

President's Report to the NMU Board of Trustees
Dr. Fritz Erickson
Friday, September 20, 2019

Northern is off to a fantastic fall 2019 semester. Along with our good news about the increase in overall enrollment, here are a few other recent highlights:

NATIONAL RANKINGS: Northern was a top 100 school and improved its place in 4 categories in the 2020 *U.S. News & World Report Best Colleges* rankings. **Among Midwest universities**, NMU tied for 76th best overall and was the **15th top public school**. We were ranked **47th among best colleges for veterans** and the **59th best value school**. While there is debate about the methodology of such polls, we are pleased that we continue to garner attention for our high quality, service to veteran students and affordability.

We also ranked **26th in the nation for our Master of Public Administration (MPA)** degree, based on our 100% online convenience, low cost and courses taught by expert faculty, according to OnlineCollege Plan.

DESIGN THINKING: As the semester was set to begin, Northern sponsored several design thinking events for faculty, staff and students. **Nearly 50 campus leaders completed the ExperienceChange certification and another 120 students and staff participated in a Design Thinking workshop**, both led by Garret Westlake, the executive director of the da Vinci Center at Virginia Commonwealth University. Dr. Westlake will be presenting to the board in December on the concept of design thinking, which is a creative process for problem solving and enhancing innovation.

STUDENT RESEARCH: 15 McNair Scholars presented on their summer research endeavors at the Sept. 6 Fall Symposium. The McNair Program prepares students from disadvantaged backgrounds for doctoral studies. Examples of the **high-caliber of research** included:

- Testing Artificial Gene Control via Designed DNA Looping in Living Bacteria
- Novel Approaches to Improving Public Transportation in Rural Communities

FACULTY GUIDANCE: Professors Randy Jensen and Sarah Breen of Northern's School of Health and Human Performance, and 14 students from the sports and exercise science programs, gave **seven presentations at this summer's International Conference on Biomechanics in Sports. The total made NMU the second-most productive university at the event.** According to Dr. Jensen, Northern's participation in the ISBS Conference since 2000 has resulted in 125 students, both grad and undergrad, having authorship on published ISBS Conference papers, possibly the most from one school for presenters who are not faculty or doctoral students.

TRUSTEE PARTICIPATION: I want to thank **Chair Bob Mahaney** for his work this summer with Northern's **Hockey Fan Experience Task Force**, which presented about 50 recommendations for elevating the Wildcat Hockey fan experience, of which more than half are being implemented already this season.

I also want to thank **Trustee Tami Seavoy** for traveling with the Northern contingent to the **Stratford Theatre Festival** in Stratford, Ont., in late August. I hear one of the highlights of the trip was the tour of the costume and prop warehouse. Northern's Stratford Festival Program Endowment

was established with a gift from retired speech communication professor Robert Dornquast and covers the travel expenses for the annual field studies trip, including six plays over three days.

ATHLETICS: Last weekend (Sept. 12-13), Northern's **weightlifting team finished third at the American Open 3** and had five of its 11 competitors finished in the top 10, including three runner-up finishes. Also Northern's **cross country team finished sixth among 26 teams**, including 5 D1 squads, at the **Spartan Invitational**. The Wildcats finished second among D2 teams behind Grand Valley.

Last month, Greco-Roman **wrestler Alston Nutter earned the bronze medal at the World Junior Championships** and **former OTS weightlifter Mat Fraser won his fourth CrossFit Games crown** to retain the title as "Fittest on Earth."