

**President's Report to the NMU Board of Trustees**  
**Dr. Fritz Erickson**  
**Friday, December 10, 2020**

Thank you for allowing me to spend a few minutes to pay tribute to the life of Senator Casperson. I'll keep my remaining remarks for the President's Report brief.

**VIRTUAL COMMENCEMENT:** First, I'd like to congratulate the December 2020 graduates. They, along with the graduates of May 2020 and August 2020 – about 1,600 graduates in total – were invited to participate in last Sunday's virtual commencement celebration.

- We look forward to working with Ms. Dever to determine a way to scroll or read the names of all graduates should we need to hold another virtual commencement.
- We look forward to the day when we can hold our commencement ceremony back in the Dome and celebrate with our graduates and their families and friends in person. But until it's safe to do so, we wanted to virtually celebrate our calendar year 2020 graduates at this time.

**STUDENT VETERAN OF THE YEAR:** Jesse Sherman was honored on Veterans Day (Nov. 14) as Northern's 2020 Student Veteran of the Year.

- Jesse completed his MBA degree this semester.
- He was selected for the award because of his academic success and his participation in university and community veterans' organizations and activities.
- Jesse joined the U.S. Marine Corps in 2002, served two combat deployments in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom, earned a Purple Heart in 2004, and was discharged at the rank of sergeant.

**NMU RESEARCH/SCHOLARSHIP RECOGNIZED:** Each President's Report I like to highlight a few NMU students or faculty who have been recognized by outside sources for their research, creative scholarship and other academic achievements. Today, I'd like feature:

- **Junior Mariah Goeks** [Go-ick] who has been doing research on the kinetics of excess charge carriers – electrons and holes – in semiconductors with physics professor (and NMU alumnus) Rick Mengyan, which has recently resulted in two recently published journal articles co-authored by Mariah. Mariah, who will graduate next year, began her research as a Freshman Fellow.
- **Alumnus Sierra Gillman** is the first author of a study recently published in *Scientific Report* on the gut microbial population of American black bears, research which she began at Northern while a grad student, working with biology professor Diana Lafferty. Sierra is now pursuing a doctorate at the University of Washington.
- **Northern public relations professor and alumna Jes Thompson** has been named the 2020 recipient of the Western National Parks Association Steward L. Udall Award for her leadership in putting together the book *America's Largest Classroom: What We Learn From Our National Parks*. The book offers insight and advice for improving educational outreach at national parks, as well as suggestions for classroom educations on how to meaningfully incorporate National Park Service sites into their curricula. The book was also named a 2020 Silver Winner in the national Nonfiction Book Awards.

**SALUTING HEALTH CARE WORKERS:** You received about donors supporting Northern as part of the Global Day of Giving. Here's quick note on Northern giving back. As part of the NMU Day of Giving, Northern made a gift of cookies and sweet treats to area health care workers.

- This included nurses, doctors and other front-line employees at U.P. Health System-Marquette and the Marquette County Health Department ...
- As well as several Northern departments, such as the NMU Health Center, who have been heavily involved in the COVID-19 response, testing, and managing of Spalding Hall.

**EAN SAVES U.P. JOBS:** As it has throughout the pandemic, Northern's Educational Access Network (EAN) was called upon recently to help prevent an Iron River call center from losing valuable employees whose home internet speeds couldn't handle the demands of working remotely.

- Northern coordinated with InvestUP to assist its efforts to assist Global Response, a call center for such industries as retail, healthcare, insurance and automotive, continue its services when all but essential workers had to find a way to work from home.
- Northern's EAN was able to provide broadband access to the company, effectively keeping 31 employees working who would otherwise have been furloughed.

**MICHIGAN LEARNING CHANNEL:** WNMU-TV has joined the Michigan Learning Channel, a statewide partnership offering instructional content to support the education of students and to provide alternative curriculum resources for families and teachers.

- Free programming will be broadcast via special on-air channels established by each of the six public television stations in Michigan.
- When the service launches Jan. 4 and will run 24 X 7.
- It is funded by the Michigan Legislature and is meant to serve as a resource for teachers, students and parents.