



# Northern's Future: The Road Map to 2015 1.0

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March 26, 2008

## **The Inspiration**

Northern Michigan University has faced many challenges and we have established a record of success that is a source of pride for all of us. Through these challenges, we have experienced and achieved growth, excellent community relations and an efficient campus. Our students are served well and the university provides an essential and critical component of the regional economy.

In 2007 we unveiled our Campus Master Plan that details plans to build and develop a greener and more learner-centered physical campus. Now is the time to begin work on the other half of the equation—the Academic Master Plan. The new strategic plan, which I have come to call the Road Map to 2015 and Beyond, identifies four thematic areas that will guide our commitment to an active and dynamic curriculum, our work on and off campus and our resolve to continue to improve the NMU experience. The plan also identifies specific priorities that we must begin to address today. These changes and those coming from your input will support the evolution of this document as we achieve goals and seek new ones. We will arrive at our destinations, but the Road Map is never completed because our trip is never really done. Most of the destinations are planned and desirable, and some will surprise us as interesting and newfound opportunities.

The Road Map is and will be an evolving document. But it must also provide benchmarks by which to guide our decision making and our work with students. The Road Map doesn't define specific times, dollars or locations; but like the plan for the physical campus, it identifies opportunities and challenges and will help us avoid distractions along the way.

The Road Map is also not meant to redefine or divert our attention away from the work we already do well. We have strong departments and units on campus that continue to improve and remain strong. The Road Map supports and builds on that work while recognizing distinctive features that separate NMU from its competitors.

Our success has enabled us to understand more fully the strengths and distinctive features that will define our future. Our heritage of being a high-touch, high-tech, high-quality campus that is both affordable and accessible must remain an important part of our value system. In order to

sustain our uniqueness and differentiate NMU from other universities, we must be clear about our priorities and direction. Three unique themes will frame our Road Map to 2015 and beyond.

**Information technologies** are the critical signature of an NMU degree. The laptop culture, enhanced by new wireless technologies and portable devices, places NMU far ahead of and distinct from our competitors. Our capability to blend this expertise with digital television and public broadcasting increases both the capacity and the quality of NMU. Our instructional and technical reach becomes planetary rather than regional.

**International opportunities** also will become a critical feature for NMU. Students demand it, employers seek it and a relevant education cannot exclude it. Beyond study abroad, our curriculum, our faculty, our student body and our thinking must reflect the realities of an interconnected, world community. We are in a unique position to distinguish all NMU majors with significant and meaningful international experiences.

**NMU's location** in the Upper Peninsula is a unique asset and, as one, must become a prominent feature of our portfolio of academic programs and our research agenda. Lake Superior and the neighboring landscapes offer resources that attract students, faculty and staff and enhance a high-quality university experience. How we choose to brand and distinguish our degrees will depend in large part upon our creative use of this most prominent resource.

Against these three distinctive brushstrokes lie specific strategies that are the foundation of the Road Map to 2015 and Beyond. The Road Map is comprised of four broad elements that each have specific goals and priorities. Each is relevant to faculty, staff and students' sense of engagement with the campus; with who we are and where we're going. More importantly, the Road Map will capture how we're going to get there. We don't want to be reckless, but we also can't afford to be late.

# Innovation

The university experience is predicated on a blend of a number of intellectual and organizational enterprises. Northern must reinvigorate the standards and processes that will sustain successful programs, create new ones, eliminate programs with declining enrollment and reflect the creativity of campus talents. The curriculum must remain relevant and meaningful, and our teaching must be contemporary and effective.

**Goal: An academic curriculum that balances successful programs with new offerings at the undergraduate and graduate level to meet the needs of students, as well as improve student career opportunities after graduation.**

Priorities:

- Integrate global engagement and diversity learning experiences throughout the academic curriculum.
- Consolidate and/or reduce the number of undergraduate majors and streamline baccalaureate programs to enhance quality and efficiency.
- Continue implementation of the faculty-mix model and faculty enhancement positions.
- Explore and act upon opportunities to expand programs in nursing and allied health to meet the growing demand for professionals in health care and related fields.
- Explore and act upon graduate programming (certificate, master's, doctoral) in areas of recognized strengths, needs and opportunities.
- Develop new applied programs in computing and IT-related majors.
- Develop a specific Road Map for certificate, one-year and two-year programs.
- Increase employee access to baccalaureate and graduate study to enhance professional development, as well as to improve service to NMU students and constituencies.

**Goal: A new professional development program for faculty and staff that rewards innovative practices and encourages interdisciplinary and interdepartmental collaboration.**

Priorities:

- Implement the Wildcat Incentive Fund to support innovative practices by faculty and staff that will help to achieve Road Map priorities.
- Provide new support mechanisms to enhance faculty and staff engagement in scholarship.
- Develop new opportunities for faculty and staff who wish to focus specified time on a project to advance Road Map goals and priorities.
- Realign policies and procedures to better support students and reward faculty and staff contributions to achieving university goals.

