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HEADLINE: MSU chief says more science, technology grads vital to **Michigan's** future

BYLINE: By Maryanne George

BODY:

Michigan State University President Lou Anna Simon told the Detroit Economic Club on Monday that the state must reinvest in **higher education**, despite a tight economy, to create public benefits that will endure for generations.

Simon said MSU, founded in 1855 as the nation's first land grant university, must remember its founding principles of access to **higher education** for ordinary citizens as the state attempts to double the number of college graduates in 10 years.

In December, the Commission on **Higher Education** and Economic Growth, chaired by Lt. Gov. John Cherry, recommended that the state double its graduates, especially in science and technical fields, to help move the state to a more stable, high-tech economy.

"The Cherry Commission is calling for a new land grant," Simon told the crowd of about 150 civic leaders and students at Burton Manor in Livonia. "It calls for us to set the bar higher. This is no easy task because all of us are struggling with the economics of **higher education**.

"The people who founded the land-grant universities understood that in order to have a strong democracy, you couldn't have haves and have-nots in our society. The land-grant philosophy is that if people are better educated it is better for us, not just for them."

Simon, who was introduced by University of **Michigan** President Mary Sue Coleman, said the commission is also calling on educational institutions to create a new partnership -- from community colleges to research universities -- to improve educational opportunities. **Michigan's** undergraduate college **graduation** rate of about 22 percent is below the national average and its unemployment rate at about 7 percent is among the highest in the nation.

"It is no longer appropriate to think of high school as the end game," she said. "Let's together set a long-range agenda and rely on the people of **Michigan** and the United States to invest today in tomorrow, even when we don't know what tomorrow will be."

Simon said it's important for research universities to invest in science and ideas that may appear to have little practical value at the time.

"We want you to think about us as an investment in your future, for your kids and your grandkids," Simon said.

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