

# Community service

## Local post-secondary education deserves funding

**M**ichigan voters will encounter a series of bond proposals aiming to improve the state's community colleges on the Nov. 6 ballot. Among the grandest is the \$56-million initiative of Macomb County Community College to enhance its science and technology offerings, upgrade its arts program and refurbish and expand campus buildings. The bond will be paid for through a millage, a property tax equal to about 20 cents for every \$1,000 of a property's taxable value. For such a small price, the needs of communities may be fulfilled with better education opportunities and higher employment rates as a result. We should support the proposed ballot measures to levy millages for community colleges.

Offering residents quality educational opportunities is one of the principle public goods all local governments should provide. Community colleges respond to these needs in a way that no other post-secondary educational institution can, allowing education at schools with open admissions, low tuition rates and eclectic course offerings. These underrated institutions are serving the need for rapid vocational training and equipping people with the skills necessary to enter an increasingly tumultuous job market.

While proposing the issuance of bonds or the imposition of new millage rates is relatively simple in legislative terms, the proposal wording is somewhat vague, saying only that the school will equip, reequip and refurbish buildings, sites and infrastructure. But this vague nature can most likely be attributed to restraints and requirements of legal language. To propose the millage, one need only specify the amount to be borrowed, the millage rate to be levied and a date for it to be paid off, and also give voters a general notion of its purpose. To their credit, community colleges seeking funds have tried to inform

voters where exactly the funds go.

Though as University students we have opportunity and privilege to attend a four-year university program, we must recognize that this option is not possible for everyone. This proposal services low-income areas and also allows graduates to pursue new interests with less financial risk. Macomb County Community College alone fulfills the needs of more than 59,000 students annually, providing a comprehensive post-secondary education to non-traditional students.

Improving schools through education and renovation also tends to increase the property value of the surrounding area, which would increase the rate at which the school could honor its financial commitment. This ultimately strengthens the economy's social and economic environments.

Given the ever-growing demand for educated workers and the increased cost of a four-year university education, community colleges will play an important role in the future of higher education. A number of them are on the ballot this year, preparing for that future. And their success will benefit all involved.