November 24, 2010 – November 30, 2010

In this edition:

**Higher Education Awareness Day at MSU**
By: Kevin Boughton, KMOT-TV News Stories

A new legislative session begins in January. Students from Minot State University hosted legislators from the Minot area for a conference showcasing student activities Tuesday.

**Technology and Higher Education noted in Milken Best-Performing Cities Report – Names Fargo No. 1**
Prairie Business

Fargo is rated first and Bismarck second in the Milken Institute Best Performing Cities report for 2010 in the category of small cities. The report notes "The big winners in the 2010 small cities index have at least one (or a combination) of these three assets: energy-related natural resources, a major university, and a military base."

**ND Science graduates earning good salaries**
Associated Press, WDAY News

New reports show that students who graduate from the State College of Science in Wahpeton earn average salaries about 16 percent below those who graduate from the much larger North Dakota State University in Fargo.

**NDSCS pleased with high placement**
By: Jennifer Johnson, Wahpeton Daily News

Ninety-eight percent of North Dakota State College of Science students are employed or continue their education following graduation, according to the college's annual placement report.

**UND team preparing for trip to Antarctica**
By: Tu-Uyen Tran, Grand Forks Herald

Tonight, when temperatures in much of the Red River valley dip into single digits and a walk outside means feeling the cold hand of winter on bare skin, give a thought to UND professor Jaakko Putkonen and his student assistants — this is what it will be like for them almost all of the time for the next two months.

The goal, Putkonen said, is to better understand how the landscape erodes in the coldest and one of the driest places on Earth. “These sites have been visited less seldom than the moon. That gives you some idea that we truly know very little about what’s going on there.”

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By: Nick Smith, Williston Herald

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By: Rebecca Beitsch, Bismarck Tribune

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By: Chuck Haga, Grand Forks Herald

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*Click on the title to go to the full article.

**Some articles are no longer available seven days after publication. They are, however, archived on the publication’s website and are available for a small fee.
Higher Education Awareness Day at MSU
By: Kevin Boughton, KMOT-TV News Stories

To view the original article, please visit: http://www.kmot.com/News_Stories.asp?news=44714

A new legislative session begins in January. Students from Minot State University hosted legislators from the Minot area for a conference showcasing student activities Tuesday.

Students wanted to educate legislators from their area about the many contributions they make to local communities as well as statewide.

“I hope that our legislators see that students as a whole are making an effort to create meaningful relationships with them for our next legislative session.” says Mary Christian, Director of Student Affairs at Minot State.

Christian believes the college experience can prepare young people to enter the work place along with make a difference in their fields.

“Students are extremely involved in the community as a whole while they’re going to school here and well after they leave,” says Christian.

Tuesday was the first annual Higher Education Awareness Day.

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The report is titled, "Best Performing Cities 2010: Where America’s Jobs Are Created and Sustained."

The report’s authors note Fargo’s agricultural base, along with a growing technology cluster. The report includes mention of Fargo-Moorhead’s higher education institutions, including North Dakota State University and notes the region’s job creation. According to the report, “From 2004 to 2009...the professional, scientific, and technical services sector added more than 1,000 positions.”

“The Milken Report represents a snapshot that shows results of the role that research universities and the NDSU Research & Technology Park can play in enhancing economic opportunities, combined with coordinated efforts among all levels of government,” said Philip Boudjouk, NDSU vice president for Research, Creative Activities and Technology Transfer.

The Milken Institute is an independent economic think tank whose mission is to improve the lives and economic conditions of diverse populations in the United States and around the world by helping business and public policy leaders identify and implement innovative ideas for creating broad-based prosperity.

The Milken Report comes on the heels of the recently released Beacon Hill Institute Report that placed North Dakota first overall in its annual state competitiveness rating. Based on 43 indicators, that report also ranked North Dakota third in Academic R&D per $1,000 gross state product and third in science and engineering graduate students per 100,000 inhabitants. The BHI report is found at http://www.beaconhill.org/competitivenesshomepage.html
New reports show that students who graduate from the State College of Science in Wahpeton earn average salaries about 16 percent below those who graduate from the much larger North Dakota State University in Fargo.

