



Higher Ed Oil and Gas Impact Fund Project

CAMPUS SAFETY AND SECURITY ISSUES

1. THE PROJECT

Minot has experienced unprecedented growth since 2008 due to the explosive expansion of the oil and gas energy industry in western North Dakota. Minot is expecting to reach a population of 75,000 in the next five years. Traffic counts increased from 20,910 vehicles a day in 2010 to 33,029 vehicles a day in 2013 at the South Broadway ramps at 28th Avenue.

In 2010, there were 17 energy-related companies employing 560 employees. In 2012, there were 53 energy-related companies employing 2,901 employees. The city footprint grew from 15 square miles in 2006 to just over 27 square miles in 2013. In the region, this influx of people and vehicles has resulted in an increase in traffic fatalities, arrests for DUI, general crime, prostitution, and drug trafficking. From 2008 thru 2011, Minot crime statistics reflect an increase in assaults from 53 to 99, in thefts from 558 to 593, and in murders from zero to six. During this same period emergency services including the Minot Fire Department, the Minot Police Department and Community Ambulance of Minot have had to make do with the resources they have to cover the growing community.

Coupled with this rapid growth, the city suffered the 2011 Souris/Mouse River flood; the worst flood in Minot's recorded history. The flood only added to the growing tensions in the area. The entire region has been uneasy since the June 4, 2007 murder of Minot State University student Anita Knutson in her off-campus apartment less than a mile from campus. This case remains unsolved. On August 7, 2012 a campus state fleet vehicle was stolen from the campus during a normal working day. It was later recovered in Texas. On March 5, 2013 President David Fuller and his wife Nancy returned to his office after dinner to find an intruder inside his office. Last month, the campus posted a security alert for an unknown man accosting multiple female students with inappropriate remarks on nearby streets and in campus parking lots. The individual, who was later apprehended, turned out to be an unregistered sex offender who was guilty of similar offenses in other states.

Minot State University students and parents increasingly express concern about safety and security. This sentiment is captured in a poignant message from a concerned mother to campus administration dated August 2011:

"Hi! A concerned parent writing here ... We have been hearing a lot about the crime rate in Minot escalating with all the unfortunate events there. The kids have been hearing about a gang, rapes and stabbings. With Facebook, texting, etc., this may be blown up more than has happened but even if there is a shred of

truth to it, it is scary. I was just wondering if you could provide some information with how the college is addressing some of the safety issues such as poor lighting in some areas on campus, perhaps upping security, providing self-defense classes, etc. You don't necessarily have to address this to me individually — actually I think this information would be greatly appreciated by many parents – maybe post information on Campus Connect or on MSU website. Let it be known by the public that security is going to be tougher.

I have even heard some parents say they don't know if they want their child going up there because of all of this and the housing situation — it is sad because MSU is a good school.

If you have already addressed this lately, thank you. If not, perhaps you would consider putting some measures in place to give us parents, and the students, a little more peace of mind.”

With the assistance of the governor, the North Dakota legislature, and the State Board of Higher Education, Minot State University has been addressing concerns like these over the last ten years. The campus has migrated from a security force employing off-duty Minot Police Officers and a private security company to an internal force of ten. Campus lighting was addressed in 2007 when fourteen new lights were added and old trees were removed on University Avenue. The avenue borders the south edge of the campus. A major effort has been made to improve campus door locks and add surveillance cameras within buildings. A fiber network connecting all campus computers was replaced. New upgraded campus ID cards have been issued to all students, faculty and staff. This work to date totals \$1.884 million, but many important and essential initiatives remain undone. Critical safety and security initiatives are essential to create a truly safe and secure environment on the Minot State University campus during a time in which safety is of paramount concern to parents, students, and employees.



2. PLANNED USE OF FUNDS

Minot State University requested \$1.485 million from the Oil and Gas Impact Fund, and received \$1,018,000 to make the following additional safety and security improvements:

Enhance emergency response



This project involves installing emergency stations across campus. These systems are named “blue light” installations and include a flashing light, an interconnectivity speaker and camera, and GPS locations for each station. In addition to providing visible means of deterring and preventing crime, these units also provide public address capabilities for emergency alerts. Students have expressed strong interest in installing a blue-light system to address growing safety concerns. The intent is to install six free-standing units and 21 wall-mounted units. The estimate for this portion of the project is \$496,000.

Enhance video surveillance

Parking lot surveillance is a proven way to deter and prevent crime on a campus. An important element in improving safety on the MSU campus is to provide surveillance coverage in designated locations. On the average, parking lot cameras cost \$3,000 per location. In a report dated July 12, 2012, security officer Brandon Neiss identified locations in parking lots to provide adequate coverage across campus. The total camera estimate is 14 or \$42,000.



Improve lighting

The lighting element of the pedestrian corridor is the first part of this project. This would create an enhanced lighted corridor from the female freshmen residence hall to the female upper class residence hall to the student center. Safety and security walks across campus at night with representatives from student government have become an annual event to identify locations where lighting could be improved. Students have been insistent on seeking support from administration to address serious issues impacting safety. Locations next to resident halls and the library are the areas of greatest concern. The largest concern is with lighting. This initiative will also involve installing lights in high risk areas across campus. This plan covers the areas identified outside of the pedestrian corridor. The total cost of lighting enhancements is \$480,000.

Minot State University has contracted with Prairie Engineering to complete the electrical design work associated with the emergency stations across campus. Plans and specifications incorporate 911 phones, surveillance systems, and GPS coordination. All plans are shelf-ready and will be implemented at the beginning of the 2014 construction season.



Samples of “blue light” systems are shown on the following page.

