

President's Report to the NMU Board of Trustees

Dr. Fritz Erickson

Friday, April 30, 2021

VIRTUAL COMMENCEMENT: First, I'd like to congratulate the 2021 Spring and Summer graduates. Just under 1,000 graduates will be participating in Saturday's virtual commencement celebration.

- 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 spring and summer 2021 graduates at this time.

STUDENT SUCCESS: Here are two examples of students excelling at recent competitions:

- **Junior Bazile Panek (BAY-zil PAN-ick) won the 2021 New Business Venture Competition** for both his written plan and his presentation in the Big Pitch competition for his proposed business, Niim, which will market socks adorned with traditional Indigenous designed created by Native Americans. Bazile is a Native American Studies major with minors in sustainability and entrepreneurship. The annual Business Venture Competition was held virtually this year. Cash and prizes for the event totaled \$13,750.
- **Jakob Lippert, a member of Northern's Quiz Bowl Team, finished second in individual scoring** among 128 players **at the Intercollegiate Championship Tournament**, the premier national quiz bowl event at the collegiate level. The Northern Quiz Bowl team defeated squads from Harvard, Amherst, Tufts and other universities to place 15th among 31 teams. Jakob averaged 66 points per game of the tournament, which team adviser Michael Joy told me was roughly the equivalent of scoring about 33 points per game in basketball. During his time at Northern, Jakob scored over 10,000 points in tournaments, putting him at the top of the career-scoring list since the team began in 2009.

BEING RECOGNIZED: I'd like to congratulate Nelly Kupper and Leslie Warren for being recognized by their professional organizations.

- **Nelly Kupper, professor of French and Russian, was named the 2021 recipient of the Dorothy Ludwig Excellence in Teaching Award** presented by the American Association of Teachers of French, the largest professional association of French teachers worldwide. The purpose of the award is to recognize teachers who have demonstrated excellence and commitment in the teaching of the French language and French and Francophone cultures and literatures. During her 20 years at Northern, Nelly has reimagined our French program in a variety of ways, including a redesign of all French courses to include Academic Service Learning.
- Leslie Warren, dean of Library and Instructional Support, was recently appointment chair of the American Library Association's Rural, Native, and Tribal Libraries of All Kinds Committee. She will serve in that leadership role from July 1 through June 30, 2022.
- Congratulations also to Dr. Gary Brunswick on being awarded the Sam M. Cohodas Professorship. Dr. Brunswick has been a marketing professor in Northern's College of Business for the past 30 years. In his role as the Cohodas Professor of Business, he plans to work on ongoing and new research project, many involving students, as well as work with the College of Business dean and colleagues to enhance the level of research-based outreach activities.

NATIONAL RECOGNITION: The University has received some recent national recognition.

- Northern was ranked 36th among best bachelor's degree programs in environmental science, according to Study.com. The national ranking highlighted our interdisciplinary approach.
- Study.com also ranked Northern 24th among the nation's best bachelor's degree programs in organizational/applied workplace leadership and 30th for our bachelor's degree in entrepreneurship.
- Northern was also one of about 230 institutions in 37 states identified as a “Voter Friendly Campus,” through an initiative where participating institutions were judged on their ability to plan and implement practices that encouraged students to register and vote in the 2020 elections and in coming years. ASNMU and past president Emma Drever led that effort.

IN ATHLETICS: Here are three “big news” items I’d like to share from Athletics.

- Our Wildcat volleyball team won the Great Lakes Intercollegiate Athletic Conference Tournament and a share of the GLIAC regular-season North Division title. The team posted a 15-2 overall record and closed the year ranked No. 18 in the country. Unfortunately, the NCAA did not hold a Division II national championship this year due to COVID. I like to think the Wildcats would have done well had they had the opportunity to compete in the national tournament this year. Congratulations to Coach Mike Lozier, who was named the GLIAC Coach of the Year; Jacqueline Smith, who was chosen the GLIAC Freshman of the Year, and the rest of the team members.
- Greco-Roman wrestler Jesse Porter, a 2020 Northern entrepreneurship alumnus and current graduate student, won the 77-kilogram weight class at the recent United States Olympic Trials. USA Wrestling still needs to qualify the 77 kilogram weight class for the Olympic Games, so Jesse will participate in the World Olympic Games Qualifier next weekend, May 6-9, in Sofia, Bulgaria. We hope to be able to watch Jesse compete at this summer’s Summer Olympic Games in Tokyo. Northern was well represented at the Olympic Trials with 25 current or former athletes qualifying to compete, the highest number of any university. Qualifiers included four current, seven graduates and 11 former Greco-Roman athletes. There were also three former women's freestyle athletes competing.
- Northern’s most decorated head coach, Sten Fjeldheim, recently announced his retirement after 34 years as leader of the Wildcat Nordic ski team. Sten, who is a Northern alumnus, also served stints as the head cross country running coach during his tenure. The ski program's incredible success is often attributed to the culture Sten created, which demanded a strong work ethic. He coached 102 skiing All-Americans and claimed 15 consecutive men's NCAA Central Regional titles from 2007-21. The final eight years of that streak also included women's NCAA Central Regional championships every year. He will be sorely missed, but we wish Sten the very best in retirement.

UNIVERSITY INITIATIVES:

- **Provost Search** – A little over a week ago, I announced the formation of a campus committee to conduct a national search for a new provost and vice president for Academic Affairs to replace Dr. Kerri Schuiling when she steps down from the position in January. Carol Johnson, dean of the College of Business, will serve as the search committee’s chair. The 25 members on the committee include faculty, staff, students and administrators and the group has its first meeting Thursday.

- **Accreditation Approval** – Northern has successfully completed our mid-cycle assurance review by the Higher Learning Commission. We met all 18 core components with no required follow-up monitoring. A next step is to prepare for the comprehensive evaluation required to reaffirm accreditation at the end of the current cycle in 2026-27. Northern participates in the HLC's Open Pathway, which follows a 10-year cycle and is focused on quality assurance and institutional improvement.