

Legislative Review

NORTH DAKOTA
UNIVERSITY SYSTEM
The Vital Link to a Brighter Future

A Look at Higher Education in Week 11: March 12–16, 2007

SBHE Revises Positions on HB 1487 and SB 2249

The SBHE revised its positions on two legislative bills at the March 15, 2007, board meeting.

As originally introduced, **HB1487** provided \$3.1 million from the Student Loan Trust Fund for low-interest student loans. The NDUS was supportive of the bill in that form. However, as amended by the Senate Education Committee, HB1487 now provides \$3 million in state general funds for grants to students who attend public two-year colleges.

At the March 15 meeting, the SBHE voted to support HB 1487. However, that support is contingent upon fully funding the SBHE base

budget request and funding for HB 1487 not being included in the base budget.

As approved by the Senate, **SB 2249** provided \$2 million in general funds to CTE for NDUS workforce curriculum development and \$2.65 million in additional funding for supplemental workforce training grants. However, a House amendment removes the funding and directs that CTE use \$1 million from the NDUS Office budget to fund the curriculum development grants.

The board also voted to oppose the House version of SB 2249.

March 22

Bills and resolutions must be reported out of committee in the second house

House Committee Votes “No” on North Dakota Promise Bill

SB 2347, the North Dakota Promise bill, was heard in the House Education Committee March 12 and reported back to the House March 15 with a “do not pass” recommendation of 10-3. The House vote is scheduled for Monday, March 19.

On March 12, testimony in support of the bill was provided by Dr. Ellen Chaffee, VCSU president; Dr. Lee Vickers, DSU president; Dennis Hill, representing private sector roundtable members; Haylee Cripe, UND, and Dante Miller, NDSU, representing NDSA; and several other strong supporters of higher education.

The text that follows is an excerpt from Dr. Chaffee's comments about how SB 2347 helps address North Dakota's urgent need to develop human capital.

North Dakota has been sitting at a crossroads for several years – much of it not created or controlled by us. Like it or not, it's here, it's moving rapidly, and every opportunity we miss

cuts our chance to achieve the kind of state we want.

What kind of state do YOU want? History starts now. And you are making it.

If we let the future happen to us, the state's population will continue to decline and age – perhaps even faster as other states ramp up their efforts to recruit talented young people to their colleges and good jobs. In the 1980s and 1990s, North Dakota lost young people because there were no jobs. Now we are losing jobs because there are no people. Ask NISC in Mandan. Ask Microsoft and MeritCare. Ask the employers who came to a conference here last year to find ways to import more internationals to North Dakota on H1B visas.

If we let the future happen to us, we might as well start shutting down everything but senior centers and nursing homes, with the bleak hope that enough qualified people will be here to care for them. Us.

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Or we can create the future. We can work to keep our young people here and to attract the best and brightest from elsewhere to study, graduate, join the tax rolls and invent for their children as our elders did for us.

What kind of risk will you take? The risk of leaving North Dakota in far worse shape than we found it? Or the risk of leadership – envisioning the kind of state we really WANT and making strategic investments to achieve it?

Centers of Excellence Funding Bill Heard

SB 2015, the OMB appropriation bill that includes funding for centers of excellence, was heard in the House Appropriations Government Operations Division March 13.

NDUS representatives of the 11 centers of excellence that have received funding and their private sector partners testified at the hearing. They reported on the progress and impact of proposals funded to date and provided examples of centers that could be developed if additional funding is available in 2007 – 09.

The speakers also told the committee they support the flexibility included in the current legislation. Rather than excluding projects that include infrastructure development and workforce training from eligibility, the group encouraged the committee to delegate selection criteria to the Centers of Excellence Commission. The committee has not yet taken action on the bill.

