

A Framework for Transformational Change

Report to the State Board of Higher Education: NDUS Strategic Plan 2015-2020

Unleashing potential, inspiring our future

North Dakota's Moment

"This moment in North Dakota's history is a rare opportunity to create impact and change that can be felt for generations to come." NDUS Staff-Faculty Survey

In North Dakota's 125-year-history, rarely has the future appeared so full of promise. Despite the nation's economic downturn beginning in 2008, the state leads the nation in lowest unemployment. In fact, in the period July 2013-July 2014, 21,700 new jobs were created (4.9 percent gain). Job Service North Dakota's online job openings in August 2014 totaled 26,929. "Help Wanted" signs have blossomed across the state.

At a time when nearly all other state governments faced dramatic budget shortfalls, the North Dakota Legislative Assembly worked with a surplus of more than \$1 billion in 2013. The legislature had an opportunity to look at ways to invest in the state's future and today, the surplus continues to grow.

After 80 years of population decline or plateau, the state is growing again and is expected to reach 800,000 by the 2020 census. While other states are experiencing a decline in the traditional college-age population, North Dakota's elementary schools are bulging. The age-17 population in North Dakota will be growing by 2020, so it is imperative higher education be prepared for growth.

Growing Pains

"Our enrollment is the highest it has ever been ..." NDUS Faculty Interview

Meeting the need for a trained and educated workforce is just one of many essential functions of the North Dakota University System's 11 institutions. Research and service to community remain vitally important. A vibrant and growing campus community, serving its host community and the state as a whole, typically has needs that range from classroom space to updated infrastructure and bandwidth. But at the heart of a campus is its ability to attract highly qualified staff and faculty who serve and inspire students. Growth is a great problem to have, but it offers challenges nonetheless.

Exploring the state's and university system's challenges, leveraging the work already accomplished on the Pathways to Student Success plan, and seizing the opportunity to provide a framework for the future that unleashes North Dakota's potential, are the focus of the university system's 2015-2020 strategic plan.

Strong Stakeholder Input

"I appreciate this opportunity to provide my perspective on North Dakota higher education. I've been here for 20 years but feel that I have rarely been asked for my thoughts about how to improve what already is an overachieving institution." NDUS Staff-Faculty Survey

No college or university exists in isolation, and the process of developing strategies for the university system's next five years can only be as strong as the ideas contributed by its stakeholders. The 2015-

2020 plan benefits from more than 100 individual and group-setting interviews. This includes a host of in-person conversations with a variety of stakeholders: student, staff and faculty leaders on each campus; college and university presidents; former NDUS chancellors and board members; business leaders, executive branch officials and legislators; and campus foundation directors and community leaders. In addition, the planning effort incorporated a survey of the state's Young Professionals Network, the first-ever Twitter chat with NDUS students and an online survey in which 1,674 NDUS staff and faculty participated.

The extensive input phase of the planning process gave voice to collective concerns and offered guidance for the conversation on July 31, 2014, when the State Board of Higher Education, the institutions' presidents and senior NDUS staff gathered to consider stakeholder input and formulate the university system's new strategic plan.

Focused on Students

"It starts and ends with students. Who's going to want to go to any university that doesn't focus on students?" NDUS Student Interview

The North Dakota University System cannot achieve without faculty and staff, nor can it exist without students. And while a claim to be student-centered is expected in higher education, NVivo qualitative analysis software revealed that NDUS stakeholders are indeed focused on students. In fact, the most-used word among the massive amount of data is "students." The three most commonly-used words among survey responses were "students," "university" and "educational." NDUS doesn't just claim to be student-centered—it *is* student-centered.

Strengths and Opportunities

"To set the stage for the future, we need to look at how we compete on a worldwide basis. Higher education needs to consider how we provide the flexibility for future learning on a continual basis. We need to find the balance between meeting competencies ... and educating well-rounded individuals."
NDUS Staff-Faculty Survey

Analysis of the input phase revealed common themes among the strengths and opportunities that were expressed and considered by participants on July 31:

- Students
- Talent pool
- Collaboration
- Partnerships
- Quality
- Affordability
- Technology, research
- Communication
- Access
- Community
- Robust economy

Issues and Weaknesses

“If nothing changes, we may as well stop talking about an excellent this and exceptional that.” NDUS Staff-Faculty Survey

Participants on July 31 also examined the results of stakeholder input that pointed out issues and weaknesses:

- Shared vision, working as a system
- Public trust and relationships
- Forward focused, nimble
- Support, appreciation for institutions
- Cooperation, collaboration
- Duplication
- Responsiveness to business needs
- Meeting students’ needs
- Student debt
- Facilities

Daring to Be Great

“Allow us to continue on a path of improvement. We will prove ourselves worthy. Then, stand back and watch us impress the world.” NDUS Staff-Faculty Survey

Challenged by strong statements from students, faculty, staff, business and government leaders, and following a discussion about who we are, what we do, the Pathways to Student Success plan and the need for a shared vision of the future, participants formulated a new vision – Inspiring Our Future – and mission – Unleashing Potential. The priority areas for the new five-year plan were expressed as:

- Affordability
- Access and availability
- Educational excellence
- Unified system

The NDUS Edge

“NDUS has an opportunity to be a premier group of institutions that offer high quality programs to those in pursuit of jobs in the workforce ... This is a great system.” NDUS Staff-Faculty Survey

Participants in the planning process noted the advantages of an 11-campus system with the institutions’ unique missions. They focused on ways to use the collective strength of the institutions for the benefit of students, businesses and the state in general. The group identified four goals for 2015-2020 to give the North Dakota University System every opportunity to help the state achieve its remarkable potential:

- Affordability - **Deliver degrees that are the best value in the nation**
- Access and availability - **Provide programs people want, where and when they need them**
- Educational excellence - **Equip students for success**
- Unified system - **Maximize the strengths of the unified system**

Shaping the Future

“We educate our future.” NDUS Staff-Faculty Survey

The work undertaken in July to establish priorities and goals, and the recommendation of the Pathways task forces, formed the foundation for the NDUS senior staff and campus presidents’ subsequent work to determine objectives and develop measurements that will quantify progress toward achieving the board’s goals.

Goal 1: Deliver degrees that are the best value in the nation

“NDUS is vital to the future of the state; it [is] a model for the nation in providing accessible, affordable public education.” NDUS Staff-Faculty Survey

Strategies

1.1 Ensure the price to attend NDUS institutions is clearly stated and regionally competitive

1.1 A **Key Indicator** Easy-to-understand tuition model (Pathways Accountability Initiative)

Outcome Tuition Task Force recommendations fully implemented by Fall 2017

1.1 B **Key Indicator** Affordability of tuition and fees for all North Dakota families

Outcome Tuition and fees at or below regional average

1.1 C **Key Indicator** Net price to attend for lowest income North Dakota families (Pathways Affordability Initiative)

Outcome Net price for lowest family income quintile at or below regional average

1.2 Standardize categories of mandatory fees and strengthen fee policies relative to charge, use, approval and oversight

1.2 A **Key Indicator** Tuition Task Force recommendations (Pathways Accountability Initiative)

Outcome Fully implemented Fall 2017

1.3 Increase use of open educational resources

1.3 A **Key Indicator** Faculty use of open educational resources

Outcome Increase faculty usage

1.4 Rank among most productive states in total funding per degree and certificate awarded

1.4 A **Key Indicator** Degrees awarded per \$100,000 of state and local appropriations

Outcome Rank at or above national average

Goal 2: Provide programs people want, where and when they need them

“We’ve heard loudly and clearly that classes need to be taught when students can take them. Students try to work full time and go to school full time; they need flexibility rather than 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.”

Business Leader Interview

Strategies

2.1 Ensure programs are relevant, valuable and timely

2.1 A Key Indicator Degrees awarded at all levels consistent with institutional missions
Outcome Increased number of degrees awarded

2.1 B Key Indicator Degrees awarded at all levels in areas of state's greatest needs, including those reflected in loan forgiveness programs (e.g., STEM, healthcare)
Outcome Increased number of degrees awarded in areas of state's greatest needs

2.1 C Key Indicator Businesses in each region receiving TrainND training
Outcome Increased number and percentage of businesses receiving training

2.2 Meet North Dakota's workforce needs through recruitment of students from traditional and non-traditional audiences, both in and out of state

2.2 A Key Indicator Proportion of NDUS attendance among ND high school graduates
Outcome Increased proportion of ND high school graduates attending NDUS institutions

2.2 B Key Indicator Number of non-resident students to meet North Dakota's workforce needs
Outcome Increased enrollment of non-resident students

2.2 C Key Indicator Percentage of adults age 25-64 in North Dakota with at least an associate's degree (April 2014 Lumina Foundation Report)
Outcome 54.5% by 2020

