



**Northwestern  
Michigan  
College**

**Board of Trustees**

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October 26, 2021

The NMC Board of Trustees has rated President Nissley as very effective in initiating the strategic planning process, leading the college through a pandemic, and strengthening connections with the community and college stakeholders. Based on this evaluation, the board instructs the Presidential Performance and Compensation Committee (PPC) to negotiate an extension of his 2-year contract. As we move beyond the initial onboarding years and pandemic crisis, the board would like an expanded list of expectations, goals and a revised review process. The PPC will bring back recommendations accordingly.

Sincerely,

Rachel A. Johnson  
Vice Chair, Board of Trustees  
Chair, Presidential Performance & Compensation Committee



# NORTHWESTERN MICHIGAN COLLEGE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Presidential Performance Evaluation  
President Nick Nissley, Ed.D.  
October 2021

**Performance Ratings:**

**Outstanding** – Performance is clearly and consistently outstanding. Demonstrates a very high degree of proficiency. Consistently exceeds standards of normally expected performance.

**Very Effective** – Performance is at a very high level. Demonstrates high degree of proficiency. Frequently exceeds standards of normally expected performance.

**Fully Effective** – Performance is satisfactory and consistently at a level expected of employees.

**Marginally Effective** – Performance is only marginally acceptable. Meets performance requirements only periodically or only in certain areas. Specific areas for future performance improvement are indicated.

**Ineffective** – Performance is poor, clearly below the level of acceptance. Improvement is mandatory.

<b>1. Lead the College’s Strategic Planning Process</b>	
<p>The strategic plan has moved along, but there have been times when it has been necessary to communicate that the process needs to follow the charge of the committee. The charge of the committee needed to be amended to allow for the work done outside of the committee by the work group. Further, at times too much reliance has been placed on the co-chairs. Clear direction needs to come from the President of the college.</p> <p>After pointing this out, steps were taken to modify the charge of the committee and Nick has taken a greater role as one of the sanity checks regarding the entire process. <i>(Chris Bott)</i></p>	<b>Effective</b>
<p>I think the President's performance has been satisfactory and consistent. I believe a better job of keeping the board informed would have been appropriate but as the board will only be involved in a policy review of the plan and not in initial formulation, this hasn't detracted from the actions undertaken by staff. <i>(Doug Bishop)</i></p>	<b>Fully Effective</b>
<p>I have been deeply impressed with Nick's personal involvement in nearly all of the strategic planning events/activities (certainly all that I have attended, which is quite a few). He has clearly set the thoughtful, energetic tone for how the process should be developed and he did what appears to be an excellent job of establishing the organizational structure to make it happen. CampusWorks appears to be quite dedicated in their capacity as a knowledgeable outside consultant. The leadership of the planning effort has created an effective "open door" policy, giving all of the college's constituent groups significant opportunities to participate. The numbers of attendees/participants at open working meetings, focus groups, etc., suggest that the goal of widespread community involvement is being achieved.</p> <p>So far, the process seems to be proceeding very smoothly, maybe even more than might be expected. The proof will be in the pudding, however, and the pudding is still cooking. I eagerly await the final product and then, of course, its implementation. My rating of Nick's performance for the process alone is Outstanding. But I think that unequivocal top grade warrants an understanding of the outcomes first. <i>(Ken Warner)</i></p>	<b>Very Effective/ Outstanding</b>

