

# Fellowship Spotlight: Advancing Postsecondary Education for Adult Learners in Michigan

2024 - 2026



**Dimitri  
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Policy Fellow

Michigan Department of Lifelong Education,  
Advancement, and Potential (MiLEAP)  
Office of Higher Education



# Background

In 2019, Governor Gretchen Whitmer set an ambitious goal of getting 60% of working-aged adults in Michigan a postsecondary credential by 2030. Youth Policy Lab (YPL) hired one of its first Policy Fellows, Avazeh Attari, to work with the Department of Labor and Economic Opportunity (LEO) on this Sixty by 30 goal. Four years later, in 2023, the governor created a new state department, the Michigan Department of Lifelong Education, Advancement, and Potential (MiLEAP), to handle all state education projects outside of K-12. In doing so, Michigan became the last state to create a state higher education body by combining the Sixty by 30 team focused on the governor's attainment goal, along with the MiStudentAid team focused on other state scholarship programs.

Recalling the previous policy fellowship, members of the Sixty by 30 staff reached out to YPL to create a new position. This fellowship was created with MiLEAP and the Office of Higher Education (OHE) team to provide capacity for longer term data projects and goals. Some of these longer term projects included a landscape analysis of transfer students from two to four-year institutions, analyzing compliance around the corequisite mandate within the Reconnect Grant Act, and analyzing the growth of Credit for Prior Learning (CPL) programs for community colleges and outcomes for students. As OHE was brand new with minimal data staff, the fellowship was an ideal partnership for the state to add extra capacity during this transition.

Dimitri Przeslawski was hired as the Policy Fellow for the MiLEAP-YPL partnership in July 2024. Previously, Dimitri worked as a middle school social studies teacher for 3 years in Ann Arbor, Michigan before receiving his master's degree in Education Policy from the Harvard Graduate School of Education in 2024. During his masters, Dimitri was able to complete Education Policy consulting projects with the Massachusetts' Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund, and Miami-Dade Public Schools. This fellowship was an ideal fit for Dimitri as he was able to use his teaching experience along with data skills gained from his graduate studies to address the state's needs. In addition, the fellowship allowed him to acquire valuable experience with state government and state policy.

# Key Accomplishments

## Legislative Report

One of Dimitri's first tasks as a policy fellow was to write a [mandatory legislative report](#) highlighting the successes of OHE throughout its first year of creation, along with an analysis of the factors that go into a high schooler's college decision making process, and recommendations for an OHE data dashboard.

Through his research of statewide and national surveys, he found that affordability, scholarships, and financial aid are typically the leading factors for a student's college decision-making process. He also found that low-income and first-generation students typically rely on online information more than personal guides such as family members or counselors; there are a lot of misconceptions for students around college affordability.

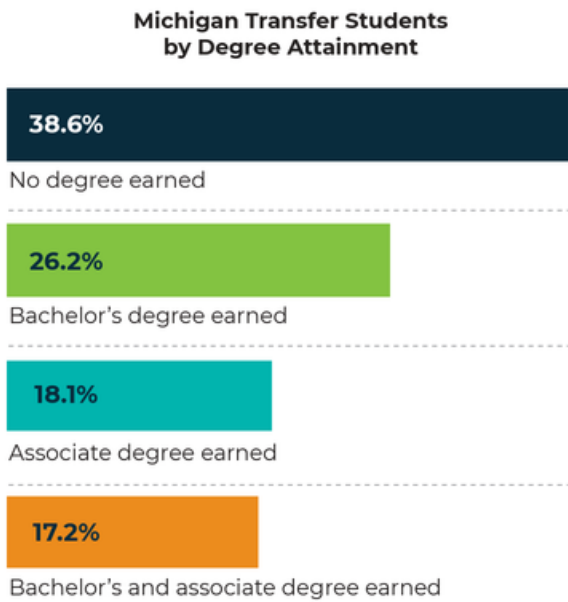
## Transfer Landscape

To aid in the Sixty by 30 goal, the Michigan Legislature created the Transfer Success Project. The goal of this project was to work with 2 and 4-year institutions to facilitate student transfer and credit acceptance. While the state helped sponsor the Michigan Transfer Agreement back in 2014, this was the first time Michigan has specifically targeted supports for transfer students at the state government level.

