

NORTH DAKOTA LEGISLATIVE MANAGEMENT

Minutes of the

HIGHER EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Monday and Tuesday, August 19-20, 2019
Ballroom, Student Center, Dickinson State University
Dickinson, North Dakota

Representative Mark Sanford, Chairman, called the meeting to order at 1:30 p.m. (CDT).

Members present: Representatives Mark Sanford, Rick Becker, Larry Bellew, Karla Rose Hanson, Richard G. Holman, Dennis Johnson, Bob Martinson, Gary Paur, Mike Schatz; Senators Brad Bekkedahl, Robert Erbele, Karen K. Krebsbach, Erin Oban, Larry J. Robinson, Jim P. Roers

Members absent: Representatives Jake G. Blum, Matt Eidson, David Monson

Others present: Senators Ray Holmberg, Grand Forks; Donald Schaible, Mott; and Rich Wardner, Dickinson; members of the Legislative Management
Brady A. Larson, Legislative Council, Bismarck
See [Appendix A](#) for additional persons present.

The Legislative Council staff distributed three memorandums entitled [Supplementary Rules of Operation and Procedure of the North Dakota Legislative Management](#), [Higher Education Study - Background Memorandum](#), and [Other Duties of the Higher Education Committee - Background Memorandum](#).

Chairman Sanford welcomed the committee members to Dickinson State University (DSU) and thanked them for serving on the committee. He said the committee will meet primarily on North Dakota University System institution campuses.

Dr. Thomas Mitzel, President, Dickinson State University, presented information ([Appendix B](#)) regarding the university, including its planned transition to a dual-mission university. He said DSU's previous role as a 4-year regional institution prevented the institution from providing certain educational programming needed for the workforce in western North Dakota. He said DSU is evolving into a dual-mission university, which was approved by the State Board of Higher Education, to offer certain certificate, 2-year, and graduate programs in demand in the region. He said new DSU programs include a Master of Entrepreneurship, an Associate of Administration, and certificates in wellness, strength and conditioning, corrective exercise, and allied health. He said DSU is considering adding programs for welding, commercial truck driver training, and peace officer training.

In response to a question from Senator Bekkedahl, Dr. Mitzel said DSU is in the Bismarck State College (BSC) TrainND region, but he has contacted Williston State College about collaborating to offer certain programs.

In response to a question from Representative Martinson, Dr. Mitzel said the DSU enrollment count in Bismarck depends on the number and level of courses taken by each student. He said DSU compensates BSC for the use of facilities.

In response to a question from Chairman Sanford, Dr. Mitzel said DSU is trying to ensure any programs added benefit both the community and the university. He said noncredit programs may be more expensive for the students due to the lack of state funding for those programs through the higher education funding formula.

In response to a question from Senator Robinson, Dr. Mitzel said DSU is enrolling both new North Dakotans and long-term residents in the new dual-mission programs. He said companies may seek to train long-term employees for new positions with the help of DSU.

In response to a question from Chairman Sanford, Mr. Ty Orton, Executive Director, Dickinson State University Heritage Foundation, said the foundation has built a \$5.2 million endowment and will award about 550 scholarships for the 2019-20 academic year.

Mr. Nick Hacker, Chair, State Board of Higher Education, presented information ([Appendix C](#)) regarding the state of the University System. He said the State Board of Higher Education finalized the systemwide strategic plan at its last meeting. He discussed the University System's efforts to implement legislation approved by the 2019 Legislative Assembly, including Senate Bill No. 2320 relating to freedom of speech and House Bill Nos. 1003, 1171, and 1333 relating to funding, skilled workforce scholarship and loan repayment programs, and the innovation loan fund to support technology advancement.

In response to a question from Representative Becker, Mr. Hacker said the State Board of Higher Education considers the graduation rates of the respective institution as part of its annual performance evaluations of each president.

Senator Robinson said a larger percentage of high school graduates in North Dakota enroll in higher education compared to most states, which may contribute to lower graduation rates.

Representative Becker said the culture in North Dakota and the relatively low cost of universities in the state may encourage youth to pursue a 4-year degree when more appropriate options may exist for certain youth.

In response to a question from Chairman Sanford, Mr. Hacker said the state has an issue with students moving to the east side of the state to attain a degree and not returning to Dickinson and Williston.

Dr. Mark R. Hagerott, Chancellor, North Dakota University System, presented information ([Appendix D](#)) regarding the state of the University System. He said *U.S. News & World Report* ranked North Dakota as the sixth best state for higher education based on the percentage of adults with a degree, graduation rates, average tuition and fees, and average debt of graduates. He said the University System is in the top 20 percent nationally for online education and is seeing an increasing number of students are enrolling in a mix of on-campus and online courses.

In response to a question from Chairman Sanford, Dr. Hagerott said University System institutions are collaborating on certain online education programs.

In response to a question from Representative Hanson, Dr. Hagerott said he would provide information regarding employee turnover on each campus.

