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University Wire

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HEADLINE: U. **Michigan** grant helps lure 2-year **college** students

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BODY:

When LSA junior Jim Straub transferred to the University from Washtenaw **Community College** at the beginning of the year, he was one of only 15 **community college** transfer students who received financial aid from the University of **Michigan**.

That number will dramatically increase in the next four years, thanks in part to a \$1-million grant given to the university by the Jack Kent Cooke Foundation.

The grant was given to eight universities specifically to help them recruit more low- to moderate-income **community college** students and provide programs to facilitate their transition.

The grant is expected to increase the number of low- to moderate-income students at the University because parents of **community college** students generally earn lower incomes.

LSA senior Alena Jirjis, who transferred from Macomb **Community College** last year, said she had to adjust to a very different lifestyle when she arrived at the University.

"It was very difficult for me," she said. "When I transferred I didn't know anything. I didn't even know how to check my (University) e-mail for a while."

Straub said he found it difficult to adjust to a campus lifestyle.

"It took me a good couple weeks before I found places where I was comfortable studying," he said. "I was a little overwhelmed by the size of the classroom, lecture halls and the workload -- a lot heavier workload."

Now Straub studies at the Harlan Hatcher Graduate Library, but he says many other transfers may face similar problems adjusting to the University.

To be eligible for the grant, the university was required to commit several million dollars

of financial aid to assist transfer students from low- to moderate-income families.

Of the 403 **community college** transfers the university accepted this year, only 18 applied for financial aid. Administrators said **community college** transfers may not be aware of the financial aid options they have.

"We will be trying to assure potential **community college** transfers that resources are available to enable them to attend the University," Margaret Rodriguez, senior associate director of financial aid, said in an e-mail interview. "There are plans to meet with **community college** presidents and their staff to discuss the opportunities and resources available at the university."

The number of low- to moderate-income students enrolled at the university dropped drastically over the past decade.

In 1995, 41.8 percent of students came from families with incomes of \$10,000 to \$74,999, but in 2005 that number dropped to 28 percent. In that time, students from families with incomes of greater than \$200,000 jumped from 12.5 to 20.7 percent of those enrolled.

Straub, who worked for 10 years after high school, was hesitant to apply to **college** because of financial issues. But Straub said his experiences at Washtenaw **Community College** assured him that he would be able to receive enough grants and loans to get his degree.

Jirjis said some potential **community college** transfers do not apply to the university because they feel intimidated by the prospect of attending such a large school.

Community college allowed Jirjis to explore her interests and remain on a sound financial footing. When it came time to transfer to a university, she said **Michigan's** size did not deter her from applying.

"It's in my personality not to pass things up," she said. "Even though universities are tougher than **community colleges**, I have a strong work ethic so I knew it would be possible to survive there."

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