SECTION 1

STRATEGY

Essence • Positioning • Messaging • Audiences • Personality

ESSENCE

Our brand essence is how we want to be thought of in the minds of our most important audiences.

It’s not how we express ourselves externally; it’s about what we want people to remember when they walk away.

Stark determination meets transcendent opportunity.

Sheer, strong and forthright — but also without decoration, exaggeration or embellishment. Equates our character with the starkness of winter beauty.

Our *sisu:* our innate quality to work hard and persevere, for ourselves and for others.

Represents how the NMU’s value transcends time and place: upward social mobility for generations, impact on the region beyond Marquette, sustaining the planet, and friendships for life. “Transcendent” is also defined as “superior” — another nod to our location.

Honors our history of access and reinforces that anyone who comes to NMU with determination will in fact succeed and reach the next level, whatever that is for them.

POSITIONING

As an elaboration of the essence, the positioning statement can serve as a point of pride and a source of identity.

ESSENCE

Stark determination meets transcendent opportunity.

POSITIONING STATEMENT

WHAT Northern Michigan University opens doors

WHO to those who want to seize opportunities with determination,

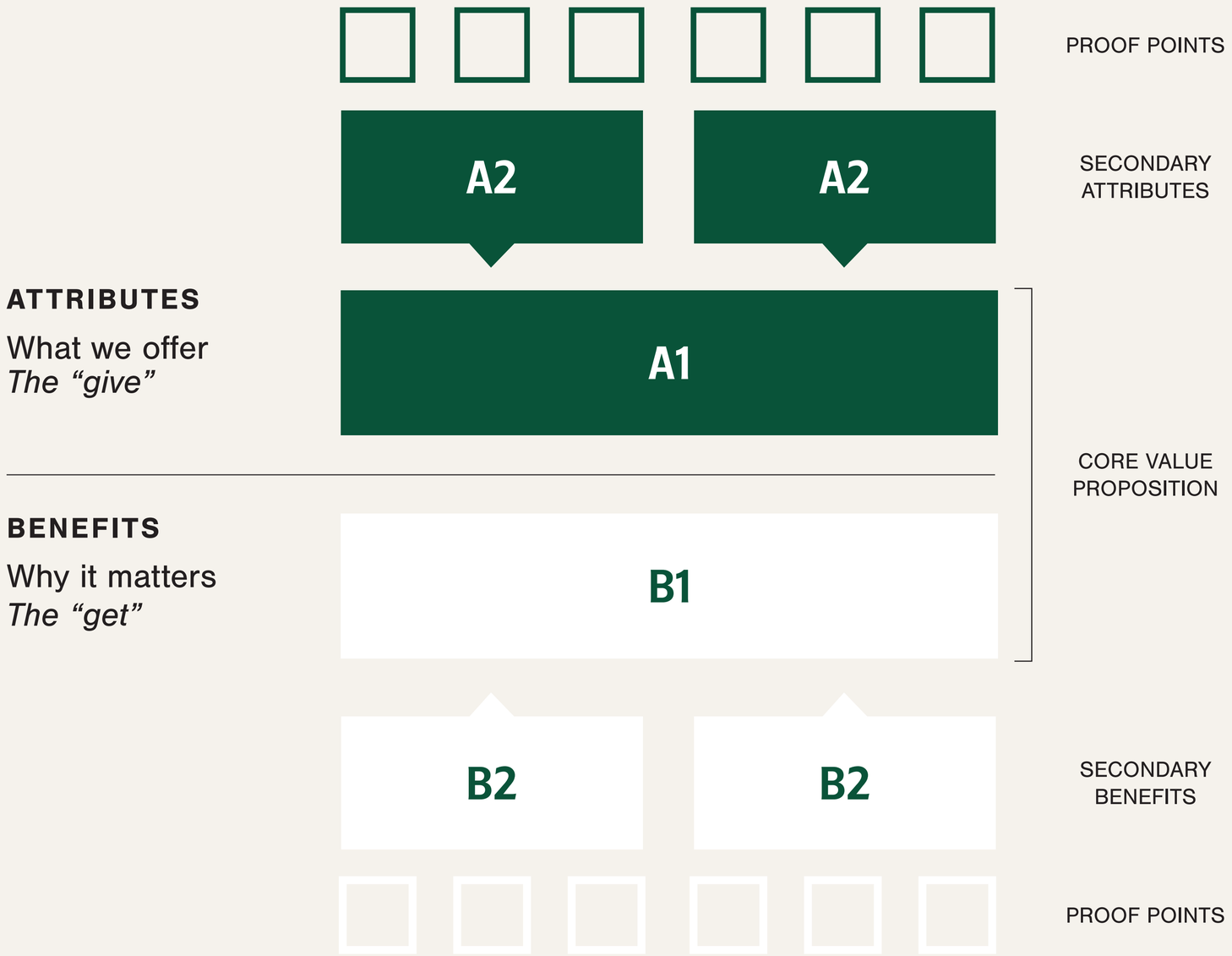
HOW through future-thinking academics in an environment of holistic support,

WHY to reach the next level for themselves, their region and their world.

