



## **Comprehensive Evaluation**

**Dr. Dean Bresciani**

**President**

North Dakota State University

June 16, 2021

**NDSU** NORTH DAKOTA  
STATE UNIVERSITY

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June 17, 2021

**Subject: Comprehensive Evaluation for Contract Renewal**

Dear Dr. Bresciani,

Let me begin by thanking you for your long service to North Dakota State University, in fact the longest serving NDSU president since President Loftsgard was hired in 1968. And, as you shared in your self-assessment, you are the longest serving research president in the fourteen state Midwest/Mountain region, a remarkable feat. The decade you have served as president has seen a string of football successes and national sports coverage never before enjoyed by our state, and require no review here, other to commend your role in this effort. I have attached your self-assessment, listening session feedback, SPOL data, and other documents for the SBHE to review directly. Now allow me to address your performance, with emphasis on the areas of finance, research performance, student enrollment, leadership adaptability, and NDSU senior executive team building.

**Finances:** As you pointed out in your self-assessment, it is helpful to understand how the NDSU enterprise was performing upon your arrival. In 2010, NDSU finances needed your attention, to which you supplied your years of experience, significantly improving a key metric, the Composite Financial Index (CFI) during your tenure. In addition, the physical plant required attention which you supplied, tackling the problem of deferred maintenance, and improving the campus without increasing the debt load. In addition, you grew the NDSU Foundation steadily across those years and have now realized your \$400 million dollar goal. This was critically important work. My concern would be how the effectiveness of traditional approaches may be impacted by new, uncontrollable variables. These are times of rapid change, such as the impact of the pandemic on student preferences, digitization of the economy, concomitant changes to work force needs, and other exogenous variables. In the face of so many changing factors, this may require adapting your approaches to diversify the NDSU enterprise stream and thus reduce long term financial risk and the wellbeing of future students and faculty and staff that may arise after both of us have retired.

**Research Performance:** North Dakota should be proud that NDSU holds several good research rankings, including among the highest state and local support in the nation. I am concerned however, that the NDSU research position has been eroding over the past several years in some of the metrics that best represent the national competitiveness of the research effort. It is therefore helpful to benchmark research metrics from the beginning of your tenure. In particular, the all-important National Science Foundation (NSF) R&D expenditures rank has declined from #128 in 2010 to #138 in 2019. Similarly, the NSF Federal expenditure ranking declined in #150 in 2010 to #171 in 2019. And overall, total R&D expenditures, adjusted for inflation, has remained relatively flat during the past 10 years (Please see Annex A: NSF HERD Survey Results). In addition, the highly coveted Carnegie Research Classification was changed to a lower classification in the past five years. I know you are attuned to these metrics and have been assiduously working to regain lost ground. The Research Committee of the SBHE was established to provide added visibility and top-level support to the research universities, and I encourage you to continue to work with them on metrics and new strategies.

**Enrollment:** Again, benchmarking to the beginning of your tenure is instructive. NDSU is a key engine for economic growth in the Fargo-Moorhead area, and in the period of 2001-2009, NDSU enrollment grew

approximately 50%. It was then reasonable when in 2015-16, you announced the goal to grow enrollment another 25% to 18,000. Yet, progress in this area has been problematic. In the past seven years, NDSU overall enrollment has declined from approximately 14,700 to 12,800. NDSU undergraduate enrollment has approximately declined from 12,000 in 2010, to 10,500 in 2020 (please see Annex B: Enrollment Trends). I do acknowledge that you have made progress on graduation rates, which are so important to each and every student affected by the failure to retain or graduate (see Annex I: Graduation Rates). Your continued effort in this area is appreciated.

***Non-Traditional Student Population:*** National education data shows that future growth of most states lies with non-traditional students. The North Dakota Legislature, Executive Branch, and SBHE have made a priority of recruiting and educating non-traditional students, providing programs people want, where and when they need them. By some accounts, more than 100,000 people in North Dakota have some college but no degree. Yet, in this key area, NDSU's numbers have declined. The number of students 23 years of age and older have since 2016, declined from 1,880 to 1,450. Concurrently, the number of courses offered using alternative delivery formats, which are preferred by non-traditional students, has remained flat until the pandemic forced all institutions to pivot from face-to-face course offerings (see Annex C: Non-Traditional Students). I would ask you to look closely at this potential pool of non-traditional students to see if you can do more to recruit, reach, retain, and graduate from this group.

***Adaptive Leadership in Times of Changing Technology, Health, Human, and Fiscal Environment:*** During your tenure, there have been periods of change which have required your response. As noted above, early to middle of your tenure you met that challenge with great success. During the middle to later phases of your service, I have some areas of concern. One is changing human needs, specifically, the need to serve a changing student body of non-traditional students, as noted in the previous paragraph. In addition, the SBHE in 2018 responded to feedback from legislators and civic leaders, to provide more agricultural education to the farmers and their children in Western North Dakota, a request that you have been hesitant to support. During the recent COVID pandemic, when SBHE leadership and state leaders recognized the urgent need to make decisions, albeit with imperfect information, there were some issues in the timeliness of your adaptability. As the existential cyber security threat to campuses, infrastructure, and pipelines grows by the day and massive breaches make national headlines (e.g., a major Midwest medical school, the disruption of fuel supplies to the East Coast), I am concerned about your speed of response. It is important you accelerate the adoption of security services offered by the State of North Dakota to secure students and faculty and facilities of NDSU (please see Annex D – Endpoint Security Project ). With regard to growing digital programs for our rapidly changing world, and the direction of the SBHE Envision 2030 to do so-- to include data analytics, computer science, software engineering, cyber security, among others-- it has been difficult to assess your progress over the past years. But I appreciate NDSU efforts. With regard to budget reductions, there have been times when you have adopted a strategy of 'across the board cuts', which has merits of simplicity. But I am concerned that such an approach may delay the ability of NDSU to position for a most certainly changed future. As you know the SBHE places a priority on freedom of speech, diversity, and inclusion, evidenced in SBHE strategy documents, the most recent digital MOUs completed with Tribal presidents, and the extensive SBHE support rendered to NDSU during the legislative session. I appreciate the priority you have placed on these areas and also understand it is difficult being a campus leader on these issues at this time.

**Executive Team Building and Shared Governance with Faculty:** To be more responsive to changing conditions requires a talented and stable executive team. While I acknowledge your years of team building that were crucial to stabilizing NDSU earlier in your tenure, your recent efforts to rebuild an executive team cause me some concerns. Illustrative of this concern is the abrupt departure of NDSU Provost in 2018, the appointment of two interims, and then when a national search yielded near 100 candidates, a person who had not applied was appointed, resulting in a faculty senate censure. The selection of a non-candidate for Provost has unfortunately raised reputational risk to NDSU, a risk articulated to me by national search firms, that future nationwide candidates might be hesitant to apply for senior NDSU positions. A related executive team issue is the long absence of a permanent Vice President of Research, resulting in three years of temporary, one-year appointments. To be able to respond to both short and long-term challenges require the best executive team the NDSU team can attract. Key to building that team is vigorous recruitment both 'in house' and from a national pool of highly qualified and dedicated servant leaders. I am encouraged that you have in the past weeks embarked on a search for a permanent Vice President of Research.

Thank you again for your long and devoted service as President of NDSU, a most wonderful university and treasure of the alumni, the citizens of Fargo, and all North Dakotans.

*This evaluation gives the highlights of President Bresciani's documented goal results. Details may be found in the enclosed Annexes (A-I) and a full report can be obtained from the Strategic Planning Online resource.*

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I acknowledge receipt of my performance evaluation.

*Dean Bresciani*

6/22/2021

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Dr. Dean Bresciani, President  
North Dakota State University

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Date

*Mark R. Hagerott*

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Dr. Mark Hagerott, Chancellor  
North Dakota University System

6/24/2021

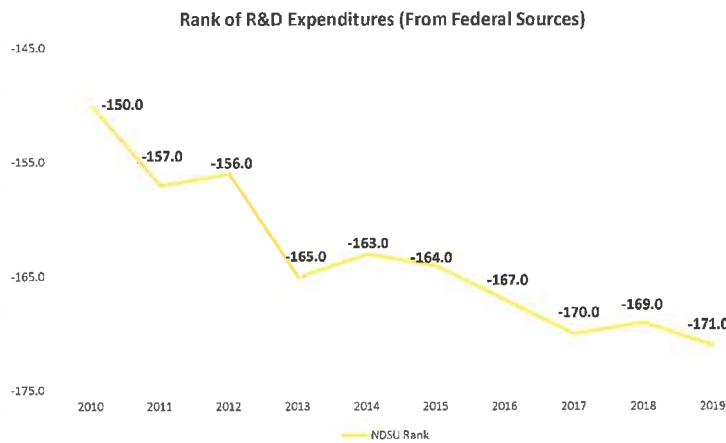
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Date

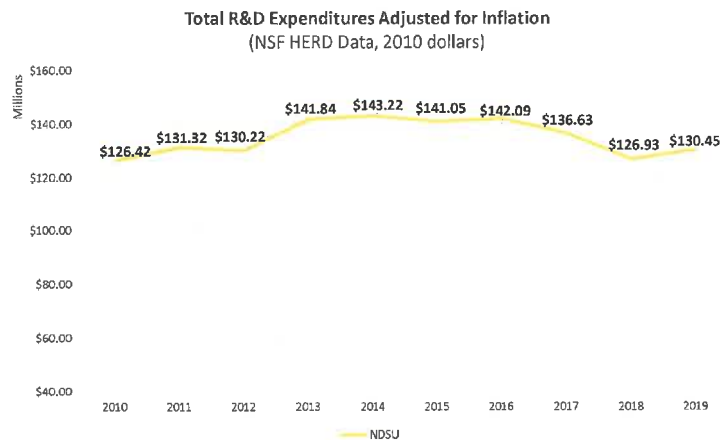
cc: Nick Hacker, Chair  
State Board of Higher Education

# Annex A: NSF HERD Survey Results

(from: <https://www.nsf.gov/statistics/srvyherd/>)



(from <https://ncesdata.nsf.gov/builder/herd>)



# Annex B: Enrollment Trends

(from <https://www.ndsu.edu/data/fastfacts/>)

