



HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS COMMITTEE

Monday, September 21, 2026

Kenner Conference Room, Hofstad Agricultural Center, Lake Region State College, Devils Lake, North Dakota

Tuesday, September 22, 2026

Henry Family Ballroom, Memorial Union, University of North Dakota, Grand Forks, North Dakota

Senator Jonathan Sickler, Chairman, called the meeting to order at 1:04 p.m. at Lake Region State College (LRSC).

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 Ganje, Brent Sanford

Members absent: Citizen Members Kelby Azure, Brent Lohnes, Terri Zimmerman

Others present: Senator Ronald Sorvaag, member of the Legislative Management

Carmen Simone, Lake Region State College; John Nordgaard, Greg Lardy, and Stacy Duffield, North Dakota State University; Joshua C. Gallion,* State Auditor; Karla Mongeon-Stewart and Corey Quirk, North Dakota University System office; Andrew Armacost, Janelle Kilgore, Scott Snyder, Jennifer Bladow, Chelsea Mellenthin, Casia Steinhaus,** and Odella Fuqua, University of North Dakota; Del Crandall, University of North Dakota School of Law; Charles Gorecki, Energy and Environmental Research Center; Mandi-Leigh Peterson and Marjorie Jenkins, University of North Dakota School of Medicine and Health Sciences; Anna Kinney, State Board of Higher Education

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

*Attended remotely on September 21, 2026

**Attended remotely on September 22, 2026

It was moved by Representative Sanford, seconded by Senator Wobbema, and carried on a voice vote that the minutes of the June 18-19, 2026, meeting be approved as distributed.

Dr. Carmen Simone, President, Lake Region State College, presented information ([Appendix B](#)) regarding an overview of the campus. She noted:

- LRSC had a fall 2025 headcount enrollment of 1,916 students, 1,426 (74 percent) of whom were part time.
- Dual credit accounts for 32 percent of total credits enrolled and nearly 50 percent of headcount enrollment at the institution.
- LRSC has established a facility usage fee to provide matching funds for deferred maintenance and extraordinary repair projects under the University System Capital Building Fund Program.

In response to a question from a committee member, Dr. Simone indicated she is confident the Surgical Technology Certificate Program added using Workforce Education Innovation Fund money will be sustainable, but she expressed concern regarding the sustainability of the Medical Laboratory Technician Program.

Mr. John Nordgaard, Chair, State Board of Agricultural Research and Education, presented information ([Appendix C](#)) regarding the priorities of the board and the board's relationship with North Dakota State University (NDSU). He noted the board:

- Is responsible for the development of a biennial budget request based on a prioritized needs list, which is submitted to the President of NDSU and the State Board of Higher Education (SBHE).
- Has prioritized requests for ongoing General Fund appropriation increases of \$5.7 million for NDSU Agricultural Experiment Station operations, \$1.4 million for NDSU Extension Service operations, and \$1.2 million for deferred maintenance.

In response to a question from Chairman Sickler, Dr. Greg Lardy, Director, North Dakota State University Extension Service and Agricultural Experiment Station, noted profits from commercialized products developed by the NDSU Agricultural Experiment Station are shared between the researcher and the research centers, where the funds are used to support ongoing research activities.

Mr. Joshua C. Gallion, State Auditor, presented information ([Appendix D](#)) regarding audit findings relating to tuition waivers awarded by campuses under the control of the SBHE. He noted:

- The State Auditor's office has reported findings relating to tuition waivers in audits dating back to fiscal year 2010 and an in-depth performance audit of tuition waivers was completed in 2015.
- The State Auditor has recently reported findings related to tuition waivers at Williston State College and Valley City State University, including a lack of procedures and an appropriate approval process for waivers awarded.

Ms. Karla Mongeon-Stewart, Deputy Commissioner and Chief Financial and Administrative Officer, North Dakota University System office, presented information ([Appendix E](#)) regarding the cost of dual credit in the state. She noted:

- The provision of a flat rate of \$79.57 for student credit-hours successfully completed by subsidized dual credit students would result in a reduction in funding of \$2.7 million systemwide for credits completed in the 2024-25 academic year.
- The University System currently identifies high school students enrolled as a uniform group of students and does not differentiate between dual-credit students and early entry students.
- University System institutions use different methodologies to identify dual-credit students; therefore, campuses report their information manually to the University System office.

