

Message from President Cook

June 27, 2023

Hello everybody. I hope your summer is off to a great start. I'd like to give you a quick update on everything that we're doing at NDSU this summer. Starting with a big focus for us is the NDSU transform strategic planning efforts and I know I've talked a lot about this but I'm just going to hit some of the high points.

So, one of the big issues you know the campus has been working on has been college mergers. Beginning July 1st, we will reduce the historical seven colleges to five.

The big focus area there is the College of Human Sciences and Education and College of Health Professions will now become the College of Health and Human Sciences led by interim Dean Ron Werner-Wilson. So, thanks to Dean Werner-Wilson for all of his work so far this summer.

And the second big merger is the College of Science and Math and College of Arts Humanities and Social Sciences will become the College of Arts and Sciences and that effort is led by Dean Kimberly Wallin. So, that's kind of the big focus. From seven to five colleges. A ton of work that everybody is doing and I'm incredibly grateful for all that. Of course, we also had a few academic programs that we had announced that were affected during the overall reductions this last year and again, just as a reminder, every student in each one of those programs as they get taught out will continue to be in those programs and they will continue to graduate from those programs if they want to.

And so, the academic program teach-out is another big focus this next year and then finally under NDSU transform the budget model will also start July 1st so we'll have a new budget model and a new organizational structure to support the new model, and again every Dean on campus is going to have kind of a traditional P&L profit and loss model to really just get a better sense of where we're at as a university. And so again, a ton of work going into that.

As I said these things will roll out July 1st but I'm sure everybody will be working on them throughout the entire fiscal year. So, I really appreciate all the hard work happening there.

Another big part of NDSU transform has been the investment. So, we continue to work through those. Professional advising was critical, developing new academic programs to meet workforce needs was another one of those, and then revitalizing our historical Bison Bridge program which was designed to help our first-generation student of color and Pell eligible students. So, I'm really excited that we're going to roll that out later this summer but really right before the fall semester begins. So, those are all really key Investments to address. I think some of our challenges, but also some of our grand opportunities.

One of the other things we did this last year was we developed three President's Councils. A President's Council on Retention, President's Council on DIR and a President's Council on Well-being. I asked each one of those councils to put together a presentation at the end of the semester and then over the summer we're working on reviewing the recommendations trying to prioritize all the hard work that everybody did.

And so, one of the three councils I'll talk about here is the President's Council on Retention that was led by co-chairs Becky Bahe, Phil Hunt and Carrie Anne Platt and was supported by 19 other dedicated and passionate in the issue employees. And so, the charge of the council is to improve NDSU student retention rate through the development of structures, strategies, and resources to help us meet really our changing student needs and they've been busy.

They created a repository of retention strategies and resources that can be used by unit leaders. They've begun addressing policy issues that hinder enrollment retention. They held a joint presentation with the President's Council on Diversity Inclusion and Respect on how to infuse diversity inclusion and respect and belonging into the academic curriculum. They created a definition of advising at NDSU and developed expectations for advisors and students. And so, a lot of work being done there, especially around the professional advising.

We're hiring academic advisors to fully support first- and second-year students with most of them starting in July and then we'll of course be implementing new student success platforms with training offered in July and August, as well.

So, their plans in the fall are going to be to identify a comprehensive advising and analytic tool from Civitas Learning. Created teaching support plan system to support instructors and units teaching in all of their teaching and quality efforts. So, really a ton of work that was first launched by that Council.

Then I think really on the front line we're going to be grinding pretty hard this summer and then into the fall and I'm really appreciative of everybody's hard work there. I think again, the purpose of all of that is to really transform our retention rates. Historically, we've been really over 80 percent freshmen coming in August. Returning the following August those rates have dropped to about 75 percent. I'd like to see them get back up to 80 and frankly, even beyond that and that'll make a big difference in our student success which we all care about deeply. I'll talk more about well-being and the DIR councils at a later video. So, you got the retention update there.

On kind of more fun stuff on the kudos front, we have a lot of things, even though it's summer. that are happening. First, I'm proud to say that we've made good progress on Grandmother Earth's Gift of Life Garden on the southwest side of campus. So, kind of starting to move a little bit of dirt over there. We expect it to be available in the community in the next few months so you'll hear more about that in the future from me.

Congratulations to Anita Hanson former NDSU student athlete for recently being named president of Fond du Lac Tribal College and Community College. Looking forward to future collaborations with her and wish her the very best.

Congratulations to our Research and Creative Activity unit and the individuals on campus involved with a partnership known as the Northern Plains AG Tech Engine. This is a pretty significant federal grant that a bunch of people have stepped up and done some really cool work on and we made the cut to be finalists in that space and we're really proud. So, the next few weeks and months ahead will be hopefully really exciting for us. So, we can deliver on some exciting research in the AG Tech space which of course is really important to us.

Also, kind of on a real fun note, congratulations to NDSU professor of English Holly Hassle for her win on Jeopardy. I know a lot of us had a lot of fun tuning seeing a familiar face on the national television. So, Holly way to go.

That was that was pretty fun and then last but not least congratulations to our track athletes and our coach for not only winning the summit league on the men's and women's side earlier this spring but also bringing home a number of Summit League Awards. Jacob Rodin was named track athlete of the year. Trevor Otterdahl was named field athlete of the year and Coach Keller was named men's and women's coach of the year. So, kind of the trifecta there for all of them and so congratulations to all of the student-athletes there and very, very well done.

Finally, for me if you might recall last summer I traveled the state.

Did a lot of the AG field days. I'm doing it again with a whole bunch of folks from NDSU. So, I'm looking forward to kind of crisscrossing the state, hitting every corner of the state. hitting all of our research extension centers, continuing to meet with community leaders from all those different areas. And so, I'm looking forward to doing that again. It was a lot of fun and I'm looking forward to seeing all of you out there as I crisscross the state.

So, I hope again that you're all having a wonderful summer. Hopefully, I'll see you soon in your community during the field day trips and Go Bison, everybody