

Message from President Cook

October 19, 2022

Hello everybody I hope you're all doing well at this point in the semester. Katie and I are gearing up for our first North Dakota winter.

Getting as much time outside with the dogs as we can to gradually, I hope, acclimate to the North Dakota temperatures. As usual, there's been a lot of exciting activity on campus so I want to review a few of those things. For starters, I want to welcome the Interim Provost David Bertolini to the role. I appreciate his willingness to step in. This is a pretty challenging position at such a crucial time for us and I know he's going to do a great job so thank you, David.

We also hosted an event last week. I'm very excited about celebrating NDSU being named the lead for a five-year \$14 million NSF grant to establish a Great Plains Innovation Hub. I'm really excited about the future of research, innovation, and entrepreneurship with this Hub and it's a great example of our efforts to thrive as an R1 research institution that you know I talk a lot about.

Our faculty are always achieving great things as well and I'm gonna I want to pick on one. There's always a lot of them that we can talk about but one, in particular, is Carol Archbold who is our Walter F. and Verna Gehrts Endowed Professor and chair of criminal justice. She was elected as the chair of the Executive Board for the American Society of Criminology's Division of Policing. So, she is the first woman to chair the division. Congratulations on that achievement and just a great job all around. Our entire Community appreciates her representing NDSU at the national level. I think that's incredibly important.

There was also a standing-room-only event recently for our Advancing Inclusion Award. I want to say congratulations to the Department of Pharmaceutical Sciences for winning the award.

We appreciate the important work that they do to make sure we're more inclusive and welcoming environment now for really all of our student, staff, and faculty so kudos to all of you. On kind of a fun front last week Katie and I, and we were joined by Frank Casey, Dr Casey who leads our NDSU experiment stations we all had a chance to tour a sugar beet farm which was, at least for Katie and I, the first time as well as touring the Crystal Sugar companies facility and so we all learned a lot about the industry and really the important kind of amazing ways NDSU is partnering with them around workforce and research.

So, all of that aside one of the priorities I want to talk a little bit more about is retention and I've been talking quite a bit about this I'm going to continue to do so. Retention is a crucial area for us. So crucial I created the President's Council on Retention and brought a bunch of leaders across campus together to really help us think about how we can best serve our students and we can address some of the challenges they face. But really all of that helps us address some of the financial challenges that are right in front of us and meanwhile really helping us to serve our region's workforce needs while we do retention better.

I understand the Faculty Senate has also started a retention committee and I want to just say I appreciate their support and their hard work in this area as well. So, last week we had our first

meeting of the retention committee and we agreed that one of the important ways we can improve retention is just to look at our retention rate.

One of the ways you can look at the rate and one of the ways that it's measured is you kind of look at different points in a student's journey and for us what we've decided to benchmark is the number of students who start as first years in the fall and then return to us in their second year during the following fall. And so last year we retained 75 percent of these first-year students to their second year and what we want to do is bump that number up a little bit.

We're working on efforts to bring that number back to about an 80 percent level. That means we're going to just be retaining more and more students. I think that's a reachable goal. One that we can start there and really build on which is a critical benchmark for us.

So, we can all work on that so with that in mind, we've brought the Retention Council together and set some strategies that we can move forward to advance that goal and one of the areas that we really need to work on is with first years. In the first year experience one of the things that they can do, or we can all do, is look at advising, intervention, and re-enrollment as examples of where we can really help those students be more successful.

So, I ask questions like how can we work on helping students who are struggling earlier get back on track? How can we help them, you know, get back to NDSU if they've left? So, these are all critical areas. You know, teaching is another one of these things that we can do better. How can we create the best teaching experience possible for our first-year students? And then finally another we can look at is just taking a look at the curriculum. How can we ensure that we're creating pathways and educational experiences where students really can be even more successful?

So, I think if we're real deliberate, focusing on retention particularly for our first-year students, I think we can help propel them on a path to be successful, to progress, and ultimately graduate and candidly graduate sooner. So, these are some of the strategies that the Retention Council is advising or suggesting that we all focus on and I think it's something we can all really rally behind and do better. I mean the point with retention is that retention is really everybody's job. Not just the Retention Council's job. Just not, you know, somebody who may have that job or title. But I think first and foremost we all have to really recognize that it's a priority and rally on it.

So, that's the point of my message and the point of the Retention Council. I think it's really everybody's job everybody needs to get behind it and I think if we do that we're going to see our students being a lot more successful from their first to second year. I think that's something all of us can really kind of get excited about and get behind. So, that's my message on retention. We'll talk more and more and more about that to the point where I'm probably going to bore you a little bit. I hope you all have a great week and Go Bison!