

# NORTH DAKOTA LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

## Minutes of the

### HIGHER EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Monday, March 10, 2008  
Brynhild Haugland Room, State Capitol  
Bismarck, North Dakota

Representative Ken Svedjan, Chairman, called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m.

**Members present:** Representatives Ken Svedjan, Lois Delmore, Kathy Hawken, Matthew M. Klein, Bob Martinson, Jasper Schneider, Bob Skarphol, John D. Wall, Clark Williams; Senators Elroy N. Lindaas, Dave Nething, Dave Oehlke, Tracy Potter, Larry J. Robinson

**Members absent:** Representative RaeAnn G. Kelsch; Senators Ray Holmberg, Karen K. Krebsbach

**Others present:** John Q. Paulsen, Thomas Barnhart; State Board of Higher Education, Fargo

Richie Smith, State Board of Higher Education, Wahpeton

Jon Backes, State Board of Higher Education, Minot

Duaine Espesgaard, Nathan Martindale, Grant Shaft; State Board of Higher Education, Grand Forks

Pamela Kostelecky, State Board of Higher Education, Dickinson

William G. Goetz, Chancellor, North Dakota University System, Bismarck

Jim W. Smith, Legislative Council, Bismarck

See attached [appendix](#) for additional persons present.

**It was moved by Senator Robinson, seconded by Representative Delmore, and carried on a voice vote that the minutes of the December 4, 2007, meeting be approved as distributed.**

#### HIGHER EDUCATION STUDY

Chairman Svedjan welcomed members of the State Board of Higher Education to the meeting for discussion on higher education policy areas. He said the meeting would be used to continue discussions with the board that began during the December 4, 2007, Higher Education Committee meeting.

Ms. Roxanne Woeste, Assistant Legislative Budget Analyst and Auditor, Legislative Council, presented a memorandum entitled [Higher Education Committee - Higher Education Policy Areas](#). The memorandum provides information on higher education policy areas and includes North Dakota University System recommendations for action in each policy area.

Ms. Woeste distributed information prepared by the National Conference of State Legislatures regarding the Higher Education Act of 1965. She said the Act was most recently reauthorized in 1998 and Congress is currently working to reauthorize the laws again. A

copy of the information is on file in the Legislative Council office.

Chairman Svedjan called on Dr. David Longanecker, President of the Western Interstate Commission on Higher Education (WICHE), to facilitate discussions of the higher education policy areas and collaboration. Dr. Longanecker presented information summarizing the [policy areas, including objectives, metrics, and strategies](#). A copy of the information presented is on file in the Legislative Council office.

#### Student Preparation

Dr. Longanecker said potential benchmarks for measuring student preparation include universal application of externally validated assessments and acceptable remediation requirements. He said possible strategies for improving student preparation include establishing statewide curriculum and competence measures, monitoring progress toward policies, and standards alignment.

Representative Delmore said elementary and secondary education stakeholders should also be included in these discussions.

In response to a question from Representative Svedjan, Dr. Longanecker said determining student preparedness is partly the responsibility of the postsecondary level. He said although other stakeholders also have these responsibilities, postsecondary institutions need to determine when a student is prepared for a postsecondary education.

In response to a question from Mr. Richie Smith, member, State Board of Higher Education, Dr. Longanecker said some states test students in grade 11 to determine areas of proficiency. If a student is found to be deficient in one or more areas, the student may use the student's last year of high school to focus on improving the deficient areas.

In response to a question from Representative Svedjan, Dr. Longanecker said some strategies for improving higher education would involve legislation while others would not. He said a statewide assessment strategy may need legislation while changing college level entrance standards may not.

Representative Skarphol said that measuring uniformity between schools is difficult. Dr. Longanecker said that uniformity can possibly be measured through external examinations to test proficiency in certain areas.

Representative Hawken said the 2005 Legislative Assembly considered House Bill No. 1379 that would have required the Department of Public Instruction to administer a curriculum-based achievement college entrance examination for all public school students in grade 11. She said the bill did not pass. She said the fiscal note on the bill estimated a cost of \$810,000 during the 2005-07 biennium and \$820,000 during the 2007-09 biennium.

In response to a question from Representative Hawken, Dr. Longanecker said even though many jobs do not require a higher education degree, many of the skills developed from higher education can still be used. He said the higher education discussions need to encompass all forms of education, including vocational and technical education.

