



HB 1220

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Christopher Scott, North Dakota Student Association

701-340-3380 | Christopher.m.scott@ndus.edu

Chair Wobbema and members of the committee:

My name is Christopher Scott, and I am the current Policy, Advocacy and Research Director for the North Dakota Student Association. I am here to express the NDSA's opposition to HB 1220.

The North Dakota Student Association (NDSA) is a student organization established in 1969 that is dedicated to ensuring that students have a voice in policy that affects Higher Education. The NDSA consists of delegates from each of the 11 public institutions that meet monthly to engage students in Higher Education policy in North Dakota. Our mission is to empower students, foster collaboration between students across campuses in the North Dakota University System, and to advocate on issues of higher education in support of access, affordability, quality, and the student experience.

HB 1220, if passed, would allow for institutions of higher education to offer accelerated degrees as a substitute for any degree offered by an institution which prepares students for high demand occupations, with these accelerated degrees not requiring students to obtain general education credits. Additionally, if HB 1220 passes, institutions under control of the State Board of Higher Education would be allowed to determine annually which degrees offered by an institution are high demand occupations.

Firstly, there are already a variety of methods by which students can attain degrees faster than the traditional four-year degree. There are the dual credit offerings that allow students in high school to gain college credit while still in high school, thus allowing these students to graduate

college at a faster rate. We have seen a massive increase in dual credit enrollment in the last decade, with thousands of students making use of this program. Multiple NDUS institutions offer two-plus-two programs and the four-plus-one programs. Two-plus-two programs allow students to complete an associate degree and then a bachelor's degree, while the four plus one program allows students to complete a bachelor's and then a master's, where master courses start in the last year of the bachelor's program. Personally, I am currently attending UND with the intent of completing a four-plus-one program to attain a bachelor's in physics followed by a master's. Many of the four-plus-one programs are offered so that students can complete a master's with a bachelor's one year quicker than they otherwise would have been able to, without compromising general education requirements.

Secondly, if HB 1220 passes, this would have negative workforce implications for North Dakota. If HB 1220 passes, the NDUS would be graduating students who didn't have to complete general education requirements. These general education requirements are included in every degree as they are deemed to be essential to everyday work life in practically every field from nursing to teaching to engineering.

General education requirements include completing a course in public speaking, two courses of English composition, general math requirements, the recently added digital literacy requirements, among other courses. Because these courses would be excluded from these proposed accelerated programs, we could see a decrease in the quality of students that the NDUS is graduating. These students would not have the speaking, English or math skills compared to students who completed similar programs which included general education requirements that addressed these skills. This would effectively make students who completed accelerated programs as proposed in HB 1220 uncompetitive compared to students who completed traditional degrees, not only outside of the state, but also inside the state when it comes to getting jobs.

An example of the use of skills gained through general education courses is actually shown in my testimony today. Without the skills I have gained through the English composition courses that I have taken, I would not be able to write my written testimony as effectively, or as grammatically correct. Without the public speaking course that I have taken, I would not have been able to present this testimony to this committee as effectively.

Thirdly, as a small final note, if HB 1220 passes, these accelerated programs would induce unnecessary competition between institutions within the state, and the institution that would stand to be detrimental to some of the smaller institutions. This could also introduce competition between four-year institutions and two-year institutions where two-year institutions could potentially be allowed to offer these accelerated programs.

With these arguments in mind, the NDSA opposes HB 1220, and respectfully asks the committee for a DO NOT PASS recommendation.