



**NORTHERN MICHIGAN
UNIVERSITY**



NORTHERN CENTER

COMPREHENSIVE ENROLLMENT PLAN:

Recruitment | Retention | Academic Innovations

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Updated 12/6/2022

Northern Michigan University has experienced significant enrollment declines. Demographic and other external factors have recently created strains on enrollment and resources, and will continue to do so for the foreseeable future. Recognizing this, NMU's enrollment plan addresses these challenges by making significant investments in recruitment, retention, and academic initiatives.

By stabilizing enrollment NMU will achieve optimal academic, experiential, and fiscal health. This will occur through implementation of strategic enrollment efforts that rise from individual unit plans that align with the university's strategic plan. Goals, tactics and metrics were developed to articulate plans in each area. A selection of impactful tactics designed for outcomes in 2023-24 include:

Recruitment:

- Deploy two additional admissions staff to generate enrollment in new geographic markets
- Pilot test the direct admit program with three partner high schools
- Use the Bridge Award to increase out-of-state enrollment
- Increase marketing resources in geographic locations with diverse populations
- Increase meetings and communication between departments and prospective students
- Conduct joint recruitment activities with academic departments to introduce NMU programs to new audiences

Retention:

- Develop a university-wide student success framework
- Promote available NMU resources and services to match the mental health needs of students with available resources by increasing awareness and improving channels of communication
- Host Global Campus regional receptions and visits to connect distance education students to NMU

Academic Innovation:

- Utilize academic program review and innovation grant processes to encourage the creation of interdisciplinary programs

Current high-level key performance indicators are listed below.

Enrollment (Fall 2022)

Headcount	6,970
Student credit hours (SCH)	90,903
Full-time equivalent (FTE)	6,115
Domestic diverse	11.6%

Retention rates

1st to 3rd semester (2021 cohort)	73.2%
4 year graduation (2016 cohort)	36.1%
6 year graduation (2016 cohort)	56.3%

INTRODUCTION

Northern Michigan University's comprehensive enrollment management plan is organized around the *Interim Strategic Plan, Focus Area 1: New Markets, New Supports: Recruitment, Retention and Student Success, and Academic Innovation*. The enrollment management committee consulted with units on campus that collectively contribute to enrollment and retention to create this plan, the associated tactics, and metrics. The President's Executive Council provided guidance on this process.

Recruitment

- Attract new students from a variety of locations, backgrounds, races/ethnicities
- Attract more students from new and existing markets

Retention and Student Success

- Engage in proactive, holistic advising, leveraging student success technology and student-centered analytics
- Increase student sense of belonging and engagement
- Strengthen support for mental health and physical well-being

Academic Innovation

- Drive academic innovation of new and existing programs to attract new students
- Employ new, flexible, and adaptive methods of content delivery to better meet the needs of current and future students

CHALLENGES

Since 2010 NMU has declined approximately 25% in total enrollment (9,273 to 6,970). If declines continue on the same trajectory then enrollment could decline another 15% -18% by the beginning of the next decade.

Declines in birth rates, high school graduation rates, and the college-going rates are well documented by Dr. Nathan Grawe, professor, and author: *Demographics and The Demand for Higher Education* (2018) and *The Agile College: How Institutions Successfully Navigate Demographic Changes* (2021) and others ([WICHE](#), [NSCH](#)).

While WICHE predicts the declines in the size of the overall markets, many more factors lead to greater declines than predicted. Regional in/out migration patterns, market share (competition with other Michigan/ regional universities), college-going gender imbalance, and the perceived and real value of a college education all negatively impact enrollment. Units across campus are aware of the market shifts as well as the many other factors and have plans in place to combat these predictions.

OPPORTUNITIES

NMU can beat these predictions. The campus location and surrounding community are vital components that make us unique. In addition, strong core majors and niche academic programming, along with reasonable tuition and fees, can keep NMU competitive throughout the Midwest and beyond. These qualities carry over to serve a broad constituent base facilitating a diverse student population both on-campus and through distance education. Competition for high-achieving, financially able students is growing and students have more choices than ever before. NMU's ability to be flexible and adapt to student and market needs gives us a competitive advantage. By being innovative and responsive to the changing landscape NMU will remain a leader in higher education and lifelong learning. Strategic recruiting, retention, and strong academic programming will help meet the enrollment goals.

