

NORTH DAKOTA UNIVERSITY SYSTEM

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

State Board of Higher Education	3
From the Board Chair	4
Student Vitality	6
Workforce	10
Intelligent Machines	14
Infrastructure	16
NDUS Financial/Tuition Snapshot	18

STATE BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION

The State Board of Higher Education is the policy-setting and advocacy body for the NDUS and the governing body for its 11 colleges and universities. It also oversees the NDSU Extension Service and Agricultural Research Stations, Northern Crops Institute, State Forest Service and the Upper Great Plains Transportation Institute. The SBHE is made up of seven citizen members appointed to four-year terms by the governor and one student appointed by the governor to serve a one-year term. The Council of College Faculties selects the board's non-voting faculty advisor, and the NDUS Staff Senate selects the board's non-voting staff advisor.



TIM MIHALICK Chair



DANITA BYE Vice Chair



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Maxwell Eriksrud Student Member



Dr. Casey Ryan Member



Jeffry Volk Member



Michael Linnell Staff Advisor



Dr. Lisa Montplaisir Faculty Advisor

FROM THE BOARD CHAIR



Tim Mihalick Chair North Dakota State Board of Higher Education

The NDUS is bucking national trends with significant increases in new freshmen enrollment."

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Greetings to our state legislators and academic and industry partners —

As the Chair of the North Dakota State Board of Higher Education (SBHE), it is my honor to present to you our Biennial Review. This document encapsulates the remarkable progress and achievements of our North Dakota University System (NDUS) over the past two years.

First and foremost, I would like to extend our deepest gratitude to the North Dakota Legislative Assembly for their unwavering support of higher education. Your commitment has been instrumental in enhancing the educational landscape of our state, providing our students with the resources and opportunities they need to succeed.

As you will see in this document, we are celebrating record enrollment, retention, and graduation rates across our institutions. The NDUS is bucking national trends with significant increases in new freshmen enrollment. Our institutions continue to provide academic programs that students want whether its on-campus or on-line.

We know that maintaining this momentum is imperative for our state, particularly when it comes to workforce. With over 43,000 students enrolled across 11 institutions, the NDUS is at the forefront of recruiting and training workforce talent. With your support, we have made significant investments in key industries such as healthcare, cyber security, and manufacturing, ensuring our graduates are well-prepared for the demands of the modern workforce.

One initiative I've been proud to be a part of this biennium, has been our "Envision 2035" 10-year strategic planning process. The SBHE, NDUS, campus representatives, and experts from business and industry, have been working for several months on this endeavor to identify the evolving needs and challenges of our world when high school seniors graduate in the year 2035.

"Envision 2035" is the culmination of nearly a year-and-ahalf of discussions, analyses, and work conducted by nine separate study groups. The study groups include Programs of the Future for Agriculture, Energy, Digitization, and Healthcare, as well as Student, Teacher, Infrastructure,



A kindergartner when Envision 2035 kicked off, Maura Schmidt will graduate high school in the spring of 2035. She helped kick off the strategic planning process as a student in a changing world of education. Work during the Envision process was done with students like Maura in mind.

Human Capital Workforce, and Values of the Future groups. The groups studied how future advancements in their respective areas will affect student preparation for the workforce and how best to adapt and develop new priorities for higher ed in North Dakota. We look forward to sharing findings from that study with all of you during this legislative session.

A new theme emerged as part of the Envision 2035 process and the theme establishes a framework for prioritizing future higher education initiatives. We hope that this concept can be adapted into a broader marketing strategy, as well, to showcase the benefits of acquiring post-secondary education in North Dakota, particularly as those credentials become critical for workforce placement. The concept is titled "RUN-ND" and is an acronym for "Retool and Upskill Now for North Dakota." RUN-ND consists of three pillars and an underlying foundation, which we have applied as the main sections of this Biennial Review. The pillars are student vitality, workforce, and intelligent machines, and they sit atop physical and digital infrastructure.

We hope this framework, which you will read more about in this document, can help better define the current and future needs for the NDUS. Further, we'd like RUN-ND to initiate larger discussions about how best to educate future workforce for industry advance-



ments and innovation, which have been accelerated by AI and digitization.