Chairman Sickler commented regarding subsidized dual credit and the varying costs to the state among campuses providing subsidized dual credit. He noted a flat rate for credits completed by dual-credit students, calculated without any credit completion or size factor adjustment, could improve the equity of funding determined under the higher education funding formula.

It was moved by Representative Bahl, seconded by Senator Wobbema, and carried on a roll call vote that the committee recommend the Legislative Assembly implement a flat rate to determine state aid for subsidized dual credit student credits completed. Senators Sickler, Erbele, Meyer, and Wobbema and Representatives Bahl, Hager, and Sanford voted "aye." Representative Martinson voted "nay."

The committee recessed at 4:13 p.m. and reconvened at 8:31 a.m. at the University of North Dakota (UND).

Dr. Andrew Armacost, President, University of North Dakota, presented information ([Appendix F](#)) regarding an overview of the campus. He noted the campus awarded total tuition waivers of \$13.8 million for the 2024-25 academic year, including \$3.4 million mandated by law or SBHE policy, \$5.1 million for graduate assistants, \$2.6 million for specific work, and \$2.7 million for merit and other waivers.

Ms. Janelle Kilgore, Vice Provost for Strategic Enrollment Management, University of North Dakota, commented regarding enrollment at the institution. She noted:

- Headcount enrollment has grown from 13,615 in fall 2020 to 15,908 in fall 2026.
- 67 percent of online students at UND are state residents, have connections to the state, are from a contiguous state or regional compact state, or are military affiliated.

Mr. Del Crandall, Dean, University of North Dakota School of Law, commented regarding the School of Law, including changes to the admissions process in response to a recommendation from the State Auditor.

Dr. Scott Snyder, Vice President for Research and Economic Development, University of North Dakota, commented regarding research expenditures at the institution. He noted research expenditures have grown from \$112 million in fiscal year 2020 to \$244 million in fiscal year 2025.

Mr. Charles Gorecki, Chief Executive Officer, Energy and Environmental Research Center, commented regarding the research center. He noted the State Energy Research Center has engaged in over 85 projects focused on North Dakota energy, resulting in 33 inventions and 40 patent applications, of which 19 patents have been granted.

Ms. Casia Steinhaus, Student, University of North Dakota, commented regarding her experience at UND.

Dr. Marjorie Jenkins, Dean, University of North Dakota School of Medicine and Health Sciences, commented regarding the status of the School of Medicine and Health Sciences (SMHS). She noted the UND SMHS research portfolio grew from \$20 million in fiscal year 2025 to over \$30 million in fiscal year 2026.

Ms. Mandi-Leigh Peterson, Senior Research Analyst, University of North Dakota School of Medicine and Health Sciences, presented information ([Appendix G](#)) regarding the UND SMHS biennial report. She noted the report is still being drafted and efforts are being made to ensure the report is understandable and meets the needs of decisionmakers.

Dr. Jenkins presented information ([Appendix H](#)) regarding ND85, an effort by UND SMHS to increase resident student enrollment in the institution's Medical Doctorate and Physician Assistant Programs to 85 percent. She noted UND SMHS has expanded the institution's student recruitment efforts statewide and the 2026 incoming class for the Medical Doctorate Program was 82 percent North Dakota residents, compared to 62 percent in the 2025 incoming class.

Dr. Armacost commented regarding deferred maintenance at UND, noting the institution has established a deferred maintenance cost pool using a percentage of tuition revenue to provide matching funds for deferred maintenance and extraordinary repair projects under the University System Capital Building Fund Program.

In response to a question from a committee member, Ms. Odella Fuqua, Interim Vice President for Finance and Operations, University of North Dakota, noted the tuition revenue budgeted for deferred maintenance is allocated to projects and is therefore not part of the institution's reported undesignated reserves.

Dr. Jennifer Bladow, Director of Teacher Education, University of North Dakota, presented information ([Appendix I](#)) on behalf of the North Dakota Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, regarding a study of Praxis Core testing performance of student teachers who used grades and exams to demonstrate reading, writing, and mathematics competencies. She noted early findings indicate that this alternative pathway can reduce barriers while maintaining expectations for candidate competency and classroom readiness.

Ms. Brenda Zastoupil, Director of Financial Aid, North Dakota University System office, presented information ([Appendix J](#)) regarding the Academic and Career and Technical Education (CTE) Scholarship Program ([Appendix K](#)) and Career Builders Program ([Appendix L](#)). She noted:

- Of the 8,749 high school seniors in the state who graduated in 2026, a total of 1,761, or 20 percent, qualified to receive an academic or CTE scholarship. Since the program began in 2010, including estimates for the 2026-27 academic year, there have been 137,827 high school graduates in the state and 28,911, or 21 percent, of those graduates were eligible to receive an academic or CTE scholarship.
- Of \$8.6 million available in the 2025-27 biennium for the Career Builders Program, the University System anticipates spending \$2.5 million by June 30, 2027.

