

NICK NISSLEY
PRESIDENT'S EVALUATION
SELF-ASSESSMENT
FALL 2024

OVERVIEW

The following two frameworks, (1) NMC's five strategic plan priorities, and (2) the nine core competencies, help frame my president's self-evaluation. They describe the leadership priorities and competencies that focus my everyday actions leading the College. I have also used these to focus and frame my communication with/reporting to the Board of Trustees. In turn, when communicating with internal and external stakeholders, they have framed my communications. I have appreciated the Board's helpfulness in affording me these frameworks. They have been invaluable tools to help me prioritize, focus, and lead the College.

NMC's Five Strategic Plan Priorities

The College's Strategic Plan, *NMC Next*, has served as a means of College-wide prioritization, focusing my attention on the five strategic priorities articulated in the plan:

1. *Future-Focused Education*: Enhance offerings through flexible academic pathways, innovative instructional delivery models and relevant, hands-on educational experiences to empower global learners for the future.
2. *Student Engagement and Success*: Develop and deliver comprehensive support services, robust engagement opportunities and a vibrant collegiate experience to foster learner success, goal completion and employability.
3. *Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging (DEIB)*: Cultivate an inclusive environment that fosters a sense of belonging and delivers equitable opportunities so all are able to thrive and succeed.
4. *Community Partnerships and Engagement*: Enhance collaborations that advance community engagement, economic and workforce development and innovative opportunities for lifelong learning.
5. *Institutional Distinction and Sustainability*: Leverage distinctive programs that strengthen institutional sustainability and expand global connections for our learners and communities.

Nine Core Competencies from The President's Evaluation Instrument

This past year, a new evaluation instrument was developed by the President's Performance and Compensation Committee (PPCC). This instrument articulates nine core competencies, to be used in evaluating the President's performance:

1. *Communications* – Demonstrates ability to effectively handle routine and non-routine internal and external communication, both oral and written.

2. *Teamwork* – Willingness and ability to work for and with others to achieve a common goal.
3. *Productivity* – Refers to the amount of acceptable work to be performed as efficiently and cost effectively as possible.
4. *Dependability* – The ability to accept and complete responsibilities.
5. *Quality* – The work provided is accurate, thorough and consistent.
6. *Problem Solving* – Ability to define and resolve problems in a timely manner with little to no harm done.
7. *Ethical Behavior* – Ability to apply ethical, open, and honest behavior in interactions.
8. *Shared Governance* – The ability to engage the College shared governance process.
9. *Board Communications and Relations* – Build and maintain effective Board-President relationships.

The following is a self-assessment of my performance, organized by these two frameworks, and is intended to afford the College's Board of Trustees an overview of how I have led the College, during this past year. My self-evaluation is organized into four sections (see the *Table of Contents*, on the next page):

1. Evidence/Examples of Strategic Leadership (Framed by the Strategic Plan)
2. Evidence/Examples of Nine Core Competencies from the President's Evaluation Instrument
3. Looking Ahead to 'What's on the Horizon'
4. Strategic Plan Implementation: Status Report

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SECTION #1: EVIDENCE/EXAMPLES OF STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP

What an extraordinary year it has been, advancing the College's mission, *delivering lifelong learning opportunities to transform lives and enrich our communities.*

Together, we're planning for our future: continuing to execute on the College and Foundation strategic plans; launching a brand assessment and strategy planning process; while completing a year-long campus master planning process.

We're also taking action, living into our future: breaking ground on our Aviation expansion/growth plan; signing of the articles of incorporation to legally establish the Freshwater Research and Innovation Center; while also seeking to address the educational desert/college inaccessibility issue, pursuing the annexation of Benzie County.

We're also transforming lives: through our new BSN degree-completion opportunity; development of the first Neurodiversity Support Center in the state of Michigan; and an international partnership (with Canada's AquaAction) to support development of water innovators and the new blue economy.

We're doing all of this while ensuring fiscal stewardship: a balanced budget, a sustainable business model, and future balanced budgets. We're not only focused on fiscally responsible expense management, but also embracing revenue diversification strategies (like the repurposing of the University Center, and sale of underutilized/unproductive properties).

How are we doing it? By remaining values-grounded and results-driven. By encouraging entrepreneurial-mindedness and innovative action. And, by always reminding ourselves, especially as we approach the College's diamond jubilee – our 75th anniversary – that we are not just a community college; *we are the community's college*. And, we are proudly committed to serving the needs of northwestern Michigan, as our name demands.

Strategy #1: Future-Focused Education

Innovation is one of the core values of our college. As president, I have been a constant source of encouragement in both showing what is possible and fanning the flames of the College to embrace entrepreneurial mindedness and innovative action. Creative ideas both large and small receive direct and timely support that creates a culture where there are no barriers from trying something new for the sake of advancing our mission.

While much attention is focused on the accomplishments enabled by our Office of Possibilities and specifically the successes being realized at the College-community intersection, there are also significant accomplishments being realized within the College, and specifically associated with our core work of teaching and learning. Remember, 'learning' is also one of the College's core values.

I am proud of the results being realized by our faculty who have innovated the following certificates and programs during the past five years:

- Surveying—AAS (Fall 2019)
- Engineering, Associates of Science in Engineering (Fall 2021)
- Culinary-Baking and Pastry Arts—Level II Certificate (Fall 2022)
- Maritime Culinary Certificate (Fall 2023)
- Uncrewed Aerial Systems (UAS)—AAS (Fall 2023)
- Water Quality and Environmental Technology—AAS (Fall 2023)
- Nursing Articulation Agreement—ADN to BSN (Fall 2023)
- Esports Management—Level I Certificate (Spring 2024)
- Computer Support Specialist—Level I Certificate (Spring 2024)
- Sports Performance Nutrition Certificate (Fall 2024)

This year has focused on implementation of several new programs that were created last year. It has included the development of a number of new programs and services as well.

The successful **implementation of our new and reimagined programs** includes the following examples.

- **ADN to BSN**. This partnership with Davenport University has helped to increase our Nursing enrollment and provide greater opportunities for our graduates to earn their bachelor degree in Nursing. The state of Michigan granted NMC \$2 million that has enabled us to: increase our student support and research staff by three professionals, provide additional scholarships, and deliver faculty and staff professional development. As a result of our partnership we celebrated the first graduation class this summer, recognizing the first 12 graduates of this new, fast-track bachelor's of science in nursing program, 11 of whom are also NMC alums. All are already employed at regional providers including Munson Medical Center, the Grand Traverse County Health Department, and Harbor Care Associates. NMC was one of the first colleges in the state to stand up a new BSN program and graduate our first BSN-credentialed students.

See:

<https://www.traverseticker.com/news/nmc-davenport-to-graduate-first-12-students-from-joint-bsn-program/>

- **Accelerated Police Academy**. Recall, we made a strategic decision and curricular innovation to redesign NMC's Police Academy to a one-semester completion model this past year. As a result, our enrollment went from 6 students for a full year program to 16 students for the two one-semester programs. This past January, we graduated our first class under the new system. Both graduating classes this year enjoyed 100% job placement.

See:

<https://www.nmc.edu/about/nmc-stories/success-stories/police-academy-graduates.html>

- **Reimagined GLCI**. As you recall, facing an unsustainable business model, we worked together with faculty and staff to reimagine a new operating model and organization structure for the GLCI that not only has erased the previous \$375,000 deficit but for the

first time in the Institute's history - the first time in at least twenty years (dating back to 2005) - produced a positive fund balance and is 'in the black'. The FY 2024 projected balance is +\$80,634 – after more than a decade of operating deficits.

This year's focus for GLCI was monitoring the hard reimagining work and changes implemented last year. With marketing support from PRMC that helped boost enrollment, this team shattered their strategic goal – two years in a row, showing strong signals of sustainability.

At the same time, the quality of the program continues to shine, illustrated by an outstanding Taste of Success event this year (which raised \$167,000 - the most ever). In addition, as part of our revenue diversification strategy, GLCI is partnering with the Hagerty Center to rent out Lobdell's for upscale events and gatherings, which will result in increased revenue for both entities.

See:

<https://www.traverseticker.com/news/how-nmcs-great-lakes-culinary-institute-came-back-from-the-brink-of-oblivion/>

In addition to the launching of these new and reimagined programs, we also **continued to innovate new programs** this year, to meet the needs of our students and the communities that we serve.

- **GLCI's Culinary Certificate in Sports Nutrition**. Starting this fall, this two-year certificate will train students to work as chefs for collegiate and professional sports teams. It originated from the GLCI's partnering with the Detroit Red Wings prospect and training camp held at Centre Ice Arena each fall. The great success of GLCI catering these camps for the last ten years led to creating this new credential.