This Biennial Review is a testament to the collaborative efforts of our educators, students, industry partners, and policymakers. Together, we are shaping a brighter future for North Dakota, ensuring that our higher education system remains a pillar of excellence and opportunity.

Thank you once again for your continued support and dedication to the advancement of higher education in our state.

Sincerely,

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Tim Mihalick

Chair, North Dakota State Board of Higher Education

STUDENT VITALITY

Student vitality is the dynamic balance of clear minds, strong bodies, and resilient spirits, forming the foundation for academic success and personal growth. A clear mind enables students to focus, think critically, and absorb new information, helping them to navigate the complexities of their studies with clarity and purpose. Strong bodies are essential for sustaining the energy levels needed for both academic and extracurricular pursuits. Resilience allows students to face adversity with strength and perseverance. It nurtures a mindset that embraces failure as a learning opportunity, builds emotional endurance, and fosters a positive outlook in the face of difficulties.



Celebrating record enrollment, retention, graduation rates

The North Dakota University System (NDUS) is bucking national trends in enrollment, retention, and graduation rates.

With enrollment, one of the most significant differences occurred with new freshmen. New freshmen enrollment during the fall 2024 semester was up 10% as compared to fall 2023. Nationally, new freshmen enrollment declined by 5%, representing a 15-point differential. Additionally, this is the second largest incoming freshmen class in the last 10 years.

Recent census data captured by the NDUS showed a surge in enrollment for the fall 2024 semester with a headcount of 45,806 students, the highest number since fall 2018. Additionally, full-time equivalent (FTE) enrollment has increased for the third straight year at 34,781students, the highest since 2020.

The jump in headcount from last fall represents a 3.6% increase from 44,227 in 2023, while the FTE count increased by 4.1% from 33,442. Additionally, total credit hour production increased by 4.2% with 511,484 hours recorded for 2024, up from 490,643 in 2023.

Eight of NDUS's 11 institutions reported enrollment gains for the fall 2024 semester. Williston State College had the largest increase at 16% while other large gains were had at Mayville State University at 8.2%, North Dakota State College of Science (NDSCS) at 7.2% and the University of North Dakota (UND) at 6%.

The uptick in systemwide enrollment is driven by a 10.1% increase in new undergraduate students. Two NDUS institutions saw significant new undergraduate growth. Dickinson State University and NDSCS all had increases of 10%. Mayville State University and UND had major undergraduate student gains with an over 25% increase from last fall. With retention, the system's most recent retention rate was 75%, rebounding to match pre-pandemic levels in 2018 and 2020. The University of North Dakota reported the highest retention rate at 83%, which is the highest ever for a North Dakota University System (NDUS) institution since the system began tracking data in 1990.

Transferability remains high, with 19% of students systemwide transferring from one NDUS institution to another institution within the NDUS. With graduation rates, the NDUS experienced its highest systemwide graduation rate at 57%, which is an 8% increase over the past decade.

- 2-year colleges had a combined graduation rate of 48% which is 17 points better than the national average of 31% for 2-year public institutions.
- 4-year universities had a 61% combined graduation rate which is 2 points better than the national average of 59% for 4-year public institutions.

Average Tuition & Fees (Academic Years 2018-2024)





Multiple pathways for student success

One of the North Dakota State Board of Higher Education's (SBHE) goals is to provide access to programs people want, where and when they need them. This mission is being achieved with new educational programs and creative delivery methods that allow flexibility for our students. This includes those who may have started a degree program but faced challenges and were not able to finish. Options now exist for those students to now return to the classroom to enhance their experience and credentials to reach their career and life goals.

One example of meeting this need is

how our institutions offer certificates and stackable credentials. A certificate can give someone an earned skill in as little as three courses and many certificates are offered remotely, allowing students to remain in their communities while sharpening their skillset.

Certificate programs have exploded across the System in response to workforce needs. In the past three years, under the guidance of Board directive, more than 300 certificate programs have been created in the system. With as little as three courses, someone can earn a certificate skill. Many certificates are also offered online, so students can remain in their community while advancing their education.

