

North Dakota State Board of Higher Education Research and Governance Committee Meeting Minutes

The State Board of Higher Education Research and Governance Committee met on Wednesday, July 17th at 3:15 pm. CT, via Teams.

Co-chair Ryan called the meeting to order at 3:15 p.m. CT.

SBHE Research and Governance Committee members

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| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Dr. Casey Ryan, Co-Chair | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Mr. Max Eriksrud, Student Member |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ms. Danita Bye, Co-Chair | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Dr. Lisa Montplaisir, Faculty Advisor |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Mr. DJ Campbell (arrived late) | |

Institution Presidents/Representatives

DCB Dean Simone, **LRSC** President Darling, **MaSU** President Van Horn, Dr. Brian Huschle, **MISU** President Shirley, **NDSU** Dr. Colleen Fitzgerald, Dr. Kristen Fellows, **UND** President Armacost, Dr. Scott Snyder, Dr. Robert Newman, Dr. Ryan Adams, **VCSU** President LaFave, Dr. David DeMuth, **WSC** President Hirning.

System Office/CTS/Guests

NDUS Chancellor Hagerott, VC David Krebsbach, VC Jerry Rostad, VC Darin King, VC Lisa Johnson, Mr. Mark Gorenflo, Mr. Corey Quirk, Mr. Chris Pieske, **AG** Ms. Meredith Larson.

Co-chair Ryan called the meeting to order at 3:15 p.m. CT.

1. **Agenda**

And,

2. **Meeting Minutes**

Bye moved, Eriksrud seconded, to approve the agenda and [June 12, 2024](#), meeting minutes, as presented.

Eriksrud, Bye, and Ryan voted yes. Motion passed 3 – 0.

3. **Research Metrics**

Co-chair Ryan informed the committee that he requested the Vice Presidents of Research at NDSU and UND create metrics that the general public could understand. Drs. Fitzgerald (NDSU) and Snyder (UND) reviewed some potential [research metrics](#) for the committee to consider:

- Total Research Expenditures: This is the total amount spent on research.
- Federal Research Expenditures: This is the portion of the total research expenditures that comes from federally funded grants.
- State Research Expenditures: This is the portion of the total research expenditures that comes from the state.

- **Industry-Sponsored Research:** This is the portion of the total research expenditures that comes from industry sponsorship.

Dr. Fitzgerald explained that these are lagging indicators, which would reflect past performance. Some forward-looking leading indicators could be:

- **Total Number and Amount of Research Awards:** This gives a sense of what's to come and is a key growth indicator.
- **Ph.D. Conferrals in National Science Foundation (NSF) Funded Fields:** This includes fields funded by the National Science Foundation, such as social sciences, education research, and traditional STEM disciplines. This metric is important as graduate programs are a key indicator of the vibrancy of the research enterprise.

The goal of these metrics is to support faculty and grow the research enterprise, with a long-term goal of reaching \$1 billion dollars in research funding between NDSU and UND. The metrics will help track progress towards goal(s).

The committee discussed various types of research grants and expenditures, methodology, different levels of students in research programs, and potential limitations/restrictions. The previous set of metrics, prior to Drs. Fitzgerald and Snyder, were based on Carnegie classification: those metrics were outdated and hard to understand. They explained their research prospective and experience as NSF Program Officers.

Chancellor Hagerott noted the anticipated massive influx of funding for AI due to a series of current and upcoming national projects. He emphasized the importance of being able to provide information on current AI research to justify requests for increased research funding at the upcoming legislative session. He also suggested a focus on defense research.

President Armacost cautioned that the vital research in humanities that is currently going on does not get lost in the reporting/metrics due to not being considered NSF funded. All parties agreed and would consider additional language for clarity could be added.

The committee continued to discuss AI and Digitization in regard to the research metrics. Concerns were expressed about the burden of unfunded mandates from the federal government, particularly in terms of regulatory requirements. There is also the potential to overcount the impact of AI in research projects due to the many ways AI can be used. Dr. Fitzgerald suggested that qualitative stories might be a better way to demonstrate impact rather than focusing solely on the dollars spent. National Science Foundation (NSF) worry that creating new metrics, different from those used by the National Science Foundation (NSF), would be another unfunded mandate requiring additional personnel. Undergraduate research, the growing number of undergraduate research students, and EPSCoR were also discussed as items that could be usefully captured in research metrics.