RECRUITMENT

At Northern Michigan University, recruitment strategies and activities are focused on three primary categories: undergraduate on-campus, graduate, and online. Diverse populations, including international students, are a component of each of those categories. NMU employees from all areas of campus, as well as current students, play a role in recruiting new students to NMU.

New and existing strategies and standard operating procedures are designed to meet these recruitment funnel objectives:

- build awareness; build the prospect pool
- promote visits to campus or pre-admission advising
- encourage application for admission and application completion
- convert admitted students to enrolled students (yield)

To achieve these objectives, action is taken to message appropriately on multiple platforms, make connections (prospective students to faculty, staff, and current students), build relationships, and provide prospective students opportunities to see NMU as the right college fit. Ongoing assessment of standard and new activities includes monitoring of staff activity and of weekly application, admission, and orientation registration counts.

The Fall 2022 headcount of 6,970 students included 536 graduate students (7.69%) and 534 Global Campus students (7.66%). Future planning should define percentage goals for graduate and online enrollment to match national benchmarks.

Strategic plan recruitment goals, tactics, and associated metrics are listed in the table below.

STRATEGIC PLAN RECRUITMENT GOAL 1: ATTRACT NEW STUDENTS FROM A VARIETY OF LOCATIONS, BACKGROUNDS, RACE/ETHNICITY

UNIT/AREA	TACTICS	METRIC	GOAL
Undergraduate	Deploy two additional admissions staff to generate enrollment in new geographic markets (Minnesota north/central, targeted national markets)	Headcount from Minnesota north/central, and priority states in regions US-E and US-W	25 additional new freshmen/transfers compared to Fall 2022 from regions USE/USW/MNN for Fall 2023
Undergraduate	Pilot test the direct admit program from 3 partner schools	Headcount from partner schools	6 new students for Fall 2023 from partner schools; prior 3 yr average is 2
Undergraduate	Use Bridge Award to increase out of state enrollment	Headcount from out-of-state	Exceed the breakeven number of 14 out of state students per year
Undergraduate	Implement the Common Application to increase applications & enrollment (yield) from national market	Applications & headcount from national markets in Fall 2024	Increase applications from 2022 baseline national market of 600 to 625 (at 20% app to enroll yield) to generate 6 additional students over baseline (3 is break even to cover Common App costs)

UNIT/AREA	TACTICS	METRIC	GOAL
Graduate	Launch new brand campaign to promote interest of graduate studies and research in order to increase inquiries from new markets	Inquiries from new markets	Positive change
Graduate	Increase marketing resources in geographic locations with diverse populations	Inquiries from diverse geographic locations	Positive change
Graduate	Reallocate existing internal funding to support more new students	Count of students receiving support	Increase from Fall 2022 baseline of 80 students to 90 students in Fall 2023
Global Campus	Implement new entirely online programs	Number of programs available online	2 new online programs a year
Global Campus	Attract students to grow the unique programs offered by NMU online	Global Campus headcount	Increase from Fall 2022 (n=534) global campus headcount.
Global Campus	Adjust staffing to meet current student demand and support needs	Staff FTE	Add one staff member in FY 22-23
International	Reconnect with existing partners and establish new partnerships with educational institutions and industry to increase international enrollment	Headcount from new and existing partners	Increase from baseline of 12 students in Fall 2022
International	Evaluate and streamline the international admissions process to reduce the number of applications that are unable to be processed without further documentation	Incomplete applications	Baseline will be established in Winter 2023
International	Work with SEVIS (Student & Exchange Visitor Information System) to approve NMU CIP codes that relate to STEM for STEM OPT inclusion	Number of SEVIS approved STEM CIP Codes	Positive Change
College/department level	Increase meetings and communication with prospective students	Percent of departments that organize events that bring prospective students to campus or travel to events to engage prospective students	All departments participate in at least one department generated recruitment event each year
College/department level	Increase the count of departments that have bylaws that recognize recruitment efforts as service in order to increase faculty involvement (campus visits, Wildcat weekend, presidential scholars)	Percent of departments which have bylaws that recognize recruitment efforts Faculty participation	Positive change
Marketing and Communications	Identify markets and target advertising by monitoring the geographic origin of admission inquiries, website visitors, and email marketing open-rates	Markets	Hot markets will be added, low markets will be dropped on quarterly basis
Marketing and Communications	Increase performance with paid digital advertising by refining messages targeted at specific audiences and locations	Channel metrics	Content success reviewed and advertising adjusted on a monthly basis
Marketing and Communications	Utilize social media engagement by delivering stories and campaigns across platforms to support enrollment and retention initiatives	Channel metrics	Content success reviewed and advertising adjusted on a monthly basis
Marketing and Communications	Utilize traditional advertising to develop effective name recognition and campus awareness messaging	Efficacy of advertising	Content success reviewed and advertising adjusted on a quarterly basis

