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Northwestern
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College

NEXUS

THE NORTHWESTERN MICHIGAN COLLEGE MAGAZINE

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ALEX BRACE

WHAT'S NMC KNOWN FOR?

Once, I wrestled with how best to answer that question. NMC has many well-regarded programs and several unique ones. NMC's a great value. But after a pair of interviews that happened to occur back-to-back one cold, blustery, gray March afternoon, I now have an answer that tops those.

First up was Alex Brace. He's a former NMC engineering club president who graduated in 2017 and went on to study computer science at the University of Michigan. Last year he was part of a national team that used a high-speed computer to win what's considered the Nobel Prize of supercomputing for research that contributed to understanding COVID-19. (Read more in Alumni Notes, p. 23.) Now about to embark on his Ph.D., Brace, 25, says, "I really started with no technical experience," and credits NMC with setting him on his STEM career path.

Immediately after Alex, I talked to Frank Wilson, a 2020 NMC graduate who continues to take classes he can transfer toward his bachelor's degree at a four-year university. He's a Native American student and father of four in recovery both from addiction and a stroke. He's part of our cover story on coaching (see p. 10) and credits his coach, Todd Parker, with getting him "back in the learning game" post-stroke. Wilson, 42, is now aiming to become a substance abuse counselor, so he can help the one in eight (*one in eight!*) Americans who now struggle with addiction.



Two very different men in age and background, yet similar in terms of arriving at NMC without much direction, and finding needed mentors and support here. Two very different career paths, yet both men similarly flourishing on their individual paths.

That's what I think NMC is best known for—helping each student be successful on their own terms. Alex and Frank are just two. Many other stories are in this issue. Whether you're a student, parent, alumnus, donor, or taxpayer, I think they'll warm your heart, just like it did mine that cold March day. **N**

Cari Noga

ON THE COVER: NMC Student Success Center staff and students going all in for coaching are, clockwise from upper right, manager Sally Smarsty, student Sarah Hobart, coach Jen Strauss, student Frank Wilson, coach Erica Whiting, coach Kailey Rubinas, student Jenn Miller, director of learning services Kari Kahler, coach Kelsey Wright, coach Todd Parker.



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Affiliate



AERIAL VIEW



CONNECTING CAMPUS

Paving of the west side of the Boardman Lake Trail along the railroad tracks south of Fourteenth Street this summer will make NMC's University Center campus, lower left, accessible to cyclists and pedestrians from the north. With the extension of the trail, all four of NMC's campuses will be linked to either a trail or sidewalk. Project partners expect to complete the loop around Boardman Lake, from south of the UC campus to Medalie Park, in 2022.

Also this year, the original TART trail linking the Aero Park campus is being widened and repaved, and sidewalk connectivity to main campus is being enhanced as part of the city of Traverse City's Safe Routes to Schools construction project.

Photo taken from the cockpit of a Cessna 172, part of NMC's aviation fleet. ■

► [Find out more at nmc.edu/aviation](https://nmc.edu/aviation)





IN APRIL, PRESIDENT NISSLEY JOINED 30 OTHER VOLUNTEERS TO PLANT 15 TREES BY NORTH HALL ON MAIN CAMPUS IN A COLLABORATION WITH RELEAF MICHIGAN AND THE DTE FOUNDATION.



NICK NISSLEY, PRESIDENT

Save the date!
June 23, 1-5 p.m.
Future Summit (virtual)
RSVP at
nmc.edu/strategic-planning

TENDING TO NMC'S FUTURE

I've learned a lot this past year, certainly more about global pandemics than I ever thought I'd need to know. Through it all, one of the themes that continues to rise to the forefront is how more than ever, the world doesn't need simple optimists, and definitely not pessimists, but more possibilarians. As I shared with you when I first became NMC president in 2020, I have long considered myself a possibilarian. In fact, I felt called to serve at Northwestern Michigan College because I see that spirit woven throughout the history of our college, and today in our students, employees and supporters.

In a period of uncertainty, like a global pandemic, it may be easier to say simply 'yes' or 'no' to the task in front of you than to take the time to ask 'why' and 'how.' But those more challenging conversations may also lead to new solutions that serve us even better in the long run. That is what I have witnessed from our employees and most importantly, our students. We're not willing to settle for shallow, short-term solutions when we have the opportunity to build something better by questioning assumptions and investing in our culture of innovation and thoughtful risk-taking. Because of this, I believe our students and our college will be better positioned for a post-pandemic world.

