

NDUS Strategy Forum: Meeting the Needs of a Changing Student Body

Forum Summary

Bismarck Stage College

June 8 and 9, 2009

Introduction and Welcome

The North Dakota University System Online hosted a strategy forum to address North Dakota challenges and changing demographics in the coming decade. The goals of the strategy forum were to develop an understanding of the issues, to consider options and to recommend appropriate system and institution responses to the challenges as the first steps in developing a focused action plan. Eighty-five representatives from the eleven system institutions and one tribal college participated in the two day event. Dr. Larry Skogen welcomed the participants to Bismarck State College and thanked the North Dakota University System for planning the Strategy Forum. Dr. Michel Hillman welcomed the representatives from the North Dakota higher education institutions to the Strategy Forum. Hillman said that this conference was about change, and not just what the state needs, but what students need and want. For additional background on the Strategy Forum, refer to the following URL:

<http://www.nduso.org/summit.html>.

Keynote Speakers

Dr. James Applegate, Senior Vice President for Program Development, Lumina Foundation, thanked the university system for the invitation to speak. He complimented North Dakota on having a data-driven approach to strategy development and being proactive in addressing the issues of the coming decade.

Applegate said Lumina focuses on three main milestones of progress: student preparedness, student success and college productivity. He said North Dakota's largest market is the adult learner. Nationally, 42.5 million or 19% of adults have some college, 56 million or 29% have a high school diploma or GED but no college and 26.4 million or 13% are high school dropouts, totaling more than 100 million adults who have not completed college degrees. Without a

postsecondary education, opportunities for advancement are limited, if not nonexistent. North Dakota does a good job of recruiting traditional students but not necessarily adult learners. He said per-capita income increases with educational level and the only way states can reduce health care and incarceration costs is to increase educational levels in the state.

Applegate said key ways to increase the number of adult learners are to:

1. Improve data systems for effective management of the learning process
2. Create incentives for students to return
3. Increase affordability and
4. Become more flexible and responsive institutions

The North Dakota University System needs to consider additional accelerated, weekend and night programs, collaboration and prior learning assessment. The United Way and the American Human Development Project have created a tool to forecast how things might change in a community if educational outcomes improve. Applegate recommended the following URL related to this project: <http://www.liveunited.org/forecaster/>. He said the data on this site indicate that, as educational levels rise, states also experiences increases in per capita income, good health, community involvement and other positive factors.

Dr. Richard Rathge, Director, North Dakota State Data Center, presented the demographic trends of North Dakota. He said North Dakota is declining in working-age population, driven by limited economic opportunities. People ages 5-54 are leaving the state while people ages 65 and older are remaining. Rathge said the challenges for the NDUS include:

1. Loss of traditional age students
2. Competition for existing students
3. Reliance on out-of-state students
4. Changing labor force composition and
5. New economy driven careers

His presentation can be viewed at

http://www.ndsu.nodak.edu/sdc/presentations/060809_NDUS.pps.

Summary of Internal and External Barriers

The attendees were divided into six groups and asked to identify barriers (unranked) the system and/or institutions can expect to encounter during the coming decade. The following barriers were identified:

1. Limited accessibility for diverse student populations
2. Student affordability based on current campus funding approach
3. Lack of a system marketing effort
4. Limited accessibility for non-traditional age students
5. A general lack of understanding of the link between higher education and state economic development
6. Lack of incentives to retain professionals in rural counties (teachers, doctors, nurses, etc.)
7. Conflict between maximum flexibility and maximum efficiency in course scheduling
8. Lack of a state, lifelong learning vision and plan to address unmet needs
9. Lack of access to a data warehouse for state and institutional planning and management
10. Resistance of the education culture to change
11. Inadequate student services, for example, meeting the needs of students who have children
12. Amount of time required to negotiate collaborative programs
13. Lack of a statewide infrastructure to coordinate online learning collaboration

Summary of System Plan of Action

Forum attendees were divided again into groups to discuss a possible system plan of action. What should the system do differently? Each group was asked to identify possible responses to the barriers identified in Session I and to suggest how the system could respond. The following responses were provided:

1. Review existing policies and be more flexible, such as with adult learners
2. Implement P-20 principles by aligning key general education curricula with K-12 outcomes to ensure smooth transitions to post-secondary education
3. Disaggregate the role of advising from teaching to leverage both effectiveness and economies of scale; made advising more students focused
4. Raise awareness and support by convening a statewide conference with a wide range of participants, including the public, governor, mayors, higher education officials/leaders and employers.
5. Improve assessment of entering students for proper placement and efficient degree completion
6. Improve existing articulation with tribal colleges to facilitate transfer
7. Continue to improve the use of technology to facilitate access to programs across North Dakota and move to a consistent set of underlying technologies to streamline efforts
8. Facilitate the return to college (or starting college) for adult learners, military personnel, etc.
9. Streamline fundamental processes and procedures – shared transcripts, shared information

Summary of Institutional Barriers

1. Lack of system degrees and marketing resources for the system
2. Limits on ability to share student data
3. Lack of resources to implement change, collaboration and new initiatives

Summary of Suggested Institutional Strategies

1. Articulate niche markets to reduce competition
2. Develop partnerships with communities to promote education
3. Increase collaboration incentives
4. Make distance education more visible and an institutional/system-level priority

5. Increase collaborative infrastructure to support partnerships
 6. Develop a “one-stop shop” approach for prospective and present students
 7. Improve policymaker understanding of demographic urgency
 8. Rekindle the roundtable concept to maximize partner involvement
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Hillman presented initial recommendations for the system that will move forward to the Chancellor, Chancellor’s Cabinet and the State Board of Higher Education for consideration as part of the planning process.

It was moved by Terry Olson, WSC, seconded by Paul Lekang, NDSCS, to adopt the Recommendations for the System agreed upon by forum participants (see below).

Recommendations for the System

Desired Outcomes

1. (Goal from the 2007-08 Interim Committee) The education attainment of North Dakota’s population will be at the level of the highest performing countries in the world.
 2. Every North Dakotan will have access to the post-secondary education needed to enable them to be personally and professionally successful (Goal from the 2007-08 Interim Committee: Students in all parts of North Dakota will have ready access to both two- and four-year degrees in a wide range of academic programs.)
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Inputs

1. Traditional college age students
2. Adults within the state
3. Non-resident students

General Strategies for Inputs

1. Improve awareness of the relationship between education and economic viability and on the demographic trends that will impact the economic future of the state and nation
 2. Define education expectations for preparation to improve student success in careers
 3. Improve access to and awareness of the system from outside the state
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Process

1. Build on a seamless P-20 system concept
 - a) Align general education curriculum with K-12
 - b) Improve assessment of entering students
 - c) Improve articulation agreements including those within the state tribal college system
 - d) Explore value of joint degrees
 - e) Consider professional advising system
 - f) Improve assessment of prior learning experience
 - g) Provide P-20 faculty and staff development
 - h) Improve access to community college programs across the state
 - i) Enhance flexible curriculum
 - j) Support individual learning styles
2. Continue to leverage technology to improve access, service to students, and productivity
 - a) Review/improve the collaborative student process
 - b) Improve services to small groups of students (1 or 2)
 - c) Share information for cross-enrolled students
 - d) Implement data driven continuous improvement processes
 - e) Facilitate distance learning as a key component to access

3. Improve information for P-20 decision-making in support of student success
 - a) State longitudinal data system
 - b) Higher Education data warehouse
 4. Engage our partners to help meet common goals
 - a) Roundtable must continue and meet frequently
 - b) Consider regional Roundtables hosted by each system institution
 5. System rewards desired outcomes
 - a) Student success
 - b) Collaboration
 6. Ensure adequate staff and other resources to implement initiatives
 7. Enhance affordability and access for all individuals (both traditional and non-traditional)
 - a) Tuition rates
 - b) Funding models
 - c) Student aid
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Outcomes

1. (Goal from the 2007-08 Interim Committee) The education attainment of North Dakota's population will be at the level of the highest performing countries in the world. Examples of objectives, targets and trajectories to accomplish these are:
 - a) Improve quality of student pipeline success (e.g. retention, graduation rates, etc.)
 - b) Increase number of adult learners
 - c) Increase number of out-of-state students
2. Every North Dakotan will have access to the post-secondary education needed to enable them to be personally and professionally successful (Goal from the 2007-08

Interim Committee: Students in all parts of North Dakota will have ready access to both two- and four-year degrees in a wide range of academic programs.) Specific objectives, targets and trajectories to accomplish this to be added.

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