



HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS COMMITTEE

Tuesday, October 28, 2025

Room 104, McCarthy Hall, Valley City State University, Valley City

Wednesday, October 29, 2025

Luckasen Room, Campus Center, Mayville State University, Mayville

Senator Jonathan Sickler, Chairman, called the meeting to order at 10:30 a.m. on Tuesday, October 28, 2025, at Valley City State University (VCSU).

Members present: Senators Jonathan Sickler, Robert Erbele, Scott Meyer, Mike Wobbema; Representatives Landon Bahl, LaurieBeth Hager, Bob Martinson, Mark Sanford; Citizen Members Kevin Black*, Ann Ellefson, Genevieve Goven, Sarah Hall Lovas, Brent Sanford

Members absent: Senator Josh Boschee; Citizen Members Maxwell Eriksrud, Brent Lohnes, Terri Zimmerman

Others present: Senators Kyle Davison and Ronald Sorvaag, Fargo, members of the Legislative Management

Senator Randy D. Lemm, Hillsboro, Representative Mike Beltz, Hillsboro

Cory Anderson, Larry Brooks, Alan LaFave, Harmony Richman, Valley City State University; Kelby Azure, Rylee Heinen, Amber Hill, Rocky Larson, Kelli Odden, Brian Van Horn, Mayville State University; Jennifer Feist, Valley City - Barnes County Development Corporation; Heidi Grunwald, North Dakota State University; Marjorie Jenkins, University of North Dakota School of Medicine and Health Sciences; Josh Johnson, Valley City Public Schools; Lisa Johnson, Meredith Larson, Jennifer Weber, Brenda Zastoupil, North Dakota University System; Patrick Lane, Van Davis, Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education; Scott Snyder, University of North Dakota

See [Appendix A](#) for additional persons present.

**Attended remotely on Wednesday, October 29, 2025*

It was moved by Senator Erbele, seconded by Senator Wobbema, and carried on a voice vote that the minutes of the August 21-22, 2025, meeting be approved as distributed.

Dr. Alan LaFave, President, Valley City State University, presented an overview ([Appendix B](#)) of the institution.

Mr. Larry Brooks, Vice President of Academic Affairs, Valley City State University, presented information ([Appendix C](#)) regarding the Artificial Intelligence Institute for Teaching and Learning at the institution.

Ms. Harmony Richman, Professor, Valley City State University, commented regarding the use of artificial intelligence in the classroom at VCSU.

Dr. LaFave presented information ([Appendix D](#)) regarding enrollment, mode of course delivery, and student recruitment and retention.

Mr. Josh Johnson, Superintendent, Valley City Public Schools, presented information ([Appendix E](#)) regarding recruitment and retention of teachers in the state.

Ms. Jennifer Feist, Director of Development, Valley City - Barnes County Development Corporation, presented information ([Appendix F](#)) regarding workforce needs and the impact of VCSU on the community.

Mr. Brooks presented information ([Appendix G](#)) regarding collaboration with other institutions and new academic programs. He noted VCSU collaborates with North Dakota State University to offer elementary education courses in Fargo and with the North Dakota State College of Science to offer a baccalaureate degree in career and technical education.

Mr. Cory Anderson, Vice President for University Advancement, Valley City State University, presented information ([Appendix H](#)) regarding student scholarships and other campus fundraising.

Ms. Brenda Wyland, Chief Executive Officer, NDeavor, presented information ([Appendix I](#)) regarding the Research Technology Park at North Dakota State University, now named NDeavor. She noted the state funding appropriated for NDeavor is being used to recruit staff, upgrade facilities, establish industry partnerships, develop initial prototypes, and for marketing.

Mr. Josh Gelinske, Chief Technology Officer, NDeavor, presented information ([Appendix J](#)) regarding the staff and projects at NDeavor.

Mr. Alex Cronquist, Senior Fiscal Analyst, Legislative Council, presented a memorandum entitled [Higher Education Governance](#) regarding the historical governance and administration of higher education in the state. He noted that in December 1992, the State Board of Higher Education (SBHE) voted in favor of joint administration of Mayville State University (MaSU) and VCSU, with geographical proximity, budget constraints, and increased political stability cited as considerations for the change. In 2002, the SBHE voted to provide for separate administration of the two universities following the advice of consultants.

