

North Dakota State Board of Higher Education

September 23, 2025, Meeting Minutes

The State Board of Higher Education met on September 23, 2025, at 8:30 a.m. CT., Minot State University, 500 University Ave W, Minot, ND 58707.

Roll Call

SBHE Members

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Mr. Kevin Black, Chair | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Mr. DJ Campbell, Vice Chair |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Mr. Tim Mihalick | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ms. Danita Bye |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Mr. Curits Biller | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Mr. Pat Sogard |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Mr. Max Eriksrud | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Mr. Levi Bachmeier (10:19 a.m. – 11:24 a.m.; 11:34 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.; |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ms. Anna Kinney, Staff Advisor | 12:57 p.m. – 1:13 p.m.) |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Dr. Lisa Montplaisir, Faculty Advisor | |

Institutions

BSC Interim President Leingang, **DCB** Interim Dean Gorder, **DSU** President Molander, **LRSC** President Simone, Ms. Bobbi Lunday, **MaSU** President Van Horn, **MiSU** President Shirley, Dr. Geller, **NDSCS** President Flanigan, **NDSU** President Cook, Dr. Bertolini, **UND** President Armacost, **VCSU** President LaFave, **WSC** President Hirning.

System Office/Guests

NDUS Commissioner Sanford, Ms. Lisa Johnson, Ms. Meredith Larson, Ms. Jane Grinde, Mr. Chris Pieske, Ms. Dina Cashman, Dr. Billie Jo Lorius, Dr. Jen Weber, Mr. Eric Jensen, Ms. Bethany Kadmas, Ms. Sharon Schwartzbauer, **CTS** Mr. Corey Quirk, **Assistant Attorney General** Ms. Rachel Sinness.

Chair Black called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m. CT.

1. Agenda

Chair Black moved to approve the agenda. The motion was seconded by Campbell.

Approved unanimously by voice vote.

Campus Report

2. Dr. Steve Shirley

President Shirley welcomed the SBHE to MiSU and expressed appreciation for the opportunity to provide a campus update.

Enrollment: Overall headcount is flat, but full-time equivalency is up 3%. The freshman class saw a 15% increase over the previous year, making it the largest in 14 years. The total new student population (freshmen, transfers, graduate students) is up 7%.

New Academic Programs: President Shirley highlighted two new programs were approved—Bachelor's in Innovation Engineering (a new four-year engineering degree developed with industry input, especially oil and gas) and a Master of Science in Mental Health and Substance Use Counseling (dual licensure, unique in the state).

Workforce Education Innovation Fund: MiSU received \$1.4 million, with funds allocated to the new engineering program, the new master's program, and a new simulation center in downtown Minot.

Trinity Health Center West: MiSU and DCB will collaborate to establish a Health Sciences Institute in a soon-to-be-vacated Trinity Health facility in downtown Minot, expanding health-related educational opportunities and simulation training.

Midwest Montessori: A new early childhood center opened on MiSU Foundation property, providing opportunities for students in education programs and addressing local daycare and preschool shortages.

Nursing Program: The 2025 graduates achieved a 100% first-time pass rate on the NCLEX exam; the four-year average is 97%, well above the national average.

Grants: MiSU received a \$5.25 million Bush Foundation grant for special education and a share of a statewide \$8 million NSF EPSCoR grant to support STEM outreach and research.

Student Opportunities: The MiSU choir performed in Norway for Norwegian Constitution Day. The Aspire program pairs high school students interested in teaching with MiSU mentors to encourage them to return to their rural communities as educators.

Fundraising: The Empower Capital Campaign concluded, raising \$55 million (by far the largest capital campaign in MiSU history), primarily for scholarships and academic programs.

Facilities: Dakota Hall (a nearly 100-year-old residence hall) will be demolished to reduce deferred maintenance. \$8.1 million was awarded for academic facility upgrades, focusing on science, nursing, and engineering spaces. Renovations are also planned for the Student Center's Beaver Dam area.

President Shirley concluded by highlighting the direct connection between campus initiatives and community/industry needs and expressed optimism for future enrollment growth. Board members commended the report and the university's responsiveness to workforce and community needs.

