

Message from President Cook

February 6, 2025

Hello everyone. As many of you know the 69th North Dakota Legislative Session began January 7th and it will continue until around May 2nd. We're about, so we're about one month in, and several colleagues, NDSU faculty and staff, have already provided testimony in support of NDSU on a variety of bills. What I'd like to do today is share highlights from our opening testimony to keep everyone informed about the amazing things happening at NDSU which are highlighting, or highlighted rather, for legislators as we seek their support.

So, first I'd like to recognize the impact our legislature made during the 2023 - 2025 session in terms of investments in NDSU and higher education. Last session NDSU received State funding for a tuition freeze, for the Challenge Grant, the Richard Offerdahl '65 Engineering Complex, some student support services like professional advising which is going fabulously, employee compensation increases of uh 4% and 6% which was amazing. Equity funding to raise lagging salaries and for us, I'm very proud we put that equity money on the staff side right toward our frontline staff which went really well we received some new economic diversification uh dollars to help us support research and the Northern Tier network. So, some funding there, and those are just sort of to name a few.

So, the legislature is very, very, very good to NDSU and to higher ed and we're very grateful. We have a lot to be proud of for what they've done for us. But we have a lot to be proud of moving forward as well. Because NDSU is a great investment for the state because we have a direct impact on workforce. We graduate the largest number of bachelor and doctoral students in the state. And when they graduate 83% of our North Dakota students from North Dakota high school and then 40% of our Minnesota high school students when they graduate, they stay in North Dakota and for their first career.

We love that NDSU also has the largest in-person student population in the state who contribute greatly to the vibrancy and the economic well-being of our community. So, we love the fact that we have in-person students in the classroom. Hands-on learning, and again, they're graduating in and working in North Dakota. As an R1 institution, NDSU ranks in the top public research institutions in the nation. That's a huge feat. We have students learning from world-class faculty many of whom are listed among the top 2% in the world. We've done a lot of reports on that topic and I'll be honest it it stuns me. It's very impressive. We have world-class faculty at NDSU and we're very proud of that.

NDSU Transform has positioned us to align more closely with industry and shape the future of our institution by focusing on our five key priorities. And as demonstrated this year NDSU has a tradition of excellence in athletics across all of our different athletic programs. Senate Bill 2003 is our appropriation bill and we have aligned our legislative ask with the needs of North Dakota in that bill. We're asking for an investment to ensure successful pathways for workforce impact so really investing in kind of student and career services. We're asking for an investment to allow us to grow North Dakota's competitive advantage in engineering and agriculture. I don't know if there's anything more NDSU than ag and engineering. As an aside about 20% of all of our graduates are engineers. Think about that for a minute. And of course, agriculture speaks for itself.

The third main area there is to really ask for an investment to improve North Dakota's quality of life in nursing, in pharmacy, and health sciences are what we refer to as allied sciences. You may not know we have the largest nursing program in the state. We have programs obviously in Fargo but we also have a great program in Bismarck.

And we do a lot of other things across the state that we're very proud of as well. These investments around these kind of academic areas are asking to really think differently about higher education. We can't keep doing things the way we've always done them. We have to be more informed by industry. This last year we spent the entire year with an industry ad hoc advisory board with industry leaders from all over the state including some elected officials which really helped us shape our legislative ask. But really just helped us shape the future of NDSU. And so, we're really grateful to that group. A lot of those conversations continue.

So, how those are woven into our legislative ask will include things like initiatives around like adjusting curriculum to be more informed by industry. We on our students knowing what the world is like out there. Let's make sure it's in the curriculum. We're introducing some new concepts, kind of, around an earn-and-learn or apprenticeship model. So, students are earning and learning while they're going to school. and they're also learning their craft and trade while they're going to school.

We're also going to be launching some new high demand degree offerings such as offering things like year-round nursing, which is really critical because we have a huge nursing shortage in our state.

