FROM THE VP

Message from Les

“A distinctive and rigorous action-based learning experience grounded in science, engineering, technology, sustainability, business, and an understanding of the social and cultural contexts of our contemporary world.” So reads goal two of the revised strategic plan. While much of this learning is accomplished via the classroom and laboratory, students gain much from their college experience outside of the regular classroom.

We know a student’s thirst for knowledge is fed within the halls of academe; opportunities to apply these learnings occur with Enterprise teams, on class projects, or in a variety of other classroom and lab activities. Outside academics, students may be organizing an alternative spring break trip, serving as leaders in student organizations, participating in varsity sports, or leading a community event.

This edition of our Student Affairs & Advancement Connection provides the reader with a glimpse into some of the many programs that complement the learning occurring within the classroom. From HuskyLead, to the Outdoor Adventure Program, and Alumni Relations Student Support Initiative, you’ll learn about programs that provide both resources and support for goal two of the plan.

Michigan Tech’s success is measured by the accomplishments and reputation of our graduates. When students enter the University, we know they are at a critical developmental stage in their life. It is important that we provide them the tools, opportunities for learning, and resources and support to be successful in their endeavors. In their recently released book, Leading Innovation and Change: A Guide for the Chief Student Affairs Officer on Shaping the Future, authors Smith, Blixt, Ellis, and others state that institutions today must prepare students for a world that is continually in flux. “Some of the most important skills they need are not learned in the classroom. Students need to learn leadership, teamwork, problem solving, creativity, and innovation. They need to know how to work independently and in networks. They need to become agile in what and when they learn. And, most important, they need to learn how to learn, because they will be lifelong learners.”

At Michigan Tech we take great pride in preparing our students to create the future, and although this future is unknown, we know it will be an exciting one. Thanks for all you do to enrich the learning experience of our students and preparing them to be agile, intentional, and successful contributors to our world.
Alexander Astin’s Theory of Involvement is almost always cited in higher education research focused on student success and retention. The link is obvious—if students are excited about their involvement and are learning both in and out of the classroom, they become part of the educational community and are more likely to stay.

In his seminal article, Student Involvement: A Developmental Theory for Higher Education, Astin argues that learning happens through student involvement—whether in classes or co-curricular groups and activities—and contributes to their growth. Simply put, involvement refers to the commitment of both physical and psychological energy that students invest in various efforts.1

The challenge becomes creating assignments, activities, and on a larger scale, an environment that elicits the student effort necessary to achieve the desired learning and development.

To illustrate, last month, Dr. Ellen Goldey, the William R. Kenan Jr. Professor and Chair of the Biology Department at Wofford College, came to campus to share her experience with the Partnership for Undergraduate Life Sciences Education (PULSE).

The focus of one session was on developing strategies to meet specific outcomes. Goldey and her colleagues created an assignment to help students develop communications skills in order to explain scientific research. Students were asked to read a journal article and then act out (with props) the results of the research. She had photos of the students in action, and no one could dispute that they were involved and enjoying in the learning process. Dressed as fish, they explained why piranhas travel in shoals.

Similar success can be seen in efforts outside the classroom. A goal was set for Michigan Tech athletes to demonstrate oral communications skills in media interviews. In this situation, athletes—primarily in hockey and basketball—gave on-camera media interviews that were then critiqued. Individual feedback was provided for improvement. This investment of effort provides these athletes with a skill they will use in many future settings. Visit the video channel at www.michigantechhuskies.com to see some of these interviews first-hand.

These two examples demonstrate the richness of learning when students are involved and not passively absorbing information.

Astin’s theory points out that “the extent to which students can achieve particular developmental goals is a direct function of the time and effort they devote to activities designed to produce these gains.” Time, of course, is a finite resource. Therefore, we can help students identify the knowledge and skills they want to acquire and suggest opportunities for involvement that support their goals. Every assignment, practice, or policy impacts the amount of effort students spend on various endeavors.

In closing, the National Survey on Student Engagement (NSSE) has also documented the benefits of student involvement describing students who are involved in their educational experience as “developing habits of the mind and heart that enlarge their capacity for continuous learning and personal development.”2 By deeply involving students in this way, we increase their potential love of life-long learning.

—Bonnie B. Gorman


HuskyLEAD is a series of hour-long professional development workshops that hones the leadership skills of our students. Although student organization leaders are the most common attendees, all are welcome and can benefit from participating. Keeping topics short, simple, and convenient caters to our student leaders’ already busy lifestyle. A variety of topics are presented, including individual growth, personal wellness, financing and growing an organization, career networking opportunities, teamwork, responsible citizenship, and more. Michigan Tech staff, faculty, industry professionals, and students give the presentations.