Member Eriksrud asked about how to measure return on investment from research expenditures. Can we measure such things as patents or other kinds of intellectual property as well as monetary returns from research efforts. Dr. Snyder replied that most researchers do fundamental research, which is about seeking knowledge rather than

generating economic return. The funding they receive from sources like NSF, NIH, and the state is aimed at this basic research. However, the process of transforming fundamental research into something that yields economic impact is a lengthy and complex journey. Dr. Fitzgerald talked about tech transfer infrastructure, dollars in patent and licensing revenues, growing their technology portfolio, and the impact of research work, including life-saving devices used in hospitals. She noted the challenges that North Dakota has receiving federal funding compared to other states. The value created from research expenditures is not just monetary but also includes the impact of the research on society and the state. However, the process of translating fundamental research into practical applications with economic impact takes time.

Co-chair Ryan stated that the metrics reviewed today are a good starting point and will be discussed further at their September committee meeting.

GOVERNANCE

4. **SBHE Self-assessment Priorities**

Co-chair Bye addressed the committee regarding the Board's self-evaluation/survey results and noted her key take aways for the committee to consider. She explained that the Board survey assists the committee to identify areas of focus and/or improvements for the 2024/2025 year. She recommended the Board focus on meeting effectiveness, [policy](#), and communication.

An annual survey is sent out to board members to identify key areas for improvement. The priorities identified from these surveys were approved in the last meeting. The task now is to create an action plan to address these priorities throughout the year.

Two main areas of focus have emerged:

1. Meeting Effectiveness: The goal is to encourage board members to consider the entire system rather than favoring a particular institution.
2. Policy: Board review strategic plan regularly to discuss progress of the system towards fulfillment of the plan.

These are challenging discussions, but they are necessary for the board's effectiveness and the system's overall improvement.

Co-chair Ryan noted a shift in opinion or understanding within the Board over the past couple years and has concerns it will have a negative impact on incoming/new Board members that don't have a full understanding of individual Board member's behavior, approach, and actions, can affect the system as a whole.

Following committee discussion, the recommendations are to continue Board training (similar to the presentation done in [May, 2023](#)), ensuring Board members have a systematic perspective and approach when taking action, and understand their fiduciary responsibilities.

The committee asked Ms. Meredith Larson, Assistant Attorney General, for guidance on next steps and/or how to address. She agreed that there needs to be an emphasis on operating as a self-governing board and on the importance of prioritizing the interests of the system as a whole over individual campus interests. She acknowledged that board members may have specific topics or areas they are more interested in but stressed that these should not overshadow the overall goals of the system. If a situation

arises where a board member seems to be prioritizing institutional interests over the system's, having an open and honest discussion can be a good first step. Providing training and professional coaching can also help guide board members towards better governance. She recommended continued training, some professional coaching, and reiterating the importance of mutual respect, open communication, and a shared commitment to the system's interests as keys to effective board governance.

Co-chair Bye stated that there will be annual Board Training(s) at the Board meeting in September 2024 and the committee will continue researching additional options for training.

GOVERNANCE UPDATES/REPORTS/DISCUSSION

5. **Update on On-boarding and Training**

Ms. Kristie Hetzler reported that the board orientation is on track. Both Mr. Campbell and Mr. Eriksrud have visited the system office, had a one-on-one meeting with the Chancellor, and have completed all the necessary start up tasks:

- New Board email address set up.
- Accounting forms and other necessary forms completed/signed.
- Both serve on the SBHE ASAC and RGC Committees and have met with Co-chair Ryan and VC Johnson to bring them up to date on current subject matters.
- Member Campbell was in the system office last week and visited with several NDUSO staff members.
- Scheduling a visit with Meredith Larson and Chris Pieske together is currently underway. This meeting will focus on key legal/compliance issues including Conflict of Interest training.

Follow-up:

- As per the committee's request an onboard checklist was created.
- As in previous years, a Board policy, procedure, and operational manual has been created and will be shared with both new Board members.

Co-Chair Bye asked for feedback from new Board members, Maxwell Eriksrud and DJ Campbell. They reported a positive experience with the onboarding process. They are looking forward to one-pager documents policies, procedures, and bylaws. Mr. Campbell noted that information on items such as Board cultural norms would be helpful.

6. **Strategic Plan Update**

Co-Chair Bye requested that the update on the [Strategic Plan](#) be moved to the September RGC meeting due to the length of today's meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 4:35 p.m. CT.

Approved September 16, 2024.