

NICK NISSLEY, ED.D.

PRESIDENT'S EVALUATION

2020-2021

SELF-ASSESSMENT

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FALL 2021

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Northwestern Michigan College Board of Trustees Presidential Performance and Compensation Committee articulated three expectations for the President to focus on in his second year in the role (Appendix A: Presidential Performance and Compensation Committee Minutes, November 12, 2020). I have used these to focus my everyday actions leading the College, and I have used these three priorities to focus and frame my reporting to the Board of Trustees, including the Executive Committee. In turn, when communicating with internal and external stakeholders, I have also used these to focus my communications. I have appreciated the Board's helpfulness in affording me such a framework. It has been an invaluable tool to help me prioritize, focus, and lead the College, during this second year of my tenure as President of the College. The following is a self-assessment of my performance and is intended to afford the College's Board of Trustees an overview of how I have met these three expectations, during my second year on the job, as the College's President.

The following is a high-level summary of the rich-description that follows – the highlights of what was accomplished this past year, given the board's three expectations:

1. Lead the College's Strategic Planning Process, to include the following:
 - a. Defining/clarifying vision, mission, and values; creating a shared understanding of present position; agreed assumptions about the future (scenario planning); articulating and evaluating challenges/opportunities; and deciding strategic priorities.
 - b. Development of a college-wide implementation plan, to include: clearly defined and aligned goals and accountability (e.g., a process for 'cascading'); results-driven action plans and dashboards; and a process for monitoring and updating.

- In partnership with our Steering Committee, the two Co-Chairs, the Board of Trustees, and our CampusWorks consulting partners, we have:
 - Engaged with hundreds of stakeholders – both internal and external – through events like: Trends in Higher Education Workshop; Student Experience Workshop; SWOT Survey; Future Summit; Mission/Vision/Values Workshops; Data Analysis Workshop; and the Scan to Plan Workshop/Strategy Development Workshops
 - Yielded draft vision, mission, values statements as well as five draft strategic directions, with objectives and action plans to be developed in the next couple of months. These will be the bedrock of the finalized plan to be approved by the NMC Board of Trustees.
 - The Board can be confident that wide and deep engagement has produced ownership, and high-likelihood of support of the plan's implementation.

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2. Continue to Lead Through the Coronavirus Pandemic, manage and maintain institutional agility through the Coronavirus pandemic, keeping focus on the overarching goals: to keep NMC students and employees safe with the least possible disruption to learning.
 - Navigated the college through four-stage campus reopening plan, while ensuring safety on campus (e.g., only 12 positive cases on campus this fall, with on-campus exposure as of 9/30/21), achieving return to a “fully operational campus” (Stage 4).
 - In addition to ensuring campus safety, also minimized disruption to student learning:
 - Leadership oversight of the influx of COVID-relief dollars during FY 20 and FY 21 the college spent \$10 million in HEERF and \$1 million in Coronavirus Relief Funds.
 - Distributed \$5.2 million of COVID relief funds to our students, since April of 2020 thanks to our staff who are so keenly student-centered, they prioritized rapid distribution of these funds. You can be very proud of the NMC staff who efficiently stewarded these taxpayer dollars and distributed them to students (so they could continue to pursue their dreams at NMC), minimizing disruption to learning.
 - It should also be noted that during this unprecedented public health crisis and economic downturn, the college produced back-to-back balanced budgets with no net tuition increase.

3. To continue to focus on the first year’s expectations, designed to further onboard and orient the President into the role.
 - a. Maintain momentum on current initiatives, ultimately driven to support student success.
 - 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.
 - 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.

Maintain Momentum

- Keeping learning at the center, I am most proud of an award that I earned this year from Phi Theta Kappa – their Paragon Award. College presidents are selected for this award for their outstanding efforts given toward promoting Phi Theta Kappa and its mission. I was one of only 22 presidents in the country to earn this award, in recognition of my student-centered leadership.
- I was able to maintain the momentum of the “Be What’s Possible Campaign” – helping close the Campaign (which was started by the previous President), and contribute to the \$40 million (15% over goal) result. In her ‘lessons learned’

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report, at the end of the campaign, consultant Paula Peter shared the following two points of 'what went right': 1) presidential commitment/engagement in the campaign, and 2) seamless presidential transition.

- I also fully engaged in projects, offering my hands-on leadership. For example: leading the reimagining of the Great Lakes Culinary Institute; supporting the DEI work on campus; development of an Aviation growth plan; and, the PRMC organization redesign.
- During this unprecedented public health crisis and economic downturn, produced back-to-back balanced budgets with no net tuition increase. Additionally, given approximately \$3 million General Fund Surplus, we recently made \$2.5 million of general fund transfers for purposes of saving for strategic and emerging initiatives, new construction and capital, as well as deferred maintenance and technology needs.

Strengthen Strategic Relationships

- Began serving on the Traverse Connect Board of Directors, contributing my volunteer leadership and further positioning the College as a critical partner in the Traverse Connect mission to lead economic development for the Grand Traverse region.
- Held 245 meetings with community members, including 69 donor meetings, and 25 meetings with government leaders.
- With lifting of COVID restrictions, have initiated face-to-face meetings with the college's 'top 20' businesses/partners (meetings on-track to be completed by end of this calendar year).

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GOAL #1: LEAD THE COLLEGE’S STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

This goal is articulated as follows:

Lead the College’s strategic planning process, to include the following:

- a. Defining/clarifying vision, mission, and values; creating a shared understanding of present position; agreed assumptions about the future (scenario planning); articulating and evaluating challenges/opportunities; and deciding strategic priorities.*
- b. Development of a college-wide implementation plan, to include: clearly defined and aligned goals and accountability (e.g., a process for ‘cascading’); results-driven action plans and dashboards; and a process for monitoring and updating.*

The following is an overview describing how I’ve gone about ‘leading the College’s strategic planning process’. While these first two paragraphs stretch back into 2020, they are important context, and offer a sort of preamble to the work undertaken in 2021; they describe the initial ‘planning to plan’ work that was undertaken pre-pandemic, as well as the 4R’s framework that shaped our rethinking of strategy through the initial phase of the pandemic.

‘Planning to Plan’ Pre-COVID (Pre-March 13, 2020). In early March of 2020, just three months into my new role and before the onset of the COVID pandemic, I initiated conversation with the President’s Council and established a ‘Planning to Plan’ Committee (Appendix B: “Getting Started with the ‘Planning to Plan’ Committee” email, from Nick Nissley, March 11, 2020), with the intention of beginning to plan a way forward with the College’s strategic planning process. Given COVID, the administration and Board of Trustees agreed that focus needed to be on managing through the pandemic, and not strategic planning. Especially, as uncertainty inhibited longer-term thinking. So, during the pandemic, my attention (like every other college president) was refocused on managing through the more immediate needs of the crisis versus longer-range strategic planning.

The 4-R’s as Our Means of Rethinking Strategy During the Early Days of the Pandemic (March 2020 – Summer 2020). On Friday, March 13, 2020, just two months into my onboarding, I was faced with the challenges of leading through the coronavirus pandemic, beginning with the decision, on that day, to close the campus and move our teaching from face-to-face to remote learning – literally over the weekend. The immediate and intense crisis management gave way after the first month to a more organized approach to leading. However, the amount of decisions and the weight of them was initially monumental. Despite the unprecedented challenges of leading an organization through the coronavirus pandemic, I’m proud of how the College pulled

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together and did not merely focus on survival; but rather, exhibited courage and resilience (Appendix C: “Our Finest Hour: The Power of Recognizing Emerging Values During a Crisis,” Nick Nissley, TCBN, May 2020). I am most proud of how, in response to the coronavirus pandemic and our need to rethink our strategy, NMC adopted the 4R’s (refocus, reopen, reimagine, and righting the ship), a framework that allowed us to effectively focus our attention and actions, as we managed and led through the coronavirus pandemic and its impacts (Appendix D: Message from the President: NMC’s 4R’s Model). Early on, we realized that we needed to hit pause on our strategic plan, and our then-priorities and annual goals, so we could refocus on the immediate issues resulting from the coronavirus. Not only did we give NMC employees permission to stop working on their pre-coronavirus goals, we set a new expectation to respond to the crisis and begin living in a new normal. Following the lead of the President’s Council, all of NMC refocused priorities and goals, developing just three priorities for the next 100 days, through summer semester/start of fall semester (the end of August 2020). NMC’s staff and faculty have pulled together since that March 13 date with laser-like focus. In the summer of 2020, I met with President’s Council leaders, and they in-turn met with their respective teams to check-in on our progress (Appendix E: 100-day Mid-Point Conversations email, from Nick Nissley, July 2, 2020).

Returning to ‘Planning to Plan’ Work (Fall 2020). The 4R’s were intended to help us focus through the end of Summer 2020, when we hoped to have greater clarity about next steps, based on the status of the coronavirus pandemic. While the pandemic did not allow for such clear next steps; regardless, the President’s Council believed there was a need to begin advancing our strategic planning process (especially, given the changes being brought by the pandemic). Thus, we returned to ‘planning to plan’ work in the fall of 2020, again beginning to plan a way forward with the College’s strategic planning process. At the same time, President’s Council also focused attention on some ‘key strategic priorities’ – e.g., development of a strategic enrollment management plan, and the strategic redesign of the PRMC organization. These were undertaken, mindful that this work was necessary to support priorities that were likely to arise in the strategic planning process (e.g., around enrollment growth). They also engaged a broad cross-section of the college and afforded us to practice enacting our values of collaboration, respect, inclusion, etc. Most of all, they were a deliberate way to encourage the college’s employees to remain forward looking and not become paralyzed by the overwhelming uncertainty that the early days of the pandemic produced. It allowed us to avoid a ‘hunker down in the bunker’ mindset by instead embracing a sense of agency, by actively shaping our future. During the fall of 2020 during this ‘planning to plan’ phase, I began conversations with President’s Council, discussing assumptions about the planning process. We also discussed these assumptions with others in the College (e.g., Leadership Council). And, we began exploring possible consultants who might support us, by facilitating the strategic planning process. I asked Stephen Siciliano (VP, Educational Services) and Vicki Cook (VP, Finance and Administration) to take on the co-leadership and serve as Co-Chairs of the College’s Strategic Planning Steering Committee. We

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initiated an RFP process to begin narrowing down a decision regarding consultant support. At the December 2020 Board of Trustees meeting, I shared an update on our 'Planning to Plan' work to date, and the board agreed to a February retreat date, to help launch the process.

Launching NMC's Strategic Planning Process (January – March 2021). During January-February 2021 we conducted the consultant interviews and decided upon CampusWorks as our planning partner (Appendix F: "Strategic Planning Consultant" Memo, February 15, 2021). By the end of February, we had held a kick-off meeting with CampusWorks, and the following key events were agreed to serve as the primary structure to our strategic planning process (Appendix G: Strategic Planning Events Descriptions from CampusWorks): Trends in Higher Education Workshop; Student Experience Workshop; SWOT Survey; Future Summit; Mission/Vision/Values Workshops; Data Analysis Workshop; and the Scan to Plan Workshop/Strategy Development Workshops. In addition to leading the development/structuring of a sound process, I also ensured a timeline was developed and agreed to deliver a final plan for Board approval (Appendix H: "NMC Strategic Planning Timeline and Events" document from Campus Works, September 22, 2021). On February 2, 2021, we held a Board of Trustees Retreat to launch the process, followed by the Strategic Planning Kickoff meeting (March 26, 2021), which included Leadership Council, the Strategic Planning Steering Committee, and Dr. Chrissy Coley and Dr. Kevin David from CampusWorks. Our strategic planning launch received positive press coverage (Appendix I: "NMC strategic planning effort kicks off," by Patti Brandt Burgess in *Record Eagle*, April 1, 2021), and follow up reporting has been positive, as well (Appendix J: "What Might NMC of 2025 Look Like?", by Craig Manning in *Ticker*, May 7, 2021). I am exceptionally proud of how well the College has broadly and deeply engaged with the community, as well as transparently communicate how the strategic planning process has been unfolding. Specifically, PRMC's strategic planning link (<https://www.nmc.edu/strategic-planning/>) on the NMC website is a critically important resource for keeping the campus/community informed. It includes our strategic planning: purpose, process, intended outcome, consultant/partner information, as well as upcoming events, and Steering Committee membership.

Leading NMC's Strategic Planning Process (April 2021 – Present). I am most proud of having 'shown up' – being actively engaged as a participant, as a supporter of the co-chairs, and as the 'chief storytelling officer' – helping the college/community make sense of 'where we're at' and 'where we're going' with the planning process. Specifically, I have shown up and actively engaged in all of the key events: Trends in Higher Education Workshop; Student Experience Workshop; SWOT Survey; Future Summit; Mission/Vision/Values Workshops; Data Analysis Workshop; and the most recent Scan to Plan Workshop/Strategy Development Workshops. Additionally, I have formally met biweekly with the Co-Chairs, the CampusWorks partners, as well as countless informal daily meetings with internal and external stakeholders – keeping them informed and inspired! Specifically, as it relates to engagement, I am most proud

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of how we're engaging broadly and deeply with our stakeholders – internal and external – e.g., students, faculty/staff, community members, k-12 leaders, colleges, employers:

- ensuring that the co-chairs are supported
- the process is led by representative-structured Steering Committee
- 22 focus groups have involved 350 faculty, staff, students and community members
- SWOT survey drew 356 responses
- Future Summit engaged more than 120 NMC employees, students and community partners
- 59 Scan Team members/volunteers actively researched and presented possible strategies

We have adhered to our timeline and remain on time for our December delivery of a draft strategic plan for Board approval. Chairman Bott has asked us to extend the completion date to afford greater board discussion of the final/draft plan in a retreat setting (to be scheduled in January). This decision will only improve the ultimate outcome. Presently, we have draft vision, mission, values, as well as strategic directions; with objectives and action plans still to be developed (Appendix K: Monthly Strategic Planning Update Memo, 9/23/21). Most importantly, I have consciously led this process, seeking to ensure a forward-looking process, for engaging internal and external stakeholders in imagining the future of the College. I have also been intentional in ensuring that we approach strategic planning as a conversation, an invitation to enliven our collective dreams around what is possible. Based on the feedback I am hearing, folks seem to agree. And, upon plan finalization, the outcome of this strategic planning process won't simply be a plan – it will also be a commitment to continue to grow and transform as we enact our future dreams.

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GOAL #2: LEAD THROUGH THE PANDEMIC

This goal is articulated as follows:

Continue to lead, manage and maintain institutional agility through the Coronavirus pandemic, keeping focus on the overarching goals: to keep NMC students and employees safe with the least possible disruption to learning.

Our success navigating the challenges of the pandemic can be best described by our 4R’s framework. Recall, the 4R’s (refocus, reopen, reimagine, and righting the ship), was the framework we adopted to allow us to effectively focus our attention and actions, as we managed and led through the coronavirus pandemic and its impacts. During this past year, my focus and energy has been on helping the College engage with the second and third R’s – reopen and reimagine. We have worked collaboratively and tirelessly, creating a plan to reopen the college and ensure a safe return to work (Appendix L: NMC COVID-19 Re-Opening Plan). We have worked even harder implementing the plan, navigating steps forward and backwards. I could not be prouder of the College’s ability to maintain institutional agility through the Coronavirus pandemic, and keep our focus on the overarching goals, ‘to keep NMC students and employees safe with the least possible disruption to learning’. We have transparently shared and updated our COVID-19 Dashboard, allowing the college and wider community to ‘see how we’re doing’. And, the answer to that question is that we’ve done exceptionally well. This semester, for example, we have only had 10 student and 2 employee positive cases with on-campus exposure. I have remained on the frontline since day number 1 of the pandemic, remaining on campus, to support our other frontline employees. We have successfully met this safety-first goal, while working through the four phases, each with unique leadership challenges:

- Stage 1 March – June 14, 2020
- Stage 2 Starting June 15, 2020
- Stage 3 Starting May 24, 2021
- Stage 4 Starting July 19, 2021

We have been welcoming our staff/faculty/students back to campus in a phased/staged approach with safety as our number one priority. To support this work, I charged two committees to assist us:

1. A committee was chartered to engage our college community to reimagine teaching and learning. Given the challenges of ensuring safety on campus/in classrooms.
2. As with our academic programming opportunities/classroom-based considerations, noted above, the pandemic has also offered us the opportunity to have a campus-wide conversation on how the nature of work itself has been changed (especially, *where* we do our work). The Future of Work Committee is being led by Diana Fairbanks and Mark

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Liebling. They are engaging with staff and Leadership Council for input on college policies, technology needs, campus culture and safety.

