

President David Roland Finley's Address to Faculty and Staff

Following is a summary of the remarks made by President Finley during his comments at the Welcome Back Breakfast on August 27, 2018, and a listing of his ten points of focus regarding the future of North Central Michigan College:

Good morning! I am Dr. David Roland Finley. It has been my pleasure to meet many of you at some point during these past eight weeks. What an impressive college! What a remarkable community! It is my honor and privilege to serve as the fourth president of North Central Michigan College.

As usual, summer has passed too quickly—suddenly, it is late August, and the 2018-2019 academic year is upon us. I would like to thank the faculty and staff who have already served our students this year... assisting with the summer registration process and by meeting with prospective students and their families. I would also like to thank everyone for making my spouse, Heidi, and I feel welcome to North Central.

Now I want to welcome all of you to a promising new year; a year that is full of promise because of the work that has already been done. History will be kind to Dr. Koch and to all of you, those who've assisted in the efforts to improve the physical plant, strengthen the connection with our community, and open doors for students via higher education. This is important and meaningful work that we are privileged to do!

Now you have a new president, and I think that it is important that you have an understanding of my views regarding our current condition... what my vision is for the future of the College... and how I believe that vision can best be realized.

The challenges today are not the same as the ones faced by Dr. Koch. Her tenure brought growth in the physical plant, with the addition of the SCRC, HESC, and the Harris Gardens... a stronger connection to the community... and an explosive growth of dual and concurrent enrollment (including Early College). Today, we must address declining enrollment and increased competition in the higher education marketplace, all while recognizing that state support is just slightly (as in 1% per annum) above flat. Ultimately, this translates into addressing our financial security. This year's budget is smaller than last year by design, but that fact ought send an important message to each and every one of us.

The move toward financial security and a budget that is growing, not shrinking, won't be easy, and it won't be made overnight. For while we address financial security (aka, the budget), we must continue to address enrollment management and deferred maintenance. In addition, we must develop a facilities plan and lead the most significant capital campaign in the institution's history.

Here's the key. We must do these things together. I am a team player, and I believe in the team concept. I believe in honest, open communication and information sharing, and it is my practice to have an open-door policy. Please know that I value your thoughts and input, and I strongly believe that everyone's voice and view ought be represented.

I believe in spirited, albeit professional discussion and healthy debate, and then... I believe in consensus building in support of the common good of the institution. In this manner, we will move forward together. It is time to heal. [REPEAT] Rather than being fragmented and a group of discordant voices, let us be a chorus for what we wish North Central to be.

It is my belief that a president of any institution should be a leader who, by personal example, can guide the further development of the academic community by emphasizing excellence. The president should have a vision of the future and the capacity to guide the institution carefully and prudently to achieve its goals.

In this regard, I have made four commitments that will guide my tenure as president:

1. to maintain the historic mission of the College—higher education that is **exceptional**, accessible, financially possible, and located near the Emmet County high school student (an area now expanded to include all counties in the Tip of the Mitt);
2. to serve this College's purpose by assisting faculty and staff in their efforts to give their very best service
3. to manage carefully and well the human and financial resources the College now enjoys; and
4. to be available, approachable, sensitive, and open to students, faculty, trustees, alumni, and friends of the College

I have made these commitments because I believe that this institution can be even better—I want North Central Michigan College to become a model institution, one that others choose to emulate! There are many challenges ahead, but I see them as opportunities. Success is contagious! When an institution has a good image and is positively perceived, people want to be involved with it.

North Central has all of the components, both tangible and intangible, needed to project a strong, positive image. I have seen them; they are the reasons that I am here. They include the high quality of our academic programs; the strength, quality, dedication, and loyalty of the faculty and staff; first-rate facilities; the strong sense of community; the success of North Central alumni; the support of our alumni and friends; and the leadership of the College's Board of Trustees.

I am encouraged and optimistic because of our potential, our challenges, our opportunities, and ultimately... our future. I ask you to assist me in directing and channeling our energies as a team, never losing sight of why we are here—to provide the very best education possible to our students.

Students need our time, our resources, our knowledge and skills, our counsel, and our support. We need to provide students with the opportunity to experience growth in character, values, and principles. We need to guide and encourage the development of their intellectual and physical abilities, to teach them to think critically and creatively, and communicate effectively. We must work to deepen their understanding and appreciation of the world and to awaken in them a sense of obligation and desire to be of service to society.

This, in the end, is what we are all about—the education and development of our students. It is our duty and obligation.

I need your assistance to carry forth the North Central tradition of sending quality graduates directly into the workforce and on to four-year institutions... graduates who can assume leadership roles, become pioneers in commerce, healthcare, and industry, and contribute to the improvement of society.

Let us work together, enthusiastically, to reach the goals we set forth for North Central—gaining confidence, respect, and trust for one another as we grow.

I need your help, your support, and, most important, your kind thoughts of encouragement as together we lead this institution. Thank you for all that each of you do to serve North Central and your efforts to make it an even greater institution day-by-day.