See: <https://www.nmc.edu/about/nmc-stories/success-stories/sports-nutrition-certificate.html>

- **Math Edge**. Building on last year's success of the [College Edge summer program](#), Mathematics faculty developed a new program to help students be successful in whatever Math pathway they chose. Entirely funded by the state College Catch-Up grant, Math faculty and Student Support Services devoted four weeks this summer to getting students college ready. As a result 89% of the students successfully completed the program. Additionally, we are seeing tremendous impact from this type of innovative programming. Our initial data analysis shows us that we had 27 students successfully complete the College Edge program in 2023. Of those, 26 were still enrolled in Spring 2024. And, of the group, 24 are enrolled again this Fall. That's an astounding 89% retention rate fall-to-fall. Typically we see more in the range of 50-55% retention of first year students.
- **Partnership Between NMC and Lake Superior State University**. NMC built a new partnership with Lake Superior State University that will enable our Engineering

graduates to attend Lake State and be directly admitted to one of four different bachelor's degree programs.

See:

<https://www.traverseticker.com/news/nmc-signs-articulation-agreements-with-lake-superior-state-university-for-engineering-majors/>

- **Construction Technology Pursuit of 3-D Home Printing.** Our Construction Technology Program with the assistance of our Office of Possibilities was awarded grants totaling \$35,000 from the National Association of Community College Entrepreneurship (NACCE) to seek equipment to offer the 3-D printing of residential construction. While still in the early stages of this effort, it offers us the potential to become a leader of this innovation in Northern Michigan. Also, the NMC Foundation led a grant proposal submission to Impact 100, resulting in NMC earning a \$116,000 grant (announced, the end of September). Related, the college has been supporting MEDC/Traverse Connect as they look to attract 3D printing companies to the region.

See:

<https://www.traverseticker.com/news/nmc-looks-to-acquire-potentially-revolutionary-equipment-for-3d-printing-houses/> and <https://www.nacce.com/news/2023-pitch-for-the-skilled-trades-winners>

- **Experiential Learning Institute Endorsement.** The success of the Experiential Learning Institute (ELI) in meeting our strategic plan goal of increasing students' experiential learning opportunities has led to taking this learning to a new level. ELI has plans in place to develop a transcript-based endorsement for students who successfully complete experiential-learning designated classes.

See:

<https://www.nmc.edu/about/nmc-stories/success-stories/eli-aims-for-endorsement.html>

Not a new course/program, but a new delivery modality, we've made significant progress in establishing accelerated courses. In fact, this fall, NMC will have thirteen accelerated course pathways, with an enrollment of more than 300 students. Also, the entire Police Academy has been accelerated by moving from a one-year to one semester program. And, most of the GLCI courses have also adopted an accelerated course format as part of their reimagining effort.

Strategy #2: Student Engagement and Success

- **Reversing a More Than Decade-Long Trend of Declining Enrollment at the College.** We have seen positive enrollment growth as strategies put in place to boost overall enrollment, retention, and course success rates have shown positive results. In fact, we've seen four consecutive semesters of contact hour increases, reversing a more than decade-long trend of declining enrollment at the College.

Fall 2023	Spring 2024	Summer 2024	Fall 2024
+ .9%	+3.1%	+8.4%	+4.8%

- Additionally, first semester retention of new students has reached 83.1%, surpassing the strategic plan goal of 82%, and the course enrollee success rate has risen from 79.8% in Fall 2020 to 81.2% this year (the goal is 83% by Fall 2025). I’m also proud to say that, through grant funding, the college has invested in a full-time coach, as called for in Strategy #2. They will be managing the College Edge program for adult students this next summer.
- Increased enrollment marketing efforts for FY24 resulted in 1,440 applications to NMC through the paid digital campaigns with an estimated return on advertising spend of \$4.40. The highest performing campaigns are the adult learner, with a focus on Michigan Reconnect, and the GLCI campaign with an emphasis on the unique culinary maritime certificate program. As you will see throughout this document, NMC is taking a comprehensive and integrated approach to our enrollment challenges and seeing positive results.
- **Future Challenges.** However, there are still metrics that were heavily impacted by the aftermath of the pandemic that need to show improvement.
 - Market share remained the same at 32.7% due to continued low college attendance rates being felt disproportionately at community colleges. In a repeat of last year, our fall non-attender survey showed the vast majority of students who applied but did not enroll simply chose not to go to college. In fact, state-wide, the market share of community colleges shrank again by .5% while the four year share increased. The new Community College Guarantee should assist with this challenge.
 - The number of students 21+ increased from last year (from 1401 to 1428), but is short of the spring 2025 target of 1610. However, there was an increase of 115 students in this age range for the fall 2024 semester. So, despite being short of the target, this metric is moving in the right direction.
 - Completion metrics are lagging and initial targets were established before the effects of the pandemic showed in our numbers. Hence they are lower for the cohorts now being reported. I expect that the good news on retention will push this item into the positive category as current cohorts move towards completion.
- **Brand Assessment and Strategy Planning Process to Address Enrollment Challenges.** This past year, I encouraged the President’s Council, with Diana Fairbanks’

leadership, to continue planning for our future: continuing to execute on the College and Foundation strategic plans; completing a year-long campus master planning process; *and* initiating a comprehensive brand assessment and strategy planning process. The brand strategy project is vitally important, especially in the face of declining enrollment and other challenges in higher education. A strong, clear brand will be crucial for distinguishing NMC and attracting students, faculty, and partners. The comprehensive brand assessment and strategy development process is designed to provide a foundation for our future success. By aligning our marketing and communication efforts with NMC's core values and strengths, we ensure a cohesive and compelling message that resonates with our key audiences and stakeholders, and ultimately drives enrollment.

I've ensured that the brand strategy is data driven. The initial discovery process engaged 50 college/community stakeholders in in-depth interviews, and more than 500 stakeholders responded to our survey, including: current students, faculty, staff, administrators, alumni, donors, and community/business partners. I've also ensured that it is informed by our current strategic plan and will be deeply intertwined with the next strategic plan. Most importantly, it aligns with our goals of increasing enrollment, enhancing student success, and fostering community partnerships.

Simply, a strong brand will amplify our strategic initiatives and make them more impactful. I am grateful for the Board of Trustees' vision and willingness to invest in the College's Public Relations, Marketing, and Communications staffing and strategies. While this project is funded through a Lumina Foundation grant, it will leverage the college's investments, ensuring that our communications are strategic, cohesive, and powerful, ultimately driving the college's success and sustainability.

The project's first output was the discovery findings report, which provided insights on brand themes and informed and led to the development of a powerful brand platform, including: brand promise, character, pillars, and ethos. This brand platform will serve as a reference point for all marketing and communication efforts, ensuring they are aligned with the brand's core values and messaging, and creating a strong emotional connection with key audiences. It also helps distinguish the brand in situations where 'consumers' have multiple educational opportunities and life choices vying for their attention.

We have now turned our attention to the final phase of visual identity assessment and developing recommendations for a 'refresh' of our branding/visual identity. The importance of this work cannot be overstated, especially given the competitive landscape of higher education, and the need to differentiate NMC from other choices. I can confidently say that this brand strategy project will benefit the College, making clear the College's value proposition and ensuring our sustainability.

Strategy #3: Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging (DEIB)

There are so many DEIB initiatives that have been undertaken during this past year. Five initiatives that I am especially proud of are:

- **Neurodiversity Support Center.** Some of our students need additional support to help them be successful. Based on her sabbatical research, English instructor Nancy Gray *established the first neurodiversity student center at a Michigan community college.* Working with Michigan Rehabilitation Services, we have begun to offer this self-funded service that has helped our first cohort of students this year.

See:

<https://www.traverseticker.com/news/nmc-unveils-new-neurodiversity-support-center/>

- **Acquisition of Off-Campus Apartments.** This is an equity initiative, an effort to help ensure that affordable housing is available for our students (and, not a barrier to their enrollment). The Front Street Flats acquisition added 24 units (all 2 bedrooms) to our student housing asset inventory, potentially accommodating 48 more students on campus. Troy Kierczynski led this effort, developing a financial model, performing due diligence, and the remodeling of ten units. He also did not hire a real estate agent, saving the College significant dollars by not having to pay a realtor's commission. We are on track to have all 24 units remodeled and filled with students by January 2025.
- **International Services.** "Life changing experiences" is how students reflect on their international study trips that the College provides. Our college is now ranked in the top ten for our study abroad program and this ranking reflects the quality of the learning that our students enjoy, according to the Institute of International Education (IIE). A special part of our students' experience is the service learning that they do as part of their trips. We are already planning five trips for 2025 and anticipate another sixty students participating in them.