In that possibilitarian spirit, we have embarked on an ambitious strategic planning process with a depth and breadth to stakeholder engagement like we've never seen at NMC. Now is the time for us all to imagine what is possible for our students, and our college as we plan together for our future. I hope you will join us in this process. For more information on how to have your voice heard, please visit nmc.edu/strategic-planning. Thank you for being part of the solution and thank you for your possibilitarian spirit! ■

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Nick Nissley". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.



**LEFT:
NMC NURSING STUDENT VOLUNTEERS**

**BELOW:
LT. GOV. GARLIN GILCRIST, LEFT, VISITED
IN MARCH**



MORE THAN 22,000 VACCINATED AT NMC'S HAGERTY CENTER

Between January 18 and May 14, more than 22,000 area residents were vaccinated against COVID-19 at NMC's Hagerty Center.

The partnership with the Grand Traverse County Health Department was integral to accelerating the pace of vaccinations in northern Michigan and considered a model statewide. Lt. Gov. Garlin Gilchrist visited in March. NMC nursing students

also volunteered at the clinic in March and April. NMC provided the Hagerty Center free of charge.

"COVID-19 is a community-wide challenge requiring a community-wide response. We at NMC feel it is both our responsibility and our privilege to support this effort and keep our residents safe," said NMC President Nick Nissley, above, second from right.



NMC TO FIELD TWO VARSITY ESPORTS TEAMS

Student athlete recruitment is underway and competition slated to begin this fall in Esports, or competitive video gaming.

Esports began as a student group in fall 2020, and quickly became the largest on campus in terms of student participation. Forming official varsity teams will allow NMC to compete in both statewide and national conferences.

Esports are also a vehicle to boost enrollment and student engagement, align with the priority NMC places on experiential learning, and intersect with multiple program areas, including computer information technology, marketing, visual communications, audio technology, and business.

Team adviser Terri Gustafson said that Esports teach players transferable career skills including teamwork, communication, collaboration, leadership and time management.

"They are a pathway beyond college, just as traditional sports and extracurricular activities are," Gustafson said.

► Find out more at nmc.edu/esports

NEW ASSOCIATE DEGREE IN ENGINEERING AVAILABLE THIS FALL

Building upon work NMC has already done to smooth transfer pathways for engineering students, particularly with Michigan Technological University, the new engineering associate degree enables students to qualify to use federal financial aid for the higher number of credits — 73 instead of 58— required by four-year universities to transfer with junior status. For other programs, financial aid is capped at a lower threshold and students would have to pay the difference out of pocket.

“For students, that represents a tremendous cost savings in addition to the benefits of staying close to home (for two years) and having much more one-on-one interaction with their instructors,” NMC engineering instructor Jay Smith said. NMC’s average class size is 20 students.

In addition to the financial benefits, the new associate degree also provides tangible evidence of a student’s accomplishments on the road to a bachelor’s degree in engineering.

Michigan has the third-highest level of engineering employment in the United States, paying an average wage of \$86,000 annually.

➤ *Read more at nmc.edu/engineering*



FACE-TO-FACE CLASSES RETURN

Kids in grades 3-12 can choose from one-week options in art, STEM, recreation and more. Classes run from June 21-Aug. 20 and are limited to 10 students in person. Livestream classes are also available.

➤ *nmc.edu/kids*



DIANA AND RICHARD MILOCK

MILOCKS MAKE LARGEST SINGLE GIFT IN NMC HISTORY—AGAIN

Traverse City residents Diana and Richard Milock have made a \$3 million gift commitment to support NMC’s Audio Technology program, Great Lakes Culinary Institute and Dennon Museum Center. This gift surpasses their prior \$2 million gift to the Dennon Museum Center and sets a new bar for the largest single gift to the college by a living donor.

The Milocks have now given more than \$5.3 million to the NMC Foundation as part of the current Be What’s Possible campaign, making them the lead donors in the fundraising effort, which has also surpassed its \$35 million goal. A total of \$37 million has now been raised for scholarships, programs, facilities, and the Fund for NMC (greatest needs).

