Campus Community:

We’re coming to the end of another exciting and busy semester. You may recall that I started the semester with a long campus update which reflected the many significant actions being taken by NDSU to deal with these turbulent times. I want to close the semester by providing an update on these initiatives and to provide some hopeful thoughts on NDSU’s future.

**Enrollment:** We are in the middle of recruiting next year’s class, and as I highlighted in my August update, we utilized two new tools this year. First, we received permission from the NDUS to create our own application process which is mobile-friendly. The application gathers all the same information as the previous application, but it does so in a much easier, more intuitive way. It significantly reduces the amount of time required to complete the application, which in turn, decreases frustration and increases completion rates.

The second tool we put in place was to waive the application fees for undergraduate domestic students. After running a short, one-month test last year, the evidence indicated that the common practice of utilizing application fees was a more significant barrier to entry than we had previously known. Based on that evidence, we waived the fee for this entire year to see what impact it would have on the admission process.

I’m happy to report that both these innovations, along with a tremendous amount of hard work by our admission staff, are showing very positive, but very preliminary, results. In fact, by early December, we had already received more applications than we did all last year. In particular, I want to note that our applications from historically underrepresented groups are up 56% over last year at this same point. While this is good news, it is far too soon to draw any conclusions from these numbers. Because these applications are now free, it is likely that some of the applicant’s commitment to enroll is lower. We will need to work hard to convert these applicants to enrolled students, the process referred to as “yield.” Nevertheless, every additional applicant is a potential new student, so we are pleased with our current position.

From an international perspective, I’m pleased to note that international undergraduate application and admit numbers are on the rise with an increase for first year international admits for fall semester 2020. In fact, overall international first year and transfer applications and admits for 2020 spring and fall semesters are showing a notable increase. It appears that our renewed emphasis in this area are showing results. Dr. Kalidas Shetty, Alicia Kauffman, Lisa Hauck, and Dr. Gursimran Walia recently returned from a two-week recruitment trip to India where they visited a number of schools and universities in three cities. The connections made on this trip are exciting and have presented NDSU with some unique opportunities to attract prospective international students at the first-year, transfer and graduate levels.

We are dealing with this challenging enrollment environment with hard work and innovation, and we’re not alone in facing these challenges. I’m not sure whether misery loves company, but our difficulties are being widely shared. Both regionally and nationally, enrollment continues to be one of the biggest issues facing universities across the country. Just last week, the Forum ran a story about cuts being required at another
regional institution because of enrollment: 

A number of issues are causing these national enrollment problems, and they will not be resolved anytime soon. Our Admission and University Relations professionals are working tirelessly to encourage students to attend NDSU. However, we all have a part to play. Everything from developing a new academic program to speaking positively about NDSU to family and friends matters. We each bear some of the responsibility for our enrollment future.

**Trio Retention Success:** TRIO is a federally funded program aimed at providing outreach and services to students from disadvantaged programs. The TRIO program at NDSU is managed through Student Support Services. The SSS goal is to increase the retention and graduation rates of its participants and to help students make the transition from one level of higher education to the next.

Kenard Booker is the Director of SSS. He and his staff recently completed the Annual Performance Report and submitted it to the Department of Education. For the TRIO grant, SSS set a goal for semester-to-semester persistence of 70%, and the result was 88%. Similarly, they set a goal that 80% of participants would be in good academic standing, and the actual result was 96%. Finally, they wanted to achieve a 30% 6-year graduation rate, and the result was 43%. These are fantastic outcomes. Please join me in thanking all the staff at SSS!

**Strategic Planning:** When I reported in August, we were just beginning the strategic planning process, and now we are anticipating the completion next semester. A tremendous amount of work has been done, and the volume of campus input has been extremely encouraging. Through survey responses and open forums, our campus provided an impressive amount of thought and information for this process. The committee is synthesizing all the materials for its final report, and in the meantime, they have provided a draft document discussing the survey results. I am looking forward to seeing the committee’s work product and finalizing our new strategic plan. However, the work does not end with the creation of the strategic plan. We need to ensure that these ideas are implemented. To that end, I’ll be working with the strategic planning committee to develop methods to ensure implementation. I’ll keep campus informed of those discussions and ideas.

**Budget:** My recent budget update provided information about the budget process, and I will continue to provide specific budget updates. In the meantime, the Provost’s Ad Hoc Budget Committee has met and been charged by the Provost. Scott Beaulier is the chair of the committee. After Dr. Grafton steps down from the Provost position on December 31, the Ad Hoc Budget Committee will continue with its work and provide their recommendations to Dr. Fitzgerald. Dr. Grafton is working with Dr. Fitzgerald during this time period to bring her up to speed on matters impacting the Provost’s office, including the budget.

**Capital Campaign:** I am sure you have all heard of the launch of the “In Our Hands” campaign. This is such an exciting opportunity. We should all feel pride in the fact that our alumni have responded so generously to help our educational and research efforts. We have already raised $311 million of the $400 million goal, and we still have some of the historically biggest donation weeks left in the year. NDSU has never been so successful in its fundraising efforts, and these long-term investments by donors will be critical to helping NDSU maintain its competitive advantage through scholarships, endowed faculty positions, program activities and facilities.

**Provost Search Update:** I intend to provide regular updates on the status of the provost search through emails to campus. For now, we are working on developing the search committee which will have diverse membership from across campus. Each college will
have representation through either a faculty member or a chair, and I will ask each dean for her/his thoughts. Faculty members may provide suggestions to their deans regarding proposed college representation by December 18. I anticipate getting information about the committee membership to campus around the start of the next semester.

**Construction Update:**

**Dunbar Replacement:** To date, we've been working with the impacted units to help develop the space needs for the building, and that process is largely complete. We are working with the architect to develop drawings, and we anticipate putting the project out to bid sometime in the spring with construction starting in the early summer.

**Aldevron Tower:** The construction process has been completed on schedule, and we are in the process of moving everybody and everything into their new spaces. Classes will start in January. Please stay tuned for a future public dedication ceremony.

I hope everybody has a happy and safe holiday season, and please remember that we are having the Holiday Open House in Old Main this afternoon from 2-4. As always, I want to thank you for your commitment and hard work towards fulfilling NDSU's mission.

Happy Holidays!

Dean Bresciani

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