See:

<https://www.traverseticker.com/news/up-there-with-the-heavy-hitters-nmc-study-abroad-program-scores-top-10-national-ranking/>

- **Campus Safety and Emergency Preparedness.** Maslow's hierarchy of needs prescribes that 'safety' needs be met before 'love and belonging' needs can be satisfied. Thus, our campus safety and emergency preparedness initiatives are central to our development of a sense of belonging at NMC. This past year I encouraged Troy to engage with Security Risk Management Consultants (SRMC) to conduct a campus-wide safety and security assessment. SRMC conducted their on-site assessment of NMC facilities beginning the week of June 3. They recently completed their report pending the finalization of the prioritization of their recommendations. Their work entailed:
 - Evaluating the effectiveness of the College's present security program, including the security systems (access control, video surveillance, intrusion detection, emergency phones, mass notification, duress alarms, etc.), security staffing and structure, parking lot security, lighting, lock and key control, policies and procedures, incident reporting, workplace violence prevention and training, emergency management, crime prevention through environmental design features (including grounds, buildings, parking lots, lighting and landscaping), and other security and operational considerations.

- Identifying and analyzing direct and indirect threats to, as well as potential vulnerabilities of students, faculty, staff, visitors, and the facilities.
- Identifying potential gaps between current operations and best practices, taking into consideration future expansion, industry trends, and the College's strategic plan.
- Providing specific prioritized recommendations to optimize the security programming for the College.
- And, providing a road map for enhancements and mitigation measures with order of magnitude costs for implementation.

We are beginning planning for sharing/discussing the report findings and recommendations through our shared governance channels, over this fall semester. And, then, beginning to execute on the recommendations. We are in process of recruiting a full-time Campus Safety Coordinator who will help implement the report's key recommendations and provide a more safe, secure, and prepared environment for our campuses.

- **Staffing and DEIB.** I'd also like to highlight my personal commitment to diversity on my leadership team, the President's Council, with the hiring of Marcus Bennett and Dino Hernandez, as well as the promotion of Hollie DeWalt (AVP Human Resources).

Strategy #4: Community Partnerships and Engagement

While there is so much positive news to report in terms of community partnerships and engagement, the majority of our attention and energy this past year has been invested in development of the Freshwater Research and Innovation Center.

- **Freshwater Research and Innovation Center.** While Board of Trustee members, Foundation Board members, other College staff (and me) are playing a role, I have to credit Jason Slade for his leadership. He's the one who is actively continuing to develop personal relationships with all of our Freshwater Research and Innovation Center partners: Michigan Tech, Discovery Center, 20 Fathoms, and Traverse Connect. This year, he has expanded this to include potential future tenants, including: Grand Valley State University, Central Michigan University, and Michigan State University. He has astutely positioned FRIC and championed that this isn't 'just' a research center; rather, he has helped our community and supporting organizations understand how FRIC can also be a driver of regional economic development (e.g., Traverse City's wading into the new blue economy). This language has been picked up by Traverse Connect as they brand the region as the "epicenter of the new blue economy".

I'm most proud of the outreach we're doing with our state's most prominent universities (e.g., Michigan State University) and their highly respected faculty/researchers:

- Doug Gage, VP, Research and Innovation
- Doug Buhler, Associate VP, Research and Innovation
- Joan Rose, Homer Nowlin Chair in Water Research; Professor; Director, Water Alliance
- Dana Infante, Chair and Professor, Department of Fisheries and Wildlife

- Heather Triezenberg, Associate Director and Program Leader Michigan Sea Grant
- Josh Gunn, Associate Director, Community, Food & Environment Institute MSU Extension
- Jo Latimore, Director of Center for Lakes and Streams, MSU Extension
- Mark Breederland, Michigan Sea Grant Extension Educator

In a 2-day long meeting with MSU, this past summer, points of collaboration were identified and a follow-up scheduled for early November. Similar discussions have occurred with GVSU's Annis Water Resources Institute (AWRI) and the university's upper administration including President Dr. Philomena (Philly) Mantella and Dr. Kara Van Dam, Vice Provost Graduate & Lifetime Learning. In mid-September, Mark Luttenton, Interim Director of AWRI and Stewart Jones, incoming AWRI Director, were on site for a review of FRIC and to identify strategic next steps for GVSU. Also, Central Michigan University is currently reviewing a preliminary lease agreement for an Institute for the Great Lakes Research Lab to be relocated at FRIC, giving CMU a larger presence in the region.

From the very start, Jason has championed not only NMC's 'place at the table', but also NMC's leadership role (as seen by our present role as one of two organizations comprising the new joint venture organization). This has resulted in the development of the articles of incorporation for the newly formed nonprofit organization, jointly owned by NMC and Discovery Center. The bylaws to successfully govern this project were painstakingly developed and included input from the key partners while protecting the college financially and also complying with Michigan's Community College Act. Discovery Center and NMC celebrated this milestone, signing the articles of incorporation on September 4th, formally launching this truly one-of-a-kind partnership. A larger celebration is being planned with all partners and future tenants during the groundbreaking. NMC will have key representation on the governing board – I've asked Jason Slade and Rachel Johnson to serve as the two NMC-appointed board members.

See:

- <https://www.traverseticker.com/news/nmc-partners-confirm-ambitious-freshwater-research-center-on-grand-traverse-bay/>
- <https://www.traverseticker.com/news/gold-in-the-water-local-partners-band-together-to-make-traverse-city-a-global-freshwater-leader/>
- https://www.record-eagle.com/opinion/editorial-freshwater-research-and-innovation-on-center/article_27eb858a-93d7-11ed-b5ce-af6939ba289d.html

Many from NMC have invested significantly in relationship building and in legislative advocacy work to build funding/support. This has entailed numerous meetings in Lansing and Traverse City, as well as attendance at political fundraisers, including many individual meetings with State Senator John Damoose, State Representatives Betsy

Coffia and John Roth, and Lieutenant Governor Gilchrist, as well as our US Senators Stabenow and Peters, helping to land our initial \$1.627 million federal earmark as well as the more recent \$15 million of state support. Most recently, Jason Slade has taken the lead, connecting FRIC with the State's Advanced Aerial Mobility (AAM), a collaborative effort between the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT), the Office of Future Mobility and Electrification (OFME), and the Michigan Economic Development Corporation. MEDC has selected the region to test drones for use cases including marine surveying, water sampling and testing, bathymetric mapping, and emergency response support around the Lake Michigan area. Some of this funding will support future drone deployment at FRIC. This allows the college to leverage FRIC for drone testing as well.

Lastly, fundraising efforts, led by Discovery Center, continue. With Dino Hernandez now in the Chief Advancement Officer role for NMC, additional fundraising support will be available for FRIC. Current cost estimates for completing the building are \$31.5 million. To date \$22.7 million has been secured (which includes the \$3 million support from NMC and \$3 million from Discovery Center). Additional pledges are ongoing as we work to close the gap. Tentative construction of the 40,000 square foot building is scheduled to begin the fall of 2025, and be completed spring of 2027.

See:

- <https://www.traverseticker.com/news/freshwater-research-innovation-center-score-s-16-million-in-federal-funding/>
- <https://www.traverseticker.com/news/freshwater-research-innovation-center-receives-15m-in-state-budget/>.

I must also mention how we're beginning to breathe life into the new Freshwater Research and Innovation Center, before the building is even constructed. We're developing the kind of programming that will characterize the Freshwater Research and Innovation Center's agenda.

- **Partnering with AquaAction to Support Development of the New Blue Economy/Water Innovation.** I have personally leveraged previous partnering relationships, to help advance NMC's positioning as a leader in the new blue economy/water innovation in our region, directly aligning with the future work at FRIC.

I can proudly share that this past year the College and Canadian non-profit AquaAction have teamed up and launched the first bi-national AquaHacking Challenge for the Great Lakes. The AquaHacking Challenge is a tech innovation program focused on developing solutions to pressing freshwater issues within the Great Lakes watershed region. The results were over 170 participants, forming 37 teams to showcase solutions to these critical water challenges, where 10 finalists pitched in May at NMC's Hagerty Center. Philadelphia-based startup Baleena won the first-place prize of \$20,000 for a microplastics filter that fits into the drum of a washing machine. Traverse City based startup Wave Lumina won second place and \$10,000 for its pitch to develop portable PFAS contamination detection kits, and is currently renting space on NMC's Aero Park Campus to continue product development.