➤ *Gifts to the campaign are still welcome. nmc.edu/give*



ALPHA RHO PI'S BEST YEAR EVER

Alpha Rho Pi, NMC’s chapter of Phi Theta Kappa, the international community college society, was named the seventh most distinguished chapter in the country at the annual PTK conference. From left, officers Alex Swainston, Amber Marsh, advisor Kari Kahler and officer Kristi Uribe celebrate here.

YOU ARE NOT ALONE

JACKIE JORGENSEN LICENSED PROFESSIONAL COUNSELOR

Licensed professional counselor Jackie Jorgensen provides clinical support for mental health issues like anxiety and depression, crisis intervention, stress management and relationships.

During the pandemic her job became virtual, and it's turned out many students actually prefer it that way, according to Jorgensen, who's board-certified as a telemental health provider. She hopes to continue some virtual counseling even after it's safe to resume services in-person and on campus, from her office in the Osterlin Building.

Whether virtual or face-to-face, Jorgensen mostly hopes students take advantage of personal counseling, another layer in the support services NMC offers students. (See cover story on coaching, p. 10.)

"I hope people see it as a more normalized reaction to stress, so they can seek help and feel better," she said. ■

➤ nmc.edu/counseling





20,000 adults in northwest Michigan who lack a college degree could qualify to attend NMC for free.

Visit nmc.edu/adult-learners to find out more.

RECONNECT: TUITION ASSISTANCE FOR ADULTS 25+

If you are 25 years old or older and don't have a college degree, you may be eligible to attend NMC tuition-free. Michigan Reconnect pays for tuition for in-district students (Grand Traverse County residents). If you're out-of-district, you'll only pay the difference between that rate and in-district. Other scholarships and financial aid programs are available, too.



'A GOOD EXAMPLE'

DAUGHTER TO FOLLOW MOTHER AT NMC

As the oldest of seven children in a migrant farm working family, there was always something for Lorena Cruz-Barcenas to do after school, from helping with the apple harvest to minding her younger brothers and sisters.

While it was important to her parents that Cruz-Barcenas, (left) attend school, and the family settled in northern Michigan permanently as she entered high school in Elk Rapids, "further education was just not talked too much about, that I recall," said the 1996 high school graduate.

Fast-forward 25 years. Now 42, Cruz-Barcenas, who enrolled at NMC last fall, is not just talking, but walking the talk of higher education for her own five children.

"As an adult doing the NMC classes, it's just different, the way I see education," she said. "The learning experience, how important it is.

"I am hoping to be a good example for them."

It seems to be working. Daughter Karyme, (right) a 2021 Elk Rapids graduate, is planning to join her mother as a student this coming fall.

Cruz-Barcenas is also providing a lesson in perseverance. She started at NMC in 2010, but stopped out after her two youngest children were born. With her older

children pitching in around the house, she picked up jobs here and there. But last fall, uncertain of the impact of COVID-19, she and husband Camerino Barcenas decided she would leave her night shift job in order to be home, should their kids revert to virtual school.

Being home meant she could return to school herself. Cruz-Barcenas also knew she needed to look ahead. With her older children likely to be leaving the household, she'll need a day-shift job.

"I need to focus on something that will work with my two little ones," she said. She's pursuing an associate's degree in business administration and made the spring semester Dean's List.

Her return to NMC also allows her to take advantage of Futures for Frontliners, a state program that pays in-district tuition for students who were frontline workers during the first months of the pandemic. But more than job skills, Cruz-Barcenas seeks education for bigger reasons. She wants to explore the vistas before her.

"Education is one thing that is important to do for ourselves. Not to please anybody else," she said.

