



North Dakota House Education Committee
Chairman Pat Heinert
March 7, 2023

Re: Senate Bill 2197

Chairman Heinert and members of the House Education Committee,

My name is Kresha Wiest and I am the Chief Financial Officer for the University of Jamestown. I am here today in favor of the newly proposed “re-energize North Dakota scholarship,” but with one simple amendment which was previously requested before the Senate Education and Senate Appropriations committees. I would like to ask for your consideration in opening the scholarship to students attending any accredited institution of higher education in North Dakota.

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, including the oil and gas industry workforce.

Graduates for Workforce

The University of Jamestown has 1,275 students in 44 majors, 3 masters, and 2 doctoral programs. UJ has approximately 250 employees and an economic impact in excess of \$110m. Our students are an integral part of our communities during their school term and after graduation. Our retention of students in the state after graduation exceeds 70%.

UJ students are graduating with degrees in nursing, elementary education, business administration, secondary education, civil and mechanical engineering, exercise science, biology, accounting, criminal justice, and computer science, to name a few of our top majors. These graduates are filling jobs in critical-need areas. Graduates from these programs directly feed and support our oil and gas industry workforce, as well as those ancillary industries that support the communities most greatly impacted by North Dakota’s energy development.

When workforce challenges abound in North Dakota, we should be prioritizing every effort to retain our high school students at any North Dakota institution of higher education.

The State Supports All Students

Currently, Jimmie students access four of North Dakota’s seven scholarship offerings: The ND Academic Scholarship, ND Career and Technical Education Scholarship, ND Scholars Scholarship, and ND Indian Scholarship.

Additionally, this chamber passed House Bill 1003, including students from the University of Jamestown in the newly created “skilled workforce scholarship program.”

These scholarship programs assist North Dakota students, no matter which school they select for their education. If you are to move the Re-energize North Dakota scholarship forward, we hope it too will include all of North Dakota’s students, to help meet our workforce challenges.

Suggested Amendment:

Page 1, line 21, currently reads:

“institution under the control of the state board of higher education.”

We would greatly appreciate the committee’s consideration to replace that language with the following:

“accredited institution of higher education in the state.”

With this simple change, the Re-energize scholarship will be available to all North Dakota students.

In closing, I thank you for your time and consideration.

Kresha Wiest
Chief Financial Officer, University of Jamestown