



WELCOME TO VCSU!

*Interim Higher Education
Legislative Committee
August 20-21, 2018*



VALLEY CITY
STATE UNIVERSITY



We're excited about...

- Enrollment Growth! Between 2008 and 2017, enrollment grew at VCSU from 1019 to 1522, about a 30% increase
 - Reasons for growth
 - additions of two master's degrees in education, our area of expertise;
 - several new majors (Fisheries and Wildlife, Athletic Training),
 - and development of strong online programs in education, technology, business, English, history, and music.
- Several projects begun in the last few years that serve students well—OERs and 3 year programs
- New, innovative ideas in education, music, and exercise science.



New Heat Plant

- THANK YOU! We saved \$20,000* on fuel this past winter!
- Activated Carbon update:
 - The feasibility study will be completed this fall
 - By January, we hope to be ready for bonding



*after adjusting for differences in winter temperatures, compared to 2016-17

VCSU in the News

U.S. News and World Report



Ranked the No. 1 'Public Regional College in the Midwest' in 2018 by U.S. News and World Report and a U.S. News 'Best College' for 20 consecutive years!



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PATHWAY TO PASSION FOR RURAL TEACHING

From staff reports

Megan Trautman prizes her "Class B" world. In that world, the "Class B" label – the athletics classification for small high schools in North Dakota – is about more than small enrollments. For Trautman, her Enderlin family, and farm and rural families across North Dakota, "Class B" is a way of living, working and aspiring together.

When Trautman completed her bachelor's degree in art education and psychology from Valley City State University (VCSU) in 2017 and searched for her first teaching job, Class B rural North Dakota called. She found what she was looking for in Carrington. In 2017-18, Trautman completed her first year of teaching, handling art classes in the Carrington School District.

"I think I wanted to go back to that rural setting, because that's where I came from," Trautman says. "You are with good, hard-working people, and able to work with lots of different people in school, in a setting where I knew I could be successful."

"When I visualized and finally decided upon an education major, I just really wanted to go back to where I came from. I like the atmosphere of a Class B school," she says.



Educating future teachers is a central focus at Valley City State University. These VCSU elementary education students practice teaching to peers in the model classroom on campus.

North Dakota Living



Snapshot Highlights (see handout)

- Last fall, VCSU enrolled 1522 students (headcount).
- About half of our students are enrolled in an education program.
- Our second-largest major is Fisheries and Wildlife, with about 60 majors.
- 46% of our students are online
- We regularly seek and sustain academic partnerships with other campuses and with entities in the community

2018 Campus Snapshot | Valley City State University

MISSION

Valley City State University is a public, regional university offering exceptional programs in an active, learner-centered community that promotes meaningful scholarship, ethical service, and the skilled use of technology. As an important knowledge resource, the University offers programs and outreach that enrich the quality of life in North Dakota and beyond. Through flexible, accessible, and innovative baccalaureate and master's programs, VCSU prepares students to succeed as educators, leaders, and engaged citizens in an increasingly complex and diverse society.

SIGNATURE PROGRAMS

Teacher Preparation

- 348 students enrolled in elementary education and 294 students enrolled in secondary education majors (Fall 2017)
- 150 students enrolled in online Master of Education (M.Ed.) and Master of Arts in Teaching (M.A.T.) degree (Fall 2017)
- Offer the only online elementary education degree program in North Dakota to increase access for teacher preparation
- More than 1,000 alumni serve as teachers and school administrators in 150 North Dakota communities

Integration of Open Educational Resources (OER)

- Faculty encouraged to replace expensive textbooks with accessible OER in curricula
- In five semesters (Spring and Fall 2016, Spring and Fall 2017, Spring 2018), OER have saved VCSU students \$939,298
- In Spring 2017, more than half of VCSU faculty used OER in their courses, impacting 55% of VCSU students
- Student survey indicates satisfaction with OER

Three-Year Programs

- 13 students who completed graduation requirements in less than 4 years graduated at Winter Commencement 2017
- 58 students graduated in less than 4 years from 2011-17

Academic Specialties

- Elementary and Secondary Education
- Fisheries and Wildlife Science
- Athletic Training
- Health Science
- Software Engineering

Academic Centers

- Don Megan Career and Technical Education Leadership Center
- Great Plains STEM Education Center
- Prairie Waters Education and Research Center

