

SB 2003

House Appropriations Committee

March 5, 2025

Tim Mihalick, State Board of Higher Education Chair

Chair Vigesaa and Committee Members: My name is Tim Mihalick, and I serve as the Chair of the State Board of Higher Education. I am here today to begin discussion of SB2003.

The State Board of Higher Education has eight voting members selected via committee, appointed by the governor, and approved by the Senate. We have two non-voting board members who serve in an advisee role as representatives of both the staff and faculty that work within our higher education system. Our mission is to enhance the quality of life, and the social and economic vitality of all served by our public colleges and universities.

Our Board has six strategic goals that include: workforce development, optimizing student affordability while maintaining campus financial health; providing access to programs people want, where and when they need them; preparing students for success; maximizing the strengths of a unified system; and research excellence and innovation. We know how important our business community is, and because we serve the entire state, we have the ability to connect students and trained workers to careers across the state. We take students, skills and knowledge, as well as workforce needs into consideration with all aspects of what we do to serve the state.

I would like to extend our deepest gratitude to the North Dakota Legislative Assembly for their unwavering support of higher education last biennium. Your commitment has been instrumental in enhancing the educational landscape of our state, providing our students with the resources and opportunities they need to succeed. The State Board of Higher Education exists to serve the state and its citizens, as you do, and



our job is to ensure that policy reflects the needs of our students and the staff and faculty that are the backbone of our institutions.

We have celebrated major successes in enrollment, retention, and graduation rates across our institutions. The NDUS is bucking national trends with significant increases in new freshmen enrollment. Our institutions continue to provide academic programs that students want whether it's on campus or online.

We know that maintaining this momentum is imperative for our state, particularly when it comes to workforce. With more than 45,800 students enrolled across 11 institutions, NDUS is at the forefront of recruiting and training workforce talent. With your support, we have made significant investments in key industries such as healthcare, cyber security, and manufacturing, ensuring our graduates are well-prepared for the demands of the modern workforce.

It is that connection of people, higher education and workforce, that continues to guide us into the future. One initiative I've been proud to be a part of this biennium, has been our "Envision 2035" 10-year strategic planning process. The SBHE, NDUS, campus representatives, and experts from business and industry, worked for more than a year on this endeavor to identify the evolving needs and challenges of our world when high school seniors graduate in the year 2035 and then project how we in higher education can position ourselves to meet those needs.

"Envision 2035" findings are the culmination of work and insights from nine separate study groups. The groups studied how future advancements in their respective areas will affect student preparation for the workforce and how best to adapt and develop new priorities for higher ed in North Dakota. As you work through our bill, you will see several Envision initiatives that were approved in the Senate's bill.



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A new theme emerged as part of the Envision 2035 process and the theme establishes a framework for prioritizing future higher education initiatives. “Retool and Upskill Now for North Dakota” or RUN-ND consists of three pillars, which are student vitality, workforce, and intelligent machines, and they sit atop physical and digital infrastructure.

We hope this framework can help define the current and future needs for higher education in North Dakota. Further, we’d like RUN-ND to initiate larger discussions about how best to educate the future workforce for industry advancements and innovation, which have been accelerated by AI and digitization.

The three pillars that we focus on to develop higher education now and into the future include:

Workforce:

Our budget has investment opportunities for the state that create economic diversification through research and further innovation on our campuses. Public private partnerships as well as partnerships with industry and business are very important to both connect students with jobs and continue to build North Dakota’s economy.

Polytechnic: The Bismarck State College (BSC) polytechnic education model allows students to combine multiple academic programs, and skill sets to create customized college degrees embedded with industry-recognized credentials. BSC integrates work-based learning into all degree options and encompasses many opportunities in collaboration with business and industry, including service learning, project-based learning, apprenticeships, internships, field experiences and clinicals. BSC engages with business and industry leaders to identify workforce needs and quickly respond with programs, certificates and even non-credit courses. BSC’s Business and Industry Leadership Teams (BILTs) are composed of business and industry stakeholders who provide BSC with strategic advice and feedback on

industry trends and the knowledge, skills and abilities required in future high-demand careers. This direct input influences the development of curriculum, program pathways and services.

Dual Mission: DSU's dual mission committee worked with local industry and educational partners to bring new opportunities to Dickinson. DSU brought career fields in technical areas such as welding and CNA training to Dickinson as well as commercial truck driver training class through a collaboration with TrainND Northwest and Williston State College (WSC). The university also expanded certificate, associate, and graduate program offerings, including a Master of Business Administration and several Master's in Education, meeting workforce needs in the SW region of the state. DSU continues to keep its finger on the pulse of the needs in its surrounding communities, and bring programming when possible to the region.

