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North Dakota State Board of Higher Education

February 26, 2026, Meeting Minutes

The State Board of Higher Education met on February 26, 2026, at 8:30 a.m., CT., via Teams.

Roll Call

SBHE Members

☒ Mr. Kevin Black, Chair
☒ Mr. DJ Campbell, Vice Chair
☒ Mr. Max Eriksrud
☒ Mr. Curtis Biller
☒ Ms. Michelle Kommer
☒ Mr. Tim Mihalick
☒ Mr. Pat Sogard
☒ Dr. Lisa Montplaisir, Faculty Advisor
☒ Ms. Anna Kinney, Staff Advisor
☒ Ms. Danita Bye

Institutions

BSC: Interim President Leingang, Ms. Rebecca Collins, **DCB:** Dean Gorder, Ms. Kayla O'Toole**,** **DSU:** President Molander, **LRSC:** President Simone, **MaSU:** President Van Horn, Ms. Amber Hill, **MiSU:** President Shirley, **NDSCS:** President Flanigan, **NDSU:** Interim President Berg, **UND:** President Armacost, Ms. Karla Mongeon-Stewart**,** **VCSU:** Interim President Burgad, **WSC:** President Hirning.

System Office/Guests

NDUS: Commissioner Sanford, Ms. Bethany Kadrmas, Ms. Christina Pieske, Dr. Jennifer Weber, Ms. Sharon Schwartzbauer, Ms. Jamie Wilke, Ms. Jane Grinde, Mr. Eric Jensen, Ms. Claire Gunwall, Dr. Billie Jo Lorius, DC Lisa Johnson, Mr. Dustin Walcker, DC Meredith Larson, Mr. Chris Pieske, DC David Krebsbach, Mr. Rick Tonder, **CTS:** Mr. Corey Quirk**, Assistant Attorney General:** Mr. Shaun McNamara, Mr. Matt Hammer.

Call to Order

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

System Spotlight Campaign

2. Spotlight on SBHE Member Danita Bye
   Mr. Jensen presented a video spotlight on Danita Bye, highlighting her background, career journey, and perspectives on education.

Board Consent (3 – 18)

3. January 22, 2026 Special Meeting Minutes
4. January 29, 2026 Meeting Minutes

SBHE Academic and Student Affairs Committee

5. Institution Organization Notice
    a. North Dakota State University
        i. Center for Banking and Finance

SBHE Budget and Finance Committee

6. UND: Name SMHS Dermatology Dept & Endowed Chair
7. DSU request to transfer Tier II/III funds
8. Mid-year Budget Report Exemption Request
9. NDUS Retirement Plans
    a. Recommended Changes to Core Investment Line Up
    b. Recommended Changes to the Investment Policy Statement

SBHE Research and Governance Committee

10. SBHE Development Instrument
11. SBHE Assessment Timeline

SBHE Policy

1st read, waive 2nd read

12. Policy 440 Enrollment Reporting
13. Policy 442 IPEDS Enrollment Reporting
14. Policy 511 Student Criminal History Background Checks

2nd read

15. Policy 331 Approval of College and University Constitutions by the Board
16. Policy 340.2 Nonprofit Affiliates
17. Policy 601.2 Acting Chief Executive Officer
18. Policy 703.3 Retirement

Sogard moved, Biller seconded to approve the Board Consent Agenda (3-18), as presented. Motion passed, 8-0.

 # Board Business

19. Executive Session

    Campbell moved, Biller seconded to move to enter executive session to 1) Discuss negotiating strategy or provide negotiating instructions to attorney and President Flanigan regarding a ground lease between the City of Wahpeton and NDSCS for development of NDSCS land and 2) to limit the executive session to board members, nonvoting advisors, counsel for NDSCS and SBHE, the Commissioner and other invited NDUS staff. The legal authority for closing this portion of the meeting is N.D.C.C. §§ 44-04-19.2 and 44-04-19.1(9).
    Biller, Bye, Campbell, Eriksrud, Kommer, Mihalick, Sogard, and Black voted yes.
    Motion passed, 8-0.

    Executive Session began at 8:49 a.m., CT.

