

N O R T H W E S T E R N M I C H I G A N C O L L E G E

WHITE PINE PRESS

We hew to the line; let the chips fall where they may.

Eviction and Cold Car Await Single Mother, Child

COVID Shutdown, Online Learning, Unemployment Snowballs for on-Campus Family

Kathryn DePauw Before the snow melts and spring arrives, NMC resident Randi Upton worries that she and her 8-year-old son Anders may have to move into her 2007 Ford Taurus come March 4. Students, like Upton, are struggling to succeed academically due to COVID-19’s impacts on mental health and cognitive function.

While becoming infected with COVID can have neurological repercussions, the stress of working, studying, and maintaining a family during this pandemic is also limiting many people’s ability to function. A 2021 Kaiser Family Foundation poll showed that about 4 in 10 adults suffered symptoms of anxiety or depressive disorder, compared to 1 in 10 prior to the pandemic. Almost half of students, a 36% increase from pre-COVID, were at risk of clinical depression according to a December 2021 study by the University of Pittsburgh.

Upton began attending NMC in spring of 2018. She moved into campus housing with her partner Austin and their son, Anders. She has paid \$850 for rent each month since then.

She has long been involved in the Veterans community on campus, worked as a writer for the *White Pine Press*, and served as the editor in chief for the NMC Magazine during COVID. While at the magazine, she created a partnership with the audio technology department to publish an audio version of the publication for those with disabilities. Her grades were stable and she was working towards her goal of earning a Master of Fine Arts.

Upton lives with mental and physical disabilities including PTSD, ADHD, and chronic pain, that can make learning and completing tasks more difficult. Despite this, she’s found a way to communicate with instructors and feel supported in the classroom.

“I’ve had a good experience with professors at NMC. A lot of them are pretty understanding about stuff,” she said. “They’ve been pretty understanding, especially like COVID and later.”

Her life remained stable until COVID shut down the economy and in-person learning in March 2020. “Within 48 hours, we lost everything,” Upton said. They went from a dual-income home to no-income almost overnight. She was working at Greenhouse Cafe and for a cleaning service and Austin had a job at a medical cannabis dispensary. She was still able to finish the semester with decent grades, despite the switch to virtual learning. As lockdown continued, her life started to unravel. Fall semester of that year, NMC was holding most classes remotely.

Upton struggled with her courses. She took a math class, her weakest subject, to work towards completing the requirements for her degree. Upton found the lack of accountability and assistance that face-to-face instruction provides challenging. “It’s really easy to fall behind in online classes,” Upton said. “And I, just like everyone else, fell into depression and just every single day is a struggle to do the bare minimum.”



Anders and Randi stand in front of their 2007 Ford Taurus.

Her private life wasn’t faring much better. She and Austin decided to separate after months of close quarters straining their relationship. He moved out in October 2020. Suddenly a single parent, Upton struggled to keep up in an already difficult class and eventually failed. She was put on academic warning for having a grade point average less than 2.0.

The spring 2021 semester started off as a clean slate, but the external pressures hadn’t changed. In the end, Upton failed one of two classes and once again her GPA fell below 2.0. NMC’s Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) policy states that when this happens, a student is no longer eligible for financial aid.

Upton claims to have filed an appeal in order to still have access to financial aid. “I figured with COVID and stuff, they would be lenient,” Upton said.

Without access to financial aid, Upton registered for classes last fall. She spent the semester working at Right Brain Brewery for \$3.50-\$4.00 per hour plus tips, which were divided evenly among the workers. She did earn tips, but the amount was unreliable. There wasn’t enough money for her to survive, pay off her classes, and keep up on her rent, she said.

She fell behind in her rent and with the balance owed to NMC on her account, she was not able to register for spring 2022 classes. Without being registered for at least six credits, she no longer qualified for family housing on campus.

Trying to find an exemption to the housing policy has been

a confusing process for Upton. She has reached out to access veteran’s resources, the Student Life Office, and the Housing department but was unable to resolve the issue.