Career development and corporate networking were hot topics in 2014–15. Career Services packed the room with “Artful Bragging—How to Sell Yourself,” where participants learned tips on how to network with potential employers or reconnect with people they already know. In another HuskyLEAD session, student organizations assigned a Career Services liaison to get first-hand, direct communication to employment and career-development information and opportunities. Corporate Partnerships built on this theme by teaching students how to foster relationships, create partnerships, and build mutually beneficial sponsorship opportunities that benefit both the individual and their student organizations. Finally, the career theme was wrapped up with “Presentations that Work,” where students learned that there is a communication ceiling in the corporate world, and that their ability to speak and write can make or break their career.

Through HuskyLEAD, students learn about wellness techniques, tips on living green, or even how to plan an event. Although the end goal for most students is to land a perfect career opportunity, they can build personal skills for the here and now that foster their success on campus and naturally increase their likelihood of retention at Michigan Tech.

—Maryann Wilcox

The staff at the Center for Diversity and Inclusion actively encourages the intellectual, social, and professional growth of all students. We also provide targeted programming to support the needs of GLBTQIA students, students of color, and women on Michigan Tech’s campus. Our programs focus on cultural awareness, community building, and student retention.

One of many outstanding programs housed in the Center for Diversity and Inclusion is the Young Women Leaders Program (YWLP). The purpose of the program is to develop the leadership, problem-solving, team building, and communication skills of Michigan Tech female undergraduate students. This is a mentoring program that pairs undergraduate women (big sisters) with middle school girls (little sisters) from the local community. The curriculum and one-on-one mentoring time helps the little sisters build positive self-esteem and practice leadership skills such as communication, goal setting, stress management, self-reflection, and problem solving. Every YWLP session includes both large group activities and one-on-one time for the sisters to work together.

There are many benefits of our unique structure, which include building a trusting and successful mentor-mentee relationship, a supportive group environment, an opportunity to collaborate with peers, and an atmosphere in which every sister is valued. The big sisters commit to a semester of training in the fall and nine weeks of mentoring in the spring semester. The program also serves to provide outreach to local schools and to foster an awareness of the Center for Diversity and Inclusion as a community resource.

—Kellie Raffaelli
The Outdoor Adventure Program (OAP) was created with the mission of engaging students in outdoor activities. Since 2006, the program has been fulfilling this mission by planning and running trips, events, and clinics for the Michigan Tech community.

In the fall, OAP staff runs Orientation trips for new Tech students. This past year, groups were sent to the Porcupine Mountains, Sylvania Wilderness, Sturgeon River, and for the first time, Isle Royale National Park. These trips help students to make real connections to not only other students but also the beautiful area that Michigan Tech is located in. Research has even proven that Orientation programs increase retention rates among those who participate, and in looking to the future, OAP is hoping to expand programming in order to reach out to more first year students.

Another first for the Outdoor Adventure Program this fall was participation in the Outdoor Nation Campus Challenge. This eight-week contest included Michigan Tech and nine other schools from across the nation. The challenge sought to find out which school could get the most individuals involved in outdoor recreation. With help from many other departments, clubs, organizations, and local retailers, Michigan Tech came in second place overall in the challenge and had two locals receive the “Outsider of the Year” award. OAP continues to work toward increasing outdoor activity among the Tech campus and community through collaboration with other groups with similar missions and goals.

—Jared Johnson

Keeping Our Huskies Outside

We Inspire Community. Thanks to the more than 200 student organizations at Tech, this is happening quite a bit. Our students actively participate in club sports, Greek organizations, and cultural groups. We also have organizations that focus on more unique interests, like hula hooping or watching cartoons. While these activities might seem insignificant at first, I guarantee that this involvement is very meaningful for students and actually does positively impact their success and retention.

In these seemingly random organizations, our students are strengthening their roots at Michigan Tech and are growing their identities as students and individuals. Astin’s Theory of Involvement states that “students learn by becoming involved.” Simply put, our students are more likely to be successful if they become involved and connected both inside and outside the classroom.

It’s important to remember that everyone measures success differently. For many of our students, a diploma will equal success. For others, success means obtaining a good job. However, for many of our students, success is measured based on their involvement and the connections they make with their peers. This involvement provides our students with a community of friends and memories that will last a lifetime. Students will endure difficult classes, and some might fail a course during their time here, but their involvement and connections to student organizations provide a level of support and motivation that can be very impactful for their retention.

Students may not always realize just how significant student organizations are for their success and retention, as most of the time they feel they are merely having fun with friends who share common interests. Sometimes it’s not until after graduation that students reflect on just how much they grew as young leaders as a result of their involvement. The friends, meaningful experiences, and Michigan Tech community that they will always call home enrich their academic experience and truly prepare them to confidently go out and create the future.

