

ND House Appropriations Committee
HB 1380, 67th Session, February 2, 2021
Dr. Steve Shirley, President, Minot State University

Chair Delzer and members of the Appropriations committee, for the record, my name is Steve Shirley, and I have the privilege of serving as president of Minot State University. I am here speaking in support of House Bill 1380, in particular the portion of the bill establishing the economic diversification research fund.

Currently in my seventh year as president of MSU, I also serve as president of Dakota College at Bottineau. Prior to MSU and DCB, I served for six years as president of Valley City State University. And so I offer a unique perspective in having the distinction over the past 13 years of leading fully one-third of the state's nine primarily undergraduate institutions comprising the North Dakota University System. In that time, I have seen first-hand the research capabilities of our talented faculty across the state:

Impressive aquatic and wildlife research is occurring at Valley City State, including undergraduate-driven work at the Prairie Waters Education & Research Center which I was proud to help launch while there. VCSU continues engaging students and community with research opportunities in Fisheries & Wildlife, Software Engineering, and Physics, where faculty and students are involved in helping build a sophisticated particle detector one mile underground as part of the Deep Underground Neutrino Experiment, a truly international collaboration;

At Dakota College at Bottineau, through our unique mission of Nature, Technology, & Beyond, faculty have led the way with hands-on research in horticulture, aquaponics, and specialty crop production, and they have helped ensure vital conservation efforts for North Dakota's outdoors, including active wildlife research on ecosystems in such important areas as the Turtle Mountains north of Bottineau;

And, at Minot State, I have watched our faculty in chemistry, geology, addiction studies, education, the biological sciences, and other areas conduct impressive research in such varied areas as behavior and addiction effects of methamphetamines, optimizing usage of the most effective fracking sand, understanding the genetics of certain types of leukemia, design of fungicides for medicine, veterinary, and agricultural uses, and research in the area of Alzheimer's, just to name a few. For a number of years, Dr. Mikhail Bobylev's chemistry students have been selected for the prestigious Posters on the Hill event at Capitol Hill in Washington DC to present their research; MSU has been the only North Dakota campus to have students selected the past several years, and they have presented

alongside students from the likes of UCLA, Purdue, the University of Chicago, the University of Oregon, and Texas A&M; a veritable “Who’s Who” of some of the finest colleges and universities in the country. With some skilled mentoring and support, it is clear our North Dakota students can and do compete against the very best in the land. Minot State’s faculty have been incredibly active with publications, research, and grant activities supported by both federal and state agencies, and this bill would allow us to continue and expand research opportunities for our students, thereby benefiting North Dakota’s future.

There are numerous examples from the other six NDUS campuses, and we’ve seen those examples highlighted during the State Board of Higher Education’s Research Committee’s meetings – this included a presentation just a couple weeks ago on the impressive research being done at Lake Region State College in precision agriculture and wind energy technology.

Many of these research opportunities across our state’s colleges and universities may not get the headlines or the attention of a glitzier project at NDSU or UND, but please know the research efforts by professors and students all across your other nine campuses are equally important and have incredibly meaningful potential in further unleashing economic diversification as our undergraduate students, the next generation of North Dakota’s leaders, complete their associates and bachelors degrees.

On a final note, with our unified University System, students can seamlessly move from one campus to another, and an important aspect of that movement is when students at a primarily undergraduate campus pursues a graduate degree at one of the larger institutions; I can think of many students over the past 13 years who have moved on to UND for Medical School or students who have gone on to do a PhD in a science-based program at NDSU. In so many of those examples, the research opportunities afforded during their undergraduate schooling played a critical role in preparing them for success - both getting accepted into the graduate program and then succeeding while there. All 11 campuses of the NDUS are collectively excited about this program’s potential for our students, our faculty and staff, and most importantly, our state, and I appreciate your time today. Thank you.