

Timothy J. Nelson, President Northwestern Michigan College
Testimony Before
Senate Education Committee
November 30, 2011

Chairman Pavlov, Vice Chairman Emmons, Vice Chairman Hopgood, Senators Colbeck and Young, My name is Timothy Nelson and it is my privilege to serve as president of Northwestern Michigan College in Traverse City, Michigan. I am accompanied today by representatives from the medical community and the maritime industry to testify in support of HB 4496 that would authorize community colleges to offer a select number of baccalaureate degrees.

NMC has a student population of 5200 plus, trains 2000+ professionals in industry/business, operates a University Center with nine (9) public and private university partners and as a result, can provide citizens in our region educational offerings ranging from a 1 hour enrichment class through a doctorate.

So why then, do we seek this authorization?

We value our partners at the university level and want to do more with them. It is not an either or situation... a university partnership or the community college baccalaureate. This is another option for the citizens of the State and of our regions. These five programs are logical extensions of the major investments we have made in capital, faculty and curriculum in existing programs. They are extensions designed to meet our learners' and our communities' needs.

You may hear that we are asking for is mission creep. I would contend this is no different than the circumstances that called for the creation of community colleges...meeting changing needs within our communities. No different than the changes and growth that led Western Michigan to grow from Western Normal School to a world class University, nor the growth that led Grand Valley State Colleges (of which I am a proud alum) to become Grand Valley State University. They expanded their programs and the credential levels they offer to meet the needs of their communities, their learners and their constituents.

The fact that 21 other states and two Canadian provinces currently allow community colleges to offer a select number of baccalaureate degrees should indicate this is not a fad.

But, it is more important for you to hear from our partners in medicine and in maritime. First you will hear from Mr. Ed Ness, President and CEO of Munson Health Care and Munson Medical Center followed by Rear Admiral Gerard Achenbach, USMS, and Superintendent of the Great Lakes Maritime Academy, followed by Captain Ed Wiltse, Vice President of Operations for the Grand River Navigation Company.

Again, thank you for permitting us to talk with you today.