Scholarships

To help retain workforce, the last legislative session provided a 19% increase in appropriation for state financial aid programs, including a 25% increase to the needs-based State Grant. Since 2010, 23,460 students have qualified for one of the three state scholarships. Total, North Dakota students have received over \$81.2 million in scholarship disbursements through state programs.

The scholarship program includes the Academic Scholarship, Career and Technical Education Scholarship and the new North Dakota Scholarship. These are state merit-based awards aimed at increasing high school rigor and retaining students within North Dakota for postsecondary education. High school students can receive up to \$6,000 under one of these scholarship programs by completing specific high school curriculum and fulfilling grade point average and test score requirements.

The NDUS continues to offer regionally competitive tuition rates, affordable student housing, and reduced student textbook costs through increased availability of Open Educational Resources. Through the implementation of additional types of inter-campus and system-wide shared services, operations will continue to become more cost effective toward the goal of providing a quality education for students.

Student Affordability

- In 2022, the University System's student loan indebtedness was lower than the national average.
- Implemented the Dual Credit Tuition Scholarship Program, providing awards to more than 2,100 students.
- Established the exchange of college transcripts amongst NDUS institutions at no cost to students.

Certificates Offered & Awarded (Undergraduate)



WORKFORCE

With more than 43,000 students taking classes across 11 institutions, the NDUS is in the business of recruiting and training workforce talent. The State Board of Higher Education (SBHE) continues to be committed to these endeavors. In addition to energy and agriculture – the state's top industries – we have invested in unmanned aircraft systems/autonomous systems, healthcare, cyber, data security and manufacturing. Each one of our institutions have programs that are supported by SBHE policy for these

emerging areas of workforce need.

A study conducted by the Georgetown Center for Education and the Workforce predicts that by 2031, approximately 71% of jobs in North Dakota will require some additional form of education after high school, whether that is a four-year degree, two-year degree or certificate program.

With support from and partnership with industry and the North Dakota Legislative Assemble, we have continued to make inroads for solving workforce challenges. Following are a few examples:

A study conducted by the Georgetown Center for Education and the Workforce predicts that by 2031, approximately 71% of jobs in North Dakota will require some additional form of education after high school ..."

Complete College America

In 2024, the State of North Dakota officially joined the Complete College America (CCA) Alliance, a national coalition of 53 states, systems, institutions of higher education and other organizations committed to increasing the number of students who successfully complete college and attain degrees or other postsecondary credentials. "North Dakota's future success depends on our ability to align higher education with workforce demands and the changing economic landscape," Gov. Doug Burgum said. "Strengthening our commitment to closing workforce and talent gaps is critical to ensuring that we not only adapt but lead the way in the decades ahead. By collaborating with national leaders and experts, we can empower more of our residents with the skills and credentials they need to thrive, while addressing the needs of our students and our state."

More than half (56.4 percent) of North Dakotans ages 25-64 hold a college degree or postsecondary credential, surpassing the national average of 54.3%, according to a 2023 Lumina Foundation Report. North Dakota aims to increase this to 65% by 2025.

By joining the Alliance as the 53rd member, the state will increase its commitment to college completion for the state's two research universities, four regional universities and five community colleges serving nearly 45,000 students. The initiative also aligns with the state's Envision 2035 strategic plan, which is focused on ensuring the state's public higher education system is preparing students for the future of work and lifelong economic opportunity and mobility.

As a member of the CCA Alliance, North Dakota leaders will work with CCA and teams of higher education leaders and state policymakers across the country to implement data-driven and evidence-based policies proven to help more students complete a degree or credential of value on time.

Soft Skills

Interpersonal skills are often referred to as soft skills or people skills. Unlike technical skills, which are often task-specific, soft skills are universally applicable across industries. Specific soft skill attributes include critical thinking and critical reasoning, communication, and intellectual and emotional engagement with others. The workforce advisory committee of the Dakota Digital Academy surveyed North Dakota business and industry and their top priority in hiring is finding people who possess soft skills. As businesses increasingly rely on technology, the ability to work well in teams, lead effectively, and navigate complex interpersonal dynamics remains highly valuable.