This semester we continue to follow COVID safety protocols, despite being at Stage 4 of our reopening plan, given the renewed concerns regarding virus transmission. For example, we tested our residence hall students prior to their moving in to the dorms at the start of this semester. We had zero positive cases. We also partnered with Grand Traverse County Health Department to hold a vaccine clinic on campus during the first week of classes, with another one held in late September. To increase our student vaccination rate, we developed lottery-like incentives. Students registered and enrolled for this fall semester, who have received at least one dose of the COVID-19 vaccine, can enter the “Win Big” raffle and possibly earn awards like tuition, housing, books, etc. 921 students have entered the raffle as of September 30, 2021.

With regards to the goal of ‘minimize disruption to learning’, we have distributed \$5.2 million of COVID relief funds to our students, since April of 2020. Because of our staff who are so keenly student-centered, they prioritized rapid distribution of these funds. The most recent disbursement was this month – where average awards equaled more than \$1000 each to more than 3000 students! You can be very proud of the NMC staff who efficiently stewarded these taxpayer dollars and distributed them to students (so they could continue to pursue their dreams at NMC), minimizing disruption to learning.

The following describes how I continue to lead, manage and maintain our institutional agility through the Coronavirus pandemic, especially over this past year as my attention has turned to managing the transition from Stage 3 of our Reopening Plan towards the challenges of moving us to Stage 4. That has meant – helping the College imagine a post-COVID future. And, specifically, as we seek to return to a “fully operational campus” (Stage 4), I have been focused on helping support the reimagining of facilities use and the delivery of services to meet our learners’ needs in a post-COVID future.

The sudden pivot in the spring of 2020 forced many organizations, including NMC, to find new ways to deliver services while continuing to support the college’s mission. This has included leadership oversight of the influx of COVID-relief dollars (federal relief funding from HEERF). In fact, during FY 20 and FY 21 the college spent \$10 million in HEERF and \$1 million in Coronavirus Relief Funds. It should also be noted that during this unprecedented public health crisis and economic downturn, the college produced back-to-back balanced budgets with no net tuition increase.

Our goals during the pandemic have been to ensure student and employee safety while limiting the disruption to learning. Last year, in-person classes were primarily delivered for programs that could not offer an on-line option. Those included areas such as Maritime, Aviation, Culinary and our skilled trades. Many courses and services shifted to on-line delivery while others were temporarily paused. During subsequent months we have taken the opportunity

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to begin reimagining delivery systems based on changing student demand. As COVID restrictions loosened, many courses and services are now offered in a variety of formats including in-person and on-line. I have championed that the college has more ways than ever to meet the needs of our learners and advance our organizational goals, by providing instruction and services in a way our stakeholders desire.

Strategically Reimagining Facilities Use. What seems inevitable, especially with the increased off-campus learning (e.g., increased virtual learning), is a need to review and reimagination of campus facilities and spaces. We must begin asking, *what may be required of our campus spaces, to meet new patterns, needs, and challenges as we enter a post-pandemic future?*

- What will be the new demand on physical space?
- What will be the new patterns that students and community members will seek that the College provides?
- How does this impact our infrastructure?

I have begun encouraging college stakeholders that we must begin to engage in a broad conversation and consider all voices. This should be similar to our strategic planning process. I am readying to launch such a reimagining exercise in the next calendar year that will include an assessment of our facilities utilization, broad campus discussions with faculty, staff and students on needs; and, discussions of planning recommendations with the Board of Trustees Building and Site Committee.

Welcoming Students Back for Fall Semester 2021. Fall 2021 has many more on campus classes and activities compared to Fall 2020. The following offers a glimpse of how we are welcoming back students for this fall semester. I am leading the 'return to campus' charge.

- 30% of our classes are meeting face to face compared to 13% face to face last year. The complete breakdown of classes is 30% face to face, 46% online/livestream, and 24% are hybrid. It should be noted that through student demand-driven scheduling there is more student interest in/demand for online classes versus lecture-based instruction. Presently, the fall 2021 fill rates are: online (87%), livestream (80%), and lecture (71%). I am ensuring that we do not go backwards or lose any of the gains that we have realized in terms of online learning growth.
- Welcome Week had over 11 events such as Pinepalooza, ice cream social, game night, speed friending with mock cocktails, as some examples.
- Advising, Financial Aid, and other student services are now open for in person meetings. We are still seeing that many students prefer the virtual option for flexibility but all offices are open for in-person appointments.

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- Student groups are able to meet in person this semester, and have already begun doing so.
- We have a regular-length semester this fall. Last year students did not come back to campus after the Thanksgiving break.
- We have eased restrictions in the residence halls allowing for more spontaneous social opportunities for the residents.
- North Hall fitness center is open to students and employees.

Campus Facilities Utilization Changes. We have taken this opportunity to re-evaluate how to best utilize our facilities. The following shows how we have responded to both demands of our community and students.

- Okerstrom Fine Arts Building: This summer a renovation has been initiated, to repurpose some space to expand the arts classes. The changes are intended to afford a more welcoming and more student-centered space.
- Oleson Center: Also, this summer renovation was completed on the NMC Children's Learning Center (Daycare), which was relocated to the Oleson Center. First and foremost, this was about creating a better space for our littlest Hawk Owls. The move to the Oleson Center also expands Munson's ability to offer 30 more daycare seats for families. The renovation also shows the college's commitment to our community, as we seek to improve this on-campus learning space.
- Osterlin Building: Planning has been initiated to renovate Osterlin to serve as an integrated student service hub. This is intended to increase student retention and completion through improved, holistic customer service experience. It will obviously enhance student experience on campus. (Appendix M: "NMC Plans Integrated Student Hub, Eyes State Dollars To Help").
- University Center: There was an opportunity to redesign the use of some of the space at the University Center with the relocation of the Audio Technology program to Founder's Hall, thanks to the willingness of the Foundation staff to move offices to the UC. Echoing our own trends, many of our partner Universities have pivoted their delivery of classes to a virtual format while maintaining their offices as regional hubs. Grand Valley State University is the exception to this with the growth of their Physician Assistant graduate program which currently occupies the lower level of the campus. GVSU anticipates continued growth of their allied health graduate specialties in the next few years. The agreement with Greenspire School to utilize the north end of the facility and outside surroundings offers new partnerships. Additionally, the expansion of the TART trail to the University Center was completed earlier this summer. The final loop and construction began in late summer. This partnership will be a benefit to the Traverse City Community and NMC.

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Re-opening of Buildings and Programming. As restrictions lifted we brought many of our services back as we were able to, based on staffing and safety protocols. For example:

- Innovation Center
 - ELI has engaged student input to design their space to invite student/community use of the space.
 - The Hawk Owl Café has reopened effective at the end of August. The Café serves as a sort of 'student hub', bringing the campus community together for food and conversation. In fact, we have three times as many students with meal plans this semester (61 meal plans last spring versus 202 meal plans this fall).
 - Our varsity Esports program is located in the lower level, and has just completed tryouts. This will bring much student activity and life to the building. (Appendix N: "Game on, Hawk Owls: NMC to field pair of scholarship esports teams")
 - NMC's Audio Technology and Music Program has begun planning to begin offering 'Friday Concerts' to activate and further enliven the space.
 - NMC's Board of Trustees are also 'leading the way', holding their monthly meetings in the Innovation Center, further activating the space and showing off the college-community possibilities
 - The building and student study spaces were well used last academic year. Many students used the space for project and study needs. With 24/7 access and large breakout rooms this was a popular building to find students in.
 - Student Life began having movie nights in the building in Spring of 2021 this will be another activity that will continue this year.
 - A pool table, foosball and board games are ordered for the building. This will allow for spontaneous student activity.
 - Craig Hadley, Zach Tate and Glenn Wolf are leading a committee to recommend ways to display student art, further engaging the campus community in this space.
- Hagerty Center
 - In August, the college began holding (wedding) events again at the Hagerty Center. Additional business will be booked as we are able to staff up. Obviously, such events will signal 'back in business' at the Hagerty Center.
- North Hall

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- NMC's Fitness Center in North Hall reopened this summer and will continue to open its doors to students and employees. Affording physical fitness opportunities on campus.
- Great Lakes Campus
 - This summer GLCI operated their hands-on baking class with Cafe Lobdell's, affording the college/community to visit the Great Lakes Campus (and taste the Bakery students' creations). Lobdell's is scheduled to be open this fall offering the popular lunch opportunities to the community.

Campus Events/Programming on Campus. As our region continued to see an increase in COVID-19 vaccination rates, and updates to state and federal health guidelines, on July 19, NMC moved to Stage 4 of our 4-Stage Reopening Plan. In Stage 4 campus is 'fully operational'. Given this, we're breathing life back into campus through a variety of campus events/programming on campus, including:

- More than 280 EES course offerings (some virtual still, and many in-person).
- College for Kids was offered in-person this summer (offering 50 classes with 500 enrollees).
- Experiential Learning Institute projects are being planned to include students engaging in service learning in our community – e.g., Kristy McDonald's project around food insecurity and NMC Students, partnering with the NMC Food Pantry and Student Success Team; as well as others that will engage with community partners like the Children's Museum, Goodwill (the Inn and Food Rescue), and more.
- NMC is hosting (in our Innovation Center), "Northern Michigan Startup Week" in partnership with 20Fathoms, Northern Michigan Angels, Newton's Road, and TC NewTech.
- Marine Center workshops were conducted throughout the summer.
- In-person student/family tours and orientation sessions.
- Student Welcome Wednesday events. Hosting new students with special activities on Wednesdays throughout the summer.
- Library is open regular hours.
- Continued in-person programming at the Dennon Museum Center.
- A return to in-person events with the International Affairs Forum (in addition to on-going virtual programming).

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- Planning has begun to relaunch student short-term international travel/learning opportunities (as soon as safely feasible).
- Throughout the summer the weekly faculty/staff pick-up basketball game has occurred – bringing life back to our campus courts!
- The Music Department held a fall semester ‘Convocation’, presenting Music, Audio Technology, and Dance faculty performances to the campus community.

I am also proud to say that at the end of August when we welcomed students back to campus, of the nearly 250 students who moved into the dorms, none had a positive COVID test. Also, despite the heartache of having to return to masking as a precautionary measure on campus, we have experienced almost 100% compliance. Our campus community rose to the challenge in March 2020 and has maintained the same level of commitment to one another – to ensure our campus safety. I am leading by example, and holding others to the same expectations.

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GOAL #3: FURTHER ONBOARD AND ORIENT

This goal is articulated as follows:

To continue to focus on the first year’s expectations, designed to further onboard and orient the President into the role.

- a. Maintain momentum on current initiatives, ultimately driven to support student success.*
- 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.*
- 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.*

The following section will describe how I have been ‘maintaining momentum’ and ‘strengthening strategic relationships’.

Maintaining momentum. I share the following as examples of how in addition to managing through COVID and leading a college-wide strategic planning process, I have also attended to maintaining momentum. While I will shine the light on my work specifically with the Great Lakes Culinary Institute (GLCI), I have led other/similar work. For example: our DEI work on campus, development of an Aviation growth plan, the PRMC organization redesign, development of our strategic enrollment management plan, and even the launching of our varsity Esports program (Appendix N: “Game on, Hawk Owls: NMC to field pair of scholarship esports teams”). Most of all, I’m proud that I was able to maintain the momentum of the “Be What’s Possible Campaign” – helping close the Campaign (which was started by the previous President), and contribute to the \$40 million (15% over goal) result. In her ‘lessons learned’ report, at the end of the campaign, consultant Paula Peter shared the following two points of ‘what went right’: 1) presidential commitment/engagement in the campaign, and 2) seamless presidential transition. I’m proud to have contributed to this success. I am most proud of an award that I earned this year from Phi Theta Kappa – their Paragon Award. College presidents are selected for this award for their outstanding efforts given toward promoting Phi Theta Kappa and its mission. I was one of only 22 presidents to earn the award this year, speaking to the active leadership I have shown for academic excellence and support of teaching and learning at NMC. In addition, I have been rebuilding the executive team following retirements of three positions. This has included the redesign of one of the VP roles (and, a national search process), after extensive listening to college and community concerns and hearing a desire for greater capacity for implementation, innovation, and community partnering. I have also accomplished this reorganization by reducing executive team

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headcount by one staff member. Lastly, I have continued to support the college’s innovative spirit, supporting new program development, such as the following examples:

- “NMC approves engineering degree,” by Patti Brandt Burgess, *Record Eagle*, January 26, 2021); new business development certificate (Appendix O)
- “Business Development Certificate Now Offered at NMC,” *Traverse City Ticker*, January 19, 2021); eldercare certificate (Appendix P)
- “Eldercare certification offered,” by Mark Urban, *Record Eagle*, February 3, 2021; and Denno’s Museum Smithsonian Affiliate status (Appendix Q)
- “Denno’s Museum Center Becomes Smithsonian Affiliate,” by Beth Milligan, *Traverse City Ticker*, March 9, 2021 (Appendix R)

As part of my ongoing work to familiarize myself with college operations and performance, my ‘deep dive’ into GLCI revealed a business model that was no longer sustainable, and that action was needed now to identify a new model that is sustainable. The following financial and enrollment metrics that I unearthed spoke to the challenge:

- GLCI has a 7+ year history of increasing deficits – from an annual deficit of \$136,000 in 2015 to the projected deficit of \$380,000 for 2021. This is a three-fold growth in the GLCI deficit, over the past seven years.
- During the same time, revenues decreased from \$1.1 million in 2015 to \$540,000 projected in 2021 (a halving of revenues over the same period).
- Additionally, student enrollment has dropped from 158 students in 2014 to just 67 students in the fall of 2020.

Thus, I set goals for the team charged with reimagining this college operation:

- Create a reimagined GLCI - e.g., new structure and business/operating model that will support a program delivery requiring no more than a college subsidy of \$150,000 annually.
- Offer a program that meets the goals of our students and serves the employers of our graduates.

I am pleased to say that the team delivered. They engaged in a collaborative process that brought together diverse stakeholders. They made clear that two approaches are needed to transform GLCI: 1) program changes (e.g., updated courses and pathways), as well as 2) addressing the restaurant operations possibility (e.g., optimizing the use of the Lobdell’s space). In the "GLCI Reimagined" Plan they have spelled out clear objectives and action plans for how we will: 1) increase enrollment; 2) increase revenue; and 3) manage costs downward. I recognize that the GLCI Reimagined Plan will require our discipline to ensure follow through/execution of the action plans. I’ve asked Troy to help support the follow through. And, this will be a key goal which I will be holding ourselves accountable for. What could have been a ‘bad news story’ was

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successfully managed and positioned as a story about continuous improvement at the College (Appendix S: “Amid Restaurant Industry Upheaval, NMC Looks to Reimagine Culinary Institute, Lobdell's,” by Beth Milligan in Ticker, July 2, 2021).

It should also be noted that during this unprecedented public health crisis and economic downturn, the college produced back-to-back balanced budgets with no net tuition increase. Additionally, given approximately \$3 million General Fund Surplus, we recently made \$2.5 million of general fund transfers for purposes of saving for strategic and emerging initiatives, new construction and capital, as well as deferred maintenance and technology needs.

Strengthening strategic relationships. The following are some bulleted examples of how I have been working to strengthen strategic relationships:

- Began serving on the Traverse Connect Board of Directors, contributing my volunteer leadership and further positioning the College as a critical partner in the Traverse Connect mission to lead economic development for the Grand Traverse region.
- This past year, established a monthly standing meeting with Warren Call (CEO, Traverse Connect) and Matt McCauley (CEO Networks Northwest), to ensure that NMC-area business needs and regional economic development needs are being discussed as they arise.
- Continue to engage in legislative advocacy, for example:
 - State Representative Roth
 - Governor Whitmer
 - Senator Peters
- During this past year, actively participated in the region’s weekly executive leadership conference call with the Governor’s Office, reporting/updating on the impact of COVID on our campus.
- Similarly, led the partnering effort, to bring the Health Department to the Hagerty Center, resulting in an outpouring of community support (Appendix T: “[COVID vaccine clinic to begin at NMC's Hagerty Center](#)” by Kathryn Halvorsen, UpNorth Live, January 17 2021).
- Presented to numerous area organizations, including: Rotary, Kiwanis, Traverse City Entrepreneurs, and The Benzie Area Historical Society & Museum.
- Proudly served as the point person for the TART Trails Boardman Lake Loop Ribbon Cutting on our University Center Campus.
- Meetings with Michigan higher education leaders, including presidents: Samuel Stanley (MSU), Dan Phelan (JCC), David Finley (NCCMC), Scott Ward (WSCC).
- With lifting of COVID restrictions, have initiated face-to-face meetings with the college’s ‘top 20’ businesses/partners (meetings to be completed by end of this calendar year).

