

Legislative Review

A Look at Higher Education in Week 14: April 6 - 10, 2009



**Thank you to the
North Dakota
Student Association
for a strong show
of support for
funding
to maintain
affordability
and increase
needs-based
financial aid!**

House Appropriations Amends SB 2003 and SB 2038

SB 2003, the NDUS budget bill, and **SB 2038**, the flexibility with accountability legislation, were acted on Thursday, April 9 by the full House Appropriations Committee.

Full committee actions on SB 2003 included transfer of \$8.2 million from needs-based financial aid to restore tuition affordability funding removed by the House Appropriations Committee, Education and Environment Division. This funding had been added by the Senate. This brings the increase for needs-based aid to about \$2.8 million over the current \$6.5 million level, which is a significant reduction from the SBHE-requested (\$20 million total) and governor-recommended (\$40 million total) funding levels.

As amended by the House Appropriations Committee, Education and Environment Division, SB 2038 included five major capital projects. All five state-funded projects were removed from the bill by the full committee, but \$5 million from the governor's flexible economic stimulus funding was included in SB 2003 for Swain Hall at MiSU. Projects removed by the full House Appropriations were:

- DSU Stoxen Library Addition
- WSC Virtual Center for Career and Technical Education
- NDUS/UND IT Facility
- NDSU Research Greenhouse (This is in addition to funding already included in SB 2020.)
- UND SOMHS Bismarck Family Practice Center

SB 2038 now also includes changes on new budget reporting details and requires the Legislative Interim Higher Education Committee to meet a minimum of six times. The interim committee will discuss things such as alternative uses of institutions; changes to institutional missions; tuition

affordability, including tuition reciprocity; workforce needs; and utilization and capacity of institution facilities.

As approved by House Appropriations, SB 2003 now includes the following amendments to the bill as approved by the Senate:

- Adds \$750,000 for a Theodore Roosevelt Center at DSU

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SBHE and NDSA Voice Concerns About SB 2003

In a Monday, April 6 conference call meeting, the State Board of Higher Education restated its support for two key initiatives included in the board's 2009-11 North Dakota University System budget request.

Funding to keep higher education affordable for students and equity funding to address campus priorities were removed from **SB 2003**, the NDUS budget bill, in amendments adopted by the House Appropriations Committee, Education and Environment Division. SBHE members concurred on the urgency to oppose these amendments and sustain this funding which included needs-based financial aid, state funding to help limit tuition rate increases and equity funding for campus priorities.

Members of the North Dakota Student Association held a news conference Wednesday, April 8 to ask for restoration of funding to limit tuition increases and to increase needs-based financial aid. Several legislators were present at the news conference to show support for the students' request.

SB 2003, from Page 1

- Adds \$350,000 from the Permanent Oil Tax Trust Fund to DSU to offset reductions in oil revenues
- Removes salary increase restrictions for the NDUS Office and restores related funding
- Reduces needs-based financial aid by \$17.9 million
- Removes \$10 million in equity funding
- Adds \$3 million for a new merit scholarship program (The \$3 million and several policy sections were moved from SB 2062.)
- Adds \$1 million and re-focuses the existing Technology Program Loan Forgiveness Program toward STEM fields (The \$1 million was moved from SB 2062.)
- Shifts funding for the UND Education Building renovation of \$11.2 million from state general fund to federal stimulus funds
- Adds \$345,000 to MiSU-B for greenhouse repairs (\$280,000) and safety/security (\$65,000)
- Adds a Legislative Council study on the impact of higher education tuition waivers
- Adds a Legislative Council study to determine the feasibility of creating a department to oversee both kindergarten through grade 12 and higher education
- Adds \$800,000 for a two-year college advertising campaign and designates \$200,000 of NDUS Office carryover for the campaign
- Allows MiSU to use funds designated for a boiler project to possibly be applied to the cost of a geothermal system
- Designates \$1.1 million of NDUS Office carryover for the Northern Tier Network
- Removes \$700,000 in funding for tribal college grants, which are funded in HB 1394 from the Permanent Oil Tax Trust Fund

The next action on SB 2003 will be a vote by the full House. Then a joint Senate and House conference committee will work to reach consensus on a version of the bill to recommend for approval by the full House and Senate.

Concealed Weapons Bill Failed

HB 1348, a bill that would have permitted the carrying of concealed weapons in NDUS campus student apartments, failed in the Senate Friday, April 10, on a vote of 23-23.

House Kills Open Records Exemption Bill

SB 2087 was killed by the House on a vote of 37-56 Thursday, April 9.

The bill would have exempted applicants for the positions of chancellor and campus president from the state's Open Records Law during early stages of the search process. It was introduced at the request of the SBHE.

Passed Bills

- HB 1029:** Establishes rules, reporting requirements for employee service awards, employer-paid tuition and professional, service club dues; amendment excludes NDUS
- HB 1113:** For classified staff, requires state agencies to develop grievance procedures and creates a statewide appeals mechanism
- HB 1124:** Authorizes North Dakota to join multi-state compact for prevention and control of wildfires
- HB 1463:** Creates a state youth council to identify issues of concern to residents under age 25
- SB 2412:** Provides a \$369,900 general fund appropriation to state health department for grant to UND Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Center

Failed Bills

- HB 1434:** As amended, provided a \$500,000 general fund appropriation to create endowments for NDUS institution endowed chairs
- SB 2062:** Created the North Dakota Opportunity Grant Program
- SB 2087:** Exempted applicant records for chancellor and president from the open records law
- SB 2278:** Prohibited discrimination based on sexual orientation
- SB 2327:** Allowed the state fire marshal to exempt temporary occupancy of historical structure renovation