

**President's Report to the NMU Board of Trustees**  
**Dr. Fritz Erickson**  
**Friday, October 16, 2020**

Let me begin by saying many – maybe most – people did not believe that Northern would still be holding in-person courses and supporting on-campus living and working environments at this point in the semester. While we do not want to jinx our success with just a little over five weeks to go, I would be remiss if I did not point out the great work by the campus so far in battling this COVID-19 pandemic.

Two pandemic notes for you:

**Dashboard Recognition**

Our COVID-19 dashboard was one of 26 to receive an A or A+ grade by RateCovidDashboard.com, which reviewed 245 college sites nationwide.

- Northern scored 10 out of 13 possible points by the online rating system.
- Northern's dashboard was developed by NMU Information Technology employees Tony Bertucci, Chris Danik and Genevieve Morgan. It is updated by Dr. Chris Kirkpatrick, medical director of the NMU Health Center.

**Meeting SLFP Students**

Last week, I had the opportunity to meet with the SLFP students in their Leadership class. This is something I do every year and really enjoy.

- We had very lively discussions on a number of topics – including social injustice and changes they would like to see on campus – but also about how they are navigating the COVID-19 situation.
  - Several talked about finding online and modified formats more demanding than in-person courses
  - While most feel they are managing the pandemic OK, many are tired and feel in need of a break
    - We are paying attention to this and talking about how to address it in the coming weeks, as well as in the next semester

Fighting COVID-19 is not all that has been happening at NMU this fall, so here are a few other updates:

**New Internship Program**

Northern and Northcross Group have entered an academic partnership

- Provides cybersecurity internships for NMU students
- NCG plans to contribute to NMU's cybersecurity initiatives, including academic programs and the U.P. Cybersecurity Institute
- We're very excited about this new partnership
- Northcross Group has decided to open an office in Marquette. They currently have offices in Maine and Virginia.

**Center for Rural Health activities**

The Center for Rural Health is up and running.

- The Center has put a focus on the need for flu vaccinations this year.
- The Center sponsored a U.P.-wide flu vaccination essay scholarship contest for high school seniors in September and early October.

- The Center has now created the “Fight the Flu” contest between the U.P.’s four universities with the winner of the highest percentage of vaccinations among its on-campus population winning a trophy and bragging rights.

### **Grants Received**

Two academic areas have received significant grants to support initiatives:

- **The BEAR Center** received a nearly \$500,000 grant from the Michigan Health Endowment Fund to help it reach a wider portion of the U.P. population.
  - Services were previously limited to children ages 2-6. With the grant, the BEAR Center will now serve the entire school-age population (2-22 years old) and address a wider range of behavioral difficulties.
- The **Department of Social Work** received a grant of nearly \$450,000 over three years to support Walking the Path Together, a program designed to reduce barriers to hiring & maintaining staff in U.P. tribal-run victim service programs.
  - Northern had a previous \$450,000 grant for this program from the same source: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Victims of Crime.

### **National and Regional Rankings**

I always enjoy bringing to the Board’s attention the various national and regional recognitions Northern and Northern people receive. Here is a sampling of some that have been announced since you were last on campus:

- Northern appeared in multiple categories of the **2021 U.S. News & World Report Best Colleges rankings**.
  - Among Midwest regional universities, Northern was 76<sup>th</sup> best overall.
  - It was also the 16<sup>th</sup> top public school in the region.
  - We also ranked as among the best colleges for veterans and advancing social mobility of disadvantaged students.
- Our **medical laboratory science (MLS) bachelor’s program** was rated the 20<sup>th</sup> best online clinical research degree in the nation by OnlineSchoolsReport.
  - Graduates of the program have a nearly 100% placement rate and more than a 95% passing rate on national certification exams.
- **Marquette**, home to Northern, was **selected among the 25 small “up and coming” U.S. towns**, according to a listing in *Reader’s Digest*.
  - In addition to mentioning Northern in the article, it cited Marquette’s location on Lake Superior as a people magnet – something we understand very well due to our student and employee recruitment.
- And congratulations to **assistant professor David Pierce**, who was recently awarded the United Resident Theatre Associations’ **“Award for Excellence in Undergraduate Training”** for his work in technical direction.
  - He was selected based on the professional preparation of his students at the 2020 URTA auditions and interviews -- the nation’s largest graduate school recruiting event for theater disciplines.

### **Wildcat Athletics**

Finally, I'd like to quickly run through what we know about the Wildcat team schedules.

- At this point, it looks like **Division I hockey** will begin with non-conference competition in late November/early December and the Western Collegiate Hockey Association (WCHA) schedule is planned to begin in early January.
- Our new **eSports** team participated in its first tournament a few weeks ago and our National Training Site **Greco-Roman wrestling** team recently began competition. Our **weightlifting team** is scheduled to compete starting in December.
- As for the other intercollegiate sports, **men's and women's basketball** competition is planned to begin in early January, along with **men's and women's alpine skiing, men's and women's Nordic skiing, women's indoor track and field, and men's and women's swimming and diving.**
- We hope **spring sports – women's lacrosse, men's and women's golf, and women's outdoor track and field** – will be able to compete as originally scheduled and three fall sports will be able to have modified spring seasons, including **women's volleyball** which is now planned to start in February and **men's and women's soccer** which are now planned to start in March.
- Unfortunately, it does not look good for **football or cross country** to have competitive seasons this year. No official announcement has been made by the Great Lakes Intercollegiate Athletic Conference (GLIAC), but that is where the discussion has been going for those sports.