

Report of the Roundtable on Higher Education Overview and Summary

A Look Into the Future: Change Urgently Needed

The overwhelming consensus of the 61 members of the Roundtable on Higher Education was bold steps must be taken to ensure:

- North Dakota's future is not an extension of the trends of the past
- All of North Dakota must benefit from a stronger economy and
- The economic vitality of North Dakota is closely linked to the North Dakota University System

Roundtable members spent seven months studying global forces and projections, examining North Dakota's economic and demographic trends and developing recommendations for creating a North Dakota University System for the 21st century.

A summary of the key components of the *Report of the Roundtable – A North Dakota University System for the 21st Century* follows:

I. Legislative Initiative

The 1999 North Dakota Legislative Assembly passed a resolution directing a study of the North Dakota University System to specifically address:

1. The expectations of the NDUS in meeting the state's needs in the 21st century
2. The funding methodology needed to meet those expectations
3. An accountability system and reporting methodology

II. Roundtable Development

A roundtable consisting of 61 state leaders – 21 legislators and an additional 40 leaders from the private sector, government and education – was formed to assist the Interim Committee on Higher Education in conducting the study.

III. The Challenge

Expectations

Roundtable members were challenged to look into the future, think outside the box and take bold actions, but also to be realistic and non-parochial and to bring forth a clear set of expectations to serve as cornerstones upon which the North Dakota University System for the future should be built.

Accountability

Roundtable members also were asked to identify and agree upon a reasonable number of University System accountability measures to replace the extensive, and often conflicting, accountability measures currently being applied. The accountability measures identified were to be consistent with the expectations for creating a university system for the 21st century. For example, the University System should be high-quality, responsive, entrepreneurial, flexible and accessible. The desired result, as stated by the roundtable, is a university system characterized by “flexibility with accountability.”

IV. Goal of the Roundtable

The goal developed and agreed upon by the Roundtable on Higher Education is:

“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.”

V. Cornerstones

The roundtable identified six key cornerstones on which to build a university system for the future. Those cornerstones are:

1. Economic Development Connection

Increase the direct connections and contributions of the University System to the economic growth and social vitality of North Dakota

2. Education Excellence

Provide high-quality education and skill development opportunities which prepare students to be personally and professionally successful, readily able to advance and change careers, be life-long learners, good citizens, leaders and knowledgeable, contributing members of an increasingly global and multi-cultural society

3. Flexible and Responsive System

Create a university system environment which is responsive to the needs of its various clients and is flexible, empowering, competitive, entrepreneurial and rewarding

4. Accessible System

Create a university system which is proactively accessible to all areas of North Dakota and seeks students and customers from outside the state. It provides students, business, industry, communities and citizens with access to educational programs, workforce training opportunities and technology access and transfer – and does so with the same performance characteristics as described in the Flexible and Responsive System goal.

5. Funding and Rewards

Develop a system of funding, resource allocation and rewards which assures quality and is linked to the expressed

high-priority needs and expectations of the University System – assures achievement of the expectations envisioned

6. Sustaining the Vision

Develop a structure and process which assures the University System for the 21st century, as described by these goals, remains connected, understood, relevant and accountable to the present and future research, education and public service needs of the state and its citizens – sustaining the vision

VI. Summary of Recommendations

Members of the six roundtable cornerstone task forces developed a total of 92 specific recommendations to implement roundtable intentions and expectations. The 92 recommendations were condensed into 27 summary recommendations. The main thrusts of the collective set of roundtable recommendations, by assigned responsibility, are:

State Board of Higher Education

1. Take the leadership in ensuring key steps required for implementation of the roundtable are taken, specifically to develop and recommend (to the Legislative and Executive Branches):
 - A long-term plan for the financing of the NDUS
 - A resource allocation mechanism
 - Accountability mechanisms, both performance and fiscal
2. Change policies and procedures to empower campus presidents; grant to the campuses the same conditions being sought for the NDUS – flexibility with accountability
3. Develop a university system which has intellectual capacity and programs aligned with the needs of the state
4. Develop a delivery system capable of making the capacities of the NDUS accessible to all of North Dakota, including:
 - Learning centers
 - Distance delivery
 - Collaborative delivery
 - Duplicated programs where appropriate
5. Cooperate with other participants in collectively moving the agenda forward