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- I am 'showing up' as a volunteer in the community: committing to serve as a Board of Directors member for Goodwill Northern Michigan; volunteering at Cherry Festival; volunteering with Food Rescue's Healthy Harvest Gleaning; and serving on the community Advisory Board for Visioning the Region's New Performing Arts Center.
- I am also helping bring positive attention to NMC's DEI leadership, having been invited to speak on a panel with three other college presidents at this fall's ACCT Leadership Congress in San Diego.
- I helped NMC support our local non-profit, the Children's Advocacy Center, to utilize space at the University Center while their facility was under construction (See: <https://www.traversebaycac.org/news-blog/community-centered>), further strengthening our relationship with non-profit leadership in our community.
- Similarly, I have encouraged the 'reimagining' of our University Center, which has produced a new partnership with the Greenspire School, where they will be renting space there, as well as developing an early college pathway between Greenspire and NMC (See: <https://www.traverseticker.com/news/greenspire-prepares-to-welcome-first-high-school-class/>).
- Last but not least, I am 'showing up' around campus, with daily 'walkabouts' and active engagement in student activities – e.g., throwing out the first pitch at a Pit Spitters game (with an NMC student/veteran), regularly meeting with PTK leaders, attending Welcome Week activities, etc.

In 2020, with my initial onboarding, the President's Office Staff, in consultation with the Board of Trustees, developed a 'relationship map' to help identify key initial meetings and relationships for the President to develop during onboarding. The original Presidential Relationship Map spreadsheet included almost 200 entries. While the coronavirus pandemic and the resultant 'lock down' and 'closing of campus' slowed the scheduling of face-to-face meetings, many virtual meetings were conducted between March 2020 and the end of calendar year 2020. Last summer, Elise and I entertained more than 25 evenings in our home, hosting more than 50 individuals (including donors, board members, community leaders, and employees), seeking to build relationships with our new community. Despite the pandemic, Presidential Relationship Map scheduling was 87% complete at the end of 2020, with the remaining 13% carrying over to 2021. Keep in mind, these are only the meetings identified on the Relationship Map and do not include dozens of other meetings scheduled and attended.

This year, the following offers a glimpse of the meetings that I've been engaged in. They have included the following:

- 345 1:1 Leadership Team Meetings
- 242 Community
- 112 Students

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- 84 Board of Trustees
- 69 Foundation
- 38 President's Council
- 26 Faculty
- 25 Government Relations
- 18 Leadership Council

As I have engaged with internal and external stakeholders, some of this year's highlights include:

Students

- Coffee with the President/Pizza with the President/Meet, Greet, Donuts Event
- Student Movie Nights
- Earth Day Celebration
- Pinepalooza Student Fair
- Student Government Association
- Phi Theta Kappa
- Coffee chat with Asian/Pacific Islander students
- Picnic table painting for Pride Week
- College for Kids Visits
- Daycare Center Welcome
- Walk Through Commencement Ceremony
- Welcome Week Activities
- Welcome Wednesday Pit Spitters game (and, throwing out the first pitch)
- Student Rotary Club Formation

Community Businesses and Organizations

- Connecting with local businesses/business leaders: TentCraft, Interactive Aerial, Sara Lee, Elmer's, Windemuller (with at least five more scheduled through the end of the calendar year)
- Traverse Connect Board Member
- Traverse Connect CEO Roundtable
- Regular Standing Meetings with: TCAPS Superintendent; Networks Northwest CEO; Traverse Connect CEO
- Goodwill Industries of Northern Michigan Board Member
- TART Trails Ribbon Cutting
- Cherry Festival 5K with Promethient
- Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians
- Campus Tree Planting with DTE and ReLeaf
- Key Note Speaker for Home Builders Association Scholarship Dinner

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- Speaker at: Rotary, Kiwanis, Entrepreneurs Club, Optimist Club

Educational Partners and Organizations

- Greenspire High School Grand Opening
- MSU President Stanley
- MCCA Virtual Summer Institute
- MCCA Spring & Autumn Board of Directors
- ACCT Virtual Leadership Congress
- Michigan Tech

Foundation

- Be What's Possible Campaign (meetings/events throughout the year)
- Scholarship Open
- 69 Donor Meetings
- Taste of Success

Government Relations

- Governor's Office COVID Biweekly Updates
- Hosted Governor Whitmer's Community Leaders Roundtable
- Rep. John Roth
- Lt. Gov. Garlin Gilchrist tour of Hagerty Center Vaccination Clinic
- Rep. Bradley Slagh
- Senator Peters

I will add that I practice a 'manage by walking around' approach to leadership, and thus every day I have many unscheduled meetings or informal conversations with students, employees, and visitors to campus. Whether it's my daily check-in with security at West Hall or simply a chat with the custodians who clean my office suite, I make time every day to informally 'get out of my office' and 'see what's happening' on campus. For statistics of my scheduled meetings organized by constituency and topic, see Appendix U: Scheduling Statistics.

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SUMMARY

On Friday, March 13, 2020, just two months into my onboarding, I was faced with the challenges of leading through the coronavirus pandemic, beginning with the decision, on that day, to close the campus and move our teaching from face-to-face to remote learning – literally over the weekend. The immediate and intense crisis management gave way after the first month to a more organized approach to leading. However, the amount of decisions and the weight of them has been monumental – extending to 18 months, now.

I am most proud of how we have maintained our focus on our mission – becoming even more student-centered given the challenges thrown at us during the pandemic. Also, I am proud of how we have maintained fidelity to our values, despite the uncertainty of what we faced. I have worked tirelessly to maintain our focus on our mission of transforming students' lives through the power of education, and allowing students to continue pursuit of their dreams. Also, despite the financial challenges, we have continued to be responsible fiscal stewards, delivering a balanced budget, with no net tuition increase. And, during this time we've also grown support for the College, with the Foundation exceeding its Campaign goal, delivering \$40 million of support to the College. All of this was accomplished as we maintained a safety-first commitment and transparency of communication (See: NMC Coronavirus Information Hub at nmc.edu/covid-19).

Now, as we look to a post-pandemic future, NMC is well-positioned, not having just survived the pandemic; we worked hard during the pandemic to plan for our desired future, so we can thrive. We are ready to execute on a soon-to-be-completed strategic plan. Also, I have initiated a leadership realignment, and the College is seeking its first-ever vice president of strategic initiatives, a newly-created executive role that will be accountable for leading the college through implementation of the strategic plan that is now being drafted; leading NMC's innovation management process, including revenue-generating ventures; and serving as a point person for business partnership and local employers (Appendix V: "Success Story: Leadership realignment creates new executive role" in NMC Now, September 1, 2021).

Despite the unprecedented challenges of leading through the coronavirus pandemic for 18+ months, especially, when facing such a challenge just two months into my onboarding as the College's new President, I am proud that the College has not merely survived; but, rather is thriving. The reason, I believe is *thanks to our people*. As I noted in a TCBN article (Appendix W: "Letting Go of the Need to Know," Nick Nissley, TCBN, May 2021).

In this time of rapid transformation, we as leaders must let go of the idea that we should be omniscient experts. We have experts at every level of our organizations and throughout our stakeholder groups. It is our job as leaders to listen to as many voices as possible, put forth a vision, then let our teams help shape that vision and bring it to life. We need to change what we expect from ourselves and each other. We must become

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comfortable not having all of the answers. We must instill greater trust and autonomy in our teams to advance our organizational goals.

I have worked tirelessly to develop a sense of empowerment in NMC – enabling others to act. I believe it is this power – the power of everyone working together with a sense of shared purpose, guided by our values, and reaching for our goals – that we will continue to build on the successes of the past 70 years as we head into a post-pandemic future. Additionally, I have used my leadership position to further leverage our values of innovation, agility, and thoughtful risk taking. I have encouraged the College's 'pandemic pivots' as well as our 'transforming for a post-pandemic future' (See Spring 2021 *Nexus*: <https://www.nmc.edu/news/media/nexus/2021-spring/index.html>).

Lastly, I am especially grateful for the NMC Board of Trustees' Presidential Performance and Compensation Committee (PPCC), which met with me regularly over my first year, as well as the NMC Board of Trustees' Executive Committee (EC), which met with me during my second year. Both have served as a sounding board, as well as offering valuable coaching during my initial two years in the President role. In addition, the Michigan Community College Association (MCCA), and especially our regular Presidents Meetings, have afforded me access to community college specific peers and their insights and wisdom. Additionally, I have through 1:1 meetings developed relationships with both NCMC's President Finley and JCC's President Dan Phelan. Both the PPCC and EC, as well as the MCCA have been invaluable resources for a new President – especially one leading through the coronavirus pandemic!

With two new trustees, and the transitioning of board chair leadership, combined with a new strategic plan, and a college infused with 70 years of possibilitarian spirit, I look forward to continuing to lead NMC into the future!

Northwestern Michigan College
BOARD OF TRUSTEES
Presidential Performance and Compensation Committee Minutes
Thursday, November 12, 2020
Traverse City, MI 49686
Virtual Zoom Meeting ID: 942 6595 0496

Committee Chair Chris Bott called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m.

Members present: Chris Bott, Rachel Johnson, Jane McNabb all attended remotely

Members absent: None

Others present: Nick Nissley, Holly Gorton, Lynne Moritz

Debrief of Presidential Evaluation Process

President Nick Nissley was asked to share his perspective on the recent presidential evaluation process. He noted the clarity of expectations toward good outcomes, with the Board providing the clear three areas of focus. Nissley further explained that this committee has allowed coaching along the way to provide beneficial feedback. The formal evaluation process of the full Board then provided additional feedback and motivation. Board committee members also shared positive comments about the process of providing clear focus areas to allow for constructive feedback that met expectations on both sides.

Presidential Transition Process Going Forward

Chair Chris Bott previously asked President Nissley to provide a path toward the next evaluation to occur closer to the end of his current contract. He stated that this committee should not need to continue meeting every month now that the president has been onboarded, moving back to the committee's original charge. The committee has served as an executive committee for the president in 2020 and there was discussion about the appointment of an executive committee in January 2021. President Nissley shared his desire to continue meeting going forward on an every-other month basis, perhaps as an executive committee after January as suggested.

Designing NMC's Strategic Planning Process

President Nick Nissley then reviewed the first portion of a draft planning document for the upcoming strategic planning process, with the intent to share with key internal leadership groups and then the full Board at their January study session. The process will include the engagement of all stakeholders, including the Board. Chair Chris Bott explained the strategic planning process may extend longer than a year, therefore, may not be completed by fall of 2021. Bott would expect to see progress at the next presidential evaluation. The remainder of the plan will be reviewed at the next committee meeting to be held in December.

Nissley then reviewed a draft set of 2021 presidential goals that he has begun developing for the committee's review and input. Upon discussion it was recommended that Nissley revise the relationship building goal to strengthening strategic relationships going forward. A suggestion was also made to add "continue" to leading and managing through the Coronavirus pandemic. The president and committee will continue to refine the presidential goals and evaluation plan with a recommendation to go to the full Board in January 2021.

Presidential Performance and Compensation Committee
November 12, 2020

Future Committee Dates

The committee determined to meet again in December, with a recommendation of presidential goals and evaluation process for 2021. It was suggested to develop a charge for an Executive Committee to be appointed in January 2021 to meet with the president every other month in 2021.

Other Discussion

There was a brief discussion pertaining to an opinion forum in the Traverse City Record-Eagle regarding the current legislative bill that would allow a community college bachelor of science degree in nursing. It was noted that NMC will respond with appropriate strategy.

Public Comment—no public comment offered.

The meeting adjourned at 2:10 p.m.

Recorded by Chief of Staff to the President and Board of Trustees Holly Gorton.



Nick Nissley <nnissley@nmc.edu>

Getting Started with the 'Planning to Plan' Committee

1 message

Nick Nissley <nnissley@nmc.edu>

Wed, Mar 11, 2020 at 5:13 PM

To: Diana Fairbanks <dfairbanks@nmc.edu>, Vicki Cook <vcook@nmc.edu>, Holly Gorton <hgorton@nmc.edu>, Joy Evans <jevans@nmc.edu>, Mark Liebling <mleibling@nmc.edu>

Folks,

Here's the most recent draft of the document that I reviewed with each of you - my 'getting started' thoughts re: undertaking a strategic planning process at NMC.

In addition, if you're not familiar with the language/use of a 'planning to plan' committee/framework, here are two links that speak to how such a framework can be used. While not specifically, the ideas are consistent with my thinking - the P2P Committee is the driver for designing a strategic planning process.

We'll discuss all of this tomorrow.

<https://www.campusintelligence.com/2018/12/14/blog-series-ie-strategic-plan-assessment/#.XmhOKNhoJjg.email>

<http://www.jgacounsel.com/wp-content/uploads/Planning-to-Plan-Strategic-Planning.pdf>

Thanks again, for agreeing to serve in this vitally important leadership role.

Nick

--

Nick Nissley, Ed.D. | President | Northwestern Michigan College | 231.995.1010

**Northwestern Michigan College****Strategic Planning at NMC (Getting Started).pptx**

3814K

In Education & Training, Issue May 2020
- By Nick Nissley

Our Finest Hour: The Power Of Recognizing Emerging Values During A Crisis

Fifty years ago we first heard the words, "Houston, we've had a problem," during the Apollo 13 crisis. Many of us are looking at our industries and our world during the COVID-19 pandemic and feeling that same sentiment.

But I also remember another legendary line spoken by NASA flight director Gene Kranz during that same event in 1970. Upon assessing the enormous obstacles in bringing three astronauts safely back to Earth after an explosion aboard the lunar module, Kranz said, "This will be our finest hour."

It's hard to believe I'd only been in the Northwestern Michigan College president's office for two and a half months when our leadership team made the unprecedented decision to shift all face-to-face learning to online in mid-March. This, of course, was followed by campus closures and shifting most employees to remote work, as so many area businesses also have done. And yet, in spite of the enormity of these challenges I can confidently say I believe our response to COVID-19 will be among our finest hours.

This response, in which NMC has prioritized the safety and well-being of students and employees while limiting the disruption to learning and maintaining its role as a strong community partner, is grounded in well-established NMC values. Framed and hanging on the walls of classrooms and offices, these include: agility, innovation, collaboration, valuing all people and responsible stewardship.

This action is exactly what I've seen in the following ways:

- Faculty and staff came together and shifted classes online in just one week, singularly focused on helping our students work through this crisis.
- NMC Marine Tech students and brother-sister duo Aaron and Bernadette Bottke began using a 3-D printer to make protective masks for Munson Medical Center.
- Two alumni nurses paused their lives and careers in Michigan to go and work in New York City ICUs.

What I've also noticed, as I've participated in dozens of online meetings and made hundreds of phone calls to students, employees and the community partners, is a new set of emerging values. These include flexibility and adaptability, courageous creativity and compassion. Whether it's finding a loaner laptop for a student who doesn't have one or being an empathetic listener to an overwhelmed student, these values weave new threads into the strong, cohesive fabric of this college and community.

I expect that other leaders are making similar discoveries in their own workplaces. If not, I invite you to look for them. Crises, as Kranz put it so memorably, can bring out our best or worst selves. In northwest Michigan I'm proud and thrilled to be among a group leading with its best foot forward. We have been a member of Grand Traverse County's Joint Operations Center daily meetings since they began on March 13. The level of cooperation and coordination between health, government, first responders, education, social service and business sectors has been incredible. Whether it's donating much-needed supplies, offering our dorms for medical personnel or helping spread the word about our community's response and resources, I am seeing firsthand what makes this community so special.

We don't know yet what lies on the other side of this transformational period. Hand-in-hand with the life-threatening coronavirus pandemic we also must respond to an economic impact that will be felt more profoundly than any since the Great Depression. With hopes that the initial health crisis may be starting to level off, NMC is now also prioritizing the long-term sustainability of the institution so we can continue to serve the learners of this region for years to come. The dual impact of COVID-19 and its economic repercussions on enrollment could be significant. Therefore, we must reimagine our future, and how we can best align our structure to best meet the changing needs of our learners.





now we will need to adapt. What I am certain of, after working closely with our employees and our board of trustees to navigate the uncharted waters of the initial crisis, is we will be well-served if our forthcoming decisions are also guided by our values, both established and emerging.

This was not the beginning I anticipated when I started at NMC in January. But there's no place I'd rather be than right here in northwest Michigan, helping to write the first draft of history for one of our finest hours. I know we can truly be what's possible because I am seeing our students, employees and community partners demonstrate that in new ways every day. I am proud to be part of this college and community with you.

Nick Nissley, Ed.D., is president of Northwestern Michigan College.

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Message from the President: NMC's 4R's Model

Apr 27, 2020 | [Intercom](#), [President Updates](#)

Good afternoon NMC family,

It's hard to believe we are entering the final week of spring semester and my first as president of our college. It's certainly not the semester any of us could have planned for, but I am more confident than ever that this is the right place for me to be at this time. Seeing your work to help our students to achieve their goals, and your work helping each other has been amazing.

While finishing the work of this semester, we are also looking toward the future. I know that may seem challenging given how much uncertainty we face, but as we talked about at our recent virtual town hall, I have a framework that I believe will help us focus our attention and actions as we live into our new normal. It's "The 4R's."