Mr. Jace Beehler, former Chief of Staff, Governor's office, presented information ([Appendix K](#)) regarding the work and findings of the 2017-19 Task Force for Higher Education Governance established by former Governor Doug Burgum. He noted the task force recommended the state change from a single SBHE to three separate boards, one for the North Dakota State University, one for the University of North Dakota (UND), and one for the remaining nine institutions. He added House Bill No. 1500 (2019) was introduced to enact the recommended changes; however, it failed in the House.

Ms. Lisa Johnson, Deputy Commissioner for Academic and Student Affairs, North Dakota University System, presented information ([Appendix L](#)) regarding the Economic Diversification Research Fund.

Dr. Heidi Grunwald, Interim Vice President for Research and Creative Activity, North Dakota State University, and Dr. Scott Snyder, Vice President for Research and Economic Development, University of North Dakota, expressed support for the restoration of funding for the Economic Diversification Research Fund.

Ms. Brenda Zastoupil, Director of Financial Aid, North Dakota University System, presented information ([Appendix M](#)) regarding the number of North Dakota academic scholarships and career and technical education scholarships provided and demographic information pertaining to the recipients.

Ms. Meredith Larson, Chief Operating Officer, North Dakota University System, introduced herself to the committee and presented an outline ([Appendix N](#)) of the University System presentation regarding higher education trends.

Mr. Brent Sanford, Commissioner, North Dakota University System, presented information ([Appendix O](#)) regarding trends in higher education, including enrollment, tuition and fees, and institution reserves.

Ms. Johnson presented information ([Appendix P](#)) regarding changes in academic programs at University System institutions, including the development of new certificate programs.

Mr. Sanford presented the fall 2025 enrollment report ([Appendix Q](#)). He noted full-time equivalent enrollment increased from 34,781 in the fall 2024 semester to 36,148 in the fall 2025 semester.

In response to a question from a committee member, Dr. Jennifer Weber, Director of Institutional Research and Analytics and Chief Data Analyst, North Dakota University System, noted dual-credit and early entry students are both identified as high school students taking college courses in the enrollment report.

Mr. Sanford presented information ([Appendix R](#)) regarding innovation, community partnerships, and the future of the University System.

The committee recessed at 3:52 p.m. and reconvened at 8:33 a.m. on Wednesday, October 29, 2025, at MaSU.

Mr. Patrick Lane, Vice President, Policy Analysis and Research, Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education, presented information ([Appendix S](#)) regarding the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education, student demographics, and higher education funding.

Mr. Van Davis, Executive Director, Cooperative for Educational Technologies, Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education, presented information ([Appendix T](#)) regarding the cost of online education.

Ms. Johnson presented information ([Appendix U](#)) regarding dual-credit and early entry in the state, including funding, affordability, and accreditation.

Ms. Johnson presented information ([Appendix V](#)) regarding accelerated degree programs, including 3-year degrees and accreditation.

Dr. Marjorie Jenkins, Dean, University of North Dakota School of Medicine and Health Sciences, presented information ([Appendix W](#)) regarding strategies under consideration and implemented to increase resident medical student enrollment in the UND School of Medicine and Health Sciences (SMHS) and in the Physician Assistant Program. She noted 54.1 percent of UND SMHS students are in-state students, although only 5.9 percent of UND SMHS applications are from in-state residents. She added that the school is increasing recruitment and targeting students earlier to ensure North Dakota high school students are aware of the potential to attend UND SMHS.

Dr. Brian Van Horn, President, Mayville State University, presented an overview ([Appendix X](#)) of the institution.

Dr. Kelli Odden, Dean, Division of Education, Mayville State University, presented information ([Appendix Y](#)) regarding teacher education at the institution.

Ms. Amber Hill, Vice President for Business Affairs, Mayville State University, presented information ([Appendix Z](#)) regarding finances and facilities at the institution.

Mr. Rocky Larson, Athletic Director, Mayville State University, commented regarding athletics at the institution.

Mr. Kelby Azure, student, Mayville State University, commented regarding his experience at the university.

Ms. Rylee Heinen, student, Mayville State University, commented regarding her experience at the university.

Dr. Van Horn presented information ([Appendix AA](#)) regarding the impact of MaSU on the community and state.

Chairman Sickler noted the committee likely would meet again in January.

The committee toured Old Main on the MaSU campus.

No further business appearing, Chairman Sickler adjourned the meeting at 12:40 p.m.

Alex J. Cronquist
Senior Fiscal Analyst

Casey Orvedal
Counsel

ATTACH:27