2.3 Expand access to instructional opportunities through non-traditional delivery methods

2.3 A Key Indicator Degree and certificate program offerings through non-traditional delivery methods
Outcome Increased number of degree and certificate programs offered through non-traditional delivery methods

2.3 B Key Indicator Students participating in courses through non-traditional delivery methods
Outcome Increased number of students participating in non-traditional delivery methods

Goal 3: Equip students for success

"Our focus is the whole student because they're here for more than classes. We're interested in developing well-rounded individuals, and lots of people on our campus understand this. They care about ... the whole person." NDUS Staff Interview

Strategies

3.1 Improve admissions standards at NDUS institutions (Pathways Access Initiative)

3.1 A Key Indicator New admission standards for first-time freshmen Fall 2016
Outcome Full implementation by Fall 2018

3.2 Increase students' overall attainment rates through increased participation, retention and completion (Pathways Access Initiative)

3.2 A **Key Indicator** Integrated Post-secondary Education Data System (IPEDS) first-time, full-time retention rates

Outcome Improved IPEDS retention rates

3.2 B **Key Indicator** IPEDS 100% graduation rates

Outcome Improved IPEDS 100% graduation rates

3.2 C **Key Indicator** IPEDS 150% graduation rates

Outcome Improved IPEDS 150% graduation rates

3.2 D **Key Indicator** Student Achievement Measure (SAM) graduation rates

Outcome Improved SAM graduation rates

3.2 E **Key Indicator** Degrees and certificates awarded to Pell Grant recipients

Outcome Increased total degrees and certificates awarded to Pell Grant recipients

3.2 F **Key Indicator** First-time pass rates on professional licensure examinations

Outcome Pass rates will meet or exceed national average

3.3 Remove barriers to registering and advising transfer students

3.3 A **Key Indicator** Transfer students who complete a bachelor's degree

Outcome Increased percentage of all transfer students who complete bachelor's degrees

Goal 4: Maximize the strengths of the unified system

“Eleven campuses working cooperatively within one system to provide access to quality education for residents and non-residents—that’s opportunity.” NDUS Staff-Faculty Survey

Strategies

4.1 Increase academic collaboration among the institutions

4.1 A **Key Indicator** Number of collaborative students

Outcome Annual improvement in number of collaborative students

4.2 Create efficiencies through shared programs and services where cost-savings and/or performance enhancements are achievable

4.2 A **Key Indicator** Programs and services delivered collaboratively

Outcome Annual improvement in number of shared services and collaborative programs

4.3 Strengthen the system’s ability to respond quickly to changing needs

4.3 A **Key Indicator** Streamlined policies and procedures

Outcome Annual improvement

4.4 Enhance the research reputation of the research institutions

4.4 A **Key Indicator** Research and development expenditures in science and engineering fields

Outcome Annual improvement

4.4 B **Key Indicator** Research and development expenditures in non-science and non-engineering fields

Outcome Annual improvement

4.4 C **Key Indicator** Science and engineering research staff (postdoctoral appointees and other non-faculty research staff with doctorates)

Outcome Annual improvement

4.4 D **Key Indicator** Doctoral conferrals in humanities fields, in social science fields, in STEM and in other fields such as business, education, public policy, social work

Outcome Annual improvement

Leaning Forward, Looking Ahead

“Stay ahead of changes in our economy and in higher education. Look at innovations and figure out how to stay ahead of the game.” Legislator Interview

Rapid changes in North Dakota’s physical, economic and social environment are providing myriad challenges and opportunities. Among the many conversations about the university system’s role in helping the state build the future, there are lingering questions regarding prospective NDUS students that merit future conversations within the framework of the 2015-2020 strategic plan.

Students of the Future

“We’re trying to build the state we want to live in, not settle for what we have.” NDUS Student Interview

In recognition of the workforce shortages in virtually all sectors of the state’s economy—jobs that require everything from a certificate to an advanced degree—respondents emphasized the need to bring more students into the university system. Suggestions included developing strong business partnerships that increase student loan forgiveness opportunities in exchange for a commitment to work in North Dakota, providing tools to veterans to complete degrees and targeting residents age 25-64 who have some college but no degree. According to the 2012 American Community Survey and the Lumina Foundation 2014 Report, the latter group comprises slightly more than 24 percent of the state’s population.

