

# Blanchard says universities overbuilt, need cash

By Tim Richard  
staff writer

James Blanchard is planning "dozes of new revenue" to hold down college tuitions. And he's looking at Michigan's community colleges to play a major role in training and re-training workers for new industry.

At the same time, the Democratic gubernatorial candidate is warning state universities they are "overbuilt" and will have to submit to some paring down.

"I don't believe you can tax-out or regulation-cut your way into bringing about investment," said the 40-year-old congressman from Pleasant Ridge, drawing a line between himself and Republican gubernatorial candidate Richard Headlee.

Blanchard was interviewed on education and economic revitalization issues recently between campaign stops in western Wayne County.

"THE UNIVERSITY of Michigan has the fourth highest tuition in the country through public institutions, and Michigan State is moving up fast," said Blanchard.

"People like (U.S. Rep.) Bill Ford (D-Taylor), especially, and myself are going to have to assure that the (federal) student loan programs don't dry up. That state has a modest loan-grant program; we're going to have to try to expand that. But it's going to be tough be-



Rep. James Blanchard  
new economic tools

cause of our budget numbers."

Blanchard sees Michigan universities losing quality rapidly. He said he has talked to U-M President Harold Shapiro, MSU President Cecil Mackey, Wayne State President David Adamany and community college presidents. All, he said, recognize that "specialization and consolidation" of colleges is inevitable.

"It may require scaling back of the system and additional doses of revenue, both to the student and to the college," Blanchard said. He did not elaborate on how colleges, which get a major portion of their funds from the state general fund, would be given more revenue.

"A MAJOR problem we face is that every (university) wants to continue to

**'There are successful programs in other states where the state will match dollar for dollar a training program a company sets up. They (companies) have to make a financial commitment.'**

— Candidate Blanchard

do everything, and every legislator has a favorite college, university or community college he wants to maintain. And there's never been a serious attempt to coordinate higher education in Michigan because they value their independence — very intensely.

"That's going to have to change, or I see the whole thing falling, sinking, sinking."

"The system is overbuilt. The enrollment numbers I've looked at are going to show, somewhere in 1990, half the enrollment numbers we had in, like, 1988."

The coordination, he said, will have to be accomplished in meetings with college officials and the governor's use of a line-item veto in appropriations bills.

BLANCHARD'S printed "Economic Revitalization & Jobs Program" invites companies to establish new plants and utilize existing plants in Michigan, promising to "provide, them with trained workers at minimum cost."

"These companies will be eligible for state matching grants and low-interest loans for worker training . . . I will finance this targeted training program with federal funds which would be made available under such legislation as the Job Training Partnership Act," his plan says.

Blanchard interjected, "That, by the way, will be signed by the president within the week . . . It helps concentrate money in places of high unemployment . . . and Billy Ford has made sure the powers of the governor's office are strengthened so that it can be run directly by the governor's office." Ford is a ranking member of the House Education and Labor Committee, which oversees all education bills.

BUT WHICH will it be for companies — loans or grants?

"It will have to depend on the situation and the state of our finances and how much money we receive under these federal programs," Blanchard replied.

"For example, there are successful programs in other states where the state will match dollar for dollar a training program a company sets up. They (companies) have to make a fi-

nanacial commitment.

"The other way is through loans. For example, if you had —" he paused.

"It's easier said than done. If you had several companies with different types of trainees (training programs), you would simply loan them the money to do the training, perhaps with the requirement that the facility for the training be one of your local community colleges.

"The money would be for specialized equipment and teachers. The (companies) would then repay the loan, and you would finance the loan through revenue bonds, and the revenue bonds would be backed by the ability and likelihood of the firm to repay it."

But state help in training workers will be only one lure to industry, Blanchard said. Major reasons for a firm's locating in Michigan would be a skilled labor pool, fresh water, a plant.

ANOTHER BLANCHARD idea is a "Strategic Investment Bank" — a proposal which sounds a little like radical Democratic candidate Zolton Ferency's plan for a state bank.

Blanchard insists it's substantially different. "His proposal was one where you would take all state monies and put them in there and use them to finance whatever you want to finance."

The problems with the Ferency plan, he said, are: "First, you'd have to change a lot of laws to do that. Second, all the pension money in there that it wouldn't be worth it."

Blanchard views Michigan banks as seeking safe loans in established firms or fast-food franchises. He's thinking in terms of venture capital.

## POW to hear Judge Mester

Oakland County Circuit Judge Fred Mester will speak at 7 p.m. Tuesday to the Political Office Watchers of Oakland County.

The free, public meeting will be in the Board of Commissioners conference room, 1200 N. Telegraph, Pontiac.

Mester, who formerly served as court administrator, will discuss the (feder- it) strains judicial resources. He will also discuss Children's Village.

POW bills itself as a non-partisan group which seeks to educate voters about issues facing Oakland County government.

## Oakland board backs Proposal H

The Oakland County Board of Commissioners has endorsed Proposal H on the Nov. 2 ballot. It would require the state Public Service Commission to hold public hearings on utilities' fuel cost changes.

After an hour-long debate and many objections by board Democrats, who said the commissioners did not have enough information to make an intelligent decision, the board approved the measure on a voice vote.

Democrats objected that Proposal H first should be studied in the board's general government committee.

Proposal H would:  
• Prohibit automatic fuel-cost adjustments in utility rates. It would allow utilities, upon request, to recover "reasonable and prudent" costs of fuel, purchased gas or purchased electricity, only after full complete PSC hearings.

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