### **Student Retention and Completion**

Dr. Longanecker said comparing the ratio of young adults in the state with a college degree to other countries' ratios is a benchmark of student retention and completion. He said some strategies to achieve the benchmark include developing measures of performance and rewarding progress.

In response to a question from Mr. John Q. Paulsen, member, State Board of Higher Education, Dr. Longanecker said technology can be used to provide advanced educational courses for students in rural areas. He said interactive video allows courses to be delivered without having the instructor present in each school.

Representative Skarphol said students in smaller schools may focus more on core areas of education compared to students in larger schools. He said larger schools generally offer more elective courses than smaller schools.

Representative Delmore said many students have work commitments that may distract from education.

In response to a question from Mr. Paulsen, Dr. Longanecker said the United States spends more on education than other countries based on education expenditures compared to gross domestic product. He said higher expenditures on education do not always result in better educated students.

### **Affordability**

Dr. Longanecker said affordability benchmarks may include comparing the North Dakota rate to the average rate of states that are members of WICHE in the following areas:

- Income to tuition and fees.
- Pell recipients to share of population in poverty.
- Indebtedness of student borrowers.

Dr. Longanecker said some strategies to improve affordability include ensuring predictable state appropriations, ensuring financial aid dollars are targeting the students with financial need, and ensuring predictable tuition and fee increases.

Representative Svedjan said average student debt upon completion of a higher education program may

be a misleading statistic to use for affordability discussions. He said many students complete their degree in a timeframe that is longer than the normal program schedule. He said this can result in greater debt load that may not be appropriate for comparison purposes.

Senator Potter said needs-based financing of education may not be the best solution. He said lowering tuition instead of increasing state-funded financial aid may allow more students the opportunity to attend a higher education institution.

Senator Oehlke said it is important for students and others to consider the value of a two-year degree or technology program.

### **Accessibility**

Dr. Longanecker said a possible benchmark for accessibility is measuring the college-attending rate of recent high school graduates. He said some strategies to achieve results are removing barriers to enrollment, flexibly providing academic programs, and exploring employer-based access programs for adults.

In response to a question from Representative Delmore, Dr. Longanecker said life experiences can be a barrier to accessibility. He said classroom atmosphere and learning styles can also be a barrier to adult education.

Senator Potter suggested more classroom time be focused on teaching rather than testing.

In response to a question from Senator Robinson, Dr. Longanecker said the collaborative process needs to be balanced. He said it is important to include other stakeholders, such as economic development, but too many participants may not be beneficial.

### **A Vision and Expectations of the North Dakota University System**

Dr. Longanecker said possible metrics for this area include trends in employment gaps, alignment with envisioned and expected future workforce needs, and the immigration and outmigration of college-educated populations.

Mr. Jon Backes, member, State Board of Higher Education, suggested that another metric is employing and retaining North Dakota college graduates in the state.

Representative Svedjan said the University System needs to respond to job growth in the state by producing graduates to fill current positions and also to produce graduates to fill future jobs in the state.

Representative Skarphol suggested that current and future discussions of institutional missions may be impeded by the current open records and meeting rules.

In response to a question from Representative Skarphol, Mr. William G. Goetz, Chancellor, North Dakota University System, said the missions of the state's higher education institutions should be reviewed.

In response to a question from Representative Skarphol, Mr. Goetz said a pool of incentive funding

for institutional mission changes would provide institutions with appropriate financial resources while still addressing flexibility.

Mr. Paulsen said it is important to recognize the missions of the institutions, including the public perception of changing missions.

In response to a question from Mr. Paulsen, Dr. Longanecker said reviewing the mission of higher education institutions should begin by considering and determining the needs of both the students and the state. He suggested the state focus on improving the productivity of the state's current institutions.

Representative Skarphol said higher education needs to move quickly and be flexible to meet workforce demands in the state.

Representative Hawken said teachers also need to be flexible and up to date on teaching methods to make education more relevant.

The committee recessed for lunch at 12:15 p.m. and reconvened at 1:05 p.m.

