

# Message from President Cook and Colleen Fitzgerald

February 12, 2024

Hello everyone. I'm joined today with Colleen Fitzgerald our Vice President of Research and Creative Activity. We had an amazing announcement this past week. Tell us a little bit about it, Colleen. Well, we were announced, and when I say we, I'm talking about FARMS which is a coalition of North Dakotans looking to address food insecurity and to create equitable agricultural opportunities.

FARMS is an award from the National Science Foundation in their new NSF Engines Program. And the goal is to catalyze economic growth, to do that around critical technology development, to make sure that you're addressing the societal or economic challenges and in doing so impact regions like ours that haven't gotten the same level of innovation investment from the federal government. And so, it's a coalition.

Who is involved in this partnership? Well, there are five core partners so, there's the Greater Fargo Moorhead Economic Development Corporation. There's the Fargo Moorhead West Fargo Chamber. There is also Grand Farm. There's the North Dakota Tribal College System and there's North Dakota State University. That's fantastic. So, it's going to be a great team. So, you touched on this a little bit but tell us a little bit about what does this mean for our community, the region, North Dakota. Okay great. Well so, I told you the five core partners but there are so many more people involved. There's, you know, we had over 75 partners at the site visit.

The goal is to really make sure that in a decade we are recognized in terms of the Ag technologies that we're developing. Global food insecurity is a huge issue and what we have in the state is some really unique assets. We've got our rockstar scientists and engineers here at NDSU. We have this amazing ecosystem that's happening in terms of entrepreneurship and innovation. We have the United States' only tribal college system and we really have also this very business-friendly environment where people are wanting to come they see what's happening and FARMS is going to help them see that on a bigger scale. Yeah, very incredibly exciting.

So, when we're talking to campus here, how do they get and how can campus partners get involved in this opportunity? Well, we're expecting to roll out a series of questions and answer sessions, information sessions and so that's some of the first pieces that we'll be doing. We've also got our ecosystem. So, FARMS is this collaborative ecosystem and the core partners as well as many of the other partners are frequently having events. You know, the Chamber has summits they have all sorts of events. We have, in June, AgTech week which a number of the partners are putting on. So, I would say looking at the ecosystem, StartupBREW, and engaging in that, coming to the events on campus that are Q&As, and then keeping your eye out for other opportunities.

The team is also really interested in getting feedback about how people see themselves as able to contribute and shape it. You know, we're talking about something that's a decade in the making. A decade of activity and so what we kind of thought of, when we went in, is really it's going to change and it's going to change as the coalition builds and grows. Absolutely.

Well so, we're super excited about this. I've got to ask you. So, you've referred to FARMS. Yes, that's an acronym, There will be a test later. What does FARMS stand for? Well, FARMS stands for Food Systems Adapted for Resiliency and Maximized Security. It's, you know, we had to be renamed for, that was the name we had going in but we are officially the NSF Engine. North Dakota Advanced Agriculture Technology Engine but FARMS, you know, it's bigger than all of us and so that acronym has really taken over and people see that it's this collaboration, this ecosystem. It's not any one of us.

So, kind of a fun thing. So, this is an NSF-funded engine award, as you said. How many of these were funded nationally? I just want people to appreciate, kind of, the partners and people we're playing with on a national scale. Yeah,

there were 10 total nationally. It's the inaugural engines. We have inquiries coming in from all over the country. Frankly actually, beyond the U.S. It is a big deal. I love it. So, national, global, a lot of partners, great for North Dakota, great for the region, great for all of our partners. Really excited (absolutely) to see what happens over the next 10 years.

So, congratulations to you. Congratulations to all the partners. Congratulations to North Dakota. I love that end, North Dakota.

So, we got to end it like this Colleen. All right. Everybody Go Bison!