Upton recently started a new job at Jet’s Pizza where she works full time making \$15 per hour. She doesn’t make tips, but it’s a relief to know exactly how much money to expect each month. Unfortunately, this may be too little too late.

If they get evicted, Upton and Anders will likely have no choice but to live in her car. This eviction could limit her housing options in the future, despite making more money. “All I’m trying to do at this point is avoid getting an eviction,” Upton said. “Getting an eviction on your record screws you, if you rent.”

“Every other time in my life, when bad stuff has happened or life has thrown me a loop, I’ve been able to figure it out,” Upton said. “I’ve always been able to make magic happen and pull through. This is the first time that I’m like, there is absolutely nothing I can do.” She mentioned that community aid and assistance programs that she’s reached out to are running out of funds and resources due to high demand. “I’m hopeless.”

This story is part of the White Pine Press’s coverage of COVID, and student homelessness which began in our Dec. 2021 issue. Look for more stories on the topic in our next issue, which comes out Feb. 17.



NMC in History

Almost the entire student body attended the third annual snow brawl in 1957, which provided an evening of fun with indoor and outdoor activities. Official events included skating, tobogganing, card games, dancing, a student talent show, and a chili dinner. The event was planned by the Future Business Leaders and the College Council and was held at Twin Lakes in Gilbert Lodge.

NORTHWESTERN MICHIGAN COLLEGE WHITE PINE PRESS

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The *White Pine Press* welcomes comments, suggestions, ideas for news stories and calendar items.

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NEWS IN BRIEF

Lobdell's will be opening for lunch starting Feb. 9. Hours of operation are Tuesday-Thursday, 11:30 a.m.—1 p.m. For reservations call (231)995-3120 Monday-Thursday 9 a.m.—4 p.m.

NMC's Student Success Center will be hosting a snow tubing event February 18 at Timberlee Hills. Family tubing will be from 5:30—6:00 p.m., and glow tubing will be from 6—8 p.m. Tube rental is free and space is limited so preregistration is required. Sign up through the Student Life interactive calendar found at blogs.nmc.edu.

NMC's Board of Trustees held its first meeting of 2022 on Jan. 24. New officers were elected for 2022. Rachel A. Johnson was elected chair, Laura J. Oblinger vice chair, Kenneth E. Warner treasurer, and Andrew K. Robitshek as secretary.

NMC Next, a new strategic plan, was unanimously approved at the same meeting. It will serve as a guide for the college through 2025.

The plan lays out five strategic goal areas: Future-focused education, student engagement and success, diversity, equity and inclusion, community partnership and engagement, institutional distinction and sustainability.

There are 24 objectives and action items that fall within the goal areas. For transparency and accountability, NMC Next objectives and progress trackers for the action items can be found at nmc.edu/strategic-plan.

The new values policy includes an inclusion statement that says, "We foster belonging and build organizational capacity that celebrates diversity and promotes equity." Trustee Doug Bishop took issue with the use of "diversity" and "equity" in the language of the statement, but still voted to approve the statement.

Vice President for Strategic Initiatives Jason Slade will oversee the plan implementation. The college has already achieved one objective with the hiring of Marcus Bennett as special assistant to the president for diversity, equity, and inclusion.

A "Passport to Russia" event will be held on Feb. 11. NMC student, Olesya Nikolaeva, will talk about her home country of Russia from 12:15—1 p.m. in West Hall, room 106.

The International Affairs Forum will present "China: Is Détente Possible?" The event will feature Kenneth Jarrett, who served as Director of Asian Affairs at the White House National Security Council, Consul General in Shanghai, and as Deputy Consul General in Hong Kong. The presentation will be held Feb. 17 at 6 p.m. To learn more or register for the event, visit www.tciaf.com.