Executive Branch

1. Assume leadership in ensuring the necessary technology infrastructure is extended throughout North Dakota
2. Work with the SBHE and the Legislative Branch in devising funding and accountability mechanisms and then:
 - Revise and simplify the budget process in conformance with these agreements
 - Modify accountability mechanisms – both performance and fiscal – to make them consistent with those of the other key stakeholders
3. Be a full participant in efforts to communicate to the public and other audiences the message emerging from the roundtable and to move the agenda forward

Legislative Branch

1. Work with the Executive Branch to ensure the necessary technology infrastructure is extended throughout North Dakota
2. Work with the SBHE and the Executive Branch to create agreed-upon funding and accountability mechanisms and then:
 - Modify budget and appropriation processes so they are consistent with the directions and expectations of the roundtable
 - Utilize the agreed-upon accountability process
 - Bring the audit function into conformance with the intent of the roundtable
3. Take steps to ensure actions of the legislature and its staff reflect a relationship with the NDUS which grants flexibility with accountability
4. Participate with other entities in communicating the agenda which has emerged from the roundtable and in continuing the process in future years

The NDUS

1. Take steps to ensure the collective capacity of its campuses – intellectual assets and programs – are aligned with the needs of the state and its citizens. In this regard, find ways to utilize the strengths of tribal colleges, private institutions and other providers to expand the educational asset base available to the citizens of North Dakota
2. Expand the definition of institutional clients to include non-traditional students, employers and other groups in addition to the traditional student body which has been the hallmark of the NDUS
3. Create a delivery system which can make these intellectual assets accessible to citizens throughout the state:
 - Learning centers
 - Technology
4. Provide the staff leadership necessary to create new financing, resource allocation and accountability mechanisms
5. Create a culture, policies and practices which support and reward entrepreneurial behavior and responsiveness to clients on the part of campus leaders and staff
6. Develop the information systems and processes to ensure accountability can be (and is) demonstrated in accordance with the agreed-upon measures

NDUS Campuses

1. Create unique, high-quality institutional strengths – capacities which serve to make the NDUS, as a system, a stronger enterprise and one which is aligned with the needs of the state and its citizens
2. Collaborate with others in utilizing these strengths in ways which serve the identified needs of clients throughout the state; minimize the barriers to accessing these assets
3. Develop internal values, policies and behaviors which encourage and reward entrepreneurship and responsiveness to the needs of clients
4. Strengthen ties to clients, engaging them in meaningful relationships and developing mutually rewarding partnerships; become engaged campuses

5. Develop academic programs which help students understand the application of their knowledge at places of employment and in the larger society
6. Put in place those mechanisms to ensure their end of the “flexibility with accountability” agreement is upheld

Private Sector

1. Work with institutions to ensure educational providers understand expectations regarding skills and knowledge of college graduates
2. Collaborate with institutions in ensuring students gain an appreciation for application of their learning – internships, mentorships, etc.
3. Participate in statewide efforts to expand and diversify the economy of the state

VII. Summary of Accountability Measures

The Roundtable on Higher Education also identified a total of 84 potential accountability measures for which the University System would be held accountable. Those 84 accountability measures were condensed into 34 measures linked to the six cornerstones and presented in the *Roundtable Report*. Progress toward each of the agreed-upon accountability measures is included in an annual accountability report, which is presented to the Interim Committee on Higher Education and distributed to other key stakeholders of higher education.

As stated in the *Roundtable Report*:

“It is the intent these accountability measures, as agreed upon, replace the accountability factors and expectations being developed independently by various entities.”

VIII. Complete Roundtable Report

Results of the roundtable study, including the cornerstones, specific recommendations and accountability measures, are published in a report titled *A North Dakota University System for the 21st Century*. This report is available through the North Dakota Legislative Council, the North Dakota University System Office or any of the 11 NDUS campuses. The report also is available on the Web at: www.ndus.edu