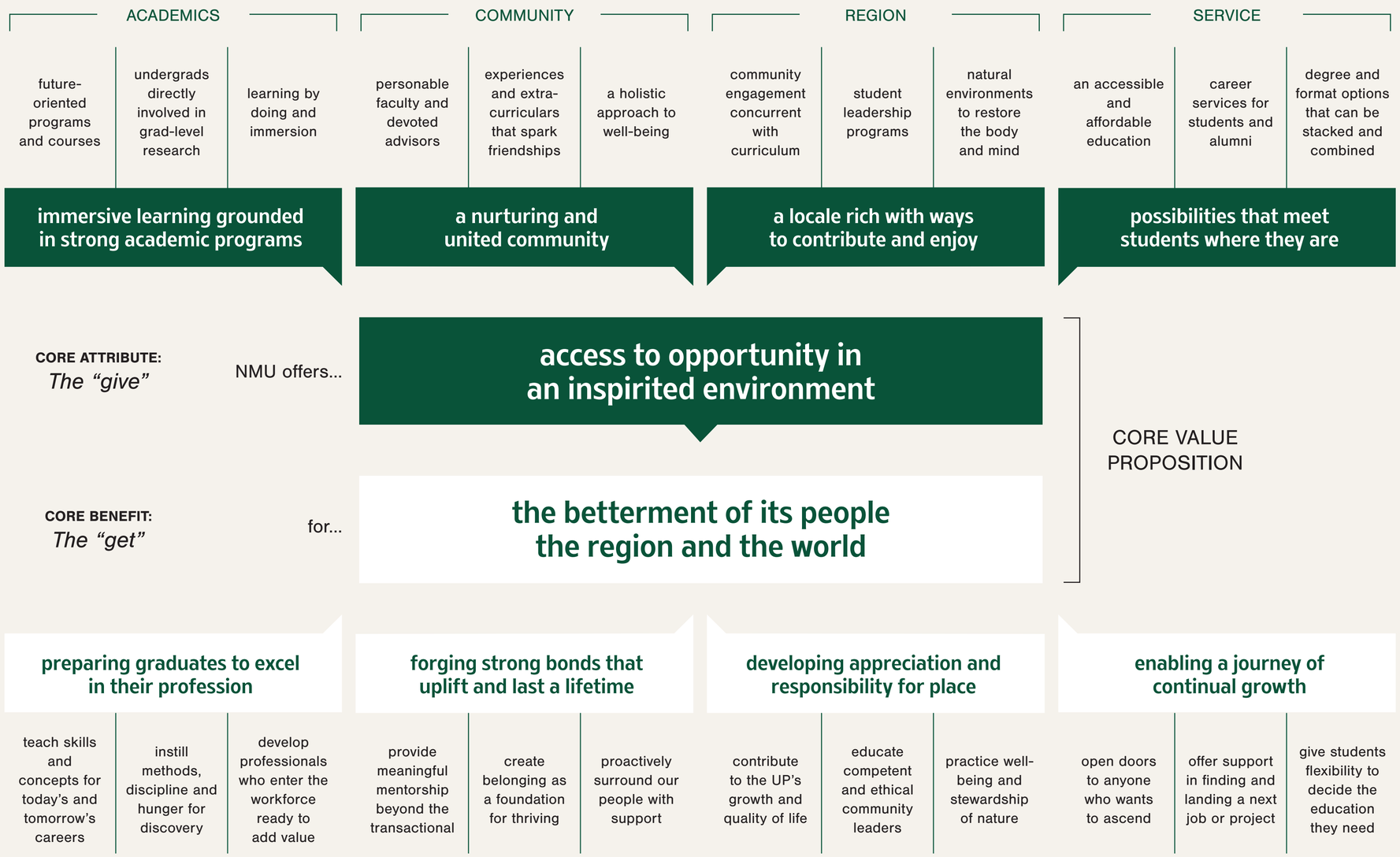
MESSAGING FRAMEWORK

The message map creates a hierarchy to articulate what we say and why it matters, consistently and compellingly. It outlines the key ideas we need to communicate (but not the exact words to use in materials).