"It's for me. I will do this. I will accomplish this." **N**

Left: Lorena Cruz-Barcenas with her daughter, Karyme





ALL IN A COACH FOR EVERY STUDENT

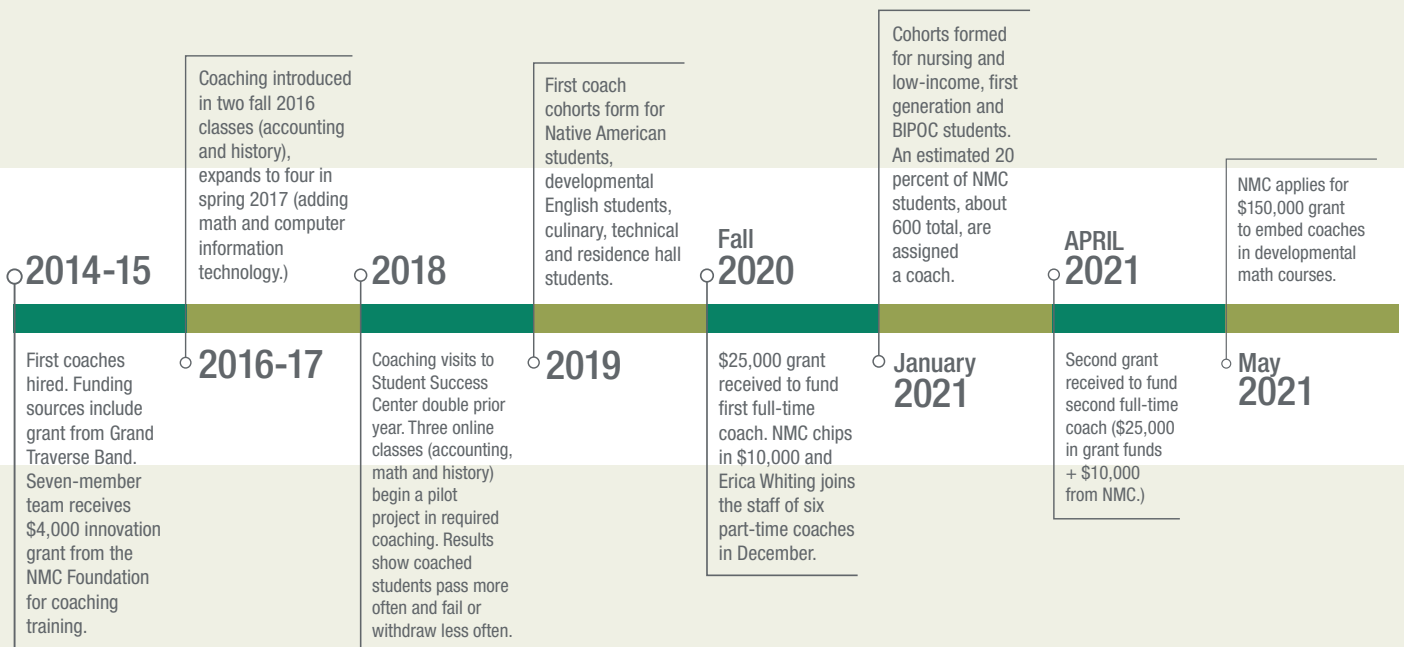
STUDENTS EXPECTING A SOLO JOURNEY ONCE THROUGH THE COLLEGE ADMISSIONS DOOR HAVE A NEW ESCORT WAITING AT NMC: A SUCCESS COACH.

Coaches aren't teachers or tutors, who remain the subject matter experts. Rather, coaches help students solve the problems that interfere with their individual success, whether they're studying English or engineering, cooking or welding.

Started as a pilot project in 2015, coached students received passing grades more and failing grades less. They also had lower rates of withdrawing from classes, which is key to persistence and completing a degree.

"It's one thing to get them through the door, but are we making sure they're completing their goal on the other side?" said Sally Smarsty, (top, right) manager of NMC's Student Success Center and the author of a grant that brought Erica Whiting, (bottom center) NMC's first full-time coach, to the college last December.

Whiting joined a half-dozen part time coaches that serve as hubs for students, pointing them to other services that can help them. ➤



“We can help the students determine what kind of supports they need,” said Whiting. The types of support tend to fall into three buckets: Study skills and strategies, time management, and stress reduction.

For study skills, coaches might suggest note-taking or test preparation techniques. For time management, something as simple as an online calendar tutorial could do the trick, while a student who is also a parent might need a referral for child care assistance to free up study time. Reducing stress could mean a referral to the NMC food pantry or to a personal counselor with mental health expertise. (See p. 7)

“We’re there to connect the students,” Whiting said.

Recently, coaching’s gained momentum with a statewide emphasis on increasing college completion rates, especially among returning adult learners. Michigan has set a goal that 60 percent of working-age adults have a post-secondary certificate or college degree by 2030, up from 45 percent today.

“We all go through life thinking we’re going to do it on our own. That’s the mark of achievement—doing it alone. I think that’s a really popular misconception,” said Todd Parker, success coach for Native American students. “I think a lot of students get caught up in that. The sooner they can ask for help, even for the simplest thing, the more we can help them early, the more we can support them through their entire academic career.”