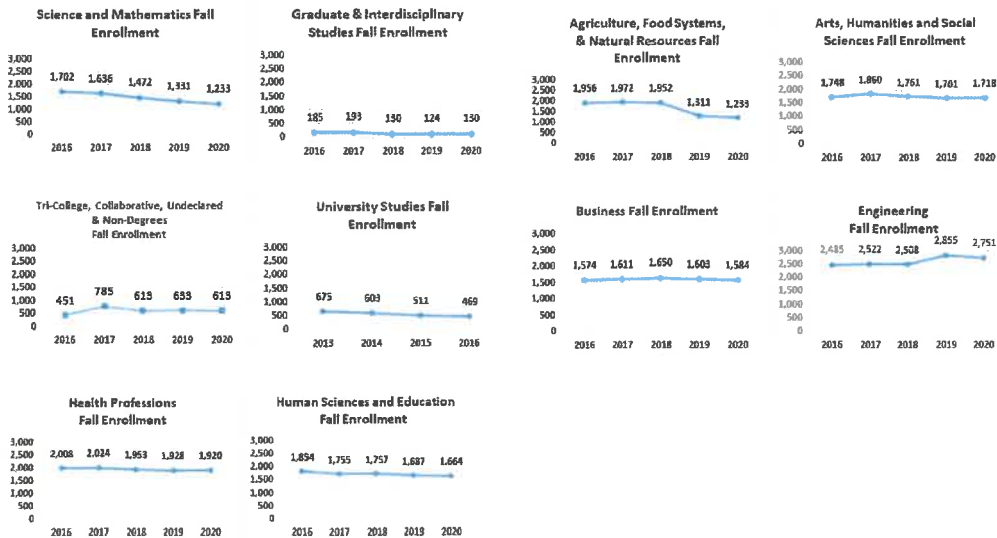
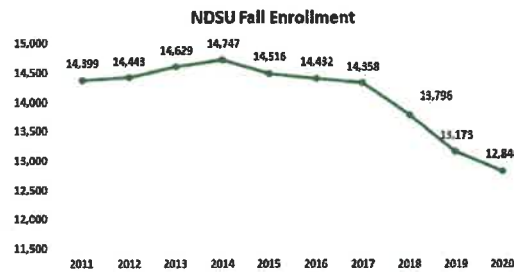
Fall Semester Headcount Enrollment by Student Level											
Student Level	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	
Undergraduate	11,911	11,988	11,948	12,124	12,037	12,010	11,984	11,425	10,811	10,555	
Freshmen	3,455	3,123	3,053	3,012	2,951	2,787	2,754	2,314	2,229	2,209	
Sophomores	2,749	2,835	2,820	2,892	2,761	2,830	2,789	2,726	2,386	2,290	
Juniors	2,393	2,393	2,436	2,524	2,608	2,575	2,618	2,570	2,537	2,324	
Seniors	3,580	3,637	3,639	3,696	3,637	3,818	3,823	3,815	3,679	3,652	
Professional	342	344	346	340	341	340	337	391	378	344	
Graduate	2,146	2,111	2,335	2,286	2,138	2,082	2,037	1,980	1,964	1,947	
Total	14,399	14,443	14,629	14,750	14,516	14,432	14,358	13,796	13,173	12,846	
Percent Undergraduate	82.7%	83.0%	81.7%	82.2%	82.9%	83.2%	83.5%	82.8%	82.2%	82.2%	
Percent Professional		2.4%	2.4%	2.4%	2.3%	2.3%	2.4%	2.8%	2.9%	2.7%	
Percent Graduate		14.9%	14.6%	16.0%	15.5%	14.7%	14.4%	14.2%	14.9%	15.2%	

Source: Fall Semester Enrollment Summaries Reports - Fourth Week, 9/22/2020.

## Historical Enrollment Fall Census

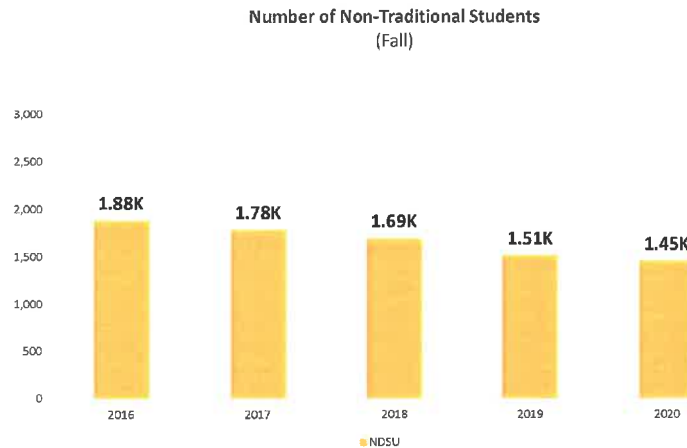
	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
NDSU Fall Enrollment	14,399	14,443	14,629	14,747	14,516	14,432	14,358	13,796	13,173	12,846

Source: 4th Week Enrollment Reports, 9/22/2020.

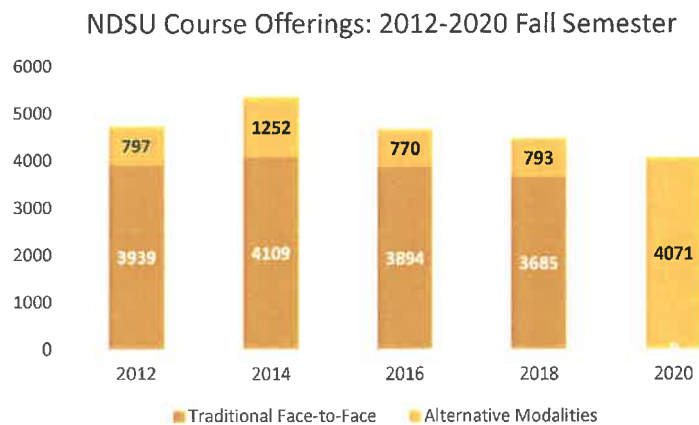


## Annex C: Non-Traditional Students

Number of students Age 23+ (from NDUS Strategic Plan, Goal #2 <https://ndus.edu/strategic-plan/>):



NDUS Course Offerings (from NDUS Student Information System: CS SR Rpt NDU001SR - Course Section Status Report):

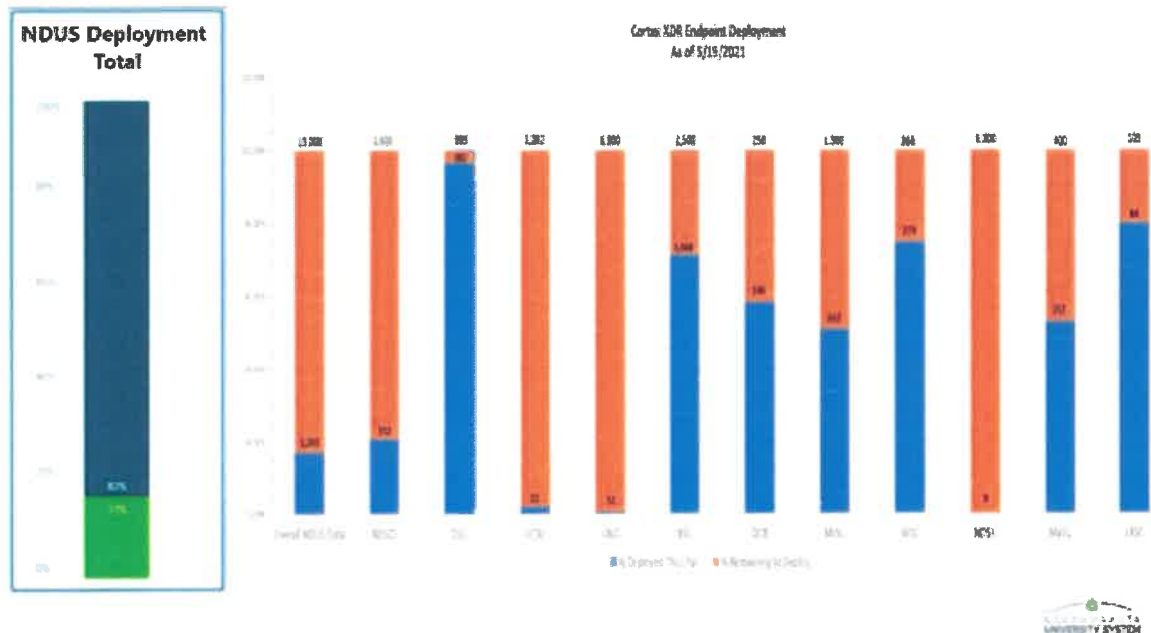




## Annex D: Endpoint Security Project

(from NDUS CTS report, May 19, 2021)

### Cortex XDR Endpoint Project



## Annex E: President Self-Assessment & Addendum

Date: April 2021

### Dean Bresciani, President North Dakota State University

***I. Please describe the 3-5 most important accomplishments you have achieved during the past five years:***

**Finances:** NDSU has improved its financial stability from a CFI risking loss of accreditation (inherited from the previous administration) to sharing the highest CFI rating of any institution in the state -- and on the cusp of yet higher ranking by both Moody and Standard & Poor's. In contrast, we recently learned from Standard & Poors that they will be lowering the rating of some 40% of our research university peers nationally.

Complementing the above, the NDSU Foundation set and will successfully reach and exceed its goal of the largest private fund-raising campaign in North Dakota higher education history (goal: \$400M). In addition, the permanent university endowment for the first time in NDSU history has surpassed \$300M (approximately \$85 million when I arrived). Annual fundraising has set similar records. While student scholarship resources have reached record levels for NDSU, endowed faculty positions have also proliferated as a result of being elevated and receiving an extraordinary level of first-ever (for NDSU) private support.

A large part of the above, and successes highlighted below (see #2, #3, #4 and #5), have been the establishment of countless major corporate partnerships. Doing so has led to substantial achievements including totally private funding of a major STEM facility (Aldevron Tower), research and public service collaborations, lobbying for and potential first-ever state research initiative funding, and broad political lobbying to advance statewide higher education interests (e.g. legislative attitudes toward out-of-state students).

**Campus Facilities:** As best records indicate, since I became president, NDSU has realized the largest number of new and renovated campus facilities in many decades -- if not ever. This includes new, expanded, and renovated of academic buildings, new research buildings, and new athletics facilities. Regarding the latter, and through private support alone, NDSU is enjoying new and/or major renovation of *every* athletic facility on the campus (inclusive of two projects underway this summer). Some of above construction projects were undertaken entirely with donated funds, others entirely with appropriated funds (the first fully legislatively funded buildings on NDSU campus since 1978), and some with a combination of both. Unlike the prior NDSU administration, all construction and renovation projects have been completed without incurring any debt (aside from two housing projects completed through revenue bonds).

At the same time, NDSU has invested heavily in improving the external appearance of campus and reducing its deferred maintenance backlog. When I arrived in 2010, NDSU had \$326 million in deferred maintenance, and it currently has only \$162 million.