COLLABORATIVE PROGRAMS

- More than 75 articulation agreements with two-year schools for baccalaureate completion in face-to-face and online programs

VCSU and North Dakota State University

- Collaborate on human development and family science/elementary education program

- Students who complete program earn degree from both institutions
- VCSU faculty teach elementary education coursework on NDSU campus

VCSU and Dakota College at Bottineau

- DOB students reside on VCSU campus and participate in DOB two-year degree and certificate programs
- Popular DOB nursing program hosted in Rhoades Science Center on VCSU campus
- DOB delivers developmental courses needed by some VCSU students

Valley Partnership of VCSU, NDSU, and Minnesota State University Moorhead

- Funded by Bush Foundation grant to prepare more effective teachers, provide continuing support for new teachers in classroom

COMPETITIVE POSITION (REGIONAL/NATIONAL)

- Ranked No. 1 among Top Public Regional Colleges in Midwest by U.S. News and World Report in 2014, 2017, 2018, 2013, and 2012 (ranked No. 2 in 2015, 2016, 2011, 2010)
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STRENGTHS, CHALLENGES, NEEDS AND PRIORITIES

Strengths

- Close-knit, personal campus: students and faculty/staff know each other, work closely together
- 20+ years of leadership in integration of technology in learning, accentuated by laptop campus (second college in nation to issue laptops to all full-time students, began Fall 1999)
- Innovative and responsive program offerings
- Strong town-down relationship
- Highly active, supportive university foundation
- Long-term history of fiscal responsibility and unqualified audits
- Renewed teaching-preparation programs
- Successful athletic program with true scholar-athletes
- Attractive campus in picturesque community

Challenges

- Older average-aged buildings of NDSD campuses carry significant deferred maintenance
- Extending prospective student market beyond traditional recruiting region
- Recruitment and retention of faculty and staff
- Adjustment and adaptation to declining state appropriations

Needs

- New Communication and Fine Arts Building to replace Foxe Hall (on wrong side of food wall) and McCarthy Hall
- McFarland Hall (main building) deferred maintenance: roof, landscaping, air-handling systems
- Student Center renovation/repurposing
- Fire-card security system for campus buildings
- Running track repair and renovation

Priorities

- Student recruitment, retention and persistence
- Activated carbon plant addition to heat plant
- Physical plant improvement

ORGANIZATION AND GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE

Interim President: Margaret Dahberg

Leadership Team

- Wesley Winick, VP for Business Affairs
- Pete Simthaler, VP for Student Affairs
- Larry Robinson, Executive Director of University Advancement
- Joseph Tywinski, Chief Information Officer
- Julie Ruessli, Assistant VP for Academic Affairs
- Jill DeVries, Athletic Director
- Craig Vanney, Director for Marketing and Communications

FACULTY STATISTICS

- FTE of Benefited Faculty: 70.2x3
- Headcount of Benefited Faculty: 73
- Percentage of Headcount Tenured: 52%
- Faculty with terminal degree: 52%

*Budget reductions precipitated a cut of 22 faculty/staff FTE for Fall 2017

STUDENT DEMOGRAPHICS

- Total Undergraduate Students (Fall 2017): 1,372
- Full-time undergraduates: 624
- Part-time undergraduates: 538

Total Graduate Students (Fall 2017): 150

- Full-time graduate students: 12
- Part-time graduate students: 138

Total Enrollment: 1,522

Online Only: 46%

Degrees Conferred in 2018-17

- Certificates: 18
- Undergraduate certificates: 2
- Graduate certificates: 18
- Undergraduate degrees: 238
- Master's degrees: 29

Student Achievement Measures (SAM)

- Completion Rates at 6 Years: 55% first-time, full-time (83% transfer cohort)

FINANCIALS

- VCSU Operating Budget (2017-18): \$28,280,980
- NDSD General Fund Revenues in VCSU Operating Budget (2017-18): \$10,053,740

Special Budget Considerations

- \$32.3 million Communications and Fine Arts Building to replace Foxe and McCarthy halls
- \$22.5 million activated carbon plant
- \$408,000 two-for-one deferred maintenance match

2015-17 Completed Student Credit Hours: 62,225

2018-19 Oust to Attend (Tuition and Fees)

