

PRESIDENT'S REPORT for BOT

Dr. Brock Tessman

May 2, 2025

Thank You to the DeVos Foundation:

As you know, we've had some amazing investments made to NMU from supporters this year. I'm honored to share news of a \$2 million gift from the Daniel and Pamella DeVos Foundation. Half of this gift will be added to the permanent endowment of the DeVos Art Museum, ensuring its continued excellence. The remainder will be directed toward a fund aimed at advancing programs and facilities related to the development of an NMU arts district that I think will be transformative for NMU and the surrounding Marquette communities. Dan was a member of the Board of Trustees from 1995-2002 and chair his final year. We sincerely thank Dan and Pamella.

Giving Day

Northern's recent Giving Day on April 18, themed "Give to What You Love," was a success, surpassing our goal of \$125,000 with gifts totaling \$168,492 from 355 donors. Thank you to all who gave.

Schultz Family Foundation Scholarships:

Speaking of giving and receiving, 33 students were recently selected from 150+ applications for the first cohort of the new Schultz Family Foundation First-Generation Empowerment Scholarship. The award, worth up to \$15,000 per year for up to four years, is geared toward first-generation students. This new program is part of the \$1 million gift made to NMU this fall by Howard Schultz, Class of '75, and his wife Sheri Kersch-Schultz. From what the Admissions staff has told me, calls made to the chosen students generated cheers and grateful tears. We are so thankful to the Schultz Family Foundation for their support.

Lansing Testimony

Last week, I joined a team of NMU students, alumni and administrators to give Northern's testimony to the Michigan Legislature's House Higher Education Appropriations Subcommittee. I went very well and our information about NMU was received by the legislators.

I want to publicly recognize and thank **Emma Gariepy**, a senior forensic biochemistry major and **Ben Klossner**, a junior mechanical engineering technology major, who presented along with me and alumni **Lexi Hagin**, a 2024 business management graduate and new executive director of the Menominee Business Development Corporation and **Troy Morris**, a 2016 psychology/behavior analysis graduate and co-founder/CEO of the aerospace and space logistics company Kall Morris Inc. of Marquette.

Additionally, we had another nine students who hail from the subcommittee member's districts who shared their stories via a series of printed cards. Their stories are compelling as well, so we've provided you with a set of the cards, along with two other documents that we included in our packets to the legislators – a "50 Hot Jobs" poster that demonstrates NMU having an academic program related to ALL 50 of the state's identified highest demand jobs through 2032 and a poster with NMU economic impact information on one side and a list of NMU alumni around the state who have recently been recognized for their professional endeavors.

To the legislators, I provided an enrollment update, highlighting Northern's third consecutive year of overall growth; talked about the measurable impact the state's Michigan Achievement Scholarship and Growing Your Own teacher education programs are having on NMU, thanked the Legislature for its support last year of NMU's cold case program, and gently reminded them of our hope to keep the Northern Enterprise capital outlay project moving forward in the coming months.

A Student Recognition – 3-Minute Thesis:

Since the board was last on campus, NMU held its 3-Minute Thesis competition with graduate students and McNair scholars presenting their original research in only three minutes, in a language appropriate to a non-specialist audience, and with only one static PowerPoint slide.

The graduate student winner was Kaylee Mercer who presented “The Impact of Social Anxiety on Neural Responsiveness to Social Reward Through Social Media and Problematic Social Media Use.” As our winner, she recently competed at the Midwest Association of Graduate Schools 3MT competition.

The McNair Scholars winner was Trinity Valentin for “Evaluating Variation in Aboveground Biomass of Industrial Hemp Using an Integration of Field and Remote-Sensing Methods.”

A Faculty and Staff Recognition – Faculty Awards:

Congratulations to Paul Truckey, who was chosen as this year’s Stephen Young & Tricia Kinney Distinguished Faculty Award recipient. Dr. Truckey has been a member of the Theatre and Dance faculty since 2003. We will hear more about him at Saturday’s commencement. In addition to that award, 10 other faculty members were recently recognized:

Excellence in Scholarship: Diana Lafferty, biology, and Greg Warchol, criminal justice

Excellence in Teaching: ZZ Lehmberg, English, Michael Crum, business

Excellence in Part-time Faculty Teaching: Debra LaMere, business

Excellence in Online Teaching: Cindy Basse, education, leadership and public service

Excellence in Leadership: Joe Lubig, education, leadership and public service

Faculty Emerging Leadership: Adam Naito, earth, environmental and geographical sciences

Technology Innovation: Lin Fang, psychological science, and Shaun Shepard, business

Congratulations to all of these honorees.

Institutional Recognitions:

Rooftop Solar Grant – Northern received a \$100,000 grant from the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development to install a rooftop solar array on top of our WellBeing Center. Two student teams were involved in writing and submitting the project proposal. The design of the project is scheduled to be done in late fall with construction taking place next summer.

