Assessing the Impact of Proposal 2,
The Michigan Anti-Affirmative Action Constitutional Amendment

Susan W. Kaufmann
CEW Associate Director for Advocacy
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In November 2006, Michigan voters approved Proposal 2, a constitutional amendment banning certain forms of affirmative action on the basis of race, gender, ethnicity, color, or national origin in public education, public employment and government contracting. It is important to note that programs or services may still be targeted to women or underrepresented minorities, so long as no one is excluded on the basis of race, gender, color, ethnicity or national origin. The law also permits affirmative action efforts that are required in order to achieve or maintain eligibility for federal programs and funds. Proposal 2 took effect in late December of 2006.

Before the vote, CEW was very active in educating Michigan residents about the potential impact of the proposal on women, individuals and communities of color and the economic development of the state. Less than two years after implementation, what can we say about responses to and consequences of Proposal 2?

The Center for the Education of Women

CEW has taken a number of steps in the wake of Proposal 2:

- Speaking out about the impact of anti-affirmative action initiatives
- Creating our Community College Transfer Student Program in concert with a larger UM initiative to increase transfers by community college students to the University of Michigan
- Creating our Crossing Boundaries Project, which brings together UM faculty, staff and students who do community-based, collaborative work in the Detroit area with local community organizations in order to explore the intersection of race and gender in their work
- Expanding our scholarship program to meet gender-neutral requirements, while focusing on targeted outreach
- Developing new capacity for staff mentoring and leadership development through the Women of Color Task Force
- Continuing to provide support and advocacy for women of color faculty through our Women of Color in the Academy Project.

The University of Michigan

Undergraduate Admissions
The University of Michigan admitted 7% fewer underrepresented minority undergraduate students for fall 2007 than 2006. For both the 2007 and 2008 admissions cycles, the University continued using new software that identifies schools and neighborhoods in Michigan and across the nation that send relatively few students to UM, so they can be
targeted for more intensive recruiting. Those include not only urban but also rural and lower-income communities. In addition, President Mary Sue Coleman and other senior leaders made many appearances across the state encouraging students, particularly in communities of color, to apply and, later, many phone calls encouraging students who had been admitted to attend. As a result of those efforts, in 2008 there was a decrease of only 2% in underrepresented minority undergraduate students who paid enrollment deposits. In total, from 2006 to 2008, underrepresented minorities fell from 12% to 11% of admitted students.

As the 2008-2009 academic year begins, the University is launching a new Center for Educational Outreach and Academic Success that will create, coordinate and support efforts by many academic units across the campus to work with school systems, students, parents, teachers, religious congregations and community-based organizations to keep diverse students moving successfully through the educational pipeline so they can be prepared to attend UM and other colleges and universities. In addition, UM is tightening connections to tribal colleges and to community colleges—an effort in which CEW is participating through our Community College Transfer Student Program—in order to encourage transfers. The University also offers outreach programs through its Detroit Center.

The University of Michigan has created two new scholarships to replace others that took race into account, along with many other factors. Michigan Tradition Awards are for students from underrepresented schools and neighborhoods. Students must be either the first in their family to attend college, raised in a single-parent home or from a family earning an income of less than $50,000. Michigan Experience Awards are for students who have participated in state or federal early-awareness or college-readiness programs typically based on socioeconomic status, like Upward Bound, Talent Search and Gear-Up. In addition, the University has significantly stepped up efforts to raise funds for need-based scholarships in order to free low- and moderate-income students from loans. The University of Michigan is committed to meeting the full demonstrated financial need of all in-state students.

**Graduate Admissions**

From 2006 to 2007, there was a 4% decrease in the percentage of self-identified underrepresented minority students entering graduate and professional programs, with a significant increase in students choosing not to select a racial designation.

**Faculty Hiring and Promotion**

The University, along with all other large federal contractors, continues to have federal affirmative action obligations related to employment, including taking affirmative steps to diversify applicant pools in job categories that are underrepresented by race or gender. Nonetheless, in recent years the University of Michigan has made no progress in increasing the percentage of women assistant and associate professors. From 2000 to 2006 there were no gains in the representation of women of color among female assistant professors; in fact, the percentage of all new female tenure-track faculty who are women of color dropped sharply in 2005 and 2006. While these problems pre-date Proposal 2, it
may well exacerbate them, as potential faculty recruits perceive the state to be unwelcoming.

A May 2008 report released by the UM Committee for a Multicultural University looked at faculty hiring, by race, since 1994 and found that blacks currently comprise only 5% of full-time, tenure-track teaching faculty and Hispanics 3%. Furthermore, since 1994, “there has been no significant change in the hiring rates for blacks and Hispanics.” In addition, the committee found that “the trend in the participation levels of black and Hispanic assistant professors has exhibited negative tendencies,” and “black faculty tend to leave the University at a higher rate than all other faculty groups.” The number of Native American faculty members is too small to permit their inclusion in the study. Again, while these historic and contemporary problems cannot be attributed to the passage of Proposal 2, it may exacerbate them by contributing to a worsening racial climate and fostering the perception outside Michigan that the state is hostile to people of color. Because hiring of female and under-represented minority faculty declined rapidly in California following passage of that state’s anti-affirmative action amendment, these trends warrant close attention.

The State of Michigan

Governor’s Executive Order
Immediately after passage of Proposal 2, Gov. Jennifer Granholm issued Executive Order 2006-7, Promoting Diversity in Michigan, affirming that “the continued promotion of diversity in Michigan is a vital component in the state’s educational efforts and an important aspect of Michigan’s economic development efforts.”

K-12 Education
According to the Michigan Women’s Commission, following passage of Proposal 2, some school districts have stopped allowing the American Associate of University Women (AAUW) and other groups to host technology camps for girls in the public schools, even though the Michigan Civil Rights Commission has defined educational programs affected by the amendment as only those that “matriculate to a degree.”

Financial Aid
Nothing in Proposal 2 bars private entities from awarding designated scholarships. Following passage, the University of Michigan Alumni Association, an independent non-profit organization, began raising private funds to create new diversity scholarships for admitted University of Michigan students. In addition, a new non-profit organization, The Imagine Fund, is dedicated to advancing diversity in higher education. It works with donors who are interested in creating scholarships “to keep the doors of opportunity open for those whose race, color, sex, ethnicity or national origin may otherwise limit their path,” or who share other characteristics, including sexual orientation, disabilities or religious affiliation that enable them to bring diversity to Michigan public or private colleges and universities.

Contracting
A survey by the Grand Rapids Equal Opportunity Director of the city’s 2007 construction projects found that, compared with 2006, spending increased by 41%. However, the value of subcontracts with minority-owned companies fell by 44% and with women-owned businesses by 47%. According to the director, the declines can be attributed to Proposal 2. During the same period, the value of subcontracts with firms owned by white men shot up by 405%. Grand Rapids Public Schools also reported a drop in minority subcontracting. Other Michigan cities have not publicly reported data showing impact on women or minority contractors.

Proposal 2 poses a serious social and economic challenge to Michigan. For example, since the passage of Proposal 2, it has only become clearer that increasing the educational level of Michigan residents is essential to sparking and sustaining economic transformation, yet race is still a powerful determinant of access to educational opportunity. In addition, women’s position is still precarious in some scientific and technical fields. In computer science and technology —vital to so much economic activity —women are rapidly losing ground. Efforts to help women and underrepresented minorities persist and succeed in the educational pipeline and to have full access to employment and contracting opportunities must be a top priority, not only for the good of individuals, families, and specific communities, but in order to ensure that Michigan has the trained workforce essential for the collective well-being of the state.