Degrees Awarded in High-Demand Workforce Jobs

(ND Career Builders)



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North Dakota Career Builders

The ND Career Builders Scholarship & Loan Repayment Program has generated 527 ND workers in in-demand occupations since inception who are either currently employed in an in-demand occupation within ND, or attending a program of study in ND that leads to an in-demand occupation. First instituted by the 2019 North Dakota Legislative Assembly, the program has been actively awarding scholarships and student loan repayment since August 2019. There have been 150 unique private sector donors for the scholarship and 54 for loan repayment who have committed to the required private donor match, totaling \$3.2 million. This program boasts retention rates of 90% for scholarship recipients and 84% for loan repayment recipients. Retention is based on either employment in an in-demand occupation in ND or ongoing education in a gualifying program of study.



ND Students Can Save up to \$17,000 on Tuition

Scholarships, Loan Repayment, or Both for Commitment to Fill a High-Demand Occupation

Learn More About Requirements at **ndus.edu/career-builders/**

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National Security Crossroads

North Dakota is in a unique position to boost and sustain UAS and counter UAS capabilities for national security. During the Envision 2035 study, a call to action was developed to implement what could be titled the National Security Crossroads for Autonomous Systems and Al/Cyber.

Geographically, this "crossroads" would be a connection between the Grand Sky UAS test airspace near the City of Grand Forks and Grand Forks Air Force Base, a test site north of Highway 2, a test site at Camp Grafton Training Center and the airspace surrounding Minot Air Force Base. The initiative also could bring in Canada as a NATO partner and member of Five Eyes, an intelligence alliance between the U.S., United Kingdom, New Zealand, Australia and Canada.

Higher ed certainly would have a role with training and education resources for this initiative. Six NDUS institutions are represented in this geographical corridor: Minot State University, Dakota College at Bottineau, Lake Region State College, Mayville State University, University of North Dakota and North Dakota State University. Further, four system campuses are designated by the National Security Agency as Cyber Centers for Excellence.



The nation at large has been challenged with healthcare and nursing shortages, particularly in hospitals and long-term care facilities. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, employment for registered nurses (RN) is projected to grow by approximately 10.4% over the next decade. This is a faster rate than the national average and translates to an average of 770 annual openings throughout the time period.

NDUS continues to work with the Norther IT Consortium and Dakota Nursing Program to develop solutions for nursing career credentialing.

The Dakota Nursing Program is a collaboration of four schools who offer nursing degrees through video conferences and face to face labs and clinicals. Students can become a practical nurse in three semesters, a RN in as little as two years, and can progress into a Bachelor of Science in nursing (BSN).

Minot State University (MiSU) and Dakota College at Bottineau (DCB) in 2023 signed a memorandum of understanding guaranteeing admission into MiSU's RN to BSN nursing program. Additionally, DCB began sharing a new state-of-the-art facility with MiSU for its nursing students in Minot at Trinity Health Care's Health Center West building. This fall, 15 practical nursing students and 18 associate degree nursing students pursued their nursing education and training in the newly-acquired building.

INTELLIGENT MACHINES

We know that digitization and AI will affect all sectors of society and will change the ways in which we educate students and prepare them for their futures. Groundwork for this transformative shift is already being laid and will continue to evolve in the next 10 years.

Research

Our work is gaining national recognition. In January 2024, North Dakota scored a major win to support economic growth in agriculture technology. The U.S. National Science Foundation (NSF) awarded a \$15 million grant to a team led by North Dakota State University and several other partners, including the North Dakota Tribal College System. The grant has the potential of totaling \$160 million over 10 years.

North Dakota is also part of a regional clean energy project that received a federal funding award for up to \$925 million. The University of North Dakota will partner in the Heartland Hydrogen Hub to produce low-carbon hydrogen, decarbonize regional supply chains, and create clean energy jobs across Minnesota, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Wisconsin.

