

## **PRESIDENT'S REPORT for BOT**

**Dr. Brock Tessman**

**Dec. 13, 2024**

### **Special Thank You:**

Let me start off with one more thank you to former Starbucks CEO and NMU alumnus Howard Schultz '75 and his wife Sheri Kersch-Schultz for their \$1 million gift through the Schultz Family Foundation to support initiatives related to NMU first-generation students and Wildcat Athletics. I'll be excited in the coming days to outline more comprehensive details about how this gift is being used in these areas. But needless to say, our students who will directly benefit as well as our entire campus, are deeply appreciative of this support. It was certainly a pleasure to have Howard and several other prominent alumni and friends on campus in October to share with them what is happening on campus today and ideas we have for our future. We hope Howard and his family members return to NMU again soon.

### **Persistence Rate:**

- Looking at the upcoming winter semester, nearly 91% of eligible Fall 2024 students have registered for Winter – and increase of +0.5% in persistence compared to last year. This is the highest fall-to-winter persistence rate since Institutional Effectiveness began tracking this statistic in 2017.
- With larger Fall 10th day headcounts and increased persistence, +33 more undergraduate students will be continuing their education at NMU compared to last year. In particular, the gains in the freshmen and sophomore baccalaureate classes directly help improve our 3rd and 5th-semester retention rates.
- Our re-enrollment efforts, along with our Student Success Team advising and other persistence/retention efforts have been key to pushing our persistence and retention rates up. Course registration is a prime example. By using analytics and collaborating with IT and advising teams, student registration information has been transformed from spreadsheets into an accessible ESP system where advisors and faculty can easily communicate and support students who have not yet registered.
- Looking at projected headcount for Winter 2025, the projected overall headcount is expected to be up +4.7% with strong gains in nearly all major student segments at both the undergrad and graduate levels. More good news as we look to 2025.

### **Next Steps in Strategic Planning:**

- As the Board learned this week, action plans for the three grand challenges of the new NMU strategic plan are being finalized – a plethora of strategy teams have been working on those goals, tasks and success measurements.
- The action plans will be formally introduced to the campus in the upcoming semester, and work on the tasks – which is underway for many of the goals – will begin in earnest. Regular updates will be included in a wide variety of settings where students, faculty, staff, alumni and community members can hear of the progress.

### Student Accomplishments:

- **Superior Cup** – Three NMU **Quiz Bowl** squads traveled to Houghton in November to compete with three Michigan Tech teams for the right to claim the Superior Cup, a traveling trophy that has been presented to the winner at each meeting of the two schools since 2015. NMU’s A squad finished in first place with a 7-0 record, so the Superior Cup is once again residing in the trophy case in The Science Building. NMU’s A squad was led in scoring by Josh Pletcher, who scored 72 points per game.
- **All-Americans and GLIAC Champs** – Brooke Pietila and Hannah Kastamo of the women’s soccer team (14-4-4, 9-2-3 GLIAC) have been named First Team All-Americans by the Division Two conference Commissioner’s Association (D2CCA). This fall, the Wildcats won their second consecutive Great Lakes Intercollegiate Athletic Conference (GLIAC) regular and tournament titles, and made their third straight appearance in the NCAA Tournament. Brooke was named the GLIAC Offensive Player of the Year; Hannah, GLIAC Defensive of the Year; Sally Patton, GLIAC Freshman of the Year; and John Sandavol, GLIAC Coach of the Year for a second straight time. On Wednesday, we learned that Brooke has also been selected as an Academic All-American.
- **Home for the Holidays** – Shows at the Forest Roberts Theatre are always exciting, but the current production titled “*Home for the Holidays*” is extra special in that it was developed and choreographed by NMU students performing in the production. Many of the songs and dances demonstrate the students’ own diverse family holiday traditions. One example is a dance choreographed by MJ Opulencia [Opal-LENSE-see-ah], who is from the Philippines and hasn’t been home for the holidays in four years. The dance reflects her country’s customs. Student Gianna Daprai [DAP-ree] developed a number that encapsulates the craziness and chaos of her family’s holiday dinners.