**Goal: A growing portfolio of corporate collaborations that exploit NMU's technical expertise, enhance academic programs and facilitate global engagement for students and faculty both on campus and abroad**

Priorities:

- Utilize corporate partners to promote additional international opportunities.
- Work with strategic technology and telecommunication partners to enhance the teaching, learning and working environment.
- Utilize corporate partners to increase internship opportunities for students.
- Utilize alternative energy plans to seed academic and research programs in energy and energy management.

**Goal: Develop the financial resources to support innovation and student success.**

Priorities:

- Develop and implement a plan for substantially increasing federal, state and private grants to NMU.
- Implement a framework for integration and collaboration between the NMU Foundation, the Alumni Relations Office and the Academic Affairs Division to support academic innovation and student success.
- Work with the NMU Foundation to double the size of its current endowment fund.
- Work with the NMU Foundation to develop a comprehensive corporate gift plan.

# Meaningful Lives

The personal, social and intellectual maturity of NMU students is the ultimate benchmark of the achievement of the university's mission. A high-quality university education creates lifelong learners, contributing citizens and thoughtful neighbors. NMU will develop those programs and employ those practices that maximize the opportunity for all students to succeed in their university experience and to lead a productive, meaningful life.

**Goal: A Liberal Studies Program that provides students with the abilities and knowledge necessary for lifelong learning and effective citizenship in a challenging and rapidly changing world.**

Priorities:

- Complete the process of creating a Liberal Studies Program that aligns with the mission, goals, skills and abilities approved for the program by the Academic Senate (2007).
- Provide professional development opportunities for faculty that will assist in the implementation and effectiveness of the new Liberal Studies Program.
- Create an infrastructure that integrates the Liberal Studies Program with the First Year Experience and other student support services that improve retention.

**Goal: Develop a new academic advising system that integrates the advising assets of academic departments and student services to contribute to a new, effective retention management network—similar to our enrollment management network.**

Priorities:

- Develop and implement a quality advising system in each college that will meet the needs of students, enhance retention and lead to increased graduation rates.
- Establish articulation agreements with community colleges that effectively evaluate and improve the transferability of liberal studies and other courses and credits and that will be attractive to transfer students.
- Identify and utilize quality assessment measures to improve the effectiveness of academic advising.
- Utilize the Center for Native American Studies, the Multicultural Education and Resource Center and the Office of International Programs to recruit, retain and grant degrees to students.
- Implement recommendations for the improvement and expansion of the NMU Honors Program.
- Increase access to and understanding of financial aid by creating new online interactive tools that simplify the financial aid process for prospective students, parents and others.

**Goal: Integrate the highest possible level of information technology skills and competencies throughout the university.**

Priorities:

- Provide a wide variety of professional development opportunities to expand the information technology skills of faculty, staff and students.
- Provide new opportunities for faculty and staff to develop and implement high-quality online academic programs.
- Establish a “think tank” to encourage new ideas and pedagogies that will leverage the university’s technical expertise and high-tech corporate partners in order to bring external resources to the university.
- Establish benchmarks for technology literacy for all NMU graduates and develop a plan to achieve them.
- Create an enhanced infrastructure that will continually expand the availability and variety of new technological tools and services for NMU students, faculty and staff.
- Develop a “virtual” campus that provides reliable, convenient access to online courses and other essential student services.

## Leveraging Campus Attributes

The attractiveness of the NMU campus in the beautiful natural environment of the Upper Peninsula of Michigan is a unique asset that should play a prominent role in our portfolio of academic programs, our research agenda and the efficiency with which the campus operates. While the campus itself represents NMU's physical assets, academic programs and other campus operations represent the human capital of the university community. Both are instrumental in sustaining the university's collective efforts to maintain a standard of excellent practice, manage costs and achieve the institutional mission.

**Goal: Utilize the Campus Master Plan and related initiatives to continue to build and develop a greener and more learner-centered campus.**

Priorities:

- Establish strategies and a communication plan for implementation of the Campus Master Plan that ensures the highest possible level of input from the NMU and local communities as financially feasible components of the plan are implemented.
- Examine classroom and other learning spaces to create the highest quality learning environments, and to advance the application of new pedagogies and technologies.
- Continue campus discussions regarding the "library of the future" to identify state-of-the-art facilities, collections, technology and collaborations that will meet current and emerging instructional and research needs, and that will support the goals and priorities of the Road Map.
- Utilize consultants' recommendations to enhance the bookstore, dining services and conference services operations.
- Continue efforts to secure resources necessary to support implementation of the Campus Master Plan.

**Goal: Enhance processes throughout campus operations to guide the use of resources and inform resource allocation.**

Priorities:

- Develop benchmarks for campus units to gauge efficiencies and time-saving practices.
- Provide training opportunities at all appropriate levels to improve the responsiveness and effectiveness of office operations.
- Develop incentive and reward systems for departments implementing cost-saving and time-saving strategies.
- Develop a structure to assess staffing in all areas of the institution to ensure compliance with federal and state requirements.