- In-state: \$7,628
- Out-of-state: \$17,187




VCSU Facility “To Do” list


- Complete our running track repair and renovation
- Capital Project: Communication and Fine Arts Building (to replace Foss Hall)
- Update fire alarm system
- Deferred maintenance on McFarland Hall
- Renovate and repurpose areas in the Student Center
- Increase the number of buildings with key-card access
- Update and expand our fieldhouse



Capital Project Handout

- New Communication and Fine Arts building – resolve the need to remove Foss Hall (from the wrong side of the flood wall)
 - Remove Foss Hall and McCarthy Hall
- Life Safety – upgrade fire alarm system
- Deferred Maintenance – McFarland Hall

VALLEY CITY STATE UNIVERSITY 



Artist's renderings of Communication and Fine Arts Building

PROPOSED VCSU CAPITAL PROJECT
Construction of Communication and Fine Arts Building

Valley City State University has an urgent need to construct a new Communication and Fine Arts Building. Permanent flood protection for the VCSU campus requires the removal of Foss Music Hall.

Estimated Cost: \$32,275,887 (project will eliminate \$6,980,384 in deferred maintenance)

The Proposal

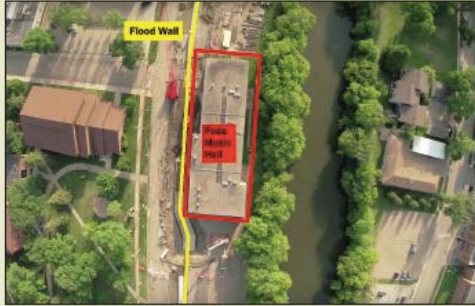
<p>The proposed Communication and Fine Arts Building will replace Foss Hall and consolidate the Art and Music programs in one facility, which will also include the Communication Arts Department. Every student completing the general</p>	<p>education program at VCSU will take at least 2 courses (6 credits) in this building. By shuffling classrooms and offices, this will also allow for the razing of McCarthy Hall. Estimated at slightly less than</p>	<p>\$32.3 million, the project is needed because of the installation of permanent flood protection along the river. It will also allow VCSU to retire more than \$6.9 million in deferred maintenance by razing both Foss and McCarthy halls.</p>
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The Need

Foss Hall (built in 1963), VCSU's music building, sits directly on the banks of the Sheyenne River. As the City of Valley City has installed permanent flood protection—protecting the city and the VCSU campus—Foss Hall is located on the wrong side of the flood wall.

To protect students and state assets, Foss Hall must be razed and its functions replaced elsewhere on campus.

In addition, to save operating expenses in the last biennium budget cuts, much of McCarthy Hall was "mothballed," with only the Art Department remaining in part of the building. A new Communication and Fine Arts Building would give the Art Department a new home and allow McCarthy to be razed along with Foss Hall.



Flood Wall
Foss Music Hall

VCSU Vision Statement

As an innovative university, we deliver distinctive, learner-centered experiences

- Innovative: we are able to try new tools and explore new options
- Distinctive: As we focus on niche areas, we are able to provide engaging, one-of-a-kind experiences
- Learner-Centered: the focus at VCSU is on the student's growth and development. Every decision requires the question, "How will this impact students?"



Vision Keeps VCSU

The vision statement describes how we see ourselves and the kind of place we want to be for our students and employees.

- Like a laser—keeps us focused, pointed in the right direction
- Provides words to test our planning and actions
- Shapes the objectives we develop to support our strategic plan.



On Target!

Engage, Innovate, Succeed: 2017-2022

- VCSU's current strategic plan directs our work on
 - growth,
 - quality,
 - student experience,
 - and optimization.



(Please see Strategic Plan handout
in your materials packet.)

- **Growth:** what are the needs of our region and state that fit with our particular expertise in education, wildlife science, and other niche areas? How are these areas changing, and how do we need to change?
- **Quality:** we have high expectations for program quality and learner success; these expectations require continuous self assessment and improvement
- **Student Experience:** students need experiences that prepare them for a life of community engagement, leadership, and services
- **Optimization:** we seek ways to streamline, collaborate, and reallocate resources in ways that allow us to serve students more effectively.

