

My name is Cynthia Prescott. I am a resident of Grand Forks and a history professor at the University of North Dakota. I testify today as a private citizen of the State of North Dakota.

I have taught general education courses for over 20 years, 17 of them here in North Dakota. For the past 3 of those years I also have chaired UND departments that offer large numbers of general education courses. My colleagues and I work hard not only to teach our students our great nation's history and related content. Yet our general education courses do so much more. They train students to think critically, to perform independent research, and hone their written and oral communication skills. In other words, we are preparing students to succeed in college and in the workplace.

I also am part of a team that received a \$250,000 private grant to enhance humanistic learning within general education programs. This Cornerstone program—which is growing across the United States at institutions ranging from community colleges to elite universities such as Stanford. Through Cornerstone we are working to train students in the critical thinking and communication skills that employers in business and technical fields prize. Cornerstone humanities courses guide students to explore ideas of citizenship and leadership. Our Cornerstone program provides applied humanities training within general education, exposing students to humanistic perspectives on students' chosen career paths and offering credentials that will make our students more competitive in high-demand fields in technology and health professions. Such learning will prepare our students to become leaders in their chosen fields.

Colleges and universities within the North Dakota University System work hard to ease students' access to transfer into and within the NDUS system. Eliminating general education requirements for baccalaureate degree programs would make it more difficult for students who begin their training at a community college or tribal college and to transfer into a four-year NDUS institution. Moreover, it would make it more difficult for students to transfer into North Dakota universities.

Even more troubling, eliminating general education requirements also would place at risk our universities' accreditation by the Higher Learning Commission. That accreditation is crucial to our students' degrees being accepted by employers across the nation and beyond.

Eliminating general education requirements is a risky undertaking that would reduce student preparation for careers and for citizenship in our state and nation. It would significantly reduce the value of a North Dakota bachelor's degree, making our graduates less competitive within the state and on the national and global stage.