**Goal: Enhance the portfolio of academic programs, research and other activities that leverage the university's location in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan.**

Priorities:

- Consolidate NMU's several environmental science efforts into a cohesive whole that will take full advantage of educational and research opportunities unique to the natural environment of the Upper Peninsula to best attract and serve students and faculty.
- Work to enhance opportunities, funding and events that strengthen and increase current university areas that focus on the Upper Peninsula—Center for Native American Studies, Center for Upper Peninsula Studies, Beaumier Heritage Center and NMU and Central Upper Peninsula Archives.
- Create a task force to examine expanding or adding programs that take advantage of U.P. assets and that would be unique to the region or nation, including such assets as the environment, local geography, recreation, rural demographics and lifestyle and weather.
- Provide seed funding for faculty-student research projects focused on the U.P. region.

**Goal: Be a model community for sustainable education and practices.**

Priorities:

- Enhance efforts in all campus operations to achieve the highest possible standards of sustainability practices and energy efficiencies.
- Seek LEED certification on all capital projects.
- Establish benchmarks for environmental literacy for all NMU graduates and develop a plan to achieve them.
- Identify new opportunities for academic study, external funding and research in sustainability and other related areas.

## Community Engagement

Acknowledgement and use of the rich learning environment outside the campus energizes the faculty-student relationship and creates an essential bridge from theory to practice. According to the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, a community-engaged campus collaborates with its larger communities (local, state, regional, national and global) for the mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources in a context of partnership and reciprocity. Students who attend a community-engaged institution learn the broad context in which they live, work, play and grow.

**Goal: Include all units of the campus in the process of community engagement; that is, collaborations between the university and its larger communities (local, state, regional, national, global) for the mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources in a context of partnership and reciprocity.**

Priorities:

- Achieve the voluntary Carnegie classification for Community Engagement and implement the institutional commitments associated with the classification.
- Utilize the documentation framework of the Community Engagement classification to develop baseline measures of the university's community engagement activities and use those measures to monitor community engagement activities.
- Establish a joint NMU/health-care industry task force to make recommendations regarding possible collaborations.
- Create new community engagement awards that will be given annually to faculty, staff and students who have exhibited an outstanding commitment to community engagement.

**Goal: Increase faculty, staff and student involvement in the Superior Edge program, academic service learning and other community engagement and leadership development initiatives.**

Priorities:

- Develop a resource plan for the Superior Edge and academic service learning programs to ensure optimal growth.
- Significantly increase the number of NMU students who participate in the Superior Edge, academic service learning and other leadership development opportunities.
- Improve the alignment of the curriculum with the Superior Edge and academic service learning initiatives.
- Implement strategies to assist students to more effectively communicate the skills and competencies developed through their achievements in community engagement.

**Goal: Put into action a commitment to be an inclusive community where differences are recognized as assets of the institution, respected attributes of the person and a valuable part of the university experience.**

Priorities:

- Endorse a statement on diversity that clearly communicates the university's commitment.
- Implement and fund strategies to increase the number of students and employees from under-represented and nontraditional groups.
- Establish an endowed chair in religious studies that will be the catalyst to the development of a religious studies program.
- Provide ongoing diversity training and education for faculty, staff and students.

**Goal: Increase collaboration with local communities, schools, governments, development groups and other partners to enhance community and economic development in the Upper Peninsula.**

Priorities:

- Establish a team of NMU faculty, under the auspices of the Sam M. Cohodas Scholar, who conduct and publish applied research that supports community and economic development across the Upper Peninsula.
- Continue to increase and whenever possible promote a culture of openness and access through regularly scheduled community/campus forums, high-quality publications and the effective use of communication technologies.
- Provide new faculty and staff with an on-the-road introduction to the U.P. to orient them to the assets, cultures and economy of the U.P. and to connect them with research ideas that will promote community and regional involvement.
- Explore the feasibility of collaborating with existing community development organizations, units of government and the private sector to establish a high-tech economic development center on the NMU campus.
- Explore the feasibility of collaborating with the state, U.P. universities and private alternative energy companies to make the Upper Peninsula a nationally recognized alternative energy and technology corridor.

## **Conclusion**

The importance of a strategy that renews itself with the successful attainment of each goal and priority must be clearly understood. Each goal and priority achieved will be replaced by goals and priorities that continue to motivate and energize us. Northern Michigan University needs to be bold but not reckless, progressive, and not constrained by the status quo. The change we seek is a challenge to improve and not a threat to our current efforts. The ongoing evolution of this Road Map reflects our commitment to continuous improvement and intellectual renewal.

**[www.nmu.edu/roadmap2015](http://www.nmu.edu/roadmap2015)**