Leading Scholar Program Expands to Out of State Students

Submitted by Bill Roberts, Financial Aid

This summer Michigan Tech approved the expansion of the highly successful Leading Scholar award to include out of state students. The response has been amazing. This year, the application pool has nearly doubled to 662 total applicants including 191 non-resident applications.

The Leading Scholar Award recognizes students with outstanding academic credentials and superior leadership skills both in and outside of the classroom. After writing a compelling essay and providing at least one teacher recommendation, 30 resident and 10 non-resident students are invited to visit campus on Sunday December 6th. The leading scholar participants and their families have dinner with faculty and staff and are hosted in the Residence halls by our current students on Sunday evening.

On Monday December 7th students will participate in a series of leadership and academic evaluations.

The resident students are competing for one of three scholarships valued at regular full-time tuition, plus room and board and a stipend of $1,000 each year. The remaining 27 students will be awarded an $8,000 scholarship per year. The out of state students will be competing for one of three scholarships valued at regular full-time nonresident tuition. The remaining seven non-resident students will receive a $17,000 scholarship per year.

The Leading Scholar Program has proven to have outstanding yield rates and has contributed to Michigan Tech achieving the strategic plan milestone of a 26 ACT Composite. Our Leading Scholar students are truly amazing and participate in many activities across campus. You will find them doing research, conducting campus tours, making a difference abroad, and on both the homecoming and basketball courts.

The success of the Leading Scholar Program is due in large part to collaboration between several departments on campus. Thanks to all who have helped to plan and bring this together. Now for the hard part.....reading 662 essays and 662 + teacher recommendations.

Assisting with the “Complex” in Student Development

Submitted by Gloria Melton, Dean of Students

When you hear “Student Development,” do you first think of Building #24, with the acronym of “SDC”? Student development is a large part of what many of us do in Student Affairs. The term also embraces diverse departments under the umbrella of Dean of Students/Student Development.

This group focuses on assisting students with many of their complex decisions between orientation and graduation-- involving identity, independence, values, academic success, relationships. As students engage in ethical decision-making, academic preparation, health awareness, and personal responsibility, their collegiate experience prepares and connects them with future careers and communities.

The Dean of Students Office responds to “highs” and “lows” of students’ academic and personal adjustments to greater responsibility for their actions and efforts. Career Services integrates student career development with attention to the pulse of industry and the economy. E-tools like “My Plan” and a menu of career preparatory services help students build greater confidence in decision-making.

Assisting students with their personal health, relationships, family situations, and academic effort engages Counseling and Wellness Services at the center of constructive decision-making. In 2009-10, peer education and “social norm” projects around issues of alcohol, drugs, and other personal choices will likely spark discovery and discussion among students and staff.

Civility, integrity, fairness, respect for others, and due process serve as hallmarks of the Student Judicial processes. Introducing “Restorative Practices” and tapping student interest in a “values” project this year will aid in the transition beyond campus to their future communities.

Student Disability Services places an emphasis on accessibility as well as accommodation. Developing self-advocacy skills and making decisions about technology to enhance physical and cognitive attributes can impact outcomes over a lifetime.

While students ultimately are responsible for their decisions, we can help translate some of the more “complex” elements as they move forward in their development.
DARS Officially Rolls Out to Students
Submitted by Jean Burich, Registrar’s Office & Karen Giddings, ESIS

DARS (Degree Audit Reporting System) is a web-based, interactive audit that was made available to undergraduate students for the first time on November 16. The system will be rolled out to students incrementally beginning with the senior class. By the end of the fall semester, all undergraduate students will have access to DARS.

This new system will assist students in tracking their progress toward degree completion and replaces our old paper audit system. It will provide students with a better overall view of how their courses apply toward their degree. The charts on the interactive audit provide a quick and easy visual representation of which areas still need to be completed. In addition, courses that can be used to fulfill various requirements will be displayed. Over the last fifteen months, academic advisors have been using DARS in test mode, getting used to the new system and helping the Degree Services area with some fine-tuning. As well as monitoring their students’ academic progress, advisors will be able to update catalog term information for their students and generate a new audit reflecting the requirements for that catalog term instantly. In addition, both advisors and students will be able to generate a ‘what-if’ audit which will allow them the ability to see where courses might apply in a different curriculum.

Though DARS will be a great benefit to our students, it doesn’t replace the good old-fashioned one-on-one meeting with an academic advisor. Students still need to meet with their advisor to discuss course loads, course registration and questions regarding degree, minor and/or certificate requirements. The release of DARS to students is another step in the process of automating and streamlining our processes. There is more to come including an on-line application for graduation, a course planning tool, and an online exception process for advisors.
**Staff Match**  These Student Affairs staff were featured in the "Staff Match" area in the summer newsletter. Take a few minutes to learn something about someone you may not know, who is contributing toward the success of Michigan Tech.

**Thy Yang** served as the Director of Multicultural Affairs at Dickinson State University (ND) and Director of International Programs at Benedictine College (KS), prior to coming to Michigan Tech. Her international credentials include foreign language study in Latin and French, an International Baccalaureate Diploma, and a semester of formal study at Nottingham Trent University (UK). She was born in Thailand, raised in Kansas and speaks fluent Hmong. Thy resides in downtown Houghton and is a regular at Joey’s Seafood, the Lunchbox and Hunan Garden.