Dual Credit Opportunities

- VCSU works with four school districts to offer dual credit courses on their HS campus. We also have qualified pre-college students enroll in online or face to face courses on our campus if the coursework is not available in their high school.
- Josh Johnson, Superintendent, Valley City Public Schools, has been working with me to identify pathways and potential certificates to document student achievement on their university transcript.



Proposed Pathways in Dual Credit

- A one-year "College Studies" certificate (24 credits)
- A 3+1 AA degree (three years in HS + 1 year in college) (60 credits)
- Degree/certificate currently under discussion; other campuses are also interested in applying this model.
- Hope to extend this model to courses taken through vocational-technical schools



Potential issue to consider: Access

- Currently high school students taking dual credit courses pay
 - \$75 per credit @ the high school (when taught by a qualified HS instructor);
 - \$127 per credit when course is taught by a university instructor to high school students only (typically via IVN to multiple sites)
 - about \$190 per credit @ campus or online (taught by a university faculty member as a regular college course).
- High School students are not eligible for federal financial aid.
- Costs limit access to those who can afford the tuition.



Some budget thoughts to ponder

1. IMPACT of % reductions on small campus vs. large campus. VCSU's budget is 44% appropriated funds; UND's budget requires 23% appropriated funds. Across the board reduction has more impact on small campus budget.
2. FUNDING FORMULA—Unintended Consequence: Growth moves small campuses into the next band on the chart—and the formula then subtracts funding because we are in a different band. We will have \$214k subtracted from our appropriation this coming biennium because of this.



Engage, Innovate, Succeed: Strategic Plan 2017–22

1. GROWTH: Grow the university to meet the needs of North Dakota and beyond.

This goal includes strategies for marketing, strategic student recruitment, retention and persistence, and program development to increase opportunities for growth.

- 1.1 *Marketing*: Focus marketing activity to increase VCSU's accessibility/interest to potential students and shape external recognition and support of VCSU.
- 1.2 *Strategic Enrollment Planning*: Use the Strategic Enrollment Planning process to involve key university department and stakeholders in planning university growth through student recruitment and program optimization.
- 1.3 *Retention and Completion*: Implement engagement strategies to increase student retention and completion.

2. QUALITY AND ENGAGEMENT: Provide distinctive learning opportunities.

This goal focuses on promoting high-impact teaching and learning practices that promote academic and cocurricular student success; supporting continued growth through professional development for faculty and staff; and utilizing resources that foster supportive learning environments for all.

- 2.1 *Engaging, High-Impact Practices*: Increase the educational quality and impact of our academic and cocurricular programs through research and application of best practices in teaching and learning, in partnership with private-sector employers and public entities in target job markets.
- 2.2 *Professional Development*: Provide opportunities and support for faculty and staff to improve student engagement and program quality.
- 2.3 *Resources*: Improve and support curricular, assessment, facility, and technology resources to increase the quality of teaching and learning experiences.

3. STUDENT EXPERIENCE: Implement cocurricular experiences to positively impact the learning and growth of students.

This goal speaks to the breadth of experiences students have on campus, online, and in their communities, and to the importance of delivering quality student experiences, including student life, access to services, financial support, work experiences, and campus interactions.

- 3.1 *Access*: Ensure students have access to the resources, activities, and opportunities for meaningful student experiences at VCSU.
- 3.2 *Student Engagement*: Promote involvement through service learning, athletics, cocurricular programs, student employment, community building, and career development.
- 3.3 *Environment*: Ensure university environments are safe, accessible, and intentionally designed to maximize student learning and experiences.

4. OPTIMIZATION: Increase efficiencies through innovation, collaboration, streamlining, and reallocation.

This goal includes strategies for strengthening collaboration with stakeholders, streamlining services and implementing innovative solutions, and strategically allocating resources to provide the highest quality VCSU experience.

- 4.1 *Efficiency*: Eliminate duplication and ineffective practices
- 4.2 *Streamlining and Reallocation*: Develop long-term strategies to help inform and prioritize budget decisions; explore additional cost-saving measures; and work with partners across the state to reduce costs and increase student access.
- 4.3 *Innovative Solutions*: Implement new processes, systems, and services to improve the VCSU experience.