Employers are invited to register for Northwestern Michigan College's 16th annual Career Fair. It will be held March 3 at the Hagerty Center on the Great Lakes Campus from 2—6 p.m. Employer registration is \$25 and available online at nmc.edu/career-fair. Due to covid restrictions, participants are limited and all attendees will be required to wear a mask at the event.

NMC is not planning on implementing an employee COVID-19 vaccination or weekly testing mandate. "We will continue to pay close attention to these developments. Our priorities continue to be on safety and legal compliance, while limiting disruption to learning," Mark Liebling, NMC's AVP of Human Resources, said in a release.

Non-Discrimination Policy Notice

Northwestern Michigan College is committed to a policy of equal opportunity for all persons and does not unlawfully discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, disability, genetic information, height, weight, marital status or veteran status in employment, educational programs and activities, and admissions. nmc.edu/nondiscrimination

NMC Community COVID Update

As COVID-19 continues to impact our community, it has become increasingly important to create easy access to important information. Since the start of this semester, NMC has stopped emailing possible exposures on campus to students and staff. The *White Pine Press* will be publishing these on-campus exposures every issue this semester in addition to COVID protocols, resources, and events in an effort to help disperse this important information. We will also share some general community information and resources.

Masking: NMC currently requires masks to be worn while indoors on all campuses.

Surgical masks and hand sanitizer can be found at all entrances. N-95 or KN-95 respirators are highly recommended and are available for the campus community at the following designated locations during regular business hours: Main Campus – Health Services (LB106), Aero Park Campus – Parsons-Stulen Welcome Desk (PS104), Great Lakes Campus – GLMA front desk or GLCI faculty suite. University Center – Extended Educational Services suite (main entrance)

Vaccinations: Vaccines remain the best protection against COVID-19, especially against severe illness. Vaccines are widely available for ages 5 and up. Grand Traverse Health Department and local pharmacies are administering vaccinations and boosters. Visit vaccines.gov to find a location.

Testing: Call NMC Health Services at (231)995-1255 to schedule a COVID

test if you are having symptoms or were exposed. The Grand Traverse Health Department and local pharmacies are also testing. To order free COVID tests for your home, visit covidtests.gov. If students, staff, or visitors test positive, please contact NMC Health Services and isolate.

Resources: Visit NMC's COVID hub for more information and resources at nmc.edu/covid19

Positive COVID Cases		
Week	NMC Campus	Grand Traverse County
1/23 - 1/28	17	650
1/16 - 1/22	23	1146
1/9 - 1/15	2	940
1/2 - 1/8	2	736
12/12 - 12/19	5	283
12/5 - 12/11	1	369

COVID-19 Cases for Northern Michigan	
Cumulative COVID-19 Cases	102,080
Cumulative COVID-19 Deaths	1,678

NMC Exposures By Campus/Building			
	Cases Since December 19		Cases Since December 19
Main Campus		Aeropark Campus	
Beckett	1	Aero Park Labs	2
Biederman	7	Auto Service Tech	3
Facilities	1	Aviation Hangars	1
Fine Arts	3	Parsons-Stulen	4
Health & Science	12		
West Hall	17	GLMA Campus	
Osterlin	5	Culinary Institute	7
Phys. Ed.	2	Maritime Academy	6
Scholars Hall	4		
		University Center	1

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From NMC, Anderson Found Steady Path to Becoming a Physician Assistant Student

Michele Coffill

Grand Valley State University

Ashley Anderson

laughed when she recalled it was a cat that sent her down her current career path.

Anderson will begin the master's program in physician assistant studies (PAS) at Grand Valley State University in August. She earned an associate degree from Northwestern Michigan College (NMC); in April, she will earn a bachelor's degree in allied health sciences from GVSU at the NMC University Center.

During an anatomy and physiology class at Traverse City Central High School, Anderson and her classmates were dissecting cats when a GVSU representative came into the class to discuss the PAS program.

"I really enjoyed the presentation and learning more about what a physician assistant does," Anderson said. "So, from my junior year, my career path was pretty much set. I like the flexibility of being a PA and that I can give back to my community."

