

Dr. Steve Shirley, President, Minot State University & Dakota College at Bottineau
SB 2003 (In Support) 69th ND Legislative Session, January 21, 2025
Senate Appropriations Committee – Education & Environment Division
Economic Diversification & Research Fund

Chair Sorvaag and members of the committee, for the record, my name is Steve Shirley, and I serve as president of Minot State University. I provide testimony today supporting the Economic Diversification & Research Fund (EDRF) within Senate Bill 2003. Specifically, I am testifying on behalf of the nine primarily undergraduate institutions (PUIs) in the North Dakota University System which have smaller research agendas, research profiles, and research infrastructure compared to UND or NDSU.

During the past two years of this initial biennial investment of EDRF dollars, six projects have been funded at Minot State. These have included supporting a Biology professor who worked with students in the lab conducting biochemical analyses, DNA extraction, bacteria identification, and identifying genes within genomes; another project by a Geosciences professor utilizing remote sensing, subsurface mapping, and other initiatives with unmanned aerial systems to broaden students' first-hand knowledge and experience with UAVs; a project modeling sediment behavior on river coulees to determine risk for slumping and landslide issues; a Kinesiology professor conducting anti-gravity treadmill research with students to develop better healing processes for patients with acute lower extremity injuries and arthritis conditions; and research by Dr. Joe Pettit, a plant ecologist at MSU, whom you will hear from shortly. There are certainly many other equally impressive research opportunities that have been created the past two years at the other 8 PUI campuses thanks to these EDRF resources.

For me, the single most important aspect of all of these projects is providing undergraduate students the opportunity of actively working alongside experienced faculty researchers to learn first-hand how research is conducted. This research at the nine PUI campuses has incredible potential to help promote economic diversification as our undergraduate students, North Dakota's future leaders, continue refining and improving their research skills.

We have a wonderfully interconnected system of higher education within North Dakota. An important aspect of the NDUS is transferability and the ability of our students to further their academic pursuits. I have seen many students the past 17 years during my time as president of Minot State, DCB, and previously at Valley City State, who completed their studies at a primarily undergraduate campus, and then went on to UND or NDSU for additional professional training in Medical School, other health-related areas, or numerous other graduate or PhD programs. In many of these cases, it has been the research opportunities these students were exposed to as undergraduates that played a vital role in preparing them for success at the graduate level. The EDRF program clearly helps further these opportunities while unleashing the academic and research potential of our students and faculty alike.

All 11 NDUS campuses are enthusiastic about the EDRF resources to provide further opportunities for our students, our faculty and staff, and most importantly, our state. I appreciate your time, and am happy to address any questions. Thank you.