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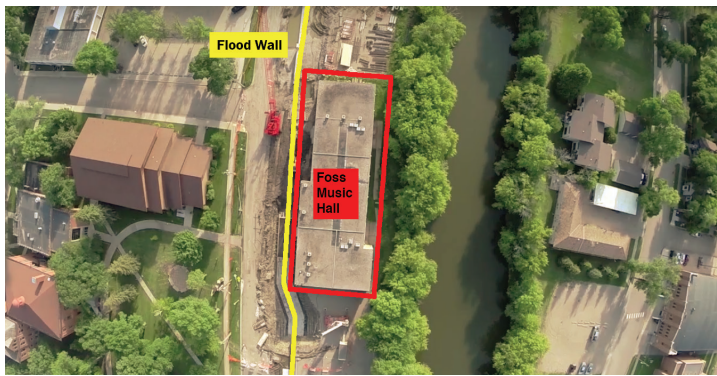
2018-19 Cost to Attend (Tuition and Fees)

- In-state: \$7,626
- Out-of-state: \$17,167



VALLEY CITY STATE UNIVERSITY

Valley City State University students, faculty and staff work together to create an outstanding teaching and learning environment. The university shows strong enrollment, retention and foundation support. The campus, with the exception of Foss Hall, is now protected by permanent flood protection. A new heating plant has been constructed, and the university is pursuing integration of an innovative activated carbon plant with the heat plant. The Gaukler Family Wellness Center provides an outstanding venue for student and community fitness and wellness activities, and a new home for VCSU's Kinesiology and Human Performance Department. Deferred maintenance presents a continuing challenge.



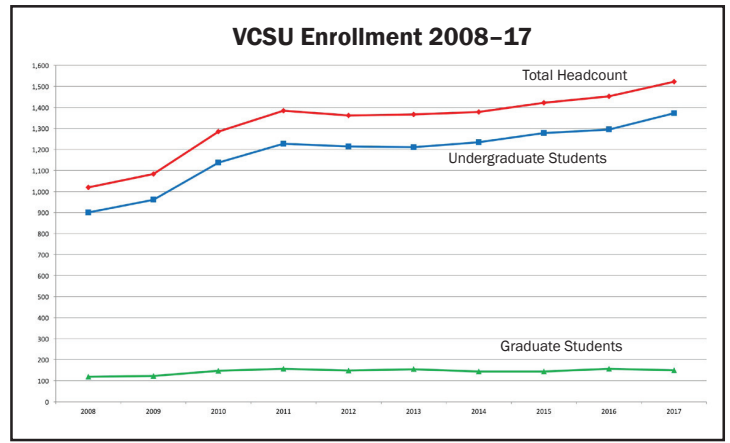
The VCSU music building, Foss Hall, sits on the wrong side of Valley City's permanent flood protection; its replacement is a top university and system priority.



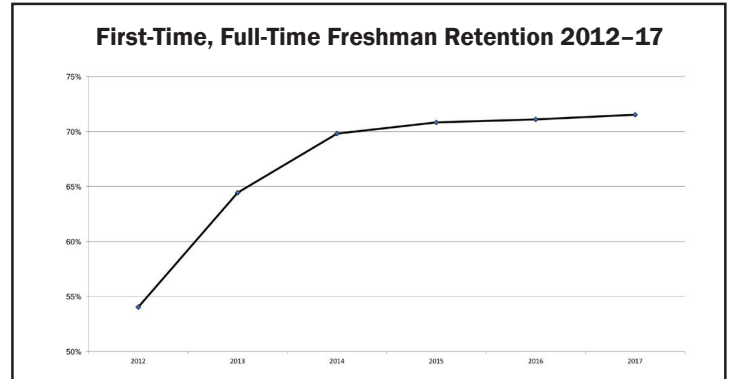
Integrating an activated carbon plant with VCSU's new heat plant will provide a new revenue stream and research opportunities for students and faculty alike.



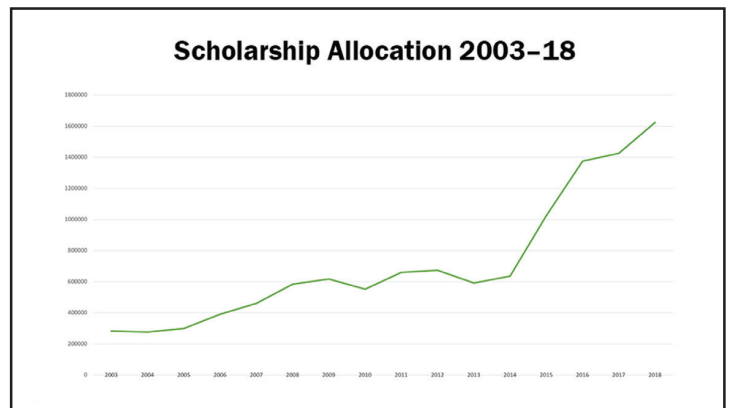
Much has been invested in McFarland Hall over time, but significant deferred maintenance remains.



