

PAUL RIPLEY YOUNG ALUMNUS AWARD



When one conjures up the image of the typical entrepreneur, one thinks of an individual who is high energy, multi-talented, adaptable, jack-of-all trades and actively involved. These characteristics sum up this year's Paul Ripley Award recipient, both while a student and student-athlete, and also how she has applied her LSSU education and personality in assisting other entrepreneurs in reaching their goals.

The 2018 Recipient of the Paul Ripley Award for Young Alumni is Erin Strang, LSSU class of 2002. Erin is President and Chief Executive Officer of Central Michigan University Research Corporation (CMURC) in Mt. Pleasant, a position she has held since 2010. The company is a professional coworking space with an accelerator program that focuses on advancing economic development in the Great Lakes Bay

Region.

"I graduated from LSSU with a solid business foundation that I have been able to leverage to assist entrepreneurs in their business strategy and development," said Erin. "I am honored to be receiving the Ripley Award, as I am fortunate to have found my passion due to the education of my alma mater."

"I transferred to Lake Superior State University from Glen Oaks Community College, where I had earned an associate's degree in general studies," Erin continued. "I was very hesitant to declare a major as I was unsure of the direction I wanted to pursue. Through great mentors and professors, I found that business was the route I wanted to take and I never looked back. In addition to the academic excellence that I encountered, I was also fortunate enough to be part of the Laker Volleyball athletics program. It was here that I gained an almost immediate extended family along with additional skillset that prepared me for the world. The complete LSSU experience was something that I will always cherish."

As President and CEO of CMURC, Erin serves organizations which have directly led to the creation of more than 170 companies – 84% of which are still pursuing growth, creating more than 490 new jobs and investing 53 million dollars. She has created sustainable, repeatable programs and services to grow the organization to add facilities throughout the Great Lakes Bay Region. Erin designed and managed facility development in Bay City and Saginaw. She created the tech transfer process to commercialize university researcher's technology and she led the Smartzone District Development in Mt. Pleasant.

Prior to becoming President, Erin served as Director of Operations in 2010. In that role she managed day to day operations for business development and business insights; recruited and retained entrepreneurial start-up tenants and affiliate client companies to provide industry, market, and feasibility analysis; product, manufacturing, and supply chain development; business strategy and implementation; investment relations and partnerships.

In 2009 she was the Grant Development Director. As such she identified potential grant opportunities for clients and CMU faculty, managing, preparing and submitting proposals totaling more than 122 million dollars.

From 2007 to 2008 Erin was the Assistant Director of Business Innovation for the Oakland University SmartZone Business INCubator. There she provided due diligence and investor analysis to venture capital and angel investors; developed business process design and facilitated planning sessions; assisted OU faculty with the design and delivery of appropriate entrepreneurship minor courses; and conducted economic development research in conjunction with OU Public Affairs Research Laboratory

The complete LSSU experience was something that I will always cherish.

- Erin Strang '02

From 2003 to 2007 Erin was employed by Michigan Virtual University, a nonprofit organization that is the premier provider in the delivery of interactive, web-based education and training to advance the knowledge and skills of Michigan K-12 students and educators. In her first year she managed special projects. From 2004 forward she was the marketing director, responsible for the marketing, public relations and internal communication efforts. She directed long and short-term strategic planning, developed campaign theme and key messages for all products and divisions; planned and managed the department budget; developed marketing promotional campaigns; conducted event management & community outreach; delivered presentations to Michigan Legislatures and Michigan Educational Organizations; handled graphical design of all collateral materials, print and electronic; designed, edited and managed all four divisional web sites and created a brand image, identity and market position.

From January 2003 to December 2004 Erin was also the project manager for the website restructure and promotional video of the Freedom to Learn grant program. She designed content and layout for brochures, invitations and promotional materials while maintaining a direct relationship with the Michigan Department of Education on funding, data analysis, and developing key system changes in the Michigan Electronic Grant System (MEGS). She managed and coordinated all major events and acted as the central point of contact for school districts, demonstration sites, and ISDs for grant information.

Currently Erin is chair of the Mt. Pleasant Area Chamber of Commerce. She is the vice chair of the Michigan Small Business and Development Center and a member of the CMU Senior Leadership Team. Previously Erin served on the Great Lakes Bay Regional Alliance Board, the Mid-Michigan College, M-Tec Advisory Board and the Middle Michigan Development Corporation.

Erin played volleyball for LSSU from 2000 to 2002 and earned her bachelor of science degree in business administration with a minor in marketing. Prior to attending LSSU, Erin completed an associates degree at Glen Oaks Community College in Centreville. Currently she is taking courses at Oakland University, working towards a masters of public administration.

“I had never really been further than an hour away from my family, let alone six hours away,” remembers Erin. “Prior to my selection to come to LSSU, I remember debating on if I were to pursue additional education at all. Looking back, I could not have asked for a better experience or better education. LSSU was a big part of the journey that molded me into the individual I am today, and I am honored to be receiving this award.”

“THANK-YOU LAKE SUPERIOR STATE UNIVERSITY!”

The Paul Ripley Award for Young Alumni will be presented at the annual Alumni Awards banquet on November 2 during Great Lake State Weekend, LSSU's homecoming. Tickets for the banquet must be reserved in advance and are available [online](#) or by phone from the Alumni Association 906-635-6219.

The Paul Ripley Award for Young Alumni honors graduates who have enjoyed exceptional personal and professional success early in their careers. Those honored must have graduated within the past 15 years. Paul Ripley was Lake State's first Alumni Director and was a member of the Pioneer Class of 1946. He also served as the Director of Placement and College Relations and taught journalism. Paul retired in 1987 after more than 20 years of service. He died this past August.