

SHOULD I STAY OR SHOULD I GO?

WHY ARE PROFESSIONAL WRITING STUDENTS PLANNING TO LEAVE MICHIGAN?

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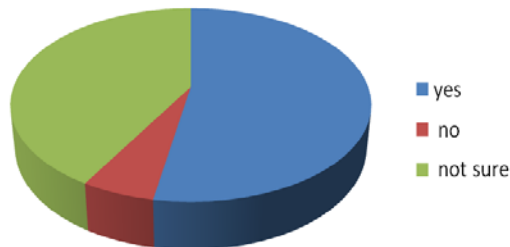
INTRODUCTION

Of 36 Professional Writing students surveyed, only two intended to stay in Michigan upon graduation. Michigan had more outbound moving graduates than any other state in the nation in 2007, according to data from United Van Lines. Governor Granholm's *Jobs Today, Jobs Tomorrow* plan for transforming the Michigan economy details the importance of ensuring all Michigan students are financially and academically prepared to achieve higher education. If Michigan cannot win students over once they have their diploma, these educational reforms will not be able to help rebuild Michigan's economy.

The state of the economy and job market are clearly concerns for much of the employable population, but there are other reasons that recent college grads are looking elsewhere to make their homes. This report analyzes the

myriad reasons that Professional Writing students at Michigan State University plan to – or would like to – leave Michigan upon graduation, and further suggests the changes they would like to

Do you plan to leave Michigan upon graduation?



see in Michigan which would make them more likely to stay. Because of the initiative Michigan policy makers have taken in transforming the economy, this report will primarily focus on students' other concerns.

Of the students surveyed, none plan to stay in Michigan upon graduation. Some have plans to leave, but the majority were unsure or are still considering their options. As such, changes made to improve Michigan's appeal to our educated young people may not just be long-term investments and perhaps can win more up-and-coming professionals to reinvigorate the economy *now*.

WHAT DOES MICHIGAN LACK?

Among the three most reported concerns was students' preference for

different types of communities. Many are attracted to big cities such as Los Angeles, Chicago, and Phoenix, and described a desire to live in far more urban places than Michigan has to offer.

Another top reason for wanting to leave Michigan was for a job, often in an industry which has little or no presence in Michigan. The publishing industry, which is locally concentrated in a small number of places outside of Michigan, appeals to many PW students. However, being discouraged by the lack of diversity among job types was reported by 64% of participants.

The other top concern was, unsurprisingly, the trying economic times Michigan is facing.

About one-third of participants reported that they would leave Michigan for graduate school or to transfer to another university. A similar amount stated that they would like to leave Michigan because of a dissatisfaction with the cultural atmosphere. Specific complaints were made about the lack of museums, theaters, night-life, and other cultural experiences. Some participants also had complaints that Michigan was not culturally diverse and was not socially accepting of minority groups.

Reason for leaving	Number
Economic troubles	23
Preference for different types of communities	23
Moving for a job	23
Wanting a change of scenery	20
Different climate preference	14
Moving for a localized job or industry	12
Graduate school or transferring schools	11
Dissatisfaction with cultural atmosphere	10
Lack of diversity	5
Dislike of local politics	4
Out of state student planning to return home	4
Concerns about cost of living	3
Preference for different educational systems	1
Other	5

WHAT ARE STUDENTS SATISFIED WITH?

The cost of living in Michigan was a concern for only 8% of participants and only 17% stated that an improvement to the cost of living would make them more likely to consider staying upon graduation. Additionally, only four of these PW students were from out of state and planned to return home upon graduation of a total seven out-of-state students.

