

Foundation news

Discovery Initiative



The Discovery Initiative pilot project team, with alumnus and NMU Foundation Board president **Kevin Boyle '81 BS**, from left: Andrew Hill, Thao Do, Erin Schafer, Brendan Franklin, Hunter Harig, Brittany Woodard, Cheyenne Marlin

Discovering the alumni experience

Spring break at NMU offers students opportunities to recharge, whether it's spending time with family, spending a week on a beach with friends or other ways of catching up and relaxing. However, this spring break, a core group of students will spend their week taking advantage of a unique new program to connect with you, the alumni of NMU.

"Our alumni are one of our greatest assets. That is why we are reaching out through The Discovery Initiative to hear their stories and insights."

—NMU President Les Wong

This pilot venture is called The Discovery Initiative and is being developed and implemented by the NMU Foundation with a grant from the Wildcat Innovation Fund. The Fund was established to support innovation

among faculty and staff as part of NMU's Road Map to 2015 strategic plan.

Student representatives will visit with participating alumni and engage them in active dialogue to:

- Understand their perceptions of NMU and learn about their life experiences since graduating.
- Gather information about what resources would help them stay more connected to NMU.
- Hear how they feel about the education they received at NMU and the effect their NMU experience has had on their lives and careers.
- Listen to their perceptions about NMU today and what challenges and opportunities they see for the university in the future.



- Learn how they would like to be involved with NMU.
- Discover what the university can do to stay relevant to them and keep them interested, informed and engaged.

“Our alumni are one of our greatest assets,” says NMU President Les Wong. “That is why we are reaching out through The Discovery Initiative to hear their stories and insights, to share information about campus life today and to build strong bonds between our students, our alumni and our university.”

“I want to learn the stories of NMU graduates and how Northern helped them succeed. I hope to gain a relationship with the alumni I meet, and be able to contact them as a resource. This will further enhance my leadership abilities and help me succeed in my career and the community.”

—Erin Schafer

The pilot program will be led by **Andrew Hill '03 BS**. Hill was the associate director for student-alumni programs at The George Washington University in Washington, D.C before returning to Marquette with his family.

Hill says, “We’re very excited to launch this program



Alumnus Kevin Boyle contributes to a team training session.

and very grateful to the university for providing the resources to pilot it. This is an organized effort to bring students and alumni together, to harness their energies and strengthen NMU for tomorrow. Alumni will be able to let us know their thoughts and feelings about NMU. In addition, this is an amazing networking and career mentoring opportunity for students, allowing them to play an active role in shaping their school for current and future students.”



THE COUCH SHOW



This February, more than 270 NMU students shared a couch. Well, not all at the same time.

Last semester the NMU Foundation conducted the “I’m Here Because Of You” campaign to raise student awareness of the many ways in which private giving, especially alumni giving, creates educational opportunities and supports the NMU experience.

This semester the Foundation wanted to provide an opportunity for students to “put themselves in the

picture” and have a chance to tell us about their NMU experience. Over 270 students responded and had their photos taken in various locations around campus. Each student filled out a comments card to accompany their photo. The comments card asked about their NMU experience and asked them to complete the sentence, “I’m here because _____.” These expressions of pride, humor, inspiration and determination will be celebrated in an exhibit titled THE COUCH SHOW. The show is a collaborative effort between the NMU Foundation and the Student Art Gallery.

Why is it called THE COUCH SHOW? The only reoccurring aesthetic element in the photographs

is the presence of an eighties-era couch that was carted around to each shooting session. The presence of the couch was used to emphasize the diversity of the participating students and to provide an additional channel for self-expression.

Watch for an online exhibit coming soon to our website. Your NMU experience may have been very much the same as theirs. Or was it?