STRATEGIC PLAN RECRUITMENT GOAL 2: ATTRACT MORE STUDENTS FROM EXISTING MARKETS

UNIT/AREA	TACTICS	METRIC	GOAL
Undergraduate	Conduct joint recruitment activities with academic departments to introduce NMU programs to new audiences	Number of new activities completed	Complete at least 5 activities with 3 departments in 2022-23
Undergraduate	Implement an online transfer credit tool (Transferology) to capture new leads and enroll more transfer students	Transfer headcount	Increase from Fall 2022 386 transfer headcount to 400 in Fall 2024 (+14 over base)
Undergraduate	Hire new transfer pathway/partnership position to create stronger pipelines for students with prior college credit	Staff FTE	Add one staff member in FY 22-23
Graduate	Launch new brand campaign to promote interest of graduate studies and research in order to increase inquiries from existing markets	Inquiries from existing markets	Positive change
Graduate	Reallocate existing internal funding to support more existing students	Count of students receiving support	Increase from Fall 2022 baseline of 80 students to 90 students in Fall 2023
Global Campus	Implement a stopped-out student re-engagement plan to re-engage students with NMU credit	Headcount	Increase YOY re-entry headcount
Global Campus	Expand just-in-time education offerings to meet the needs of the industry's professional development needs	Number of just-in-time program offerings	Yes/No: Meeting current industry needs
Global Campus	Expand scholarship program opportunities that are available to Global Campus students	Number of scholarships	Add 1 scholarship(s) opportunity per year
Global Campus	Establish a process to articulate non-credit education to university credit to help students time to degree and financial needs	Articulation process established	Completed by Winter 2024
International	Redesign the International Programs website for cultural clarity and ease of navigation to drive international applicants	Website changes	Done Yes/No
International	Increase opportunities for international students from under-represented countries to be awarded academic scholarships to ease the financial burden and increase enrollment	Scholarship opportunities for international students	Increase the International Academic Award scholarship to match the non-resident bridge award of \$5,600
International	Increase graduate school matriculation from bridge program partnerships with existing exchange universities	Headcount	Increase from baseline 0 in Fall 2022
College/department level	Increase meetings and communication with prospective students	Percent of departments that organize events that bring prospective students to campus or travel to events to engage prospective students	All departments participate in at least one department generated recruitment event each year
College/department level	Increase the count of departments that have bylaws that recognize recruitment efforts as service in order to increase faculty involvement (campus visits, Wildcat weekend, presidential scholars)	Percent of departments which have bylaws that recognize recruitment efforts Faculty participation	Positive change
Marketing and Communications	Leverage current students from particular geographic regions to increase peer to peer engagement through digital and social media	Count of ads Channel metrics	Increase from current 10% of content to 20% of content during the 22-23 academic year
Marketing and Communications	Utilize traditional advertising to develop effective name recognition and campus awareness messaging	Efficacy of advertising	Content success reviewed and advertising adjusted on a quarterly basis

RETENTION AND STUDENT SUCCESS

NMU wants to help students succeed, find value in their college education, and meet their personal higher education goals. Improving retention among all groups is key to overcoming declining numbers of high school graduates entering college.

Following the Strategic Plan, the Enrollment Plan organizes retention and student success efforts around advising, a sense of belonging, and student well-being. This plan provides details on how NMU is engaged in helping students feel like they belong and assisting them in overcoming financial, socioeconomic, and academic barriers.

As pandemic recovery continues, it is expected that undergraduate retention rates will soon return to pre-pandemic rates. With new, intensive efforts on retention, it is expected that retention rates will increase to new levels.