There were a few bumps on her path, however.

Anderson, a lifelong resident of Traverse City, was accepted into GVSU after graduating from high school and began her first fall semester on the

Allendale Campus.

"What I learned about myself is that I really preferred being in northern Michigan and being with my family," Anderson said.

After that initial semester, she transferred to NMC.



Traverse City native Ashley Anderson will begin her master's degree in physician assistant studies at Grand Valley in August after earning earlier degrees from NMC and GVSU.

"NMC was a great buffer for me after my one semester at GVSU," Anderson said. "I found it was not as much pressure as a traditional campus and I continued to be on track toward my degree. It was flexible and everyone was super supportive."

Anderson works as a medical assistant at Traverse City Orthopedics. She said her connections with the area's health care community may help her be successful when she's ready to enter the workforce.

"With our clinical rotations, I will be learning where I'm planning to practice," she said.

That is the primary reason Grand Valley opened a satellite PAS program in Traverse City in 2015: to educate students who want to stay in northern Michigan and provide care for area residents. Since that year, more than 70 percent of students who earn PAS degrees work in the area.

Grand Valley's PAS program has an articulation agreement with NMC that grants preferred admission to the program at the Traverse City Center for two qualified NMC students who meet admission criteria.

Learn more about Grand Valley's Physician Assistant Studies program in Traverse City online. www.gvsu.edu/tcprograms

NMC Holds “Embrace the Dream” Events

NMC is hosting a campus-wide celebration of Martin Luther King, Jr., and Black History Month through Feb. 14. Inspired by the words in MLK’s “I Have a Dream” speech, “Life’s most persistent and urgent question is, ‘What are you doing for others?’” events will focus on community engagement, and diversity, equity, and inclusion.

The Voices Project exhibit allows visitors to learn the stories of lesser-known contributors to the arts, sciences, and occupations through QR codes found on posters. They can be found at the Great Lakes Campus, in the Parson-Stulen building, and on main campus in the Health/Science, Tanis, Beckett, Scholars, and Fine Arts buildings through Feb. 28.

The Dennon is hosting the **“Color & Shape: Black Artists from the Dennon Collection”** exhibit. This exhibit of works by Black American artists highlights the growing legacy of this important collection at the Dennon Museum Center. Comprising 70 years of artistic prowess, the collection ranges from abstract painting to figurative drawing and digital photography. It can be viewed Monday-Friday, 12—5 p.m.

Watch **“Black in Space: Breaking the Color Barrier”** in the Dutmers Theater, February 16, 1 pm—2 pm and 2:30 pm—3:30 pm, to learn how several African Americans served as pioneers of the Space Race.

5-Week Challenge emails are sent to all



The “Voices Project” exhibit in West Hall shares the stories of Madam C.J. Walker, Edward Bouchet, and more.

students and staff to give them the opportunity to read, watch, and learn more about DEI throughout the month of February. Friday Reflections offer a facilitated discussion, and a chance to connect with others and share what the participants are learning and how it impacts our thinking.

Sign up to volunteer and support **Safe Harbor of Grand Traverse**. Help the homelessness by serving dinner on February 7, 4 pm—8:30 pm or 5 pm—9 pm. Sign

up for a shift at gtsafeharbor.ivolunteer.com/nmc2022.

Take a virtual tour of the **Jim Crow Museum** February 9, 10 a.m.—11:30 a.m. or February 10, 1 p.m.—2:30 p.m. The Jim Crow Museum of Racist Memorabilia, which reports it has amassed the nation’s largest public collection of artifacts spanning the segregation era, from Reconstruction until the Civil Rights movement, and beyond. Registration required.

There will be an **Open Mic Night** for students Feb 10, 5 pm—7 pm in the West Hall Innovation Center.

The NMC Hawk Owl Café is hosting a **“Food for the Soul”** event Feb 14, 11 a.m.—1 p.m. Traditional African American/Black/Southern-inspired dishes, entrees and desserts will be served in the Hawk Owl Cafe.