Current statistics show NMC students who met with a coach increased their GPA 0.25 points, on average, above the previous semester. To that end, NMC is aiming to pair every student with a coach by the end of 2021. About 600, or 20 percent of the student body, are assigned one currently. Along with Native American students, specific cohorts exist for residence hall students, culinary, nursing, and technical

academic area students, and those in developmental English (a pre-introductory class whose enrollment often includes older students, first-generation college students, non-native English speakers, or students with learning disabilities.)

“This is a group of people who haven’t necessarily been successful,” said developmental English instructor Nancy Gray. “They have to be convinced.”

“

The sooner (students) can ask for help, even for the simplest thing, the more we can help them early, the more we can support them through their entire academic career.

— Coach Todd Parker

Coaching does that, so much so that Gray’s embedded it into her class. Students work in virtual breakout rooms with Whiting once a week.

“Every single one has reported that they have learned something that they need,” Gray said. In addition, the cohort format amounts to a cheering squad.

“That’s a huge part—building community and helping them feel like they belong,

not only in the class, but at the college,” Gray said.

Prior to COVID-19, embedding coaches also drew up the success rates of online students to equal those in face-to-face courses, said Kari Kahler, associate dean of Learning Services. Next, NMC is hoping to embed coaches in developmental math classes in order to reduce the math developmental sequence to one class.

“When we look at high-impact practices that are happening around the country, a lot of those high-impact practices involve embedding coaches,” Kahler said.

Some NMC instructors require coaching but leave it up to the student to arrange. Still others offer extra credit as an incentive. Assigning coaches just as students are assigned advisors would help integrate the benefits across the board.

“We’re working to create this coaching culture,” Smarsty said.

Meet three students who are all in. ►





FRANK WILSON, 42

2020 associate degree graduate continuing to take classes toward a bachelor's degree in social work.

GOAL:

Become a substance abuse counselor.

CHALLENGES:

Addiction (has 13 years clean and sober); mobility and memory due to a stroke in 2015; shift to online classes due to COVID-19.



ON HIS COACH, TODD PARKER:

Todd got me back into the game of learning. Now that I'm making my way back, I can help people with the similar crutches that I used to have," says the father of four.



COACH PARKER SAYS:

If we had 10 percent of our students with this level of dedication to education, we'd be in a better place," says Parker, Native American student cohort coach, recalling that Wilson had to repeat a math class five times before he passed it.

Of the value of the Native student cohort, Parker says, "It's a much smaller community of students, and they're aware of each other's progress, and they support each other." ►

SARAH HOBART, 37

Associate of general studies student in her first semester.



GOAL:

Nursing degree

CHALLENGES:

20 years since last in school; full-time job; four children (youngest are 3 and nine months old).

“ ON HER COACH, JEN STRAUSS:

I was second-guessing even signing up. ‘Maybe I shouldn’t be doing this. Maybe I’m too old to be starting out.’” This self-doubt came to a head when she received an English paper assignment. But Strauss gave her tactics to approach it. “I honestly would be way overwhelmed without her help.”

“ COACH STRAUSS SAYS:

She really was Swiss cheesing school into her life, finding the holes and using them wisely.” Holes like drive time and while she was breast pumping. Like many adult students, she brings a maturity to her education. “They know they need help and it’s not a bad thing to ask for help. (Hobart) reached out for every resource available to her so that she could do her best.” >



— Coach Jen Strauss

JENN MILLER, 19

Biology student planning to graduate December 2021.

GOAL:

Transfer for bachelor's degree, eventually work in environmental policy or conservation.

CHALLENGES:

ADHD; shift to online classes due to COVID-19; is from Jackson, Mich. and has limited local support; works 20-25 hours/week.

“ ON HER COACH, JEN STRAUSS:

I have a really hard time with time management. She puts it all together, and everything feels not so jumbled.”

“ COACH STRAUSS SAYS:

(Miller) used to feel really scattered and put things off.” Now, after a year of weekly coaching sessions focusing on organization, study skills, and self-affirmation, “she’s just four-pointing this semester. I do a lot of cheerleading for her.” ■



GLOSSARY: STUDENT SUCCESS, FROM A TO T

ADVISOR—Works with students to identify longer-term college and career goals and lay out steps on the way, such as an academic plan for registration and transferring to a four-year school. Required in a student's first semester, encouraged every semester.