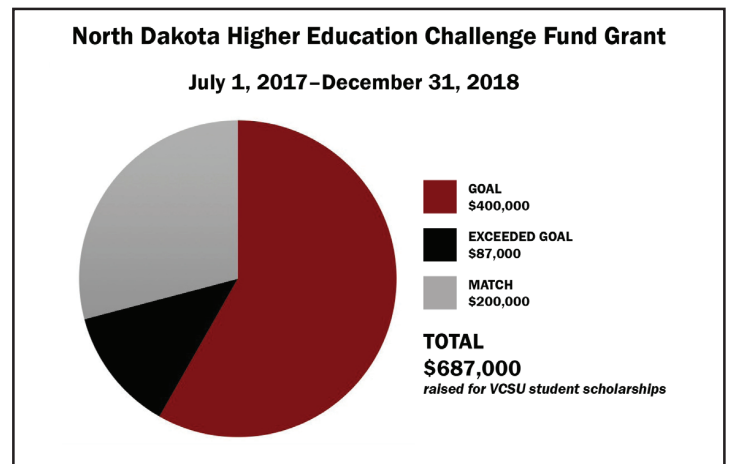
Enrollment continues to trend upward.



Investing in improved retention has yielded significant returns over the last five years.



The VCSU Foundation has allocated \$1.623 million in scholarships to VCSU students in 2018-19.



Thanks to the generous support of alumni and friends, the VCSU Foundation met and exceeded the Challenge Fund goal in April 2018.



PROPOSED VCSU CAPITAL PROJECT **Construction of Communication and Fine Arts Building**

Valley City State University has an urgent need to construct a new Communication and Fine Arts Building. Permanent flood protection for the VCSU campus requires the removal of Foss Music Hall.

Estimated Cost: \$32,275,887 (project will eliminate \$6,980,384 in deferred maintenance)

The Proposal

The proposed Communication and Fine Arts Building will replace Foss Hall and consolidate the Art and Music programs in one facility, which will also include the Communication Arts Department.

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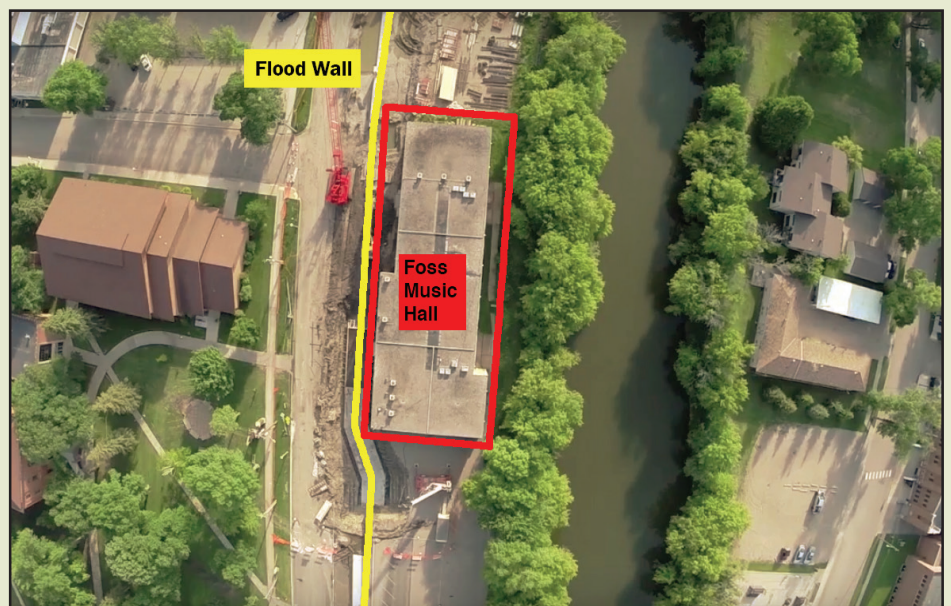
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In addition, to save operating expenses in the last biennium budget cuts, much of McCarthy Hall was “mothballed,” with only the Art Department remaining in part of the building. A new Communication and Fine Arts Building would give the Art Department a new home and allow McCarthy to be razed along with Foss Hall.



