



Photo of Les Wong by Jim Godell.

## 'Limitless possibilities, unparalleled opportunities'

Les Wong was officially invested with the NMU chain of office as the university's 13th president at an Oct. 16 ceremony.

In his speech, "Everybody Counts—Everybody Matters," Wong cited chronicles of the Lewis and Clark expeditions, which according to one historian exemplified "[America's] sense of limitless possibilities and unparalleled opportunities." He said higher education could take a lesson from how the explorers reacted to the possibility of encountering unknown people whose smoke trails were visible on the horizon of the Dakota prairie.

Wong said that rather than making an assumption as to whether the smoke represented

friend or foe or choosing to steer clear of the unknown, Lewis and Clark responded with curiosity. They did not lose a single person to hostile action, and they met numerous tribes of Native people.

"Their journey represents the triumph of a curious, positive engagement with the unknown," he said. "Everyone on the Corps of Discovery and everyone they met mattered."

Similarly, Wong said he envisions an NMU education as using curiosity to contain fear, minimize ignorance, and prepare students to respond to the unknown. A challenge, he added, is to begin to recognize the value of the journey and not just the rewards of the outcome.

### Northern earns another top Midwest ranking

Northern Michigan University is one of *The Princeton Review's* "Best Midwestern Colleges" for 2005. The distinction came on the heels of the August 2004 announcement that NMU ranks 13th in the top tier of Midwest public universities by *U.S. News & World Report* magazine.

*The Princeton Review* named 170 institutions—public and private—from 13 states to the "Best Midwestern Colleges" list. Each had to meet standards for academic excellence within its region. The publication also sent representatives to each campus to distribute and collect a 70-question student survey about campus life.

## Fire sparks, water works

A small fire was contained to one room in Van Antwerp Hall at Northern Michigan University on Saturday, Nov. 13.

A halogen study lamp left on for too long and left too close to bedding material caused the fire.

The evacuation of the building went smoothly, and the fire was quickly snuffed out by Northern's sprinkler system, which was installed just two years ago. This was the first real-life test of the system, and, according to university officials, the system worked exactly as it should.

No one was hurt, and the damage—mostly from smoke and water—was limited primarily to the room the lamp was in. A few items on the floor in adjacent rooms suffered some mild water damage.

Students, other than those who lived in the room where the fire was, were able to get back into their rooms about 3 1/2 hours after evacuating the residence hall. The material possessions of the students who lived in the room were covered by homeowner's insurance, and the university provided both students with replacement notebook computers.

The students were assigned to other rooms in Van Antwerp Hall while the damage to their room was repaired.

# Freshman retention rises

A greater percentage of Northern freshmen are returning to campus for their second year of college, according to Paul Duby, associate vice president of institutional research at NMU. Nearly 73 percent of first-time, full-time, baccalaureate-bound freshmen who enrolled in the fall of 2003 returned to NMU for the fall 2004 semester. This is a one percent increase over the previous year's comparison. It is also virtually equal to the all-time high in 1995, which is an especially notable achievement, given the fact that NMU now has twice as many freshmen.

Duby attributes the increase to the following factors: the success of the First Year Experience program, in which almost half of NMU freshmen are enrolled; Northern's array of student support programs such as the college transition and freshmen

probation programs, all-campus tutoring, and the writing center; and stronger academic credentials of NMU freshmen.

"The credentials of our freshmen have been increasing because of scholarships and recruitment," Duby said. "Our goal is to recruit more first-time, full-time freshmen and keep them."

NMU has been investing more in scholarships such as the National Academic Award to recruit high school students.

"Our reputation is also increasing, and if your reputation is stronger, you get better students," Duby said.

He also said that the number of students from Northern Illinois and Wisconsin has increased.

"There are a lot of good things going for the university, and the increasing numbers show that," Duby said.

