

MSU-Northern

Office of Teaching & Learning Excellence

Strategic Plan, updated 2025

Mission Statement and Goals

OTLE is dedicated to the support and advancement of evidence-based teaching and learning practices and the professional development of all members of the MSU-Northern teaching community. OTLE partners with faculty, staff, and administrators to develop and sustain a culture that values and rewards teaching, respects and supports individual differences among learners, and creates learning environments in which diverse students and instructors can excel.

OTLE's mission statement contains three embedded goals.

- I. OTLE is dedicated to the support and advancement of evidence-based teaching and learning practices and the professional development of all members of the MSU-Northern teaching community.
- II. OTLE partners with faculty, staff, and administrators to develop and sustain a culture that values and rewards teaching,
- III. respects and supports individual differences among learners, and creates learning environments in which diverse students and instructors can excel.

Goal I	Support faculty as they improve the quality and effectiveness of teaching and learning at MSU-Northern.
Goal II	Cultivate a community of practice among MSU-Northern faculty across all programs, supporting faculty development at all career stages.
Goal III	Improve the responsiveness and accessibility of curricula and learning environments at MSU-Northern.

OTLE's mission and goals align with MSU-Northern's Core Themes 1 and 2, which express MSU-Northern's commitment to "provide liberal arts, professional and technical programs that serve a diverse student population," and "promote a student centered and culturally enriched environment which fosters student success."

Ongoing efforts and initiatives of OTLE

Tech Snacks

Tech Snacks are short, focused professional development sessions covering instructional technology, pedagogical techniques, and online learning, delivered in 15-minute chunks. OTLE offers around 11 weekly Tech Snacks sessions each Fall and Spring semester. During the 2024-2025 academic year, 80% of on-campus faculty and adjunct faculty attended at least one Tech Snacks session.

I	II	III	<i>Tech Snacks supports all three OTLE goals.</i>
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Assistance in the Onboarding of New Faculty & Adjuncts

MSU-Northern hired eight new, full-time faculty members for the Fall 2023 semester and is likely to hire many more new instructors in the next few years as senior faculty retire and as programs are changed or added. Additionally, adjunct instructors are hired frequently each semester, some of which are never on campus and are harder to connect with. Many new faculty at Northern — especially in technical programs — come with ample content area expertise but little teaching experience. Over the past two years, the OTLE took a more active role in onboarding new faculty members, assisted with curriculum and course design, and began connecting new faculty to a campus-wide community of practice, especially during our transition to the Canvas LMS. With adjuncts, OTLE works closely with each College Chair to do regularly adjunct Canvas check-ins, ensuring their courses are mapped out well and adjuncts are provided with necessary resources.

I	II	III	<i>Onboarding New Faculty & Adjuncts supports all three OTLE goals.</i>
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Faculty Learning Community

The FLC is intended to help new faculty improve their teaching practice, course design, and assessment and evaluation strategies, as well as career development skills related to faculty mentoring, program development, and the promotion and tenure process. The FLC meets once a month, focusing on teaching excellence in the fall semester and career development in the spring semester. New faculty members are strongly encouraged to participate during their first year at MSU-Northern. Experienced faculty are also asked to help facilitate the discussions, creating opportunities for peer mentorship across programs. Teaching Triangles are a great FLC opportunity where faculty from different disciplines are paired together to learn from each other and explore pedagogy practices.

I	II	III	<i>The Faculty Learning Community supports all three OTLE goals.</i>
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Innovative Teaching & Learning Festival

Every spring semester the OTLE hosts a two-hour innovative teaching and learning festival intended to showcase audio, video, and other media projects created by Northern students and faculty. The goal is to promote diverse media creation and usage in face-to-face and online classrooms at Northern. Presentation topics vary, such as teaching styles in the classroom,

emerging technologies faculty are using, and even ways of exploring the Canvas LMS with students.

	II	III	<i>The OTLE media festival supports goals II and III.</i>
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Teaching & Learning Reading Group

Each semester the OTLE plans and facilitates a faculty and staff reading group related to teaching and learning and/or technology and society. During the Fall 2021 semester we read and discussed Grant Wiggins and Jay McTighe's *Understanding by Design*, which focuses on curriculum design that stimulates the student experience. During the Spring of 2022 semester we discussed Ted Chiang's *Exhalation*, which covers the importance of social interaction, self-discovery, and communication in general. In the Spring of 2023, we explored Apostolos Doxiadis and Christos H. Papadimitriou's graphic novel, *Logicomix*, which explores the general human search for truth, particularly through logic, mathematics, and philosophy.