The recent white paper series from the American Council on Education’s Presidential Innovation Lab, “Who Are the Students of the Future?” provides additional food for thought:

“Major changes in demographics, technology, social media, and students’ learning styles—as well as their expectations for the learning experience—mean students who will be coming to colleges and universities in the next five to 10 years are very different than those in the past.”

Given the educational and workforce needs now and in the next decade as identified in the 2014 Paulien & Associates System-wide Master Plan Report, and Job Service North Dakota's 10-year job projections, the North Dakota University System has ample reasons to develop plans for targeted, aggressive recruitment.

Game-changing Strategies

Other ideas threading through the stakeholder input may merit further conversation and prioritization within the next five years. The collective responses to the NDUS Staff-Faculty Survey include a wealth of visionary thoughts about new approaches to better serve our students and our state.

- NDUS as a magnet (e.g., a robust honors programs and student aid incentives) to retain the brightest high school graduates and attract non-resident students to address the state's workforce concerns:
"We lose these very bright students; we need [ways] to capture them..." Business Leader Interview
- With an increasing number of retirements from military service, the opportunity to attract veterans to the campuses to complete degrees (Pathways Affordability Initiative):
"This includes ... learning credits being consistent among the 11 institutions, especially for our service members and veterans." NDUS Staff-Faculty Survey
- Ground-breaking research opportunities, such as the three-campus collaborative currently working with the Northern Plains Unmanned Aircraft Systems Authority:
"... embrace our strong potential connections to the rest of the world, especially in terms of energy development, agriculture, and unmanned aerial systems." NDUS Staff-Faculty Survey
- Greater opportunities to develop strategic partnerships with business leaders for mentoring and workforce development innovations:
"The business community is strongly supportive of the state's educational system. The biggest push from the business side is being nimble enough to respond in a timely manner to changing job requirements. Several years ago when we began seeing the need for technical training, the system responded well. But business also hasn't lost its need for four-year degrees and beyond." Business Leader Interview
- Diversity and the need to increase students' exposure to diverse and global perspectives:
"Diversity is really an issue in North Dakota – we are the last bastion of beige. Higher education needs to give our kids an international perspective and integrate that so the next generation of leaders understands the world's challenges." Business Leader Interview
- Student debt and the opportunity to enhance merit and needs-based aid (Pathways Affordability Initiative):
"My suggestion is to help students by making an education affordable so they can avoid significant student debt." NDUS Staff-Faculty Survey

- The challenge of helping students complete programs in a timely manner through added emphasis on services such as advising and counseling:
“We have a task force for student advising. We want to do as much as possible for students.”
NDUS Faculty Interview
- The opportunity to address remediation and support K-12 initiatives such as the “Leveraging the Senior Year” initiative (Pathways Quality Initiative):
“K-20 needs to look carefully at the Lumina [Foundation] study. Our state needs the best-skilled, highest-trained workforce. That’s what will set us above the other states for economic development in the future.” Business Leader Interview
- The need to support lifelong learning—with opportunities for career retooling—as a growing need:
“We have a strong workforce in North Dakota, but we need constant ‘upgrade’ opportunities—a continuous training cycle. We need to be fast and flexible in our education system offerings.”
Business Leader Interview
- Our students inspire, our faculty and staff transform, and our researchers amaze; but those stories must be communicated to a broad audience, and the effort will benefit from an 11-campus communications plan:
“We North Dakotans are taught not to brag—we have to learn it’s okay to tell our story, to talk about the good work our students, faculty and staff do.” NDUS Staff-Faculty Survey

Presidents’ Initiatives

“We are living through one of the most interesting times in North Dakota [history]. This state has great potential.” NDUS Staff-Faculty Survey

When the Chancellor’s Cabinet met in early September to work on the strategies, key indicators and outcomes to achieve the goals and measure progress, the institutions’ presidents noted the need to maintain high standards of delivering a quality education. They also discussed collaborative efforts and additional initiatives for the future:

- Create Collaborative Higher Learning Initiatives (e.g., virtual center for teacher educational excellence, advanced technology applications, etc.)
“The mortar of higher education is not in the buildings, it is in the educators. A good educator can teach in a cave, a poor educator’s students will not learn regardless of the building in which they meet.” NDUS Staff-Faculty Survey
- Meet educational excellence and workforce needs through strategic incentives
“The state says, ‘Here’s a billion dollars to invest in our grandchildren’ – what would higher education do with it?” Business Focus Group

Over the next several years, the Chancellor’s Cabinet will explore these initiatives and provide periodic reports to the State Board of Higher Education.