National standards exist for measuring retention for first-time, full-time freshmen. Quantitative goal setting for retention of other groups (graduate, online, non-traditional, etc.) has been problematic since standards are not well established.

First-time, full-time new freshman first-to-third semester return rates are 2018 cohort: **75.4%**, 2019 cohort: **76.3%**, 2020 cohort: **72.5%**, 2021 cohort: **73.2%**. Future enrollment planning should determine the most effective method for enumerating **all** retention efforts.

Strategic plan retention and student success goals, tactics, and associated metrics are listed in the table below.

STRATEGIC PLAN RETENTION GOAL I: ENGAGE IN PROACTIVE, HOLISTIC ADVISING LEVERAGING STUDENT SUCCESS TECHNOLOGY AND STUDENT-CENTERED ANALYTICS

UNIT/AREA	TACTICS	METRIC	GOAL
Undergraduate	Develop a student success framework 1.0 university-wide	Framework	Initial framework established by Fall 2023
Undergraduate	Continue adoption and refinement efforts of the Educational Success Platform (ESP) to better support student success efforts	Interactions (alerts, cases, progress surveys)	Increase quantity and quality of interactions Establish baseline in Fall 2022
Undergraduate	Engage in proactive, holistic advising leveraging student success technology and student-centered analytics	Metrics to be determined Unit assessment plan being developed 2022-23	Unit plan completed by Fall 2023
Graduate	Develop consistent program director position descriptions outlining advising duties	Percent of departments	100% of departments with graduate programs
Graduate	Develop methods to measure student outcomes (time to completion, graduation rate, job placement, GPA, belonging)	Task completion	Methods developed by Summer 2023

UNIT/AREA	TACTICS	METRIC	GOAL
Global Campus	Establish a retention metric for NMU's distance education students to better understand distance education retention needs	Retention metric established	Yes, No
Global Campus	Increase the Global Campus student use of ESP for student support needs	ESP usage	Global Campus students logging in to ESP
Global Campus	Expand the usage of online tutoring services to Global Campus students for academic support	Online tutoring usage	Global Campus students utilizing tutoring services
International	Increase study abroad participants by creating efficiencies in the study abroad application and tracking system	Study abroad participants	Increase from baseline 25 in Fall 2022 to 50 in Fall 2023
College/department level	Increase the count of departments that have bylaws that recognize retention efforts as service in order to increase faculty involvement	Percent of departments which have bylaws that recognize retention efforts Faculty participation	Positive change
College/department level	Perform outreach to non-registrants	Percent of departments doing outreach	Positive change
College/department level	Increase early reporting of low performing students in ESP for 000/100/200 level classes	Percent of sections reporting	Positive change
Marketing and Communications	Implement a messaging strategy to current students about utilizing advising and affiliated support systems to increase use of such services	Strategy implemented	Done (yes, no) 22-23 academic year

STRATEGIC PLAN RETENTION GOAL 2: INCREASE STUDENT SENSE OF BELONGING AND ENGAGEMENT

UNIT/AREA	TACTICS	METRIC	GOAL
Undergraduate	Increase participation in student organizations and programs	Count user activities and events Count of Pick One points	Positive change Baseline 2022-23
Undergraduate	Improve student connections with peers, faculty/staff, and alumni	Count of students who participate in structured mentoring programs (faculty, staff, alumni, or peer mentors) Quality of mentoring	Positive change Baseline 2022-23
Undergraduate	Improve connection between students' academic program and co-curricular activities and their career goals (major exploration, experiential learning, internships, career exploration, etc)	Count of departments that offer experiential learning opportunities at 100/200 level Count of for-credit internships Attendance at career fairs/ events	Positive change Baseline 2022-23
Graduate	Facilitate focus groups to explore new ways to engage students in the Graduate Student Association	Focus group yes or no	recommendations generated
Graduate	Expand faculty mentor and advisor participation in CGS&R workshops, & events	Faculty advisors and mentors participation	All mentors and advisors participate in at least 1 event including: -Orientation -WoW -3MT -Celebration