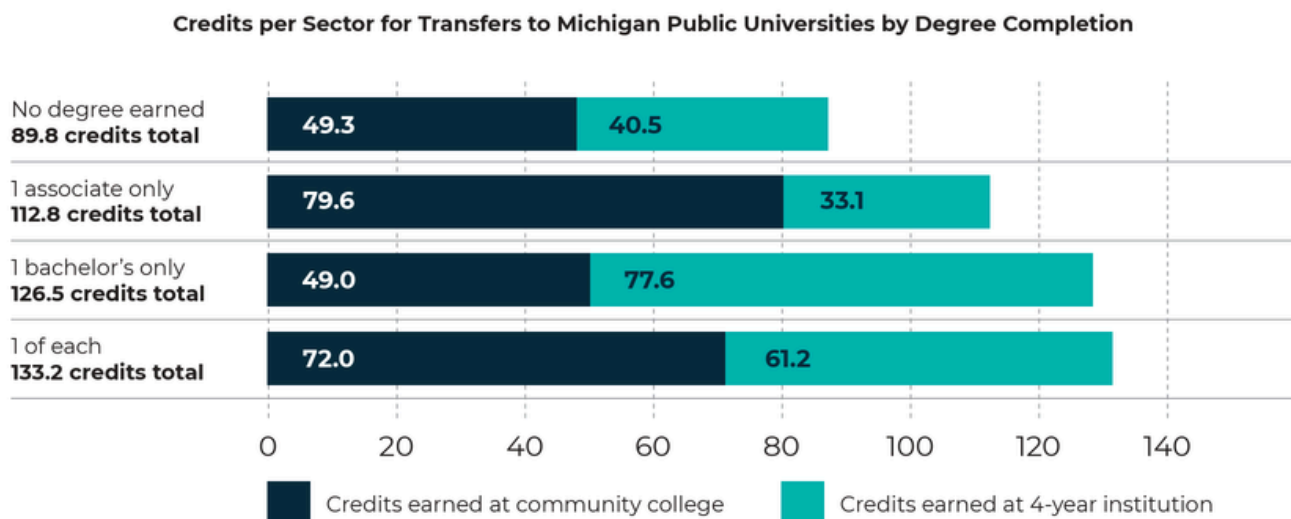
Dimitri was tasked with creating a landscape analysis of Michigan transfer students from 2 to 4-year institutions. By analyzing students by cohort and mirroring some of the national definitions of transfer students, he was able to create a dataset of over 45,000 transfer students who began community college from 2013-2019. This dataset was created using data from the Center for Education Performance and Information (CEPI), which collects postsecondary data throughout Michigan. This specific dataset juxtaposes national datasets on Michigan transfer students as it includes data the state uniquely collects. It also differs from the data shown in MiSchoolData as it only looks at transfers from community college to four-year institutions and does not look at lateral transfers. This data has been instrumental in the Transfer Success Project and has influenced decision making regarding the new Advisory Council on Transfer Success, the Transfer Landscape Briefs, and the creation of new statewide transfer pathways. Following Dimitri's data analysis work, he assisted in editing the briefs and created the data visuals from the dataset which can be seen here: [Michigan Transfer Landscape](#).

Some of the findings (which can be seen in the [Michigan Transfer Landscape Analysis](#)) include:

- A plurality of transfer students (38.6%) end up with no degrees after 6 years.



- The average transfer student who earns no degrees after 6 years averages nearly 90 credits earned.
- A transfer student who earns a bachelor's degree attempts and earns more credits than what is necessary for the degree.



- Outcomes for students that attend full-time are significantly better than transfer students who attend part-time.

## Corequisite Mandate

The Michigan government typically avoids interfering with specific best practices, procedures, and policies for colleges and universities. However, when the Reconnect Grant Act passed in 2020, allowing all Michigan adults without a postsecondary credential to return to community college for free, the legislature required a policy mandate to receive full Reconnect funding. This was the corequisite mandate for remedial coursework. Studies from other states have shown that when students need remedial coursework, defined as intro-level courses that are not credit-bearing towards graduation, the best practice is for the student to take the support class and the required class in the same semester. For example, if a student needs Algebra for their associate degree in business, but they came to community college with low math skills, persistence and graduation are increased if the student attends Pre-Algebra and Algebra in the same semester, as compared to taking Pre-Algebra one semester and Algebra the following semester. It benefits the student if they receive the support they need while making progress towards their degree at the same time. It is a barrier for students to spend significant time and money on courses that do not count towards graduation.



Academic year 2023-2024 was the first year in which it was required for community colleges receiving Reconnect students to shift their remedial course structure for math and English courses to the corequisite model. Any Reconnect student taking a standalone remedial course would not be allowed to be charged for the course. Dimitri was tasked with analyzing student-level course taking data to ensure that colleges were implementing the mandate correctly. He reached out to colleges to better understand their remedial course structure and wrote a report that is on the [Reconnect Transparency and Reporting webpage](#).

After monitoring and outreach, every community college reached compliance for the corequisite mandate. OHE is eager to analyze the effects of corequisite courses on student retention rates and graduation rates. In preparation for this future research, Dimitri made sure to note the colleges implementing best practices from those reaching compliance without fully embracing the corequisite model.

## Credit for Prior Learning (CPL)

Credit for Prior Learning are credits awarded to students for learning that they completed before enrolling at the institution. Credits can be earned for things such as industry credentials, certificate classes/programs, military training, exams, etc. This is a way for colleges to recognize that students are enrolling with previous schooling even if they don't have a degree, and studies show that awarding students with CPL helps move students towards graduation.

