



Academic Affairs Report
May 15, 2026

Agenda Item #1: Approval of Reducing the Minimum Credit Hours for Associate’s and Bachelor’s degrees

Information

Action

Discussion

Purpose:

The purpose of this action is to approve the recommendation to reduce the minimum credit hours required to complete an associate’s degree to 60 and a bachelor’s degree to 120.

Background:

A proposal was brought forward by faculty to the deans and Provost to reduce LSSU’s minimum credits to graduate for an associate’s degree (currently 62) and a bachelor’s degree (currently 124), to align with Higher Learning Commission minimums. The Higher Learning Commission’s Assumed Practice B.1a states *“The institution conforms to commonly accepted minimum program length: 60 semester credits for associate’s degrees, 120 semester credits for bachelor’s degrees and 30 semester credits beyond the bachelor’s for master’s degrees. Any variation is explained and justified.”*

A review of Michigan public universities was conducted to assess minimum credit hour requirements for bachelor’s degree completion. Among the fifteen public universities, two institutions — Oakland University (124 credit hours) and Western Michigan University (122 credit hours) — currently require more than the 120-credit hour standard, as does LSSU at 124 credit hours.

The HLC minimum, state data, and feedback from departments was discussed and reviewed by the LSSU Curriculum Committee. On February 19, 2026 the Curriculum Committee voted 10–1 in support of a recommendation to lower our minimum credits for both the associate’s and bachelor’s degrees to conform with the HLC minimum requirements, while allowing individual programs the ability to set higher thresholds when warranted by their curriculums or specialized accrediting bodies.

Suggested Action/Motion:

Approve the 60-credit hour minimum for associate degrees and 120-credit hour minimum for bachelor’s degrees.

President’s Recommendation:

Approval of the motion, as presented.



Academic Affairs Report
May 15, 2026

Agenda Item #2: Approval of Emeritus Faculty Nomination

Information

Action

Discussion

Purpose:

The purpose of this action is to approve the recommendation to award emeritus faculty status to Dr. Alexei Iretski.

Background:

Consistent with University policy, the Board of Trustees may grant emeritus status to a faculty member with academic rank in recognition of demonstrable meritorious teaching, outstanding service, or published research. The designation may be assigned to:

- Associate or full professors, who have terminated their responsibilities as a result of retirement after a minimum of ten years at the University, or
- A faculty member at any rank at retirement after a minimum of twenty years of service to the University,

provided the candidate has attained the age of 55 at the time of retirement.

Recommendations for emeritus status may be initiated through self-nomination by the Emeritus Candidate, by the faculty of an academic school, or by a University administrator.

All recommendations shall include a comprehensive statement attesting to the candidate's consistent record of quality performance as demonstrated by one or more of the following:

- A substantive record of scholarly achievement commensurate with national and international standards within a specific discipline.
- A recognized record of outstanding teaching and educational contributions.
- Clear evidence of service to the University beyond normal expectations.

The Provost convened a committee of five tenured, full professors to review the submission and forward their recommendation to the Provost.

RESOLUTION
from the
Lake Superior State University
Board of Trustees

Whereas, *Dr. Alexei V. Iretski faithfully served Lake Superior State University from his initial appointment as a sabbatical replacement in 2002, transitioning to a full-time role in 2003, earning promotion to Associate Professor with tenure in 2007, and achieving the rank of Professor in 2013, until his retirement; and*

Whereas, *Dr. Iretski taught at Lake Superior State University for over two decades, elevating the academic standing of our institution through a rigorous dedication to teaching, scholarship, and service within the School of Chemistry, Environmental, and Geosciences; and*

Whereas, *Dr. Iretski taught a vast array of courses including Life Chemistry, General Chemistry, Survey of Organic Chemistry, Inorganic Chemistry, Physical Chemistry, and Advanced Inorganic Chemistry, ensuring that generations of students graduated with technical proficiency through his management of intensive, hands-on laboratory experiences; and*

Whereas, *Dr. Iretski established a substantive record of scholarly achievement directly addressing pressing global energy and environmental challenges, such as biomass conversion into fuel, heterogeneous catalysis, and advanced CO₂ adsorbents; and*

Whereas, *Dr. Iretski's prolific research output is evidenced by his authorship of 78 peer-reviewed publications and his holding of 11 patents related to chemical processing and biomass conversion; and*

Whereas, *Dr. Iretski acted as a global ambassador for LSSU, modeling lifelong learning and collaboration through extensive work as a Visiting Professor during his 2009 sabbatical and beyond, representing the university at prestigious institutions including Interkat Catalyst GmbH in Germany, the Armenian Academy of Sciences, Pierre and Marie Curie University in France, Mississippi State University, and the University of California, Santa Barbara; now, therefore be it*

Resolved, *that the Board of Trustees of Lake Superior State University formally extends to Dr. Alexei V. Iretski its sincere appreciation for his loyalty, varied contributions, dedication to his profession, distinguished teaching, and service to this University by bestowing upon him the rank of Professor Emeritus with all the honors, rights, and privileges appertaining thereunto; be it further*

Resolved, *that a copy of this resolution of recognition appear in the minutes of this meeting of the Board of Trustees, so that this sincere tribute of respect and gratitude will be included in the permanent records of this University.*

Adopted by unanimous vote of the Board of Trustees and given by our hands this 15th day of May 2026.