NMC'S 4R'S MODEL FOR LEADING THROUGH THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC

- 1. Refocus** – As we transition our focus from crisis to recovery, we must deliberately refocus our attention from pre-coronavirus to now, and what lies ahead. We must hit pause on our old goals so we can reevaluate where they should be situated in terms of refocused priorities, and articulate new priorities/goals for the next 100 days. We must cascade this throughout the organization, to ensure folks are not stuck where we were. And, so we can begin creating greater clarity about where we're going.
- 2. Reopening and Reengaging** – While there's no indication, yet, of what post 'stay at home' looks like, we're beginning to hear signaling that reopening is on the horizon and being planned for. We're also hearing that we're not likely going back to the old normal. Rather, we will need to begin to formally develop explicit scenarios about our possible futures. We will each need to help our colleagues by working together on reopening and reengaging as we come back to work. Again, our challenge will be to not assume we're getting back to the old normal. Rather, we must each begin to reimagine our future and our new normal.
- 3. Reimagining** – Based on the above mentioned scenarios, we must breathe life into these reimagined work processes. We will need to leverage the courageous creativity and innovations that have already been born during this time of great challenge and equally

great possibility. This new (or, renewed) college, and supporting new business model, will ensure that we're weathering the financial storm resultant from the coronavirus pandemic.

4. **Righting the Ship** – Refocusing, reopening and reengaging, and reimagining, will allow us to right the ship – to ensure the college's financial stabilization and the ultimate sustainability of the institution. We'll need to be good fiscal stewards – engaging in weeding (answering what we need to stop doing), pruning (answering what we need to cut back on) and, we'll need to plant some new crops – e.g., new approaches to delivering a community college education.

—

Nick Nissley, Ed.D. | President | Northwestern Michigan College | 231.995.1010



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Want to keep up with what's happening at NMC? Sign up for NMC Now, a bi-weekly e-newsletter highlighting campus [success stories](#), [upcoming events](#), and media mentions of the college. [Check out past issues and sign up here »](#)

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July 2, 2020

PC members:

As Nick shared in PC today, he would like to formally conduct check-in conversations with each of you as we have reached the half-way point of our 100-day key priorities/goals created May 1 (also attached to email). These will be informal conversations allowing Nick to check in and see how things are going toward the completion of those goals. Below are 7 questions Nick has provided to guide the conversation.

1. What **strengths** have you leveraged over the past four months, as we've navigated the coronavirus pandemic and its resultant impacts upon the College's operations?
2. Do you feel that you have consistently lived our **values**? What are you most proud of in terms of the values-driven leadership you have/our team has exhibited?
3. Do you feel you delivered on your **commitments**? What accomplishments are you most proud of?
4. Where have we struggled with **trust and conflict** as a team? What have you done to build trust and engage productively with conflict?
5. How has your work contributed to our team's **results** and the College's success?
6. What do you want to do differently – e.g., to **improve** upon in terms of your leadership practice?
7. What can I be doing to better **support** your success and the College overall?
 - a. What should I **keep doing** – e.g., something that is helping us work well together and realize our desired results?
 - b. What should I **stop doing** – e.g., something that isn't really serving the team's effectiveness?
 - c. What should I **start doing** – e.g., something that I am not doing now, but is needed to help us work more effectively as we pursue our goals?



Northwestern
Michigan
College

MEMO

Administrative Services

To: Board of Trustees

From: Nick Nissley, Rachel Johnson, Stephen Siciliano, Holly Gorton, Joy Goodchild, Vicki Cook

Date: February 15, 2021

Subject: **Strategic Planning Consultant**

This document is intended to provide an overview and contract recommendation for consulting services for the 2021 strategic planning process.

Recommendation

Board authorization for administration to enter into a contract with CampusWorks, Inc. for strategic planning consulting services in the amount of \$90,000, with an additional \$8,000 for possible travel, for a total budget of \$98,000 to be funded by the Board Designated Fund for Transformation.

Background/Scope of Work

On January 6, 2021, Northwestern Michigan College posted a request for proposal for strategic planning consulting services. Eight firms responded to the request for proposals. The committee reviewed all eight proposals. Based on the responses to the RFP the committee selected the following four firms to be interviewed.

Company	Base Price	Travel
Ellucian	\$94,385	
Thomas Miller	\$97,550	\$1,500 (1 visit)
CampusWorks	\$90,000	\$8,000 (4 visits)
Greenway	\$72,500	\$6,000 (8 visits)

Bid Analysis

All firms provided a variety of expertise in the area of strategic planning. CampusWorks is being recommended as the firm that provides the best resources. The following highlights the rationale for selection:

- The experience that they have with community colleges
- They have a robust process for inclusion of all stakeholder groups
- Their willingness to adapt to NMC's culture and community engagement needs
- Their student focus philosophy
- Their company depth including both personnel and access to data

Funding Source

Funding source is the Board Designated Fund for Transformation.

Strategic Planning Events Descriptions

Northwestern Michigan College

Trends in Higher Education Workshop

During this presentation, CampusWorks will introduce and lead a discussion on trends in higher education, identifying themes related to enrollment, student success, technology, and accountability that can support institutional transformational objectives.

The workshop will provide an overview of the technology landscape, highlight trends occurring in higher education with a focus on student services/experiences and look at long-range future horizons challenges that could further impact NMC. It will explore the overall use and leveraging of technology to streamline operations and provide desired employee and student experiences, minimizing administrative work. This session acts as a primer to assist faculty, staff, and administration in embracing the redefining of the student experience by challenging them to embrace the possibility of new models of services.

This workshop will be offered to a representative audience at the College, including leadership, faculty, staff, and possibly students. All who plan on participating in the Student Experience Workshop are encouraged to attend.

Student Experience Workshop

This interactive workshop with a representative audience from the College is designed to develop the future definition of the student experience at Northwestern Michigan College. The outcome will be a succinct and motivational document that articulates a vision for the student experience.

In addition to articulating the desired experience for all NMC students, the resulting student experience statement will include a second part that addresses how employees will support the ideal student experience. The proposed student experience statement will be presented to the President's Council and Strategic Planning Steering Committee for review and approval. The final document will serve as a guiding document for the subsequent strategic planning activities, ensuring alignment between institutional priorities and the ideal student experience at Northwestern Michigan College.



SWOT Survey

This survey is sent to all employees (and select external constituents) to gather input on their thoughts on the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats that NMC should consider while developing the strategic plan. Results from the SWOT Survey are analyzed by the Strategic Planning Steering Committee and Work Team and are used to inform the topics discussed at the Future Summit, as well as the strategic priorities included in the strategic plan.

Future Summit

This half-day mini-conference is a signature event bringing together internal and external constituents to learn about future trends associated with key opportunities identified in the SWOT and early focus groups. Constituents will be engaged in “Ed Talks” to garner baseline knowledge on the hottest topics to be considered by NMC as it looks toward the future. Participants will then break into small workgroups to apply their learnings to NMC as it relates to the College’s future vision and develop 2-3 impact statements that will feed into the strategy development process. The outcomes of this signature event include engagement of all constituent groups, enhanced corporate engagement in workforce development and planning with NMC, and a shared vision among constituents for the challenges and opportunities that face the College and region.

Mission/Vision Workshops

At these workshops, the Board of Trustees will evaluate the institution’s current mission statement and vision statement, collaborating to determine whether any revisions to the statements are warranted. The mission and vision statements that emerge from these workshops are shared with all employees and students in a college-wide survey, in which respondents provide feedback on the statements articulating NMC’s reason for being (mission) and the institution’s aspirations (vision). Feedback from the survey is shared with the Strategic Planning Steering Committee and President’s Council so they can offer feedback to the Board of Trustees’ consideration as they finalize the mission and vision statements. The work conducted during these workshops also determine the overarching 3-year strategies that guide NMC’s strategic plan.

Values Workshop

All employees are invited to attend this workshop dedicated to evaluating NMC's current core values and determining the shared beliefs that guide employees in their work on the strategic plan and throughout the College. The draft values that emerge from this workshop are included in a college-wide survey that provides all employees with an opportunity to share their input on the guiding principles. Results from the survey are shared with the Strategic Planning Steering Committee for their consideration as they finalize the values in conjunction with the President's Council.

Data Analysis Workshop

This workshop allows the Strategic Planning Steering Committee and Work Team to spend time synthesizing institutional data, planning assumptions, impact statements, and input from employees, students, and community members. The review of these data help the Steering Committee and Work Team better understand the most critical issues that the College needs to address as a part of the strategic plan. The analysis conducted in this workshop will directly inform the development of strategies, measurable objectives, and 12-month action plans.

Strategy Workshops

At these workshops conducted with the Strategic Planning Steering Committee and Work Team, participants review a summary of data and information gathered throughout the planning process and draft 6-7 clear, high level strategies that serve as the focus of the strategic plan for the next 3 years. Employees have an opportunity to provide feedback on the draft strategies via a college-wide survey, with results being shared with the Steering Committee and Work Team for their review as The Steering Committee prepares to finalize strategies in conjunction with the President's Council. Once finalized, the Strategic Planning Steering Committee, Work Team, and campus managers develop measurable objectives with corresponding action plans to advance each strategy.

Objective and Action Planning Workshops

Objective Workshops: At these workshops, the Strategic Planning Steering Committee and Work Team develop 3-6 measurable objectives for each strategy. Objectives are finalized by the President's Council and Strategic Planning Steering Committee, and once approved, the Strategy Owners, Objective Leads, and Management Team develop 12-month action plans to support each objective.

Action Planning Workshops: At these workshops, the Strategy Owners, Objective Leads, and Management Team develop 12-month action plans to achieve each measurable objective. Action plans are finalized by the President's Council and Strategic Planning Steering Committee, and they include assigned leads for each action. These action plans will help the College achieve its objectives through an annual planning cycle that will ensure sustainability, accountability, and success of the strategic plan.

Implementation Workshop

Strategic plans are only as effective as the actions taken to maintain their momentum and impact on the institution. To ensure long-term success of the plan, the President's Council will focus on how the institution can best ensure the plan is aligned with other institutional processes, prioritized among all stakeholders, and resourced appropriately. The workshop will also generate suggestions for how the College can best incorporate institutional learning into an ongoing planning process and cycle that is integrated with the annual budgeting process.

Presentation of Final Strategic Plan

After receiving feedback from employees and community members, the Strategic Planning Steering Committee will submit a recommended strategic plan to the College President. Upon approval, the President will submit the final strategic plan to the Board of Trustees for their review and approval. The final strategic plan will include a mission statement, vision statement, values, strategies, and measurable objectives.

NMC Strategic Planning Timeline and Events - September 22, 2021						
Legend	NMC Activity	Board of Trustees	Workshop or Event	President's Council and/or SPSC Meeting	Survey	Academic Calendar
Dates	Delivery Method	Duration	Events	President Nissley Participation	Participants	Complete
Week of March 15th	N/A	N/A	Announce Strategic Planning Initiative to the Campus and Call for Interest in Strategic Planning Work Team	X	NMC Public Relations, Marketing & Communications	✓
Friday, March 26th 8-9:30am	NMC Zoom (See Invite)	90 minutes	Strategic Planning Kickoff with Leadership Council (promote Work Team opportunity, with All Call email sent following meeting)		Leadership Council (includes President's Council and Strategic Planning Steering Committee)	✓
Months of April - May	Zoom TBD	90 minutes	Constituent Focus Groups Students Employees K-12 partners University partners Regional employers Business and industry leaders Community organizations Citizens in NMC's service area		Select Internal and External Constituent Groups and Campus Committees/Councils	✓
Week of April 5th or 12th	N/A	N/A	Send Confirmations to Strategic Planning Work Team Members		NMC SPSC Co-Chairs	✓
Week of April 5th or 12th	N/A	N/A	Launch of Strategic Plan Brand/Video/Webpage/Press Release/PowerPoint Template		NMC Public Relations, Marketing & Communications	✓
Monday, April 5th 2:30-4pm	Zoom (See Invite)	2 hours	Kickoff and Trends in Higher Education Workshop	X (to attend and kick off the Session if possible)	All Employees	✓
4pm April 5th - 8am April 15th	N/A	1.5 weeks	SWOT Survey (Internal and External Audiences) - Sent Following Trends in Higher Education Workshop		Employees, Board of Trustees, and Community Members	✓
Tuesday, April 6th 5:30pm	NMC Zoom (See Invite)	90 minutes	Strategic Planning Kickoff with Board of Trustees	X	Board of Trustees	✓
Friday, April 16th 9am - 12pm	Zoom (See Invite)	3 hours	Defining the Student Experience Workshop	X (to attend and kick off the Session if possible)	All Employees and Invited Students	✓
Wed, April 21st - Thurs, April 22nd	N/A	2 days	President Approval of Draft Student Experience Statement for All Employee and Workshop Participant Survey	X	President	✓
Wed, April 21st 11:30am - 1pm	Zoom	1.5 Hours	SPSC Meeting (Review Role in the Process, Review SWOT Analysis Results/Focus Group Themes and Respond to Future Summit Topic Survey)		SPSC	✓
Friday, April 23rd 9-10:30am	Zoom	1.5 Hours	Curriculum Committee Focus Group		Curriculum Committee	✓
Tues, April 27th - Wed May 5th	N/A	1 week	Student Experience Statement Survey for Employees and Students (including survey item on workshop participation)		All Employees and Students	✓
Week of April 26th			Last Day of Spring Classes, Exams, Commencement May 1st			
Monday, April 26th 2:30-4pm	Zoom	1.5 Hours	Policy Council Focus Group		Policy Council	✓
Tuesday, April 27th 12-1:30pm	Zoom	1.5 Hours	Student Focus Group		Students	✓
Tuesday, April 27th 5-6:30pm	Zoom	1.5 Hours	Resident Student Focus Group		Resident Students	✓
Wednesday, April 28th 12-1:30pm	Zoom	1.5 Hours	Staff Focus Group #1		Staff	✓
Thursday, April 29th 5-6:30pm	Zoom	1.5 Hours	Adult Learner Focus Group		Adult Learner Students	✓
Months of May and June	N/A	N/A	Future Summit Community "Roadshow" Presentations to External Partners (optional)	X	Facilitated by the President, President's Council, and SPSC, with presentation drafted by CampusWorks	
Week of May 3rd	N/A	N/A	April Monthly Strategic Planning Community Updates to Employees, Students, and Key Constituents		NMC Public Relations, Marketing & Communications	✓
Thursday, May 6th 10-11:30am	Zoom	1.5 Hours	Faculty Council Focus Group		Faculty	✓
Thursday, May 6th 11:45am-1pm	Zoom	1.5 Hours	Joint SPSC and Work Team Meeting (Review Roles in the Process, Review SWOT Analysis Results/Focus Group Themes and Discuss Future Summit Topics and Presenters)		SPSC and Work Team	✓
Thursday, May 6th 3:30-5pm	Zoom	1.5 Hours	Staff Focus Group #2		Staff	✓

Saturday, May 8th			Summer Classes Begin			
Weeks of May 10th and 17th	N/A	N/A	Mail/Email Future Summit "Save the Date" Invitations		NMC Public Relations, Marketing & Communications	✓
Weeks of May 10th and 17th	N/A	2 weeks	Confirm Future Summit Topics and Identify Potential Future Summit Speakers	X	President's Council and SPSC	✓
Monday, May 10th 1:30-3pm	Zoom	1.5 Hours	Leadership Group Focus Group		Leadership Group	✓
May 11th 2-5pm	Zoom	3 hours	Mission Workshop	X	Board of Trustees	✓
Wednesday, May 12th 9-10am	Zoom	1 hour	Finalize Student Experience Statement	X	President's Council and SPSC	✓
Wednesday, May 12th 11:30am-1pm	Zoom	1.5 Hours	Community Partners Focus Group		Community Partners	✓
Thursday, May 13th 9-10:30am	Zoom	1.5 Hours	Foundation Board Focus Group		Foundation Board	✓
Friday, May 14th 1-2:30pm	Zoom	1.5 Hours	DEI Team Focus Group		DEI Team	✓
Monday, May 17th 9-10:30am	Zoom	1.5 Hours	University Partners Focus Group		University Partners	✓
Monday, May 17th 1-2:30pm	Zoom	1.5 Hours	Alumni Focus Group		Alumni	✓
Wednesday May 19th 9-10:30am	Zoom	1.5 Hours	Advisory Board Focus Group #1		Advisory Board	✓
Wednesday May 19th 11:30am-1pm	Zoom	1.5 Hours	Advisory Board Focus Group #2		Advisory Board	✓
Monday May 24th 2:30-4pm	Zoom	1.5 Hours	Advisory Board Focus Group #3		Advisory Board	✓
Monday, May 24th 9-10:30am	Zoom	1.5 Hours	Arts Partners Focus Group		Arts Partners	✓
Tuesday, May 25th 9-10:30am	Zoom	1.5 Hours	IAF (International Affairs Forum) Focus Group		IAF Partners	✓
May 25th 2:30-4:30pm	Zoom	2 Hours	Data Review Workshop/Recruit Future Summit Volunteers with SPSC and Work Team		Research, Planning, and Effectiveness, SPSC, and Work Team	✓
Wednesday, May 26th 11:30am-1pm	Zoom	1.5 Hours	Business Partners Focus Group		Business Partners	✓
Wednesday, May 26th 3:30-5pm	Zoom	1.5 Hours	Community "All Call" Focus Group		Community Members	✓
Thursday, May 27th 3:30-5pm	Zoom	1.5 Hours	K-12 Partners Focus Group		K-12 Partners	✓
Week of May 31st	N/A	N/A	May Monthly Strategic Planning Community Updates to Employees, Students, and Key Constituents		NMC Public Relations, Marketing & Communications	✓
Wednesday, June 9th 9:30-10:30am	Lynne Zoom	1 hour	Vision/Values Feedback Session	X	Board of Trustees	✓
Tuesday, June 15th 2-3pm	Chrissy Zoom	1 hour	Future Summit Volunteer Orientation		Future Summit Volunteers	✓
Wed, June 23rd 1-5pm	Zoom Webinar	4 hours	Future Summit	X	Employees, Students, and Community Partners	✓
Week of July 5th	N/A	N/A	June Monthly Strategic Planning Community Updates		NMC Public Relations, Marketing & Communications	✓
Wednesday, July 7th 3-4pm	Chrissy Zoom	1 hour	Review of Strategic Planning Process, Steering Committee Role, and Upcoming Activities	X	SPSC	✓
Wednesday, July 14th 2-4pm	Chrissy Zoom	2 hours	Review of Future Summit Impact Statements and Scan Team Assignments/Orientation		SPSC and Work Team	✓
July and Early August	N/A	N/A	Scan Team Research		SPSC and Work Team	✓
Week of Aug. 2nd	N/A	N/A	July Monthly Strategic Planning Community Updates		NMC Public Relations, Marketing & Communications	✓

