

North Dakota State Board of Higher Education
December 4, 2025, Meeting Minutes

The State Board of Higher Education met on December 4, 2025, at 8:30 a.m. CT.

Roll Call

SBHE Members

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Mr. Kevin Black, Chair | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Mr. Tim Mihalick (left at 12:55 p.m.) |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Mr. DJ Campbell, Vice Chair | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Mr. Pat Sogard |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Mr. Max Eriksrud | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Dr. Lisa Montplaisir, Faculty Advisor |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Mr. Curtis Biller | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ms. Anna Kinney, Staff Advisor |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ms. Bye | |

Institutions

BSC, President Leingang, **DCB**, Interim Dean Gorder, **DSU, LRSC**, President Simone, **MaSU**, President Van Horn, **MiSU**, President Shirley, **NDSCS**, President Flanigan, **NDSU**, President Cook, Ms. Stephanie Wawers **UND**, President Armacost, **VCSU**, President LaFave, **WSC**, President Hirning.

System Office/Guests

NDUS, Commissioner Sanford, DC Meredith Larson, Ms. Bethany Kadrmas, Ms. Christina Pieske, Mr. Chris Pieske, Ms. Billie Jo Lorus, Ms. Jamie Wilke, Mr. Dustin Walcker, Ms. Claire Gunwall, Ms. Sharon Schwartzbauer, Mr. David Krebsbach, Ms. Jane Grinde, Mr. Eric Jensen, DC Lisa Johnson. **CTS**, Mr. Corey Quirk. **Assistant Attorney General**, Mr. Shawn McNamara.

Call to Order

Chair Black called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m., C.T.

1. # Agenda
Mihalick moved, Biller seconded motion to approve the agenda as presented. Motion was passed unanimously via voice vote.

System Spotlight Campaign

2. [Spotlight on VCSU's AI Institute of Teaching and Learning](#)
President LaFave from Valley City State University, presented the launch and implementation of the AI Institute for Teaching and Learning, funded by the Workforce Education Innovation Fund, detailing its collaborative approach, training plans, and ethical focus for K12 and higher education across North Dakota.
3. Spotlight on University of North Dakota
President Armacost provided the board with a comprehensive update on UND's recent achievements, including student and faculty honors, research grants, new academic

programs, campus development, and major initiatives such as satellite launches, AI ethics, and innovation-focused projects.

Board Consent (4-11, 13-16)

4. October 30, 2025 [Meeting Minutes](#)

SBHE Audit Committee

5. Updated FY26 [Audit Plan](#)

SBHE ASAC Committee

- a. Institutional Organization Exploration
 - a. [North Dakota State University](#)
 - i. Center for Banking and Finance
 - ii. Honors College
- b. Tenure
 - a. [North Dakota State University](#)

SBHE Budget and Finance Committee

8. [Housing, Food, and Fee Guidelines](#)
9. [NDSU request to transfer Tier II/III funds](#)
10. [DSU Interim Financing Request](#)

Retirement Plan Oversight Committee

11. Recommendation
 - a. [Summary](#)
 - b. [NDUS Retirement Plan Revenue Credit Balance](#)

SBHE Policy

1st read:

- ~~12. Policy 503.1 [Student Free Speech and Expression](#)~~
13. Policy 503.2 [Student Data Privacy and Security Bill of Rights](#)
14. Policy 514 [Due Process Requirements for Student Conduct That May Result in Suspension or Expulsion](#)

2nd read:

15. HR Policy 2 [Appointments](#)
16. Policy 706.1 [Board Member and Advisor Per Diem Payments](#)
Billir moved, Eriksrud seconded, to approve the consent agenda, excluding item 12, moving it to Board Business. Motion carried 7-0.

Board Business

MOVED 12. Policy 503.1 [Student Free Speech and Expression](#)

Mr. Pieske presented history on why the revision of this policy occurred.

Bye moved and Eriksrud seconded the motion to approve Policy 503.1 Student Free Speech and Expression. Motion carried 7-0.

17. Reduced-credit bachelor's degrees

- a. [Policy Changes](#)

The Policy change is as follows; Direct the NDUS System Office staff to draft a new policy to establish a reduced-credit Bachelor degree pilot program, with

guardrails established by the Board. Also direct the NDUS System Office staff to draft an amendment to Policy 409 to reference the new policy.

b. Reduced-credit bachelor's degree draft [guardrails](#)

DC Johnson outlined the rationale for a standalone pilot policy on reduced credit bachelor's degrees, presenting seven proposed guardrails such as limiting program rollout, focusing on Bachelor of Applied Science degrees, excluding licensure programs, requiring mandatory advising, and considering transcript notation. Board members debated the necessity and implications of transcript notation (asterisk), with many expressing concern that it could stigmatize the degree, while others emphasized the importance of industry or employer endorsement and the need for a sunset clause to ensure periodic policy review.