UNIT/AREA	TACTICS	METRIC	GOAL
Global Campus	Increase the student usage of the GC Student Union in EduCat to connect distance students to each other and the institution	GC Student Union access	GC students utilizing the GCSU weekly
Global Campus	Establish online student organization to engage distance education students	GC student orgs	One GC student organization
Global Campus	Host Global Campus regional receptions and visits to connect distance education students to NMU	Events	2 regional events per year
International	Develop a pre-arrival international online orientation to foster a sense of belonging	Online orientation created	Done (yes, no)
International	Increase international student participation in the All Nations Club to foster a sense of belonging	Students actively involved in the All Nations Club	Positive Change
International	Create events celebrating international students and global cultures to foster a sense of belonging	Events	Increase from 6 in Fall 2022
College/department level	Formalize intentional mentoring with the goal of improving engagement	Number of departments with formalized mentoring plans Quality of mentoring relationships	Positive increase Improve mentoring relationships
Marketing and Communications	Increase peer-to-peer engagement through digital and social media telling more student stories across platforms to support retention initiatives	Count of posts Channel metrics	Increase from current 10% of content to 20% of content during the 22-23 academic year

STRATEGIC PLAN RETENTION GOAL 3: STRENGTHEN SUPPORT FOR MENTAL HEALTH AND PHYSICAL WELL-BEING

UNIT/AREA	TACTICS	METRIC	GOAL
All units	De-stigmatize help-seeking to increase the likelihood that students will seek help through NMU	NSSE survey	Improve from baseline W21 NSSE questions
All units	Provide tools to faculty and staff for responding to signs of student distress	Count of participation in training	Increase
All units	Promote available NMU resources and services to match the mental health needs of students with available resources	Waiting list NSSE Survey	Improved awareness Reduction of waiting list Reduction of unmet need
All units	Add case management services to increase our service capacity to meet the wellbeing needs of our campus community	Correct routing of students Patients meet personal well-being goals	Improvement
Graduate	Liaise with Special Advisor for Campus Mental Health & Wellness to inform student support programming and services	Health and wellness services information published for graduate students	Task completion by Fall 2022
Global Campus	Establish national health promotion partnerships where distance students can get a discount or have use of exercise facilities to promote wellness	Number of partnerships	One partner in each of Global Campus's top enrollment states
College/department level	Formalize intentional mentoring with the goal of improving engagement	Number of departments with formalized mentoring plans Quality of mentoring relationships	Positive increase Improve mentoring relationships
Marketing and Communications	Create a mental health and wellness messaging campaign across campus for increased awareness of new and improved services	Campaign created not yet identified awareness metric	Done (yes, no) Increase awareness

ACADEMIC INNOVATION

Institutions of higher education must pay attention to the quality and nature of academic programming to optimize enrollment. At the same time, it is vital to offer programs that are distinctive and meet the needs of all learners. NMU is a regional comprehensive university that also offers career and technical programs, credit / non-credit credentialing, and other alternative educational opportunities. This puts the university in a unique position to maximize available expertise to foster academic innovation. NMU is well situated to develop new academic programming that is innovative, interdisciplinary, and relevant for the students of today and into the future.

Northern's administration and faculty foster program innovation through curriculum development, support for new content delivery methods, new policies and procedures aimed at removing barriers to timely change, and expanded marketing of academic programs.

Strategic plan academic innovation goals, tactics, and associated metrics are listed in the table below.

STRATEGIC PLAN ACADEMICS GOAL 1: DRIVE ACADEMIC INNOVATION OF NEW AND EXISTING PROGRAMS TO ATTRACT NEW STUDENTS

UNIT/AREA	TACTICS	METRIC	GOAL
Undergraduate	Utilize academic program review and innovation grant processes to encourage creation of interdisciplinary programs	Count of new interdisciplinary programs	Create new interdisciplinary programs
Graduate	Develop program viability methods and determine viability for all existing programs to assist GPC in making recommendations	Viability method process developed Recommendations for suspension or continuation of programs	100% programs reviewed
Graduate	Expand the portfolio of doctoral offerings to meet regional needs and leverage existing faculty expertise	Count of doctoral offerings	1 new doctoral program implemented in Summer 2024
Global Campus	Prioritize potential online academic programs to grow the online portfolio at NMU	Prioritizing process established	Done (yes, no)
Global Campus	Align with evolving higher education standards of accepting PLA and AP credit from outside institutions	Policy revised	Done (yes, no)
Global Campus	Establish transfer agreements with MiWorkforce pathways to further ease the transfer from Michigan Community Colleges	Established pathway agreements	1 agreement established
College/department level	Support new program development or revitalization of existing programs with an eye toward increasing enrollment	Number of programs explored Number of programs launched	Positive increase