<p>Nick has been passionate about the strategic planning process since its inception. It is clear this is a critical tool for his leadership and for guiding the staff. I have witnessed Nick consistently refer to developments with the plan and developing content in the plan in nearly every discussion. Additionally, Nick has been clear in his actions that this process needs to be led by more than him - he has gone above and beyond to be inclusive and trusting throughout the entire process.</p> <p><i>(Laura Oblinger)</i></p>	<p><b>Very Effective</b></p>
<p>Strategic planning is in full swing and was designed without full board input on the process. Following that process, defined groups were invited to present and sent a Zoom link to submit input. Hopefully, there was input by all interested persons and the results will be good.</p> <p><i>(Kennard Weaver)</i></p>	<p><b>Fully Effective</b></p>
<p>The process has effectively engaged stakeholder groups from both inside and outside the college community. The resulting work product is appropriately forward-thinking and reflective of real challenges and opportunities faced by the College.</p> <p>While the process has been purposely democratic and undertaken with a concern for buy in and engagement, there are still times when the process must be led in the right direction. This is an area where President Nissley can continue to improve his leadership style.</p> <p><i>(Rachel Johnson)</i></p>	<p><b>Effective</b></p>
<p><i>No submission from Michael Estes—resigned October 17, 2021.</i></p>	<p>--</p>

<b>2. CONTINUE TO LEAD, MANAGE AND MAINTAIN INSTITUTIONAL AGILITY THROUGH THE CORONAVIRUS COVID-19 PANDEMIC</b>	
<p>Managing the pivot from in person to virtual setting has continued as Nick has managed the phases of our return to a new normal.</p> <p>He has provided a facilities utilization plan and the process of revisioning what we will look like going forward is creating addition plans and processes; i.e., the strategic enrollment plan, adding resources to our marketing budget to improve branding and our messaging and the work on the strategic plan. <i>(Chris Bott)</i></p>	<b>Fully Effective</b>
<p>As a new executive, the President has done a capable job in this area. I find it troubling that actions such as reinstating a mask mandate were undertaken by simply adopting a committee recommendation without simultaneously advising the Board of Trustees. <i>(Doug Bishop)</i></p>	<b>Fully Effective</b>
<p>Nick leaped into action right at the outset of the pandemic, as should have all societal institutions; many, perhaps most, did not. I have been deeply impressed with his handling of both the shut-down of the campus and the rapid, and smooth, transition to online learning. Nick's actions and words of wisdom have likely minimized the toll of COVID in our campus community. His ability to rally the faculty, staff, and students, into an alternative mode of education has been exemplary. And his success in moving us forward during this unprecedented challenge has deeply impressed me. The successful pursuit of the strategic planning process, virtually all virtual, in the face of this unanticipated and major disruption is illustrative of Nick's ability to manage and maintain institutional agility. I have watched, with some dismay, as so many other college and university leaders have fail to respond promptly and effectively to COVID, often at a cost to their communities (with sizable outbreaks of COVID where campuses were not shut down quickly or properly, with some campuses opening up too soon and/or without adequate protections, only to have to close again shortly thereafter, etc.). <i>(Ken Warner)</i></p>	<b>Outstanding</b>
<p>Leading through a pandemic as we have experienced required the individual at the helm to have tolerance for criticism, required resilience, and demanded that the human asset came first - over profits, productivity, and everything else. Nick soared in all of these areas during his time that I witnessed him leading through the pandemic. Nick provided consistent updates and communication to a broad level of stakeholders. He communicated with calmness and honesty. <i>(Laura Oblinger)</i></p>	<b>Very Effective</b>
<p>Nick has led the college through a difficult period, and has limited the negative effects of the pandemic. Faculty and staff were involved in the process of dealing with Covid-19, so compliance with the approved procedures has been good. <i>(Kennard Weaver)</i></p>	<b>Very Effective</b>
<p>Under President Nissley, the College has maintained its fiscal health during a very difficult time. We have also made important strides in tackling the sustainability of GLCI and the aviation program. The allocation of additional resources for PRMC is appropriate and timely as the College prepares for increased competition and enrollment pressures.</p> <p>As we look forward, President Nissley has also initiated the important work of analyzing our facilities usage with an eye toward evolving work and education</p>	<b>Very Effective</b>

paradigms - an important area of focus as we steward the community's resources. <i>(Rachel Johnson)</i>	
<i>No submission from Michael Estes—resigned October 17, 2021.</i>	--