Bye moved, Biller seconded, to approve the motion regarding reduced-credit bachelor's degrees as was stated by Black. Motion carried 7-0.

18. Consideration of Interim Presidential Appointment at VCSU

a. Executive Session

Biller moved and Campbell seconded, to enter Executive Session to consider and discuss the appointment of an interim President for Valley City State University. Move to enter Executive Session to (1) consider the appointment of an interim President for Valley City State University, and any contract terms (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 North Dakota Century Code sections 15-10-17(1)(d), 44-04-19.1(9), and 44-04-19.2.

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

Executive Session began at 9:34 a.m., C.T.

Present:

SBHE Members

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Mr. Kevin Black, Chair | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Mr. Tim Mihalick |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Mr. DJ Campbell, Vice Chair | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Mr. Pat Sogard |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Mr. Max Eriksrud | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Dr. Lisa Montplaisir, Faculty Advisor |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Mr. Curtis Biller | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ms. Anna Kinney, Staff Advisor |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ms. Danita Bye | |

Others Present:

Commissioner Sanford, DC Meredith Larson, Mr. Chris Pieske, Ms. Christina Pieske
Assistant Attorney General Mr. Shaun McNamara.

Executive Session adjourned at 10:50 a.m., C.T.

Executive Session reconvened at 11:22 a.m., C.T.

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

Open Session reconvened at 11:28 p.m., C.T.

Campbell moved, Mihalick seconded to appoint Dr. Allen Bergad as Interim President at Valley City State University, giving Commissioner Sanford authority to negotiate and execute terms of the contract. Motion passed 7-0.

19. Consideration of Interim Presidential Appointment at NDSU

a. Executive Session

Campbell moved, Biller seconded, to enter Executive Session to (1) consider the appointment of an interim President for North Dakota State University, and any contract terms (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 North Dakota Century Code sections 15-10-17(1)(d), 44-04-19.1(9), and 44-04-19.2.

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| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ms. Bye | |

Others Present:

Commissioner Sanford, DC Meredith Larson, Mr. Chris Pieske, Ms. Christina Pieske Assistant Attorney General Mr. Shaun McNamara.

Executive Session adjourned at 12:24 p.m., C.T.

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

Open Session reconvened at 12:26 p.m., C.T.

Black announced that the Board is not appointing an Interim at this meeting. Commissioner Sanford will oversee an inclusive process, similar to what was used at Valley City State University. Consideration of an Interim appointment will take place at a Special SBHE Board meeting in January.

Representative Reports/Updates/Discussions

20. Staff Senate

Ms. Kinney reported on recent Staff Senate meetings, highlighting campus leadership searches, bylaw committee work, staff recognition award development, and campus-specific events aimed at community building and professional development. Ms. Kinney explained that current tuition waiver policies restrict use to the employees' institution, with ongoing discussions about expanding eligibility system-wide, noting that changes may require legislative action. Ms. Kinney highlighted concerns from staff who

are unable to pursue advanced degrees at their home institutions due to policy limitations, leading some to leave for educational opportunities elsewhere. She suggested providing a detailed update to the board in a future meeting to address these barriers.

21. CCF

Dr. Montplaisir reported that recent meetings focused on tenure qualifications, with ongoing data collection via surveys and collaboration with Campbell and DC Johnson to review HR policies and pathways for tenured and non-tenured faculty, aiming to provide formal recommendations in January. Dr. Montplaisir mentioned the possibility for faculty in tenured positions to transition into non-tenured roles if pathways are available.

22. NDSA

Mr. Eriksrud reported that the NDSA meeting had higher turnout from western schools and resulted in the establishment of annual goals, including mental health, freedom of speech, college affordability, workforce development, campus housing, and internships, with a future resolution on internships anticipated. The NDSA passed resolutions supporting campus safety policies, specifically referencing policies 60 and 617, and expressed overall satisfaction with the meeting's outcomes.

SBHE Committee Reports/Updates/Discussions

23. SBHE Academic and Student Affairs Committee

Biller noted that most of the committee's recent work centered on reduced credit degrees, with robust discussions aimed at moving the topic forward and reducing its prominence in future agendas. The committee is monitoring developments in AI, with Biller expressing interest in ensuring standardized processes to avoid conflicting approaches among universities and highlighting the shift from concerns about AI-enabled cheating to leveraging AI for educational enhancement.