Rural Health Recognized – The NMU Center for Rural Health received this year’s Nonprofit of the Year Award from the Upper Peninsula Economic Development Alliance. The Center has solidified more than \$2.3 million in funding for health-related projects and workforce development initiatives over the past four years. Congratulations to Director Elise Bur and the Center’s staff.

Welles Honored – Some of you know campus canine celebrity Welles, who is the loyal service dog for NMU Veteran Services Coordinator Mike Rutledge. Welles was recently awarded the 2025 Silver Tag Award from UPAWS at its annual gala, recognized for his longtime service and for his “comforting and supportive presence” on campus and in the community. We want to thank Welles and his partner Quinn, as well as our very active WildPups contingent, for the support they provide our campus. Congratulations, Welles.

Milestones:

A happy **50th anniversary to the NMU Social Work Department**, which recognized this milestone in March with a series of events.

In April, as part of NMU's 125th Anniversary celebration, the departments of theatre and dance and communication and media studies collaborated on the production of **"30 Years Later: Remembering Haywire"** which was really enjoyed by those who attended. In 1995, NMU's musical *Haywire*, written by Northern Professor Shelley Russell with the musical score by Professor Rob Engelhart, was one of just five shows from 900 submissions selected to perform at the Kennedy Center's College Theater Festival.

This week, Northern closes out its **yearlong 125th Anniversary celebration**, which began on NMU's Charter Day of April 26 last spring. And what a year it has been! So many activities, including:

- Our 125th dinner at Homecoming
- The Maddie & Tae Community Outdoor Concert behind the Dome
- A revival of the NMU plant and tree nursery and its grand re-opening
- A baggataway [ba-gate-a-way] or Native American lacrosse contest and the showing of the Ojibwe version of Star Wars
- A 125th-themed Sonderegger Symposium and presentation on the history of jazz at NMU during the NMU Jazz Festival
- 43 past members of the NMU community selected as "transformative leaders"
- A daylong WUPX broadcast by former DJs and a Zoom panel with alumni campus leaders representing many different decades
- Debuting a new and modernized alma mater, written by NMU Professor Dwight Brady
- As well as debuting our new mission, vision and strategic plan
- To name just a few things that took place over the past year ...
- None of these event and activities just magically happen. They all take dedicated and creative people coordinating their success.
 - To all those who were involved in making this a fun and meaningful year of looking back at NMU's last 125 years and helping us to start to look forward to the next 125 years, thank you.

Brock Personal Note:

Seeing this is my last president's report, I thought I would note for the record just a select few of the personal moments/events that stand out from the last couple years.

- Making my Theatre Debut as part of Putnam County Spelling Bee (October 2022)
- Signing the Okanagan Charter (April 2023)
- Flash Mob at Commencement (Don't Stop Believin') (May 2023)
- Hot Ones / 3rd degree hot wing interview (Summer 2023)
- Visiting each of the 31 academic departments in AY 22-23, 23-24, and (almost) 24-25
- Investiture with 124 students and daughter's classes/ fun run (September 2023)
- Bringing back the all-employee Holiday Dinner (December 2023)
- Playing Mother Ginger in community production of the Nutcracker (December 2023)
- John Green visit to campus (January 2024)
- MOU with AAUP in Spring 2024 and subsequent one-time support for others Fall 2024
- Seeing retention numbers hit an all-time (recorded) high of 78% (Sept 2024)
- Superior Dome Showdown (October 2024)
- Howard Schultz return to campus (October 2024)
- Cutting down piece of net with Men's Basketball at Tech (March 2025)
- Ribbon Cuttings Across Campus (Wellbeing Center, BEAR Center, Jacobetti Center, Vandament Arena)

This list goes on...none of it would have been possible without the tremendous support you as the NMU BOT has offered our team. You have given us the space to lead here on campus, but you've also been there - for me personally and also for the entire University - when we've needed your guidance and support. Thank you.

And, of course, the milestones above are just a few from a very active and positive 2+ years. Northern is in a strong position today, with positive momentum in multiple areas, enrollment, budget, student success, faculty achievements, Wildcat Athletics, and community engagement.

My time roughly coincided with the preparations for, experience of, and reflections on, Northern Michigan University's 125th Anniversary. What a privilege.

More and more apparent to me is that, with all our new buildings, new programs, and new achievements, Northern's success is about a delicate balance between looking toward the horizon while also staying grounded in the traditions and wisdom of our past. There is a way to keep thinking about new ways to meet the challenges ahead, to focus on innovation and creativity while also not losing track of the culture, lessons, and historical milestones that have always been part of our DNA. One of my favorite lines of any poem, or really of any written work, may apply to the beautiful blend of future and past that makes Northern Special. It's from TS Eliot's "Little Gidding"

He says: "We must not cease from exploration and the end of all our exploring will be to arrive where we began and to know the place for the first time."

Quite a nice way of thinking about the past, present and future of this great University, and this great Upper Peninsula. Thank you and Go Cats!"