Mr. Grant Shaft, member, State Board of Higher Education, commented on the board's expectations of the Legislative Assembly in the higher education process. He said it is important to recognize that the board is mostly composed of new members and board members should be given the opportunity to share thoughts with the Legislative Assembly. Mr. Shaft suggested the Legislative Assembly consider long-term methods of stabilizing higher education funding to allow the board the ability to plan for its long-term goals.

Mr. Duaine Espégard, member, State Board of Higher Education, said it would be helpful for the board to be included in discussions on kindergarten through grade 12 policy areas. He said it would be beneficial for the Legislative Assembly and board to promote agreed-upon higher education objectives to the public.

Representative Klein said the budget process for higher education is easier when funding is requested as a unified system rather than each institution separately requesting funding.

Ms. Pamela Kostelecky, member, State Board of Higher Education, said it is important to continue discussions with elementary and secondary education and roundtable members.

Mr. Paulsen said tribal colleges should be taken into consideration when discussing higher education policy areas.

Mr. Backes suggested the Legislative Assembly identify the accountability items it would like to monitor to allow for pertinent information to be gathered and distributed.

Representative Skarphol said the State Board of Higher Education may need to prioritize funding requests for future endeavors. He said it is important for the board, on key decisions, to inform the Legislative Assembly before taking final action.

## Efficiency and Effectiveness

Dr. Longanecker said the main metric for efficiency and effectiveness is measuring productivity indicators.

In response to a question from Representative Delmore, Dr. Longanecker said mission differentiation and development of strengths are important when duplication of services and competition is present among higher education institutions.

In response to a question from Representative Skarphol, Dr. Longanecker said an incentive funding formula to reward institutions that graduate students in four years would work, but it may not serve the students well. He said other options should be considered, including incentives for students to graduate in four years. Dr. Longanecker said Illinois adopted legislation that provides a constant tuition rate for four years for an undergraduate student before allowing the rate to be increased.

Ms. Kostelecky said a large remedial student population is a burden on the University System.

Dr. Longanecker said the Legislative Assembly should focus on the core values of efficiency and effectiveness and rely on the State Board of Higher Education to determine the details.

Dr. Harvey Link, Vice President of Institutions Advancement and Government Relations, North Dakota State College of Science, presented information on the instructional roles, faculty responsibilities, and faculty workload variables at the State College of Science. He said faculty responsibilities include instruction, curriculum development, professional development, student academic advising, and institutional service. A copy of the information presented is on file in the Legislative Council office.

Dr. Rich Braun, Vice President for Academic Affairs, Dickinson State University, presented information regarding faculty responsibilities, faculty teaching loads, and faculty teaching load examples. He said a standard teaching load at Dickinson State University is a minimum of 12 credit-hours per semester or 24 credit-hours per academic year. A copy of the information presented is on file in the Legislative Council office.

Dr. R. Craig Schnell, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs, North Dakota State University, presented information on the different missions and roles of faculty. He said comparing faculty workload is difficult because each workload is unique due to differing job descriptions. A copy of the information presented is on file in the Legislative Council office.

Senator Potter suggested that information be provided to the committee regarding the percentage of faculty employed in each role at North Dakota State University. Chairman Svedjan asked Dr. Schnell to provide the information to the Legislative Council office.

Dr. Ken Grafton, Dean of the College of Agriculture, Food Systems, and Natural Resources, North Dakota State University, provided information on the mission of the College of Agriculture. He said

the college provides academic instruction to students and works closely with the North Dakota Agricultural Experiment Station and the North Dakota State University Extension Service. A copy of the information presented is on file in the Legislative Council office.

Dr. John Watson, Dean of the School of Engineering and Mines, University of North Dakota, presented information regarding the faculty plans, activities, and evaluations in the School of Engineering and Mines. He said faculty is required to complete faculty activity plans and faculty activity reports each year. A copy of the information presented is on file in the Legislative Council office.

Representative Skarphol suggested the committee receive information from Dr. Watson regarding faculty activity reports separated into graduate and undergraduate courses. Chairman Svedjan asked Dr. Watson to provide this information to the Legislative Council office.

Dr. Dennis Elbert, Dean of the College of Business and Public Administration, University of North Dakota, presented information regarding the tracking of faculty workloads. He said the software program--Digital Measures--is being implemented in all departments on campus which allows for tracking general information, faculty teaching loads, faculty research productivity, and faculty service activities. A copy of the information presented is on file in the Legislative Council office.

