

March 7, 2023

Senate Appropriations – Education and Environment Division
Re: House Bill 1003, specifically related to a New Engineering Facility at North Dakota State University

Chairman Sorvaag,

On behalf of the North Dakota State University (NDSU) College of Engineering Advisory and Advancement Board, we respectfully offer this testimony in support of House Bill 1003, specifically as it relates to funding for a new engineering facility at NDSU.

The Board, consisting of NDSU graduates and industry leaders within the state of North Dakota and throughout the United States, works with the College of Engineering in a number of ways. We support capstone programs and robotics competitions, establish scholarship endowments, and hire students and graduates for internships and permanent positions. We believe the NDSU College of Engineering plays a vital role in contributing to the workforce needs of North Dakota. Students who receive a hands-on education at NDSU are quality, project-ready graduates who provide immediate impact to their employer, many of which are based in North Dakota.

The investment in a new engineering facility will enhance NDSU and the state economy by providing more collaborative and technologically improved spaces that support innovation between the various College of Engineering departments in an effort to drive economic growth to North Dakota in precision agriculture, autonomous systems, energy, cyber security, artificial intelligence, environmental stewardship, entrepreneurship, and new technology commercialization. Within the College of Engineering, the various engineering disciplines and computer science departments support countless infrastructure, technology, and other needs to the state, especially to the agriculture industry which is vital to the state of North Dakota.

Investment in new engineering facilities is necessary to continue to remain competitive with state of the art facilities that not only attract students for the various engineering and computer science degrees that NDSU has to offer, but also retain students through their degree completion at NDSU. These facilities are needed to provide adequate classroom, laboratory, research, technology and other student related spaces that are safe, collaborative, and accessible to current/future students. Currently, many of the College of Engineering facilities are decentralized, utilizing existing facilities that are outdated/beyond their useful life (1960's era), overcrowded, not meeting current safety needs, and lacking accessibility to be inclusive/welcoming of all students. Additionally, in order to meet the College of Engineering core values, a facility is necessary to focus on our students in an ever-changing world, provide spaces/resources that are inclusive and welcoming of all our student's needs, allow students hands-on learning that fosters innovation/collaboration, and attracts faculty and research opportunities that further enhance our students into the leaders of tomorrow.

Currently, colleges outside of North Dakota are competing for the same students and it is critical that NDSU has facilities and resources that make students choose and stay in North Dakota for their college education. Without top notch facilities, NDSU will be further challenged in attracting future students and faculty. With **64%** of the engineering and computer science graduates in North Dakota coming from NDSU, the lack of attracting students to NDSU further compounds the situation that North Dakota firms will continue to have a shortage in hiring engineering and computer science talent into their workforce. With student visits being extremely important in the area of recruitment, having a favorable impression about the quality of facilities allows for attracting these students as well as providing a quality education. In today's market, engineering and computer science positions are going unfilled because there is inadequate student population going through the college systems to fulfill the needs of industry.

For the reasons mentioned above, the NDSU College of Engineering Advisory and Advancement Board (CoEAAB) requests approval of House Bill 1003 with funding for new engineering facilities at NDSU. We appreciate your consideration of our request and your service on behalf of the state of North Dakota.

Sincerely,



Jennifer Gora
CoEAAB Chair



Jerry Specht
CoEAAB Vice Chair