Find Your Passion Through Volunteerism! Volunteers are desperately needed due to the declining numbers of volunteers from COVID-19. Join United Way and area volunteer leaders to learn how you can make a difference in the lives of those around you on Feb 14, 12:30 pm—1:30 pm in West Hall, room 106/107.

NMC Food Pantry Drive is accepting donations of non-perishable food items and toiletries. Items may be dropped off in the Osterlin Building. The NMC Food Pantry operates year-round in order to supply students with nutritious food and personal items in order to combat food insecurity. To donate money through the NMC Foundation, please visit nmc.edu/give.

Anti-Racism Resources are available through the Osterlin Library. NMC librarians will offer a list of media resources to educate and inspire all age groups. Explore these resources at nmc.libguides.com/anti-racism/bhm.

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COVID-19 Continues to Hurt NMC Enrollment

Kyle Hoffman
Assistant Editor

COVID-19 has made a deep impact on virtually every facet of human life, and higher education is no exception. University and college enrollment has declined by 938,000 students, or 5.1%, nationwide from fall 2019 to 2021, according to the National Student Clearinghouse Research Center. NMC suffered an enrollment decline of about 8%, or 283 students, in the same time period.

“The biggest trends that have impacted enrollment recently are demographics, the economy, and the pandemic,” Todd Neibauer, Vice President for Student Services and Technology at NMC said.

Enrollment numbers and trends have a large impact on NMC’s budget. Almost half of the annual funding comes from tuition, according to Neibauer. This makes addressing low enrollment a high priority and NMC is working to identify factors that could reverse the negative trend.

“Our strategic plan lays out actions we are taking to work with employers and new state programs to increase enrollment of older students,” Neibauer said. “We will also be working on plans to increase the percentage of students who stay in school and complete their programs and gain a degree or certificate.”

Enrollment was up slightly from last year despite COVID-19 evolving into different variants. NMC gained 99 students from spring 2021 to 2022, breaking the steady trend of declining enrollment for at least the last five years.

NMC enrollment dropped from 3,541 in spring 2018 to 3,098 in spring 2022—about 13.5 %. The college experienced much of its loss, about 5.6%, between spring 2018 and 2020. “Before the pandemic, unemployment was near all-time lows and we saw a large drop in enrollment in older students,” Neibauer said. If there was an enrollment resurgence due after these enrollment declines, COVID-19 thwarted any chances.

High unemployment typically leads to higher community college enrollment, as people enroll to get better, more secure jobs. Unemployment skyrocketed once the pandemic hit—from rates around 4% to rates as high as 15%. Enrollment continued to decline despite this.

Enrollment in NMC’s two largest programs have seen declines between spring 2020 and 2022. The program with the highest enrollment, General Liberal Arts and Science, lost 67 students and the second-largest enrollment category, students enrolled with no defined degree or certificate, lost 128 students.

Enrollment numbers show that students seem to favor standard community college degrees over transfer programs, which are meant to prepare students for further study at a university. At NMC, enrollment in the Accounting-Transfer associate degree program fell from 27 students in spring 2020 to 17 in spring 2022, while the Accounting associate degree program rose from 25 students to 49 over the same period. Similarly, enrollment in the Business Administration-Transfer associate degree dropped from 108 students in spring 2020 to 90 in spring 2022, while the General Business Administration associate degree program rose from 88 to 109 students over the same period.

Some individuals may have pushed college off because of COVID-19’s impact, but some may have decided they will never enroll, regardless of what the future holds. Individuals have to consider many things before deciding if college is the right decision for them. Not everyone has the means to make the large financial and time commitments that college demands. Most people sitting on the fence are feeling a strong gust of wind towards pushing college off or taking a break.

Only 29% of high school seniors completed financial aid



by the end of December 2021 in anticipation of attending college in fall 2022, according to a National College Attainment Network analysis of Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). And for students who took a “gap year” after graduating high school in 2020—only 2% ended up enrolling in the fall of 2021, according to the National Student Clearinghouse (NSC).