Ms. Stacie Sevigny, Executive Director, Walsh County Job Development Authority, commented regarding the use of the Career Builders Program by Walsh County employers.

Mr. Mike Hanson, Director, North Valley Career and Technology Center, commented regarding the use of the Career Builders Program to recruit an employee to work at the center.

Mr. Brent Sanford, Commissioner, North Dakota University System, presented information ([Appendix M](#)) regarding trends in higher education. He noted:

- University System enrollment has grown since 2020.
- Tuition rates at doctoral and other 4-year institutions in the University System are below the regional average, but tuition rates at 2-year institutions in the University System are above the regional average.
- Campus tuition rate increases for the 2026-27 academic year ranged from 3 percent at Mayville State University to 6 percent at Bismarck State College, Williston State College, Valley City State University, UND, and NDSU.

Mr. Corey Quirk, Chief Information Officer, North Dakota University System, presented information ([Appendix N](#)) regarding the potential replacement of the state's enterprise resource planning system, PeopleSoft. He noted the current plan is to issue a request for proposal for a single vendor system with capabilities for human capital management, financial management, learning management, and a student information system. The total project cost is estimated to be between \$200 million and \$240 million.

Ms. Anna Kinney, Staff Advisor, State Board of Higher Education, presented information ([Appendix O](#)) on behalf of the North Dakota State Staff Senate. She noted University System staff priorities for the 2027 legislative session include competitive compensation, preservation of benefits, and continued investment in campus facilities and infrastructure.

Ms. Chelsea Mellenthin, Director of Experiential Learning, University of North Dakota, and Dr. Stacy Duffield, Director of the Office of Teaching and Learning, North Dakota State University, presented information ([Appendix P](#)) regarding the Governor's School. Ms. Mellenthin noted:

- The Governor's School is funded through the Department of Public Instruction, and \$5,000 is available per scholar, for up to 50 scholars for each institution.
- Funding may be used for defraying expenses for students while on campus, including housing, dining, resident assistants, program directors, instructors, and faculty research sponsors.
- The Governor's School provides programs related to science, technology, engineering, mathematics, energy law, mental health, education, and health sciences.
- A typical day in the program for the participating scholars includes 6 hours of classroom time, hands-on learning activities, research laboratories, field trips, and projects.

Dr. Duffield requested increased flexibility in the program pathways to allow institutions to build on their strengths, provide transformative hands-on learning experiences, establish community connections, and develop the North Dakota workforce.

Mr. Alex J. Cronquist, Senior Fiscal Analyst, Legislative Council, presented a bill draft [\[27.0178.02000\]](#) regarding Professional Student Exchange Program eligibility, Scholars Program eligibility, the Skilled Workforce Scholarship and Student Loan Repayment Programs, the Governor's School, and funding for various student financial assistance programs administered by the University System. He noted the bill draft is similar to the bill draft considered by the committee at the June 18-19, 2026, meeting, but a section has been added to establish the Governor's School in the North Dakota Century Code with more flexibility relating to eligible expenditures and program pathways.

A committee member expressed concern regarding the inclusion of both student financial assistance programs and the Governor's School in a single bill.

It was moved by Senator Meyer, seconded by Senator Wobbema, and carried on a roll call vote that the committee recommend bill draft 27.0178.02000 relating to student financial assistance programs and the Governor's School to the Legislative Management. Senators Sickler, Erbele, Meyer, and Wobbema and Representatives Bahl, Hager, Martinson, and Sanford voted "aye." No negative votes were cast.

It was moved by Representative Martinson, seconded by Representative Bahl, and carried on a roll call vote that the Chairman and the Legislative Council staff be requested to prepare a report and to present the report and recommended bill draft to the Legislative Management and that the committee be adjourned sine die. Senators Sickler, Erbele, Meyer, and Wobbema and Representatives Bahl, Hager, Martinson, and Sanford voted "aye." No negative votes were cast.

No further business appearing, Chairman Sickler adjourned the meeting sine die at 2:57 p.m.

Alex J. Cronquist
Senior Fiscal Analyst

Casey Orvedal
Counsel

ATTACH:16