

INTRODUCTION TO THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF THE WINTER 2017 STUDENT COMMENCEMENT SPEAKER

Lani came to NMU in 2011 from Chicago, Illinois. Upon her arrival, Lani knew she would have to get involved in order to feel part of the community. She joined the Black Student Union and wanted to try out for the NMU Dance Team. She had no formal ballet training, however, so she wasn't eligible for the team—at first defeated by this rejection, her sophomore year she and a friend started another dance team for those with no formal training. That began her involvement at Northern.

Lani took a year off after her sophomore year. When she returned, she became heavily involved in the Black Student Union and was the president for two years. She started the “Let's Talk about It” program—an open forum for members of the NMU and Marquette communities to discuss controversial issues such as race relations and racism. She worked closely with President Erickson and the Admissions Office to establish a recruitment trip to Chicago and Detroit where BSU members visited high schools and talked to students about NMU. They met with over 600 students on each of their two trips.

Lani worked as a Resident Assistant for a semester, as a student assistant in the Sociology department office for two years, and has been involved in ASNMU and Platform Personalities this academic year. She also serves on the Youth Advisory Board of the Steve Fund, working to address the stigmas associated with mental illness in communities of color. She has completed the entire Superior Edge program.

In the summer of 2016, Lani studied International Business at East China Normal University in Shanghai. She considers that to be one of her most rewarding experiences and has been encouraging other minority students to take advantage of studying abroad.

Lani is graduating tomorrow with a major in Entrepreneurship. She will be the first person in her family to graduate from college. Next year, Lani will be working as an Assistant Complex Director at the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater and starting a master's program in Higher Education Leadership.

The theme of Lani's address tomorrow is learning, self-care and persistence.