By hosting this challenge at NMC and supporting the innovation that goes along with it, the hope is that these water innovators will want to stay and spin those businesses up in Traverse City. This then becomes the pipeline for the Freshwater Research & Innovation Center.

See:

- <https://michiganadvance.com/2024/05/15/microplastics-filter-for-laundry-wins-to-p-prize-at-great-lakes-aquahacking-challenge/>
- <https://www.northernexpress.com/news/feature/water-knows-no-borders-aqua-acti-on-aqua-hacking-nmc/>

While the Benzie County Annexation Ballot Initiative didn't see its way through to the election, and a vote by Benzie County residents, I made a significant investment of time and energy to advance the possibility. And, I think it's safe to say that this wasn't a 'loss'. Rather, the investment has yielded: a much richer understanding of the annexation process; the development of deep relationships with Benzie County residents, political leaders, and supporters of the College; and, a deeper understanding of the issues facing Benzie County (and, how the College might play a role in addressing those issues).

- **Benzie County Annexation Ballot Initiative.** Over the past 12 months I took on what seemed to be 'another job' (in addition to my president role), as I served as the leader for our Benzie County annexation ballot initiative. During this past year, I made over 30 trips to Benzie County to engage in meetings with residents, businesses/organizations, politicians, supporters *and* opposition. These meetings afforded me insights that allowed me to recommend to the College's Board of Trustees that we 'move ahead' with the annexation possibility. I also engaged with pollsters, campaign consultants, 'Yes Committee' advocates, legal counsel, and State government and associations. Since spring, I led our NMC team in advancing our efforts; until the end of August when we made the decision to withdraw our ballot proposal (given the ballot language inaccuracy issue). While the withdrawal wasn't our intended 'end game', I firmly believe it was the right decision and that it preserved (and, maybe even strengthened) the College's positive reputation (by not advancing inaccurate ballot language).

In addition, our exceptionally well managed communications not only quickly de-escalated a potential crisis situation, but strengthened the public perception of the College by highlighting how we upheld our organizational values. This reframing led to nearly 100% positive feedback about "how the College handled it". I am especially grateful and proud of the work of Todd Neibauer who worked side-by-side with me, from the very start of this initiative, and I want to recognize him for his 'above and beyond' contribution. What's next? Or, where do we go from here? We will be scheduling a Board study session in the near future, to ensure that we have an 'after action review' to make sense of the efforts, and to begin considering any next steps. I am convinced that the issue of accessibility and affordability remain key issues for our surrounding counties, who

remain in an ‘educational desert’. We must ask ourselves and answer what role we want to play in helping them, and serving our mission as northwestern Michigan’s college (and, not just Grand Traverse County’s college).

Strategy #5: Institutional Distinction and Sustainability

Our NMC Strategic Plan’s 5th goal, “Institutional Distinction and Sustainability” asserts that we will, “*Leverage distinctive programs that strengthen institutional sustainability and expand global connections for our learners and communities.*” Here, I will address examples of: 1) our leveraging of distinctive programs; 2) our strengthening of institutional sustainability; and 3) our expansion of global connections for our learners and communities.

First, let me speak to one significant development and means for accomplishing these goals - continuing development of our **Office of Possibilities (OOPs)**. I have taken on a championing role, for developing the College’s entrepreneurial mindset and innovation capacity. Historically, we have been fortunate to rely on the NMC Foundation for the support of Innovation Grants to improve teaching and learning at the college. But the landscape of higher education is changing, and disruptive innovation has become more critical to ensure NMC’s long-term success. We are fortunate to have dedicated faculty and staff here at NMC, who have always been willing to take risks and embrace new ideas. We are also experiencing a growing entrepreneurial ecosystem in Traverse City as more start-ups, incubators and collaborative spaces take root in our region.

With all of this in mind and in partnership with the Foundation, we have launched a more disruptive and exciting innovation strategy and supporting infrastructure at the college. The Office of Possibilities (or OOPs) is designed to allow students, faculty, and staff to explore and develop their ideas. Unlike the College’s previous innovation process, it involves: 1) mentoring to challenge and flesh out the idea; 2) connecting back to the entrepreneurial community; and 3) focusing on developing entrepreneurial mindedness/a growth-driven mindset to expand innovation at NMC. In short, we’re leveraging OOPs to build the College’s innovation capability (yes, “OOPs” - encouraging risk taking and learning from failure). We are encouraging entrepreneurial thinking and disruptive innovation at NMC and building out our community’s entrepreneurial ecosystem.

This has resulted in some strong successes over the past year. During the 2023-24 academic year, the NMC Foundation funded a record eight new projects as well as two cohorts of the Design Thinking Workshop and Innovation 101. New projects included:

- Motorsports Club (student)
- Microplastics in the Boardman/Ottaway Watershed (faculty)
- Human Flourishing Credential/Common Good Education (faculty)
- Learning to Learn software module (faculty)
- Native American Community Education (students)
- Neurodiversity Support Center (faculty)
- Custom Pharmaceutical Bottle for Opiates (student)
- Quantifying Microplastic Pollution (students)

- **Our leveraging of distinctive programs.** I am most proud of how we've advanced the Aviation Growth Plan, with hangar groundbreaking scheduled for October 7, 2024, and completion scheduled for Fall 2025. We have committed to leveraging this distinctive program to support an aggressive growth plan over the next three years, including more instructors, more aircraft, and a bigger hangar – to support enrollment growth. Those expansions will allow the college to realize up to 50 percent more aviation students per year, which would in turn help make a dent in the pilot shortage, grow the College's revenues, and the region's economy. In addition to the \$3.75 million we secured from state advocacy efforts, this year we also received \$550,000 from a Federal earmark sponsored by Senator Stabenow.

See:

<https://www.traverseticker.com/news/taking-it-higher-nmc-plots-aviation-program-expansion/>

Also, our Uncrewed Aerial Systems degree (UAS program) continues to align with industry needs through the pursuit of grants and strengthened industry connections. The UAS program was selected as part of an Advanced Aerial Mobility grant in July, providing new equipment and statewide exposure. The program also applied as part of a consortium with Munson, CMU, DroneUp and others for a US Department of Transportation grant to provide workforce development and technical assistance for the development of a healthcare drone corridor.

See:

<https://www.traverseticker.com/news/state-funding-to-support-drone-testing-electric-aircraft-charging-in-tc/#:~:text=In%202022%2C%20The%20Ticker%20reported,as%20UAS%20are%20cleared%20to>

- **Our strengthening of institutional sustainability.** This past year I turned our attention to include long-term budgeting and the building of a 7-year forecast. That forecast identified gaps in future years (if nothing is done), including FY25, driving initiatives to balance the current year budget, as well as actions to ensure long-term sustainability.

Current year initiatives have saved approximately \$1.2 million dollars annually (\$528,000 from the Voluntary Separation Plan and \$636,000 from the position analysis/attrition and reorganizations):

- 3 Departmental Reorganizations
 - (1) Human Resources – eliminated one FTE and combined previous Benefits/Comp Manager with the AVP role.
 - (2) Learning Services – eliminated a layer of management (one FTE) and redistributed workload.
 - (3) Academic Affairs – eliminated one FTE, added part of that FTE to another department (Educational Technologies) and redistributed workload.

- Reduction through Attrition
 - 35 positions have become vacant and been reviewed; 25 have been replaced; 6 have not been replaced; 3 faculty positions have been replaced by adjuncts; 1 position is on hold as we monitor
- Voluntary Severance Plan
 - 6 retirements, 3 positions not replaced

Additionally, our EduStaff implementation, our move to utilizing Edustaff for new supplemental and adjunct hiring, has resulted in savings of about \$150,000, as of March 2024.

As we look ahead, this year we are beginning to implement a ‘program review’ process – PESR, the Program Enhancement and Sustainability Review process. We anticipate this generating a half million dollars of improvement, and a balancing of the FY 26 budget. I can proudly state that we are forecasting a General Fund surplus of approximately \$1.0 million for FY24, and all board required reserves are projected to be in compliance with targets as of 6/30/24.

A bit of very positive news – *possibly* – thanks to the diligence of both Troy Kierczynski (Vice President for Finance & Administration) and Trustee Chris Bott, NMC submitted a claim for the Employee Retention Credit (ERC) – sometimes called the Employee Retention Tax Credit or ERTC – a refundable tax credit for certain eligible businesses and tax-exempt organizations that had employees and were affected during the COVID-19 pandemic. Our auditors have recently informed us that our claim has met the eligibility requirements. However, we are still awaiting IRS review of the claim. *If we’re successful*, the ERC could yield approximately \$8 million of revenue (to help fund the long list of campus master plan capital needs).