## Cosby packs the Berry

Bill Cosby treated NMU students, faculty, staff, and community members to a night of improvisation, funky facial expressions, and good-natured teasing on Friday, Nov. 12, at the Berry Events Center. More than 6,800 people attended the two sold-out performances.

Cosby joked about the Upper Peninsula, college life, relationships, and parents and children during his routine.

The event was sponsored by two NMU student groups—Platform Personalities and Northern Arts and Entertainment.

## Excellence in Teaching recipients announced

NMU English professor Ray Ventre and communication and performance studies professor Wally Niebauer are the recipients of the 2005 NMU Excellence in Teaching Awards. They were recognized at the Celebration of Scholarship Ceremony on Thursday, Dec. 9.

Ventre joined the NMU English faculty in 1979. He is director of English graduate studies and has served on the American Association of University Professors executive, educational policy, and salary compensation review committees. Ventre is a past recipient of the outstanding faculty award from the NMU chapter of Mortar Board. He received a bachelor's degree from Providence College and a doctorate from Brown University.

Niebauer arrived at Northern four years ago after teaching public relations for 17 years at Iowa State University. He serves as adviser for the NMU chapter of the Public Relations Student Society of America, a role that earned him the 2002-03 student organization adviser of the year award. Niebauer is a member of the USOEC, academic service learning, and health promotions advisory boards. He received both a bachelor's and a master's degree from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. He earned a doctorate from Michigan State University.

Award winners were cited for their sustained record of high achievement in teaching evidenced by peer observation; student evaluations; knowledge of subject matter taught; clarity, organization, and consistency in subject presentation; enthusiasm for teaching and learning; creation of a safe and open learning environment; and experimentation with teaching and learning paradigms.



Bill Sampson

## NMU student discovers rare blood disorder

NMU student Pete Pelletier of Newberry was gaining some hands-on experience at the Portneuf Medical Center in Pocatello, Idaho, as a step toward completing his associate degree as a clinical laboratory technician, when a discovery turned his standard clinical practicum into a real resume booster.

Pelletier was testing an anemic woman's blood to find a donor for her transfusion and obtained abnormal results.

"We were thinking that I had done something incorrect in my testing, but I continued to do the work-up for more learning experience," Pelletier said. "What I found next confirmed that my work-up was probably accurate and that we were dealing with a very rare Rh blood type."

Since this occurrence was so rare, Pelletier sent the blood sample to the American Red Cross, and they forwarded it to the National Reference Lab and Rare Donor Center. The ARC listed the chance of finding a compatible unit of blood as less than 1 in 10,000.

"It is a very complex problem to solve when encountered, and it is so hard to find compatible blood that the patient could die before it would become available," said Wayne Price, Pelletier's adviser and a clinical laboratory science professor at NMU.

Pelletier described the discovery of the unusual Rh-factor as both exciting and nerveracking, especially because many technicians who work in the field of transfusion medicine have never had the chance to see a similar case.

Pelletier wrote a paper on the topic and presented it at the Wisconsin Association of Blood Banks Annual Education Seminar in Milwaukee.

## Easing sticker shock

Study shows the 'net cost' of college has decreased

The net tuition cost for the average Michigan public university student decreased over a recent five-year period, according to a study issued in November by the Presidents Council, State Universities of Michigan.

Results show that increases in scholarships, grants, and tuition tax credits have more than outpaced rising tuition rates after inflationary adjustments. This means that students, on average, paid a smaller percentage of the total "sticker price" for tuition and mandatory fees in fiscal year 2003 than they did in 1998.

At Northern Michigan University, for example, the annual tuition rate for resident undergraduates increased by \$1,358 over the five-year span. But the increase was offset by a combination of institutional aid, state aid, federal aid, and federal tax credits that rose by an even greater amount—\$1,411.

"This study confirms that it's important to look at both numbers," said NMU President Les Wong. "Some might assume college is out of reach because they only see reports of tuition going up. They may not realize that financial aid is compensating for that by growing at a similar or even more accelerated rate. Higher education is a significant investment, and Northern is committed to ensuring that it remains accessible to those with the greatest need. We have put more university resources into financial aid and scholarship programs every year, even when we were cutting other budgets across campus."

