

March 20, 2025

Chair Wobbema and members of Workforce Development:

We, the General Education Committee of Bismarck State College, urge you to consider a **DO NOT PASS** recommendation on HB1220. Our greatest opposition to this proposed bill comes from subsection 1d., “Not require a student to obtain general education credits for a North Dakota accelerated degree.”

As professionals in our fields, many of us have heard from industry leaders and advisory boards of the importance and necessity for essential skills and the greater development of these skills in order for students to be workforce ready. Advisory boards heavily influence how our programs are put together, and we rely on them to guide our curriculum. Those boards place continual emphasis on essential skills that go along with program-specific content. As instructors, we are masters in our fields and teach the skills necessary for those in our disciplines. As such, we depend on those in other general education areas to teach our students the additional essential skills needed. These types of skills are which are precisely the skills garnered via general education courses for students to gain knowledge that will serve them well in their careers and everyday life. Beyond technical knowledge and expertise, what we consider essential skills are equally vital to success in any profession.

Communication, teamwork, critical thinking, problem solving, and adaptability enable professionals to collaborate effectively, navigate challenges, and respond to evolving industry demands. The general education curriculum addresses these needs with courses that teach students how to express ideas clearly and persuasively, both in writing and in verbal communication. Strong communication skills are key for collaborating with others and for being an effective team member. Interpersonal skills and the ability to work effectively with others are essential in most careers.

For example, engineers must articulate complex ideas to clients and colleagues, while healthcare professionals rely on empathy and interpersonal skills to provide quality patient care. Leadership and time management skills further help individuals advance in their careers and contribute meaningfully to their teams. By integrating both general education and essential skills into technical programs, students gain a well-rounded education that enhances their employability and prepares them for the complexities of the professional world.

At BSC, the General Education Committee views general education as an opportunity rather than an obligation. Many general education courses, such as communications, arts, humanities, social science, math, science, and technology, encourage students to think critically and evaluate different perspectives that build skills in critical thinking and problem solving. General education courses also offer students practice in how to integrate knowledge and communicate ideas efficiently and professionally. Our students are able to choose from a diverse selection of courses that are broad enough to apply to multiple degree paths, while remaining specific enough to enhance their chosen field of study.

Again, using the previous example, engineering students meet their general education mathematics requirement with calculus, a course that, while classified as general education, is essential to engineering and the physical sciences. Similarly, students in our various healthcare programs complete coursework in anatomy and physiology, psychology, sociology, chemistry, microbiology, nutrition, composition, public speaking, and mathematics. We firmly believe cutting these type of general education courses could hinder future professionals in essential skills required for their careers.

We thank you for your time, and again, we urge this committee to consider a **DO NOT PASS** on HB1220.

Sincerely,
BSC General Education Committee
Katrina Eberhart, co-chair