Suggested Action/Motion:

Award emeritus faculty status to Dr. Alexei Iretski.

President's Recommendation:

Approval of the motion, as presented.



Academic Affairs Report May 15, 2026

Agenda Item #3: Academic Affairs Update

Information

Action

Discussion

Purpose:

The purpose of this information is to provide an update on activities in the area of Academic Affairs.

Background:

Highlights from Academic Affairs

Monthly updates have been sent to campus and the Board that contain the activities and accomplishments of our students, faculty, and staff in Academic Affairs since the last board meeting. For your reference, you can find archived copies of the monthly report for [January and February](#), [March](#), and [April](#) by clicking on the links. These reports are filled with compelling examples of experiential learning, showcasing meaningful collaboration between faculty and students on impactful scholarly work, as well as strong efforts in recruitment, outreach, and community engagement.

To provide additional highlights related to current initiatives:

1. Faculty and staff continue to prepare the Assurance Argument in advance of the fall comprehensive visit by the Higher Learning Commission.
2. LSSU's 40th Atlantic Salmon Release will occur on June 4, 2026 at the fish hatchery adjacent to the Barch Center for Freshwater Research and Education.
3. Beginning July 1, 2026, Academic Affairs will be structured into three colleges, the College of Arts and Sciences, the College of Great Lakes Ecology and Education, and the College of Professional Studies. Dr. Kathy Berchem will assume the role of Associate Vice President for Assessment and Accreditation in the Provost's Office.
4. Students, faculty, staff, and visitors filled the Arbuckle Student Activity Center on Friday, April 24, as 114 students showcased 83 capstone projects at the 10th Annual Campus-Wide Senior Research Symposium. Students presented their posters and confidently engaged with attendees, answering questions about their work.

Office of Sponsored Programs

New Grants since February Board Meeting

1. Michigan State Police Emergency Management and Homeland Security Division

External Grant Awards				
Sponsor	Amount	Award Period	Budget Highlights	PI
Michigan State Police Emergency Management and Homeland Security Division--State and Local Cybersecurity Grant Program	\$32,000	01/22/2026-09/30/2028	Salary/Fringe: N/A Indirect Costs: N/A	Julie Hober

With support from the State and Local Cybersecurity Grant Program, LSSU will complete a cybersecurity assessment that will be used to develop a framework for the campus cybersecurity posture for subsequent years. The completion of a cybersecurity assessment as well as both internal and external penetration tests will assist LSSU in identifying vulnerabilities and provide a framework for improved risk management, validation of security controls, enhanced response, and ongoing improvement. Future cybersecurity goals and priorities will be based on the results of these assessments, and will be the cornerstone of configuration, policy and budgetary changes, while the pretest will identify immediate threats to be addressed.

2. U. S. Army Engineer Research And Development Center (ERDC)

External Grant Awards				
Sponsor	Amount	Award Period	Budget Highlights	PI
U.S. Army Engineer Research and Development	\$216,243	04/16/2026-04/15/2029	Salary/Fringe: \$177,174 Indirect Costs: \$39,069	Ashley Moerke

The Modeling nuisance algal blooms of Didymosphenia geminata and their impacts on macroinvertebrate assemblages in the St. Mary's River project will investigate the proliferation of *Didymosphenia geminata* (Didymo) in the St. Marys River and other Northern Michigan waterways to identify the environmental triggers behind its nuisance algal blooms. By conducting year-round water quality sampling and biological monitoring, CFRE researchers aim to develop predictive models that explain how factors like nutrient levels and temperature drive stalk production. Additionally, the study will assess the impact of dense Didymo mats on benthic macroinvertebrates, which are vital food sources for local fish populations. Ultimately, the findings will support a collaboration with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to establish real-time monitoring and effective management strategies for these ecologically sensitive channels.

3. Michigan Arts and Culture Council (MACC)

External Grant Awards				
Sponsor	Amount	Award Period	Budget Highlights	PI
Michigan Arts and Culture Council (MACC)	\$21,900	01/01/2026-12/31/2026	Salary/Fringe: N/A Indirect Costs: N/A	Noah Lucé

Funding from the Michigan Arts and Culture Council (MACC) will modernize two critical systems at the LSSU Arts Center Mainstage Theatre. This grant facilitates the acquisition of an upgraded projection system and professional hardware for the technical booth, significantly enhancing production capabilities.

Suggested Action/Motion:

None

President's Recommendation:

N/A