COACH—Helps students identify roadblocks to academic success such as reducing test anxiety or improving study habits. Focuses on clearing barriers, identifying and achieving short-term goals. May be required or voluntary, used as often as needed.

COUNSELOR—Clinical mental health support for issues like depression. (See p. 7) Voluntary, as often as needed

TUTOR—Has expertise in a particular subject and assists students directly with coursework. NMC offers drop-in and appointment tutoring. Voluntary, as often as needed.





NATIVE AMERICAN STUDENT SUCCESS

GRAND TRAVERSE BAND TRIBAL COUNCILORS ALL NMC ALUMNI

Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians tribal councilors bring a variety of perspectives to their positions, but are unanimous in at least one thing: their NMC alumni status.

All seven members of the tribal council either attended or graduated from NMC, as far back as 1969 and as recently as 2019. (NMC considers anyone who has taken a for-credit class to be an alumnus.)

Due to its location NMC might, at first, be an automatic choice. But councilors said it's all about having the right opportunities in the right place at the right time.

"NMC being there when I needed it was probably life-altering," said vice-chairman Mark Wilson. Though he dropped out of high school, he earned his associate degree from NMC in 2007 and then went on to earn both a bachelor's and a master's from partner universities at NMC's University Center.



Beyond NMC's convenience and accessibility, there's financial incentive. Citizens of federally-recognized tribes are entitled to a tuition waiver from the state of Michigan to attend public Michigan institutions. This is due to the treaty of 1836, in which tribes ceded two-thirds of the land that now comprises the state of Michigan, and allowed for statehood in 1837. The Grand Traverse Band increases the incentive by offering its 4,200 members a stipend per credit, up to 12 credits.



"I just utilized that to treat education as a part-time job. In the end, I wound up getting a master's degree," said Wilson, 41, who first came to the college with his mother, a genealogist, tagging along on her research trips to Osterlin Library.

Councilor Brian Napont also went on to the University Center after earning his NMC associate degree in freshwater studies in 2014. He completed a master's certificate in project management through Ferris State, and has been accepted to the MBA program. Now in his second term on the tribal council, he sees his education and leadership as a circle.

"To take my work experience into the classroom, to share with other students, and to bring the education back into the work environment has benefitted my position for the tribe," Napont, 50, said.

Wilson hopes his children, now 14 and 18, take advantage of NMC as well. So does tribal chairman David Arroyo, father of a high school sophomore and an eighth grader.

"I'm going to encourage them to go the NMC route, and then go to a four-year college," said Arroyo, 48, who's attended off and on himself, most recently an IT class. Arroyo added that NMC's workforce preparation programs are also good options for those who don't want to transfer elsewhere.



"You don't have to look at NMC as a stepping stone. It can be some place you go to obtain a degree and have a good career," he said.

"NMC's really special to me," Wilson said. "I can't give it enough praise." **N**



TOP LEFT: TRADITIONAL POW WOW ON CAMPUS, 2019
ABOVE: ALUMNUS & TRIBAL COUNCIL VICE-CHAIR MARK L. WILSON
LEFT: NMC GRADUATION, 2018 // IMMERSION CAMP, 2018





NEW T.C.-D.C. CONNECTION

Dennos affiliates with Smithsonian Institution

Through a new Dennos Museum Center affiliation with the Smithsonian Institution, northern Michigan residents and visitors will be able to sample programming and traveling exhibitions from the nation's largest museum system.

The Washington D.C.-based Smithsonian, a flagship institution of American art, culture and history, operates 19 museums and galleries and the National Zoo, including the National Museum of African American History and Culture, National Air and Space Museum, National Museum of the American Indian, and the National Portrait Gallery.

"It is our hope that this partnership will help bring our nation's largest museum system to Traverse City residents, schools, and visitors in an affordable and collaborative way," said Craig Hadley, executive director and chief curator at the Dennos.

As an affiliate, the Dennos may collaborate on unique public programs and workshops, co-develop youth programs, host traveling exhibitions, negotiate artifact loans, and co-host public lectures by Smithsonian scholars. For \$25, Dennos members can upgrade membership to allow them to visit other Smithsonian affiliates, as well as access other benefits.