Monday, August 9th			Summer Classes End			✓
Tuesday August 10th 2-5pm	Chrissy Zoom	3 hours	SPSC Mission/Vision Workshop	X	SPSC	✓
Tuesday, August 17th 3-5pm	Chrissy Zoom	2 hours	Scan Team Findings Presentation	X	SPSC/Work Team	✓
Monday, August 23rd 8am-12pm	Hagerty Center	4 hours	Opening Conference for Faculty and Staff - Strategic Planning Updates and Employee Values Workshop	X (to kick off the Session)	Employees	✓
Tuesday, August 24th 9am-12pm	Hagerty Center	3 hours	Scan to Plan Workshop (Strategy Workshop #1)		SPSC and Work Team	✓
August 30th - September 3rd	N/A	1 week	Values Survey for Employees		Employees	✓
Saturday, August 28th			Fall Classes Begin			✓
Week of Sept. 6th	N/A	N/A	August Monthly Strategic Planning Community Updates		NMC Public Relations, Marketing & Communications	✓
Wednesday, Sept. 8th 2-5pm	Chrissy Zoom	3 hours	SPSC Vision Workshop (will finalize draft statement to submit to Board their approval for inclusion on employee survey)	X	SPSC	✓
Wednesday, September 15th 2-5pm	Chrissy Zoom	3 hours	Advancing Strategies Workshop (Strategy Workshop #2)		SPSC and Work Team	✓
Friday, Sept. 17th 11am-1pm	Chrissy Zoom	2 hours	SPSC Values Workshop (will finalize draft statements to submit to Board their approval for inclusion on constituent survey)	X	SPSC	✓
Wednesday, Sept. 22nd 9-11am	Chrissy Zoom	2 hours	Approval of Draft Values for Constituent Survey	X	SPSC	✓
Monday, Sept. 27th 5:30pm	Lynne Zoom	N/A	Regular Board Meeting - Review Draft Mission/Vision/Values Statements (without Excellence) for Constituent Survey	X	Board of Trustees	✓
Week of Oct. 4th	N/A	N/A	September Monthly Strategic Planning Community Updates		NMC Public Relations, Marketing & Communications	
Friday, October 8th 1-3pm	Chrissy Zoom	2 hours	Draft and Approve Draft Excellence Value Statement and Strategy Statements to submit to Board for inclusion on constituent survey	X	SPSC	
Tuesday, October 12th			October Conference - No Classes			
Friday, Oct. 22nd 11am-2pm	Chrissy Zoom	3 hours	Objective Workshop #1		SPSC, Work Team, and Management Team	
Monday, Oct. 25th 5:30pm	Lynne Zoom	N/A	Review SPSC's Draft Excellence Value Statement and Draft Strategy Statements	X	Board of Trustees	
Week of Oct. 25th	N/A	1 week	Constituent Survey on Mission, Vision, Values, and Strategies		Employees and SPSC	
Week of Oct. 25th	Chrissy Zoom	1.5 Hours	Feedback Session with Students	X (and/or SPSC Co-Chairs)	Students	
Week of Oct. 25th	Chrissy Zoom	1.5 Hours	Feedback Session with Community Members	X (and/or SPSC Co-Chairs)	Community Members	
Week of Oct. 25th	Chrissy Zoom	1.5 Hours	Feedback Session with Employees	X (and/or SPSC Co-Chairs)	Employees	
Week of Nov. 1st	N/A	N/A	October Monthly Strategic Planning Community Updates		NMC Public Relations, Marketing & Communications	
Week of Nov. 1st	Chrissy Zoom	2 hours	Finalize Draft Strategies and Draft Mission, Vision, Values based on Constituent Survey to Submit to the Board Policy Committee	X	SPSC	
Friday, Nov. 5th 11am-2pm	Chrissy Zoom	3 hours	Objective Workshop #2		SPSC, Work Team, and Management Team	
Monday, Nov. 8th 11am-12pm	Lynne Zoom	1 hour	Board Policy Committee Meeting - Finalize Mission, Vision, and Values to Submit for Full Board Approval	X	Board of Trustees Policy Committee	
Tuesday, Nov. 9th 3-5pm	Chrissy Zoom	2 hours	Implementation Workshop	X	President and SPSC	
Thursday, November 11th 10am-12pm	Chrissy Zoom	2 hours	Approval of Objectives (including assigning Objective Leads)	X	SPSC	
Friday, Nov. 19th 12-3pm	Chrissy Zoom	3 hours	Action Planning Workshop #1 (including assigning Action Leads)		Strategy Owners, Objective Leads, and Management Team	
Week of November 22nd			Thanksgiving Holiday (Wednesday - Sunday)			

Monday, Nov. 22nd 5:30pm	Lynne Zoom	N/A	Regular Board Meeting - Approve Final Mission/Vision/Values Statements and Review Objectives Approved by the Strategic Planning Steering Committee (Lynne: confirm date to submit drafts)	X	Board of Trustees	
Friday, Dec. 3rd 12-3pm	Chrissy Zoom	3 hours	Action Planning Workshop #2		Strategy Owners, Objective Leads, and Management Team	
Wednesday, Dec. 8th 1-4pm	Chrissy Zoom	3 hours	Finalize Strategic Plan to Present to Board	X	SPSC	
Week of Dec. 6th	N/A	N/A	November Monthly Strategic Planning Community Updates		NMC Public Relations, Marketing & Communications	
Week of Dec. 13th	N/A	N/A	Approval of Action Plans	X	President and President's Council	
Saturday, December 18th			Fall Classes End			
Monday, December 20th	N/A	N/A	Regular Board Meeting - Strategic Plan Presented to NMC Board of Trustees for Approval	X	President and Co-Chairs	
January 2022	N/A	N/A	Launch of Strategic Plan to College Community (Internal and External)	X		

NMC strategic planning effort kicks off

Livestreamed events target board, faculty, staff and students

Strategic planning effort kicks off

HIGHER EDUCATION

BY PATTI BRANDT BURGESS

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TRAVERSE CITY — Northwestern Michigan College is launching its community engagement process that will be used in updating a strategic plan for the college's future.

On Tuesday a strategic planning kickoff will be presented via Zoom to the Board of Trustees by CampusWorks, the Floridabased consultant that was hired to create the plan.

The presentation is open to the public; it will be posted at NMC.edu with a link to the livestreamed event for community members who want to watch.

Two other events are posted at the NMC website, though neither is open to the public.

On Monday, CampusWorks will host a Zoom workshop on higher education for a "representative audience at the college" that includes faculty, staff and administrators, according to the NMC posting.

On April 16, a student experience workshop will take place, also via Zoom, also with a representative audience, the posting states.

"We are highly interested in student information," said Marguerite Cotto, vice president for lifelong and professional learning. "The future of our college is about how this experience impacts students. That voice of the student, that's key."

Cotto, who is a member of the Strategic Planning Steering Committee, said students will be engaged

through student government and other organizations and clubs.

Board Trustee Kennard Weaver said the various groups of people at the college will be targeted in segments, rather than using a shotgun approach.

"The people will be involved," Weaver said. "They're just not going to be involved all at once."

Steve Kellman, coordinator of web content and online strategies for NMC, said more communityfocused events are being planned and will be added to the website as they become available.

One of the goals of the strategic plan is to refocus energies and resources for the next three years using data, interviews, focus groups and surveys.

Part of that includes defining NMC's desired future state.

Cotto said the college is facing a shift in enrollment patterns and a shift in the community that can be seen in economic and demographic changes.

Over the last year the pandemic has made those shifts more apparent, Cotto

SEE NMC PAGE 2A

Livestreamed events target board, faculty, staff and students

Strategic planning effort kicks off

NMC

FROM PAGE 1A

said, and a strategic plan will identify the opportunities of the future, both for the college and for the community.

Progress reports on the strategic plan will become a regular part of board meetings for the next several months and updates will be posted on the NMC website, Cotto said.

CampusWorks was chosen from a field of eight applicants; the company will be paid \$90,000, plus an additional \$8,000 for travel, if needed.

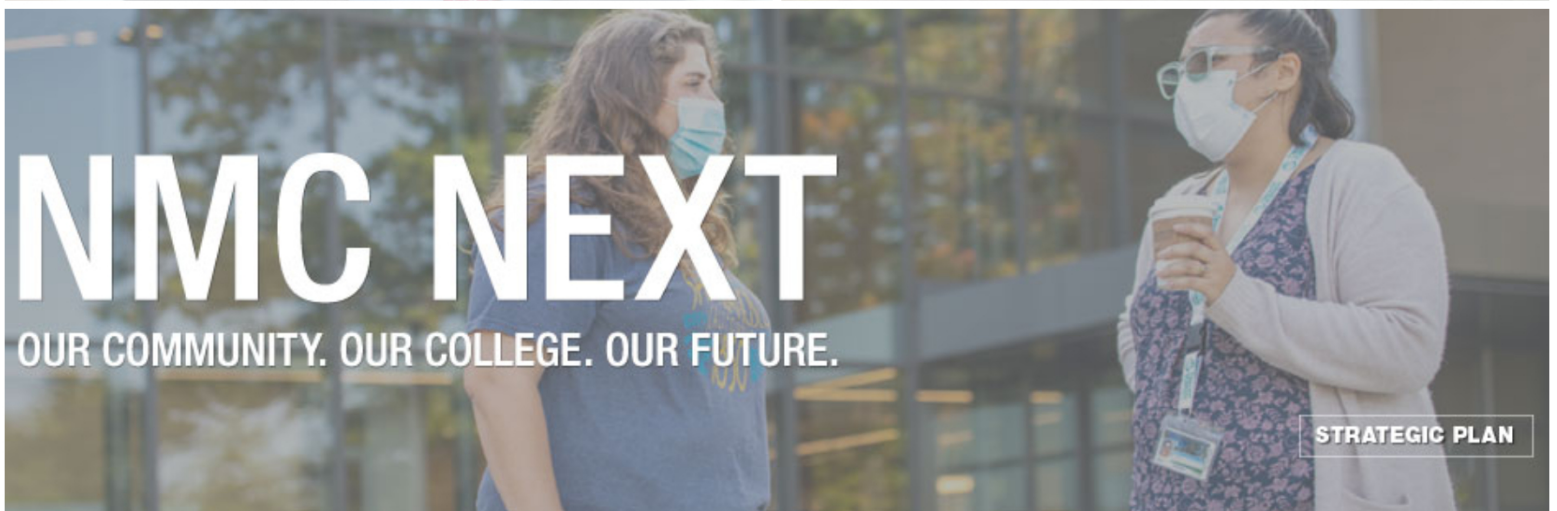
NMC's strategic plan gets updated regularly, but it has been about 15 years since a consultant was hired for a more vigorous

planning process.

The engagement process that aims to also involve alumni, board and community members will take place until September, with a draft plan in place by October and an opportunity to give feedback on it.

A final plan will be shared in November, with board approval sought in December and operational planning beginning in January.

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What Might NMC Of 2025 Look Like?

By Craig Manning | May 7, 2021

“A once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.” That’s how Northwestern Michigan College President Nick Nissley describes the college’s new strategic plan, which was launched in April and is expected to carry on for much of the next decade. Specifically targeted toward shaping the college’s direction, Nissley sees it as the pivotal stepping stone to a brand-new (and better) future. *The Ticker* sat down with Nissley to learn more about the plan, its goals, and how the community can get involved.



Ticker: Why is this strategic planning process so important?

Nissley: One, when you think about strategic planning, it's a forward-looking process. It's about imagining that desired future. Particularly where we are now, in terms of the pandemic, that future is less clear than it's ever been. That's probably the greatest reason why we need to be undertaking this now.

Secondly, any good strategic planning process is about engaging stakeholders. We've been very clear that this is an opportunity for us to listen, internally and externally, to all of our stakeholders – from faculty and staff, to alumni, to NMC Foundation board members, to taxpayers, to K-12 partners.

Thirdly, it's about seeing what we want to become and asking, 'How are we going to get there?' It's not just about vision; it's really about how we are going to get to that desired future.

Ticker: So what's happened so far?

Nissley: An important piece of context is that we're doing this in partnership with a strategic plan consulting group called CampusWorks. We chose CampusWorks for two key reasons. One is they've got a robust process for stakeholder engagement. We want to make sure this is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to listen to as broad and deep an engagement base as possible. CampusWorks is good at that process.

The second thing I'm committed to is making sure this is a student-centered process. I think lots of folks undertake strategic planning and they think it's about asking, 'What new buildings are we going to build?' or 'What new fundraising campaign are we going to launch?' Those things should be secondary. We're undertaking this because we want to improve the college for our learners...

One thing we've done so far is what's called a 'Student Experience Workshop.' That was a half day and involved over 150 people here on campus, of which 51 were students. It was a good starting place.

You're probably familiar with the language of SWOT: strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats. That was one of the second key findings from our survey, and I think we received back almost 350 responses [feedback].

What we're building to, on June 23, is called the 'Future Vision.' It's the most imaginative work I mentioned. Based on the trends that we're seeing, based on how COVID has transformed our lives, who we want to become? How do we live into that



future? The Future Summit is going to bring together internal and external stakeholders, our students, our faculty, our staff, and that's where we begin to do that work.

The plan is, in December, we will present a final draft to the board for approval. And on January 1, we will begin executing on that plan.

Ticker: For community members who are invested in NMC's future, how might they play a role?

Nissley: We've got approximately 30 focus groups that have been scheduled. Folks may identify with one of those focus groups – whether it's K-12 partner, whether it's local business, whether it's alumni – and participate. If someone doesn't fit into one of those focus groups, we're also going to do what we're calling the 'Community All Call.' That's on May 26, from 3:30-5pm. It'll be via Zoom, as are most of our engagements. And that call is for anyone. Even if you don't fit one of our focus group categories, we want to hear from you.

Ticker: How will COVID-19 affect all this?

Nissley: After seeing our college and our community in action over this past year, I truly believe this is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to not just talk in theory about reimagining our future, but to see that, right now, everything is on the table because of the pandemic.

We've spent more than a year challenging established assumptions. I'll give you one example: on March 13, 2020, when we had to make the decision to close down the college and pivot from face-to-face instruction to remote, the assumption the whole world had was that college was something that occurred on a campus. Very quickly, that assumption had to be abandoned. We had to reinvent ourselves overnight, to figure out how to deliver this thing called 'college' if you can't come to campus.

That's the kind of challenge that we've had to address over these last 12 months. We know things are possible that we never thought could change...I think we've got to have the audacity to say that we want to design a college that's going to serve our learners – not just today, but into the future. And we need to do that because we don't know what that future holds, because of the pandemic.

The last time a new strategic plan was undertaken [at NMC] was updated or adjusted – was over a decade ago [Editorial note: Nissley is executive director of public relations, marketing, and communications]. So when I say this is a really unique opportunity, I mean it. We're not just making adjustments. This is an



opportunity to start with a clean sheet of paper. And given how the world has changed, how everything has become so topsy-turvy, I think that is exactly why we need a strategic plan right now. The world's changing so quickly and dramatically for our learners. We need to be able to fulfill our commitments and help prepare them for that.

