internships and potential job opportunities.

Another program Global Lansing has begun work on is to develop an international protocol network to welcome international delegations as they visit our region. Michigan State University brought 1,100 international scholars to our community in 2012. This number, in addition to delegates visiting through other channels like the Lansing Regional Sister Cities Commission, Lansing Community College, municipal hosted delegations, etc. has reached a critical mass and is in need of an ongoing strategy.

Michigan is one of the leading Midwest states to create tangible economic development programs that tap into immigrants as job creators. Based on the support from Gov. Rick Snyder and developments in immigration changes at the federal level, future success is about to arrive.

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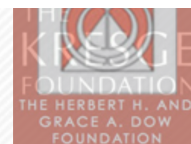


Duane

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Is the purpose of State supported colleges and universities to educate Michigan students or to increase the revenues of local and State businesses? If so, does that change how those schools approach the role of the school?

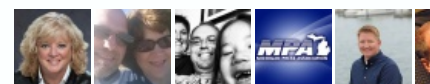
Are the % of transient students (non-residents) in the State schools growing? Are they displacing in State students?



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Is the added revenue (above the in State student tuition) the college/universities receiving affecting how they admit students?

Why were the State colleges created? Were they created by citizens and their representatives for a particular purpose? Has that focus been changed by the college/univ administrations and Boards without the involvement or consent of those who created them?

Is the program to retain immigrant students equivalent to that of retaining resident students?

Many questions are raised by the article, few are answered.

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