The Benefits



Foss Hall (behind flood wall)



McCarthy Hall (now mostly “mothballed”)

- Gather communication and fine arts programs— 5 majors, 5 minors and 4 certificate programs—under one roof, providing students with consolidated, updated facilities.
- Remove the McCarthy Hall classroom building (built in 1930) and its \$5.6 million in deferred maintenance, in addition to savings of Foss Hall’s \$1.3 million deferred maintenance—a total deferred maintenance savings of \$6.9 million.
- Achieve organizational efficiency through common box office and shared administrative support, and achieve space efficiency through multi-use workrooms and performance areas.
- House at least 2 of VCSU’s required general education courses, giving all freshmen on campus access to modern classroom facilities and increased exposure to the arts.
- Provide ADA accessibility (currently lacking in Foss Hall) in the new building with an elevator.
- Create appropriate acoustics in performance and practice space, along with proper climate control to preserve expensive instruments.
- Foster an atmosphere of collaboration and inspiration, an interdisciplinary approach to creative problem-solving and innovation, and a synergy embodying the VCSU core values of innovation and community, by combining the fine arts with the communication arts programs in one building.

Additional VCSU Capital Projects — \$3,628,313

VCSU has additional capital project needs that fall into two categories: Life Safety and Deferred Maintenance.

Life Safety — \$2,529,323

Life safety projects include:

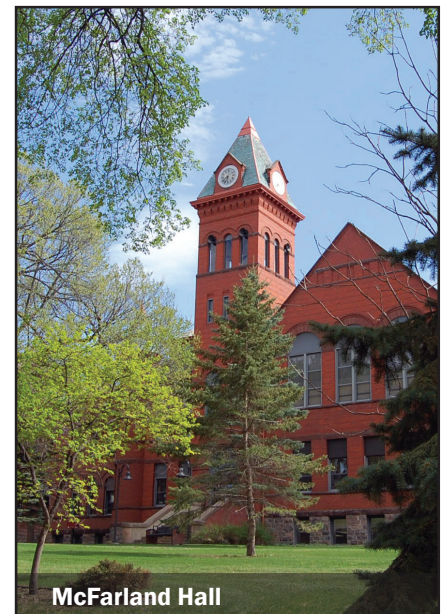
- Emergency power supply with a backup generator for W.E. Osmon Fieldhouse and a standby power feeder for Facilities Services
- Fire alarm system upgrades to provide necessary information (e.g., specific room, type of alarm) for targeted response by campus staff and/or fire emergency personnel
- Emergency egress improvements to provide safe evacuation routes from a number of campus buildings

- ADA accessibility improvements to buildings currently “grandfathered in” (but noncompliant with current building codes and ADA requirements) to provide access to all building levels and spaces to all individuals

Deferred Maintenance — \$1,098,990

Deferred maintenance projects include:

- Work on McFarland Hall (main building), including tuckpointing and masonry repair, exterior painting in targeted areas, spray-foam insulation, gutter and downspout repairs, and repainting and refinishing of signature clock faces
- New roof for McFarland Hall, replacing cedar shingles and updating the clock tower roof as well



McFarland Hall



VALLEY CITY
STATE UNIVERSITY

Valley City State University ♦ President’s Office
101 College St SW ♦ Valley City, ND 58072
701-845-7102 ♦ www.vcsu.edu

PATHWAY TO PASSION FOR RURAL TEACHING

From staff reports

Megan Trautman prizes her “Class B” world. In that world, the “Class B” label – the athletics classification for small high schools in North Dakota – is about more than small enrollments. For Trautman, her Enderlin family, and farm and rural families across North Dakota, “Class B” is a way of living, working and aspiring together.

When Trautman completed her bachelor’s degree in art education and psychology from Valley City State University (VCSU) in 2017 and searched for her first teaching job, Class B rural North Dakota called. She found what she was looking for in Carrington. In 2017-18, Trautman completed her first year of teaching, handling art classes in the Carrington School District.