Ticker: As president, do you have specific priorities that you are championing?

Nissley: I think of myself as a servant leader, meaning: My job is to help enable others. So I don't have selfish goals of my own, because I know that I'm entrusted as a steward, by this community, to carry out the mission of the college. That said, I've spent the better part of these past 12 months doing some deep listening, and I can tell you some of the things that I've heard from our stakeholders...that I will help support as a servant leader.

One was experiential learning: we have a new Experiential Learning Institute on campus, and there's a tremendous amount of passion around that, because it's about asking, 'How do we enhance the quality and the employability of our students, while at the same time cultivating our community and business partnerships, so that students get those hands-on learning-while-they're-earning experiences?'

Another piece that I've heard a lot about from our stakeholders is that we need to continue to reinforce the college's relevance to employers, and to do that through investing in our workforce development...

We've also got a number of what you might think of as NMC's 'signature programs': things like the Great Lakes Maritime Academy; the Water Studies Institute; our culinary program; our aviation program; the International Affairs Forum. We need to make sure that we're continuing to invest in those programs.

Ticker: Anything else to add?

Nissley: The process that we're undertaking, I hope, is not just something that we're going to do this one time during strategic planning. I hope that we're building a muscle for broad collaboration and that we are going to carry that forward for future engagements with the community, with businesses, with institutions.

But what I'm most excited about is there's a tremendous amount of excitement on campus and in the community [about this process]. And that's what's possible for the college...



f Comment (<https://www.facebook.com/TraverseCityTicker/>)



MEMO
Administrative
Services

To: Dr. Nick Nissley, President

From: Stephen Siciliano, Vice President for Educational Services
Vicki Cook, Special Assistant to the President

Date: September 23, 2021

Subject: Monthly Strategic Planning Update

The Strategic Planning process is progressing as agreed upon by the Board of Trustees and the Strategic Planning Steering Committee. The months of August and September have been primarily focused on finalizing the draft vision, mission and values statements, along with drafting the strategies. The Work Team and the Strategic Steering Committee (SPSC) have both had workshops designed around these items. The Work Team consists of over 50 employees that represent multiple college departments and programs. The Strategic Steering Committee consists of Board of Trustee representatives, NMC employees and community members. The teams are designed to ensure we gather the perspectives of multiple stakeholder groups. Chris Bott has asked us to add two months to our schedule - instead of targeting a December finalization date, to afford in-depth conversation of the plan at a January Board of Trustees retreat, with approval sought in February.

CampusWorks facilitated the discussions for each of the vision/mission/values statements and the strategies. The guiding principles for development of mission, vision, and values are defined on page two along with the SPSC draft statements. The draft strategies will be reviewed by the Board in October, in advance of the survey that is being sent to stakeholders (to further engagement and afford feedback regarding the articulation of the vision/mission/values). These draft statements will go to all employees, the SPSC, Board of Trustees, and the same stakeholder groups from the spring focus groups and SWOT survey for feedback (these groups will not be editing or voting; they will strictly be providing input). The SPSC will use the survey results and information from the feedback sessions in making their final edits to the four documents. In November the SPSC will submit the final recommendation of the proposed vision/mission/values statements. The approval of the mission, vision and values statements will follow the same process as all Board Policies: proposed at a regular or special meeting of the Board of Trustees on a first-reading basis and adopted at a subsequent regular meeting.

Public relations continues to provide monthly updates to employees and students. Community members and NMC stakeholders can access the Strategic Planning website to stay informed. The website is nmc.edu/strategic-planning.

Upcoming October activities include:

- October 8 SPSC draft Excellence Value & draft Strategies
- October 22 Objective workshop #1
- October 25 BOT to review draft strategy statements to be included in survey
- October 26-31 Survey and Focus groups

Guiding Principles and Recommended draft statements

Mission Statement guiding principles and SPSC recommendation:

A mission statement should state the institution's reason for being. Some key characteristics include:

- Institution's reason for being
- Reflects the purpose and the value institution provide
- Remains unchanged for long periods of time
- Memorable and concise
- It answers both the 'what' we do questions as well as describes 'how' we do it

SPSC Draft Mission Statement: **We promise lifelong learning opportunities to transform lives and enrich our community.**

Vision Statement guiding principles and SPSC recommendation:

A vision statement is aspirational. The key characteristics of this statement include:

- Helps to set long-term goal
- Different from current position
- Future orientated & ambitious
- Clear and concise
- Serves as a filter for all decisions

SPSC Draft Vision Statement: **A global community where all learners unlock their full potential.**

Values guiding principles and SPSC recommendation:

Institutional values are the fundamental beliefs that help to define the organization's culture. The values should be developed through a process that actively engages all employees. The characteristics should include:

- Should be aspirational
- Should be authentic
- Reflect how employees will hold themselves accountable
- Should limit the number for ease of remembering
- Define in easy to understand terms

SPSC Draft Values Statements:

Integrity: We act with the highest degree of ethics, personal responsibility, fairness, and openness ensuring that we match our actions with our words.

Collaboration: We co-create solutions and celebrate the joy of working together, empowering each other and nurturing community partnerships for the benefit of our learners.

Respect: We demonstrate mutual regard and appreciation for one another to assure a culture of trust.

Inclusion: We foster belonging and build organizational capacity that celebrates diversity and promotes equity.

Innovation: We are agile, imaginative, and forward-thinking, taking risks to meet future needs of the college and our communities.

Learning: Learning is at the center of all we do and is foundational to a thriving community; we are life-long learners.

Stewardship: We practice stewardship by investing responsibly in the human, physical, financial, and environmental resources entrusted to our care.

Excellence: *To Be Developed October 8, 2021*

SPSC Draft Strategic Directions -- Draft Strategy Statements To Be Developed October 8, 2021

1. Future-Focused Education
2. Student Engagement and Success
3. Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion
4. Community Partnerships and Engagement
5. Institutional Distinction and Sustainability

Assumptions:

1. Driven by Governor's executive order, CDC and local health department
2. Institutional view; general policies, common standards and building hours
3. VPs to work with individual departments to create their operational plans for area/office
4. Managers should have documented plan prior to employees returning to buildings
5. ACHA 'New Guidelines on Reopening Campuses in the COVID-19 Era
6. Michigan's MI Safe Start Plan

NMC Re-Opening Plan/COVID-19 Response

Strategy: Re-opening of the campus will be done in phases, with full focus on keeping our students, our employees and our community safe.*

Accompanying Documents: Educational Services & Student Services Plans, HR/Payroll FAQ, Health and Safety Protocols

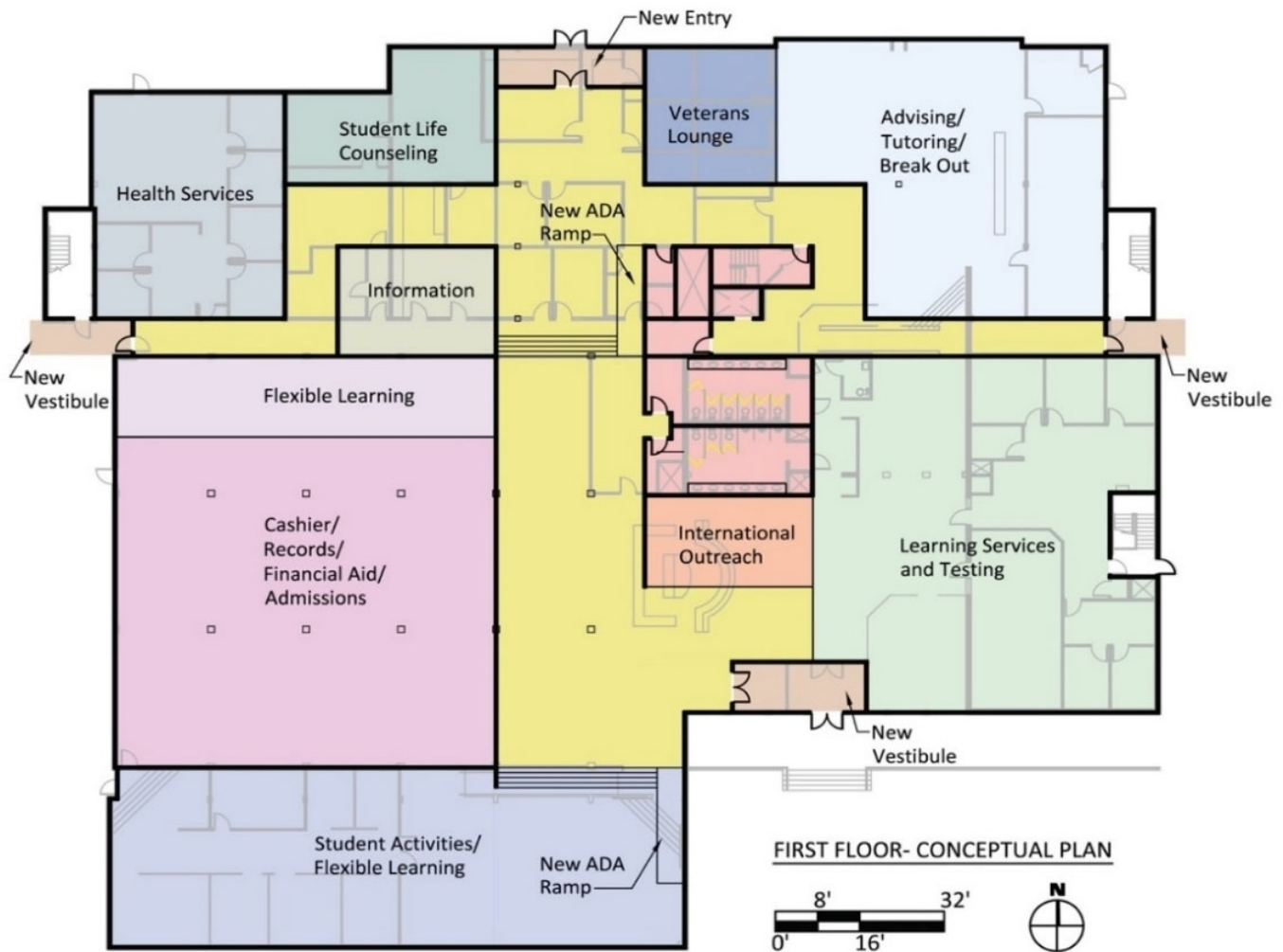
	Who is on campus?	Hours	Restrictions	Protocols	Questions/Comments
<p>STAGE 1 March-June 14, 2020</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Campus Security • Facilities • Limited identified faculty and staff only as necessary • Other staff continue to work remotely • Health screening clearance with supervisor prior to entering building is required daily of all employees coming on campus (temperature, illness, exposure) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All staff will work remotely • Facilities 1st, 2nd & 3rd work schedule TBD • Campus Security schedule TBD • Restricted employee building access • Facilities to clean building periodically 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No students/external customers on campus • Instructional & student support services continue remotely • Food Services remains closed • Bookstore and Library remain closed • No face-to-face meetings • Minor campus projects on hold • Limited campus deliveries • No on campus interviews (video interviews continue for limited hiring) • Professional Development limited to online offerings. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social distancing protocols followed across campus • Departments must develop plan to allow limited employee return to campus while maintaining social distancing requirement (some employees continue to work remotely); 50% capacity density limit for office occupancy • All meetings continue to be held virtually • Cleaning to occur as needed • Employee PPE provided where/when needed, masks may be required of all employees (homemade face masks may be worn if preferred) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restrictions and protocols will be adjusted based on recommendations/ requirements of state and local conditions. • Phase Specific guidelines protocols are not date specific and can be extended based on state and local guidance • Operational and Logistics personnel needed for Phase 2 to be identified in Phase 1 • Identify additional technology needed for each phase (example: additional monitors, health screening station/app, etc.)
<p>STAGE 1 TRIGGERS</p>	<p>What are the indicators/conditions that will support moving to the next phase?</p> <p>Governor’s Executive Orders, Legislation guided, MI Safe Start guidelines, GTCHD Guidance & Recommendations, campus readiness</p>				

	Who is on campus?	Hours	Restrictions	Protocols	Questions/Comments
<p>STAGE 2</p> <p>Starting: June 15, 2020 (Updated August 19, 2020)</p> <p>Limited services on campus</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Phase 1 employees Increased employee administrative, support and operational employee presence based on departmental plans Some employees may still be working remotely; work that can be completed remotely should continue Each department will be asked to develop work plans based on office space configurations, ability to maintain social distancing, and staff ability to work remotely. Plans for the number of people on campus must be approved by PC. Guidelines initially set at 50% workspace density but may be adjusted depending on area specifics Self health screening clearance through questionnaire. Employees should use CampusClear app or email to supervisor 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If possible office staff should work remotely on Friday so that facilities team can clean and sanitize campus Facilities 2nd & 3rd work as normally scheduled Campus Security 24/7 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Instruction continues remotely where possible Limited face to face instruction Instructors and students to clean tables and desks before and after class Student services departments should limit contact with students. Remote appointments should be preference. External customers allowed on campus by appointment only Bookstore limited hours with curbside pick-up Library limited hours Testing Center TBD DMC open with limitations No facility rentals Phase 1 allowances for project work and deliveries continue In-person meetings allowed provided social distance and mask protocols can be achieved Preference is that video interviewing continue No in-person professional development offered Student events are allowed if approved by COVID team. COVID event request should be completed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Social distancing and mask protocols continue Departments operate based on submitted staffing/social distancing plans Sneeze guards installed where needed for service interaction Facilities cleaning and disinfecting routine continues Employee PPE provided for medium risk employees where/when needed Masks required in all common areas, classrooms, conference rooms for all employees (homemade face masks may be worn if preferred); MASKS REQUIRED IN ALL AREAS EXCEPT PERSONAL OFFICES Cleaning materials provided in each work area for employees to use as needed Designated entrance and exit doors Eating in designated areas only. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Restrictions and protocols will be adjusted based on recommendations/requirements of state and local conditions Phase Specific guidelines protocols are not date specific and can be extended based on state and local guidance Fall classes are a combination of on-line, hybrid & face-to-face
<p>STAGE 2 TRIGGERS</p>	<p>What are the indicators/conditions that will support moving to the next phase?</p> <p>Governor’s Executive Orders, Legislation guided, MI Safe Start guidelines, GTCHD Guidance & Recommendations, face-to-face instruction and business transactions permitted, campus readiness</p>				

	Who is on campus?	Hours	Restrictions	Protocols	Questions/Comments
<p>STAGE 3 Starting May 24, 2021</p> <p>Campus is open with social distancing and PPE required based on guidelines</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employees are able to work from campus • Work from home can continue based on HR policies and procedures • Health screening will be done based on CDC and health department guidelines 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appropriate in-office schedules to meet the campus stakeholders & students needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In-person on-campus instruction begins, with possible modifications to promote social distancing • Instructors and students to clean tables and desks before and after class • Service offices see students and external customers by appointment • Walk-in services allowed assuming social distance protocols can be achieved • Fitness Center can open specific cleaning plan • Food Services may be expanded according to social distancing protocols • Bookstore opens with social distancing measure in place • Library open • Events can occur based on social distancing and health department guidelines 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional cleaning protocols will need to be developed/ scheduled • Additional health screening protocols may need to be implemented • Employee PPE available for medium risk employees • Cleaning materials provided in each work area for employees to use as needed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restrictions and protocols will be adjusted based on recommendations/ requirements of state and local conditions. • Phase Specific guidelines and protocols are not date specific and can be extended based on state and local guidance
<p>STAGE 3 TRIGGERS</p>	<p>What are the indicators/conditions that will support moving to the next phase?</p> <p>Governor's Executive Orders, Legislation guided, MI Safe Start guidelines, GTCHD Guidance & Recommendations, face-to-face instruction and business transactions permitted, campus readiness</p>				

	Who is on campus?	Hours	Restrictions	Protocols	Questions/Comments
STAGE 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Campus is fully operational	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• All employees as scheduled	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Face-to-face instruction and services resume	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Social distancing protocols/ controls may still be required	

* Exceptions to this plan will require President's Council approval



NMC Plans Integrated Student Hub, Eyes State Dollars To Help

By Craig Manning | July 6, 2021

Northwestern Michigan College (NMC) is eyeing its next big construction project: a renovation of the Osterlin Building that would combine student services from at least three different buildings across campus into one centrally-located “integrated student service hub.” The project will cost an estimated \$5.6 million and would renovate 26,000 square feet on the first floor of the 57-year-old building – though the college is looking to fund part of the project through the same state government program that helped pay for the \$14 million-plus renovation of the West Hall Innovation Center.

The integrated student service hub would combine a range of student services under one roof, including admissions, financial aid, student financial services, advising, tutoring, counseling, international outreach, health, veteran services, and student life. Currently the Osterlin Building houses some but not all of these services.