Ten Points of Focus

- 1. Strategic Planning/Vision:** I have asked a newly formed Strategic Planning and Assessment Team (SPAT) to lead a campus-wide planning effort this coming year. However, this effort will not be successful unless everyone is involved. The listening sessions held over the summer have provided the seeds for this activity. The SPAT will be working with you to develop a master plan for campus facilities, to determine our optimum size, composition, and rate of growth (is our ideal student population 2,500, 3,500, or 5,000?), and to assess our non-academic and academic operations. The SPAT will utilize Bryson and Alston's *Creating Your Strategic Plan Workbook* to guide this process. We must take off our blinders and be open, creative, innovative thinkers about the future of North Central. It is vital that we are the educational leader in this region, not only for our students, but for the entire community. We ought also investigate how we might fill recreational and cultural voids in our region that have a linkage to higher education and play to our strengths.
- 2. Branding/Marketing:** We're working hard in this area, but it's difficult to determine the effectiveness of the money that is being spent. Print media has become passé, and social media now drives our world, particularly the world of our prospective students. To succeed in this increasingly competitive higher education marketplace, NCMC must build an even broader public awareness of the educational offerings provided and of its importance to the region. We are a tremendous resource—we must not sell ourselves short. Let us market North Central as the quality institution that it is—let us fully realize our potential.
- 3. Fundraising:** We are currently in the Quiet Phase of a \$5 million campaign. More details will be provided momentarily. However, it was quickly recognized that a \$50 million Vision is needed to move North Central forward into the new decade and beyond. What is certain is that one-third of the funds raised must be for the endowment—a significant increase in our endowment, which currently stands at ~\$8 million, is our best avenue for reducing our dependence on tuition dollars and achieving financial security. To raise the funds necessary for this vision, we will need to (a) increase foundation/corporate contacts; (b) increase emphasis on estate/planned giving; (c) increase alumni participation; and (d) expand our donor base.
- 4. Enrollment Management:** This topic needs to lead the agenda of every meeting on campus! Without butts in the seats, we can close the doors and go home. [REPEAT] What can we do to stabilize and then grow enrollment? How do we best convey to prospective students the distinctive attributes of our academic programs and institution, and how each responds to the needs of our world? What can we do to best connect students to campus and bolster retention throughout Semester 1, during Semester 2, in Year 2, and beyond? Are there

opportunities to expand search names, better utilize social media, clarify and streamline our admission process, and issue financial aid awards more quickly?

5. **Summer Programs/Activities:** When Petoskey and surrounding communities are most vibrant with resorters and tourists, North Central is at its quietest. How do we better connect with these populations, so as to bolster the bottom line? Might we develop an Elderhostel program or host additional summer camps for the children and grandchildren of those who reside in our community? Might we provide an American experience to college-age students from abroad? What about an expanded Lunch & Learn Series?
6. **Academic Program Development/Innovation:** The Tip of the Mitt has tremendous educational and cultural assets. How do we best add value to that ecosystem? What can we do to meet the talent needs of our surrounding communities? Might we offer post-graduate certificates for those who've earned their associate's degree and desire further education? Ought we offer English as a Second Language coursework and recruit internationally?
7. **Upgrade the Physical Plant/Address Deferred Maintenance:** We could easily spend \$3 million today on deferred maintenance and probably more. The library has just been renovated, and dormitory roof and sidewalk repairs (and more) have occurred over summer. However, much remains to be addressed. The AD/CL Building is slated for renovation in 2019. The State has approved a \$3.4 million capital outlay (50% of total) for this purpose, and a matching campaign of \$5 million is underway. Others projects currently under consideration are the Ring Road Extension and Residence Hall renovation and/or new construction. Let's remember to add to that mix the need to (constantly) upgrade the IT infrastructure across campus.
8. **Expand Facilities, Services, and Activities for Students:** As just mentioned, we have a great need for new or renovated student housing. The relocation of Student Services to the AD/CL Building ought be a very positive step forward. What more can we do to improve our student services, activities, and intramural offerings? Should we offer childcare? Ought we consider an intercollegiate ski team, golf team, cross country, bowling, or e-sports team? Might we develop a collegiate drumline or other musical ensemble?
9. **Seek Further Opportunities to Enhance Faculty/Staff Development and Continuing Education:** We must encourage continued education, including degree completion; support attendance at conferences and workshops; and support sabbaticals and other means of renewal.
10. **Strengthen and Improve our Partnership with Communities in Petoskey, Emmet County, the Tip of the Mitt, and throughout the State:** We must look for new and innovative ways to share resources, reach out to new markets, and to provide non-traditional means of education and its delivery. How might we partner with McLaren Northern Michigan, the Great Lakes Center for the Arts,

Crooked Tree Arts Center, Bay View Chautauqua, etc. How do we best serve Charlevoix, Cheboygan, Gaylord, St. Ignace, and other towns in our region?

So there it is... my top ten list.

I echo the words of board chair Phil Millard, "If we change nothing, nothing changes." Let us focus on change, innovation, and enrollment as we move forward!

Allow me to finish with this statement...

Through the decades, North Central has proven to be a dynamic force for learning... one that opens doors for students... and is key to the region's economy. I look forward to working with the entire College team, community members, local businesses and our elected officials to accomplish even greater things in our future. Together, we will prepare our students for the challenges of a dynamic, digital, and inter-connected world. This work will yield benefits in talent development for our area employers and, ultimately, contribute to the wellbeing of this region. Thank you.