    Present:

SBHE Members

☒ Mr. Kevin Black, Chair
☒ Mr. DJ Campbell, Vice Chair
☒ Mr. Max Eriksrud
☒ Mr. Curtis Biller
☒ Ms. Danita Bye
☒ Mr. Tim Mihalick
☒ Mr. Pat Sogard
☒ Dr. Lisa Montplaisir, Faculty Advisor
☒ Ms. Anna Kinney, Staff Advisor
☒ Ms. Michelle Kommer

Others Present:
Commissioner Sanford, President Flanigan, DC Meredith Larson, Mr. Chris Pieske, Ms. Christina Pieske, Mr. Matt Hammer, Mr. Shaun McNamara.

Executive Session adjourned at 9:45 a.m., CT.

Open Session reconvened at 9:57 a.m., CT.

Kommer moved to delegate Sogard and Mihalick to negotiate the lease and development of NDSCS land with the City of Wahpeton, consistent with board policies and priorities. Campbell seconded.
Motion passed, 8-0.

20. Mihalick moved, Kommer seconded, to enter executive session to 1) Discuss negotiating strategy or provide negotiating instructions to attorney and President Flanigan regarding the NDSCS Dorm Project and 2) to limit the executive session to board members, nonvoting advisors, counsel for NDSCS and SBHE, the Commissioner and other invited NDUS staff. The legal authority for closing this portion of the meeting is N.D.C.C. 44-04-19.2 and 44-04-19.1(9).
Biller, Bye, Campbell, Eriksrud, Kommer, Mihalick, Sogard, and Black voted yes.
Motion passed, 8-0.

Executive Session began at 10:01 a.m., CT.

Present:
SBHE Members

☒ Mr. Kevin Black, Chair
☒ Mr. DJ Campbell, Vice Chair
☒ Mr. Max Eriksrud
☒ Mr. Curtis Biller
☒ Ms. Danita Bye
☒ Mr. Tim Mihalick
☒ Mr. Pat Sogard
☒ Dr. Lisa Montplaisir, Faculty Advisor
☒ Ms. Anna Kinney, Staff Advisor
☒ Ms. Michelle Kommer

Others Present:
Commissioner Sanford, President Flanigan, DC Meredith Larson, Mr. Chris Pieske, Ms. Christina Pieske, Mr. Matt Hammer, Mr. Shaun McNamara.

Executive Session adjourned at 10:36 a.m., CT.

Open Session reconvened at 10:45 a.m., CT.

Black summarized that the board provided negotiating instructions to President Flanigan, directed continued collaboration with the system CFO and Budget and Finance Committee, and emphasized compliance with policy and stewardship of assets.
No vote was taken.

21. UND Land Sales to NDDOT
    a. Ray Richards Golf Course Property
    b. West Campus Property

    Ms. Mongeon-Stewart presented two related land sale items to the North Dakota Department of Transportation for the 42nd Street underpass.
    Mihalick moved, Biller seconded to approve both UND land sale items to NDDOT.
    Motion passed, 8-0.

22. BSC Residence Hall Lease-back
    President Leingang presented the BSC Residence Hall leaseback agreement with Mystic LLC, detailing the structure, financials, and intended impact.
    Biller moved, Eriksrud seconded to approve the BSC Residence Hall leaseback.
    Motion passed, 8-0.

23. Honorary Degrees
    a. NDSU
    b. MaSU

    DC Johnson presented honorary degree nominations from NDSU and MaSU.
    Campbell moved, Eriksrud seconded to approve the honorary degree nominations for NDSU and MaSU.
    Motion passed, 8-0.

24. NDUS Foundation Reappointments
    a. Ms. Julie Traynor, MS, RN, Director of the Dakota Nursing Program, as reappointed – 4-year term
    b. Representative Scott Louser, BS, MS, Real Estate Broker, as reappointed – 4-year term

    Black presented the NDUS Foundation reappointments.
    Sogard moved, Bye seconded to approve the NDUS Foundation reappointments.
    Motion passed, 8-0.

 # SBHE Policy

1st read, waive 2nd read

25. Policies 305.1 Institution President Authority and Responsibilities; Contract Terms and 605.1 Academic Appointments (presidential retreat rights and termination without cause)
    Mr. Pieske presented proposed amendments for Policies 305.1 and 605.1 and suggested waiving second read in order to put these amendments into effect before the hiring of new presidents next month.