24. SBHE Budget and Finance Committee

a. SBHE Retreat Priority items:

i. Dual Credit/ Tuition Discussion – Subsidized and unsubsidized delivery, Policy 805.1 & Procedure 805.1

Mihalick reported that the BFC committee has continued to touch on the Dual Credit/Tuition discussion. There is continued discussion with legislators regarding this topic.

ii. [Resource Sharing Between Institutions](#)

1. [Proposed Policy](#)

Mr. Pieske explained that the shared services policy is in its initial draft stage, with only preliminary review so far, and will be circulated through councils, stakeholders, and institutional leaders for feedback before formal adoption.

iii. Funding Formula Recommendations

Mihalick reported that the Funding Formula Recommendations discussions are continuing with legislators.

25. SBHE Audit Committee

Mihalick stated that Mr. Walcker presented an updated Audit plan for FY26. Mr. Pieske also presented on the DOJ Guidelines during their last meeting.

26. SBHE Research and Governance Committee

- a. SBHE Retreat Priority items:
 - i. Tenure
Campbell reported that the committee hopes to have a policy in front of the board in January of 2026.
 - ii. Institutional Mission, Program Offerings, and Vision for the Future [Survey](#)
Campbell said they are preparing campus-specific documents outlining current status and future outlook as resources for Board members.

27. Midwest Higher Education Annual Meeting

Mihalick left before giving an update on the Midwest Higher Education Annual Meeting. Black noted any available update would be shared with the board later.

Chair Report

28. Updates from Chair Black

Black noted that several of his intended updates had already been addressed. He reported that the Funding Formula Interim Committee convened in mid-November and expressed appreciation for the Committee's collaborative efforts.

Commissioner Report

29. Large IT Project Quarterly update

a. [Current Major IT Project Status – 2025 Q3](#)

b. [MITPO \(LPO\) Quarterly Report – 2025 Q3](#)

Mr. Quirk reported that the completion of UND's migration to a third-party managed network service, noting the project was slightly delayed but on budget, with no other major projects currently in execution.

c. Study of the Enterprise Resource Planning System

Mr. Quirk summarized the legislative study mandated by Senate Bill 2021, Section 11, which examines the current PeopleSoft ERP system and potential future solutions, including cloud-based versus on-premises options, and the differing requirements of state agencies and higher education. Vendor assessments have been utilized, with both the state and NDUS conducting market analyses and preparing requests for limited information (RFLI) to inform future decisions, with findings to be shared at upcoming legislative meetings.

30. Agency Project/ System Alignment Project Update

DC Larson reported that recent listening sessions at NDSU and UND were well attended and gathered feedback from campus leaders and community members, with additional sessions and surveys planned to collect input from presidents, system office leaders, board members, and other stakeholders. The alignment project's report is scheduled to be delivered before the board's spring strategic planning session, with consideration given to inviting Agency consultants to present at the retreat.

31. Presidential Evaluations Process Review Update

DC Larson and Ms. Grinde met with all current presidents to gather feedback on the evaluation process, identifying valued elements such as on-campus presence and personalized follow-up, and plan to develop a streamlined evaluation format in the coming month.

32. Presidential Search Process Updates – DC Larson

- a. BSC
DC Larson stated that the BSC presidential search is being led internally by the system office in collaboration with campus representatives, with the first search committee meeting completed and the job description expected to be posted by December 10th.
- b. VCSU
DC Larson reported that the Valley City search has not officially started, but co-chairs have been selected, and a pre-planning meeting is scheduled to finalize the timeline, with the process expected to conclude a month or two after BSC and NDSU.
- c. NDSU
NDSU's search is being managed primarily by the campus with system office support, following an aggressive timeline, and the first search committee meeting is set to discuss the use of a search firm and finalize the position description.

33. [DOJ Guidelines](#)

Mr. Pieske explained that DOJ guidelines are used to evaluate the effectiveness of compliance programs, with future audit committee reports structured around these standards to assess current practices and identify areas for improvement.

34. [HLC State Partners Update](#)

DC Larson summarized key points from the HLC's 'Trends 2025' document, drawing attention to the need for accountability, demonstrating return on investment, and adapting to changing expectations in higher education.

35. Updates from Commissioner Sanford

Commissioner Sanford reported frequent meetings with legislative and executive branch leaders to address funding formula, online education, and dual credit, aiming to represent all 11 institutions and maintain a unified approach.

Black noted the potential impact of challenging commodity prices and future revenue uncertainties on the budget climate, urging board members to remain mindful of these factors in planning.

Other

36. Public Comments

There were no comments made by the public.

Adjourn

Chair Black adjourned the meeting at 1:29 p.m., C.T.