As you’re well aware, over this past year, the College completed yet another major strategic planning process, this one for our campus facilities, our Campus Master Plan. It has resulted in a courageous vision and plan that was approved by the Board in June. It will result in:

- Repurposing of the University Center, and sale of underutilized properties (creating revenue diversification)
- Expanding student housing (removing a barrier for enrollment)
- Conversion of our power plant to renewable energy
- Vision for the development of our Eastern Avenue property
- Revitalization of our Front Street/Main Campus, including the development of a Student Services Hub
- As well as, our Aviation Expansion/Growth Plan and the development of the Freshwater Research and Innovation Center

See:

- <https://www.traverseticker.com/news/new-nmc-campus-plan-outlines-possibilities-for-student-housing-expansion-eastern-avenue-parcel/>
- <https://www.traverseticker.com/news/nmc-eyes-student-housing-more-vibrant-main-campus-as-part-of-in-progress-facilities-master-plan/>

In mid-September I communicated to the College that after careful consideration, NMC has decided to end our long-standing contract with Sodexo, which has provided facilities management services for our college for the past 18 years, since 2006. Effective November 30, 2024, we will transition to an internal facilities management model, with NMC directly hiring employees to fill these facilities management roles and oversee these essential operations. I believe that by bringing the facilities management team in-house, NMC will be better positioned to adapt to the evolving needs of our students, staff, and campus. This strategic reorganization will also allow us to more directly manage our facilities operations and ensure stronger alignment of the operations and personnel with our mission, vision, and values, while enhancing communication across all levels of facilities operations. In the spirit of sound fiscal stewardship, the reorganization will also afford us cost savings that will be reinvested in other strategic priorities. Specifically, it will allow for the hiring two new critical positions as part of this reorganization, with no additional costs to the college due to the savings we will realize from ending the Sodexo contract:

- **Campus Safety Coordinator:** This new full-time role will report directly to the Vice President for Finance and Administration and be responsible for safety, security, emergency management, occupational and environmental health and safety, and more. Previously, this position reported through facilities and was provided through our Sodexo contract.
- **Facilities Project Manager:** This new full-time role will report to the Director of Facilities and focus on the execution of our recently approved campus master plan.

Lastly, let me share that my commitment to fiscal stewardship and long-term sustainability is evidenced in my courageous leadership and managing of our staffing levels. You can see (in the chart, below), that I've managed the overall staffing levels downward from 684 (when I arrived, pre-pandemic) to today's level of 605 – a 12% reduction. While we've realized increases in staff positions – from 146 pre-Covid in 2019 to 157 today (e.g., our in-sourcing of Hawk Owl Café and hiring of staff roles like our Marketing and Creative Director roles in PRMC to support strategic plan initiatives) – we've at the same time seen a decrease in the number of administrator/manager roles in the College. In fact, I've personally 'led the way' reducing my own team/staff, by eliminating the Chief of Staff role and restructuring HR executive leadership, resulting in an FTE reduction.

	2023	2022	2021	2020	2019	2018	2017	2016	2015	2014
Staff	157	150	142	145	146	134	146	154	154	148
Administrators/Managers	35	35	37	37	36	36	35	36	37	37
Faculty	81	82	82	82	81	86	88	90	95	96
Adjunct	123	125	149	139	158	140	170	177	178	191
Maintenance/Custodial/Group	27	27	28	29	31	31	31	31	31	35
Supplemental	112	103	87	60	140	139	135	127	132	133
Students	70	72	67	55	92	83	106	93	108	102
Total	605	594	592	547	684	649	711	708	735	742
*NOTE- These numbers are captured in November of every year and represent a snapshot in the year.										
Number of PC members from Admi	10	10	10	10	10					

Also, there have been questions raised about the decrease in the number of student employees. So, let me share the following chart which shows that while the real number of student employees has declined significantly since Covid (from 92 in 2019 to 70 today), the percentage of students who are employees has remained relatively constant, around 2%. In other words, the decline in the number of student employees is in line with the overall decline of student enrollment. That said, we're taking action (e.g., recently increasing the hourly rate for student workers from \$12 to \$14/hour) to encourage more students to take advantage of on-campus employment. However, as you're well aware, our whole community is competing for the labor force, and many times our students are finding higher wages in off-campus employment.

	2024	2023	2022	2021	2020	2019	2018	2017	2016	2015	2014
Student Employees		70	72	67	55	92	83	106	93	108	102
Total Student Count	3255	3148	3100	3285	3278	3581	3726	3956	4167	4268	4542
		44.97142857	43.05555556	49.02985075	59.6	38.92391304	44.89156627	37.32075472	44.80645161	39.51851852	44.52941176
Ratio of Students/ Employees		45:1	43:1	49:1	60:1	39:1	45:1	37:1	45:1	40:1	45:1
Percentage of Students who are Employees		2.22%	2.32%	2.04%	1.66%	2.57%	2.23%	2.68%	2.23%	2.53%	2.25%

- **Our expansion of global connections for our learners and communities.** The College's Extended Education (EES) programming has developed high-value learning opportunities that leverage faculty expertise and participants yearning to travel abroad. Launched in the fall of 2023, EES has successfully run trips to Italy (full with waitlist) and Iceland & Greenland (full). As well as a trip to Greece scheduled for Fall 2024 (full with waitlist). And, South Africa is scheduled for Winter/Spring 2025.

In addition to this example of EES's distinctive programming that's contributing to our sustainable business operations, the Great Lakes Water Studies Institute and the College's Construction Technology programs are again working with the Yellow River Conservancy Technical Institute (YRCTI) in China, after a pause due to the pandemic.

YRCTI will send 75 students virtually to each program this fall and NMC instructors will travel to Kaifeng, China in the spring.

SECTION #2: EVIDENCE/EXAMPLES OF NINE CORE COMPETENCIES FROM PRESIDENT’S EVALUATION INSTRUMENT

As mentioned earlier, last year, a new evaluation instrument was developed by the PPCC. The instrument articulates nine core competencies/key leadership accountabilities:

- (1) Communications
- (2) Teamwork
- (3) Productivity
- (4) Dependability
- (5) Quality
- (6) Problem Solving
- (7) Ethical Behavior
- (8) Shared Governance
- (9) Board Communications and Relations

In this section, I share select, specific examples of how my leadership manifested results in these nine areas. They are meant to be illustrative, and are not exhaustive.

Communications

Demonstrates ability to effectively handle routine and non-routine internal and external communication, both oral and written.

I am proud of my communications: with internal college stakeholders (e.g., students, faculty, and staff); external stakeholders; and specifically with the Board of Trustees and Foundation Board. For example:

- Internal Stakeholders:
 - Weekly President’s Council Meetings
 - Once Per Semester Meeting with PC Leaders’ Teams
 - Once Per Semester Meeting with the Student Government Association
 - Monthly Leadership Council Meetings
 - Opening Conference (August and January)
 - Annual Meeting with Residence Life Staff
 - Annual Meeting with GLMA Board of Visitors
 - Annual Meeting with Faculty Association President
 - Bi-Annual College Orientation
 - Bi-Monthly New Employee Meet and Greet Coffees
 - Annual College Holiday Party
 - Annual Budget Town Hall Meetings
 - Periodic Meetings with Governance and Leadership Groups on Campus

- Periodic Meetings with Phi Theta Kappa

While these are formally/regularly scheduled meetings, many more informal meetings occur, as requested/needed. Also, this is not an exhaustive list, but rather illustrative of the formal/regular meetings that occur, to afford communication with internal stakeholders. In addition, I actively engage with stakeholders through social media, to allow them to stay real-time updated on my activities/things happening at the College. My use of social media to keep the campus and community informed was recognized by my community college peers, earning me an invitation to present/share my strategy at last year's ACCT LeadCongress.

Simply, I am very actively engaged, 'showing up' for 'just about everything' on campus and in the community. In terms of campus activities, I am present and actively engaged in activities ranging from IAF to Welcome Week, and Musical Concerts to the Cherry Festival Parade.

- External Stakeholders:

I am also actively engaged in the local community – e.g., my board service to Traverse Connect Board of Directors, Goodwill Northern Michigan Board of Directors, Munson Medical Center Community Healthcare Council, and my regular participation in the Rotary Club of Traverse City, which afford me opportunities to communicate about NMC, as well as to listen/hear community feedback – positive and negative – about the College. In addition to these regular/formal engagement opportunities with external stakeholders, I also 'show up' for countless other organizations/events (e.g., from the Cherry Festival to Rotary's Kids Free Fishing Day) – which further communicates my/NMC's commitment to the wider community). The fact that I am so accessible to community members, communicates my willingness to listen and engage with the community. In turn, Trustees are not confronted with 'community complaints' or negative perceptions of the College.

