



President's Office

Dr. Steve Shirley, President, Minot State University & Dakota College at Bottineau

HB 1161 (in **Opposition**)

69th ND Legislative Session, March 17, 2025

Senate Appropriations – Education and Environment Division

Chair Sorvaag and members of the Senate Appropriations Education & Environment Division, thank you for the opportunity of submitting testimony in opposition to HB 1161. I am Steve Shirley and serve as president of Minot State University as well as Dakota College at Bottineau.

The proposed changes in HB 1161 would create inefficiencies and add an unnecessary level of governmental bureaucracy for Minot State, DCB, and all North Dakota University System (NDUS) campuses. The finances on a college campus are unique when compared to nearly all other state agencies. While other state agencies receive separate salary and operating appropriation lines, NDUS institutions receive all their funding as operating funding and are allowed to allocate between salary and operating as necessary to address the typical ebbs and flows campuses experience. This includes student enrollment, both overall campus enrollments as well as those specific to individual departments and majors, along with the fact that funds supporting the numerous campus programs (both academic and otherwise) are from a variety of sources (state appropriations, tuition, fees, auxiliary units, grants, contracts, etc.) creating for a very dynamic and unique budgetary model.

Our flexibility with finances when a vacant position emerges helps navigate other changes and initiatives that might be occurring across campus (ie – surging enrollment in a new academic program or high-need workforce area where a new faculty member might need to be hired). The changes proposed in this bill would create major challenges and limit our flexibility of adapting and re-prioritizing resources as needed to best serve our students and the citizens of North Dakota.

Minot State University and DCB both have strong track records of being efficient while responsibly utilizing our state resources. This bill creates inefficiencies with additional red-tape, new administrative accounting burdens, and the potential of creating additional delays in hiring processes. All of these issues will undoubtedly reduce our ability for operational flexibility and responsiveness. I sincerely hope we can continue managing vacant positions as they arise within the overall structure of our individual campus budget needs.

I strongly urge a DO NOT PASS recommendation on HB 1161, and appreciate your time and thoughtful deliberation. Thank you.