—Joe Cooper
Choosing a career is not simple. Research shows that students journey through several stages as they find their career path. At Michigan Tech, we help students navigate these decisions and become the authors of their own lives.

Switching majors is part of that process. Of our first years in 2014, 16 percent of them changed their major. By comparison, in 2012, 11 percent of first-year students at Ohio State University switched. Some of this change comes from how students decide to choose majors.

Tang, Pan, and Newmeyer (2008) examined high school students, where career choice is often addressed by school counselors, and the researchers examined what had the largest impact on this decision process. Their findings mirrored other studies, identifying the students’ self-efficacy, supported by their experiences, was the single leading factor in their career choice.

Magolda’s second stage, called crossroads, is where students discover the career path set by this predetermined formula is not suitable for them. Magolda found that real-world career settings provided great opportunities for students to develop their own personalized career path, as they strive to resolve the conflict of what they wanted in relation to what others wanted.

Students then move on to the third stage, becoming the author of one’s life. This is where they combine their newfound self awareness with an authentic self confidence to pursue their new journey.

Baxter’s second stage is a pivotal part of students’ campus experience. The Michigan Tech Career Services team has partnered with University faculty, leadership, and corporate partners to create numerous and diverse Industry Days here on campus. The goal of each day is to allow our students to learn about and experience as many careers in industry as possible. Successful Industry Days have been: Steel Day, Railroad Day, Petroleum Day, and Medical Careers Week.

During Medical Careers Week, students learned about medical informatics from Donald Peck, vice chair of radiology at Henry Ford Medical Group. They also heard about the challenges of making all medical records electronic by 2015 and methods being created to retrieve and secure this data. Marie Calabria of Blue Belt Technologies Inc., provided students a glimpse of the exciting and diverse work within a biomedical start-up company, including outlining the complex process of obtaining government approvals to bring a new medical device to market.

The number of Industry Days on campus will grow in 2015–16, with the addition of: Aerospace Day, Mining Day, Business Day, and Consumer Products Day. Attending these events allows students to learn about careers in each industry, explore the future growth and innovations in each sector, and network with industry representatives who are targeting them in recruiting efforts. The ultimate goal is helping them find the career that fits their strengths and interests, allowing them to focus their education with passion and commitment.

A student’s journey to self-authorship begins with their parents helping chart their post-secondary path, and Michigan Tech’s Industry Days serve as a catalyst to move them from Magolda’s crossroads stage to becoming the author of one’s life. This collaborative effort of you—faculty and staff—and our corporate partners will produce a magic elixir. When taken by students, it produces the self-efficacy, or the belief in one’s own abilities, needed to develop personal and career success.

—Steve Patchin
Athletics: Success In and Out of the Classroom

Michigan Tech athletics has had arguably its finest season in school history. With the spring season yet to come, five Huskies teams and numerous individuals have qualified for the NCAA Championships in their sports.

The top performers on the field of play have also been some of the top performers away from it. Here are just a few.

Hockey’s Tanner Kero is Michigan Tech’s third Hobey Baker Finalist, third WCHA Player of the Year, and third WCHA Outstanding Student-Athlete. The senior forward is a finalist for the Senior CLASS Award and won the WCHA scoring title with 34 points in league games on 13 goals and 21 assists. Kero is a co-captain for the fourth-ranked Huskies and became one of 63 players in program history to reach the 100-point mark for his career on January 31. He maintains a 3.72 grade point average in mathematics with a concentration in actuarial science and has received four merit awards as the top student in his class. He is a WCHA Scholar-Athlete for the third year in a row and also a three-time member of the WCHA All-Academic Team.

Deedra Irwin became the second Michigan Tech women’s Nordic skier at the World Championships after she qualified to represent Team USA with a strong performance at the U.S. Nationals hosted at the Michigan Tech Nordic Training Center in January. The two-sport athlete from Pulaski, Wisconsin, led the Huskies cross country team in all seven races in the fall including a thirtieth-place finish at the Midwest Region Championships. She was then an NCAA qualifier on snow, taking nineteenth in the 15-kilometer classic race at the NCAA Championships at Lake Placid, New York. Irwin boasts a 3.84 GPA in exercise science. The senior has earned three GLIAC Academic Excellence Awards and three National Collegiate All-Academic Ski Team nods.

Jillian Ritchie was a co-captain for one of the most successful Michigan Tech women’s basketball teams in school history. The Huskies finished with a 28-3 overall record, a GLIAC North Division title, a GLIAC Tournament crown, and a trip to the NCAA Midwest Region semifinals. The senior forward from De Pere, Wisconsin, averaged 11.5 points and 5.6 rebounds per game but came on strong at the end of the season. She was named GLIAC North Division Player of the Week three times in February and was selected as the GLIAC Tournament MVP. Off the court, Ritchie maintains a 3.74 GPA in scientific and technical communication. She has also worked part time in the athletic department as a graphic designer for four years.