“The phenomenon of students sitting out of college seems to be more widespread. It’s not just the community colleges anymore,” Doug Shapiro, who leads the research center at NSC, told National Public Radio. “That could be the beginning of a whole generation of students rethinking the value of college itself. I think if that were the case, this is much more serious than just a temporary pandemic-related disruption.”

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Afro So Big

Jae Nichelle

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To the people who asked me ‘why?’
When I cut all my hair off.
To the man online who said ‘some of y’all women need to tame y’all afros’
And to my boss who told me ‘I hope this whole natural phase ends soon’.

May I one day have an Afro so big,
It shuts your mouth before you open it.
May I one day have an Afro so wild,
It tames you.

So in command that when it says sit, you sit.
I want an Afro so big I could smuggle a pack of twizzlers in it when I go to the movies,
And when I sit in the front row, I block everyone’s view behind me.

I want an Afro so hard, it sucker punches this one girl in class,
who tried to touch it on the slick.
I want an Afro that can do a neck roll and tell her,
‘Bitch, you ain’t slick.’

I hope when I gain weight,
It goes straight to my Afro.

So in addition to economy and first class,
Airlines have to add a brand new section called
‘Dark and lovely with really big head rest’.
And in the event that, that plane crashes,
My Afro doubles as a floatation device.

I want an Afro so grand,
only Moses could part it.
So big it develops a cult following,
And fanfiction where it is put into relationships with other famous afros,
All of which it denies.

And when I have a depressive episode,
I want it registered as an official emotional support Afro.
So thoughtful it turns shrinkage into arms and gives me a high five.

I want an Afro so big it envelopes the solar system,
Becoming a representation of just how cosmic black women really are.

I want the kids I work with to be able to lift themselves up just by holding on to it.
I want an Afro so hard, I could shield my little brother from bullet wounds.

So soft I could use it to make a bed wherever I go and forget how often I feel like I don’t have a home, I wanna make my Afro a home.
Where a mom could finally rest,
No longer having to pick up extra shifts to pay the rent.
I want an Afro that can express my gratitude to her better than I have.

An Afro with a bigger mouth than me that isn’t afraid to use it.
An Afro so unapologetic, that it tells me the hard truths like look,
You need to grow up and forgive people who hurt you or watch,
Watch how effortlessly I let negative comments bounce off.

I want an Afro I can lose myself in,
Or find myself finally.

I want it to drag on the ground behind me and touch the sky at the same time
And when someone asks me, ‘why?’
I will ask them, have you ever seen something so free, and so wild?

The Poet Focuses On Social Issues at NMC Event



Photo Courtesy of Jae Nichelle

Ally Licht Staff Writer Jae Nichelle, an award-winning poet, ghostwriter, and acclaimed lover of sweet potatoes, performed virtually as part of NMC’s “Embrace the Dream” celebration on Jan. 25. 17 participants joined over Zoom to discuss human rights issues and hear the acclaimed poet perform. Nichelle’s written poetry has been featured in many publications such as Best New Poets 2020 and The *Washington Square Review*. She has been winning poetry slams since she was 16 and gained popularity when her performance of “Friends With Benefits” went viral on YouTube. Nichelle also writes articles regarding language and mental health issues that are prevalent in her community.

Nichelle focused on income inequality during the NMC event. First, she welcomed the audience and expressed how great she thought it was that so many had gathered to listen to poetry on a Tuesday evening. Then, she challenged the attendees to think critically. “In an alternate reality, would you have money in your ideal world?” Nichelle asked the participants. The answers were varied. One person mentioned they would prefer a bartering system while another mentioned how money has its pros and cons. After the discussion, Nichelle expressed her own feelings, stating that everyone should have access to what they need, regardless of money or other factors.

