



## **Engrossed HB1003**

Senate Appropriations Committee

March 3, 2023

Tim Mihalick, State Board of Higher Education Vice Chair

Chair Bekkedahl and Committee Members: My name is Tim Mihalick and I serve as the Vice Chair of the State Board of Higher Education. I am here today to discuss Engrossed HB1003.

The State Board of Higher Education (SBHE) has eight voting members selected via committee and appointed by the governor and approved by the Senate. We have two non-voting board members who serve in an advisee role as representatives of both the staff and faculty that work within our higher education system. Our mission is to enhance the quality of life, and the social and economic vitality of all served by its public colleges and universities.

Our Board has six strategic goals that include: workforce development, which was added last year to help address workforce issues in the state; preparing students for success; optimizing student affordability while maintaining campus financial health; providing access to programs people want, where and when they need them; maximizing the strengths of a unified system; and research excellence and innovation.

We thank the legislature for its past support of higher education and the governor for his budget recommendations. We are encouraged by the budget approved by the House and stand ready to assist as you continue your work in the Senate.

On February 23<sup>rd</sup> the SBHE endorsed the engrossed House version of HB1003, with two exceptions. Section 19 and section 20 of the bill infringe on the Board's constitutional responsibilities for institutional administration and academic programming. The SBHE respectfully requests these sections be removed from the bill.

The State Board of Higher Education exists to serve the state and its citizens, as you do, and our job is to ensure that policy reflects the needs of our students and the staff and faculty that are the backbone of our institutions. It is the connection of people, higher education, and workforce, which continues to guide us into the future. The three pillars that we focus on to develop the future of higher education include:

1. Workforce:

Our budget request included workforce training and innovation investment opportunities for the state that create economic diversification through research and further innovation on our campuses. Public private partnerships as well as partnerships with industry and business, are very important to both connect students with jobs and continue to build North Dakota's economy. Some wonderful examples already in place include:

- *Dual Mission:* Dickinson State University is working with Dickinson Public Schools and

Career and Technical Education on the proposed construction of a career academy to train area high school and post-secondary students in fields like welding, truck driving, diesel mechanics, Certified Nursing Assistant, and other health care careers, and possibly even robotics.

- *Apprenticeships and Internships:* Lake Region State College (LRSC) is continuing to work on apprenticeships, including with Northrup Grumman in New Town and another coming to the Grand Sky facility at the Grand Forks Air Force Base. LRSC has also expanded its wind energy technical training to Tioga to train oilfield workers to work on wind farms.
- *Career and Technical Education:* Dakota College at Bottineau and Minot State University (MiSU) have been collaborating on a new Center for Career and Technical Education that will open within the next year. Beyond the two campuses, this highly collaborative project has involved many partners including the City of Minot, the Minot Area Chamber-EDC, the MiSU Development Foundation, Trinity Health and a federal HUD grant. This downtown Minot Center will provide training in dental assisting and dental hygiene, as well as other new 1- and 2-year CTE educational options that will benefit central and western North Dakota for years to come.

We continue to find great success through Public Private Partnerships and strive to continue utilizing them across the system to address capital funding needs. This lowers the burden to the state and allows for needed improvements.

## 2. Innovation:

Our campuses continue to innovate throughout the system including in classroom study/space, research and adapting ever-evolving technology in learning spaces that eventually helps students innovate in the workplace. Examples of innovation include:

- *Dakota Digital Academy:* The Dakota Digital Academy (DDA) was launched to coordinate, expand, and enhance educational opportunities in computing and cyber sciences in North Dakota and the upper Midwest. The DDA has funded the development of several certificates and classes in cybersecurity and software development. The courses are offered through a web portal and are stackable to serve workforce needs.
- *E-COR – Electronic Curriculum Open Resources:* The future of higher education will include increased pressure for high quality, relevant online education courses and content. By working as a system, we have an opportunity to create the best online higher education content and system in the country. The basic framework is that faculty can share course content they have created across the system with an incentive to reward the faculty member whose course is used more frequently. This will ensure content and courses are current, relevant and the best in the country.

3. Student success:

Student success is the cornerstone of our overall success. We know legislative support for scholarships such as the *Challenge Grant* and *Career Builders* has been valuable to students being able to access higher education needs throughout the system. We encourage continuation of these programs to support our students' learning needs.

Equally important is student mental and behavioral health. We are in the business of educating the whole being of students to ensure their success. We have received direct feedback from our students emphasizing the importance of these needs and have responded through the student tele-mental health, which has proven to be a great resource for our campuses.

We also advocate for continuing dual credit opportunities. Students from across the state can save time and money through dual credit and begin a foundation for higher education attainment more quickly and at a lower cost. It is an opportunity that can mean college is more affordable, more accessible and less time consuming once a student gets to college.

Relatedly, pathways are in place at our two-year institutions that provide high school students the opportunity to earn an associate's degree alongside their high school diploma, saving students up to two years of time and a cost savings, thanks to the discounted dual credit rate.

In support of these three pillars, we need a strong foundation in which higher education can serve our communities, state, and students. To this end, we support the development of a stabilization fund that would make higher education less susceptible to the highs and lows of the markets, which hinders our ability to create opportunities for students and feasible job skills for the workplace. We request you consider the addition of a stabilization fund study to HB1003.

In closing, we are committed to preparing students for lifelong learning and to support a broad spectrum of workforce needs throughout the state. In our pursuit of connecting students to careers, we want to ensure North Dakota is also prepared to meet the challenges ahead. We will continue to work toward the betterment of the entire state and delivering the benefits of higher education our communities are accustomed to.

The University system and its 11 institutions provide the state with an educated workforce ready to meet the challenges of an ever-changing work environment while providing outreach and continuing education programs for the state's residents and businesses. We will continue to create and support jobs and employment opportunities through research, extension, and teaching activities, all of which provide economic benefits to enhance local and state economies.

I am available to answer your questions. Thank you.