"This will take our reciprocal benefits to the next level," said Megan Heator, operations manager at the Dennos Museum Center. "We're excited to be able to connect our members to the broader Smithsonian network." **N**

Learn more: dennosmuseum.org/membership

- ▼ Ernest C. Withers, *Daddy, I Want to be Free*, 1961, gelatin silver print. Collection of the Kalamazoo Institute of Arts, Gift of Ronda Stryker, 2002.52



- ▲ Gordon Parks, *American Gothic*, Washington, D.C., 1942, gelatin silver print. Collection of the Kalamazoo Institute of Arts, Acquired through the generosity of an anonymous donor. 2012.45



- ▲ Julie Mehretu, *Rogue Ascension*, 2002, lithograph in colors on Somerset paper and two sheets of Denril vellum. Collection of the Kalamazoo Institute of Arts; Elisabeth Claire Lahti Fund Purchase, 2018.47



- ▲ Kerry James Marshall, *Keeping the Culture*, 2011, screenprint and linocut in colors, on Arches paper. Collection of the Kalamazoo Institute of Arts; Elisabeth Claire Lahti Fund Purchase, 2018.46

DENNOS MARKS 30TH WITH NINE EXHIBITIONS 'Resilience: African-American Artists as Agents of Change'

This summer, the Dennos galleries will be a microcosm of the museum's 30-year history of hosting art in every conceivable media and artists from everywhere.

Nine exhibitions will pass through the galleries this summer. In a typical year, the Dennos hosts 12 shows total, Executive Director Craig Hadley said.

"This is a nice way to acknowledge our 30th and provide a lot of variety," Hadley said. "It's going to be a really busy summer. If (visitors) come in May or June and then come in August, it's going to be a completely different experience for them."

The first round of summer exhibitions includes "Resilience, African-American Artists as Agents of Change," and offers

paintings, prints, drawings, photographs and sculpture. The exhibition honors aspects of African-American history and culture and its contributions to all of America, highlighting a select group of artists who have used art as an indispensable tool for social commentary and change over 150 years.

Part of the collection of the Kalamazoo Institute of Arts, "Resilience" is on view until Aug. 15.

Other planned summer exhibitions include "Voices and Votes: Democracy and America," curated by the Smithsonian (July 3-Aug. 15); an exhibit of portraits by NMC art instructor Rufus Snoddy (June 6-Aug. 15), and a collaboration with Up North Pride. **N**

PROMISES MADE, PROMISES KEPT

25 YEARS AND COUNTING

UNIVERSITY CENTER BROUGHT ADVANCED DEGREES TO NORTHERN MICHIGAN

CMU
CENTRAL MICHIGAN
UNIVERSITY



25th ANNIVERSARY



At your child's school. Running a winery. Under the hood of your car. At your doctor's office. Running a tribal government. Thirty thousand feet overhead, in an airplane cockpit.

All these are places where you'll find graduates with four-year degrees, earned at NMC's University Center (UC). They embody the fulfillment of a promise made 30 years ago, when a community-wide goal-setting initiative, Grand Traverse 20/20, determined that it was a top priority for residents to be able to earn bachelor's degrees and beyond without leaving the region.

NMC stepped up to the challenge and need, and the UC opened in 1995 with more than forty programs offered by a dozen Michigan colleges and universities. In the 25 years since, =>



DAVENPORT UNIVERSITY





**GRAND VALLEY
STATE UNIVERSITY**

**FERRIS STATE
UNIVERSITY**
TRAVERSE CITY

UC partners have granted more than 9,000 bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degrees, plus specialty certificates and endorsements.

Programs are clustered in three main areas: business, education and health, and UC graduates have gone on to succeed as professionals, entrepreneurs and leaders. A sample are pictured here. Meanwhile, the UC continues to evolve. As more college students shift to online learning, the composition of the campus on Boardman Lake is changing. This fall, for example, the Greenspire School will begin offering high school classes in UC classrooms. Whatever community needs arise over the next five, ten or 25 years, NMC will be a willing partner to meet them. **N**

↓
Read more: nmc.edu/lc25

U // Left to right: CMU graduates Victoria Derks, TCAPS principal; Megan Hancock, TCAPS teacher; Stephen McDonald, Elk Rapids teacher; Davenport University graduates Rachel Roman, lead RN care manager, Northern Lakes Community Mental Health; Rove Estate proprietor McKenzie Gallagher; Guffey's Automotive Service owner Garret Guffey; Envoy Air captain Abigail Smelzer. All are also NMC associate degree graduates.