**Kristi Isaacson** has been the Associate Coordinator for Youth Programs since January of 2008. She is originally from Calumet and graduated from Michigan Tech with a Bachelor’s Degree in Business Administration and is currently pursuing her MBA. She resides in Hancock with her husband Joel, three year-old son Aidan, one year-old daughter Kiera and six year-old dog Blue. In her free time, Kristi enjoys spending time at the lake and traveling with her family whenever possible.

**Adam Griffis** and his wife, Veronica, are originally from Vermont, where they met in high school. They lived in Ithaca, New York for five years and moved to Houghton when Veronica took a position as a professor in the Civil & Environmental Engineering department three years ago. Adam joined the Career Services staff shortly thereafter. The lion’s share of their time involves playing with their newborn daughter, who was born this past Father’s Day.

**Glenn Ekdahl** and his wife Linda live in Paavola Location in Franklin Township. They have one son Jeffrey (Danielle) and one granddaughter Mackenzie. He is a retired Chief Petty Officer of the U.S. Navy Reserve. Glenn has been working at Michigan Tech for 31 years and began his career in the Memorial Union Building and is currently working in Douglass Houghton Hall as Facilities Manager/Security. Glenn also serves as Supervisor of Franklin Township and enjoys his hobby of being a Ham Radio Operator.

**Service Options for Students Expand**

Submitted by Rachel Wussow & Bri Drake, Student Activities

Student Activities has been reaching out to lend a hand to many deserving organizations and people in the greater Keweenaw area. We have grown enormously from the single yearly Make A Difference Day that was hosted in the fall to see an increase of more than 20 new service projects over the last year. In total Student Activities will offer over 100 hours of projects for student to partake in. From raking yards and painting fences to playing bingo and baking bread, student volunteers are getting the opportunity to get out and be active in their community throughout the school year. Several different programs have been implemented to meet the varying time constraints of many busy students.

Here’s the breakdown:

* Service Saturdays – once a month, held on a Saturday from 9am-noon

* 60 Minutes of Service – twice a month, the day of the week rotates, 5-6pm

* Alternative Spring Break Trips – two trips over Spring Break to serve in other parts of the country

* Semester Collection – Denim Drive to insulate homes

www.cottonfrombluetogreen.org/

So far this fall we have hosted 11 projects with 432 participants for 1,317 hours of service. Our next events in November are Tails and Trails, a Service Saturday, an Alternative Spring Break Informational Meeting and 60 Minutes of Service - Winterizing Homes! For more information please check out our website at www.sa.mtu.edu/community/

**New Staff** in Student Affairs

Welcome the staff who have joined the Student Affairs team since our last newsletter.

Left to right: Melanie Narhi, Housing Facilities in DHH; Tammy Bakkila, Housing Facilities in Wads; Albert Erkilla, Housing Facilities in Wads; Mike Myllyoja, Housing Facilities at Daniell Heights; Lori Weir, Multicultural Affairs; inset: Tara Crandall, Admissions

**Headlines from STUDENT LIFE**

**Multicultural Affairs**

For the first time, seven students and one staff member represented Michigan Tech at the Women of Color Conference in Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics in Dallas, TX in October.

**Housing & Residential Life**

Housing Set to Launch Climate Study in November for Residence Hall and Apartments.
"All set?" he asks. Somewhere in the middle replying, "Yeah, I think..." he stumps on the gas, my head snaps back, my helmet hits the front of the bucket seat and suddenly I'm moving faster over the face of this earth than ever in my life. I'm strapped into this tin can so tight I can barely breathe. I'm flying through mud and gravel, careening around hairpin turns and bottoming out in large crevasses at speeds up to 105 miles per hour. After a few moments of sheer terror mixed with complete exhilaration the driver stops the car, looks at me with a smile so wide I can see it from under his facemask and says, "Welcome to the world of rally!"

I met Heath, my driver, five years ago during move-in. He was a first-year student and I was a second year Vice President. Over the years we have stayed connected and I have watched him grow from an adventurous, bright eyed first-year student to an advanced, well educated race car driver with abundant opportunities for the future.

Like those three or four dozen rally drivers who visit the Keweenaw each fall, every student attending Michigan Tech brings their own unique personality and characteristics. They are on their own journey, some have an idea where they want to end up and others are just cruising down the road. As educators, we have an important role to play in helping students continue towards the finish line. In a sense we are Michigan Tech's pit crew; creating conditions that matter, encouraging active engagement on and off campus, instilling in students a sense of pride, helping them develop coherent values and ethics, and communicating high expectations for learning are all part the role we play. We pride ourselves on preparing students to create the future and I can think of no way to better live that than to be in the trenches, or on the track, learning right along with them.

Think if students wore driving suits like the rally drivers with patches sewn on displaying who supported them throughout their education. Whose patches would we read on our students? Certainly names of individual faculty members who made a difference, perhaps names of RA's, OTL's, advisors to student organizations, the staff member in Financial Aid or Student Activities who went above and beyond and the call of duty. We are our students' sponsors.

As we approach Thanksgiving I think it is important to celebrate our successes as well as reflect on those things we are thankful for. Students at Michigan Tech are extraordinary in many ways; I am thankful for their curiosity, intelligence, work ethic and spirited fun. In addition, there is not a day that goes by that I am not reminded how lucky I am to work with an amazing team of people both in and outside of Student Affairs. Finally, I am thankful for our families and friends who support our efforts and understand (or at least attempt to understand) the nature of our work.

It is important that we remember even when we feel like we are going 105 miles per hour that it is about students and their success. And perhaps the best question to ask ourselves is what are we doing each day to earn our name on the patches of each of our students?

Thanks and you have my best wishes for a healthy, happy holiday season. Rally on!

Les