

REPORT OF THE ROUNDTABLE ON HIGHER EDUCATION October 8, 2008

The higher education roundtable process originated in September 1999 when 61 state leaders – 21 legislators and 40 private sector, government, and education representatives – came together with the Legislative Interim Committee on Higher Education to conduct a study of the North Dakota University System. The following goal emerged from this process:

To enhance the economic vitality of North Dakota and the quality of life of its citizens through a high quality, more responsive, equitable, flexible, accessible, entrepreneurial, and accountable University System.

Continuing the Process: October 2008

The ninth meeting of North Dakota's Roundtable on Higher Education was convened in Bismarck on October 8, 2008, by Representative Ken Svedjan, Chair of the Interim Higher Education Committee. The sixty participants in this roundtable process included the Legislative Interim Higher Education Committee, private sector stakeholders, the State Board of Higher Education, and representatives of K-12 education, state government, and North Dakota colleges and universities.

The Roundtable discussions identified key actions that are vital to the future of the state and outlined some broad policy directions for the North Dakota University System. As indicated below, the participants' recommendations affirmed strategic objectives that have been established by the State Board of Higher Education as well as goals identified by the Legislative Interim Higher Education Committee. This convergence suggests that the University System is on the right track to meet North Dakota's critical education and workforce needs.

Setting the Tone: Introduction and Opening Comments

Chairman Svedjan welcomed the participants and thanked them for their presence and commitment to this process. He emphasized the importance of their input to the Legislative Interim Higher Education Committee and asked, "What are the issues the Committee should be considering?"

Chancellor Goetz observed that the North Dakota Roundtable on Higher Education was created by the legislature in 1999 to ensure that higher education policy is closely linked to state priorities. The roundtable process has forged a new relationship between higher education and the state and led to the creation of a common vision. "The NDUS is truly interwoven into the fabric that will enhance North Dakota's economic future and uplift the social well being of its citizens. There is but one way to view the challenges and opportunities given to us and that is as a collaborative partnership." He urged participants to work collectively to resolve policy issues and asked, "What are the public's expectations of the North Dakota University System, and how do we cooperatively address those expectations?"

Don Morton of Microsoft recognized the roundtable as a vehicle for comprehensive strategic planning for the future of the state. He commented that this process has helped unleash the power and potential of the University System for North Dakota through connecting with business to grow economic development.

Joe Rothschilder of Steffes Corporation asserted that "Now is the time to take the roundtable to the next level." He urged private sector participants to take advantage of this opportunity to communicate their needs and challenged higher education to respond to those needs with the help of the legislature.

Building Shared Understanding: Background Information

Dennis Jones, President of the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems, provided resource information on North Dakota's changing demographics and focused on the role higher education plays in growing

the population and economy of the state. For example, he referenced two critical segments of North Dakota's population that must be given attention by the University System: Native Americans and adults who may not have completed a college level certificate or degree. This material was presented as background for breakout group discussions.

Focusing on Policy Issues: Breakout Group Discussions

Breakout group discussions focused on four critical themes that emerged from the deliberations of the Legislative Interim Higher Education Committee: Education Attainment, Accessibility, Contribution to Economic Development, and Meeting Workforce Needs. Each group was assigned two of these policy areas for discussion, and participants engaged in conversations based on the related questions.

1. Education Attainment (Rep. RaeAnn Kelsch, moderator)
 - a. Is a working age population educated to the level of the best in the world appropriate for North Dakota?
 - b. Where should efforts at improvement be focused? (for example, for particular education levels or subpopulations)
 - c. What is the most important action that North Dakota could take?
 - d. What specific steps should be taken by the Legislative Assembly, SBHE, Executive Branch, and the Private Sector?
2. Accessibility (Rep. Bob Skarphol, moderator)
 - a. Higher Education would be considered accessible if _____.
 - b. What is the greatest barrier to access: geographic, programmatic, economic/financial, time?
 - c. What is the most important action that North Dakota could take?
 - d. What specific steps should be taken by the Legislative Assembly, SBHE, Executive Branch, and the Private Sector?
3. Contribution to Economic Development (Sen. Tony Grindberg, moderator)
 - a. The most important contribution higher education could make to economic development in ND is _____.
 - b. Where is the biggest gap between state needs and higher education's current contribution? (research, developing entrepreneurs, training a workforce, helping parts of the state with greatest need, etc.)
 - c. What is the most important action that North Dakota could take?
 - d. What specific steps should be taken by the Legislative Assembly, SBHE, Executive Branch, and the Private Sector?
4. Meeting Workforce Needs (Sen. David Nething, moderator)
 - a. The NDUS would be viewed as being responsive to employers' workforce needs if _____.
 - b. What are the workforce requirements versus what the NDUS System is providing?
 - c. What is the most important action that North Dakota could take?
 - d. What specific steps should be taken by the Legislative Assembly, SBHE, Executive Branch, and the Private Sector?