We're all also requesting, but beyond that kind of list of things, we're also requesting authorization for future capital projects that we will use non-state special funds to support. So, we go to the legislature when we want to do building and new capital projects even though we're not asking for legislative or state dollars. There's still an authorization process that you have to go through which I think is really important. So, our authorization of future capital projects include a couple of things like a wrestling practice facility. So, we got a great tradition in wrestling here. We will be asking donors to come up and support a \$13 million new wrestling practice facility which would be kind of on the west side of the SHAC there. Our university village complex is something that really, we'd like to do a lot of remodeling and renovating on. And so, we're asking for some help there.

Now, our students have expressed an interest in renovating, and maybe even adding on to, our memorial union so our current memorial union is funded completely historically by student fees which is phenomenal. And the students are now talking about let's get a little bit of an upgrade on it. It is completely paid off now. We have no debt on our union so let's think about the future of the union and really think about the future of our students and the kind of resources and spaces they need to be successful. So, we're excited about that. And then the final capital request, which again is not going to request any state funding for, is around a new biosafety lab which would be in Van Es Hall which will be dependent upon a pretty significant research grant that we're currently working on. So, we're excited about all of those areas.

NDSU also strongly supports requests that are out there as part of the North Dakota University System. So, the NDUS, the State Board that includes a number of items including, not entirely, but some of the key ones, a compensation package which would be wonderful for our campus and wonderful for the entire state. A review of the higher education funding formula. We

appreciate the great work that the state board has done in that regard. Increased funding for both the Challenge Grant and more funding for that economic diversification research fund or what we refer to as EDRF. So, more Challenge Grant that helps every college in the state. More research dollars. We love that we're doing amazing things with the dollars they gave us last time. We want to continue down that path. Some funding to support a high performance computing effort that we're doing. And that one is actually in conjunction with UND so we're excited about that.

An inflation factor increase which funds cover our North Dakota PERS change in plan, which is significant, and very important. And of course, the NDUS's Envision 2035 plan as part of that same bill that's out there.

The NDSU North Dakota Forest Service also has some requests in there. So, Tom Claeys, you guys he does an amazing job leading the Forest Service. I did one of these videos with Tom not too long ago because you guys know they are absolutely heroes. If you recall they've done a ton of amazing work out west to keep our state safe and so we appreciate Tom and his team.

Additionally, colleagues have been testifying. So, my colleagues, our colleagues, have been testifying on Senate Bill 2020 to support budget request for the NDSU Extension, the North Dakota Ag Experiment Station, included in that, of course. is also the Upper Great Plains Transportation Institute and the Northern Crop Institute. So, we have David Boehm, you know, on the NCI side. We've got Denver Tolliver who's always been doing amazing work on the UGPTI side. The Upper Great Plains Transportation Institute side. And, of course, Dr. Lardy. Everybody knows Dr. Lardy does an amazing job representing agriculture across the state.

So, a lot of people are really busy advocating for NDSU. Another person who's been out there doing great work, I would say, representing and advocating for the faculty voice is our Faculty Senate President Lisa Montplaisir. She is all day, every day, all weekend, all night working hard for us across a number of other bills that are out there. And so, tell Lisa, thank you for all her hard work when you see her on campus.

During session you may be asked to provide examples of the impact we make here at NDSU or even to testify on various bills that are important to the institution and so forth. I know there are a lot of people whose names I didn't mention who've been out in Bismarck or testifying via Zoom. I just want to tell you all thank you, thank you, thank you. It's really important that you advocate for NDSU and you advocate for higher education in the state of North Dakota.

So, thanks for all your work. So, all right I got to take a deep breath. I'm a little exhausted. I've shared a lot of information but I encourage you all to be informed and engaged this legislative session. It's super important.

Please visit the legislative tab on the Office of the President. So, my website for the latest updates. I put all my testimonies in there. We put a lot of bills that we know that are of interest. We put bills on there that we're tracking as part of the NDUS. So, the North Dakota University system, out there. But, and certainly, just so you know, if there's a bill out there, if there's an issue that's bubbling up, if you guys have a question, if you want to provide us advice or feedback please, reach out. We need your help too. It's important that we're all working on this together. So, that's it for now. Like I said, I'm exhausted. A ton of information but a lot of people are working hard for NDSU.

And to all of you, I'm very grateful. And Go Bison!