The educational systems in Michigan were also, on the whole, not concerns for participants. While 25% would like to see improvements, almost 100% did not feel that schools were a reason to leave

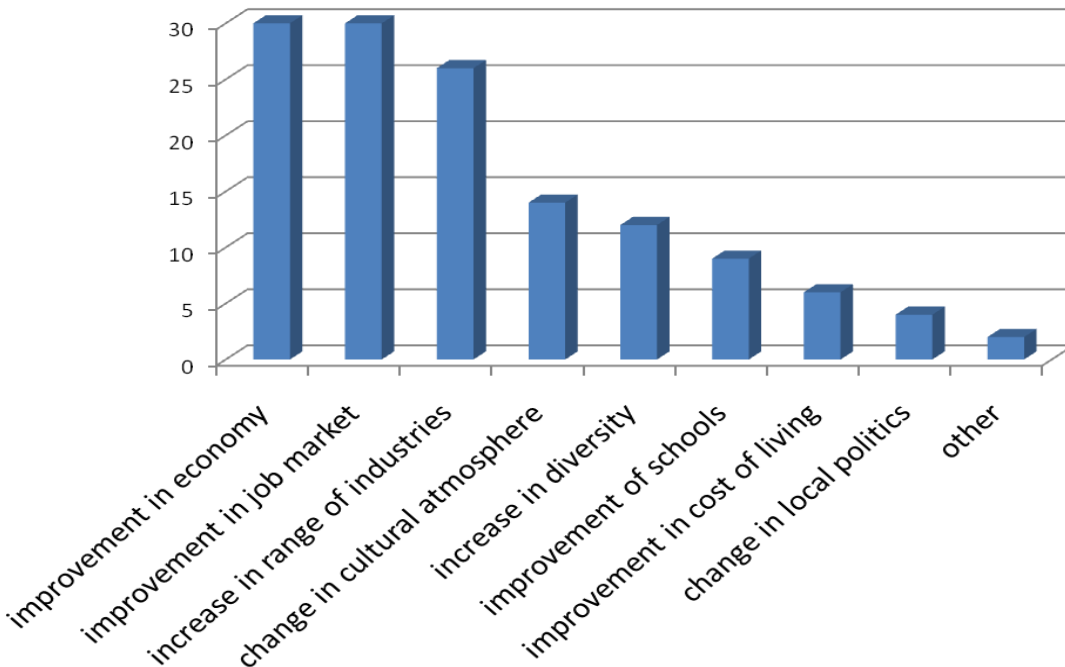
the state.

Participants were generally satisfied with the direction of Michigan politics, with some specifically mentioning the importance of focusing on the economy – which is reflected in many of the state's recent efforts.

WHAT DO STUDENTS WANT TO SEE CHANGED?

One participant said, "I would stay in Michigan if I had the chance to be part of revitalization efforts..." The strengthening of the economy in general is a change that would encourage almost every participant to stay in Michigan. The job market is a top concern, but nearly three-quarters of participants also

What Students Want to See Changed



wanted to see an increase in the range of industries and professions in which they could be employed. Particular types of work that participants were interested in are: digital fields, the publishing industry, and advocacy work.

A few participants were concerned about the availability of health care, an issue which could improve with an increase in job availability.

Roughly one-third reported that they would like to see an increase in cultural diversity in Michigan – whether with regards to the accessibility of art or the social acceptance. Professional Writers, like other educated and creative professionals, often desire a richer and more diverse cultural atmosphere with many artistic and cultural opportunities, and this tendency was clearly voiced by survey participants.

Other participants mentioned a specific interest in a wider variety of outdoors activities such as rock climbing or canoeing; attempts to make more outdoors opportunities available to Michiganders may win students like these over.

CONCLUSION

Professional Writers and graduates are an integral part of today's economy. Because so many modern workplaces and industries require the skills that Professional Writers have honed, efforts to retain PW students and graduates

would complement programs like *Jobs Today, Jobs Tomorrow* in transforming the Michigan economy.

Because such a high proportion of current PW are still looking for reasons to stay in Michigan, efforts to make the state a more appealing place to new graduates could soon be beneficial both for students and, through their contributions to the economy, Michigan as a whole.

Though Michigan is working hard to revitalize the economy, tactics focused solely on the job market will not be as successful as a more holistic approach. If retention of graduates is a goal, limited efforts concentrating only on monetary issues will not be successful; today's students are looking for more than just a job when deciding where they want to live.



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