Attending to issues inherited from (several) previous administrations, extensive infrastructure improvements, frequently underground and/or out of sight, also take place on an annual basis through internal resources. These investments will relieve future administrations from an aspect of deferred maintenance that could otherwise cripple the campus if left for a future administration.

On a more obvious front, comprehensive landscaping has taken place across the campus, all grounds are now irrigated, and the state's first nationally recognized tree-planting program ("Tree Campus USA") has been put in place.

**Research:** NDSU's research productivity positions it as the state's only top-100 ranked research university (NSF). Counterintuitively, that ranking has been maintained during a period of unprecedented withdrawal of state support resulting in a massive loss of faculty and staff. In fact, over the past few years research productivity is actually trending up.

**Student Retention and Graduation Rates:** NDSU has implemented a wide range of strategic student success initiatives, and continues to do so. They have resulted in state-leading student retention and graduation rates complimenting the state's largest full-time, *residential* student enrollment. Doing so leads to placing more graduates in to the workforce than any other System institution—at a rather notable "success rate" (job placement or graduate school) of 95% for undergraduate students and 94% for graduate students. Ironically worth noting is that NDSU's state formula funding has suffered as a result of this success in that we are getting students in and out faster which causes a loss of FTE's.

**Athletics:** Almost all NDSU teams now regularly reach post-season league, NCAA tournament and national championship levels, resulting in NDSU's consistent ranking as one of the most successful overall NCAA D-I programs in the nation (including eight FCS national football championships, and qualification for five "Big Dance" men's national basketball tournaments). Other teams/athletes moving to NCAA post-season and national championship levels include both men's and women's indoor track & field, both men's and women's golf, wrestling, softball, women's volleyball, both men's and women's cross country, and both men's and women's outdoor track & field.

At the same time, the average GPA of athletes has come up to and now far exceeds that of the overall student body, all teams are well above a 3.0 GPA and, for the past four years, 60-80 student athletes have every semester have achieved 4.0 GPAs across all NDSU colleges. Many student athletes annually receive league and NCAA academic recognitions, including two NCAA "Woman of Year" finalists in the past six years and ten NCAA Elite 90 recognitions across four sports.

In addition, I have assumed increasingly senior NCAA leadership roles, leading to my current service on its Division-I Board of the directors. These are the first time a North Dakota president has served in such NCAA roles.

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## ***II. Please describe the 3-5 biggest challenges your institution has faced during the past five years:***

**State Funding:** Historic serial cuts to state appropriated support to North Dakota higher education have resulted in the loss of over 165 faculty and staff.

**Facilities:** The physical plant inherited from the previous administrations was by System evaluation ranked as the state's worst, and has demanded and will continue to demand focused attention to maintain and improve the physical functionality of the campus. Adding to that challenge, the A. Glen Hill STEM Center (2017) was the first fully state-funded building in the preceding 40 years. While campus building conditions have dramatically improved, facilities (both above- and below- ground) remain a demanding inherited situation of aging infrastructure.

**Enrollment Decline:** A notable two-year drop in new student enrollments a few years ago continues to cause financial stress as those classes' cycle through the system. That challenge should, thankfully, soon be retired.

**Enrollment Competition:** While NDSU (by more than 3,000 students) now leads the state in full-time students, and also now leads the state in the enrollment of both in-state high school graduates, and out-of-state high school graduates, the intensity of competition for those students, particularly those from out of state, is increasing and anticipated to become intense.

However, through a broad menu of recruitment and matriculation initiatives, NDSU successfully stabilized and is now steadily growing first year student enrollments. That success will require even more focused diligence as we approach the nationwide demographic “cliff” to be realized in 2025. **State Research Support:** North Dakota is one of the few (if any) states in the nation that do not provide discretionary support for research initiatives. That lack of support substantially hampers the competitiveness of the state’s two research universities versus their peers. Legislative progress on this front, led by statewide business leaders initially approached by NDSU, and collaboratively supported for the past four years by NDSU and UND, bodes promising.

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**III. Please describe the 3-5 most important goals for the next five years:**

**Enrollments:** As previously indicated, enrollment competition will become, on an increasing basis, far more intense over the next five years because of nationwide demographic and economic issues. This is further complicated by the steady increases in recruiting by competing in- and out-of-state, public and private higher education institutions very purposefully targeting F-M area student prospects. Additionally, the State of Minnesota is increasing financial support to students aimed at retaining their own students within Minnesota.

While ND demographics and subsequent ND enrollments are anticipated to remain relatively stable, the majority of NDSU’s enrollments come from outside the state where competition for them will become increasingly aggressive. As the System institution best positioned to draw, retain and graduate out-of-state students, and given the state’s workforce need for those students, NDSU feels a disproportionately high responsibility to be successful on this particularly demanding front.

**Corporate and Federal Partnerships:** To be successful on all fronts, but particularly research productivity, NDSU will need to continue growing its R & D relationships with major private sector and federal partners. Although NDSU has an impressive portfolio of same, as the saying goes – “if you aren’t growing you’re dying,” so NDSU will need to remain both aggressive and successful on this front.

**Political Position:** NDSU both benefits by and suffers from being located in the largest county and largest city in the state. That being the case, both statewide and legislative perceptions of Cass County and Fargo, and by extension NDSU, are at times at odds with maximizing the potentials of NDSU. We are continuously working to compellingly share NDSU’s value-proposition to the state and are making substantial demonstrable headway in doing so.

**Stabilization of Senior Leadership:** NDSU’s president has become the longest-serving research university CEO in the 14-state northern/mid-west region of the U.S. However, NDSU needs to stabilize a number of other senior academic leadership positions. That has recently been accomplished on a permanent basis with the Provost role, but needs to similarly take place on a permanent basis with the Vice President for Research & Creative Activity (with permanent filling of the provost role, the VP-R search is now underway). Potential decisions regarding one or two college-level leadership roles is currently on hold, though, pending conclusion of the current strategic prioritization process.

**Groundwork for the Future:** For NDSU simply to maintain but with the aspiration to improve its service to the state, region and nation, we must continue to strengthen enrollments, research productivity, maintenance and growth of the physical campus, and the generation of resources to support doing so. The pressures to support and grow successes – leading to increasing our contributions to the people we serve — will become more and more demanding.

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**IV. Please describe the 3-5 biggest challenges your institution will face in the next five years:**

**Enrollments:** (please see discussions in segments II and III above).

**External Financial Stability:** While NDSU has been very successful in stabilizing and continuing to improve its internal financial situation, the volatility of state support (as a reflection of a fragile bimodal, commodity-based economy) severely challenges NDSU's success. As an illustrative example, in 2010 NDSU had some 120 less faculty than its slightly smaller nearby peer Montana State University. Over the next five years NDSU grew its faculty to mirror MSU (with resulting growth in both enrollments and research productivity), but has since lost more than it gained in faculty positions due to serial cuts of appropriated support. We can and will try to recover that lost human capital that is critical to our success, but will that prove to be a repeating future cycle?

**National Visibility and Relevance:** Due to unusual successes on both research productivity and athletic fronts, NDSU has uniquely elevated its visibility as a *nationally* competitive research university (by external evaluation rather than local self-complimentary evaluation). Success in doing so is about much more than the university itself. In many ways, North Dakota is judged externally by the visibility and success of its research universities. NDSU as the state's largest and most successful university is drawing distinctive national attention, as confirmed by Standard & Poor's now referring to it as the state's flagship university.

The above creates a responsibility to help advance North Dakota on a national stage. That's "easy to say but hard to do" ... as every other major research university in the nation is trying to accomplish much the same, and they often have advantages in doing so that are not available to NDSU.

**Ability to be Dynamic and Responsive to the Marketplace:** NDSU and UND are unique within the NDUS System by proportions perhaps under-appreciated. While the two research universities are relatively *similar to each other* in terms of size and scope, they are extraordinarily *dissimilar from the other nine*.

For example, the summer school enrollments of both NDSU and UND exceed the regular year enrollment of the next largest institution in the System. The research universities' dissimilarity to the smallest institutions is even more extreme. In fact, the combined enrollments of NDSU and UND represent the majority enrollments for the entire System.

It is also worth noting that for the most part, enrollments at the other nine are largely drawn from within the state, whereas the majority of NDSU and UND enrollments are drawn from outside of the state. In other words, the research universities operate under very different market conditions than the nine regional institutions.

Tensions resulting from the above differences are the consequence of System operational decisions that both disregard those differences, and give the smallest institutions the same "voice" in policy decisions as the largest institutions -- even though their size, scope and marketplace are completely different. To put a finer point on that tension, policy decisions are generally based not on what is best for the largest universities and the most students, but rather what is best for the smaller institutions with far fewer students.

**Social Strife:** The increasing levels of anger and polarization in our society are -- throughout the nation -- consistently spilling over to and eroding campuses and their sense of community. That environment of combativeness, for NDSU, creates constant reputational and legal risks less frequently faced in other areas of North Dakota.

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## **V. What do you need from me – NDUS Chancellor – to support your growth and initiatives:**

**Differential Treatment of the Research Universities:** The state's two research universities need to be not simply recognized as different, but provided differential treatment and autonomy (or at least decision making influence) reflecting their completely dissimilar size, scope, marketplace and the expertise of campus senior leaders. That's not meant as any disrespect of the other System campuses


or their leadership, nor to suggest that the research universities don't appreciate the advantages of being in the System, but simply that treating the two in the same manner as the other nine substantially limits success of the former, with implications for the vast majority of the state's students.

**Support on Diversity, Inclusion and Respect:** NDSU has taken aggressive actions during this last year to improve its awareness, responsiveness and voice on issues related to diversity, inclusion and respect. Additional support from the SBHE and the NDUS on these issues would of course be welcome.



**MEMORANDUM**

To: Chancellor Hagerott  
Chair Hacker

From: Dean Bresciani 

Date: June 17, 2021

Re: Comprehensive Evaluation

Thank you for the copy of my Comprehensive Evaluation, dated June 17, 2021 (the copy I received was indicated to be a draft and delivered on June 16, 2021). I appreciate this opportunity to respond to the evaluation. As I indicated in our conversation, I intend for this memorandum to become a permanent part of the Evaluation.

This process has been an interesting and novel experience. As I understand it, the NDUS has never done a comprehensive evaluation on its presidents before, and it selectively chose me and two other presidents as the inaugural candidates. Whenever a new and complicated process is instituted, there are likely to be bumps in the road, and this process has been no different. Overall, I have found the process to be a useful exercise.

Please know that there are numerous parts of the written Evaluation with which I agree. However, there are portions that I believe need clarification and/or context. With this document, I hope to provide the SBHE members with my perspective on those situations. The topic headings below correspond to the items within the Evaluation.