Dr. Mitzel led the committee on a tour of Dickinson State University, including the Perch dining hall, eSports program, DSU Heritage Foundation building, Klinefelter Hall, nursing program, and the Agriculture Building and Indoor Arena.

The committee traveled to the North Dakota State University's (NDSU) Dickinson Research Extension Center (DREC) and toured the DREC grounds.

Mr. Greg Lardy, Acting Director, North Dakota Agricultural Experiment Station, and Interim Director, North Dakota State University Extension Service, commented regarding the administrative structure of the NDSU Agricultural Research and Extension Centers.

Dr. Christopher Schauer, Interim Director, Dickinson Research Extension Center, presented information ([Appendix E](#)) regarding DREC. He said DREC was founded in 1905 and is the oldest branch research station in North Dakota. He said DREC owns 6,265 acres for agronomic, rangeland, and beef cattle research. He said DREC received approximately \$3.5 million from the general fund for the 2019-21 biennium, which primarily pays for staff salaries and benefits.

Mr. Ryan Buetow, Extension Cropping System Specialist, Dickinson Research Extension Center, presented information ([Appendix F](#)) regarding agronomy research, including hemp research conducted at DREC. He said DREC is growing 14 different strains of hemp.

Dr. Douglas Landblom, Animal Scientist, Dickinson Research Extension Center, presented information ([Appendix G](#)) regarding cattle feed research conducted at DREC. He said crop rotation and forage grazing can improve soil health, crop yields, and animal health.

Chairman Sanford recessed the meeting at 6:15 p.m. (CDT) and reconvened the committee at 9:00 a.m. (CDT) on Tuesday, August 20, 2019.

Dr. Bryan Alexander, Futurist, Bryan Alexander Consulting, LLC, presented information ([Appendix H](#)) regarding the future of higher education. He said higher education is becoming globalized, as students are traveling to other continents to pursue a degree. He said higher education institutions in the United States are experiencing changing demographics, as the youth population is declining, the senior population is expanding, and the population is becoming increasingly urban. He said technology is changing society, as video is replacing paper and photos are beginning to replace text. He said some higher education campuses are responding by bringing virtual reality and augmented reality technology into the classroom.

In response to a question from Chairman Sanford, Dr. Alexander said the adjunct faculty system was designed for faculty who are professionals outside of higher education; however, it has evolved to include professors who teach at multiple institutions and professors who teach online in addition to the classroom. He said the replacement of tenured faculty with adjunct faculty may be detrimental to the campus community because adjunct faculty are less likely to become involved in campus clubs and volunteer efforts.

In response to a question from Representative Martinson, Dr. Alexander said higher education institutions are hiring more adjunct faculty than tenured faculty primarily to reduce the cost of salaries and benefits. He said adjunct faculty typically are capable and know their subject matter well; however, they often lack training and off-campus connections a tenured faculty member may have.

In response to a question from Representative Holman, Dr. Alexander said the impact of technology and the digital economy on inequality is a significant issue because individuals unable to afford technology or communities lacking high speed internet access are at a disadvantage.

In response to a question from Representative Holman, Dr. Alexander said campuses should prioritize digital infrastructure, including high speed internet access, and buildings should be constructed of materials that will not inhibit wireless internet. He said furniture should be multifunctional, adjustable, and easy to move.

In response to a question from Representative Martinson, Dr. Alexander said the national higher education structure is very diverse, and different institutions will respond differently to the coming change. He said some schools that resist change may survive by marketing themselves to students who also are slower to change. He said a part of academia is protecting the past, but another part is being creative and forward thinking.

Dr. Demarée Michelau, President, Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education, presented information ([Appendix I](#)), regarding Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE) services and the state of higher education. She said WICHE was formed 65 years ago and North Dakota has been a member since 1988. She said member states may participate in the Western Undergraduate Exchange program and the Professional Student Exchange Program to allow for reduced nonresident tuition rates for students attending an institution in another state and to allow for student access in certain professional degree fields, including veterinary medicine, optometry, and dentistry. She said WICHE also is working to improve the transfer of general education credits between institutions in different states. She said higher education challenges and opportunities include changing demographics, an increased focus on connections to the workforce, and accreditation changes.

In response to a question from Chairman Sanford, Dr. Michelau said she could provide examples of other states using targeted higher education funding relative to workforce development.

In response to a question from Senator Bekkedahl, Dr. Michelau said she would provide information regarding state funding per student in Montana.

Senator Robinson suggested the committee receive additional information regarding the change in the number of adjunct faculty in the University System over the past 6 to 10 years.

Representative Martinson suggested the committee receive additional information regarding faculty salaries. He also requested information regarding whether the University System conducts exit interviews with employees and how the interview information is compiled and used.

No further business appearing, Chairman Sanford adjourned the meeting at 12:30 p.m. (CDT).

Alex J. Cronquist
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ATTACH:9