

## **Written Testimony in Support of the North Dakota Challenge Grant**

Presented to the ND Senate Appropriations – Education and Environment Division

Submitted by: Chuck Ulmer, Trustee, North Dakota State University Foundation

January 20, 2025

Dear Chairman Sorvaag and Members of the Committee,

For the record, my name is Chuck Ulmer, and I am a Trustee of the North Dakota State University Foundation. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of the North Dakota Higher Education Challenge Grant Fund.

**Governor Kelly Armstrong is proposing \$50 million be invested in the next biennium for the program, and as a stakeholder in North Dakota State University and the future of North Dakota, I strongly support this request.**

Nationwide, higher education faces continuing challenges including dropping enrollment, rising tuition, and changing attitudes regarding the benefits of a college education. NDSU is not exempt from these threats which in the long term have a negative effect on the state's future. However, NDSU has proven the positive results of a college degree by graduating students who have joined the workforce in critically needed areas and became productive North Dakota citizens.

Preparing students for the changes in a modern workforce does not come without a cost. Tuition and direct state appropriations are not sufficient to cover the expense of operating the University. More and more, assistance from private donations is instrumental in funding scholarships, research and infrastructure.

**When exploring private charitable donations, national studies have shown that greater than 75% of donors are more likely to donate if a match is offered. 1 in 3 donors indicate they would give a larger gift if a match is applied to their donation.**

With the Challenge Grant, an investment of \$50 Million Dollars from the legislature would provide \$150 Million Dollars to be used by the colleges and universities of NDUS. This important private-public partnership would be instrumental in helping North Dakota stay ahead in the increasingly competitive recruitment of students in the Midwest. The NDSU Foundation has had success in the past with the Challenge Grant and has donors waiting to make a difference again if this legislation is enacted. Now is the time to advance this program to a new level that will provide a return on investment to North Dakota for years to come.

I urge this committee to fund the Challenge Grant at the entire \$50 Million Dollar level and challenge the private sector to respond. There is no doubt that they will.

Thank you for considering this opportunity and for your continued service to North Dakota.

NDSU stands ready to put your investment to work.

Regards,

Chuck Ulmer

Trustee

North Dakota State University