



## President's Office

Dr. Steve Shirley, President, Minot State University & Dakota College at Bottineau  
HB 1221 (In Support) 69<sup>th</sup> ND Legislative Session, January 31, 2025  
House Appropriations Committee – Education & Environment Division  
Workforce Education Innovation Program

Chair Nathe and members of the committee, for the record, my name is Steve Shirley, and I serve as president of Minot State University as well as Dakota College at Bottineau. I am submitting this written testimony in strong support of funding for the Workforce Education Innovation Program in House Bill 1221.

Both the MiSU and DCB campuses have been working to respond to the rapidly changing economic conditions in North Dakota by training and educating our students in key academic areas. Particularly in establishing new academic programs and/or expanding those programs that are growing quickly, the lag with funding formula payments after students are enrolled can create some challenges. The new funding source envisioned through the Workforce Education Innovation Program in HB 1221 would directly help alleviate this issue. A few examples of how these funds would be helpful:

- Last year, DCB established a new Dental Assisting program in Minot, and later this year will begin a new Dental Hygiene program. These fields are areas of great workforce shortage in western and central North Dakota. We added these programs as a direct response to industry needs. As you know, dental programs are expensive, and through a combination of support from the City of Minot, various grants, and industry support, we have made these new programs a reality. However, there are undoubtedly some fiscal realities and challenges in the immediate future as we continue building and growing these new programs; Workforce Innovation funds would certainly be beneficial.
- MiSU and DCB have brought forward a capital request as part of SB 2003 (the higher education funding bill) to purchase the Trinity Health Center West building in downtown Minot. This project has been highly ranked and supported by the State Board of Higher Education. Our vision is to turn this facility into a Health Sciences Institute where the two campuses would further collaborate and offer a number of health-related academic programs. We have strong support from Trinity, the Minot Area Chamber-EDC, and many others in the area as these new education opportunities would address some of the very significant health-related workforce shortages in western North Dakota. Again, the funds envisioned in the Workforce Education Innovation Program could be tapped and utilized to help us stand up these programs much quicker with the hiring and supporting of new faculty.
- At MiSU, we have had significant growth in new academic offerings including Cybersecurity and Operations, Data Science, and Exercise Science & Rehabilitation. All of these are rapidly growing majors at MiSU with plenty of job opportunities for graduates. Again, the availability of a Workforce Education Innovation fund to more quickly access resources for hiring and supporting faculty in these rapidly expanding fields would be incredibly helpful. These funds would also be most helpful as we expand into cutting-edge work now underway at MiSU in areas such as Artificial Intelligence.



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In short, both Minot State and DCB are enthusiastic about the Workforce Education Innovation Program and the funding recommendation in HB 1221. These resources will provide a major boost to our ability of responding and adapting more quickly and effectively with significant workforce shortages and challenges in North Dakota. We appreciate your careful consideration of this bill, and would be happy to respond should you have any questions. Thank you.