**A. Comprehensive Evaluation for Contract Renewal**

Introduction. I was surprised and, frankly, disappointed in the overall negative tenor of the summary. I am starting my twelfth year at NDSU (not a decade), and I am proud of NDSU's accomplishments during my presidency. As I will detail below, those accomplishments go well beyond the success of our football team and touch on every aspect of NDSU. In particular, I note that my Self-Assessment (Annex E) was very different from this Evaluation, but it was neither disputed nor discussed.

Finances: I want to thank you for acknowledging our achievements regarding NDSU's finances. I inherited a very difficult financial situation at NDSU, and we were able to dramatically improve the situation. Examples include:

- NDSU's Composite Financial Index was only 1.2 in 2010, but in 2020, our CFI is 4.09.
- Since 2010, NDSU has completed, or will soon start, the construction of six major buildings on campus, and none of them involved debt financing: (1) A. Glenn Hill Center; (2) Sugihara Hall; (3) Aldevron Tower; (4) Sanford Health Athletic Complex; (5) Agricultural Products Development Center; and (6) Indoor Football Practice Facility.

- NDSU already surpassed its \$400 million fundraising campaign goal months ago and will continue to grow (in the evaluation it indicates that NDSU is “on the verge of realizing” the goal). The Evaluation also does not recognize the significance of this record accomplishment.
- On April 16, 2021, the objective, third-party rating agency S&P Global Ratings continued NDSU’s AA- rating despite the fact that negative financial pressures were impacting universities’ bond ratings all across the country. NDSU’s current rating is higher than when I arrived. In their evaluation, S&P wrote: “We assessed NDSU’s enterprise profile as strong, characterized by modest matriculation rates and good geographic diversity, which has helped offset local demographic pressures and FTE declines. We assessed the university’s financial profile as very strong, characterized by solid available resources, good state funding environment, and a low debt burden.” A copy of the S&P Global Report is attached.

I am in complete agreement with you regarding the fact that there are major changes which are impacting the entire higher education industry. However, the Evaluation did not mention the major steps that NDSU has been taking to deal with those steps, including: (1) improving our admission process which has resulted in increases in first-year enrollment; (2) a comprehensive and inclusive strategic planning process; and (3) the completion of a semester long academic prioritization program by Huron Consulting (one of the premier national higher education consultants) with their report being available here: [https://www.ndsu.edu/provost/strategic\\_plan/strategic\\_prioritization/](https://www.ndsu.edu/provost/strategic_plan/strategic_prioritization/). This report will be used to guide our future academic planning and budget allocation efforts.

Research Performance. Research at NDSU has been a point of pride for me. I arrived at NDSU at the time when federal earmarks were ending. Prior to my time, North Dakota’s federal delegation had been incredibly effective at getting non-competitive funding allocated to North Dakota. However, that ended when earmarks stopped, and NDSU had to compete nationally with much larger, more well-funded institutions. Despite the intense competitive pressure, NDSU’s research expenditures have increased from 2010 to 2020 whether you adjust the numbers for inflation or not. In 2010, NDSU’s total research expenditures were \$126.4 million. I’m pleased to report that NDSU’s 2020 total expenditure was \$155.6 million. This is the third straight year of expenditure growth, and the second largest expenditure ever.

Enrollment. I certainly agree that NDSU is a key economic engine for Fargo-Moorhead, but I would also indicate that NDSU is a key economic engine for the entire state of North Dakota. It has been important for NDSU to continue to retain North Dakota students and to recruit out-of-state students for North Dakota’s workforce needs. I note that you indicate that we have been down in enrollment for the past seven years. In fact, there were relatively minor changes from 2014 through 2017. Certainly, in 2018, we experienced a dramatic drop in first-year students, and in 2019, we experienced another, much smaller, drop in first year enrollment. However, in 2020, through aggressive admission changes, we grew our first year class, and we expect a larger first year class again this year.

It is also important to note that these changes occurred during a nationwide drop in higher education enrollment. Across the country, there were millions of more student enrolled in higher education in 2010 than in 2021. The fact that NDSU’s enrollment has been as stable as it has been is a testament to our aggressive efforts and our reputation for quality education in programs students are seeking.



Non-Traditional Student Population. I certainly agree that higher education has to do more to retrain its non-traditional population, and NDSU is playing its part in that. Unfortunately, I'm not sure about your data regarding NDSU's 23 and older population, and without more time, I cannot look into this in detail. However, I would note that NDSU's dramatically improved graduation rates and a new degree completion program are likely to result in fewer 23 and older students; a result we can all celebrate.

Also, the Evaluation failed to note that NDSU has already been working on improving its academic delivery to non-traditional students. For example, I would note that NDSU was a leader during the pandemic of incorporating the HyFlex educational delivery model across its campus. This was made possible by a CARES grant, and in its application to the governor seeking money for support of HyFlex, NDSU wrote the following: "Thinking beyond the current crisis, this technology will enable NDSU to improve its educational services for years to come." In furtherance of that goal, on January 28, 2021, I wrote a campus-wide update about the future of HyFlex at NDSU, which including the following language (see attached):

[N]ational demographic trends have not changed. Certain areas of the country have been experiencing a shortage of college-age students. Starting in 2026, that trend becomes national (i.e., 18 years after the birthrate decline caused by the Great Recession of 2008). NDSU will continue to be impacted by these trends because of the increasingly intense national competition for students. Please remember that our current budget cutting process was caused by loss of enrollment, not a loss of state support (although further cuts from the legislature continue to be possible). To prevent future losses, we need to increase enrollment.

I believe that HyFlex can help with these enrollment issues if we are thoughtful and creative about using it. For example, I could foresee HyFlex expanding the summer course offerings and providing rural and under-resourced secondary schools with access to specialized dual credit taught by college faculty, not high school teachers. Those ideas could just be the tip of the iceberg. The only limit may be our own creativity.

We are approaching a time when the crisis will be past, and we still have this powerful tool at our disposal. Now is the time to talk about its future. To that end, I'm asking Provost Fitzgerald to lead a collaborative effort with faculty aimed at exploring both faculty and student needs/expectations and developing innovative solutions. She is already starting this process, and by the end of the calendar year, I believe we will have exciting new ways to continue to fulfill NDSU's mission.

Adaptive Leadership in Times of Changing Technology, Health, Human, and Fiscal Environment.

Thank you for acknowledging my effective leadership, but I am confused by some of your comments about recent activity:

1. With regard to the non-traditional student issue, please see above.

2. With regard to moving our agriculture education to western North Dakota, I am not sure why you did not include any of the issues that I previously raise about this topic. I understand that legislator(s) may have wanted agriculture production programs to be developed online so as to be available in Western North Dakota. However, faculty did not believe that was an appropriate approach, and even if they had, those requests came at the same time as major budget cutting at NDSU. It is expensive to create quality online content, and there was no data to suggest that there was sufficient student demand to offset the cost. Nevertheless, in order to accomplish this request, NDSU signed a new collaborative AgEd program with Dickinson State University.
3. With regard to timeliness and adaptability during COVID, I am at a loss to know what that references. NDSU was a leader during the COVID pandemic. We implemented HyFlex, our infection rates were consistently below the local community and state rates, and our first year enrollment actually grew.
4. With regard to cybersecurity threats, I am not sure what you mean about timeliness. You indicate that we need increase our adoption of the resources by the State of North Dakota. Are you referring to something specific? I understand that my IT division is working with CTS on this matter, but you and I have never spoken about any such topic.
5. With regard to "across the board budget cuts", I am not sure I understand. Different departments at NDSU had different percentage cuts, and the deans were charged with implementing the cuts within their college. In addition, as indicated above, we retained Huron Consulting which will be helpful on a going-forward basis for guiding budget prioritization decisions.

Executive Team Building and Shared Governance with Faculty. I have had a great deal of consistency within my executive team. In fact, S&P Global wrote: "NDSU has an experienced senior management team. Senior management continues to develop and apply an enrollment strategy to help offset geographic pressures. In our opinion, the senior management team exhibits good tenure, and its budgeting and financial management practices have been adaptive to the variable state funding environment." Please see pg. 5 of the enclosed S&P Global report.

With regard to the Provost search, we did get numerous applicants, but ultimately, it was a failed search. There was only one candidate that the committee could fully support (even though the campus feedback did not fully support), and that candidate was unable to start in a reasonable time period. Luckily, we had an interim provost (one of the two you mentioned in the Evaluation), who had been doing an amazing job for nine months. As an executive, I had to choose between a sub-optimal external candidate who could not get the full support of campus or the search committee or a tremendously effective and proven internal interim provost. I made my decision, and it was the right decision. Provost Fitzgerald has been tremendous in the role, and I am thankful that she is serving in that role. Her performance since her appointment has been roundly applauded by campus.

With regard to the VPR search, I was asked by faculty leadership to not fill that role until the provost search was completed, and out of respect for shared governance, I honored that request. After Provost Fitzgerald became permanent, we immediately started the national search. In addition, Interim Vice President Schuh has been doing a great job in the position, so NDSU has not been at any disadvantage during her time as VPR.

**Annex A – I:** Given the short amount of time that I have had to review this material, I have not had an opportunity to review all the pages in detail. I would note, however, that the material related to the listening sessions do not appear to be a word-for-word transcript, and as such, I cannot speak to whether they accurately capture the content of those sessions. I would also like to attach a document that was prepared for the listening sessions which provides a quick overview of some important metrics during my time as president of NDSU.



## North Dakota State University; Public Coll/Univ - Unlimited Student Fees

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# North Dakota State University; Public Coll/Univ - Unlimited Student Fees

## Credit Profile

North Dakota State University  
Long Term Rating

AA-/Stable

Affirmed

## Rating Action

S&P Global Ratings affirmed its 'AA-' rating on North Dakota State Board of Higher Education's (SBHE) various bonds, issued on behalf of North Dakota State University (NDSU, or the university). The outlook is stable.

As of fiscal year-end 2020, NDSU had \$142.4 million of outstanding debt, including \$126.3 million of revenue bonds (including its housing and auxiliary facilities system bonds and debt issued for NDSU's two component units); capital leases made up the remaining debt. All debt is fixed rate except for component unit debt, which is variable rate notes secured by the outstanding pledges raised by the foundation. The university has no swap contracts. We consider the debt burden to be low, with a maximum annual debt service (MADS) burden at 1.85% of fiscal 2020 adjusted operating expenses. The housing and auxiliary facilities revenue bonds are secured by pledged revenue, which includes net revenue of the housing and auxiliary system in addition to pledged fees. Pledged fees include a wellness-center fee and the memorial union bond retirement fee imposed on all students, as well as a parking fee when applicable (a fee for service for student, faculty, and staff permits). S&P Global Ratings views the security as equivalent to an unlimited student fee pledge.

