

**SUBMITTED BY:**

**M. ROY WILSON, PRESIDENT**

**RECOMMENDATION TO RENEW CHARTER  
Michigan Developmental Disabilities Institute**

It is recommended that the Board of Governors renew the charter for the Michigan Developmental Disabilities Institute (MI-DDI) through December 2026, as recommended by the Center and Institute Advisory Committee-I (CIAC-I). The Provost concurs with this five-year charter renewal recommendation, as does the Policy Committee of the Academic Senate.

**Background**

MI-DDI works to contribute to the development of inclusive communities and quality of life of people with disabilities and their families through a culturally sensitive statewide program of interdisciplinary education, community support and services, research and dissemination of information.

The Michigan Developmental Disabilities Institute (MI-DDI) is Michigan's designated University Center of Excellence in Developmental Disabilities mandated under the Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act of 2000, PL 106-402. The Institute reports to the Administration on Disabilities (AoD) within the Administration of Community Living (ACL) housed in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). As a University Center of Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (UCEDD), MI-DDI has a federal mandate to perform four core functions: interdisciplinary education, community support, research and information dissemination. MI-DDI adheres to the requirements of PL 106-402, Sections 151-156, including five-year re-applications, peer site reviews and federal monitoring.

In 2016 Dr. Sharon Milberger became the Director of the MI-DDI. Under Dr. Milberger's exemplary leadership, MI-DDI has leveraged its CORE grant funding and brought in the prestigious LEND grant and other foundation grants to enhance its reach and impact across the State of Michigan and the nation. Dr. Milberger is supported by three Associate Directors, a staff of 35 (24 full time), faculty affiliates and a Community Advisory Council. All of the staff (some of whom are also graduate students) are supported through grants and contracts which in 2018-19 totaled approximately \$2.8 Million dollars and \$2.6 Million in 2019-2020.

**Review**

In accordance with the Board of Governors Wayne State University Statute 2.23.01 *Centers and Institutes: Policy on Creation, Operation, Review, and Discontinuance*, MI-DDI underwent a formal review by the Center and Institute Advisory Committee-I (CIAC-I) in winter of 2020.

The CIAC-I subcommittee followed the guidelines provided by the Provost's office to assess the evidence and value of the MI-DDI as a freestanding unit at WSU. The review process involved a) DDI self-study documents b) Final CORE Grant Report of 2017 c) additional materials

requested by the CIAC-I and d) a site visit at which the CIAC-I members met with the director, leadership team, senior management team, and key internal and external constituents.

The CIAC-1 report recommended that the charter for this Institute be renewed for a period of five years. The committee submitted a final report to the Provost and to the Policy Committee of the Academic Senate. The Policy Committee of the Academic Senate received the report and prepared a recommendation for a five-year renewal also.

### **MI-DDI strengths as indicated by the CIAC-I**

MI-DDI's federal mandate requires that the program be a self-contained, free-standing Center/Institute, reporting to the university administration. MI-DDI's value and activities are closely aligned with Wayne State University's Strategic Focus Areas:

- a. **Student Success:** The WSU Students Sharing Success Student organization supports diverse students to promote graduation and retention.
- b. **Teaching Excellence:** Pre-service training is one of the Institute's four federally-mandated core functions. MI-DDI offers Michigan's only Graduate Certificate in Disabilities through the WSU School of Social Work. The certificate program is designed to prepare graduate students for a career in the disabilities field. MI-DDI also works with the WSU School of Medicine on the Arie co-curricular program where second year medical students are paired with families who have a child with an intellectual and/or developmental disability. In addition, MI-DDI leads the Michigan Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental Disabilities (MI- LEND) program. MI-LEND is an interdisciplinary leadership training program, funded under the Autism Collaboration, Accountability, Research, Education, and Support (CARES) Act, and administered by the Health Resources and Service's Administration's (HRSA) Maternal and Child Health Bureau (MCHB). The MI- LEND program trains emerging leaders with the goal of improving the health of infants, children, and adolescents with or at risk for neurodevelopmental disabilities and other related health care needs. MI-LEND is a collaborative effort of six universities: Central Michigan University, Michigan State University, University of Michigan-Ann Arbor, University of Michigan-Dearborn, Western Michigan University, and Wayne State University.
- c. **Research:** Research is one of the Institute's four federally-mandated core functions. The MI-DDI Research Council includes researchers across WSU with a shared interest in disability-related research to promote collaboration, diversity & inclusion and community engagement. MI-DDI secures grant funding; contributes to evidence-based literature; engages students and diverse populations in research; and seeks to be recognized nationally and globally as leaders in the disability field. Persons with disabilities are co-evaluators/co-researchers on all projects.
- d. **Diversity & Inclusion:** Disability is an important part of diversity; five staff members completed prestigious national Diversity Leadership Training programs; MI-DDI has a federally-funded Diversity Fellowship program and the MI-LEND program integrates diversity & inclusion into all aspects of training. The Institute works to develop a

common understanding that disability is an acknowledged and critical component (and natural part of the human condition) of diversity and inclusion.

- e. **Entrepreneurship:** MI-DDI is engaged in identifying innovative approaches to promote diversity and inclusion (e.g., increasing accessibility of self-driving vehicles, development of apps, training/mentoring disability leaders in the community, etc.).
- f. **Financial Sustainability and Operational Excellence:** MI-DDI continues to secure ~\$2.6M each year through federal, state and foundation grants and contracts.
- g. **Community Engagement:** Community Support is one of the Institute's four federally mandated core functions. MI-DDI currently has 15 statewide projects and 118 statewide partners and engages community members in all key program activities.

In its site visit, the CIAC I subcommittee found repeated support for the notion that MI-DDI brings value to all of its constituencies. MI-DDI was referred to as a “bright light”, a “hub” for activity, bringing a “strength-based approach”, a “resource” and a pioneer from family advocates to students to faculty within and outside Wayne State.

### **Recommendations by the CIAC-1 for the next charter period**

The committee recommended the following for the MI-DDI:

- a) **Sponsorships, other forms of fund development:** Given that MI-DDI is currently 100% dependent on current grants and contracts it's staffing can be precarious. Working to begin asking for funds (e.g. annual letter, conference sponsors) and looking to foundations for more discretionary funding may be helpful in bolstering MI-DDI's future resources.
- b) **Enhancing its visibility within the University and Outside of it:** Wayne State University has its share of students with disabilities. Focusing on how MI-DDI can support those students can greatly enhance MI-DDI's on campus presence. Consider press releases for important reports and developing relationships with WSU's marketing and media relations as well as with press members can be considered too.
- c) **MI-DDI and Research:** MI-DDI is best known for its training and community support. Dr. Milberger has begun partnering with other faculty to compete for NIH and other research funds. The monies slotted for an Associate Director for Research should be reviewed and determine if possible short-term joint appointments are possible for promising WSU faculty researchers whereby MI-DDI would enhance its research productivity and visibility for original research.

- d) **Successful renewal of the LEND grant:** Renewal of the LEND grant should receive the highest priority within MI-DDI. This grant is establishing the national reputation and impact of MI-DDI and clearly helping to make Wayne State a leader in Developmental Disabilities across all Michigan universities.