



SB2003

Senate Appropriations

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Chair Holmberg and Committee Members: My name is Mark Hagerott, and I am the Chancellor of the North Dakota University System. I am here to provide testimony on Senate Bill 2003. As stated earlier by State Board of Higher Education Chair Nick Hacker, the Board has expressed significant support for a needs-based budget to fund higher education in North Dakota, which will provide both stability for students, faculty, and staff in a time of a historic pandemic, but also provide the foundation for further innovation and transformation.

In the past two years the university system has seen significant gains in several areas and challenges in others. Without legislative support, many things would not have been possible particularly due to the coronavirus pandemic. I want to thank the legislature for its work with higher education and to highlight several of higher education's key accomplishments.

We are dedicated to caring for our students in this time of human crisis. At the same time, we continue to innovate and transform. For example, Bismarck State College is implementing the model of a Polytechnic institution. Already, new Bachelor of Applied Science degrees are being offered. Traveling 98 miles to the west on I-94, Dickinson State University is implementing a Dual Mission model where program offerings have expanded to include welding and commercial truck driving. The innovation and transformation from these two institutions will have a direct and helpful impact on the employment and training needs in the western part of North Dakota.

Beyond BSC and DSU, the other nine institutions, the System Office, and CTS all continue to focus on innovation and transformation. The ability to be agile and responsive gives students the opportunity to find more success while concurrently creating an economic impact that totaled \$5.42 billion during the 2019 fiscal year.

Other high points related to Academic and Student Affairs include:

- Tele-mental health access;
- Expanded on-campus offerings ranging from more than 100 new certificates to new master's degree programs;
- Continued support for open educational resources;
- Electronic Curriculum Open Resources, which are necessary to the future of higher education;

- Creation of the Dakota Digital Academy;
- Expanded online programming that increases access to high quality programs already in place to adult and geographically isolated students.

The pandemic will go down in the history books as one of the biggest challenges North Dakota has ever faced and the University System was right there. We worked tirelessly with the Governor's Office, the Department of Health, and the National Guard, successfully transitioning students, faculty, and staff to front line nurses, lab techs, contract tracers, and more. Additionally, our faculty and staff transitioned more than 11,000 face-to-face classes to alternative delivery in less than two weeks when the crisis first reached the state last spring. That effort was aided by technological applications and enhanced instructional design, which was only possible thanks to a combination of previous legislative support and CARES Act funding. Finally, our campus level response included improving classroom safety while also accelerating new techniques in tele-medicine.

Our most recent strategic planning effort crossed the state, gathering feedback and building consensus. This significant effort has brought forward several recommendations, including:

- Exploration of a funding stabilization mechanism for higher education in the state;
- Increased support for research universities to innovate and encourage industry partnership;
- Enhanced mental and behavioral health programs and services;
- A three percent salary increase for faculty and staff;
- Continued support for scholarships such as through the Career Builders program.

Beyond those achievements, NDUS has participated in expanded partnerships with business and industry, in terms of responsive trade and academic programs. We are providing more opportunities for Career and Technical Education while leveraging numerous training grants. The university system has expanded its capacity to train nurses under the Dakota Nursing Program; we have seen two of our colleges and universities reach the seldom-achieved NSA certification for digital programs at BSC and North Dakota State University; and we have substantially increased the amount of dual credit earners.

The state is facing a time of unprecedented change. As you know, change brings with it an equally unprecedented opportunity for the state and our public higher education system to become leaders within emerging industries. The NDUS is well-positioned to help fill the need for this expected growth, which represents a much higher rate than the average national demand.

Thank you.