	II	III	<i>The OTLE reading group supports goals II and III.</i>
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Continuous Direct User Support

On a daily basis, OTLE offers technical and pedagogical support to faculty, staff, and students at MSU-Northern. This includes support for the Canvas online learning platform; other software and web services; online and face-to-face classroom instructional design; curriculum development; video and audio recording; content accessibility; and other faculty and student support as needed.

I		III	<i>Direct User Support primarily supports goals I and III.</i>
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Taking a Role in Student Orientation and Support

OTLE has been a part of the student orientation process for the last few years. Since students don't get much exposure to our office outside of student-focused events, like orientation, we make sure to get facetime with them any opportunity we can. In addition to hosting a Canvas login/setup session during their Fall orientation, we also travel with some faculty to Havre High School each semester to help our Dual Enrollment students get into Canvas and ask any questions they have for us. This has helped immensely over the years with students knowing what our office is and how we're able to support them.

		III	<i>Participating in student orientation would support goal III.</i>
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Proposed future initiatives for OTLE

Take a central role in online Accessibility compliance

According to the US Department of Education Office of Civil Rights, “‘accessible’ means that individuals with disabilities are able to independently acquire the same information, engage in the same interactions, and enjoy the same services within the same timeframe as individuals without disabilities, with substantially equivalent ease of use.”¹ MSU-Northern will increasingly need to contend with accessibility compliance in a systematic way. Additionally, In 2027, higher education institutions receiving federal funding must ensure their online content, including websites and mobile apps, adheres to the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.1 Level AA standards. This requirement is part of the ADA Title II regulations and aims to make digital content accessible to individuals with disabilities. Public institutions, such as MSU-Northern, with a population of fewer than 50,000 people have until April 26, 2027, to comply.

		III	<i>Managing accessibility compliance would support goal III.</i>
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Provide more Canvas, AI & Pedagogy Workshops

Throughout each semester, OTLE plans to host more workshops on an as-needed basis for the Canvas LMS, emerging AI technology, and various pedagogy topics. These workshops will allow us to support innovation and resilience in higher education by integrating emerging technologies, particularly in the rapidly evolving world of AI, Canvas updates or product integrations, federal, state, and institutional policy awareness, and overall pedagogy design into faculty development. During the 2024-2025 academic year, 74% of our on-campus faculty attended one or more workshops related to Canvas. Additionally, some adjunct instructors also attended some workshops.

I	II	III	<i>More Workshops primarily supports goals I and III.</i>
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Craft an AI Resources Hub

With the frequent and consistent evolution of AI, OTLE plans to build a general AI Resource hub for faculty, staff, and students on our website, aiming to be AI syllabus-ready by Fall 2026. The goal in crafting and updating the AI resources hub over time is to keep up with AI industry standards and offer guidance on the ethical, practical, environmental, and other AI implications that come with its use, particularly in higher education. According to a study by Campbell Academic Technology Services of students and faculty using AI, 58% of students reported they do not feel they have sufficient AI knowledge and skills, while only 17% of faculty feel they are at an advanced or expert level with AI.²

I	II	III	<i>Implementing an AI resource hub meets all three OTLE goals.</i>
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¹ <http://www.umt.edu/accessibility/docs/FinalResolutionAgreement.pdf>

Assessment of OTLE activities

Tech Snacks and Events Log

OTLE staff track attendance for faculty, staff and students of every tech snacks, workshop, or event that we host. This allows us to record which faculty members are interacting with us most, how often, and for which sessions they attend. The same goes for students and staff, though we have fewer events centered around them. This interaction data is used to measure OTLE support effectiveness and volume and also contributes to faculty portfolios as a way to measure their professional development, amongst other metrics.

Yearly student survey

Each spring, OTLE asks MSU-Northern students via Canvas announcement to complete a survey assessing their use habits of Canvas, access to technology and devices, and satisfaction with MSU-Northern's Canvas system. Relevant assessment data is collected and used for feedback with faculty, instruction, and other relevant departments to help improve student experience.

Yearly faculty survey

Each spring, OTLE asks MSU-Northern faculty via email or on paper to complete a survey intended to assess their satisfaction with OTLE, their use of Canvas, and suggestions for improvements or new offerings from OTLE. Most data is used to craft new workshops or Tech Snacks topics.