Due to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, NDSU transitioned to a hybrid instruction format with classes offered online and some in-person instruction, which the university has continued through the spring semester and is currently evaluating this model for future use. Total international students represent less than 5% of the total enrollment, so we do not believe the decline in international enrollment would materially effect overall revenue. As part of the Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund II, authorized by the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act 2021 (CRRSAA), the university received a total of \$8.0 million (this compares with \$7.6 million received in 2020 as part of the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security [CARES] Act). The university expects to use the full amount within fiscal year 2020-2021. Management expects operations to improve in fiscal 2021 due to the additional CARES Act funding. Management expects to receive additional federal funding from the American Rescue Plan Act that is anticipated to be used in fiscal 2022 and fiscal 2023. In fiscal 2020, auxiliary revenue was not materially changed from the previous year. In fiscal 2021, the expected loss of revenue management anticipates using HEERF stimulus money to reimburse loss revenue in auxiliary operations.

## Credit overview

We assessed NDSU's enterprise profile as strong, characterized by modest matriculation rates and good geographic diversity, which has helped offset local demographic pressures and FTE enrollment declines. We assessed the university's financial profile as very strong, characterized by solid available resources, good state funding environment,

*North Dakota State University; Public Coll/Univ - Unlimited Student Fees*

and a low debt burden. Combined we believe these credit factors lead to an indicative standalone credit profile of 'a+'. As our criteria indicate, the final rating can be within one notch of the indicative credit level. In our opinion, the 'AA-' rating on the university's bonds better reflects NDSU's very low debt levels and available resources compared with medians and with those of peers.

The 'AA-' rating reflects our assessment of NDSU's strengths:

- Solid financial resource ratios for the rating category;
- Low MADS burden, at 1.85% of fiscal 2020 adjusted operating expenses; and
- Relatively broad geographical draw for a public flagship institution, as demonstrated by NDSU's large out-of-state student population (56.3% of total enrollment in fall 2020).

Somewhat offsetting factors, in our opinion, include:

- Full-accrual operating deficits in fiscal 2019 that widened in fiscal 2020;
- Continued decline in full-time equivalent (FTE) enrollment that could further pressure financial operations;
- Declining high school demographics within the state that are expected to continue to pressure NDSU's enrollment due to negative demographic trends.

The stable outlook reflects our expectation that, over the outlook period, NDSU's enrollment will begin to stabilize and available resource ratios will remain at current levels or better. We also expect the university will improve financial operations on a full-accrual basis, due to the increases expected in state funding and one-time federal stimulus money that NDSU anticipates will be spent in fiscals 2021 and 2022.

North Dakota State University, located in Fargo on the Minnesota border, is the state's land-grant institution and the largest (in terms of full-time-equivalent [FTE] students) of the state's 11 public institutions. Founded in 1890, NDSU is a comprehensive university offering 291 total degree programs (undergraduate and graduate).

#### **Environmental, social, and governance (ESG) factors**

In our view, higher education entities face elevated social risk due to the uncertain duration of the COVID-19 pandemic. North Dakota State University transitioned to remote learning in spring 2020 and adopted strategies last fall to protect the health and safety of its students, faculty, and staff. We view the risks posed by COVID-19 to public health and safety as a social risk under our ESG factors. Despite the elevated social risk, we believe North Dakota State University's environment and governance risk are in line with our view of the sector.

## **Stable Outlook**

### **Downside scenario**

The rating could come under pressure if the trend of FTE enrollment declines materially, if NDSU continues to produce full-accrual operating deficits, the pension liability and funding levels were no longer in-line with the rating, or if available resources deteriorate from current levels. Further unforeseen pressures from the pandemic that cause material weakening of demand, finances, or the trajectory of the school's plan to mitigate the effects of the COVID-19

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outbreak may also result in a negative rating action.

### Upside scenario

We could consider a positive rating action if FTE enrollment stabilizes, resulting in a trend of sizable operating surpluses combined with significant growth in financial resources to levels commensurate with a higher rating.

## Credit Opinion

### Enterprise Profile

#### Industry risk

Industry risk addresses the higher education sector's overall cyclical and competitive risk and growth by applying various stress scenarios and evaluating barriers to entry, levels and trends of profitability, substitution risk, and growth trends observed in the industry. We believe the higher education sector represents a low credit risk when compared with other industries and sectors.

#### Economic fundamentals

In our view, the university has good geographic diversity with a majority of students coming from outside of North Dakota. As a result, our assessment of the university's economic fundamentals is anchored by the U.S. GDP per capita.

#### Market position and demand

NDSU's headcount and FTE enrollment have declined over the past three years. For fall 2020, total headcount decreased slightly by 2.5% to 12,846 (11,252 FTE) relative to 13,173 headcount (11,704 FTE) in fall 2019. In our opinion, continued declines in North Dakota high school graduate demographics over the next 10 years will continue to pressure NDSU enrollment. To offset demographic pressures within the state, the university has been successful in recruiting more students from other key markets such as Minnesota. Management anticipates that the enrollment will improve in fall 2021, given its continued effort to enhance recruitment. Although it is early in the recruiting process, management anticipates overall enrollment to stabilize in fall 2021.

NDSU's geographic diversity is impressive for a public university, in our view, as just 43.7% of its students are from within the state. North Dakota maintains a reciprocity agreement with Minnesota, which has historically accounted for about 45% of the student population. The remaining students were from other states and foreign countries.

For fall 2020, NDSU received 7,880 freshman applications. NDSU's freshman acceptance rate, in our opinion, is weak for the rating category, at 94.1% for fall 2020. However, NDSU's matriculation rate of 31% is quite healthy and is indicative of a demand niche within the region. Freshman matriculation improved in fall 2020 with 2,307 compared with 2,218 freshmen in fall 2019. However, this remains significantly below 2,633 incoming freshmen in fall 2018. ACT scores of entering freshmen exceed the national average, and the average score in fall 2020 was 23.6 (the national average is about 21).

Tuition remains affordable, in our opinion, and increased by 4% for both in-state residents and nonresidents during the 2020-2021 academic year. Total tuition, fees, and room and board charges equaled \$19,846 for an in-state resident,



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which is in the lower range of peer university averages. Minnesota undergraduate students who have been approved by the state for reciprocity tuition are charged tuition at 112% of the resident rate.

### **Management and governance**

The North Dakota SBHE is the governing body for the 11 colleges and universities in the North Dakota University System (NDUS). The SBHE consists of eight voting members, seven of whom are appointed by the governor (with the advice and consent of the senate) for four-year terms, and one student member appointed to serve a one-year term. A nonvoting faculty adviser and a nonvoting staff adviser also serve on the board. The SBHE has administrative and financial oversight over the 11-member institutions of the NDUS, including NDSU.

The NDSU has an experienced senior management team. Senior management continues to develop and apply an enrollment strategy to help offset geographic pressures. In our opinion, the senior management team exhibits good tenure, and its budgeting and financial management practices have been adaptive to the variable state funding environment.

## **Financial Profile**

### **Financial management policies**

The university has formal policies for endowment, investments, and debt. It operates according to a five-year strategic plan and has a formal reserve liquidity policy. The university meets standard annual disclosure requirements. The financial policies assessment reflects our opinion that, while there may be some areas of risk, NDSU's overall financial policies are not likely to negatively affect its future ability to pay debt service. Our analysis of financial policies includes a review of the university's financial reporting and disclosure, investment allocation and liquidity, debt profile, contingent liabilities, and legal structure and a comparison of these policies with those of comparable institutions.

### **Financial performance**

State appropriations are significantly tethered to the oil and gas and agricultural industry, which has over the past two years constrained state funding as those industries have seen economic pressures. In fiscal 2018, due to conservative budgeting practices, operations improved to a positive \$7.4 million, or 1.6% margin, compared with slightly negative operations in fiscal 2019. In fiscal 2020, operating deficit widened to \$13.6 million or a negative 2.8%. Management continued to make budget cuts to mitigate weakened state funding, additional expenses due to the COVID pandemic, and a decline in enrollment. Management is anticipating improvement in operations in fiscal 2021, due to continued conservative operating practices, modest growth in state funding, and federal funding due to the COVID pandemic, but could be offset if NDSU continues to have pressure in undergraduate enrollment.

NDSU's budget for the 2019-2021 biennium increased significantly when compared to the 16.9% reduction in 2017-2019 original base. Management expects continued improvement in state funding for the next biennium. Further NDSU received \$70 million which has been earmarked for science building and other capital improvements.

We view NDSU's revenue base as fairly diverse, with net tuition, fees, and auxiliary revenue at 47%; state operating appropriations at 24%; and grants and contracts (including federal Pell grants) at 11% of fiscal 2020 adjusted operating revenue.



*North Dakota State University; Public Coll/Univ - Unlimited Student Fees***Financial resources**

NDSU's financial resource ratios have improved since fiscal 2012 and have remained relatively stable in the past several years. The growth in unrestricted net assets (UNA) in the past was aided by several years of full-accrual operating surpluses posted by NDSU. As of June 30, 2020, adjusted UNA, including assets held by the foundation, were \$160 million, compared with \$156.5 million as of June 30, 2019. This constituted 32.9% of fiscal 2020 adjusted operating expenses and 113.8% of debt.

The university's endowment is held by the NDSU Development Foundation and had a market value of roughly \$248.6 million. The university-held endowment has increased significantly over the last 10 years. However, in our view, NDSU endowment remains low relative to both the rating category and peer public flagship institutions' levels.

**Debt and contingent liabilities**

As of fiscal year-end 2020, NDSU had \$142.4 million of outstanding debt, including \$126.3 million of revenue bonds (including its housing and auxiliary facilities system bonds and debt issued for NDSU's two component units); capital leases made up the remaining debt. Management does not anticipate additional debt during the outlook period.

The majority of NDSU employees participate in the TIAA defined contribution plan with a smaller part of all employees participating in the North Dakota Public Employees Retirement System (NDPERS) defined based plan. NDSU contributes to NDPERS, a cost-sharing multiple-employer defined benefit pension plan that covers substantially all employees of the state of North Dakota, its agencies, and various participating political subdivisions. We understand that the overall pension funded status is 49%, which is significantly lower compared to historical levels due to a change in assumptions that could possibly create risk long-term. However, in our view, NDSU has partially offset some of that risk given all its administrators and faculty have transitioned to the TIAA plan starting in 2014. We will continue to monitor the situation and any adjustments that could be made by state legislators to address current funding assumptions.