Board Consent

3. June 26, 2025, [Meeting Minutes](#)
4. August 14, 2025, Retreat [Meeting Minutes](#)

SBHE BFC Committee

- ~~5. NDSU [Lease Agreement Request](#)~~— moved to Board Business
6. NDSCS [Land Purchase Request](#)

7. BSC [Capital Building Fund Tier II & III request](#)
8. BSC [Ground Lease and Development Agreement](#)

SBHE ASAC Committee

9. Institution Organization Notice
 - a. [North Dakota State University](#)
 - i. Institute for AI in Learning and Workforce Development
 - b. [Valley City State University](#)
 - i. Artificial Intelligence Institute for Teaching and Learning
10. Tenure
 - a. [North Dakota State University](#)
11. [2026 Meeting Schedule](#)

Member Sogard requested to remove item 5, NDSU Lease Agreement Request from the consent agenda; there was no opposition.

Sogard moved, Bye seconded, to approve the amended consent agenda, items 3 – 4 and 6 – 11; further, move item 5, NDSU Lease Agreement Request, to Board Business.

Black, Campbell, Mihalick, Eriksrud, Sogard, Bye, and Biller voted yes. Bachmeier absent. Motion passed 7-0.

Board Business

MOVED: 5. NDSU [Lease Agreement Request](#)

Member Sogard raised a compliance concern regarding a right of first refusal clause in the NDSU lease agreement, referencing Policy 909, which limits advantages to lessees.

Mr. Pieske explained two options: interpret the policy as not violated or grant an exception to Policy 909. He reported NDSU's general counsel did not view the clause as an advantage to the lessee but as protection for their investment.

Board members discussed the small size of the land involved and agreed the exception was reasonable.

Bye moved, Mihalick seconded, to approve NDSU [Lease Agreement Request](#) as presented, with exception of Policy 909.

Black, Campbell, Mihalick, Eriksrud, Sogard, Bye, and Biller voted yes. Bachmeier absent. Motion passed 7-0.

12. [Recommendation to add Roth Option to 457\(b\)](#)

Ms. Grinde presented the recommendation from the Retirement Plan Oversight Committee to add a Roth contribution option to the 457(b) plan, aligning with the Secure 2.0 Federal Act requirements and providing consistency with the NDPERS plan.

The committee had already met requirements through the 403(b) plan but recommended the addition for continuity and alignment.

The recommendation was unanimously approved by both the Retirement Plan Oversight Committee and the Budget and Finance Committee.

Mihalick moved, Biller seconded, to approve the [Recommendation to add Roth Option to 457\(b\)](#), as presented.

Black, Campbell, Mihalick, Eriksrud, Sogard, Bye, and Biller voted yes. Bachmeier absent. Motion passed 7-0.

13. Consideration of Chancellor Appointment

a. Presentation and Q & A by Interim Chancellor Sanford

Interim Chancellor Sanford presented his strategic vision for the NDUS, focusing on three pillars: connecting students, strengthening institutions, and serving the state.

Key priorities included expanding dual credit and certificate programs, addressing the 40% of high school graduates not entering higher education, and targeting the 103,000 North Dakotans with some college but no credentials.

Chancellor Sanford emphasized the importance of workforce responsiveness, partnerships with industry and legislators, and supporting research and innovation across all 11 institutions.

He discussed the need for shared services, strategic investments, and employee retention.

Chancellor Sanford addressed the alignment of academic programs with workforce needs and the importance of being the primary source of workforce talent for the state.

During Q&A, board members asked about artificial intelligence in education and workforce, research priorities, online education competition, collaboration with K-12, and staff retention. Chancellor Sanford provided detailed responses, drawing on personal experience and outlining strategies for each area.

The board discussed Chancellor Sanford's background, noting his experience in government and with higher education policy, and considered his fit for the permanent chancellor role.

b. Executive Session

Campbell moved, Bye seconded, to enter Executive Session to consider and discuss the appointment of the Chancellor of the North Dakota University System. Move to enter Executive Session to (1) consider the appointment of the Chancellor of the North Dakota University System and (2) limit the executive session to voting board members, nonvoting advisers, selected NDUS Office Staff, and board counsel. The legal authority

for closing this portion of the meeting is N.D.C.C. Sections 15-10-17(1)(d) and N.D.C.C. 44-04-19.2(1).