Human rights and social justice issues like this are common themes in her work, which also strives to highlight struggles the Black community faces. During the event, Nichelle recalled a time when her boss took issue with her afro. “It’s amazing how many issues can come from just the hair on your head,” she says. She then performed her poem “Afro So Big,” which she wrote in response to people, including the boss in her story, who were unaccepting of her hairstyle.

To learn more about Jae Nichelle’s work, or to read more poems, visit <https://www.jaenichelle.com>.

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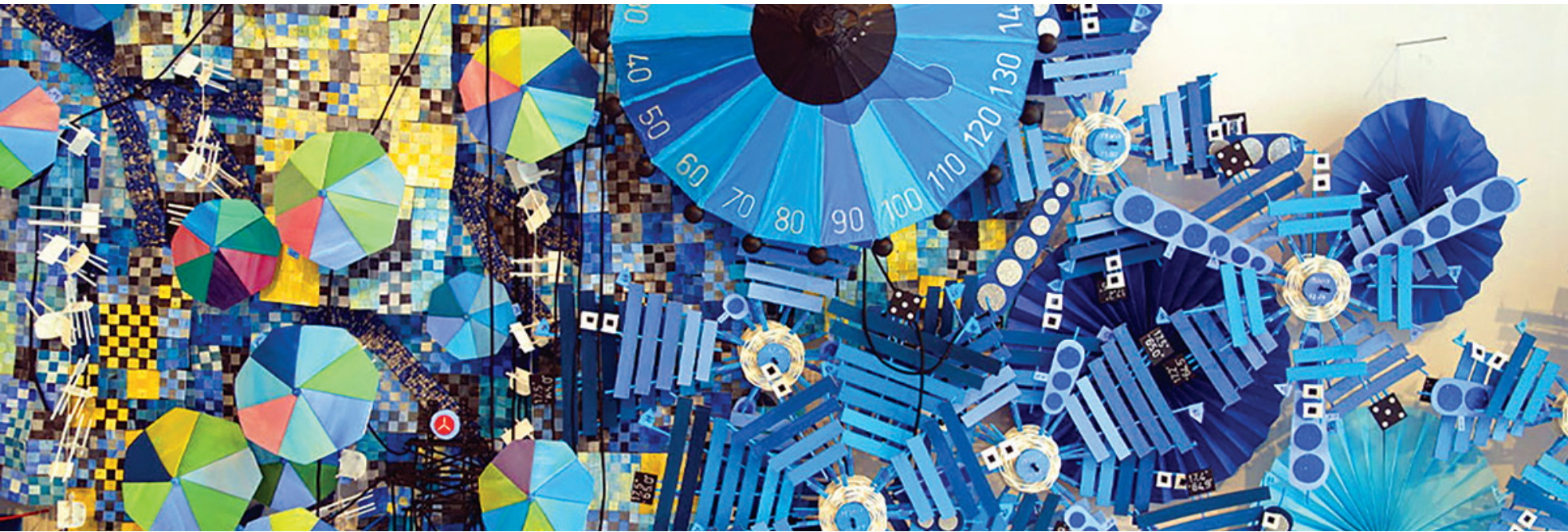
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Detail image from Miebach, Stay Healthy and Strong

A New Year Brings New Art to the Dennos

Craig Hadley The new year has brought a wealth of new exhibits to the Dennos Museum and Chief Curator Center. Take a moment in between classes to stop by and see what’s on display. As always, admission is free to NMC students when you present your NMC student ID card.

COLOR & SHAPE: BLACK ARTISTS FROM THE DENNOS COLLECTION
January 17, 2022 — April 3, 2022
This exhibit of works by Black American artists

highlights the growing legacy of this important collection at the Dennos Museum Center.
2022 NORTHWEST MICHIGAN REGIONAL JURIED EXHIBITION
January 23, 2022 — May 29, 2022
Held regularly at the Museum for 30 years, the exhibition features art made by regional artists over the last year and juried by an arts professional outside of the region.
NATHALIE MIEBACH: STAY HEALTHY AND STRONG
January 23, 2022 — May 29, 2022

Nathalie Miebach explores the human response related to extreme weather patterns and the COVID-19 pandemic through the translation of scientific data into woven sculptures, installations and musical scores.
THE ART OF: DEL MICHEL
January 23, 2022 — April 3, 2022
These images celebrate the beauty and energy that Del Michel experiences in nature, alive with dynamic change . . . landscape patterns shaped by natural forces such as wind, climate, quality of light and atmosphere.