### FOR MORE INFORMATION:

- Presidents Council Report  
[www.pcsum.org](http://www.pcsum.org)
- NMU Tuition and Fees  
[www.nmu.edu/facts/tuitfees](http://www.nmu.edu/facts/tuitfees)
- NMU Financial Aid (Federal and State Aid, NMU Scholarships, Grants, and Special Situation Funds)  
[www.nmu.edu/finaid](http://www.nmu.edu/finaid)

NMU awarded an average of \$556 in institutional aid per fiscal-year equated student in 1998. Five years later, the figure climbed to \$889, a 60 percent increase.

The Presidents Council report was patterned after a study done for *USA Today* and compiled by Hank Prince, a former Michigan House Fiscal Agency associate director.

Prince found that the net cost of a college education was 45 percent of the "sticker price" in fiscal year 2003, compared with 60 percent in 1998.

"Institutional aid is a significant but overlooked component of the total cost of higher education," said Mike Boulus, executive director of the Presidents Council. "Political involvement, in the form of tuition caps, makes it harder for universities to provide resources to students, which may result in higher net tuition costs for many students."

The Presidents Council is a nonprofit higher education association based in Lansing. It serves Michigan's 15 public universities.

—Kristi Evans

# Taking a closer look at child's play

Psychology professor receives grant to study gender development

Most research on gender development has focused on children 3 years of age or older, but theory suggests that awareness of one's own sex and the potential for developing gender stereotypes begins even earlier in life. The challenge has been validating the theory.



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Infants and toddlers do not have the same level of verbal understanding or cooperation required in previous studies, and recent attempts to establish age-appropriate measures have been thwarted by methodological problems or inconsistent results.

Maya Sen, psychology professor and director of the gender studies minor at NMU, will try to make advances in this emerging area of research. She has received a two-year, \$100,000 grant from the

National Institutes of Health to develop and pilot-test measures to analyze gender development in 6- to 30-month-old children.

"We will adapt methods used in other areas of research with very young populations with the goal of designing paradigms that are both age appropriate and engaging," she said. "Specifically, we will try to measure children's understanding of what sex they are; their knowledge of gender stereotypes; and gender salience, or the attention and importance they attach to gender. The main focus is determining whether the measures themselves are feasible, but hopefully we will also obtain some results for this age group in the process."

Sen said that while there are a variety of ways to measure stereotype knowledge in older children, such as showing the subject a doll and asking whether a girl or boy is most likely to play with it or asking the subject to put a toy airplane into the hands of a female or male doll, these are not ideal activities for younger children.

"We will test kids 12-30 months old using six different measures," she said. "One is sequential touching—presenting them with a tray full of toys and observing how they play with them and associate the toys with each other. It's similar to testing category formation when

kids play with related toys. There is some evidence that children know the doll and truck distinction at 12 months. They might have stereotype knowledge at that age, or it could be a case of innate differences or parents steering them away from other things. At 12 months girls and boys prefer dolls—at 18 they show gender stereotyped preferences."

Sen's interest in the field stems from her feminist upbringing. While parenting plays a role, she said even children raised in egalitarian households learn gender stereotypes. Sen is interested in when these first develop and whether they conceivably can be changed. She is also intrigued by children who don't conform to stereotypes even when there is so much societal pressure to do so.

"Reducing stereotypes is a goal, but not the primary one," she said. "We want to provide detail for what develops and when so that hopefully we can use these measures to develop longitudinal studies of gender development from birth through adulthood. Once a better theoretical explanation of gender development is in place, it might be used for interventions that will lead to cultural change."

Four undergraduate students will help Sen execute the study.

"Students can read or talk about designing a study, but to actually experience the process is much more valuable and really boosts their resumes," she said.

Sen began testing young children in December.

—Kristi Evans