



## **Supplemental Information: Response to the Free Press and ProPublica Accusations**

### **Department of Education investigation:**

Although Baker College can only speculate why the Department of Education decided to investigate, we firmly believe it directly results from the Free Press and ProPublica articles. Unfortunately, the articles are intentionally misleading and riddled with inaccuracies. The college maintains its adherence to the Department of Education procedures and all regulatory requirements as well as those outlined by the Higher Learning Commission and the 19 specialized program accreditations held by the college.

The author's assumptions about potential actions by the Department of Education are, at best, reckless. However, the articles should have mentioned the possibility of the Department of Education concluding its investigation with no findings. Additionally, attempting to draw a connection between two publicly traded, for-profit schools that faced multiple investigations is highly inappropriate, egregious, and deliberately misleading.

### **Student Awareness of the Investigation:**

The article falsely insinuates that Baker College failed to inform students about the investigation, which is untrue. The authors are aware this is untrue, as the correspondence to the Baker College community was referenced in prior articles. Furthermore, to get their story, they had a male reporter repeatedly solicit our female students in a public parking structure to acquire quotes, causing distress and fear.

### **Governance Structure:**

Additionally, according to their "experts," the article makes yet another misleading statement, suggesting an issue with the college governance structure; however, after a review of our structure in 2022, the Department of Education was satisfied with the information we provided.



### **Tuition and Fees:**

Baker College intentionally keeps tuition low; we are one of the lowest cost four-year institutions in Michigan. Unlike some institutions, we refrain from inflating tuition and providing substantial scholarships to create the appearance of generous awards for prospective students.

Baker College's tuition is lower when compared to the average tuition and fees of public or private four-year institutions in Michigan. The examples below are from the 2022 Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) data published by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES).

### **Average Annual Tuition and Fees, 4-Year Colleges/Universities, in the State of Michigan:**

- Average Baker College: \$12,710
- Average Public: \$14,361
- Average Private (excludes Baker College): \$29,936
- Alma College\* \$45,616

(\*Anna Clark, one of the authors, is a faculty member at Alma College a fellow Michigan Independent College and University (MICU) member.)

Furthermore, the college does offer institutional scholarships and grants. For example, a recent high school graduate with a 3.0 GPA interested in studying nursing would receive \$5,000 in institutional scholarship funds (Deans and Nursing scholarship), equating to \$8,400 in annual tuition and fees (based on 30 credit hours). Another example: a transfer student enrolling at Baker College after receiving an associate degree with a 3.0 GPA would receive \$6,000 in institutional scholarship funds (Trustees Transfer Scholarship), equating to \$8,000 in annual tuition and fees (based on 30 upper-level credit hours). Please note the examples do NOT include any State of Michigan or federal grant programs, which can further lower the tuition cost.

Also, we introduced free housing for the 2023-24 academic year. The program provides the first year free and fifty percent or \$2,300 for the second year at three of our four residence hall campuses in Cadillac, Owosso, and Port Huron.



Baker College also has a BeFree Tuition Guarantee program, a free tuition program for those with greater financial need.

Finally, Baker College did not raise tuition for the 2023-24 academic year and also lowered master's and doctoral tuition. Finally, the college does not have a different tuition rate for out-of-state students.

### **Student Loan Debt:**

Once again, the authors' statements regarding Baker College's student debt are misleading. According to the most recent 2021 Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) published by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), for four-year institutions, Baker College graduates and students who attended but did not graduate have a lower median debt than the average public or private institution in the State of Michigan.

**Median Loan Debt for all students** (graduates and those who attended but did not graduate while attending four-year institutions in Michigan):

- Baker College: \$16,753
- Average Public: \$17,971
- Average Private (excluding Baker College): \$17,595
- Alma College\*: \$23,250

(\*Anna Clark, one of the authors, is a faculty member at Alma College a fellow Michigan Independent College and University (MICU) member.)

We are conscious of student debt, and to help students reduce their reliance on accumulating debt, our tuition is lower than the average four-year Public or Private institution in the State of Michigan. We offer a variety of scholarships and grants designed to reduce tuition. Also, all students participate in entrance loan counseling.



### **Borrower's Defense and FTC Claims:**

Baker College is unaware of any open borrower's defense claims and inquired about past claims with the Department of Education; they would not share information about claims.

The article also omits that claims under the borrower's defense are rising, affecting public and private institutions in recent years. During the authors' investigation, they scoured social media for accounts of borrowers' defense claims and even encouraged students to file such claims.

The FTC has not contacted Baker College, and we are unaware of any claims filed.

### **Marketing:**

Another significant and egregious comparison is marketing spending to institutional scholarships and financial aid. Marketing spending has nothing to do with financial aid. Again, Baker College does not engage in the practice of inflating tuition and then offering substantial institutional aid to create the illusion of generous awards for prospective students. In other words, our tuition is low, one of the lowest in the state; therefore, we do not engage in the practice of inflating tuition and providing substantial scholarships to create the appearance of generous awards for prospective students. Given one of the authors, Anna Clark is a faculty member at Alma College, we will use her institution as an example. When comparing just tuition, room and board, books, etc., for the 2022-23 academic year, Alma College's average annual tuition is \$45,616, while Baker College's average yearly tuition is \$12,710.

Alma College likely (hopefully) provides more financial aid than Baker College, given their annual tuition is \$32,906 higher per year.

Furthermore, the article's author, David Jesse, asserts that the college engages in "aggressive" marketing of its programs. It's important to note this statement represents his subjective viewpoint rather than fact. Numerous in-state and out-of-state colleges and universities engage in marketing activities in Michigan; Baker College is not unique. David Jesse's opinion intentionally perpetuates a misleading narrative, singling out Baker College.



### **Graduation Rate:**

Before the 2017-18 academic year, Baker College operated like a community college with open enrollment admissions standards to support a student population seeking skills or taking classes to transfer to another institution. As a result, graduation rates at community colleges are low. Based on government reporting, graduation rates are measured as a six-year cohort, so it does take time to see a published improvement; however, based on our incremental data, the college is seeing a significant increase in retention and graduation rates.

It is worth mentioning the authors did inquire about the improvements in our graduation rates; however, regrettably, they opted not to incorporate any reference to our achievements. This exclusion implies that any favorable developments at the college do not fit within the intended narrative.

### **Employees and Media Inquiries:**

We have never implied job loss if an employee speaks with the media; however, we do request employees direct media inquiries to our PR person when an official statement on behalf of the college is needed.

### **Number of Campuses:**

Another inaccuracy is the number of campuses in Michigan. Baker College has six campuses, not five. We have locations in Port Huron, Royal Oak, Jackson, Owosso, Cadillac, and Muskegon.