Black, Campbell, Mihalick, Eriksrud, Sogard, Bye, and Biller voted yes. Bachmeier absent. Motion passed 7-0.

Executive session began at 10:17 a.m. CT.

Present:

SBHE Members

Mr. Kevin Black, Chair

Mr. Tim Mihalick

Mr. Curtis Biller

Mr. Levi Bachmeier (joined 10:19 a.m. – 11:10 a.m.)

Ms. Anna Kinney, Staff Advisor

Mr. DJ Campbell, Vice Chair

Ms. Danita Bye

Mr. Pat Sogard

Mr. Max Eriksrud

Dr. Lisa Montplaisir, Faculty Advisor

Others Present:

Ms. Meredith Larson, Ms. Jane Grinde, Mr. Chris Pieske, Ms. Bethany Kadrmas, Assistant Attorney General Ms. Rachel Sinness.

Executive session adjourned at 11:10 a.m. CT.

c. Reconvene in open session to discuss and/or take action.

Reconvened open session at 11:14 a.m. CT.

Campbell moved, Mihalick seconded, to appoint Brent Sanford as the permanent Commissioner of Higher Education, giving the SBHE Chair authority to negotiate contract details on behalf of the SBHE.

Black, Campbell, Mihalick, Bachmeier, Eriksrud, Sogard, Bye, and Biller voted yes. Motion passed 8-0.

Campbell moved, Bye seconded, to approve first reading and waive second reading of changes to SBHE policies, NDUS procedures, and Human Resource Policies renaming Chancellor to Commissioner, Vice Chancellor for Academic and Student Affairs to Deputy Commissioner/Chief Academic and Student Affairs Officer, and Vice Chancellor for Administrative Affairs to Deputy Commissioner/ Chief Financial Officer.

Black, Campbell, Mihalick, Bachmeier, Eriksrud, Sogard, Bye, and Biller voted yes. Motion passed 8-0.

14. Consideration of Presidential Appointments at BSC and LRSC

a. Executive Session

Campbell moved, Sogard seconded, to enter Executive Session to (1) consider the appointment of presidential appointments at BSC and LRSC (2) limit the executive session to voting board members, nonvoting advisers, Commissioner, selected NDUS Office Staff, and board counsel. The legal authority for closing this portion of the meeting is N.D.C.C. Sections 15-10-17(1)(d) and N.D.C.C. 44-04-19.2(1).

Black, Campbell, Mihalick, Bachmeier, Eriksrud, Sogard, Bye, and Biller voted yes. Motion passed 8-0.

Executive session began at 11:35 a.m. CT.

Present:

SBHE Members

Mr. Kevin Black, Chair

Mr. DJ Campbell, Vice Chair

Mr. Tim Mihalick

Ms. Danita Bye

Mr. Curtis Biller

Mr. Pat Sogard

Mr. Levi Bachmeier (joined 11:34 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.)

Mr. Max Eriksrud

Ms. Anna Kinney, Staff Advisor

Dr. Lisa Montplaisir, Faculty Advisor

Others Present:

Commissioner Sanford, Ms. Meredith Larson, Ms. Jane Grinde, Mr. Chris Pieske, Ms. Bethany Kadrmas, Assistant Attorney General Ms. Rachel Sinness.

Executive session adjourned at 12:18 p.m. CT.

b. Reconvene in open session to discuss and/or take action.

Reconvened open session at 12:24 p.m. CT.

Mihalick moved, Biller seconded, to appoint Dr. Carmen Simone as the permanent president of LRSC, giving the SBHE Chair authority to negotiate contract details on behalf of the SBHE.

Black, Campbell, Mihalick, Eriksrud, Sogard, Bye, and Biller voted yes. Bachmeier absent. Motion passed 7-0.