**North Dakota State University, N.D.: Enterprise And Financial Statistics**

--Fiscal year ended June 30--

	2021	2020	2019	2018	2017
<b>Enrollment and demand</b>					
Headcount	12,046	13,173	13,796	14,358	14,432
Full-time equivalent	11,252	11,704	12,394	12,784	12,783
Freshman acceptance rate (%)	94.10	93.60	92.50	91.60	92.80
Freshman matriculation rate (%)	31.10	39.20	43.90	44.70	52.60
Undergraduates as a % of total enrollment (%)	82.20	82.20	82.80	83.50	83.20
Freshman retention (%)	82.00	78.90	78.90	79.10	79.60
Graduation rates (six years) (%)	62.30	60.30	57.60	58.00	55.50
<b>Income statement</b>					
Adjusted operating revenue (\$000s)	N.A.	473,564	472,872	474,880	478,581
Adjusted operating expense (\$000s)	N.A.	487,172	476,330	467,431	480,300
Net adjusted operating income (\$000s)	N.A.	(13,608)	(3,458)	7,449	(1,719)
Net adjusted operating margin (%)	N.A.	(2.79)	(0.73)	1.59	(0.36)
Estimated operating gain/loss before depreciation (\$000s)	N.A.	12,737	22,330	32,874	22,795

## North Dakota State University; Public Coll/Univ - Unlimited Student Fees

North Dakota State University, N.D.: Enterprise And Financial Statistics (cont.)					
Change in unrestricted net assets (UNA; \$000s)	N.A.	(1,434)	(2,504)	2,641	(3,731)
State operating appropriations (\$000s)	N.A.	115,671	115,371	112,021	124,987
State appropriations to revenue (%)	N.A.	24.40	24.40	23.60	26.10
Student dependence (%)	N.A.	46.80	33.70	34.80	34.30
Health care operations dependence (%)	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.
Research dependence (%)	N.A.	9.90	10.50	10.50	10.10
Endowment and investment income dependence (%)	N.A.	1.00	0.90	1.00	0.60
<b>Debt</b>					
Outstanding debt (\$000s)	N.A.	142,367	150,389	157,550	100,808
Proposed debt (\$000s)	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.
Total pro forma debt (\$000s)	N.A.	142,367	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.
Pro forma MADS	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.
Current debt service burden (%)	N.A.	2.74	2.31	2.49	2.75
Current MADS burden (%)	N.A.	1.85	1.89	1.83	1.88
Pro forma MADS burden (%)	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.
<b>Financial resource ratios</b>					
Endowment market value (\$000s)	N.A.	248,636	208,173	205,293	167,201
Related foundation market value (\$000s)	N.A.	401,269	311,583	295,322	235,006
Cash and investments (\$000s)	N.A.	150,287	157,794	177,263	138,946
UNA (\$000s)	N.A.	81,898	83,332	85,918	83,277
Adjusted UNA (\$000s)	N.A.	160,063	156,481	156,042	146,468
Cash and investments to operations (%)	N.A.	30.80	33.10	37.90	28.90
Cash and investments to debt (%)	N.A.	105.60	104.90	112.50	137.80
Cash and investments to pro forma debt (%)	N.A.	105.60	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.
Adjusted UNA to operations (%)	N.A.	32.90	32.90	33.40	30.50
Adjusted UNA plus debt service reserve to debt (%)	N.A.	113.80	105.50	100.30	147.20
Adjusted UNA plus debt service reserve to pro forma debt (%)	N.A.	113.80	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.
Average age of plant (years)	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.
OPER liability to total liabilities (%)	N.A.	0.90	0.80	0.90	N.A.

N.A.—Not available; MNR—Median not reported; MADS—Maximum annual debt service. Total adjusted operating revenue = unrestricted revenue less realized and unrealized gains/losses and financial aid. Total adjusted operating expense = unrestricted expense plus financial aid expense. Net operating margin =  $100 \times (\text{net adjusted operating income} / \text{adjusted operating expense})$ . Student dependence =  $100 \times (\text{gross tuition revenue} + \text{auxiliary revenue}) / \text{adjusted operating revenue}$ . Current debt service burden =  $100 \times (\text{current debt service expense} / \text{adjusted operating expenses})$ . Current MADS burden =  $100 \times (\text{maximum annual debt service expense} / \text{adjusted operating expenses})$ . Cash and investments = cash + short-term and long-term investments. Adjusted UNA = Unrestricted net assets + unrestricted net assets of the foundation. Average age of plant = accumulated depreciation / depreciation and amortization expense.

## Related Research

Through The ESG Lens 2.0: A Deeper Dive Into U.S. Public Finance Credit Factors, April 28, 2020

Ratings Detail (As Of April 16, 2021)

North Dakota State University; Public Coll/Univ - Unlimited Student fees

Ratings Detail (As Of April 16, 2021) (cont.)		
North Dakota St Univ hsg and aux fac rev bnds (University Village And New Residence Hall)		
Long Term Rating	AA-/Stable	Affirmed
North Dakota St Univ hsg and aux fac rev rfdg bnds (Refunding Of Series 2009a)		
Long Term Rating	AA-/Stable	Affirmed
North Dakota St Bd of Hgr Ed, North Dakota		
North Dakota St Univ, North Dakota		
North Dakota St Bd of Hgr Ed (North Dakota St Univ) hsg and auxil facs rev rfdg bnds		
Long Term Rating	AA-/Stable	Affirmed
North Dakota St Bd of Hgr Ed (North Dakota St Univ) PCU_USF		
Long Term Rating	AA-/Stable	Affirmed

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## Bresciani, Dean

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**From:** All NDSU Employee list <NDSU-EMPLOYEE-OFFICIAL@LISTSERV.NODAK.EDU> on behalf of Bresciani, Dean <00000f23384abdda-dmarc-request@LISTSERV.NODAK.EDU>  
**Sent:** Thursday, January 28, 2021 11:53 AM  
**To:** NDSU-EMPLOYEE-OFFICIAL@LISTSERV.NODAK.EDU  
**Subject:** Campus Update - HyFlex

NDSU Community,

With this update, I want to start a conversation about NDSU in the post-COVID world.

- A. Full Return to the Classroom.** Media are reporting that vaccine roll-out is starting to pick up steam after some initial problems. All indications are that the rate of distribution will continue to increase, and hopefully, President Biden will be able to meet his goal of 100 million doses in 100 days. In fact, there's reason to believe that it could be achieved sooner. While we are wary of the contagiousness of the new variants, I believe that we can and should be hopeful about the future.

Along those lines, we need to be planning for how campus will operate once COVID is no longer as threatening as it has been. This semester we again adopted HyFlex as the primary modality of course delivery, and both students and faculty are choosing whether to attend classes in-person or synchronously remote. Given the fact that the virus is still very present in the country, it makes sense that this semester we will continue to use HyFlex.

However, as the situation improves, the rationale for continuing with such heavy reliance on HyFlex becomes less compelling. In fact, I believe that it is reasonable, and pedagogically beneficial, for both faculty and students to physically return to class even during this semester. Nevertheless, the choice will remain with each person.

I anticipate the fall to be a very different situation. Right now, I expect a full return in the fall semester to our traditional educational model with both faculty and students physically in the classroom. I have heard from both faculty and students about the desire to return to the classroom, and the fall semester is a logical and appropriate time to effectuate that change.

Noticeably, I have not dealt with summer classes. While many summer classes were already online even before the pandemic, many others were face-to-face. These classes are tougher to plan right now because much depends upon how quickly the vaccine is distributed and what happens with the new variants of the virus. Summer appears to be an inflection point, and we need to monitor events to determine the modality of our summer classes. We will be providing additional information soon.

- B. Future of HyFlex.** HyFlex was effective at allowing NDSU to teach its courses throughout the pandemic, even when the COVID metrics in North Dakota were among the highest in the world. However, HyFlex was instituted at NDSU during a crisis, and because it was a crisis, it limited the amount of planning and inclusive conversation that could occur.

In addition, you may recall that even before the pandemic hit, the entire higher education industry was facing major difficulties, particularly in the area of enrollment. How the pandemic will impact enrollment is unclear. In the short-term, graduating seniors and the unemployed may be more likely to continue their educations because of the lack of employment opportunities. However, the lack of financial resources caused by the economic downturn may prevent some people from being able to continue their educations.

In the longer term, national demographic trends have not changed. Certain areas of the country have been experiencing a shortage of college-age students. Starting in 2026, that trend becomes national (i.e., 18 years after the birthrate decline caused by the Great Recession of 2008). NDSU will continue to be impacted by these trends because of the increasingly intense national competition for students. Please remember that our current budget cutting process was caused by loss of enrollment, not a loss of state support (although further cuts from the legislature continue to be possible). To prevent future losses, we need to increase enrollment.

I believe that HyFlex can help with these enrollment issues if we are thoughtful and creative about using it. For example, I could foresee HyFlex expanding the summer course offerings and providing rural and under-resourced secondary schools with access to specialized dual credit taught by college faculty, not high school teachers. Those ideas could just be the tip of the iceberg. The only limit may be our own creativity.

We are approaching a time when the crisis will be past, and we still have this powerful tool at our disposal. Now is the time to talk about its future. To that end, I'm asking Provost Fitzgerald to lead a collaborative effort with faculty aimed at exploring both faculty and student needs/expectations and developing innovative solutions. She is already starting this process, and by the end of the calendar year, I believe we will have exciting new ways to continue to fulfill NDSU's mission.

*Dean Bresciani*

Dean L. Bresciani, President  
**NORTH DAKOTA STATE UNIVERSITY**  
Member of the 14th 11 Campus North Dakota University System

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TEACHING, STUDENTS AND ADMINISTRATION

BACHELOR DEGREE COMPLETIONS



GRADUATE DEGREE COMPLETIONS



STUDENT TO FACULTY RATIO



ADMINISTRATIVE COSTS  
Percent of university budget funding central administration  
FY 20 audited NDSU financial statements



VICE PRESIDENTS



FINANCIAL STEWARDSHIP AND FUNDRAISING

NDSU ENDOWMENT



COMPOSITE FINANCIAL INDEX  
Commonly used higher education measure of financial health



STANDARD AND POOR'S RATING SERVICES



DEFERRED MAINTENANCE



ECONOMIC IMPACT



RESEARCH

RESEARCH EXPENDITURES  
Funds largely derived from external grant resources



LICENSING INCOME



NDSU NORTH DAKOTA STATE UNIVERSITY

EXTERNAL EVALUATION

S&P Global Ratings, June 4, 2019:

"We assessed NDSU's enterprise profile as very strong, characterized by a modest decline in enrollment, solid matriculation rates, and good geographic diversity, which has helped offset local demographic pressures. We assessed the university's financial profile as very strong, characterized by solid available resources, good financial policies, and a low debt burden."