Mihalick moved, Bye seconded to approve the proposed amendments of Policies 305.1 and 605.1 and waive second read.
Motion passed, 8-0.

1st read

26. Policy 605.1 [Academic Appointments] (eligibility for tenure)
    Mr. Pieske presented changes that are prospective, not retroactive, for eligibility for tenure.
    Campbell moved, Mihalick seconded to approve the proposed changes for eligibility for tenure, waiving second read.
    Motion passed, 8-0.

Representative Reports /Updates/Discussions

27. Staff Senate
    Ms. Kinney expressed appreciation to Chair Black for engaging with the Staff Senate. The Staff Senate addressed topics including the new staff award, employee tuition waivers, and updates from various institutions. Additionally, Ms. Kinney reported that she was reelected as the representative to the SBHE by the Staff Senate.

28. CCF
    Dr. Montplaisir noted that CCF will soon conduct an election to select the new SBHE representative, with results scheduled for announcement at the upcoming SBHE meeting. In light of updated tenure eligibility requirements, CCF will begin discussions regarding the anticipated increase in faculty pursuing opportunities for advancement to terminal or higher degrees, as well as addressing questions from faculty relating to these changes.

29. NDSA
    Eriksrud shared updates from the February NDSA meeting in Williston. Key topics included AI policies, concerns about faculty using AI to grade assignments, and discussion of the Compact of Academic Excellence, which he urged everyone to review independently.

SBHE Committee Reports/Updates/Discussions

30. SBHE Academic and Student Affairs Committee
    Biller noted that ASAC invited a guest speaker from Golden Path Solutions to discuss their product, Compass. Additionally, Biller stated that ASAC approved 20 new academic programs and certificates while considering the termination of two programs. The group discussed the disproportion between the number of new offerings and the fewer terminations. Next month, both AAC and ASAC meetings will address issues related to low enrollment.

31. SBHE Budget and Finance Committee
    Mihalick reported that Dr. Blake Flanders presented at the BFC meeting in February. His presentation was regarding deferred maintenance and real estate.

32. SBHE Research and Governance Committee

Bye mentioned that no Research topics were addressed at the February meeting and passed the discussion to Campbell for Governance matters. Campbell shared that he had asked DC Larson to develop a stronger recognition program for the board, which would allow the board to acknowledge outstanding achievements within the system.

33. BSC Presidential Search Process Update
    DC Larson announced that six semi-finalists will be on campus next week. The process is progressing, and DC Larson expressed appreciation for everyone who has contributed to the Search Process.

34. VCSU Presidential Search Process Update
    DC Larson shared that progress is being made in the VCSU search. The next meeting is scheduled for March 27th, where the committee will begin reviewing and discussing the candidates' applications based on their submitted materials.

35. NDSU Presidential Search Process Update
    Black stated that the initial pool of over 60 applicants has been reduced to a more manageable group. Interviews are scheduled for March 2nd and 3rd, with a further round for shortlisted candidates taking place off-campus on March 9th and 10th. The final selection will be determined at the Board meeting on March 30th.

36. System Alignment Project Update
    DC Larson presented a concise overview of the System Alignment Project. The consultants are currently preparing the final draft of their paper study and will attend the April SBHE Retreat to share further details.

Chair Report

37. Black stated that Senator Sickler, who chairs the Legislative Higher Education Institutions Interim Committee, invited Commissioner Sanford and Chair Black to discuss updates on dual credit and shared services. Black added that in March, each committee will be asked to give guidance on these topics in preparation for the Interim Committee's April meeting.

Commissioner Report

38. Updates from Commissioner Sanford
    Commissioner Sanford noted that ROI (return on investment) is a priority for the current administration and could impact NDUS. He also discussed possible responses to lower funding. Governor Armstrong indicated that budget reductions will be considered for the next biennium, with higher education typically facing larger cuts. Therefore, a proactive approach from SBHE is advised.

Other

39. Public Comments
    President Shirley wanted to confirm the dates of the Legislative Higher Education Institutions Interim meeting on April 8th at DCB and April 9th at MiSU.

Adjourn

Chair Black adjourned the meeting at 12:08 p.m., CT.