In the Reconnect Grant Act, community colleges can receive \$80 per credit for CPL awarded to Reconnect students. This incentive payment program has been in existence for two academic years, 2023-2024 and 2024-2025. Dimitri was tasked with analyzing the growth of the program from year one to year two, as well as looking at preliminary outcomes for students that received CPL credit. A report will be published in summer 2026 on the [transparency website](#) with full results. Overall, CPL programs throughout the state have increased dramatically, and preliminary results show positive effects for students.

## Additional Projects

Below is a list of other accomplishments and projects Dimitri was able to complete during the fellowship:

- After the first year of its creation, OHE created a few action teams to smooth transitions from the different offices to create one cohesive office. Dimitri contributed greatly to the Data Action Team where he initiated various projects including a workflow calendar of office data needs, a document highlighting differences in data definitions, and a petition to change CEPI postsecondary data definitions to better align with OHE's needs.
- Dimitri learned PowerBI, Microsoft's dashboard making software. He used these new skills to update current OHE dashboards such as the Reconnect Dashboard, and create internal dashboards such as a transfer student dashboard.
- In 2024, Michigan was granted federal money to temporarily expand Reconnect to 21-24 year olds. This created a rush to try and spread the news quickly throughout the state. After its completion, Dimitri wrote a detailed internal report on the successes of the various outreach initiatives during Reconnect Expansion.
- He analyzed data on male students in postsecondary education for the governor's initiative on getting more men enrolling and graduating from college.
- In summer 2025, Dimitri's supervisor went on maternity leave for 3 months and Dimitri stepped in and seamlessly carried out the day to day tasks for the Student Success and Strategic Initiatives Team.

# Conclusion

This fellowship was the perfect opportunity for Dimitri Przeslawski in his professional journey as he transitioned from the classroom into the education policy space. He was able to use his experience as a teacher and the knowledge he gained from his masters degree to make an immediate impact with the state. He built on his data skills by learning new programs such as PowerBI and analyzing statewide datasets. He was also able to gain invaluable experience in understanding the state government landscape, and Michigan's postsecondary landscape. Dimitri was able to use this experience to earn a full-time position with the state and the Office of Higher Education as a Data and Compliance Analyst for the Data and Evaluation team. In this new role, he will continue the work he began as a policy fellow.

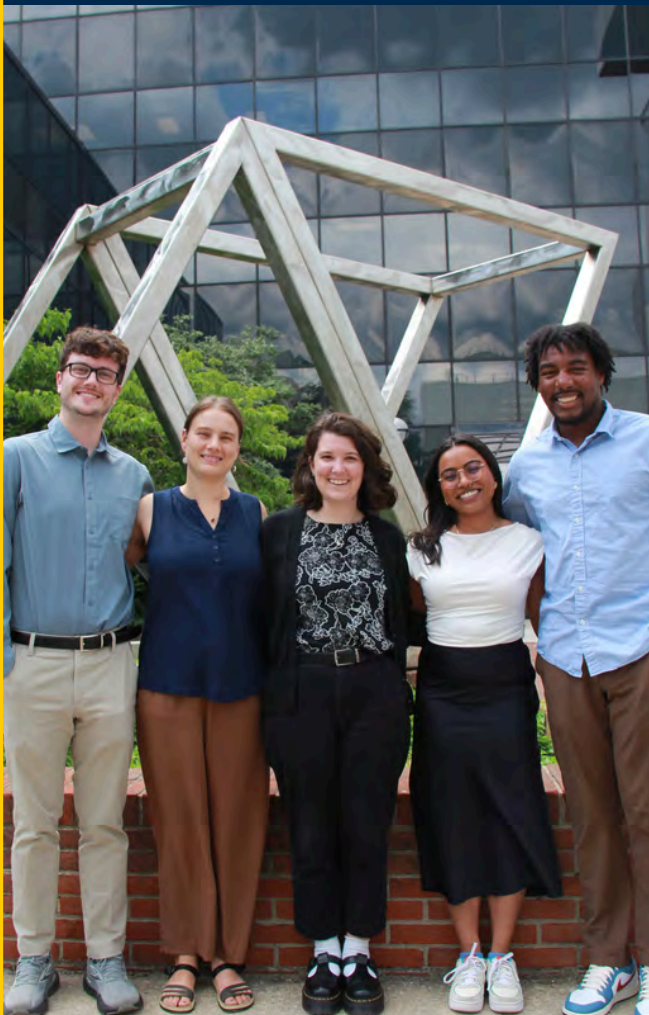
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*Dimitri brought experience as an educator, expertise in education policy, and motivation to learn the Michigan higher education landscape into his role at MiLEAP, and we are very lucky that he did. Throughout his time at OHE, he has served Michigan's colleges and college students with great care and professionalism. He has played an integral role in the data and research apparatus in OHE and we are delighted that he will be continuing on in the office after his fellowship ends.*

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**Rachel MacMaster, Data Analyst**  
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The **Youth Policy Lab**, a joint research center of the Gerald R. Ford School of Public Policy and the Institute for Social Research, envisions a world where partner-driven and policy-centered research fuels positive social change.

Our mission is to inform public policy decisions that impact youth by analyzing data and evaluating programs to help society answer its most pressing questions.



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