See **Section 2: Voice and Tone** for tips on how to make these messages come to life.



MESSAGING MAP



AUDIENCES

We need to understand and prioritize who we're speaking to and establish goals for each audience, so we can best engage them with the brand.

INTERNAL AUDIENCES — EXTERNAL AUDIENCES

CURRENT WILDCATS

Those who are already here

GOAL

ALIGNMENT

ALUMNI AND DONORS

Those who support us

GOAL

ENGAGEMENT

MARQUETTE AND THE REGION

Those who shape NMU's future and reputation

GOAL

REPUTATION

FUTURE WILDCATS

Those we wish to attract to NMU

GOAL

AWARENESS

AUDIENCES

CURRENT WILDCATS

GOAL

Alignment

GROUPS LIKE

Current students

Faculty

Staff

THEIR MOTIVATION

I have goals for my life and my career, and I'm willing to work hard for them at a place where I feel valued and supported.

NMU'S RESPONSE

We believe in you, and we care about you. We'll work hard to make opportunities available for you, and we will invest in the care and support you need to follow through with them.

MESSAGES TO ELEVATE THROUGH FACTS OR STORIES

- The essence of what unites them and why NMU matters
- Types of degrees and paths available for them
- Hands-on learning and extracurricular educational opportunities
- Career outcomes and skills acquired through what they're studying
- Ways to connect with employers and gain experience while studying
- How to access academic and well-being resources and support

AUDIENCES

ALUMNI AND DONORS

GOAL

Engagement

GROUPS LIKE

Alumni

Alumni donors

Non-alumni donors and supporters

THEIR MOTIVATION

I value NMU and would like to stay connected to the university and to other Wildcats, and support the university whenever I can.

NMU'S RESPONSE

You are a part of this community wherever you are. There are many ways to contribute to NMU to create opportunities and make connections.

MESSAGES TO ELEVATE THROUGH FACTS OR STORIES

- How alumni can remain connected to each other
- How alumni can stay connected to the university no matter where they are (in Marquette or other communities)
- How alumni can contribute by volunteering, giving or partnerships, to give students a chance to succeed
- NMU's prowess in sustainability and its role in Marquette and the UP; in particular, preservation of the natural environment
- Lifelong career services, connecting NMU students and alumni with opportunities

AUDIENCES

MARQUETTE AND THE REGION

GOAL

Reputation

GROUPS LIKE

Parents

Counselors and advisors

Employers and local business owners

The general public in the UP

THEIR MOTIVATION

I love this community, and I want it to thrive. I would like to support NMU in a way that also brings benefits to my endeavors.

NMU'S RESPONSE

We are stronger together. You can provide opportunities for our students and alumni to enrich their careers, and get their innovative perspectives. You can partner with us to move forward important initiatives for our community and region.

MESSAGES TO ELEVATE THROUGH FACTS OR STORIES

- How NMU needs their partnership for the betterment of the region by offering opportunities to students and graduates
- How NMU's investments, projects and research are supporting Marquette and the region — economically and environmentally
- NMU's investment and focus in its students through academic excellence, hands-on experiences and holistic support

AUDIENCES

FUTURE WILDCATS

GOAL

Awareness

GROUPS LIKE

Regional high school and community college students

Local and regional workers without a degree

Local and regional workers with a bachelor's degree

Their influencers

THEIR MOTIVATION

I am ready for the next step in my journey. I'm not sure if I can do it, but I will give it my all, and I trust that it will be worth it.

NMU'S RESPONSE

We'll open the doors, but it's your job to walk through them and stay on course. When you doubt, we'll be right behind you to uplift and support you. Getting to the other side is definitely worth it.

MESSAGES TO ELEVATE THROUGH FACTS OR STORIES

- Future- and career-relevant degrees and courses
- Professors' backgrounds and accolades
- Types of degrees and paths available
- Hands-on learning and extracurricular educational opportunities
- Career outcomes and skills acquired
- Access: admission and financial aid
- Personalized attention from faculty and staff; they're not on their own
- Strong bonds and friendships for life
- Holistic support for well-being

PERSONALITY

Our personality traits set the tone for how we convey our messages.

They answer questions like: How do we make people feel when we interact with them? How would they describe us?

By staying true to these characteristics, we can create materials with greater resonance and emotional strength.

Enterprising

We are adventurous in our endeavors and ready to give everything our best.

Steadfast

We're grounded in our aspirations and unwavering toward our progress.

United

We are stronger together. We lean in. We lean on and uphold each other.

Spirited

We are brave and full of life, and we share our energy freely.

Unconventional

We're endearingly quirky and uncommonly caring.