



Testimony
Senate Appropriations - Education and Environment Division
Senate Bill 2003
January 21, 2025

Chairman Sorvaag and members of the Senate Appropriations - Education and Environment Division Committee. The Valley Prosperity Partnership (VPP) is a membership organization led by business executives – joined by economic development, chamber of commerce, and higher education leaders – to advance and advocate for shared strategic economic development opportunities for the Red River Valley region and for North Dakota.

The business executives who lead companies across the state of North Dakota that comprise the VPP desire to strengthen and diversify our economy. North Dakota's Higher Education Challenge Grant Program offers several benefits to public colleges and universities in the state that play a vital role in enhancing the educational landscape of North Dakota, benefiting both students, employers seeking qualified employees in all sectors, and the broader community.

The proven benefits of the Higher Education Challenge Grant Program include:

1. **Increased Funding:** The program provides matching grants, meaning for every two dollars raised by the institutions from non-state, non-federal sources, the state provides one dollar
2. **Encouragement of Philanthropy:** By offering matching grants, the program incentivizes private donations and philanthropic efforts, fostering a culture of giving and community support for higher education.
3. **Support for Academic Projects:** The funds are specifically earmarked for projects that advance academics, such as scholarships, faculty development, and research initiatives.
4. **Economic and Workforce Development:** By investing in higher education, the program contributes to the development of a skilled workforce, which is crucial for the state's economy.
5. **Community Engagement:** The program encourages collaboration between institutions and their surrounding communities, promoting a sense of shared responsibility and partnership in supporting higher education

The program is supported by alumni and friends, by faculty and staff, by students, by all of North Dakota University System institutions, by the State Board of Higher Education and by the governor and lawmakers, who have put dollars in the program since 2013.

Thank you for your consideration of this important initiative, which has demonstrated considerable impact.

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