

Legislative Review

A Look at Higher Education in Week 12: March 23-27, 2009



The Legislature recessed March 26 and 27 and will reconvene March 30. The recess allows lawmakers to return home and help battle rising floodwaters.

Subcommittee Work Continues on SB 2003, the NDUS Budget Bill

Work continues on **SB 2003**, the NDUS budget bill, in the House Appropriations, Education and Environment Division. Recent subcommittee actions include:

- Added \$750,000 for a Theodore Roosevelt Center at Dickinson State University
- Added \$350,000 from the Permanent Oil Tax Trust Fund to Dickinson State University to offset reductions in oil revenues
- Removed salary increase restrictions for the NDUS Office and restored related funding
- Removed \$8.2 million in state funding which would have permitted tuition rate increases to be frozen at the two-year campuses and limited to no more than 4 percent per year at the four-year campuses in 2009-11
- Removed \$10 million in equity funding
- Added \$23.2 million for the state grant program (\$21 million is expected to be amended out of SB 2062.)
- Added \$3 million for new merit scholarship program (The \$3 million is expected to be amended out of SB 2062.)
- Added \$1 million for new STEM Loan Forgiveness Program (The \$1 million is expected to be amended out of SB 2062.)
- Shifted funding for the University of North Dakota Education Building renovation of \$11.2 million from state general fund to federal stimulus funds
- Added \$345,000 to MiSU-B for greenhouse repairs (\$280,000) and safety/security (\$65,000)
- Added a Legislative Council study on the impact of higher education tuition waivers
- Added a Legislative Council study to determine the feasibility of creating a department to oversee both kindergarten through grade 12 and higher education

Sub-committee work will continue with full Appropriations Committee action to follow.

Committee Recommends “Do Pass” on Financial Literacy Bill

HCR 3016, a concurrent resolution urging school districts to offer a financial literacy course, was heard in the Senate Education Committee Monday, March 23, and received a unanimous “Do Pass” recommendation from the committee.

Vice Chancellor Mike Hillman told the committee the SBHE supports improved financial literacy education in North Dakota schools. Enhancing age-appropriate financial literacy education

and improving access to financial planning information for parents were recommended in a March 2008 report to the board on barriers to student financial access to college.

The report also recommended that the Joint Boards of Education support improvements to financial literacy education.

The bill now awaits action by the full Senate.

House Subcommittee Hears Opportunity Grant Bill

SB 2062, the Opportunity Grant bill, was heard in the House Appropriations, Education and Environment Division, Monday, March 23.

Chancellor Bill Goetz testified in support of the bill, which, in its present form, includes new and statutory changes and \$25 million in new state funding for the following student financial aid programs:

- Needs-based financial aid \$21 million
- Opportunity Grants \$3 million
- STEM Student loan forgiveness \$1 million

Goetz told the committee these important programs will help North Dakota students, especially in light of the financial challenges faced by many students and families. He said these programs will provide opportunities to improve high school and college performance, increase post-secondary participation and enhance the state's labor pool with talented graduates.

The sub-committee has not taken action on the bill.

Bills Passed This Week

HB 1027: Gives the Budget Section authority to increase the number of legislatively authorized FTE positions (Note: SB 2003 exempts the NDUS from this provision)

HB 1176: Changes licensing of dental assistants and hygienists

HB 1460: As amended, creates a grant program for state institution alternative use plan

HB 1566: Requires the NDUS to study ways to improve interaction between the NDUS and tribal colleges

HB 2389: Changes MiSU-B name to Dakota College at Bottineau effective Aug. 1, 2009

Committee Adopts Amendments to SB 2020, the NDSU Ag Budget

Work on **SB 2020**, the NDSU Research and Extension appropriation bill, continues in the House Appropriations, Education and Environment Division. Amendments adopted by the sub-committee to date include:

Additions to the Extension Service budget:

- \$220,000 for 4H leadership education
- \$200,000 for agents in training
- \$240,000 for an agribusiness specialist
- \$40,000 for a junior master gardener
- \$125,000 for parenting resources

Additions to the Research Stations budget:

- \$250,000 for a wheat rust pathologist
- \$180,000 to the Carrington Research Center for a plant pathologist
- \$220,000 to the Central Grasslands Research Center for a forage agronomist
- \$65,000 to the Williston Research Center for an irrigation scientist
- \$925,000 in one-time funding to the Dickinson Research Center operating pool

Committee work on SB 2020 will continue next week.

Bills Failed This Week

SB 2288: Reduced from 150 to 135 required high school instructional hours for specific fields of study