Eriksrud moved, Bye seconded, to direct the Commissioner to create a search committee for a permanent president at BSC pursuant to Policy 601.1 and to appoint Member Campbell as the search committee chair.

Black, Campbell, Mihalick, Eriksrud, Sogard, Bye, and Biller voted yes. Bachmeier absent. Motion passed 7-0.

Board members discussed that, unlike LRSC, BSC's interim president, Dr. Dan Leingang, had not yet undergone a competitive process for presidential appointment, which was the main reason for moving forward with a search committee.

It was emphasized that the interim president at BSC is invited and encouraged to apply for the position.

Board members expressed appreciation for the interim president's work and encouraged his participation in the process.

15. RFP- Listening Sessions SBHE

Member Campbell provided background on the competitive RFP process initiated to conduct listening sessions with various stakeholders, including faculty, staff, students, alumni, legislative bodies, and state agency heads. The process began 12 months prior, involved drafting and revising the RFP, and resulted in receiving over 11 proposals.

The committee, with the assistance of a procurement officer, reviewed and scored the proposals, ultimately selecting Sagency, a consulting firm from Fargo, based on strong references and proprietary technology for information collection.

The project budget is \$100,000, and board approval was requested to proceed with the contract and spending.

Member Bye and others supported moving forward, noting the high quality of proposals and the importance of stakeholder engagement.

Member Sogard inquired about the project timeline; it was clarified that deliverables and a timeline are included in the contract, with phase one to be approved now and phase two dependent on future funding. The timeline for phase one is expected to be robust (approximately 90 days).

It was noted that funding for the project would need to be identified, as it was not currently budgeted.

Bye moved, Campbell seconded, to approve the selection of Sagency, as presented, and authorize the SBHE Chair to execute the contract.

Black, Campbell, Mihalick, Eriksrud, Sogard, Bye, and Biller voted yes. Bachmeier absent. Motion passed 7-0.

SBHE Policy

1st reading

16. [HR Policy 25 Job Discipline - Dismissal and Policy 308.1 SBHE Member and Employee Code of Conduct](#)
17. Policy 409 [Degrees Offered](#)
18. Policy 469 [College Credit in High School](#)
19. Policy 508 [Student Grant, Scholarship, Loan Repayment, and Exchange Programs](#)
20. Policy 601.1 [Presidential Searches](#)
21. Policy 605.1 [Academic Appointments](#)
22. Policy 617 [Safety of Children on Campus](#)
23. Policy 703.1 [Early Retirement](#)
24. Policy 901 [Campus Planning and Facilities Management](#)
25. Policy 902.1 [Construction Process - Legislative Approval; List of Funding Requests](#)
26. [Policy 906 Emergency Preparedness and Management; Continuity of Operations; Security and Policy 1902 Emergency Notification System](#)
27. Policy 907 [Building Plaques](#)
28. Policy 908 [Financing Through Revenue Bonds](#)
29. Policy 909 [Real Property Leases](#)
30. Policy 910 [Transfer of Real Property](#)

31. Policy 910.1 [Development of State Land](#)
32. Policy 1205.1 [State Longitudinal Data System](#)
33. Policy 1206.1 [Data Element Dictionary - Data Quality and Integrity](#)

Eriksrud moved, Mihalick seconded, to approve first reading of items 16, 19 - 20, and 22 – 31.

Note: Items 17, 18, 21, 32 and 33 were omitted from this motion for individual consideration.

Black, Campbell, Mihalick, Eriksrud, Sogard, Bye, and Biller voted yes. Bachmeier absent. Motion passed 7-0.

17. Policy 409 [Degrees Offered](#)

Ms. Johnson briefed new language which had been introduced to permit select institutions to offer reduced credit bachelor's degrees, maintaining general education requirements.

Board members discussed adding a safeguard requiring students to meet with an advisor before enrolling in reduced credit programs.

Eriksrud moved, Biller seconded, to approve Policy 409 [Degrees Offered](#) as presented on first reading and refer it back to the Academic and Student Affairs Committee for additional discussion, specifically to consider adding language that would require students pursuing reduced credit bachelor's degrees to meet with an academic advisor.