STRATEGIC PLAN ACADEMICS GOAL 2: EMPLOY NEW, FLEXIBLE AND ADAPTIVE METHODS OF CONTENT DELIVERY TO BETTER MEET THE NEEDS OF CURRENT AND FUTURE STUDENTS

UNIT/AREA	TACTICS	METRIC	GOAL
Undergraduate	Explore alternative timelines for bachelor degree programs	List established	Develop SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) analysis and action steps
Undergraduate	Develop a framework for offering stackable credentials	Framework developed	Done (yes, no)
Undergraduate	Development of a hyflex course definition and implementation to support student demands and expectations	Policy established	Done (yes, no)
Graduate	Expand course and program innovation through the Master of Interdisciplinary Studies (MIS) program	Count of students in MIS	Increase
Global Campus	Incorporate AR/VR opportunities in online courses to enhance the student experience	Courses utilizing AR/VR	Courses using AR/VR technologies
International	Develop a virtual exchange program to provide equitable international experiences for NMU students on-campus	Exchange program developed	Done (yes, no)
International	Increase Global Campus International Students	Headcount of International Global Campus students	Increase from baseline 1 in Fall 2022
College/department level	Support development of new content delivery methods	Description of support supplied	Done (yes, no)

CONCLUSION

Enrollment planning is critical to having a healthy, forward-looking university. This plan effectively informs the university community about the proactive recruitment, retention, and academic innovation work organized around these goals:

- Recruit **new** students from a variety of backgrounds
- Recruit **more** students from new and existing markets
- Provide proactive, holistic advising
- Increase sense of belonging and engagement
- Strengthen support for mental and physical well being
- Drive academic innovation
- Employ new methods of content delivery

Strategic enrollment management is a fluid and dynamic process. The plan will need to be continually revised and updated to reflect societal and institutional changes. A comprehensive enrollment management plan is stronger when all impact areas are included. National benchmarks suggest that future iterations of this plan should include enrollment strategies related to housing, pricing, financial aid/ scholarships, and academic program enrollment analysis.

Enrollment efforts are effectuated by all units across campus. This plan represents the efforts across a wide range of units on campus, including Admissions, the Retention Committee, Global Campus, Graduate Studies, Academic Affairs, and other academic and support units.

Through these collective efforts, Northern is working to emerge more diverse in the student populations it serves; more innovative in its programs, services and delivery methods; and more flexible to ever-changing societal, economic, and technological factors.

Feedback

Your ideas, comments, suggestions, and questions are an important component of the communication stream and solutions to problems. Please email enrollmentplan@nmu.edu if you would like to provide feedback.

APPENDIX

SENIOR ENROLLMENT MANAGEMENT TEAM MEMBERS

* denotes members of ad hoc enrollment plan subcommittee

Kerri Schulling	President
Dale Kapla	Interim Provost and Vice President
Gavin Leach	Vice President, Finance and Administration
Steve VandenAvond*	Assoc Provost, Dean of College of Technology and Occupational Sciences
Leslie Warren*	Interim Associate Provost for Academic Affairs
Cindy Paavola	Assistant to President, Strategic Initiatives
Christine Greer*	Assistant Vice President/Dean of Students
Jason Nicholas	Assistant Provost/Director of Institutional Effectiveness
Amy Barnsley*	Provost Fellow, Retention Specialist, Faculty
Lisa Schade Eckert*	Dean, Graduate Education and Research
Robert Winn*	Dean, College of Arts and Sciences
Carol Johnson	Dean, College of Business
Joseph Lubig	Interim Dean, College of Health Sciences and Professional Studies
Derek Hall*	Chief Marketing Officer
Gerri Daniels*	Executive Director, Admissions
Brad Hamel*	Executive Director, Global Campus
Heather Pickett*	Director, Graduate Management and Marketing
Michael Rotundo	Director, Financial Aid