NOTABLE ACHIEVEMENTS

- NDSU won eight of the last nine NCAA DI Football Championships, bringing high levels of positive national attention to both NDSU and North Dakota.
- According to a recent survey, 78% of graduates from North Dakota and 41% of graduates from Minnesota are employed in North Dakota.
- Since 2010, NDSU has completed, or will soon start, the construction of six major buildings on campus, and none of them involved debt financing: (1) A. Glenn Hill Center; (2) Sugihara Hall; (3) Aldevron Tower; (4) Sanford Health Athletic Complex; (5) Agricultural Products Development Center; and (6) Indoor Football Practice Facility.
- NDSU was a strong advocate for the development and implementation of the system-wide funding formula which brought predictable, equitable funding to all the institutions of the NDSU.

## Annex F: SPOL Data

The President reports achievements for the reporting period using the SPOL (Strategic Planning Online Data system).

### Goal One: Deliver degrees that are the best value in the nation

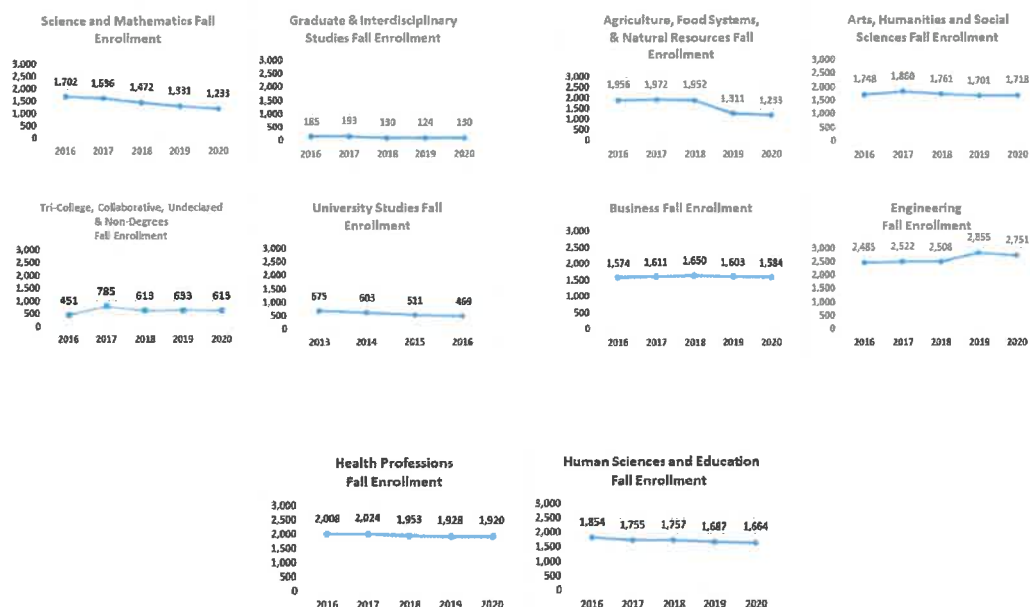
- NDSU enrolled the largest number overall of full-time students in North Dakota; the largest number of full-time undergraduates from North Dakota; and the largest number of fulltime undergraduates coming to North Dakota from out-of-state
- NDSU enrolled the largest number of engineering students and the largest number of nursing students in North Dakota
- Enrollment Trends by College (from <https://www.ndsu.edu/data/fastfacts/>):

College	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Agriculture, Food Systems and Natural Resources	1,702	1,635	1,472	1,331	1,233
Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences	1,748	1,868	1,761	1,701	1,718
Business	1,574	1,611	1,650	1,603	1,584
Engineering	2,485	2,522	2,508	2,855	2,751
Health Professions	2,008	2,024	1,953	1,928	1,920
Human Sciences and Education	1,854	1,755	1,757	1,687	1,664
Science and Mathematics	1,956	1,972	1,952	1,311	1,233
Graduate and Interdisciplinary Studies	185	193	130	124	130
Tri-College Collaborative and Non-Degree	451	785	613	633	613
University Studies	459				
Total NDSU Enrollment	14,432	14,358	13,796	13,173	12,846

Notes: Computer Science moved to the College of Engineering in Fall 2019

University Studies and Undeclared Majors moved to College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences in Fall 2017

Source: 4th Week Enrollment Reports, 9/22/2020

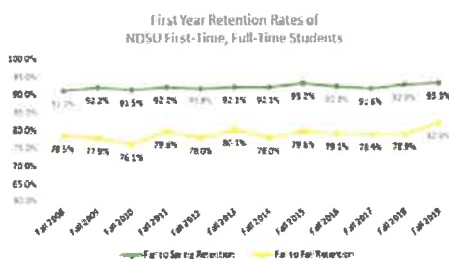




- NDSU matches if not leads the state in economic analysis by both Standard & Poors and Moody.
- CFI continues to improve, resulting in increased financial and functional efficiencies; latest S&P ranking of AA- with consideration of future further upgrade.
- Various national rankings:
  - NDSU ranks in the top 4.9% of the 19,788 universities worldwide according to the 2020-21 edition of the "Global 2000" list by the Center for World University Rankings.
  - The 2020 American Journal of Pharmaceutical Education ranked NDSU as one of the 5-6 best values for instate and out-of-state residents for Pharmacy
  - Payscale.com ranks NDSU 251 in terms of affordability and return on Investment, down 35 places as compared to the previous year rank of 216
  - Washington Monthly's 2020 National University Ranking listed NDSU as 221 out of 389
- Retention and Graduation:
  - NDSU awarded largest number of baccalaureate and doctoral research degrees awarded in North Dakota
  - TRIO Support Services reported 88% persistence rate from semester to semester, 96% of students in good academic standing, and 43% 6-year graduation rate for participants.
  - Post-graduation success rates (employment/graduate study) are 88% for undergraduate students and 95% for graduate students. Elevated retention rate to 82%; Elevated 4-year graduation rate to 43.3% (from <https://www.ndsu.edu/data/fastfacts/>):

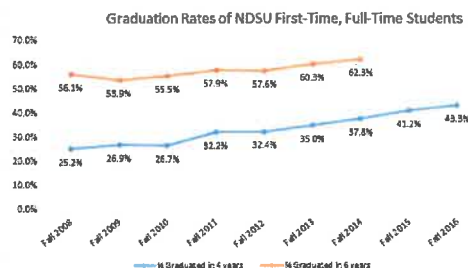
Retention Rates

	Fall 2008	Fall 2009	Fall 2010	Fall 2011	Fall 2012	Fall 2013	Fall 2014	Fall 2015	Fall 2016	Fall 2017	Fall 2018	Fall 2019
First-time Full-time Fall to Spring Retention	91.2%	92.2%	91.5%	92.2%	91.8%	92.1%	92.1%	93.2%	92.3%	91.6%	92.3%	91.3%
First-time Full-time Fall to Fall Retention	78.5%	77.9%	76.1%	79.6%	78.8%	80.1%	78.8%	78.6%	79.1%	78.9%	78.9%	82.0%



Graduation Rates

	Fall 2008	Fall 2009	Fall 2010	Fall 2011	Fall 2012	Fall 2013	Fall 2014	Fall 2015	Fall 2016
% First-Year Students Graduated in 4 years	25.2%	26.9%	26.7%	32.2%	32.4%	35.0%	37.8%	41.2%	43.3%
% First-Year Students Graduated in 6 years	56.1%	53.9%	55.5%	57.9%	57.6%	60.3%	62.3%	--	--



Source: IPEDS Reports. Undergraduate Level Time to Degree Outcomes, 9/22/2020

- The EDA awarded a \$1.5 million grant to the NDSU Research and Tech Park for its new Innovation Studio, which is being aggressively implemented as funds become accessible.
- Continue to increase adoption of OER, now with financial support and involvement of Student Government.
- Giving Day broke previous records with more than \$1.3 million raised through more than 1,700 gifts.
- The state record setting major capital campaign will reach closure well beyond goal.
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- NDSU offers more online courses, by a wide margin, than any other college or university in North Dakota. However, data from 2021 spring semester (see below, from NDUS Student Information System CS SR Rpt NDU001SR - Course Section Status Report) shows UND offered 1,509 IA/IS courses compared to NDSU's 368 (IA and IS courses considered to be online courses).

Count of Sec	Column Labels						
Row Labels	Traditional/ Face to Face TC	Combo/Hyflex (CO)	Independent Study (CR)	Face to Face Off Campus (FF)	Internet Asynchronous (IA)	Internet Synchronous (IS)	Grand Total
NDSU	1970	2016			125	344	4479
UND	147	2468	38	112	1034	475	4274
Grand Total	2117	4484	38	237	1378	499	8753

- State of Residency, in all sectors, is holding steady (from <https://www.ndsu.edu/data/fastfacts/>):

	2016		2017		2018		2019		2020	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
North Dakota Residents	5,960	41.3%	5,854	40.8%	5,632	41.3%	5,501	41.8%	5,316	41.5%
Minnesota Residents	6,543	45.3%	6,536	45.2%	6,389	46.3%	6,024	45.8%	5,915	46.0%
Other States/ U.S. Citizens	839	5.8%	851	5.9%	757	5.5%	773	5.9%	780	6.1%
International	851	5.9%	792	5.5%	740	5.4%	872	5.1%	831	4.9%
Permanent Residents	231	1.7%	229	1.6%	210	1.5%	193	1.5%	176	1.4%
Total	14,432	100%	14,358	100%	13,736	100%	13,173	100%	12,846	100%

Source: 4th Week Enrollment Reports 9/22/2020

### Goal Two: Provide programs people want, where and when they need them

- Private sector engagement supporting NDSU has substantially and consistently increased on an annual basis.

