

Listening Session: How do we prepare for ND's version of Stargate?

February 20, 2025, Meeting Minutes

Via Teams/In-person: Bavendick Stateroom, NECE Building, BSC Campus
1200 Schafer St, Bismarck, ND 58501

SBHE Members participating:

Mr. Tim Mihalick, Chair
Mr. Curtis Biller
Mr. Kevin Black
Mr. Maxwell Eriksrud

Chancellor present: Dr. Mark Hagerott

Institution Representatives Present:

BSC: Interim President Brent Sanford, Dr. Marcus Fries, Ms. Mari Volk, Ms. Nicky Kadrmas
DCB: Dean Carmen Simone
DSU: Ms. Shawna Egli, Ms. CarrieLynn Reinhard, Ms. Krissy Kilwein, Mr. Todd Hauf
LRSC: President Doug Darling
MaSU: President Brian Van Horn, Mr. Brian Huschle
NDSCS: President Rod Flanigan
NDSU: Dr. Xin Wang
UND: President Andy Armacost, Dr. Scott Snyder
VCSU: President Alan LaFave, Mr. Larry Brooks, Mr. Kerry Gregoryk, Ms. Theresa Semmens, Ms. Susan Pfeifer, Mr. Joe Tykwinski
WSC: President Bernell Hirning

NDUS Staff Participating:

Mr. Jerry Rostad, NDUS
Mr. Tom Danford, NDUS
Mr. Mark Gorenflo, NDUS
Dr. Billie Jo Lorus, NDUS
Mr. Eric Jensen, NDUS
Ms. Bethany Kadrmas, NDUS
Ms. Mindy Sturn, NDUS
Ms. Sharon Schwartzbauer, NDUS
Mr. Dustin Walker, NDUS

Others Participating:

Mr. Shawn Paschke, Xcel Energy
Ms. Dana Hager, Basin Electric
Mr. Ron Ness, ND Petroleum Council
Mr. Troy Walker, Dakota Carrier Network
Ms. Terry Effertz, TechND
Ms. Kayla Pulvermacher, MIDCO
Mr. Rick Geloff, Bank of ND
Dr. Todd Pringle, Deere & Co.
Mr. Aaron Mooney, Tugboat
Mr. Alan Dohrmann, Governor Armstrong's Office
Mr. Wayde Sick, Ms. Tracy Becker, North Dakota Career and Technical Education
President Steven Smith, Cankdeska Cikana Community College
Ms. Dawn Greuel, Job Service of North Dakota
Mr. Nathan Schneider, Bismarck Mandan Chamber
Mr. Brian DeCoteau, UTTC

Jerry Rostad, Vice Chancellor of the North Dakota University System, began the listening session at 12:08 p.m. CT.

Introduction and opening remarks

- Mark Hagerott, NDUS Chancellor
- Andy Armacost, UND President
- Alan LaFave, VCSU President
- Rod Flanigan, NDSCS President

Opening remarks were provided by President Sanford (BSC), President Armacost (UND), President LaFave (VCSU), President Flanigan (NDSCS), President Steven Smith (Cankdeska Cikana Community College), and Wayde Sick (Career and Technical Education). These remarks emphasized the importance of integrating AI into curricula to meet future workforce needs, discussed AI's impact across industries and the need for investment in AI education and research, and highlighted the crucial role of soft skills in conjunction with technical skills in AI education.

Opening Comments from Energy Industry

- Shawn Paschke, Xcel Energy
- Dana Hager, Manager of Communications, Basin Electric
- Ron Ness, President, ND Petroleum Council

Vice Chancellor Rostad then facilitated a discussion on energy industry perspectives. Participants included Ron Ness (North Dakota Petroleum Council), Shawn Paschke (Xcel Energy), and Dana Hager (Basin Electric). Key themes emerging from this discussion included the challenges of providing sufficient power for AI data centers, including the high cost of new

power generation; the potential of utilizing North Dakota's natural gas resources for this purpose; and the need for collaboration between energy providers and educational institutions to support AI initiatives.

Opening Comments from Data Center Industry

- Troy Walker, Director of Sales and Marketing, Dakota Carrier Network
- Terry Effertz, Executive Director of TechND and Data Center Coalition of ND
- Kayla Pulvermacher, Government Relations for ND, MIDCO

Vice Chancellor Rostad then led a discussion on data center industry perspectives, with contributions from Terry Effertz (TechND), Troy Walker (Dakota Carrier Network), and Kayla Pulvermacher (MIDCO). Discussion points included the role of data centers in supporting AI and their infrastructure requirements (fiber optics, power, etc.), as well as legislative updates regarding regulations affecting data centers and the importance of a favorable business climate.

Opening Comments from Business Innovation Community

- Rick Geloff, Bank of North Dakota
- Todd Pringle, Engineer, Deere and Co.; ED of the DDA
- Aaron Mooney, founder of Tugboat, a North Dakota startup in the insurance space. Tugboat is a portfolio company of Gener8tor ND, 1889, Pathway Ventures and they have participated in the ND Development Fund Angel Match Program.

Vice Chancellor Rostad then introduced a discussion on business innovation community perspectives, with contributions from Todd Pringle (Deere & Co.), Rick Geloff (Bank of ND), and Aaron Mooney (Tugboat). Participants discussed leveraging North Dakota's low-cost energy to attract data centers and AI ventures, emphasizing the need for accessible high-density compute resources to support local initiatives and research, particularly in agriculture and exploration. The Bank of North Dakota's role in financing these projects, including partnerships, was highlighted. Aaron Mooney shared his positive experience with the state's innovation environment, explaining how AI has transformed his business and praising supporting programs and policies.

Open Dialogue

Vice Chancellor Rostad then opened the floor for open dialogue, inviting questions from both in-person and online attendees. The ensuing discussion covered several key areas. Participants raised concerns about power availability and infrastructure for data centers, emphasizing cross-sector collaboration. The group discussed broadening the scope of the interim study on power supply and regulation to include workforce development, AI integration, and university collaboration. The importance of soft skills in graduates was reiterated, along with the need for public education about AI and its applications, including integrating AI education throughout

the educational pathway. Finally, it was noted that BSC is exploring a four-year AI degree focused on training AI technicians for practical application across industries.

Tim Mihalick, SBHE Chair, and Dr. Mark Hagerott, NDUS Chancellor, provided closing remarks, expressing appreciation for the participants' time and contributions, and emphasizing the importance of these discussions for future progress.

No action items were considered, and no votes were taken during the listening session.

At 1:31 p.m. CT, the listening session concluded.

Approved February 25, 2025.