Apprenticeships & Internships: LRSC is continuing to work on apprenticeships, including with Northrup Grumman in New Town and another coming to the Grand Sky facility at the GFAFB. LRSC has also expanded its Wind Energy Tech training to Tioga to train oilfield workers to work on wind farms.

Career and Technical Education: Dickinson State University (DSU) directly collaborated with Dickinson Public Schools and the Southwest Career and Technical Education Academy to develop pathways to train area high school and post-secondary students in fields like welding, diesel mechanics, CNA and other health care careers, teacher education, and business. These pathways allow students access to the Early University programming, allowing them a quicker pace towards achieving their academic credentials and entering the workforce. These career academies earned DSU and DHS the Governor's Award for Systems Innovation in Education.

We continue to find great success through Public Private Partnerships and strive to continue utilizing them across the system to address capital funding needs. This lowers the cost burden on the state and allows for needed improvements.

Intelligent Machines/Technology:

Our campuses continue to innovate throughout the system including in classroom study/space, research and adapting ever-evolving technology in learning spaces that eventually helps students innovate in the workplace. The effective, consolidated use of AI and machine learning functionality will be pivotal in helping all NDUS institutions to be adaptive, responsive, and innovative leaders in the higher education sector. It is imperative that a system approach is used to ensure availability and impact at all eleven institutions. Examples of a system approach in technology include:

Core Technology Services is in a supportive role of Artificial Intelligence/Machine Learning (AI/ML) for all 11 campuses. CTS has enabled numerous AI tools and features within the system wide Learning Management System over the past several months. We are preparing the use of data (data lake) and security around the possibilities of utilizing AI either off the shelf or custom developed tools.

Dakota Digital Academy: The Dakota Digital Academy (DDA) was launched to coordinate, expand, and enhance educational opportunities in computing and cyber sciences in North Dakota and the upper Midwest. DDA has funded several certificates in Cybersecurity and Software Development. The courses are offered through a web portal and are stackable to serve workforce needs. The DDA has quickly pivoted to support the emerging AI/ML technologies. The DDA has sponsored several grants and scholarships to help faculty incorporate AI into their curriculum and the DDA partnered with Valley City State University to host the inaugural AI conference centered on important and futuristic topics about how AI will impact higher education and virtually every aspect of the workplace.

As part of a recent Dakota Digital Academy group discussion regarding advancing AI, CTS is looking at ways AI can enhance advising assistance through Degree Map. It could potentially improve advising, reduce time to completion, and improve retention. CTS would manage and host a proof-of-concept and a potential future project that could potentially help campuses that need additional advising assistance.

Student Vitality:

Student success is the cornerstone of our overall success. We know legislative support for scholarships such as the *Challenge Grant and ND Career Builders* has been valuable to students being able to access higher education needs throughout the system. Eighty-seven percent of scholarship recipients are currently either in a qualifying program that leads to an in-demand occupation or currently working in an in-demand occupation within North Dakota. This program boasts a retention rate near 90%. We encourage continuation of these programs to support student learning and the connection of businesses to a skilled workforce.

Equally important is student mental and behavioral health. We are in the business of educating the whole being of students to ensure their success. We have received direct feedback from our students emphasizing the importance of these needs and we know the collaborative effort of Student Tele-mental Health has proven to be a great resource for our campuses.

We also advocate for continuing dual credit opportunities for our students across the state. Students can save time and money through dual credit and begin a foundation for higher education attainment more quickly and at a lower cost. It is an opportunity that can mean college is more affordable, more accessible and less time-consuming once a student gets to college.

In support of these three pillars, we need a strong foundation in which higher education can serve our communities, state and students. To this



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end, we support investment in physical and digital infrastructure. As artificial intelligence expands, the need for data security and data storage will expand with it.

In closing, we are committed to preparing students for lifelong learning and to support a broad spectrum of workforce needs throughout the state. In our pursuit of connecting students to careers, we want to ensure North Dakota is also prepared to meet the challenges ahead. We will continue to work toward the betterment of the entire state and delivering the benefits of higher education our communities are accustomed to.

The University System and its 11 institutions provide the state with an educated workforce ready to meet the challenges of an ever-changing work environment while providing outreach and continuing education programs for the state's residents and businesses. We will continue to create and support jobs and employment opportunities through research, extension, and teaching activities, all of which provide economic benefits to enhance local and state economies.

I am available to answer your questions. Thank you.

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Report of the
Commissioner of the General Land Office
for the year ending June 30, 1904

The following is a list of the
lands which have been
acquired by the United States
during the year ending June 30, 1904.

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