I should also add that I annually participate in MCCA's Capitol Day, as well as a handful of other times per year, meet with state legislators and local political leaders, in Lansing as well as hosting them on campus. Additionally, I have over the past five years, sustained a productive working relationship with all of our local media, and offer them regular access for interviews/coverage of NMC issues.

Lastly, I have adeptly managed some challenging communication issues – from staking out a vision/plan for Eastern Avenue development opportunities, to University Center consolidation onto Main Campus, not to mention the Benzie County annexation proposal.

- Board of Trustees:

Please see Competency #9, *Board Communications and Relations*, at the end of this section, where board communications is specifically addressed.

- Foundation Board and Donors/Supporters:

This past year, I have had more than 30 meetings with donors/supporters and Foundation Board members, engaging in both stewardship and cultivation. Most of these meetings are held at my home and formally engage these individuals over a meal or social gathering. This past year, it included traveling across Lake Michigan to Milwaukee, aboard the *State of Michigan* with the Great Lakes Maritime Academy cadets. I joined with our Foundation staff, and Wisconsin Navy League members for a Great Lakes Maritime Academy special port of call visit to raise funds for the Wisconsin US Navy League's scholarship at NMC. Additionally, significant time and energy was invested in the Foundation restructuring and the Chief Advancement Officer search process, resulting in the top-notch hiring of the College's new Chief Advancement Officer, Dino Hernandez.

Teamwork

Willingness and ability to work for and with others to achieve a common goal.

My primary team is the President's Council. And, I consider the team to be 'high performing' (just look at the results being realized through the execution of our strategic plan). I also spend time with our Leadership Council, the 'next level' of leaders – e.g., PC's teams – meeting with them monthly, to communicate and help grow their leadership talent. I'm keenly aware that as President I must be focused on the development of *my team's teams*, our bench strength, and the need for ensuring the capability of others to *step up* when needed. I continue to invest in leadership development of our College's leaders – e.g., supporting their participation in MCCA's Leadership Academy, and Leadership Grand Traverse.

Considering the definition of this competency – *working with others to achieve a common goal* – just look at the results being realized across the College. From student success, to fiscal well-being and enrollment growth, not to mention positive labor and media relations. Or consider that we've had another record-setting year of fundraising. There's an optimism and hopefulness about the College's future. Our teams are building trust and confidence through values-grounded and results-driven leadership. Of course, conflict is a natural (and healthy) part of any team. I continue to support our teams to manage and transform conflict, mindful that *the relationship is the delivery system of anything we try to accomplish*. To that end, I've invested in a year-long team development process, engaging with an outside facilitator, to help us, as President's Council, grow together. Especially, considering the magnitude of the challenges that we're facing in the next five years, as we go about executing: the College's and Foundation's strategic plan (as well as a refreshed one for the College, next year), the Campus Master Plan, the Branding Refresh, and beginning a new Fundraising Campaign – I must ensure that we're a highly functioning team. This year-long process with the President's Council is designed to help us grow so we can deliver on these big goals.

Productivity

Refers to the amount of acceptable work to be performed as efficiently and cost effectively as possible.

I consider myself to be a highly productive leader. And, the results being realized by the President's Council, advancing our strategic plan, surely speak to the College's culture (and, my reinforcement of the culture). Just consider the big, bold actions taken this past year:

- Campus Master Plan
- Brand Assessment and Strategy Development
- Aviation Growth Plan
- Freshwater Research and Innovation Center
- Benzie Annexation
- Voluntary Separation Plan and Reorganizations

Dependability

The ability to accept and complete responsibilities.

I have brought an action-oriented bias to NMC and the President's role. Thus, I've embraced this competency's charge to 'complete'. And, I don't shy away from difficult challenges. Rather, I steadily push through challenges, in a calm, steady way. For example, during the Campus Master Plan process I created space for neighbors' voices to be heard, yet I didn't relent in staking out a vision/plan for Eastern Avenue development opportunities. Similarly, in the Campus Master Planning process, I led the College to action, building consensus around a vision for the University Center consolidation onto Main Campus. As well, for 12 months I persisted through the Benzie County annexation proposal process, often encountering negative comments, but again, being unrelenting in advancing the College's vision. I've also not shied away from challenges – like the Voluntary Separation Plan or reorganizations. I can be counted on to *do what I say I am going to do*. That's dependability.

NMC embraces a plan-do-check-adjust (PDCA) approach to taking action. I've also shown my flexibility, to *adjust* when needed. While it could be imagined that we wouldn't have 'backed down' from our pursuit of the Benzie annexation vote, I showed that I am also capable of adjusting (even when it means not achieving the desired goal/outcome). In this instance, my actions communicated that I am the 'chief executive' – e.g., 'where the (proverbial) buck stops'. It was me, as the College president, who made the decision (after weighing many perspectives/others' input). The decision to withdraw our ballot proposal was mine, and was owned by me.

Quality

The work provided is accurate, thorough and consistent.

There are a number of examples from around the College that one can look to as data points that speak to my championing of 'quality'. Let me offer four:

- First, consider how our occupational programs, especially our health occupation programs, consistently produce successful graduates who are rapidly placed in their field of study. Among these programs is our Dental Assistant program. Quality and excellence can be defined by the success of our students and recognition of our instructors. This

program illustrated both this year as our students passed their state exams at a rate of 100% and the program coordinator, Beckie Wooters, was the recipient of the 2024 Allied Dental Professional Educator by the Michigan Dental Association. See: <https://www.nmc.edu/about/nmc-stories/success-stories/dental-assisting-gets-100-percent.html>. Similarly, consider our Nursing program’s quality outcomes this past year. They achieved a 96.77% pass rate on the national exam, higher than the US and MI results.

NCLEX-RN Pass Rate Data Comparisons

ACADEMIC YEAR	NMC	MI	US	ALL ADN
2023–24	96.77%	92.95%	93.03%	92.42%

One other program in our health occupations area that reflects the high quality and excellence that I champion across the college, is our Surgical Technology program. NMC’s program is run in partnership with Munson Medical Center and graduates have had a 100 percent pass rate on the licensing exam the last two years.

I offer these examples – Dental Assistant, Nursing, Surgical Technology – as examples of how my championing of quality within the College helps to reinforce a culture of continuous improvement and excellence.

- Second, I have wholeheartedly supported and continue to encourage NMC’s participation in the Higher Learning Commission’s Student Success Academy as fulfillment of the Open Pathway Quality Initiative. After the HLC accepted our Assurance Report this past January, our next step in the accreditation process requires that we establish a major project to support student success. In meeting this requirement, our Leadership Council decided to have NMC apply to the HLC Student Success Academy – and we were accepted. This is a two-year journey focused on discovering innovative approaches to facilitate student success. The work aligns to our strategic plan strategies of Future-Focused Education, Student Success, and DEIB. The tasks assigned by the academy require us to concentrate on specific subpopulations identified in our data as potential candidates for further research, with the aim of enhancing those students’ chances of success. We are seeking to identify those improvements that will impact the greatest number of our students.
- Third, speaking to the quality of my leadership, I was invited to join the national board of directors for the National Association for Community College Entrepreneurship (NACCE) which is the premier community college entrepreneurship organization in the United States. This will allow NMC leading-edge engagement with other entrepreneurially-minded community colleges, to help fuel our innovation endeavors. It also recognizes NMC as a leader.
- Lastly, I’d offer up that others, outside of the College, recognize the quality and excellence of the institution of NMC as well as my leadership – by choosing to invest in NMC. We continue to see record-breaking donations to the Foundation as well as

significant state and federal support of NMC initiatives (e.g., the \$15 million state support for the Freshwater Research and Innovation Center, and the \$3.75 million we received from the state to support the Aviation Growth Plan). These investments show public trust and confidence in the quality of NMC, and its leadership.

Problem Solving

Ability to define and resolve problems in a timely manner with little to no harm done.

While my daily work as president is focused around problem solving and decision making, let me share some examples from two specific areas: 1) problems solving around *managing costs* and 2) problem solving to support *revenue diversification*.

- Managing Costs

This past year I initiated and managed through some very significant cost management initiatives. These included: a voluntary separation plan; canceling of the Sodexo contract and restructuring our facilities operation; engaging EduStaff; as well as the GLCI reimagining. All of these required me to help the College see the possibility of improved performance through change, specifically managing labor expenses while not negatively impacting other areas. It also required that I approach problem solving while also maintaining fidelity to our values, seeking to balance fiscal stewardship with excellence (e.g., not ‘cutting’ too much, and ‘hurting’ other operations). As with any change these have been met with resistance. But, I have also worked hard to help the College ‘work through the change’.