Representatives of each group reported on the results of their discussion, with recommendations made corresponding with the objectives of the State Board of Higher Education and the goals of the Legislative Interim Higher Education Committee. These issues also align closely with the six Roundtable Cornerstones as summarized below.

Aligning Recommendations with the Six Cornerstones: A Summary of the Conversations

The following points reflect issues discussed by the four breakout groups (Education Attainment, Accessibility, Contribution to Economic Development, and Meeting Workforce Needs). These issues align closely with the six Roundtable Cornerstones as well as with the goals of the Legislative Interim Higher Education Committee and with the objectives of the State Board of Higher Education. (A more detailed listing is included as Attachment 1.)

1. Contribution to Economic Development

- Continue NDUS partnership with private sector and work closely with targeted industries.
- Focus resources to build workforce skills to meet economic development needs of the state.
- Provide more distance education to meet business needs across the state.
- Continue – and further develop - the research and opportunities offered by the Centers of Excellence, EPSCoR, and other programs.
- Enhance entrepreneurship opportunities.
- Consider tax incentives to encourage recent graduates to remain in state.
- Consider tax incentives to encourage businesses to work with universities.

2. Education Excellence

- Educate the working age population to the level of the best in the world.
- Provide clear pathways between degree levels.
- Support partnerships and collaboration that enhance statewide student access.
- Encourage lifelong learning to promote access to all demographics.
- Expand internships in partnership with North Dakota businesses.

3. Flexible and Responsive

- Provide ability to immediately respond to workforce needs with new programs. This requires flexibility and financial resources.
- Offer shorter term programs.
- Market degrees that take less than four years to complete.
- Hold regular meetings of NDUS and private sector as a systematic process for input.
- Provide a designated office at each college/university that allows businesses to communicate directly with the college/university.
- Work with businesses to develop curriculum and programs to meet future workforce needs.
- Continue employer feedback to higher education on skill levels of interns and graduates.
- Focus on employer partnerships with higher education for training and development of employees (long-term benefits for state), including higher education classes in the workplace.

4. Access

- Provide the opportunity to ensure that everyone who wants to go to college is adequately prepared and may go to college.
- Give specific attention to the state's Native American and adult populations.
- Increase accessibility by addressing the following barriers: Economic/Financial (including time, job, and family responsibilities), Psychological (leaving home for the first time; lack of encouragement/advisement; coming from a small school to a larger school), Geographic/ Programmatic Delivery, and Preparation/ Education Attainment

5. Funding and Rewards

- Adequately fund higher education.
- Allow funding flexibility.
- Provide incentives for students or universities to meet selected workforce needs as appropriate.
- Review higher education funding to support online costs as well as on-campus costs.

6. Sustaining the Vision

- Review the long-range vision for higher education including campus mission statements.

Moving Forward: Next Steps and Assignments

Following the group reports and ensuing conversations with Roundtable participants, Dennis Jones summarized the day's work and outlined assignments for each of the partners. The outcomes of the Roundtable discussion formed the basis for continuing deliberation by the Legislative Interim Higher Education Committee.

