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## HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS COMMITTEE

Wednesday, April 8, 2026

Alumni Conference Center, Thatcher Hall, Dakota College at Bottineau, Bottineau, North Dakota

Thursday, April 9, 2026

Conference Center, Student Center, Minot State University, Minot, North Dakota

Senator Jonathan Sickler, Chairman, called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m. on Wednesday, April 8, at Dakota College at Bottineau (DCB).

**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,\* Terri Zimmerman

**Members absent:** Senator Josh Boschee; Citizen Members Maxwell Eriksrud, Brent Lohnes, Brent Sanford

**Others present:** Senators Brad Bekkedahl, Williston, and Ronald Sorvaag, Fargo, members of the Legislative Management

Representative Dick Anderson, Willow City, and Senator Paul J. Thomas, Velva

Bruce Bollinger, North Dakota State University; Corey Gorder, Dakota College at Bottineau; Rick Hedberg, Minot State University Foundation; Sarah Kempel, Briar Maudal, and Eniola Soetan, North Dakota Student Association; Amy Lee, Michelle Sayler, Bryan Schmidt, Krystal St. Peter, Minot State University; Scott Molander, Dickinson State University; Brenda Zastoupil, North Dakota University System office

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

*\*Attended remotely on April 9, 2026*

**It was moved by Senator Erbele, seconded by Representative Bahl, and carried on a voice vote that the minutes of the January 15, 2026, meeting be approved as distributed.**

Dr. Steven Shirley, President, Minot State University and Dakota College at Bottineau, welcomed the committee to DCB, and introduced Mr. Corey Gorder, Campus Dean, Dakota College at Bottineau.

Mr. Gorder presented an overview ([Appendix B](#)) of DCB. He noted DCB:

- Collaborates with Minot State University (MiSU) for business office services, institutional research, human resources, printing services, and Title IX services.
- Collaborates with the University of North Dakota (UND) for financial aid services and North Dakota State University (NDSU) for payroll services.
- Enrollment has grown from 549 full-time equivalent (FTE) students in the fall 2022 semester to 768 FTE students in the fall 2025 semester.

In response to a question from a committee member, Ms. Lisa Johnson, Deputy Commissioner for Academic and Student Affairs, North Dakota University System office, noted there should not be any issue transferring credits from one North Dakota University System institution to another institution in the University System.

The committee toured the nursing program facilities in Old Main at DCB.

Ms. Sarah Kempel, President, North Dakota Student Association, presented information ([Appendix C](#)) regarding current priorities of the North Dakota Student Association, including student safety, academic freedoms, and mental health resources.

Ms. Briar Maudal, member, North Dakota Student Association, commented regarding campus housing, food accessibility, and internship availability. She noted dual-credit offerings are different across the state and the North Dakota Student Association passed a resolution supporting restrictions that prevented UND and NDSU from offering dual-credit courses until the potential impact on other University System institutions is determined. She also noted the association has expressed hesitancy toward the establishment of 90 credit-hour degrees that may have reduced general education requirements.

Ms. Eniola Soetan, Vice President of Governmental Affairs, North Dakota Student Association, commented regarding student-led research, academic and career success, and internships.

Ms. Brenda Zastoupil, Director of Financial Aid, North Dakota University System office, presented information ([Appendix D](#)) regarding grants to tribal colleges for nonbeneficiary students. She noted \$7,981 of grant funding was awarded per FTE nonbeneficiary student during the 2025-26 academic year, and an additional \$52,142 of excess funding was distributed to the institutions at a proportional rate. The following schedule details the allocation of grant funding during the 2025-26 academic year:

<b>Tribal College Assistance Grants - 2025-26 Academic Year</b>			
<b>Institution</b>	<b>Headcount of Nonbeneficiary Students</b>	<b>FTE Enrollment of Nonbeneficiary Students</b>	<b>Grants Funds Provided</b>
Cankdeska Cikana Community College	34	25.8	\$220,277
Nueta Hidatsa Sahnish College	27	17.5	149,413
Sitting Bull College	11	7.3	62,327
Turtle Mountain Community College	26	15.2	129,776
United Tribes Technical College	35	27.9	238,207
<b>Total</b>	<b>133</b>	<b>93.7</b>	<b>\$800,000</b>

Ms. Johnson presented information ([Appendix E](#)) regarding faculty tenure.