Following the House committee hearing, the Senate Appropriations subcommittee working on HB 1003, the NDUS budget bill, also discussed centers of excellence. HB 1003 subcommittee members are Sens. Ray Holmberg, Tony Grindberg and Larry Robinson. Comments were provided by Mark Nesbit, chair of the Centers of Excellence Commission; Eddie Dunn, NDUS chancellor; and Shane Goettle, Department of Commerce commissioner.

Senate Appropriations Hears HB 1125

HB 1125, a bill to create a loan forgiveness program for veterinarians, was heard in the Senate Appropriations Committee March 15.

Peggy Wipf, NDUS director of financial aid, testified in support of the SBHE-sponsored bill. Wipf said the intent of the bill is to encourage new veterinary medicine graduates to return to North Dakota to practice.

The committee did not take action on the bill.

Senate Committee Approves HCR 3025

HCR 3025, a concurrent resolution authorizing a study of possible methods for growing North Dakota's population and increasing the available workforce, was heard in the Senate Industry, Business and Labor Committee March 13 and recommended for approval by the committee on a vote of 7-0 on March 15.

In testifying in support of the bill, Chancellor Eddie Dunn said it is consistent with one of the central messages shared by supporters of higher education this legislative session.

“That message is,” Dunn said, “the single most important factor that will determine the success of North Dakota will be its human capital – people with the knowledge and skills required to fill positions in the knowledge-based economy we are experiencing today.

“The study would also parallel a charge from the recent report issued by the Blue Ribbon Commission of the NCSL. I suspect most of you are familiar with this report. One of the key recommendations in the NCSL report, which this study resolution would address, is, ‘rethink higher education policy as part of state economic development,’ ” Dunn said.

College Admission Requirements Omitted

SB 2309, a bill to increase high school graduation requirements, was heard in the House Education Committee March 12.

Because the bill also specified the number of units required for college admittance, Mike Hillman, NDUS vice chancellor for academic and student affairs, told the committee the bill conflicted with a constitutional provision delegating that responsibility to the SBHE.

By increasing the number of required units without grandfathering in recent graduates, SB 2309 would force the NDUS to turn away some potential students.

On March 13, the committee amended the bill to omit college admittance requirements.

Bills Failed This Week

- SB 2050:** Increases state retiree health benefit fund contributions and monthly credit from \$4.50 to \$5.00
- SB 2051:** Increases contributions to PERS retirement and supplemental retirement benefits
- SB 2245:** Relates to an income tax credit for higher education costs
- SB 2303:** Creates a health information technology steering committee

Bills Passed This Week

- HB 1102:** Increases fees for architect, engineer, construction management or land surveying services for purposes of bidding
- HB 1140:** Relates to inflation adjustments on long-term temporary partial disabilities
- HB 1412:** Relates to research and experimental expenditures tax credit to a pass-through entity
- SB 2038:** Relates to powers and duties of the Information Technology Committee
- SB 2044:** Provides for supplemental retiree benefit payments under the public employees retirement system
- SB 2048:** Relates to final average salary calculations and conversion of sick leave benefits
- SB 2360:** Increases fee for nonprofit organization number plates

On the Week 12 Agenda

- SB 2260: Mon., March 19, 10 a.m., H-APPGOV:** Provides authority for criminal history records checks

Additional Bills Passed Last Week

- HB 1030:** Relates to the appropriation of higher education institutions' special revenue funds
- HB 1031:** Relates to budget requests and block grant appropriations for the NDUS
- HB 1032:** Relates to the cancellation of unexpected appropriations for the NDUS
- HB 1033:** Relates to public improvements, bidding, construction management and public improvement contracts
- HB 1054:** Relates to pharmacy closings and reporting requirements
- HB 1066:** Increases the state forester reserve account balance from \$500,000 to \$1 million
- HB 1087:** Includes vehicles of the state forester as authorized emergency vehicles
- HB 1123:** Relates to regulation and licensing of optometrists
- HB 1235:** Expands eligibility for the Scholar's Program to graduates from bordering states
- SB 2028:** Eliminates Budget Section approval on the state forester reserve account