Ben Stelzer was both the GLIAC Player of the Year and Michigan Tech men’s basketball’s first-ever Midwest Region Player of the Year this season. He averaged 22.1 points per game, leading all players in the Midwest Region, while leading the nation in 3-point field goals made per game (4.0). The 6-1 senior guard, with 618 points on the season, totaled 1,755 career points—seventh most in Michigan Tech history. He also reset Tech’s record for 3-pointers made (360). Stelzer keeps a 3.69 GPA in finance and earned Academic All-America Second Team accolades. The Manitowoc, Wisconsin, native guided the Huskies to a 19-9 overall record and their third straight NCAA Tournament berth.

—Wes Frahm
Michigan Tech is fortunate to have several generous donors that make obtaining a world-class education possible for many of our students. Without their generosity, many of our best and brightest students would not see their dreams of earning a degree from Michigan Tech fulfilled. We, as administrative and advancement staff, thank the donors at every opportunity, but the best appreciation comes from the students.

There are over 400 sponsored scholarships assisting about 860 students. These scholarships lighten the financial burden on students, but they can also lead to something without monetary value: a connection between donors and recipients. In the fall of 2014, all recipients were asked to write thank you letters to their donors. Recipients wrote about their interests, involvement at Tech, future endeavors, and, most importantly, their gratitude for the donor’s generosity.

Many recipients wrote that they hope to “pay it forward” one day and contribute to the culture of philanthropy that these donors represent and value. One donor wrote back to a student, “Thank you for the beautiful letter. I am so happy about your successful studies and your plans for the future.”

The program will continue to develop and actively engage students in thanking donors for their time, talent, and treasure that they so generously give. Connecting students with those who help fund their education may give them more motivation in school; students are more aware that someone cares and has invested in their success.

—Andy Gutierrez and Andrea Kubicki

Big Student Ideas Can Get Big Bucks

A common struggle for student organizations is not a lack of ideas but a lack of resources to make their great ideas happen. The Michigan Tech Alumni Association saw this need and launched the Student Initiative Support Program (SISP) in 2011.

SISP is designed to promote student involvement on campus. The program is geared towards registered student groups, clubs, or societies who are looking to make a positive difference on campus. Organizations fill out a form to let the Alumni Association know of their needs, and successful applicants may receive up to $1,500 (or other resources, such as equipment, expertise, etc.) in support of their initiative. Preference is given to inclusive events that will positively impact all students and support the Alumni Association’s mission: “Celebrating Traditions. Creating Connections.”

Have you noticed the new warming trailer by the Broomball courts? How about the updated Memorial Wall in the Memorial Union Building? Both of these projects were made possible thanks in part to the SISP. Other Michigan Tech traditions supported through the program include Oozeball, Winter Carnival, and Pep Band’s participation in the Traverse City Cherry Festival parade.

For more information, and to submit a sponsorship request, visit www.mtu.edu/alumni/sisp.

—Erin Thompson
One of the key things to be reminded about in our internet-driven world is that you should be controlling your personal brand. This means structuring the data you are releasing to the digital world and being intentional about what messages you want to be publicly seen.

In addition to providing meaningful private gift dollars, Campus Campaign is also important because it influences and enhances our culture of philanthropy on campus. If today’s students see employees choosing to make a personal gift to Tech, maybe they will be more inclined to contribute after graduation.

To give students an up-close look this year, they were invited to participate in the process. Current students delivered “I am Michigan Tech” wristbands to all faculty and staff donors, giving the students the chance to personally meet and thank those employees who chose to invest in Tech. It was a great opportunity for them to see employees who believe in Michigan Tech’s mission and vision—and the great work taking place here every day!

Campus Campaign runs until June 30 (the end of the fiscal year), so employees still have time to reserve their place on the 2014–15 campus honor roll of donors. Go to www.mtu.edu/campuscampaign for information on how to participate. Or, contact Paula Nutini at pjnutini@mtu.edu.

—Paula Nutini

One of the best ways to do this is through a profile on LinkedIn, a professional networking tool. Due to its millions of active members, LinkedIn shows up at the top of most search results. This means that if you have a profile, when someone is researching you, your LinkedIn information shows up front and center. Since this is something that you have control over, you hold the power to direct your own self-brand. Even if you aren’t job searching, you can still increase your visibility and credibility by controlling your online reputation. And who knows . . . that one network connection might be the key to your next successful project.

Make sure you create a profile on LinkedIn, keep it current, and add me as a connection!

—Jeremiah Baumann