“It’s about logic and efficiency,” says Troy Kierczynski, NMC’s interim vice president of finance and administration. “I’d say efficiency is really what we’re trying to bring to our students. And in turn, we hope it’s a better experience for them. And then because of that better experience, we hope that it might help more students stay on campus, or stay in class, and complete through the end [of their degree programs].”

According to Kierczynski, the college has been trying to get the Osterlin project funded by the state’s joint capital outlay appropriations subcommittee since 2017, when that same committee approved funding for the West Hall project. Per the state, Michigan’s capital outlay process helps finance “the acquisition, construction/renovation, and maintenance of facilities used by a state agency, public university, or community college.” Kierczynski says the process typically follows an annual funding cycle, with community colleges and other eligible entities submitting projects for consideration each year. Due to COVID-19 and its impacts on the budget, however, the state has not accepted any formal capital outlay submissions for the past two budget cycles.

The lack of a formal capital outlay process has so far held NMC back from setting a concrete plan for the construction of the student service hub, but Kierczynski expects the project will move forward soon with or without state funding. After conversations this past spring with State Representative Bradley Slagh, who also serves as vice chair for the joint capital outlay appropriations subcommittee, Kierczynski says Slagh asked NMC to submit a project informally.

That informal submission took the form of a letter dated June 18 and sent to the two chairs of the subcommittee – State Senator Ken Horn and State Representative Matt Maddock – in which NMC President Nick Nissley shared details about the project and the impact it would have on NMC students.

“Uniting these services at one central location will increase student retention and completion through an improved student experience,” Nissley wrote. “Although the Governor’s office is not accepting capital projects, we seek your consideration for funding this important initiative,” Nissley concluded. “State support through capital outlay or other federal recovery funding would greatly accelerate our pace and scope.”

NMC seeks \$2.8 million from the state, which would cover half of the project's budget. Even without state funding, though, Kierczynski says NMC is committed to uniting its student services offerings at Osterlin. That building has some vacant space that the college is looking to use since the NMC library was relocated from Osterlin to West Hall upon that project's completion. That factor, combined with the expected benefits of having a central student service hub – as well as necessary ADA improvements at Osterlin that would be built into the project design – has NMC looking at multiple strategies for getting the renovation funded.

"The last project we got [funded by capital outlay] was West Hall, back in 2017," Kierczynski explains. "Prior to that, our last capital outlay was 2005. So it's not like these things come up all that often. I think this is likely our last plug to the state to try to get this project funded...and we want to really utilize this asset we have at Osterlin. So if we don't get state funding, we are going to look to pursue this project with our own resources."

"We have funds available from money we financed back in 2016, when we built North Hall," Kierczynski adds. "We have \$2.2 million of capital funding that we anticipate using over the next year, particularly toward this project. And then we would be looking also at private support, philanthropic support, and potentially some of our reserve money [to cover the rest of the cost]."

If NMC's informal bid for capital outlay funding somehow does result in some money from the state ("We aren't feeling confident that we're going to get state funding," Kierczynski notes) it would allow the renovation to move forward as planned, whereas the project would likely go back to the drawing board to be scaled down if NMC were to self-fund the entire price tag.

As for timeline, Kierczynski actually expects that things would move ahead more quickly if NMC *doesn't* get state funding.

"If for some reason we do get some funding this year in the state's budget, there would be basically a two-year process before the project is complete," he explains. "The first year, we would have to go through a planning authorization process, where we have a year to submit formal schematic documents regarding the project, and then the state reviews those and approves them. And then we probably have a year or so of construction. So if we did get some something approved in this year's budget, we would probably be looking at a final completion date of October 2023. If we don't, perhaps the project would be done even sooner, because we wouldn't have to go through that one-year planning phase required by the state...we would probably be looking at completion date of October 2022."

https://www.record-eagle.com/sports/local_sports/game-on-hawk-owls-nmc-to-field-pair-of-scholarship-esports-teams/article_ec747006-98a2-11eb-a8f0-a7ac065a33d1.html

ALERT

Game on, Hawk Owls: NMC to field pair of scholarship esports teams

By Andrew Rosenthal arosenthal@record-eagle.com

Apr 11, 2021



A computer sits on a table in NMC's West Hall Innovation Center in Traverse City on Friday.

Record-Eagle/Mike Krebs



TRAVERSE CITY — It all started with a Discord whiparound during the Hawk Owls Rocket League tournament last fall.

“Why don’t we apply for funding?” Luz Del Angel, one of the founders of the Northwestern Michigan College esports club, recalled a member say.

Months later it’s not just a discord, nor just a vehicular soccer game — esports at Northwestern Michigan College becomes a path to a scholarship.

NMC announced this week the launch of a varsity esports team, making it the Traverse City school’s first intercollegiate team in decades. The Hawk Owls begin recruiting this spring and summer to compete the following fall.

Students on varsity teams receive \$1,000 in total scholarship money (\$500 each for fall and spring semesters) and get dedicated coaching and development.

Del Angel anticipated the timeline to take at least a year — definitely not one semester — when their friends talked seriously about hosting a varsity team.

“I didn’t think it would be this quick,” Del Angel said. “I did not expect us to get the funding right away, I thought we’d have to plan it out over time.”

The Hawk Owls practice and compete in a newly-renovated esports lab in their West Hall Innovation Center. So far, lights and computers occupy the place, but the rest remains under construction.

“It feels really good to have the mascot and have something cheer for, someone to cheer on and give us the ability to not only compete against fellow two-year schools in the state, but also four-years in the state and in the country at some point,” said Teri Gustafson, NMC’s Esports Advisor.

Gustafson said NMC’s esports program grew to be one of the school’s largest in membership — 93 students strong.

Del Angel, a third-year NMC student, said the club’s request to the university was initially funding for events. Over time that led to scholarship funding for the Hawk Owls’ varsity team.

“Everyone was up for it. Terri was like ‘Totally,’” Del Angel said. “Now we’re here.”

Gustafson said discussions about offering esports to students in any capacity stated about 18 months ago. When the coronavirus pandemic paused most in-person gatherings on campus, a lot of those discussions stopped.

In the fall, Gustafson advised the school's esports club to give students a way to connect and feel social on a virtual campus where in-person student activities were less active. It was an instant hit.

"Once that started and we saw a significant student interest, we started to lay the groundwork for getting varsity going," Gustafson said. "After consulting with some other schools across the state and other conferences, it really helped pave the way that moving to varsity was the great next step to take."

NMC competes two conferences — the Michigan Esports Conference and the National Junior College Athletic Association Esports (NJCAA).

The beauty of esports is state and national competitions don't have to come with logistical nightmares like travel and lodging. That means NMC student athletes could compete against a junior college in California one day and the Michigan Wolverines the next.

Famously, Robert Morris University in Illinois became the first to offer scholarships specifically for League of Legends in 2014. It advanced to the inaugural intercontinental national championship in 2016, but lost to the University of British Columbia.

NMC expects about 13 student-athletes in its first year of competition and will hire coaches for each of the two teams. The Hawk Owls also hired a consultant with head coach experience at one of Michigan's Mid-American Conference programs to aid the transition to a varsity program.

Del Angel said prospective student athletes do not necessarily have to be a professional at a certain game; they just have to have the teamwork skills and effort in the classroom.

Student-athletes must maintain a 2.0 grade-point average and be a full-time student to retain eligibility.

"You have to be decent at the game, but you also have to have like teamwork and knowledge," Del Angel said. "It's kind of like an actual sport. You could be perfectly good at the game like shooting hoops and stuff, but if you don't have teamwork skills, that's going to make you lose the game."

"It's kind of less skill-based and more teamwork-based. Anyone can sit at their computer and learn how to move a character or press buttons."

The Michigan Esports Conference (MEC) includes 15 schools ranging from a two-year colleges all the way up to NCAA Division 1. The MEC includes Ferris State, Western Michigan University, Grand Valley State, the University of Michigan, Michigan State, Siena Heights, Michigan Tech, Davenport, Eastern Michigan, Central Michigan, Aquinas, West Shore Community College, NMC and Kettering.

“There’s really a wide range of schools that compete against each other,” Gustafson said.

The MEC streams Rocket League, Overwatch, League of Legends, Counter-Strike: Global Offensive and Rainbow Six: Siege. Del Angel said the varsity program is looking at Overwatch to compete in with its varsity program.

Schools affiliated with the NJCAA can compete state to state depending on school enrollment and skill level.

“They focus on the uniqueness. You only have your student athletes for two years,” Gustafson said. “It gives you an opportunity as a two-year school to join a national conference but not compete against some of the schools that have some more resources.”

Del Angel finishes their classes at NMC this summer, but nonetheless is excited to help give students that are now middle and high schoolers a chance to earn scholarships for playing video games.

“Let’s say the program’s already set in stone when I started being a student, I would be so happy,” Del Angel said. “I’m happy that we were able to make this happen for future students ... they’re definitely going to be excited that Traverse City, a community college, is going to have a varsity program.”

Gaming business experts estimate esports to be a billion-dollar industry, outpacing sports like professional rugby in revenue.

“Many of them may have a goal to compete professionally in esports, which is a very real thing with the way things are going,” Gustafson said. “I’m really looking forward to helping them get there if they have that path and giving them a way to get there — but also working with them to help them build skills in regular skills after they graduate with teamwork, communication and leadership.”

Follow Andrew Rosenthal on Twitter @ByAndrewR

https://www.record-eagle.com/news/nmc-approves-engineering-degree/article_901333d0-5f48-11eb-990c-bf15f31ecea.html

NMC approves engineering degree

By Patti Brandt Burgess pburgess@record-eagle.com

Jan 26, 2021



TRAVERSE CITY — Students seeking degrees in engineering now can earn more credits at Northwestern Michigan College before transferring to Michigan Technological University to earn their undergraduate degree.

The new Associate of Science in Engineering will let students transfer 73 credits from NMC to MTU.

Students can currently transfer 60 credits under the NMC's transfer degree, the Associate in Science and Arts. But any credits taken beyond that 60 credits are not covered by federal financial aid, something the new degree will allow.

The college also is working on similar articulation agreements with about six other universities, said Stephen Siciliano, vice president for educational services at NMC.

There are about 70 students in pre-engineering at NMC, Siciliano said.

NMC's engineering degree will require students to take 48 credits of general education courses — composition and a humanities and social sciences course — as well as the science and math courses required for all pre-engineering transfer programs, such as chemistry, calculus and physics.

Students also will take 25 directed electives determined by the engineering program they have chosen and the university to which they are transferring. Courses could include anatomy and physiology, thermodynamics or physical geology.

Taking the directed electives will assure that students can transfer in as juniors at most universities.

With the new articulation agreement students will be able to choose from a variety of engineering programs, whether that's chemical engineering, mechanical engineering or computer engineering, Siciliano said.⁶⁶

"We feel very confident that these 73 credits will fit well for students picking any one of those pathways," Siciliano said.

"We know this is going to help our students in the long run," said Chris Bott, board chair.

In other business, NMC President Nick Nissley announced that the college would receive \$4.1 million under the Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund that was part of a COVID-19 package passed by Congress just before Christmas.

Of that, \$3 million will go to the college and about \$1 million will go directly to students, Nissley said.

Rules of distribution under the first round of funding from the federal CARES Act in mid-2020 were strict, he said. Under this funding the rules will likely be similar, though they may be a little looser, he said.

"We need to be sure we are adhering to the rules and doing it by the books," Nissley said. "We want to get the dollars distributed as soon as possible."

TRENDING VIDEO

Cheesy Baked Asparagus





Business Development Certificate Now Offered At NMC

Jan. 19, 2021

Northwestern Michigan College (NMC) is teaming up with the Northwest Michigan Small Business Development Center (NWSBDC) to offer a Business Development Certificate program at NMC. The program, part of NMC's Extended Educational Services, is intended "to help business owners navigate the complexity of starting and running a business." Courses for the certificate program will be available at NMC starting this winter.

According to a press release announcing the new Business Development Certificate offerings at NMC, the program was made possible by CARES Act funding received by the NWSBDC last year. The certificate program, which offers a range of courses designed to provide key business knowledge in "short, affordable, information-packed sessions," is NWSBDC's way of meeting the requirements for the CARES Act funds.

NMC is marketing the Business Development Certificate as a continuing education opportunity for current or future business owners, covering skills in categories such as business start-up, financial management, marketing, and customer service. To earn the certificate, students must complete eight core classes across those four categories, as well as four elective courses in subjects like cybersecurity, employment law, nonprofit start-up, and more. Depending on the electives that enrollees choose, NMC estimates

that students can expect to receive “roughly 40 hours of education ranging in total cost from \$700 to \$1,200.” Some business owners will be eligible to receive financial assistance for the program.

“[This program] will provide early-stage entrepreneurs the foundational information that they need to remain successful for the long haul,” said Annie Olds, regional director of the for the NWSBDC. “We’ve not seen a prolonged slowdown in the demand for or desire of individuals to become small business owners despite the tumultuous times all small business owners have been confronted with in 2020. However, the entrepreneurial ecosystem in which these early-stage or immature companies are operating has become much trickier to navigate and we know that education and appropriate resources for these business owners are critical.”

More information about the Business Development Certificate can be found here (<https://www.nmc.edu/resources/extended-education/certificates/business-development.html>).

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Life Indigo

Ad Life Indigo

FEATURED VIDEOS

U.S. House to vote Thursday on infrastructure bill

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https://www.record-eagle.com/news/business/eldercare-certification-offered/article_d000bed4-617f-11eb-bf4d-eb6068666c09.html

education

Eldercare certification offered

By Mark Urban murban@record-eagle.com

Feb 3, 2021



TRAVERSE CITY — It's a simple matter of supply and demand.

In an attempt to answer a need, Northwestern Michigan College is launching an Eldercare Certificate program. The 20-hour program is offered within two separate six-week sessions.

"It's excellent to be offering these opportunities," NMC Extended Educational Services Director Laura Matchett said. "It's so needed in the area, both locally and globally."

"We need people in these careers," added Elizabeth Sonnabend, NMC Professional and Workforce Development Manger. "There is really a big need for home health aids and caregivers."

Sonnabend, who joined NMC after working at the Grand Traverse Pavilions, said several healthcare experts from the area gave input and are instructors for the classes.

Amy Northway from Monarch Home Health, Cindy McGarry from BrightStar Care, April Missias from Leelanau Senior Services and others from Bay Area Senior Advocates gave the most input. Classes are offered six weeks and are scheduled to run twice, from Feb. 9 to March 11 and again from March 24 to April 28.

"We're going to keep running them," Sonnabend said. "They don't have to finish them all at once."

The classes also are suitable for family caregivers, in addition to those interested in eldercare as a career. Sonnabend said the 24/7 nature of eldercare also provides options for those who want to work weekends while going back to school.

“These are also next level skill growth development opportunities where people can work at the same time,” Matchett said.

Sonnabend said there is “a lot of customer service” in the care of older adults, which would translate to people who may have lost jobs in other sectors.

“This might be great training for someone looking to make that transition,” she said. “It also has a great career path.”

“We have been very aware as we create workforce and professional development opportunities that people need a job now,” Matchett added.

According to NMC, the cost of earning the eldercare certificate is less than \$400.

There is a free online information session on eldercare. Other scheduled topics include:

- Basic caregiving skills
- Meeting the social needs of seniors
- Meal prep and planning
- Dementia and memory care basics
- Legal and ethical issues
- Family dynamics and crisis prevention intervention
- Basic lifesaving skills
- Entering the eldercare workforce

The certificate program also may lead to other health care education at NMC.

To register for NMC’s eldercare certificate program, visit <https://tinyurl.com/NMCElderregister>. For more information on the program, visit <https://tinyurl.com/NMCElderinfo>.

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Traverse City News and Events



Dennon Museum Center Becomes Smithsonian Affiliate

By Beth Milligan | March 9, 2021

The Dennon Museum Center at Northwestern Michigan College has become a Smithsonian Affiliate, the museum announced Monday. The Dennon joins a network of more than 200 other Smithsonian Affiliates in the U.S., Puerto Rico, and Panama.

As a Smithsonian Affiliate, the Dennon will “have the opportunity to collaborate on unique, public programs and workshops, professional development opportunities, co-develop youth programs, host traveling exhibitions, borrow artifacts, and co-host public lectures by Smithsonian scholars,” according to a museum release. The partnership also allows the Dennon to offer a Smithsonian Affiliate membership as an add-on to its existing membership options. Smithsonian Affiliates are “collaborators on many of the Smithsonian’s strategic priorities, adding local content, context, and expertise to national initiatives to help tell a fuller story,” the release states.

“We are thrilled to begin building a formal relationship with the Smithsonian Institution and all of its collections and educational resources,” says Dennon Executive Director and Chief Curator Craig Hadley. “While many of us up here in northern Michigan may have difficulty accessing Washington, D.C., 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.”