C // Counterclockwise: Ferris graduate and Grand Traverse Woman magazine publisher Kandace Chapple*, instructors Steve Drake and Susan Odgers (also a GVSU instructor); graduate and retired NMC vice president of finance and administration Vicki Cook*; GVSU graduates John Parker-Der Boghossian, chief diversity officer, Normandale Community College, Bloomington, Minn.; Crystal Lake Clinic physician assistant Lara Gavaldon*; Kingsley principal Kristin Goethals*; WMU graduates Matt Peschel, Glen Lake counselor; municipal drinking water specialist Andrew Cater*; District Health Dept. #10 mental health supervisor Susan Stendel

*- also an NMC associate degree graduate



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ALUMNI NOTES

2 RICH BRAUER, 1974, has been a full-time filmmaker since graduating with a bachelor's degree from Brooks Institute in 1977 (using credits transferred from NMC). All nine of his feature films are on Amazon Prime and will soon be joined by his tenth. Fun fact: As a student at NMC in 1973, he made the first ever NMC recruitment film. Watch it on [youtube.com/northwesternmichigancollege](https://www.youtube.com/northwesternmichigancollege)

STEVE MORGAN, Law Enforcement 1979, retired as undersheriff for Leelanau County after eight years on the job and four decades of service in law enforcement. He spent 25 years with the Traverse City Police Department as an officer and K-9 handler. Morgan graduated from St. Francis and NMC before attending Ferris State University.

1 BLAKE KETCHUM, 1980, started her own agribusiness, [seed-balls.com](https://www.seed-balls.com). She is most proud of the fact that it is an ethically-run business, which she traces to her NMC Introduction to Philosophy class. The business has a 30-hour work week that pays a living wage, kids and pets can come to work, and sells innovative, educational green products.

SHERYL HOOKER, 1988-89, works in the testing center of Blackhawk Technical College in Janesville, Wis., where she plans, develops, and coordinates the delivery of testing center services. She

works to alleviate test anxiety for all students so they can achieve success and meet their goals.

CRYSTAL SHILLING, 1994, received her master's and doctor of social work degrees. She is currently conducting research on establishing a partial hospitalization program for women with postpartum depression in Wayne County and is in a private practice in Livonia, Mich.

5 RUTHY KIRWAN, Culinary 2003, published her second cookbook, *Easy Sheet Pan Cookbook: Creative, Fuss-Free Recipes*. Kirwan is a cooking instructor, recipe developer, and blogger obsessed with creating simple recipes and routines for working parents. She lives in New York City with her husband and kids. Find her at [PercolateKitchen.com](https://www.PercolateKitchen.com)

6 MICA SCOTTI KOLE, 2009, won third place in the Writers of the Future, an international contest for science fiction and fantasy authors whose winners are sent to Hollywood for a one-week workshop and red-carpet awards gala. She has also been published in the January 2021 issue of *Galaxy's Edge*, a literary magazine.



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ALUMNI NOTES

8 COURTNEY LORENZ, Culinary 2011, created Cultured Kombucha Co. in Traverse City and won first place and \$10,000 in the company growth category at the Michigan Women Forward's WomenUp and Pitch event in February. Out of 150 applicants, Lorenz was one of eight women entrepreneurs presenting their business plans. Lorenz said Cultured Kombucha will use the award "to upgrade its systems, launch new territory, and onboard a new team member."

4 CORY HOLMAN, 2012, and **ELISE HOLMAN**, 2019, husband and wife, have purchased Garden Goods, a retail store in Traverse City.

7 ALEX BRACE, ASA 2016, Engineering Certificate 2017, was part of a team of researchers who in 2020 won the Gordon Bell Special Prize for outstanding research achievement towards the understanding of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Gordon Bell Prize is considered the Nobel Prize of supercomputing. Brace graduated from University of Michigan in 2020 and will be attending the University of Chicago to begin his PhD studies.

9 SHERRY RONNING, Culinary 2018, recently created the blog, From Michigan to the Table (frommichigantothetable.com) Her growing collection includes recipes using venison, freshwater fish, and fresh fruits and vegetables. She also owns Sherry's Sheer Delight Bakery in Manistee.

3 PAUL YOUNG, 2021, joined the technology start-up Goldcast, founded by three Harvard Business School alumni. Young hopes to gain entrepreneurial experience, attend an MBA program, and then start his own business.

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