<p><b>3. TO CONTINUE TO FOCUS ON THE FIRST YEAR'S EXPECTATIONS, DESIGNED TO FURTHER ONBOARD AND ORIENT THE PRESIDENT INTO THE ROLE.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>A. Maintain momentum on current initiatives, ultimately driven to support student success.</b></li> <li><b>B. Strengthen strategic relationships with both campus and community members, e.g., NMC Foundation Board, educational partners, Traverse Connect, Networks Northwest, non-profit organizations, and general public.</b></li> <li><b>C. Listen and learn from internal and external stakeholders in alignment with the college strategic directions, as well as continue to learn about NMC as a community college along with other Michigan community colleges and related legislative structures.</b></li> </ul>	
<p>Since I have had a closer role with Nick and have semi-weekly updates with him, I feel he has improved over the prior year in this area as he learns the mechanics of NMC and how the President needs to integrate into the College with faculty, staff and executives, and our Community and our business partners.</p> <p>He has become more involved in the community with his board position with Traverse Connect, interacting with our local legislators and becoming more involved in the MCCA as a member President.</p> <p><i>(Chris Bott)</i></p>	<b>Fully Effective</b>
<p>I think he has done a fine job with a term that almost immediately became part of a state mandated shutdown. The board was informed on a monthly basis of existing conditions and a plan of action. I am impressed with his efforts to maintain strategic relationships. I do think that more supervision and direction to the Vice Presidents generally and to the director of the Foundation specifically would be helpful. That is however his call, although the performance of the Vice Presidents will be a significant factor in his annual evaluation.</p> <p><i>(Doug Bishop)</i></p>	<b>Fully Effective</b>
<p>I find Nick's presence at virtually every college-related event (and many other community events), and his kind and enthusiastic engagement with other participants, truly mind-boggling. All of those involvements are consistent with his role as NMC's leader and his clear ambition to make the college a better place, for its students and the community. His self-assessment documents the multiple ways in which he interacts with the community, be it through serving as a member of the board of Traverse Connect, meeting with the college's "top 20" business partners, attending the Traverse Bay Children's Advocacy Center celebration of completion of its building project, volunteering at the Cherry Festival, or whatever. Nick's documentation of the meetings he has attended this past year is breath-taking. Indeed, I worry a bit about his burning out at the rate he is going currently. A few days ago I asked him if he ever took any time off from work. His answer was that the previous week he had left campus mid-afternoon to go pick blueberries...for Food Rescue's Healthy Harvest Gleaning, for 4 hours. My idea of relaxing is playing golf. Nick's is picking blueberries for people experiencing food insecurity.</p> <p>I was interested in Nick's allocation of his time among NMC's various constituencies. Presented in Appendix U, the allocation looks largely quite sensible. I was a bit surprised to read that he devotes 36% of his time to working with his leadership team. It's certainly plausible that that should be the number one priority, but I would not have expected that it occupies more than a third of his time. At the other end of the spectrum, I was surprised at the relative lack of time engaging with faculty (3%). I'm not being at all critical of either (or of anything in between). Rather, I'm intrigued by seeing this detailed breakdown, an accounting that suggests</p>	<b>Outstanding</b>