Valentine’s Day Oreo Truffles

Molly Salter Staff Writer Valentine’s Day brings not only couples together, but also best friends and family members. People commonly exchange small gifts such as chocolate covered strawberries, fresh red roses, decadent cakes, and, of course, classic chocolate truffles filled with caramels, fudge, and fruit fillings. In the week leading up to February 14, over 58 million pounds of chocolate is sold in the United States alone! Those iconic heart shaped boxes decorated in bright reds and pinks filled with chocolate truffles are the most popular treat to buy. An incredible 36 million boxes are sold every year in the United States. But you don’t need to resort to a store-bought solution! Don’t get me wrong, they can be delicious and come in a beautiful box, but making something yourself can mean even more to a person—especially around Valentine’s Day! Oreo truffles are a simple, easy, and delicious dessert to make for a loved one. A sweet, soft, and tender interior dipped in a rich semi-sweet chocolate shell will satisfy that special someone’s sweet tooth. A drizzle of white chocolate and a pinch of red and pink sprinkles is the perfect way to personalize your gift with a little Valentine’s flair. I hope you try my recipe for these chocolatey single-portion desserts with an Oreo twist!

Oreo Truffles

This recipe will make around 40 truffles.

Ingredients:

Truffles

- 1 Family sized container - Oreos, crushed
- 3 Tablespoons - Salted Butter, melted
- 8 oz - Cream Cheese, room temperature

Dipping Chocolate

- 2 Cups - Semi-Sweet Chocolate Chips, melted
- 1 Teaspoon - Crisco Shortening

Decorative Topping

- ½ Cup - White Chocolate Chips, melted
- ½ Teaspoon - Crisco Shortening
- ¼ Cup - Pink and Red Decorative Sanding Sugar

Instructions:

Truffles

1. Crush the Oreos into a fine dust in a food processor or place in a large bag and beat with a rolling pin. No large lumps of cookies should be in the mixture.
2. Melt the salted butter and add to the crushed up Oreos, mix it all together.
3. Add the cream cheese to the Oreo mixture in a food processor or by hand with a spatula. The mixture should be soft with an almost wet like consistency and appearance.
4. Using a cookie scoop or a 1 tablespoon measuring spoon, portion each Oreo truffle and roll into a ball by hand.
5. Place on a parchment lined baking sheet and place truffles in the freezer to harden, this will make it easier for the chocolate to set once they are dipped.
6. While they are in the freezer, melt the semi-sweet chocolate chips in either a double-boiler over the stove or a microwave-safe bowl, adding the crisco shortening to it to smooth out the texture. Make sure to stir the chocolate every 30 seconds to prevent burning if you decide to melt the chocolate in the microwave!
7. Pull out the cooled truffles and, with a fork, drop them into the melted chocolate, shake off the excess chocolate, and place them back on the parchment paper.
8. Once they all have been dipped and set back on the parchment paper, place them back in the freezer to set the chocolate.

Decorations

1. Grab a small microwave safe bowl and place the white chocolate and crisco shortening into the bowl, melt them together using the 30-seconds and stir method, and place in a small zip-lock bag.
2. Pull out the chocolate dipped truffles and then cut a very small corner off the zip-lock bag.
3. Moving quickly, drizzle the white chocolate over top of the truffles in whatever design you want.
4. Quickly sprinkle on the sanding sugar for decoration.
5. Store in the Fridge in an airtight container until ready to be served to a loved one.