

President's Report to the NMU Board of Trustees
Dr. Fritz Erickson
Thursday, April 30, 2020

What a period in Northern Michigan's University history since I last reported to the NMU Board of Trustees. While the University has lived through many emergency situations in its 120 years of existence, the COVID-19 pandemic has truly been uncharted waters and has certainly tested our innovation, nimbleness and dedication to students and staff. I am very proud of our efforts during these trying times.

[Sharing safety equipment and supplies]

I've kept you abreast of our pandemic efforts, including sharing safety equipment and supplies with Upper Peninsula Health System-Marquette and other UPHS hospitals, the Jacobetti Home for Veterans, and other area health care facilities.

[Providing PPE support for health care professionals]

I've told you about our creating PPE items for health care professionals:

- Art and design faculty involved in designing and making Plexiglas shields
- theater staff sewing facemasks
- use of our 3-D printers and CNC machines

[Supporting the business and education communities]

We've also been doing what we can to support the business community:

- Created the #WildcatsMeanBusiness campaign to support local and alumni businesses and services
- Invent@NMU offering free services to small businesses
- The U.P. Cybersecurity Institute offering free cyber courses to businesses and community members
- We're actively supporting the K-12 education system through use of the Education Access Network – the EAN – and our public television station, WNMU, for educational programs.

[Supporting NMU students]

And, of course, our focus has been on supporting NMU students. We've done this in a number of ways, such as:

- the development of the 2020 Wildcat Student Relief Fund being supported by many of you, campus leadership, faculty, staff, parents, alumni and community members.
- Keeping our residence halls and campus apartments open and operational for those who do not have other permanent places of residence
- And keeping the NMU Food Pantry operational where we are providing food and personal hygiene items to an average of 50-60 students and often their young families each week.

In addition to our faculty converting their courses to remote instruction, I also want to remind the board of the many units on campus who have very quickly transformed their services to online formats to continue serving Northern students at a very high level.

These include, but are not limited, to:

- The **All-Campus Tutoring Center** for course and individual tutoring services
- **The Writing Center**
- The NMU HelpDesk for technology assistance

- **Northern Counseling and Consultation Services**, doing phone consultations to help students in need find mental health and well-being services in whatever area they now reside, as well as helping those still on campus
- **Veteran Services**
- The **Academic and Career Advising Center**, providing one-on-one advising to students as the COVID-19 crisis began to ramp up just as advising for fall course registration was scheduled to take place.
- **Rec Services** in providing outdoor rec equipment rentals out of the FitZone to the students in the residence halls and apartments so they could get outdoors.
- **Career Services** who has been providing a series of digital resources to students that are specifically designed to help them think through how to find a summer or permanent job in the midst of a pandemic.
- Many of the **end-of-year activities** still happened, just via the internet, including:
 - The Business Venture Competition
 - The Senior Art Exhibit
 - The Celebration of Student Scholarship and Creative Works
 - The Leadership Recognition Event for student campus leaders and organizations
 - To name just a few

I've also had the opportunity to be a part of several **departmental online graduation celebrations**, which have been enormous fun and have been much appreciated by the graduates.

[Life Beyond COVID –National Ranking and Recognitions]

Finally, I'd like to share a few highlights unrelated to the COVID-19 crisis as signs that life beyond coronavirus does exist.

NATIONAL RANKINGS: Northern has been included in 4 recent national rankings.

- Our **pre-med program was 16th** among the “Best and Most Affordable” in the U.S. Our program was praised for our cost of attendance, student-to-faculty ratio, graduation rate, and admittance rate into medical school.
- Northern was again ranked **among the safest campuses** in the nation and was 1 of 2 Michigan institutions rated nationally by YourLocalSecurity.com. Northern ranked No. 18 among the nation's top 25 safe campuses.
- Northern was **1 of 2 Michigan universities to appear on the “Most Affordable Four-Year Colleges and Universities by State”** listing released by University Headquarters, an educational organization that compiles comprehensive information for students in pursuit of higher education.
- One I am particularly proud to share is **Northern ranking second among small public institutions nationwide in the 2020-21 Military Friendly Schools** by VIQTORY Media. This was our third consecutive appearance in the Top 10 for this category and our highest placement. Northern was also the only Michigan institution in the Top 10 for the category.
- And finally, Northern was chosen for yet another national ranking related to skiing, being named the only Midwest representative on the **“30 Most Beautiful Ski Town Colleges”** listing released by Online College Plan. Northern was 15th on the list.

RECOGNIZING NORTHERN PEOPLE: We've also had several Northern people recognized by state and national organizations, including:

- **Bill Digneit**, director of NMU theater, who received the Dr. Dawn Gallup Honor Award from the Michigan Council for Exceptional Children for his work to promote sensory-friendly productions at Forest Roberts Theatre.

- **Jamie Crabb**, assistant nursing professor, who was selected by the National Council of State Boards of Nursing to be part of the development of the organization's national certification exam.
- English professor **James McCommon's** book on George Shiras and the Birth of Wildlife Photography was selected among the Library of Michigan's 2020 Notable Books.
- English professor **Marek Haltof's** book, "Screening Auschwitz" was recognized by the Polish Institute of Arts and Sciences of America.
- And finally, Northern's first and longest-serving hockey coach **Rick Comley** was named the prestigious 2020 Legend of College Hockey Award from the Hobey Baker Memorial Award Foundation.

Congratulations to them all.