### Goal Three: Equip students for success

- Elevated entering class average high school GPA to 3.53 (up by .03 from previous year) and average ACT score to 23.7 (down by .1 from previous year). *Note: ACT scores were waived for Fall 2020, so data is incomplete*
- The extension of the experimental application waiver, singularly, was a game-changer for overall applications in fall 2020, particularly those from under-represented populations.
- NDSU recently completed a formal MOU with the ND Air National Guard to create a degree completion program for active duty personnel.
- By blending data-driven decision making with new access options which hy-flex have made possible, NDSU has a purposeful strategy for broadening its access, application and enrollment success
- Application, Admission and Enrollment (from <https://www.ndsu.edu/data/fastfacts/>):

Fall Semester Headcount Enrollment by Student Level										
Student Level	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Undergraduate	11,911	11,988	11,948	12,124	12,037	12,819	11,384	11,425	10,831	10,555
Freshmen	3,189	3,123	3,053	3,012	2,951	2,787	2,754	2,314	2,229	2,283
Sophomores	2,749	2,835	2,820	2,892	2,781	2,830	2,789	2,726	2,386	2,290
Juniors	2,353	2,393	2,436	2,524	2,688	2,575	2,618	2,570	2,537	2,324
Seniors	3,580	3,637	3,639	3,696	3,637	3,818	3,823	3,815	3,679	3,662
Professional	342	344	346	349	341	348	337	391	378	344
Graduate	2,146	2,111	2,335	2,286	2,138	2,082	2,037	1,980	1,864	1,847
Total	14,359	14,443	14,629	14,730	14,516	14,432	13,736	13,173	12,846	
Percent Undergraduate	82.7%	83.0%	81.7%	82.2%	82.9%	83.2%	83.5%	82.8%	82.2%	82.2%
Percent Professional	2.4%	2.4%	2.4%	2.3%	2.3%	2.4%	2.3%	2.8%	2.9%	2.7%
Percent Graduate	14.9%	14.6%	16.0%	15.5%	14.7%	14.4%	14.2%	14.4%	14.9%	15.2%

Source: Fall Semester Enrollment Summaries Reports - Fourth Week 9/22/2020

### Historical Enrollment Fall Census

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
NDSU Fall Enrollment	14,399	14,443	14,629	14,747	14,516	14,432	13,736	13,173	12,846	

Source: 4th Week Enrollment Reports 9/22/2020



#### Goal Four: Maximize the strengths of the unified system

- Agricultural Affairs has established a 20% tribal liaison position to encourage and promote relationships between entities in Ag Affairs (NDSU Extension, ND Ag Experiment Station and CAFSNR) and the 1994 land grants in the state.
- IT Division collaborations with Tribal Colleges & Universities in ND:
  - NSF Campus Cyberinfrastructure Team: Piloting a CI-enabled Tribal Research Collaboration. This 2-year cyberinfrastructure proposal is a collaboration between the American Indian Higher Education Consortium (AIHEC), Sitting Bull College (SBC), Nueta Hidatsa Sahnish College (NHSC), United Tribes Technical College (UTTC), Turtle Mountain Community College (TMCC), Cankdeska Cikana Community College (CCCC), and NDSU. AIHEC intends it to serve as a model and pilot for replication in other regions of the US. Together these institutions will establish the socio-technical foundations of a sustainable ND research infrastructure supporting current STEM research and education programs while providing the framework for operating and building on that infrastructure for the future. A "community of practice" among peers will be established to serve much the same function as mutual aid agreements between small fire departments. This will improve knowledge sharing and resilience to disruptions among the small IT support organizations involved. This community of practice will strengthen the research and education programs of the five TCUs in ND. These schools serve AI/AN students, many of whom are first generation college students, and act as bridges to these underserved and underrepresented populations. The design and delivery of health, education, and other community services which rely on capable and reliable cyberinfrastructure will be advanced, as will TCU-based pure and applied research of tribal and regional significance. It will also provide skills development and summer employment opportunities for TCU students and faculty as they operate, maintain, and expand the cyberinfrastructure themselves - within the ND educational community of practice.
  - Northern Tier Network Consortium: The current NSF CC proposal builds on previous successful projects and regional collaborations among higher education institutions across the upper Midwest and Pacific Northwest, who collectively serve as partners to coordinate efforts of the Northern Tier Network Consortium. The Northern Tier Network Consortium in 2018 extended an invitation to regional TCUs to join in the consortia's annual conference and other consortia activities. The invitation intentionally expands the group to include anchor institutions across the region working toward common goals, including synergies between land grant institutions supporting local economic development, education and research. Engaging the TCUs in the NTNC serves to expand the 'community of practice', and benefits all by improving communications and human networking to move communities forward.
- Collaborating with The University of North Dakota's Division of Research & Economic Development, and the North Dakota Department of Commerce, to focus on the well-functioning UAS and autonomous systems ecosystem in North Dakota
- The ND Forest Service provided assistance to ND residents relating to sick trees, community forestry and general forestry. Assistance requests have been increasing and, in many cases, the efficiency and ability to serve statewide has been enhanced by technology.
- The ND Forest Service has engaged with other states and agencies in a national effort to protect resources, homes and lives during the wildfire season. In 2020, out-of-state assistance was provided to Wyoming, Nevada, Montana, Colorado and Oregon.

- MOU with Minot State University to assist MSU with hosting 2 international exchange visitors in the student non-degree catering.
- Soon to be confirmed Nursing MOU with Williston State College, around an Rn to BSN completion program, potentially leading to the NDSU DNP program.

#### **Goal Five: Research Excellence and Innovation**

- NDSU is a part of the American Connection Broadband Coalition. This coalition advocates for public and private sector investment to bring High-speed internet infrastructure to rural areas, in addition to advocating for policies and contributing their own resources to facilitate remote education, health and mental health services, job opportunities and more, with the goal of connecting and lifting up all communities through access to modern digital technology.
- Due to aggressive proactive NDSU IT measures, we have to date been largely exempt of data intrusions becoming otherwise commonplace in ND and around the world.
- Finalized rollout of Novelution, an electronic research management system that will help alleviate our paperwork burden, has been completed. Novelution's electronic lifecycle for research projects will eliminate the need to hand-deliver paper documents around campus.
- Proposal Development Program implemented that offers topics such as finding funding, developing a well organized and structured proposal, writing project summaries, and evaluation and peer review.
- New Faculty Program continued for first and second year faculty that offers professional development opportunities centered on research career development.
- NDSU CoSearch launched - a 1.5 day event aimed to bring together faculty from various disciplines to develop collaboration ideas around the theme "Farm of the Future."
- NDSU Research supports new opportunities to solve problems alongside industry partners in themed areas of bio-based plastics and biomedical engineering and health.



## Annex G: Online Survey

Strategies & Priorities																
Response Score	The President is an effective leader				The President promotes a climate of diversity				The President involves students/faculty/staff in campus governance				The President encourages innovation			
	Student	Faculty	Staff	Alum	Student	Faculty	Staff	Alum	Student	Faculty	Staff	Alum	Student	Faculty	Staff	Alum
	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	10	9	8	7	6	5
Count	59	83	118	55	59	88	116	51	48	65	104	54	55	76	108	53
Mean	6.1	6.2	7.2	8.8	7.2	6.5	7.4	8.0	6.8	6.0	6.8	8.7	6.5	6.1	7.6	8.9

Response Score	Institutional Leadership																		
	The President has a long-term vision for the institution				The President brings together appropriate people to set priorities for the institution				Overall, the President works well with students/faculty/staff										
	Student	Faculty	Staff	Alum	Student	Faculty	Staff	Alum	Student	Faculty	Staff	Alum							
	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2
Count	64	102	119	57	72	102	121	50	68	105	120	56							
Mean	5.3	4.3	6.5	8.7	4.2	4.3	6.1	8.2	4.4	3.8	6.4	8.4							

Communication and External Relations																
Response Score	The President presents a positive image for the institution				The President is appropriately involved in student/faculty/staff engagements				The President listens attentively				The President communicates clearly			
	Student	Faculty	Staff	Alum	Student	Faculty	Staff	Alum	Student	Faculty	Staff	Alum	Student	Faculty	Staff	Alum
10	11	15	28	34	8	9	18	24	9	11	23	23	14	6	27	27
9	8	10	29	10	2	5	20	11	5	5	20	15	8	10	30	14
8	4	11	17	3	7	4	14	5	4	5	14	4	6	11	20	5
7	7	13	11	2	2	7	11	4	3	8	7	3	6	11	12	2
6	4	8	10	1	7	4	7	2	3	6	11	0	4	7	9	1
5	7	9	5	3	2	8	12	4	4	6	9	3	8	11	7	4
4	3	3	9	2	4	7	4	1	4	2	3	3	3	6	4	1
3	3	9	7	0	7	8	12	0	6	9	5	0	3	10	4	0
2	6	10	6	1	10	12	6	1	5	16	6	0	6	11	7	1
1	24	15	9	1	20	34	11	1	23	31	16	3	19	24	11	1
Count	77	103	131	57	69	98	115	53	66	99	114	54	77	107	131	56
Mean	4.9	5.7	7.0	8.8	4.3	4.0	6.3	8.4	4.4	4.2	6.5	8.3	5.4	4.8	7.1	8.6

Personal Qualities																
Response Score	The President maintains high standards				The President exercises judgment in dealing with sensitive issues				The President deals with crisis in a timely manner				The President is willing to re-evaluate decisions, if necessary			
	Student	Faculty	Staff	Alum	Student	Faculty	Staff	Alum	Student	Faculty	Staff	Alum	Student	Faculty	Staff	Alum
	10	3	7	11	9	11	11	11	13	11	11	11	8	6	19	19
9	3	8	1	9	5	8	18	12	5	11	10	12	0	6	17	11
8	7	14	17	4	7	9	10	6	8	6	17	5	7	9	16	6
7	5	7	9	2	3	10	14	3	7	10	13	3	2	3	4	2
6	2	6	5	1	3	4	3	1	4	12	8	1	3	3	8	0
5	4	6	4	3	5	7	7	1	3	7	8	1	3	7	3	1
4	3	6	5	1	3	9	4	2	1	3	8	2	4	4	3	1
3	8	8	5	1	3	9	5	2	8	5	3	1	3	5	7	0
2	5	7	7	0	5	9	1	0	4	14	5	1	7	11	10	0
1	8	19	10	1	10	2	8	1	1	1	8	1	1	10	15	3
Count	72	92	115	55	77	98	116	53	74	101	126	53	61	92	102	43
Mean	5.3	5.3	7.1	8.8	4.4	5.0	6.7	8.5	5.2	5.1	6.5	8.6	4.0	3.8	6.2	8.4

Current and Future Considerations									
The President brought together appropriate parties that provided effective institutional leadership to the Covid-19 pandemic					The President brought together the appropriate parties to ensure effective institutional communication regarding the Covid-19 pandemic				
Response Score	Student	Faculty	Staff	Alum	Student	Faculty	Staff	Alum	
	10	12	11	3	13	10	10	4	
	9	4	12	10	3	4	13	14	4
	8	6	10	7	6	10	13	14	6
	7	10	8	7	0	10	12	14	0
	6	7	10	7	2	5	7	9	2
	5	6	10	2	0	6	10	2	0
	4	1	7	3	1	4	8	5	2
	3	5	9	7	0	4	10	5	0
	2	7	8	3	1	4	5	4	1
1	6	11	8	2	10	10	11	1	
Count	74	105	126	47	76	105	127	46	
Mean	5.3	6.1	7.5	8.8	5.6	6.2	7.3	8.8	

## Annex H: Graduation Rates

(from <https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/use-the-data>)