A specific cost management initiative that I’ve helped us execute has been the ending of our long-standing contract with Sodexo (who has provided facilities management services for our college since 2006). By changing from the outsourced model and bringing this work in house, we’ll not only save money on the contract, we’ll be able to hire two critical positions to support implementation of our strategic plan – a campus Safety Coordinator role as well as a facilities Project Manager role. These two roles will be added without any net increase in expenses. I offer this as an example of the kind of creative problem solving that I am encouraging and supporting throughout the College.

- Supporting Revenue Diversification

I continually remind the College that “we cannot cut our way to prosperity”. I am a believer that a chief executive must focus on *both*, cost management strategies as well as revenue enhancement strategies. So, I have encouraged the College to embrace revenue enhancement and revenue diversification strategies, like: acquisition of the Front Street Apartments; Aviation Growth Plan; pursuit of the Employee Retention Credit (ERC); repositioning the University Center as a real estate asset; development of the Freshwater Research and Innovation Center; creating a vision for the development of our Eastern Avenue property; the positioning of a next fundraising campaign for the Foundation (to align with our 75th anniversary); as well as asset optimization at Lobdell’s and the Dennon Museum (as we develop special events revenue in both venues). These are examples of

the kind of creative problem solving that I am embracing and encouraging throughout the College, problem solving focused on possibilities – specifically, revenue enhancement and diversification

Ethical Behavior

Surely, you have come to realize, over these past five years, that I am a ‘man of integrity’ (e.g., I act with the highest degree of ethics, personal responsibility, and match my actions with my words). The value of this to Trustees and the reputation of the College cannot be overstated. Simply, trustees are not required to deal with drama, scandal, ‘bad press’ or anything else that could threaten their personal reputation or the College’s institutional reputation. As already noted throughout this document, the media has carried many positive stories of NMC this year, which reflect positively upon the Trustees. Simply, the College and Trustees were held in the most positive light, with NMC having an unprecedented year of positive media sentiment in news coverage.

As you know, this doesn’t ‘just happen’. It happens because you have a President who acts with the highest degree of integrity and ethical behavior. A President who is a role model for the rest of the College, encouraging those same high standards from everyone – e.g., shaping a culture of ethical behavior.

An example of this *behaving ethically* character of the President can be seen in our recent decision to withdraw the College’s ballot proposal (for annexation) from the Benzie County election ballot. As you’re well aware, I acted swiftly and decisively after learning that we had submitted inaccurate ballot language. While the withdrawal wasn’t our intended ‘end game’, I firmly believe it was the right decision and most importantly, that it preserved (and, maybe even strengthened) the College’s positive reputation (by not advancing inaccurate ballot language).

Shared Governance

The ability to engage the College shared governance process.

My actions show that I recognize the importance and value of the representative involvement of all members of the College community in College-wide planning, policy formulation, and decision-making. My leadership actions have shown that I invite others to have a voice in how decisions are made. At NMC our governance councils provide the formal representative structure for articulating that voice. I personally lead two of our four college governance councils: President's Council and Leadership Council; Planning/Budget Council is chaired by Stephen Siciliano; and, Policy Council is currently chaired by a faculty member. However, I go beyond the formal councils, to also informally engage with faculty and staff – e.g., through conversations with them during my daily campus walkabouts, to informal pizza parties and cookouts to just ‘connect’ with them as colleagues. My personal engagement with the President's Council is weekly, and I meet monthly with the Leadership Council. As mentioned earlier, I’ve initiated, this year, a year-long ‘team development’ process to further enhance the working relationships and effectiveness of the President's Council.

In addition, as you know, the Faculty Council is another representative body at the college, serving as a faculty senate, Faculty Council serves to represent faculty as part of shared governance. There is a formal practice of the President of the Faculty Association and/or the Chair of Faculty Council being invited to attend a minimum of two President's Council meetings per semester. Again, this minimum expectation is adhered to, with many more informal meetings with faculty occurring throughout the year. I am regularly invited into faculty member's classrooms and field trips to engage with their classes/students. This past year, I paid more than 20 visits to faculty in their classrooms, engaging with them and their students.

I also have an annual meeting with the President of the Faculty Association, simply designed to afford open, two-way communication. Obviously, it has helped build rapport and trust between us.

Board Communications and Relations

Build and maintain effective Board-President relationships.

My communications with the Board of Trustees occurs in multiple ways, including:

- the monthly Board of Trustees Meeting
- my written Mid-Month Update
- monthly check-in/update meetings with the Chair of the BOT
- bi-annual lunch/check-in meetings with each trustee
- participation in all Committee Meetings (Audit, Building and Site, Executive, Fellows Nominating, Policy, and Presidential Performance and Compensation; as well as all Foundation Board and committee meetings)
- bi-annual Study Sessions and biennial Retreats with the BOT
- Special Alerts (e.g., the Hamburg's visit to the Great Lakes Campus Harbor)
- Educational Materials (e.g., my sharing of "Trends in Higher Education Articles" in my Mid-Month Update)
- emails, phone calls, and face-to-face communications
- as well as an annual 'Back to School' gathering of the Board of Trustees and Foundation Board Executive Committee members
- additionally, special events afford informal communication opportunities, for example:
 - the Michigan Community College Association (MCCA) Board of Directors fall and spring board meetings, as well as the Summer Conference
 - MCCA Capital Day
 - the Association of Community College Trustees (ACCT) Annual Conference
 - NMC's Opening Conferences (August and January), Annual Retiree Recognition Celebration, and many more events on campus
- and, lastly, informal connections occur regularly, for example:
 - Rotary meetings
 - Welcome Week Move In
 - International Affairs Forum

- o Northern Michigan Policy Conference and Traverse Connect Annual Celebration Gala
- o and, simply seeing folks 'around town'

SECTION #3: LOOKING AHEAD TO ‘WHAT’S ON THE HORIZON’

What’s on the horizon? While much has been accomplished over these first five years of my presidency, I am equally excited about the possibilities that lie on the horizon. As we look ahead to the next five years, the following seven strategic initiatives are top of mind:

1. The end of 2025 will mark the completion of our **strategic plan**, *NMC Next*, and the need to update/develop a new way forward/strategic plan.
2. At the same time, we will begin implementation of our **campus master plan**, which will include:
 - a. Building consensus around a vision for the **University Center**, including the consolidation of the University Center onto the Front Street/Main Campus, and embracing its potential as a revenue diversification strategy (through repurposing it, not as an educational building, but as a real estate asset).
 - b. Expanding **student housing** – removing a barrier for enrollment while at the same time expanding revenue diversification strategies.
 - c. Renovating Osterlin and developing our **new student services hub**.
 - d. Conversion of our **power plant** to green/geothermal energy.
 - e. As well as execution of our **Aviation Growth Plan** and development of the **Freshwater Research and Innovation Center**.
3. Continuing to advance our **brand assessment and strategy planning process**, which will be especially important to aid in enrollment growth.
4. And, the development of the Foundation’s **next fundraising campaign** (to align with our 75th anniversary).
5. We will also begin implementing a **program review process** – PESR (the Program Enhancement and Sustainability Review) to ensure long-term fiscal sustainability.
6. Thinking sustainably about the College’s revenue model and seeking to decide upon the **non-enrollment driven revenue growth possibilities** – e.g., consideration of Hedlee override strategy; capital improvement strategy; and/or annexation strategies.
7. We will continue leveraging **The Office of Possibilities (OOPs)** to further develop the College’s innovation capability by encouraging entrepreneurial mindedness and innovative action at NMC while building out our community's entrepreneurial ecosystem.

I’d argue that we must also begin looking beyond the next five years, to *what lies beyond the horizon*. Our recently completed Campus Master Plan articulates a vision for the possible development of our Eastern Avenue property. The plan envisions that development to occur in the next 8 years. We will need to begin planning in this next 5-year window in order to deliver on that plan expectation.

These are big, bold plans for the College’s future. Plans that will span the next 5-10 years. I am prepared to commit to what’s required to deliver on these plans. And, in fact, I’ve already begun investing in a multiple years-long team development process, engaging with an outside facilitator, to help us, as President’s Council, grow together. Especially, considering the magnitude of the challenges that we’re facing in the next 5-10 years, as we go about executing

on the strategies noted above – I must ensure that we're a highly functioning team. This years-long process with the President's Council is designed to help us grow so we can deliver on these big goals.

