

Rachel Jenkin, Student Senate president

Thank you, President Haas. I come here today representing some of the best and brightest students in our state. However, behind our great test scores, high employment rate, and retention efforts, lies struggling students with jeopardizing financial situations. 1 in 3 of our students goes hungry by having to choose rent/ textbooks/ or tuition over food. 40% of our students have reported finances being traumatic or very difficult to handle. When looking towards our government for help in supporting students, we have seen a decrease in state allocations specifically for higher education by almost 40% . In the meantime, GVSU has had to resort to increasing tuition 37% within the past 10 years.

These numbers scare me and they should scare you as well.

When money becomes the biggest barrier to education, it misaligns our priorities and hurts people.

Universities have grown increasingly transactional. Please recognize that we are not selling a product; we are an environment for discovery and curiosity. When financial pressures are now at the forefront of the minds for the majority of our students, they are no longer learning how to become nurses, teachers, or future representatives, they're learning how to sacrifice food, textbooks, and future financial security for something the state can and should be paying more for.

As stated previously, Michigan has sadly shown higher education is not a priority. We've decreased allocations, and in turn, our per capita has steadily decreased over the years whereas peer states like Minnesota have invested double the allocations towards higher education and have been flourishing with a steady increase of per capita for the past 30+ years. As Michigan representatives, as college graduates, as governing officials who made a promise to try and improve this amazing state, invest in us as students and we will invest back into Michigan. Thank you for your attention and dedication, I'm looking forward to change.