



North Dakota House Appropriations Committee
Education & Environment Division
Chairman Mike Nathe
January 16, 2023

Re: House Bill 1033

Chairman Nathe and members of the House Appropriations Education and Environment Committee,

My name is Dr. Polly Peterson, President of the University of Jamestown. I am speaking today in favor of the North Dakota challenge grant program, but with one amendment request. I would like to ask that for your consideration in adding the foundations of private, North Dakota-based universities as eligible applicants for this program. The reason is simple:

Students at the University of Jamestown are North Dakota students. They are North Dakota-educated. And they are needed to fill critical workforce needs across the state.

Leveraging Private Donations

The decision to include private, North Dakota-based universities in the challenge grant program would allow our foundation to further leverage contributions from individuals—just as the public institutions do. Even when a donor desires to give to the University of Jamestown’s foundation, ultimately, that same dollar given to a public university foundation is worth more. As we seek to raise funds from a highly overlapping and interconnected donor base, the University of Jamestown finds itself at a distinct disadvantage.

The State Supports All Students

Matching grant funding would not be the first public funding to support students at the University of Jamestown. Jimmie students access four of North Dakota’s seven scholarship offerings. In fact, a recent data pull from the NDUS office shows that between 2020-2022, a total of \$6.64 million, or 10% of North Dakota’s total scholarship funds, are going to students at the University of Jamestown, the University of Mary, and Trinity Bible College. On average, \$1.42 million is disbursed to U Mary students each year, \$718,000 to students at UJ, and \$72,000 to Trinity Bible College students. State dollars are already assisting private college students through our scholarship programs—because they are North Dakota students.

Scholarships For ND Grads

The Matching Grants statute specifically supports “projects dedicated to the advancement of enhanced academics” which include investments in “research, scholarships, technology, endowed chairs, and educational infrastructure,” while excluding scholarships for the benefit of athletics, campus facility repair projects, and new capital construction. We propose including the University of Jamestown for projects dedicated exclusively to scholarships, thereby eliminating any question regarding the eligibility of private university participation in this program.

Further, we would propose an additional condition: that UJ’s matching fund scholarships be made available solely to graduates of North Dakota high schools. We believe funding for higher education in North Dakota should focus on funding students who are residents of North Dakota, and who attend a North Dakota college.

Graduates for Workforce

The University of Jamestown has 1,275 students in 44 majors, 3 masters, and 1 doctoral program. UJ has approximately 250 employees and an economic impact in excess of \$110m. Our students are an integral part of our communities. Our retention of students in the state after graduation exceeds 70%. UJ students are graduating with degrees in nursing, elementary education, business administration, exercise science, secondary education, civil and mechanical engineering, biology, accounting, criminal justice, and computer science, to name a few of our top majors. These graduates are filling jobs in critical-need areas. When workforce challenges abound, we should be prioritizing every effort to retain our high school students at North Dakota institutions of higher ed.

Leveraging \$1 Million

HB 1033 rightfully proposes to return the matching grant appropriation to near-original levels of funding at \$24 million. While the Governor boldly proposed doubling that to \$50 million, we are asking for a small portion of any final appropriation. The University of Jamestown believes it could harness \$1 million in challenge grant funding, to leverage \$2 million total in scholarships for its students.

In closing, I thank you for supporting this program over the past decade. Challenge grants are a wonderful tool for higher education in North Dakota. **We would greatly appreciate your consideration to include private institutions, for scholarship use only, for graduates of North Dakota high schools.**

Thank you for your time, and I would stand for any questions.

Dr. Polly Peterson
President University of Jamestown