

Legislative Review

NORTH DAKOTA
UNIVERSITY SYSTEM
The Vital Link to a Brighter Future

A Look at Higher Education in Week 15: April 9–13, 2007

HB 1003 Conference Committee Hears Budget Reduction Proposal

On April 13, members of the **HB 1003** conference committee heard a proposal by Rep. Monson that would bring the NDUS budget to about \$7 million below the executive recommendation for higher education. Monson said this reduction is needed, along with reductions to other bills, to reduce overall legislative funding by \$50 million in order to achieve a balanced state budget with the desired reserve balance.

Although he did not have specific amendments for review, he said that funds added by the House and Senate would be removed. He said

he also intends to propose a reduction of 2 percent of each institution's operating budget, which would total roughly \$5 million. This funding would be pooled and allocated by the State Board of Higher Education to fund critical needs. He said he expects the amendments will be ready for presentation to the committee on Monday.

The first HB 1003 conference committee meeting was held April 12. In addition to Rep. Monson, the committee includes Reps. Wald (chair) and Aarsvold and Sens. Holmberg, Kresbach and Robinson.

Conference Committee Recommends Amendment of SB 2309, the High School Requirements Bill

On April 12, the conference committee on **SB 2309** unanimously recommended amendments that would mandate course requirements for high school graduation beginning with the 2008–09 school year.

The course year requirements in the Senate version of the bill were amended to unit requirements, and the physical education requirement was defined to allow inclusion of one-half unit of health. The amendments require DPI to identify eligible course offerings, and school districts to file graduation requirements with DPI. No school district may reduce its graduation requirements below those in existence on June 30, 2007.

Although the requirements fall short of those recommended by the Joint Boards/ETF, they do establish state-level course graduation requirements for the first time in North Dakota history. Interim legislative discussions are expected to result in recommendations to further strengthen and define graduation requirements during the 2009 legislative session.

Conference committee members are Sens. G. Lee (chair), Flakoll and Taylor and Reps. Meier, Wall and Hunsakor.

Senate Confirms Espegard

Newly appointed SBHE member Duaine Espegard was confirmed by the Senate April 13 on a unanimous vote of 47–0. His confirmation hearing was held April 11.

Espesgard is a retired bank administrator who worked for Bremer Financial from 1969 to 2003. He was elected to the North Dakota Senate in 2000 and served until 2006.

He currently serves on the North Dakota Department of Commerce Community Foundation, the Grand Forks Region Economic Development Corporation and the Norsk Hostfest Board.

Espesgard is a graduate of Unity High School and Aakers Business College. He attended the University of North Dakota and the University of Wisconsin's Graduate School of Banking.

**Friday,
April 20**

**will be the
75th day of
the 2007
Legislative
Session.**

**Sessions are
limited to
80 days.**

Conference Committee Makes Recommendations on HB 1487

In an April 11 meeting, the **HB 1487** conference committee recommended removal of the new financial aid program for students who attend two-year colleges and the corresponding \$3 million general fund appropriation.

The remaining provisions of the bill, which were unanimously supported by all conferees, will permit the Bank of North Dakota to offer a fixed or variable rate on the Dakota Education Alternative Loan (DEAL) for educational expenses; this will likely result in a lower interest rate for borrowers.

Conference committee members are Reps. Carlson (chair), Kelsch, Williams and Sens. Flakoll, G. Lee and Taylor.

Conference Committee Considers DoC Budget Bill

The **HB 1018** conference committee is reviewing the Department of Commerce budget bill, which includes funding for Centers of Excellence.

However, **SB 2015**, the Office of Management and Budget bill, has been amended to include provisions related to the centers that are more restrictive than the HB 1018 version. These differences will need to be reconciled by the conference committees.

The HB 1018 conference committee includes Reps. Carlson (chair), Skarphol and Glassheim and Sens. Grindberg, Holmberg and Robinson. A SB 2015 conference committee has not been named.

Conference Committee Reviews HB 1019, CTE Budget Bill

Workforce training funds once included in **SB 2249** now are part of **HB 1019**, the Career and Technical Education budget bill, which now is being reviewed by a conference committee.

This funding includes \$2.65 million for supplemental workforce training grants to be distributed to the four workforce training regions in the state. It also includes \$1 million to be divided equally by BSC, LRSC, NDSCS and WSC for curriculum design and development related to workforce needs.

Conference committee members include Reps. Monson (chair), Carlson and Gullekson and Sens. Grindberg, Christmann and Mathern.

SB 2030 and SB 2200 Conference Committees Looking at Interim Studies

SB 2030, a bill related to K–12 Joint Powers Agreements, and **SB 2200**, a bill dealing with state aid to local school districts, contain provisions for a number of interim legislative studies.

The conference committees working on both bills have been meeting regularly to reach agreement on specifics. All recommendations on interim legislative studies will be considered by the Legislative Council following conclusion of the session.

SB 2030 conference committee members are Sens. G. Lee (chair), Flakoll and Taylor and Reps. Kelsch, Meier and Mueller.

SB 2200 conference committee members are Sens. Freborg (chair), Flakoll and Taylor and Reps. Kelsch, Haas and Mueller.

HB 1020 Conference Committee Begins Work

The conference committee on **HB 1020**, the NDSU Research and Extension budget bill, met for the first time April 13 and reviewed the differences between the House and Senate versions of the bill.

Conference committee members are Reps. Klein (chair), Hawken and Gullekson and Sens. Bowman, Holmberg and Lindaas.

Conference Committee Begins Discussion of HB 1395

The first meeting of the conference committee on **HB 1395**, a bill to provide financial assistance to tribally controlled community colleges, was held April 12 with representatives of each House supporting its version of the bill. The committee only agreed that it would continue its discussion. A meeting of the committee scheduled for April 13 was canceled because of scheduling conflicts; committee meetings will be scheduled to continue the discussion next week.

Conference committee members are Reps. Kelsch (chair), Monson and Hanson and Sens. Freborg, Flakoll and Taylor.

Bills Failed This Week

HB 1320: Relates to the approval of early childhood education programs

Bills Passed This Week

- HB 1065:** Changes membership of the advisory transportation council of the UGPTI
- SB 2023:** Provides an appropriation for defraying the expenses of various state departments and institutions
- SB 2093:** Provides for the reimbursement of travel in advance
- SB 2276:** Provides an appropriation to North Dakota Prevention and Advisory Council for grants to prevent impaired driving, alcohol or drug abuse

Bills Passed April 2–6

- HB 1125:** Creates loan repayment fund for vets
- HB 1322:** Specifies indemnification clause requirements in state service contracts
- HB 1429:** Relates to the budget stabilization fund
- HB 1461:** Assigns management of IT for the NDUS to the SBHE
- SB 2037:** Changes IT planning and reporting, including changes to the definition of a large project
- SB 2246:** Increases state employee meal and lodging reimbursements