Ms. Johnson presented information ([Appendix F](#)) regarding reduced credit degrees. She noted the State Board of Higher Education has adopted a policy to provide for the establishment of reduced-credit bachelor's degree programs as a pilot project ending in 2030.

The committee recessed at 4:11 p.m. and reconvened at 8:30 a.m. on Thursday, April 9, 2026, at MiSU.

Dr. Shirley presented an overview ([Appendix G](#)) of MiSU. He noted MiSU:

- Added a masters degree in mental health and substance use counseling and a baccalaureate degree in innovation engineering.
- Partnered with 40 K-12 schools to graduate 47 students, with an additional 109 currently enrolled, with an online special education degree under the Department of Public Instruction's Para to Professional Program.
- Partnered with NDSU for payroll and benefits processing.

Ms. Michelle Saylor, Director of Enrollment Services, Minot State University, presented information ([Appendix H](#)) regarding student recruitment.

Dr. Bryan Schmidt, Department of Science Chair, Minot State University, presented information ([Appendix I](#)) regarding the Innovation Engineering Program.

Dr. Krystal St. Peter, Assistant Professor and Chair, Department of Behavioral Science and Criminal Justice, Minot State University, presented information ([Appendix J](#)) regarding the Mental Health and Substance Use Counseling Program.

Dr. Amy Lee, Chair, Department of Nursing, Minot State University, presented information ([Appendix K](#)) regarding the nursing program.

Mr. Rick Hedberg, Vice President for Advancement and Executive Director, Minot State University Foundation, presented information ([Appendix L](#)) regarding fundraising at the institution, including the use of Challenge Grant funds.

Ms. Meredith Larson, Chief Operating Officer, North Dakota University System office, distributed a list ([Appendix M](#)) of shared and consolidated services in the University System and commented regarding the compliance investigation at Dickinson State University (DSU). She noted the investigation is being conducted by an accounting firm, CLA (CliftonLarsonAllen) LLP and is expected to be complete by June 2026.

Mr. Scott Molander, President, Dickinson State University, distributed information ([Appendix N](#)) regarding shared services with NDSU. He noted the capital project relating to the Agriculture and Technical Education Building and the rodeo arena is complete. He added that UND and NDSU business office personnel have been helpful in making positive changes to DSU's business office functions.

Mr. Bruce Bollinger, Vice President for Finance and Administration, North Dakota State University, commented regarding NDSU's work with DSU to provide business office services for the campus. He noted:

- NDSU and DSU are working with legal counsel to secure bond financing for the Woods Hall capital project at DSU.
- Efficiencies are being gained through shared services, as higher level administrative staff at DSU are replaced with lower-paid staff.

Ms. Johnson noted DSU's accreditation is currently in good standing; however, areas to address, including faculty qualifications, have been identified through the accreditation process. She added that the university's transition to a dual-mission institution has raised some concerns regarding the faculty qualifications for the 2-year programs.

Mr. Corey Quirk, Chief Information Officer, North Dakota University System Core Technology Services, presented information ([Appendix O](#)) regarding the University System's enterprise resource planning system, currently PeopleSoft. He noted the system is in need of replacement at an estimated total cost of between \$100 million and \$145 million, to be paid over the next four bienniums. He added that the needs for an enterprise resource planning system for the University System may differ from the rest of state government because the University System requires student information system integration, grants management, and academic and curriculum management functionality.

Ms. Johnson presented information ([Appendix P](#)) regarding dual-credit in the state.

Committee members commented regarding:

- The impact of dual-credit on the funding formula for certain campuses and the potential of instituting a flat rate for dual-credit in the higher education funding formula.
- The cost differences between a dual-credit course taught by a high school teacher and a college professor, both for the high school and the college.

Chairman Sickler indicated the next meeting would be held at NDSU and the North Dakota State College of Science in late June. He noted there will likely be a bill draft for the committee's consideration to increase funding for the Scholars Program, expand the North Dakota Governor's School Program, and make technical corrections to other scholarship programs.

At the request of a committee member, Chairman Sickler indicated the committee would receive updates at a future meeting regarding the Workforce Education Innovation Grant Program, New Horizon Program funding at NDSU, and National Security Crossroads funding at UND.

No further business appearing, Chairman Sickler adjourned the meeting at 2:30 p.m.

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Alex J. Cronquist  
Senior Fiscal Analyst

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Casey Orvedal  
Counsel

ATTACH:16