

## **PRESIDENT'S REPORT for Board of Trustees**

**Dr. Brock Tessman**

**September 20, 2024**

### **Mission Statement:**

- In the formal is the request for approval of the new University mission statement.
- As you know, we worked on several versions of the statement throughout last year, including a session with the Board of Trustees.
- Developed a statement that is not too long but fully captures the priorities of Northern Michigan University today, in 2024.

- The new mission reads:

*Northern Michigan University empowers learners with distinct and meaningful experiences that open doors to extraordinary opportunities.*

*Our purpose is to foster close connections between learners, leaders, communities, and the natural environment in order to nurture and inspire creative problem solvers, critical thinkers, and responsible citizens dedicated to promoting the health and vitality of the Upper Peninsula, Michigan, and beyond.*

- We presented this version of the statement to the campus community at the Fall Convocation and the feedback we've received for it has been positive.
- As I mentioned, the mission statement does need formal approval of the Board of Trustees and is in the formal.

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

- Like the new mission statement, Our Compass, NMU's new strategic plan was presented to the campus at the Fall Convocation.
- Since then, we have been collecting feedback, including small group discussions as part of the year's first meeting of the President's Leadership Council.
  - Overall, positive reaction to the plan, although we've certainly received some very thoughtful and constructive ideas which will help us refine the framework.
- Currently NMU's three vice presidents who are serving as the executive sponsors of the plan's three grand challenges have been working to select their strategic leads and helping the leads begin to build the strategy teams that will develop the strategy action plans.
- The strategy teams will be participating in Strategy Doing workshops on campus in about a week, Sept. 30 through Oct. 3.
- We've scheduled our Fall University Forum for 3 p.m. Wednesday, Nov. 6, where the executive sponsors will update the campus on the progress of each grand challenge.

- Our goal is to have the action plans for the 11 strategies completed by the close of the fall semester.

### **Recent Recognitions:**

- **Student Recognition:**

**Cybersecurity** – In mid-August, Northern became the first higher education collaborator in the 12-year history of Northern Strike, one of the Department of Defense’s largest joint military readiness exercises. Eight NMU information assurance/cyber defense students had the rare opportunity to work alongside military cybersecurity teams from the U.S. and NATO ally Latvia. Their mission was to regain control of a network used for communications and war command that had been compromised by a foreign adversary, determine how the network was infiltrated and remediate the vulnerability.

**Dance scholarship** – Musical theater major Don ‘Tae Mitchell of Austin, Texas, received a full scholarship to attend the summer 2025 training intensive at Giordano Dance Chicago, which is known as “America’s original jazz company.” Artistic director Nan Giordano made the surprise announcement while the company was on campus to perform at NMU’s summer North Coast Dance Festival.

- **Faculty Recognition:** English professor Kel Sassi won a research award from the National Council of Teachers of English. The NCTE’s Julia E. Berry Research Award is given to teachers and professors who propose research projects that study “the careers of English majors and/or the role and function of English in career development.” Dr. Sassi’s research will focus on reaching NMU alumni currently teaching English. She will explore what challenges they face, such as book banning and censorship, and what factors help to keep them in the field.

- **The Institution:**

**Transfer-friendly** – Northern is one of 228 colleges and universities nationwide and one of only three public institutions in Michigan named to the 2024 Phi Theta Kappa (PTK) Honor Society’s Transfer Honor Roll for “creating dynamic pathways” to support transfer students. This accomplishment marks the third consecutive year Northern has been recognized for outstanding transfer student services.

**STARS Gold** – Northern has been recognized as a STARS Gold Institution by the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education. STARS is the Sustainability Tracking, Assessment & Rating System. An institution’s score is based on the percentage of applicable points earned across five main categories: academics; engagement; operations; planning and administration; and innovation and leadership. Northern was within a few points of gold when it submitted its STARS report a year ago. Jes Thompson, assistant vice president for Sustainability, documented and submitted the report again this summer on Northern’s behalf. Two things that contributed to the gold designation was Northern’s development of a carbon neutrality plan by 2050 and the NMU Board of Trustees’ decision to fully divest the University’s endowment fund from the fossil fuel industry by 2028 while also boosting sustainability-related investments by up to 15%. You may have noted that in our new strategic plan, we have a goal of platinum status next.

### **Celebrating 125 Years:**

- Tonight, Northern will play host to country duo Maddie & Tae in the 125<sup>th</sup> Celebration Outdoor Concert, which takes place behind the Superior Dome. The concert is free and open to all on

campus and the public. Students and community members, alike, are very excited and we expect a large crowd, possibly in the 5,000 to 7,000 range. One thing I'm really excited about regarding the concert is that our opening act is NMU student Sami Brown of Waco, Texas, who is not only a talented singer and guitarist, but also a member of the Wildcat women's soccer team. Sami is a graduate student working on her MBA. As a high school junior, Sami was a contestant on *American Idol* and advanced through several early rounds of competition. We're very excited to give her this opportunity.

- Also, as a part of the NMU's 125<sup>th</sup> Celebration, Northern will feature a Bagodowe [Ba-GOT-oh-Way] Gift Game at 1 p.m. Sunday at the Superior Dome. This is a traditional Anishinaabe lacrosse game. This is sponsored by the Office of Diversity and Inclusion.
- Another 125<sup>th</sup> Celebration event is the open house of NMU's new Native Plant Nursery at 3 p.m. Tuesday, Oct. 1. The nursery is located behind the Service Building on Sugarloaf Avenue. The event is co-hosted by NMU's Sustainability Hub for Innovation and Environment (SHINE) and NMU Building and Grounds.
- Also, the Mind over Miles 5K at 5:30 p.m. Thursday, Oct. 10, being held on World Mental Health Day. The event is meant to highlight the WellBeing Center and Northern's commitment to mental health. The course will take participants on a scenic loop through much of NMU's campus, starting and finishing at the WellBeing Center. This is sponsored by the NMU Wellbeing Office and the People, Culture and Wellbeing pillar.
- Recently, the Beaumier U.P. Heritage Center opened a new exhibition titled "Northern Tapestry: 125 Years of Stories." The exhibition explores the unusual, unknown, odd and sometimes challenging experience that have helped make it the university it is today. The Center will host of the annual Sonderegger Symposium on Friday, Nov. 8, in the Northern Center. The Symposium has a Northern 125<sup>th</sup> theme.
- Next semester, the 125<sup>th</sup> Celebration will feature concerts, panels and other special events before concluding with the May commencement ceremony.