Black, Campbell, Mihalick, Eriksrud, Sogard, Bye, and Biller voted yes. Bachmeier absent. Motion passed 7-0.

18. Policy 469 [College Credit in High School](#)

Ms. Johnson highlighted edits to allow UND and NDSU to offer dual credit courses to high school students in Grand Forks County and Cass County, respectively.

Presidents Flanigan and Simone discussed impacts on their institutions.

Biller moved, Mihalick seconded to approve first reading, waive second reading, and final adoption of [Policy 469](#), as presented.

Black, Campbell, Mihalick, Eriksrud, Sogard, Bye, and Biller voted yes. Bachmeier absent. Motion passed 7-0.

21. Policy 605.1 [Academic Appointments](#)

Ms. Johnson briefed edits required by SB 2003: added language for post-tenure review committee composition and appeal process.

Bye moved, Campbell seconded, to approve first reading of Policy [605.1](#), as presented.

Black, Campbell, Mihalick, Eriksrud, Sogard, Bye, and Biller voted yes. Bachmeier absent. Motion passed 7-0.

32. Policy 1205.1 [State Longitudinal Data System](#)

Dr. Weber briefed that the policy is deemed obsolete due to disbanding of the statewide SLDS committee; recommended for removal.

Mihalick moved, Sogard seconded, to approve first reading, waive second reading, and final adoption of Policy [1205.1](#), as presented.

Black, Campbell, Mihalick, Eriksrud, Sogard, Bye, and Biller voted yes. Bachmeier absent. Motion passed 7-0.

33. Policy 1206.1 [Data Element Dictionary - Data Quality and Integrity](#)

Dr. Weber highlighted edits made to update the data dictionary, reflecting migration to new software.

Sogard moved, Bye seconded, to approve first reading, waive second reading, and final adoption of Policy [1206.1](#), as presented.

Black, Campbell, Mihalick, Eriksrud, Sogard, Bye, and Biller voted yes. Bachmeier absent. Motion passed 7-0.

2nd reading

34. Policy 1203.1 [Digital Accessibility](#)

Mr. Pieske presented Policy 1203.1, stating it is unchanged from previous meetings and is designed to comply with federal regulations effective April 2026. An accompanying procedure has already been approved by the Cabinet and will be posted once the policy is approved.

Mihalick moved, Eriksrud seconded, to approve second reading and final adoption of Policy [1203.1](#), as presented.

Black, Campbell, Mihalick, Eriksrud, Sogard, Bye, and Biller voted yes. Bachmeier absent. Motion passed 7-0.

Representative Reports

35. Staff Senate by Ms. Anna Kinney.

36. CCF by Dr. Lisa Montplaisir.

37. NDSA by Mr. Max Eriksrud.

SBHE Committee Reports/Updates/Discussions

38. SBHE Academic and Student Affairs Committee by Mr. Curtis Biller.

39. SBHE Budget and Finance Committee by Mr. Tim Mihalick.

40. SBHE Audit Committee by Mr. Tim Mihalick.

41. SBHE Research and Governance Committee by Ms. Danita Bye/Mr. DJ Campbell.

Chair Report

42. Chair Black
 - a. Future campus report outs

Chair Black emphasized the value of regular campus report outs from presidents, highlighting that the board exists to serve presidents and campuses and should be informed about campus highlights and areas needing collaboration.

The intention is to establish a strong tradition of campus reports at board meetings, aiming for at least twice a year, ideally quarterly.

Guidance and a schedule for these reports will be developed and coordinated with all presidents to ensure regular updates on campus needs and opportunities for board support.

Chancellor Report

43. Updates from Interim Chancellor Sanford
No update. Item skipped due to time constraints.
44. Joint Boards Meeting
No update. Item skipped due to time constraints.
45. Vice Chancellor Johnson Golden Award recipient
Ms. Larson discussed Ms. Johnson's receipt of the Golden Award from MiSU, recognizing her 30+ years of service, leadership, and advocacy in higher education.

Other

46. Public Comment – no public comment.

Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 1:13 p.m. CT.