

1/21/25

Written Testimony in Support for the North Dakota Challenge Grant

Presented to the ND Senate Appropriations-Education and Environment Division

Submitted by: Michael L. Vipond Treasurer of Executive Governing Board/North Dakota State University Foundation.

January 21,2025

Dear Chairman Sorvaag and Members of the Committee,

For the record, my name is Mike Vipond and I am the Treasurer of the Executive Governing Board of the NDSU Foundation. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of the North Dakota Higher Education Challenge Grant Fund.

Governor Kelly Armstrong is proposing \$50 million to be invested in the next biennium for the program, as a stakeholder in North Dakota State University and the future of North Dakota I strongly support this request.

- NDSU impacts North Dakota's future in many ways, providing well educated students from both North Dakota and surrounding states. North Dakota NEEDS graduates in the areas of agriculture, engineering, health care and technology and more to fuel the growth of North Dakota!
- For a healthy workforce development cycle to exist in North Dakota, we need a strong and well-funded university system.
- With matching funds, a **\$50 million** investment from the state will drive **\$150 million** of investment in North Dakota higher education over the next two years.
- Access to affordable and quality education is truly life changing!

I am an example of what NDSU can do to change the trajectory of a young person. Growing up in rural Minnesota, not really being exposed to much of North Dakota I arrived on campus coming to NDSU to pursue a degree in Agriculture. I was a 1st generation college student, earned my degree, after time in Fargo, moved a couple times for my career but found out how much I missed ND. It was a place where I felt comfortable and could build a life, when I had had the chance, I jumped and the opportunity to move back!! One of the best decisions I ever made. Now I call myself a "Proud North Dakotan" Programs like the Challenge Grant will provide opportunities for scholarships, educational programs, research, technology and endowed chairs, ect. Giving opportunities to students they might not otherwise have.

The challenge Grant is a proven tool that ensures North Dakota students stay in North Dakota schools. With Challenge Grant funding, we make North Dakota higher education more attainable and competitive in recruiting and retaining talent against our neighboring states, opening a pathway to encourage these graduates to live and work in North Dakota.

Creating a Win-Win:

- The Challenge Grant offers a public-private partnership, as a donor we love to partner with public dollars to maximize impact on campus. I am confident that our donors will step and support this major commitment from the State.

I urge the committee to fund the Challenge Grant at an unprecedented level and challenge the private sector to respond. I'm confident they will. This is truly an investment in the future of North Dakota and its workforce. To compete on a national and global level this program will produce results today and long into the future!!

Thank you for considering this opportunity and your continued service to North Dakota.

NDSU stands ready to do its part in putting your investment to work to its fullest extent.

Regards,

Mike Vipond

Treasurer of the NDSU executive Governing Board, and proud North Dakotan.