
My name is Mike Raich, and I am serving in my first year as the Interim President of the Northeast Higher Education District, which includes Mesabi Range College.

When I accepted the position this past summer, never in my wildest dreams did I think that I would be addressing all of you at commencement, virtually from my office. Just as you never imagined that your lives, your education, and your commencement ceremony would be so severely effected by a worldwide pandemic.

I want to thank Provost Shelly McCauley Jugovich for her leadership and the caring and creative faculty and staff at Mesabi Range College for going up and beyond this year to ensure that education and services to students continued through spring semester. It was truly a team effort that allowed us to complete this academic year.

The good news is that you made it. Despite the challenges you faced throughout the past few years, whether COVID-19 related or not, you persisted and earned your degree from Mesabi Range College.

People usually pursue higher education because, through learning, they want to advance their lives in some way. They are at point A and dream to be at point B. In this educational journey, learning and life’s lessons often occur beyond the classroom walls, and this year provided a solid example of that sentiment. The fact you were able to wade through the adversities and fears associated with COVID-19 and persist to the point of graduation is a testament to your will and determination.

You will continue to come across road bumps in your life. We all do; it’s inevitable. But you can take what you learned from this year—from both in and outside the classroom – and it will serve you well in meeting future challenges on life’s journey.

I want to include a quote by Martin Luther King Jr., because what would a commencement ceremony be without a quote?

He said, “If you can’t fly, then run, if you can’t run, then walk, if you can’t walk, then crawl; but whatever you do, you have to keep moving forward.” The point? By whatever means, find a way to keep furthering your life’s pursuits. You all found your own way to keep moving forward this spring, and for that, I, along with Mesabi Range’s faculty and staff, are very proud of you.

Congratulations Mesabi Range class of two thousand and twenty (2020).

I wish you the best!