“I think I wanted to go back to that rural setting, because that’s where I came from,” Trautman says. “You are with good, hard-working people, and able to work with lots of different people in school, in a setting where I knew I could be successful.”

“When I visualized and finally decided upon an education major, I just really wanted to go back to where I came from. I like the atmosphere of a Class B school,” she says.

At VCSU, the teacher education path Trautman followed – from and back to rural North Dakota – is common, and highly valued. “Many of our students come to us from rural communities,” says Dr. Sheri Okland, dean of the VCSU School of Education and Graduate Studies. From the faculty, to the continuing innovations in teacher education, to the teacher graduates the university produces, Okland says VCSU is dedicated to being a solution to a major challenge. “In North Dakota, there is definitely the need. Some rural areas struggle to get teachers,” she says.

Okland also adds VCSU has a location that is central in a rural region, and draws rural students who want to stay near their home or prefer a smaller campus setting for higher education. Megan Trautman fits that bill.

“Valley City State is close to home, and that was important to me,” the Enderlin High School graduate says. Undecided on a major during her start there, Trautman, who played basketball for VCSU, kept at general studies, when art got her attention. “I didn’t really think I would be in the education field, and didn’t see myself as an art teacher, but then I took my first art class, and I really enjoyed it,” Trautman says.

Interest and achievement grew into a passion. “I started to get excited about everything I was learning, and then wanted to share that with others, not just keep it for myself,” she adds.

Trautman eventually declared the double major of art education, and psychology – which was also an area of strong interest. “Now I’m using these every single day when I’m in the classroom,” Trautman says.

She provides art instruction at all grade levels, and does some team coaching, as well. For all her art students, Trautman passes along the importance of art, along with the techniques for drawing, painting, sculpting and other art forms.



Educating future teachers is a central focus at Valley City State University. These VCSU elementary education students practice teaching to peers in the model classroom on campus.

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“I also want to create a comfortable environment for all my students – comfortable for them to come in my classroom, and be themselves, experiment with different things, and create, and learn and grow,” she says.

FROM VCSU TO SCIENCE CLASS

Zach Nelson, a Kindred High School graduate, another 2017 VCSU graduate, also just completed his first year of teaching, at Sargent Central High School. His university degree is in chemistry education, and he now teaches five different high school science classes. Nelson’s path to chemistry education was a shift in gears from his start as a math education major. After his freshman year at VCSU, his favor turned to the sciences.

“After my freshman year, I transitioned over into the sciences. They’ve always been interesting to me, and I love doing and teaching science, so that’s why I made the transition,” Nelson says.

Nelson describes his first year at Sargent Central as challenging – and trying – but he would learn these are common experiences for the first-year teacher. He was able to establish a routine and a rapport which helped smooth the ride.

“It was just actually getting into that routine and becoming more comfortable with the students and then becoming more comfortable with myself that really helped out. And it was nice because the kids are always good,” Nelson says.

Nelson says a key he found to relating science studies to high schoolers was applying science to their world. He did this by describing the biological fundamentals of hunting habitat, or the value of chemistry in agriculture. With the Bobcat manufacturing facility nearby, Nelson was able to discuss the basics of robotics, and the role it plays there.

“I would like my students to become more science literate,” Nelson says. “Part of why I wanted to get into teaching science is that nowadays we have a lot of controversy surrounding scientific issues that are really hot-button issues. We have a lot of people who don’t seem to understand what’s going on and it’s becoming not only a problem in our society but politically, and financially and elsewhere. I just want to show them that this is why we know what we know, and this is how we use this information,” he says.

OKLAND: INNOVATION & POSSIBILITIES

Dr. Sheri Okland says VCSU works on several fronts to meet the challenge for placing teachers where they are sorely needed and excellent, modern teachers everywhere. Currently, Okland says innovation is a major point of emphasis in VCSU’s curriculum development.

“Our basis for innovation and teaching our teachers is to look at the possibilities, and understand what’s out there in the world, and how they can bring that back to problem solve with what is happening in rural North Dakota,” Okland says.

“We emphasize differentiating and individualizing instruction so that all of their students can learn,” Okland continues, “and I think we start with helping our preservice teachers understand how they learn. There’s a definite need to understand our own personal learning in order to understand how children learn.”

Rural educator perspectives

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