Faculty Advisory Committee

OTLE maintains a Faculty Advisory Committee to help better identify the technical and professional development needs of Faculty at MSU-Northern, and to better assess OTLE's effectiveness at addressing those needs. The Faculty Advisory Committee is drawn from a diverse pool of faculty, and includes a mix of new and established faculty and representation from all colleges at MSU-Northern. The Advisory Committee meets four times per academic year, and participates as needed to support OTLE's faculty development initiatives. Meeting notes are recorded and will be publicly accessible via the OTLE web page.

²<https://sites.campbell.edu/academictechnology/2025/03/06/ai-in-higher-education-a-summary-of-recent-surveys-of-students-and-faculty/>

Assessing the effectiveness of OTLE Professional Development

It's relatively easy to track professional development attendance and support interactions, which OTLE does. It's more difficult to track meaningful changes in faculty teaching practice due to OTLE initiatives, or subsequent improvement in student outcomes. To assist in assessing our effectiveness in improving teaching and learning practices at MSU-Northern, OTLE utilizes an evaluation tool designed by the Association of College and University Educators.

The ACUE model suggests that meaningful change in faculty practice follows six levels.

Level 1	Faculty Engagement Do faculty find our faculty development offerings relevant?	Input Measures
Level 2	Faculty Learning Do faculty learn new teaching practices?	
Level 3	Faculty Implementation Do faculty implement new teaching practices?	
Level 4	Student Engagement Are students more motivated and engaged?	Output Measures
Level 5	Student Outcomes Are students completing more courses and earning better grades?	
Level 6	Institutional outcomes Are retention and completion rates improved?	

Adapted from MacCormack, Snow, Gyurko & Sekel, 2018. Connecting the Dots: A Proposed Accountability Method for Evaluating the Efficacy of Faculty Development and Its Impact on Student Outcomes, ACUE

The first three input measures are being measured by OTLE using self-reported survey data from faculty. This can help determine which evidence-based professional development offerings faculty are finding useful, and if they are implementing any changes in practice based on what is being offered.

The last three output measures can be measured by gathering institutional student course evaluations, academic achievement statistics, and retention and completion rates over time. Institutional retention and completion outcomes are influenced by a huge number of variables, and it can be difficult to tease out what initiatives and policies are having the most effect. However, ACUE's research strongly suggests that faculty learning and implementation of effective teaching practices are positively correlated with institutional student outcomes.

Measurable yearly goals for OTLE

Maintain or increase the number of individual faculty members attending Tech Snacks.

This will mean more faculty exploring new teaching and technology topics. Perhaps more importantly, it increases opportunities for faculty across programs to interact in an informal environment, developing a community of practice and an atmosphere of peer mentoring. This metric is easily measured by collecting attendance data for each Tech Snack session.

Increase the percentage of faculty members implementing new, evidence-based technology and teaching practices in their learning environments based on OTLE offerings. As described in the ACUE assessment proposal, increased implementation of evidence-based practices by faculty is shown to improve student engagement and outcomes, and ultimately to improve institutional outcomes. Since this metric will be based on voluntary survey responses, accurate measurement will be less consistent and could fluctuate dramatically on a per-semester basis. Over time, three-, four-, and five-year implementation rates should provide a more accurate trend line.

Maintain or improve overall faculty satisfaction rates with OTLE service over time. This metric will be based on voluntary survey responses. Maintaining a satisfaction average at or above 7 out of 10 will be considered a success.

Maintain or improve student satisfaction rates with Canvas over time. This metric will be based on voluntary survey responses. Factors affecting student satisfaction include technical administration of the Canvas system, student training and orientation with the Canvas system, and improved faculty implementation of best practices for online course design. Maintaining a satisfaction average at or above 7 out of 10 will be considered a success.

Maintain currency with educational and technological trends in higher education. In order to provide faculty with cutting-edge professional development opportunities, OTLE staff are continually researching current trends and breakthroughs in teaching and learning. This includes independent research, exploring current literature, attending free or low-cost online training and seminars, and attending and presenting at regional and national conferences.

Increase adoption of inclusive design tools in Canvas. Whether this is Yuja panorama, Yuja Video, Lucid Whiteboard, etc. we are regularly updating and adding tools in Canvas that faculty and students can benefit from. Getting 70% usage or more from faculty out of each tool will be considered a success.