Dr. Joshua Wynne, Associate Dean for Academic Affairs, University of North Dakota School of Medicine and Health Sciences, presented information on faculty workload issues at the School of Medicine. He said each department of the school has a set of department-specific expectations that are used as benchmarks of faculty productivity. A copy of the information presented is on file in the Legislative Council office.

Representative Skarphol suggested the committee receive information on the number of School of Medicine faculty classified as community faculty, research faculty, and academic faculty. Chairman Svedjan asked Dr. Wynne to provide this information to the Legislative Council office.

### **Higher Education Funding**

Dr. Longanecker said metrics for funding include peer funding for institutions with a critical mass of students and base funding adequacy to sustain small institutions. He said possible strategies for funding include providing sufficient funding to ensure quality that is consistent with the metrics, developing appropriate metrics for determining appropriate levels of funding, and funding new initiatives that serve the public interest.

In response to a question from Representative Svedjan, Dr. Longanecker said it would be appropriate to use different funding comparisons for large and small institutions.

In response to a question from Representative Skarphol, Dr. Longanecker said larger institutions could use peer comparison funding while smaller institutions use a base funding method. He said enrollment numbers could be used to determine which funding method an institution uses.

In response to a question from Senator Nething, Dr. Longanecker said it may be difficult to compare North Dakota to other states for higher education funding. He said the small population can create distortions when conducting funding comparisons.

In response to a question from Representative Skarphol, Dr. Longanecker said "at-risk" students are defined as students less likely to succeed in higher education due to differing background situations.

Representative Skarphol suggested that smaller institutions may be able to educate those students who are unable to complete a degree at a larger institution.

### **An Appropriate Higher Education Structure**

Dr. Longanecker said the main metric for determining an appropriate higher education structure is strong evidence of satisfaction among stakeholders with the public agenda for higher education and their engagement in setting that agenda. He said strategies for attaining success include determining the nature of the collaborative process, establishing the collaborative process as a permanent or semi-permanent structure, and setting the focus of the collaborative process as determining the role of higher education in progressing the future of North Dakota.

In response to a question from Representative Skarphol, Dr. Longanecker said new collaborative processes involve engaging stakeholders through processes, such as a town hall meeting.

Representative Hawken said many items are requested by the committee that are not used. She said the new Higher Education Roundtable should not gather information that is not used.

Representative Skarphol said many legislators have reservations about the Higher Education Roundtable process because it has not met recently. He said it should not be used as a permanent solution unless kept current.

Senator Nething said the Higher Education Roundtable is embedded into the strategic plans of universities and they are experiencing the benefits. He said the Higher Education Roundtable ideas are currently being used by the University System and functioning. He suggested the Higher Education Roundtable be expanded to include representatives of elementary and secondary education.

Ms. Kostecky suggested that more stakeholders be engaged to continue the Higher Education Roundtable process after the current participants are no longer active.

Mr. Backes said a group should review the Higher Education Roundtable cornerstones to decide if they are still relevant or if new cornerstones are needed.

Mr. Goetz said the missions of the institutions are well-defined in the Higher Education Roundtable process.

### **HIGHER EDUCATION CONSULTANT**

Chairman Svedjan said the committee at future meetings will further refine what has been discussed to date. He recommended a higher education expert be utilized to assist the committee in developing its upcoming considerations and any recommendations. He suggested hiring Mr. Dennis Jones, President of the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems, for up to 15 days of service to provide this assistance to the committee. He said the cost for these services would not exceed \$35,000.

Representative Hawken said she does not support the committee hiring a consultant. She believes the benefits of previous consulting services have not been worth the cost.

**It was moved by Representative Martinson, seconded by Representative Skarphol, and carried**

**on a roll call vote that the Higher Education Committee request approval from the chairman of the Legislative Council to engage the services of a higher education consultant.** Representatives Svedjan, Klein, Martinson, Skarphol, and Wall and Senators Lindaas, Nething, Oehlke, Potter, and Robinson voted "aye." No negative votes were cast.

There being no further business, Chairman Svedjan adjourned the meeting at 5:25 p.m.

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Brady A. Larson  
Fiscal Analyst

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Allen H. Knudson  
Legislative Budget Analyst and Auditor

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