1. Private Sector Assignments:
 - a. Actively participate in activities designed to identify workforce needs
 - i. Surveys
 - ii. State/regional Roundtables
 - b. Provide input to higher education through:
 - i. Assessment of students' work readiness
 - ii. Involvement with relevant programs (e.g., serving on advisory boards)
 - c. Provide opportunities for students (and faculty) to get hands-on experience in the kinds of high-wage occupations available in North Dakota
 - i. Internships
 - ii. Part-time employment
 - iii. Apprenticeships
2. SBHE Assignments:
 - a. Define common expectations of student preparedness for college
 - b. Review the mission and roles of institutions to determine the most effective way to serve the state
 - c. Review higher education finance policy
3. Legislative Assignments:
 - a. Define the expectations of the North Dakota University System through accountability measures
 - b. Create expectations for a longitudinal database and provide for its development
 - c. Convene future Roundtable meetings, with the next meeting to be held by July 31, 2009

Attachment 1

Aligning Recommendations with the Six Cornerstones: A Detailed Listing

1. Contribution to Economic Development

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- Continue – and further develop - the research and opportunities offered by the Centers of Excellence, EPSCoR, and other programs.
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- Offer shorter term programs.
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- Provide a designated office at each college/university that allows businesses to communicate directly with the college/university.
- Work with businesses to develop curriculum and programs to meet future workforce needs.
- Continue employer feedback to higher education on skill levels of interns and graduates.
- Focus on employer partnerships with higher education for training and development of employees (long-term benefits for state), including higher education classes in the workplace.

4. Access

- Provide the opportunity to ensure that everyone who wants to go to college is adequately prepared and may go to college.
- Give specific attention to the state's Native American and adult populations.
- Increase accessibility by addressing the following barriers:
 - *Economic/Financial* – including time, job, and family responsibilities.
 - Maintain affordability for individuals of all economic backgrounds.
 - Financial aid is crucial.
 - Community colleges should serve as a low-cost access point.
 - *Psychological* - leaving home for the first time; lack of encouragement/advisement; coming from small school to a larger school.
 - Policies and infrastructure are in place to serve older-than-average and other non-traditional students.
 - Market to/communicate with non-traditional students and to targeted geographical areas.

➤ *Geographic /Programmatic Delivery*

- Develop higher education centers that serve their regions with needed two-year, four-year, and/or graduate degree programs.
- Ensure that the programs/courses students need are available at the times and places they need.
- On-line education is critical, especially for place-bound students, adults, and other populations (requires sufficient infrastructure).
- Continue and support creative delivery, partnerships, and collaborations that improve statewide access (examples include MISU-B partnership with VCSU for nursing; NDSU-VCSU virtual incubator).
- Focus at the associate/certificate level to meet state needs. This level also gets students onto the economic "on-ramp" and prepares them for higher levels of education.

➤ *Preparation/ Education Attainment*

- Prepare students to be able to succeed when they arrive at college. Ready for work or college is one and the same.
- Provide active career/vocational advising and placement; identify career opportunities and workforce needs.
 - Implement systematic P-20 career counseling in North Dakota
 - Assess high school students' interests and skills and help them find the best fit in terms of colleges, programs, and careers.
 - Develop or identify assessment tools.
 - ✓ ACT and Work Keys are being considered as assessment tools. Assessments must be meaningful for the student.
 - ✓ Will there be a graduation standard?
- a. Career advising: Create awareness about opportunities (colleges, programs, jobs) available to them in ND (more exposure to a broad range of fields beginning at an early age).
 - ✓ Send students to college "with a purpose."
 - ✓ Provide access to career projections for next five years.
 - ✓ Inform students of skills needed to fill specific jobs.
 - ✓ Help students connect their abilities/interests with specific occupational needs (e.g., art student learns about graphic design).
 - ✓ Keep students' goals as a priority.
- Offer higher level classes in high school.
- Teach money management/financial literacy in high school.
- Implement college programs to help freshmen with undecided majors.
- Higher education can provide feedback to schools (role for State Longitudinal Data System).

5. Funding and Rewards

- Adequately fund higher education.
- Allow funding flexibility.
- Provide incentives for students or universities to meet selected workforce needs as appropriate.
- Review higher education funding to support online costs as well as on-campus costs.

6. Sustaining the Vision

- Reviewing the long-range vision for higher education including campus mission statements.