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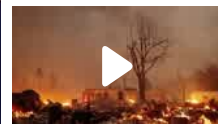


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Amid Restaurant Industry Upheaval, NMC Looks To Reimagine Culinary Institute, Lobdell's

By Beth Milligan | July 2, 2021

Seismic shifts in the restaurant and hospitality industry in the wake of the pandemic are also impacting other fields, notably culinary schools. Northwestern Michigan College – which is facing the same challenges of declining enrollment and a growing deficit that recently forced Washtenaw Community College to end its culinary program (<https://www.washtenawvoice.com/2020/09/03/culinary-and-baking-and-pastry-programs-to-be-discontinued/>) – is plotting out a new future for the Great Lakes Culinary Institute (GLCI) and teaching restaurant Lobdell's that could portend major curriculum and operational changes on the horizon.

Enrollment in GLCI's culinary arts associate's program has steadily declined over the last seven years, from 131 students in fall 2014 to 56 students in fall 2020, according to NMC Vice President for Student Services and Technologies Todd Neibauer. Enrollment in the culinary arts certificate program has dropped from 27 to 11 students in the same timeframe. Meanwhile, the program's deficit has ballooned from \$59,166 in 2014 to \$303,480 in 2020.

"The standard at NMC is that occupational programs not exceed an annual subsidy from the general fund of more than \$150,000," says Neibauer. "While GLCI has always received a subsidy from the general fund, unfortunately GLCI has exceeded the standard limit

since 2016. With the pandemic's impact on the entire college budget, it became clear that we must make more significant changes to GLCI."

Earlier this year, NMC President Nick Nissley asked GLCI Director Leslie Eckert to undergo a three-month process called "Reimagining GLCI" that collected input from various stakeholder groups – including local employers, students, alumni, and faculty – and used a "data-driven approach" to analyze the entire department. The process generated a multi-year plan to address three main goals: increase enrollment, increase revenue, and decrease costs – particularly labor costs in the department.

"It's a two-fold approach phased in over the next three years," Nissley says. "The first thing is programmatic updates. How do we make sure the curriculum and courses are what students are looking for? And then there are changes to the Lobdell's operations." The 90-seat teaching restaurant overlooking Grand Traverse Bay has long been popular with both students and locals, but is an "underutilized asset," Nissley says. "Out of 365 days, we're operating in the space only a third of the time. How can we optimize that space, with maybe a (year-round) restaurant operation or catering operation or event space, so that it's something that will generate additional revenue?"

The Reimagining GLCI committee has been tasked with delivering a new plan for Lobdell's by next March. Also on the to-do list: cutting the department's deficit by half to \$150,000 in the next three years and finding a way to reduce labor costs. "Is this going to impact employment at GLCI? No," says Nissley. "There will not be any employee layoffs, and the plan does not prescribe any. But we do need to be mindful and more tightly manage our labor costs."

For Eckert, the Reimagining GLCI process is another twist in a volatile two-year journey as head of the department, with only a handful of months under her belt in 2019 before the pandemic hit in early 2020. "It's a lot, because I didn't get a chance to see the program running at its full capacity," she says. "But I'll look at that and take an advantage, which is that I didn't have a chance to lay down a pattern of how it should be. Starting out new, maybe it will help me embrace change more. It's a stressful situation, but closing is just not an option. We have this phenomenal space, and it just needs to be reorganized and revamped. We had a great model before, but it's no longer sustainable."

Nissley and Eckert anticipate changes are in store not only for the programming content at GLCI, but the model by which instruction is delivered. "People are more interested in sustainability, in health and nutrition, in plant-based menus, in hands-on learning," says Nissley. "How do we build that in? It could be more internships, more externships, more creative ways to market and sell the school." Eckert says higher education data across the

board reflects a change in perspective students, many of whom aren't "interested in a long-term degree" but rather short-term intensive curriculum blocks, specialty certificates, and one-off training programs.

"Instead of the only way you can come (to GLCI) is for a year or two, maybe some people will want to come for a month or two to a learning hub to enrich their skills and go into the workplace," Eckert says. Given the proliferation of home chefs and foodies, particularly in the Traverse City region, GLCI could also offer "master classes" with professional chefs or shorter-term learning programs for enthusiasts who want something more in-depth than a two-hour extended education class but less intensive than a full-time degree program. "Not everyone wants to be a chef, but a lot of people want to be involved in food in some way," Eckert says.

Everyone *The Ticker* spoke with at NMC firmly stressed the importance of GLCI to the college and community. Graduates have gone on to launch S2S Sugar 2 Salt, The Towne Plaza, Smoke & Porter, Rose and Fern, and Nittolo's Pizza, to name just a few examples. "One of the takeaways of going through this process was experiencing the amount of support that not only NMC but GLCI specifically has in the community," Eckert says. "When I say community, it's encompassing of those working in the workforce, on the (GLCI) advisory board, within the food service industry, the farmers, local agriculture. All those businesses that interconnect in some way." Neibauer points out that while the culinary school is "expensive to operate," it offers numerous other benefits to NMC, including increased enrollment in general education classes, increased on-campus housing, and increased participation in student activities.

With so many local hospitality businesses struggling to hire employees, Nissley says GLCI remains an important pipeline of workers to the community. "Local employers rely upon us...and those restaurants help support the local economy and our vitality as a community," he says. He notes that NMC's maritime and aviation programs also struggled in the past but were able to successfully reinvent themselves. Nissley is confident GLCI can do the same. "Failure is not an option," he says. Eckert agrees, saying turning the program around "is not such a major challenge that we can't surmount it."

"Food will always be there, and we will always want food," she says. "It's up to us to keep the momentum going. We need to change with the times."

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COVID vaccine clinic to begin at NMC's Hagerty Center

by Kathryn Halvorsen
Sunday, January 17th 2021



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<p>Within hours of announcing a mass COVID-19 vaccine clinic, all of Grand Traverse County Health Department's 1,500 doses were claimed. Every appointment scheduled. (WPBN){/p}

Every appointment scheduled.

The health department is partnering with the Hagerty Center at Northwestern Michigan College to provide the clinic next week.

The Grand Traverse County Health Department said there are three components that are important when it comes to vaccination planning.

Those are having a good location, help and enough supply to support the demand.

NMC'S Hagerty Conference Center is offering the region the ability to move forward.

"For us locally, this opportunity starts a process we've all been waiting for," Grand Traverse County Administrator Nate Alger said. "To return to a life that is not hampered by the pervasive threat of spreading or contracting the coronavirus."


Starting Monday, doses of the Pfizer vaccine will be given by appointment at Northwestern Michigan College's Hagerty Conference Center.

"When the county needed a larger space to help more people get vaccinated fast, we said

only we can help," NMC President Nick Nissley said.

But getting more people vaccinated depends on having enough supply.

"The vaccine doses available for the next week are approximately 2,000," Grand Traverse

Search Site  start to increase, that we will be able to start offering more and more and that we will hit our goals of vaccinating over 3,000 Grand Traverse County residents each week moving forward."

Last week when phase 1B was announced, more than 23,000 people registered to get the vaccine.

"We will have to be weaving in second dose clinics with first doses. Appointments for the second three to four weeks after, its critical to maintain those," Hirschenberger said.

Alger said starting February 8, the arena at the Grand Traverse County Civic Center will also be converted to a vaccine clinic.

Assuming they have enough vaccine and staff, the goal is to reach 7,000 people a week between these two locations.

Even though next week's clinic is full, that doesn't mean your chance to get vaccinated is gone.

We're told more appointments will be added as more vaccine is made available from the state of Michigan.

The health department encourages you to check its website daily to see if an appointment opens up.

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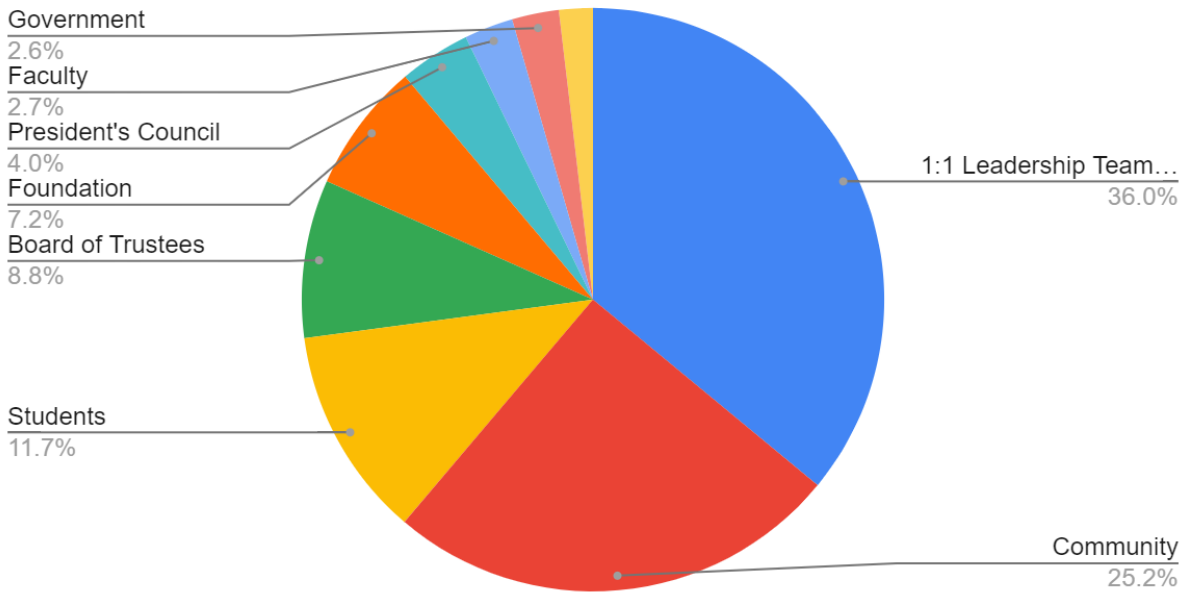
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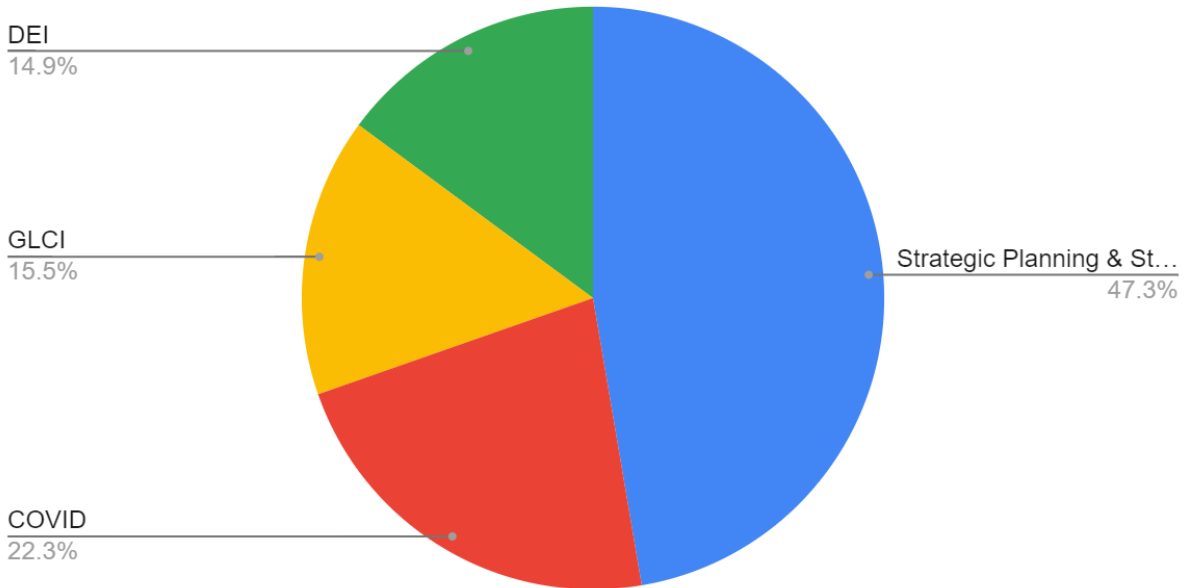
President's Time in Meetings by Constituency

October 1, 2020 - September 30, 2021



President's Time in Meetings by Topic

October 1, 2020 - September 30, 2021



Success Story: Leadership realignment creates new executive role

SEPTEMBER 1, 2021

Northwestern Michigan College is seeking its first-ever vice president of strategic initiatives, a newly-created executive role that will lead strategic planning implementation and innovation management at the college.

Specifically, the new vice president will be accountable for leading the college through implementation of the [strategic plan](#) that is now being drafted; leading NMC's innovation management process, including revenue-generating ventures; and serving as a point person for business partnership and local employers.

"We're at a unique point in our college's history," President Nick Nissley said in a [recruiting video](#).

"The pandemic has accelerated the transformation of higher education, allowing us to challenge our previous assumptions."



The new vice president, Nissley continued, will be charged to "develop new ways to springboard into the future to meet the evolving needs of our diverse stakeholders."

The position was created by realigning executive leadership responsibilities, and does not add an additional administrator. The vice president will oversee several existing departments including the [NMC Marine Center](#), [Extended Educational Services](#) and the [International Affairs Forum](#).

Each of these divisions serves a broader group of learners than traditional, post-high school, degree-seeking students. Demographically, that pool of students is declining in Michigan and nationwide, so the college aims to grow enrollment by reaching new

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populations, particularly adult learners who need credentials for advancement and professional development.

Massachusetts-based recruiting firm Spelman Johnson was retained to facilitate the nationwide search. Given the broad responsibilities, the position has drawn keen interest from dozens of applicants from around the country. NMC will begin reviewing applications this week and the position will remain open until filled.

“The ability to build strong relationships and to deliver results is at the heart of this role,” Nissley said. “I believe an entrepreneurial spirit will inspire and excite our internal and external partners as we work toward shared success.”

In Education & Training, Issue 2021 May
- By Nick Nissley

Letting Go Of The Need To Know



I am a planner by nature. Like many of you, I am at my best when I have time to do my homework and develop a clear path forward.

Turns out, that isn't as easy as it sounds in these "unprecedented times" we've been working through this last year. But one of the most important lessons I've learned is, not only is it ok to *not* have all of the answers, it may be even better.

Let me tell you why.

In January 2020 if you had asked colleges like ours, and many other businesses, whether or not we could operate virtually you would have probably gotten some wide-eyed stares in response. Sure, in theory, it might be possible, but it would

take a lot of planning, policies and procedures to pull it off, let alone considerable time and resources we just didn't have.

But by March 2020, what we didn't have was a choice. What we had in abundance was our employees' dedication to limiting the disruption to our students' learning. So we did it. This is one of the proudest moments in our college's history and the most telling as we look toward the future. While we would often talk about being what is possible, that idea also had some unintentional boundaries created by our existing business structures.

After this past year, we realize with new clarity that we can and should challenge all of those previous assumptions. It is liberating and might have been a little scary if not for our greatest resource, our people.

Large, established organizations usually have robust policies and procedures in place that clearly outline how we operate. Our employees have come to rely on them to help guide the way. There was safety in knowing what was expected and what worked.

But when we were forced to throw a lot of those guidelines out of the window when we went virtual, we all had to take a more active role in figuring out what worked and what didn't work for us. We each had to be an advocate for our own needs while meeting the needs of our students. It was no longer about following the letter of a policy, but embracing the spirit of our mission.

As a result we've had higher engagement, ownership and innovation throughout the organization. We've proven that we are more resilient and agile than we knew. We now know we can pivot faster, we can try new things and adjust if they don't work right the first time. Not only is that accepted, it's expected and encouraged. We no longer have the luxury, or the burden, of needing all of the details finalized before we allow ourselves to move forward or implement changes to achieve our goals.

In this time of rapid transformation, we as leaders must let go of the idea that we should be omniscient experts. We have experts at every level of our organizations and throughout our stakeholder groups. It is our job as leaders to listen to as many voices as possible, put forth a vision, then let our teams help shape that vision and bring it to life.

We need to change what we expect from ourselves and each other. We must become comfortable not having all of the answers. We must instill greater trust and autonomy in our teams to advance our organizational goals. And they will likely surprise us with what they've come up with. Of course, there will be bumps along the way, but I believe we will achieve even greater success in the long run.

I am more comfortable now than I've ever been with not having all of the answers because I know we have the people in our college and in our community who will work together to get us where we need to go. In late 2019, when I began my listening tour with employees and community members, I knew strategic planning would be necessary to help us clarify who we are, imagine what we want to become and map out how we can successfully transition to that future state.

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We've spent more than a year challenging established assumptions. We know things are possible that we never thought could change. Now is the time to tap into the courageous creativity this community has to design a college that will serve our learners today and in the future, even if – and especially because – we don't know what that future holds.

Nick Nissley, Ed.D., is president of Northwestern Michigan College. He is an education executive with more than 25 years of experience including K-12, community college and university settings.

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