### Faculty and Staff Recognition:

- **Dr. Sarah Mittlefehldt** of the Department of Earth, Environmental and Geographical Sciences (EEGS) has been chosen as the recipient of Northern’s 2024 Peter White Scholar Award. During her year as the Peter White Scholar, she will focus her research on *Biofuels & BTUs: The Development of Upper Peninsula Forests as Energy Resources*. She and colleagues are exploring the challenges and opportunities of heating with local wood, and the broader issues pertaining to sustainable wood-based biofuel production.
- **Art and Design Professor Steve Hughes** was selected as a winner in the Figure & Portrait category of the 14<sup>th</sup> Annual PleinAir Salon Art Competition for his series of acrylic paintings that meld portraiture with graphic elements and patterns. That series was also featured as a Chosen Winner in the online American Illustration 43 show earlier this year.
- **Dr. Shawnrece Butler**, Assistant Vice President for Diversity and Inclusion, is one of six humanities leaders elected to the Board of the Federation of State Humanities Councils. The Federation advocates for increased investment in and engagement with the national network of humanities councils, and supports the work of civic health and cultural vibrancy.
- **Kourtney Goodwill**, assistant admissions director and a regional counselor for Wisconsin, was selected as a 2024 Rising Star Award recipient through the National Association for College Admission Counseling. The award honors individuals and programs that exemplify excellence and dedication in serving the needs of student as they transition from high school to college.
- **Former President Kerri Schuiling** is a recipient of the 2024 Dorothea Lang Pioneer Award, the most prestigious honor presented by the American College of Nurse-Midwives Foundation. The award recognizes exceptional individuals in the field who have exhibited vision, leadership and

innovation. Among her many accomplishments in the field, Kerri co-authored the award-winning textbook *Women's Gynecologic Health*, which is in its 4<sup>th</sup> edition.

### The Institution:

- **Nursing** – Northern offers the top accredited RN to BSN program in Michigan, based on annual rankings compiled by NursingProcess.org. NMU was the top-ranked program based on three factors: academic quality, as determined by enrollment, retention and graduation rates; affordability; and overall reputation. In another recent national ranking, NMU's nurse practitioner program was No. 3 in the state, according to RegisteredNursing.org.
- **Competency-based Learning Grant** – Northern has received an Innovation Investment Award of nearly \$906,000 from the Michigan Center for Adult College Success to develop competency-based education options that will help adults obtain postsecondary credentials. The funding will be directed in part to refining Northern's system for granting credit for prior learning through noncredit or work-based learning, and to creating additional non-credit micro-credentials, or short courses focused on a particular skill. The grant was one of nine awarded in the state.
- **Three Partnerships** –
  - 1) NMU has collaborated with Alpena Community College and Central Michigan to create the **Northeast Michigan Teacher Pipeline** for aspiring educators. It offers students a "2+" pathways option that allow students to complete their first two years at Alpena Community College before transferring to NMU or CMU to complete their bachelor's degrees.
  - 2) Northern has also partnered with **Gogebic Community College in a direct admissions program** for transfer students interested in completing a bachelor's degree at NMU. Interested GCC students will be admitted to NMU during their time at GCC, giving them access to Northern's academic and career advising, as well as Olson Library privileges, a MyNMU account, an NMU email address, and access to NMU campus events and student life activities.
  - 3) Additionally, **Northern has enhanced its partnership with Trillium House of Marquette**, which offers hospice services to area families. NMU social work and nursing students are gaining personalized field experiences and valuable insights into providing end-of-life care through this opportunity. Melissa Cavill, a graduate of NMU's nursing program, has been the executive director at Trillium House since May 2023.

### Celebrating 125 Years:

- Since last April, Northern has had a lot of fun celebrating our 125<sup>th</sup> Anniversary with a wide variety of activities from a gala dinner to a 5k, an outdoor concert to the grand reopening of the NMU tree and plant nursery, a Bagodowe [Ba-GOT-oh-Way] (traditional Anishinaabe lacrosse) game to the NMU at 125-themed Sonderegger Symposium, and so much more.
- The fun continues in the Winter 2025 semester with a special music concert, a salute to the 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Forest Roberts Theatre production of *Haywire* being chosen to perform at the Kennedy Center, some faculty and alumni panels, and an old-fashion field day at the Superior Dome. Watch for the details of those events coming in January.