Investments like these influence the way we conduct planning for higher education in North Dakota. We don't know for certain what tomorrow will bring, but we can do our best to embrace these emerging opportunities



This image was created in Adobe Firefly using the prompt: Futuristic AI and education concept with a library background in realism.

and, through our Board policy decisions and planning for the future, work to make North Dakota a state where quality education leads to a fulfilling career.

Statewide AI Conference

Researchers, industry practitioners, educators and thought leaders comprise a list of presenters scheduled Sept. 26 for the inaugural North Dakota AI Conference hosted at Valley City State University (VCSU) at the Larry J. Robinson Center. Attendees had the opportunity to hear about the evolving relationship between humans and From left to right, Monsignor James Patrick Shea, University of Mary president; Todd Pringle, Dakota Digital Academy director; and NDUS Chancellor Mark Hagerott visit during the inaugural AI conference's "fireside chat," which touched on the event's theme of "Being Human and Working in the Age of AI."

Artificial Intelligence in the context of work, society, personal development, and what it will mean for all North Dakotans.

The event theme was "Being Human and Working in the Age of AI." Presenters explored ways to leverage the transformative power of AI while maintaining human connection across all sectors of society.

"Every day, we see the advancement in AI technologies and the expansion of its uses. AI is here and is altering how we live, work and interact with one another," said North Dakota University System Chancellor Mark Hagerott. "It's important



for all North Dakotans to understand the implications for AI use and development, particularly how it will challenge the use of our humanity, creativity and compassion for one another. This conference will be a great opportunity to have these conversations so we can better prepare for the future ahead."

The statewide conference was a partnership between Valley City State University, the Dakota Digital Academy, North Dakota University System, the University of Mary, the North Dakota Information Technology and North Dakota Department of Public Instruction.



Research & Development Expenditures

INFRASTRUCTURE

Physical





Whole-of-Government Approach to Al

We must partner with state agencies to establish a whole-of-government approach for a long-term, statewide effort to ensure affordable, responsible, and trustworthy Al. These must include efforts to expand computational capacity, to attract top talent to the state and NDUS, to promote academic programs and professional development opportunities, and to incentivize our industry partners.

We must look for novel opportunities to expand private-public partnerships, which would provide an additional set of resources to help shape the advancement of the state's Al infrastructure and use case development, but to also drive new workforce opportunities within the state.

AI and machine learning (ML) will transform the institutions of the NDUS by enabling personalized learning experiences, enhancing the creation of curriculum and streamlined operational efficiencies. Al-driven systems can tailor educational content to meet individual student needs, adapting in real-time to their learning pace and style. This personalization will enhance student engagement and improve learning outcomes. ML algorithms can analyze vast amounts of educational data, providing insights that help educators and institutions make informed decisions about curriculum development and student support services. Furthermore, AI and ML are essential for research, powering complex simulations and data analysis tasks that push the boundaries of academic inquiry.

The effective, consolidated use of AI and ML functionality will be pivotal in helping all NDUS institutions to be adaptive, responsive, and innovative leaders in the higher education sector. It is imperative that a system approach is used to ensure availability and impact at all eleven institutions.

The NDUS partnered with the Governor's office and the North Dakota Information Technology (NDIT) department to create an AI executive governance group. The group began meeting in July of 2024 and created five study groups: governance, workforce, infrastructure, policy, and organization. The findings of the study groups were coalesced and presented to the governor in November, in preparation for possible legislative support by the 69th Legislative Assembly.

Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP)

Core Technology Services and the campuses of the NDUS conducted a three-phase, 16-month market analysis that focused on the current state and next generation of technologies to support the student information system, the human capital management system, and the financials system. The findings of this study were presented to the State Board of Higher Education at the May 2024 meeting. The findings of the report included a \$10 Million cloud readiness budget as the next step. This finding and accompanying budget emerged as the top priority for the Envision 2035 process at that time. However, the following month, the NDUS was asked to pause the process and that NDIT would have the lead on the ERP process going forward. So, the ERP and budget was pulled from the Envision budget priority.



FINANCIAL SNAPSHOT

2024-2025 Annual Budget





TUITION SNAPSHOT

Comparison of North Dakota and Regional Averages Resident Undergraduate Tuition and Mandatory Fees







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