SECTION #4: STRATEGIC PLAN IMPLEMENTATION STATUS REPORT

This is Year 3, the final year of this strategic plan, *NMC Next*. The goals for this academic year are to improve the performance of each objective and close as many strategies as possible. The Year 2 status and summary of each strategy is listed below.

Year 2 Status and Summary

Strategy 1: Future-Focused Education (Champion: Stephen Siciliano)

Enhance offerings through flexible academic pathways, innovative instructional delivery models, and relevant, hands-on educational experiences to empower global learners for the future.

Status: 4 objectives are in progress and on track. 1 objective is complete (accelerated courses).

Key Metrics: Course delivery, student success, and experiential learning opportunities are all meeting targets. Credentials for prior learning improved during the academic year 2023 - 2024. Efforts will continue as we identify more opportunities with the career tech center and noncredit programs. The objective to increase online course delivery was revised to better align delivery to student demand. Accelerated programs have exceeded the planned number of courses and this objective has entered monitoring mode (objective met).

Strategy 2: Student Engagement and Success (Champion: Todd Neibauer)

Develop and deliver comprehensive support services, robust engagement opportunities, and a vibrant collegiate experience to foster learner success, goal completion, and employability.

Status: All objectives are in progress and on track per action steps; enrollment gains made, but behind target.

Key Metrics: Student sense of belonging continues to increase and has exceeded its target. Enrollment numbers are still lagging behind targets but marketing campaigns continue to be expanded and three semesters have shown increased enrollment with Fall 2024 currently up (enrollment will not be finalized until after this report). Student Success coach coverage continues to be an issue as retaining coaches has been difficult.

Strategy 3: Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging (Champion: Marcus Bennett)

Cultivate an inclusive environment that fosters a sense of belonging and delivers equitable opportunities so all are able to thrive and succeed.

Status: 3 objectives are in progress and on track; 2 objectives are complete

Key updates: The collaborative offerings in the area of DEIB has had a tremendous impact on the college and the surrounding communities. Some examples are the creation of a DEIB webpage, a Neurodiversity Support Center, and a revitalized Multicultural Club which helped advance the initiative of inclusion and belongingness. The only area

that is lagging is the objective related to increasing BIPOC numbers for NMC, due to the limited BIPOC population in northern Michigan.

Strategy 4: Community Partnerships and Engagement (Champion: Jason Slade)

Enhance collaborations that advance community engagement, economic and workforce development, and innovative opportunities for lifelong learning.

Status: 4 objectives are in progress and on track. 1 objective is lagging target.

Key Metrics: Workforce development opportunities have increased and on-site custom training added. Financial performance of EES continues to improve, but is still behind target. Monitored via Business Office and monthly check-ins. University partnerships are on track.

Strategy 5: Institutional Distinction and Sustainability (Champion: Troy Kierczynski)

Leverage distinctive programs that strengthen institutional sustainability and expand global connections for our learners and communities.

Status: 3 objectives are on track, 1 is behind, and 3 objectives have been met and are in monitoring mode.

Key Metrics: Aviation exceeded past revenue and headcounts; hangar expansion begins this fall. Culinary has met its financial objective. WNMC has moved to monitor mode. IAF continues to improve. GLWSI is not meeting financial targets but is seeing an increase in enrollment for the second straight Fall.

Internally, Year 2 resulted in the following:

- continued alignment of the Strategic Plan to A3s (department-level goal setting) and program review
- cascading of goals from the Strategic Plan to the department level to individual performance plans
- alignment with NMC's budget cycle and resource planning processes
- incorporation of some of the college's key initiatives including increased hangar expansion and the freshwater center
- drove key parts of the master planning process
- updating of a dashboard system with objective-level metrics
- timely updates to internal and external stakeholders
- completion of 2 additional objectives (accelerated courses and WNMC financial performance)

Year 2 Successes

While there have been numerous wins, both big and small, below are some key successes we should be proud of and are the direct result of the Strategic Plan and the dedication of objective leads and champions.

Strategy 1 (Future-Focused Education) - Accelerated course delivery has been implemented. Advisors and chairs continue to monitor for opportunities and to ensure student success. Over 90% of students had an experiential learning opportunity (ELO) this academic year, up from only 54% in Fall '22, well on the way to providing an ELO for every credential-seeking student. This has been assured for the future as we now have infused at least one experiential learning opportunity in all of our certificates and degrees.

Strategy 2 (Student Success) - In Year 2, PRMC refined its campaigns to focus on conversion and performance. In addition to adult and traditional learners, the campaigns prioritized key program areas with unique offerings that appeal to a wider geographic market (GLCI and GLWSI.) In addition to increasing enrollment in these areas, PRMC also improved the return on advertising spend and cost per application metrics. Spring-to-fall retention percentages are higher for this year compared with last year.

Strategy 3 (DEIB) - DEIB training implemented for all employees. A professional development DEIB goal has been added to our HR goal setting system to allow employees to pick their own DEIB area of interest for education, empowering employees to select goals that resonate with them. Completion of the DEIB survey from Brooklyn College has provided survey results to advance remaining objectives.

Strategy 4 (Community Partnerships) - Extended Education Services' training arm has become an exclusive training partner to Sara Lee, providing training to supervisors and those on the production floor. Additionally, this custom training model has been rolled out to other local businesses. Tiered offerings and other changes have been implemented to continue to improve the financial performance of EES. Direct connect has been developed with GVSU and deployed this fall to better advise and support students starting at NMC and continuing on to GVSU.

Strategy 5 (Distinctive Programs) - A new maritime culinary certificate was developed and the second cohort begins this Fall. The Great Lakes Culinary Institute continues to meet their objective with significant financial improvement (a loss of \$375k in Fall '21 to a projected positive balance of almost \$80k in FY24). Fleet expansion has begun and the groundbreaking for the aviation hangar expansion is scheduled for this Fall.

Year 3 Transition

The development of Year 3 action steps began in November 2023 with preparation of a rough draft of action steps to support the current objectives based on performance metrics. Subsequent feedback sessions occurred as well as integration between the college's A3s and budget processes ensuring alignment across program areas and resources. Champions, key objective leads, and others reviewed key strategies in early June 2024 with the President's Council to share which actions will occur over the next twelve months to close out or further advance the open objectives. New and updated actions were finalized with the adoption of the FY25 budget, Year 2 Strategic Plan Actions were archived beginning July 1, 2024, and Year 3 Actions implemented as

of July 31, 2024. This comparison of each year in terms of objectives and action steps provides an overview:

	Year 1 of Strategic Plan	Year 2 of Strategic Plan	Year 3 of Strategic Plan (current)	Comments
Time Frame	~ 17 months Feb. 2022 - June 2023	12 months July 2023 - June 2024	12 months July 2024 - June 2025	Aligns with fiscal year for departmental planning and budgeting
Strategies	5	5	5	No change
Objectives (open)	24	22	20	Year 2: 2 of 5 DEIB objectives are closed Year 3: WNMC and accelerated courses are in monitor mode.
Action Steps	190	174	159	35% are new; 65% are carryovers
Metrics	Beginning	Fully-implemented	Fully-implemented	Next update is Sept. 2024 to capture Fall enrollment data and FY24 performance
Alignment	Minimal	Aligned to NMC's A3s and budget process	Aligned to NMC's A3s and budget process, used to inform Master Plan and Brand Architecture work	Alignment continues across the college.

Goals for Year 3

- More focused action steps to meet or further objectives.
- Increase the use of metrics to determine performance, adjusting as needed.
- Focus on the key objectives under each strategy.
- More streamlined development of Year 3 actions.
- Begin integration into standard college processes where applicable.
- Implementation of the CAAS survey (Spring '25) to pull critical data for Strategy 4.
- Identify strategies, goals, or objectives that should be carried over to the next strategic plan.
- Provide final narrative and summary of the plan's performance.

On the Horizon (early planning of the next strategic plan)

- Outlining the timing for the next strategic plan will occur over the next year. In the meantime, potential strategies are already emerging with preparation and implementation

of the Master Plan and campus vibrancy, revenue diversification, freshwater research center (currently tied to Strategy 5, Objective 2), innovation (also in the NMC Foundation's Strategic Plan) and brand strategy (Stamats). The current work will replace some of the "prep" necessary in the beginning stages of a strategic plan, giving these future strategies the opportunity to begin immediately while the next plan is being developed. In addition to developing new strategies, it is important that careful thought be given to the actual structure of the plan, baseline data, prioritization, flexibility, and the process of executing the next strategic plan. These lessons learned will continue to be generated.