

Office of Possibilities

PLEASE DISTURB

By Will Kitchen, co-director,
Office of Possibilities,
Northwestern Michigan College,
Traverse City, Michigan

Northwestern Michigan College's (NMC) Office of Possibilities (OOPs) was initially launched to encourage disruptive innovation within the college. In less than 12 months, it has become a key part of the community's entrepreneurial ecosystem and has been used to drive ideas supporting the college's strategic plan. And the journey is still evolving!

"OOPs is a dynamic startup that thrives on change and creativity. We don't even have a traditional 'office,'" said Steve Rice, faculty co-director of OOPs. "It is a mindset, a movement, a culture of innovation, and a community network that is open to anyone who wants to innovate or ideate. It empowers people to create solutions and opportunities and encourages innovation and entrepreneurship."



NMC, in partnership with the Waterlution Water Innovation Lab (WIL) initiative, strives to restore freshwater health in North America. Working together are: Russ Schindler (left), Sample Serve Founder, and Dafrosa Kataraihya, WIL participant.

Structure

The "secret sauce" to OOPs' success is its structure: agile, flat, and independent. Add a healthy dose of strong college leadership and vision, as well as community volunteers and partners. Two faculty co-directors drive the program, along with 12 community entrepreneurs who serve as an Advisory Committee. "These subject-matter experts collaborate with entrepreneurs to develop their ideas and connect them with other parts of the Traverse City entrepreneurial ecosystem," said Rice. "We also work closely with the NMC Foundation to help stimulate resource innovation."

Some recent examples of OOPs' projects include:

Common Good Education

Common Good Education is an innovative curriculum of 21st century skills and knowledge to help people unlock their full potential. It is

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Heather Mitchell

Organization

Tallahassee Community College

Title

Vice President for Institutional Advancement and Executive Director of the Foundation

Success is...

...reaching a goal through hard work, constant learning, healthy fear of failure, and a great dose of positive attitude.

Current Project/s

- Raising funds for scholarships, finishing a \$3M Athletics Campaign for facility renovations;
- Working to enrich our student veteran programming;
- Planning for our 2024 Cleaver and Cork Food & Wine Festival.

Website

tcc.fl.edu/about/college/tcc-foundation

Social Media Handle

LinkedIn: Heather Mitchell

Three Things I've Gained Since Becoming a Member of NACCE

- Connections to other growth-minded advancement professionals;
- Access to innovative resources to help me do my job;
- Having Becky Corbin as a resource!

What Does Innovation Mean to You?

Using creative ways to solve a problem.



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offered in response to NMC's strategic plan and is a next action step toward the actualization of the college's vision.

Innovation Skills Credential

The credential is a set of skills development courses designed to provide entrepreneurs with the knowledge needed to turn ideas into reality. The rollout is focused on developing young professionals who want to nurture entrepreneurial solutions around freshwater issues in the U.S. and Canada in partnership with Aqua Action, an organization dedicated to restoring freshwater health in North America (aquaction.org).

Design Thinking and the Strategic Plan

This is an OOPs-funded cohort of students, staff, faculty, and community members participating in a series of design thinking

workshops focused on two areas of NMC's strategic plan – enrollment and revenue alternatives. Results are shared with NMC and the college foundation to act on ideas that have the potential to provide solutions.

Think Locker

The method is based on the premise that perceptual learning is NOT flashcards. This is a tool that allows teachers to create rich learning experiences for their students.

Additional projects span artificial intelligence, manufacturing, music, podcasting, home construction alternatives, film making, electric vehicle conversion, drones, and health care products.

"The OOPs community has been a transformative experience for me," said Loghan Call, co-founder and CEO of Audacia Elixers, an OOPs participant. "I have never found a space that blends the world of business and the desire to create with the

openness, honesty, and curiosity that exists in every OOPs meeting."

Please Disturb

The OOPs team welcomes individuals to disturb them with their ideas. Through the office, aspiring entrepreneurs can share ideas or challenges; join an existing group or initiative that aligns with their interests or passions; start a group around a topic or issue of interest; or attend events or workshops that highlight the work and learnings of community members. ●



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