<p>that Nick keeps a remarkably detailed record of how he spends his time. (That was reflected in his description of the number of meetings over the year by group.) In the same appendix U, the description of meetings by topic surprised me because it appears to omit several topics, meetings with prominent business leaders members being one notable example.</p> <p>Nick described his management philosophy as MBWA - management by walking around. That is evident everywhere you look. Spending just a couple of hours with him one day, I was impressed at his greeting innumerable staff by name, everyone from staff leaders to a security guard. His attention to individuals has an institutional payoff. It contributes significantly to an environment in which people feel appreciated, and that stimulates more effective work contributions.</p> <p>Despite COVID, Nick appears to have learned NMC remarkably well in a short time. He is certainly supporting institutional progress and even renewal, through the strategic planning process, his work reimagining the GLCI, and looking forward to an evaluation of the use of campus spaces in the new world in which virtual learning is likely to continue as a significant part of the educational endeavor.</p> <p>Altogether, I can't imagine a more successful onboarding and orientation. Nick has learned NMC. NMC, in turn, has learned, and appreciates, their new leader. <i>(Ken Warner)</i></p>	
<p>Nick has been clear in all instances I have had with him to be concerned first and foremost with the impact to NMC's learners. I have heard it in his statements and seen it in his actions. He has spent time learning every facet of the College's programming, the instructors that deliver the curriculum and the students that are engaged. I know this through his continual efforts to tell stories about these experiences of his.</p> <p>Nick's involvement on the Traverse Connect board is critical to stay connected to opportunities within that partnership. He has been passionately engaged in the Foundation's recent Be What's Possible Campaign. Additionally, I have had the experience to engage with our region's business leaders in his effort to learn from them what they need out of their College to remain thriving in the region. Nick has genuinely listened and reacted to the needs of these business executives. This effort is an example of Nick's desire to build upon the College's relationships with key partners.</p> <p>The above comments also describe how Nick is actively engaging with external stakeholders, but also his genuine interest in all working parts of the College has been obvious. Nick is an active listener and a passionate learner - soaking up information that will help him understand the legacy of the college, its impact, and how he can bring his skills to advance us into the future. <i>(Laura Oblinger)</i></p>	<b>Very Effective</b>
<p>Nick has continued to meet the first year expectations, with reduced emphasis, as other matters require attention. Strategic planning has taken on a central role, and the constant demands of administering the college consume more of the available time and energy. The need to maintain a dialogue with the community, including the business community, will remain an area for development. <i>(Kennard Weaver)</i></p>	<b>Fully Effective</b>

<p>In addition to some of the examples I listed in the previous answer, President Nissley has shown a commitment to strengthening strategic relationships through the creation of the VP-Strategic Initiatives position.</p> <p>It is also noteworthy that NMC, alongside MCCA, successfully advocated for both community college funding in the state budget and the removal of tuition constraint language that would have been greatly detrimental to our future ability to respond to the financial needs of the College.</p> <p><i>(Rachel Johnson)</i></p>	<p><b>Very Effective</b></p>
<p><i>No submission from Michael Estes—resigned October 17, 2021.</i></p>	<p>--</p>



<b>4. Other Comments/Overall Evaluation</b>	
We need to work on an expanded list of expectations driven by our current operating model and the objectives established by the new strategic plan. <i>(Chris Bott)</i>	<b>Fully Effective</b>
President Nissley did an outstanding job in his role on a panel at ACCT and was easily the most well spoken and thoughtful of the three Presidents on the panel. He represented NMC well. He is obviously still finding his way on campus given the restrictions he has been under but I see no reason that he will not improve and grow to even better ratings. <i>(Doug Bishop)</i>	<b>Fully Effective</b>
I have yet to meet anyone who is not favorably impressed with President Nissley. His warm, sincere, and engaging personality combine with a seemingly deeply genuine ambition to see NMC prosper, and the creative thinking and collegial leadership to make it happen. My standard response to a leadership evaluation process is to evaluate strengths and weaknesses, often focusing on opportunities for improvement. I'm sure the latter must exist with regard to Nick, but I have yet to see them. NMC is most fortunate to have him at the helm. <i>(Ken Warner)</i>	<b>Outstanding</b>
<i>No additional comments. (Laura Oblinger)</i>	<b>Very Effective</b>
Nick has stepped into a position new to him, and learned quickly. He leads by example and by soliciting input from faculty and staff so they can claim ownership in the resulting position. <i>(Kennard Weaver)</i>	<b>Fully Effective</b>
<i>No additional comments. (Rachel Johnson)</i>	<b>Very Effective</b>
<i>No submission from Michael Estes—resigned October 17, 2021.</i>	--