Science President John Richman says the salary scale for associate degrees has been improving.

The Forum newspaper reports that a study released by the College of Science states the average starting salary for recent two-year graduates was $32,000 a year.

A similar survey by North Dakota State reported $38,000 as the average starting salary for four-year graduates.

Richman says that in the current economy, technicians with associate degrees are in high demand. He says the highest-paid Science graduate included in the report is a welder who attended a nine-month program and earns $68,000 a year.

Nine-eight percent of North Dakota State College of Science students are employed or continue their education following graduation, according to the college's annual placement report.

Although the college wants to maintain its high placement percentage, the job market dictates that, said President John Richman. As in the past, the campus needs to partner and listen to business and industry to better understand workforce needs.

"As we do that, then we will align our programs and curriculum to meet that workforce need," he said. Of the 28 programs featured in the study, 22 reported 100 percent placement, according to a release delivered late on Tuesday to the Daily News. Richman said this indicates the college offers programs that align with the state's current workforce needs. With 3.6 jobs available for each graduate, the college's main goal is to recruit more students to fill those jobs.

"As long as that number is there, we have an unmet need," he said.

The report also revealed 71 percent of graduates accepted related employment in North Dakota, while more than 80 percent are continuing their education in the state.

In an effort to continue the college's success, Richman said they're always seeking ways to improve. NDSCS also plans to continue its marketing campaign to spread awareness of the education it offers and inform others of the careers available in the state, he said.
TONIGHT, WHEN TEMPERATURES IN MUCH OF THE RED RIVER VALLEY DIP INTO SINGLE DIGITS AND A WALK OUTSIDE MEANS FEELING THE COLD HAND OF WINTER ON BARE SKIN, GIVE A THOUGHT TO UND PROFESSOR JAAKKO PUTKONEN AND HIS STUDENT ASSISTANTS — THIS IS WHAT IT WILL BE LIKE FOR THEM ALMOST ALL OF THE TIME FOR THE NEXT TWO MONTHS.

The geological survey team will be taking a long camping trip to the exotic interior of Antarctica, where they’ll hike over miles of rough, boot-busting terrain, collecting rocks and taking climate measurements.

The goal, Putkonen said, is to better understand how the landscape erodes in the coldest and one of the driest places on Earth. “These sites have been visited less seldom than the moon. That gives you some idea that we truly know very little about what’s going on there.”

It’s summer now at the bottom of the world and the best time of year for expeditions, especially ones involving extensive time in the outdoors. Temperatures where the team will be going should average a few degrees north or south of zero.

This is not the Antarctica of most nature documentaries.

Here, there are no penguins, no seals, just the dark rocks, the white ice and the blue sky. The Ong Valley and Moraine Canyon are far from the sea and accessible only after several hours’ flight time, meaning a day trip is generally impractical. The nearest permanent science facilities are more than 300 miles away.

Putkonen’s team includes a UND grad student, two undergrads and a post-grad from Vanderbilt University. The UND team members depart today from Grand Forks.

6,000 pounds

An Antarctic expedition is as much a tale of discovery as a tale of logistics, for this is a camping trip unlike any other.

Altogether, team members will travel something close to the circumference of the Earth with stops to pick up gear and survival training in Christchurch, New Zealand, and McMurdo Station, America’s main scientific facility in Antarctica.

They’ll use military jets, aircraft with skis for landing gears and helicopters, hauling about 6,000 pounds of gear into the field. That doesn’t include survival packs, in case their gear is destroyed and help is delayed by poor weather.

The expedition itself is funded to the tune of $360,000 by the National Science Foundation, but Putkonen figures just getting there with all the gear costs probably two to three times that. “Everything we do there is so expensive. It’s not just going there out into the field, but there’s this whole logistical mountain behind me.”

Almost everything needed to sustain human life has to be shipped in, including fuel. One scientist complained to the Chronicle of Higher Education in 2008 that aircraft fuel costs of $60 to $130 a gallon threatened her planned surveys of Antarctic mountains.

So, every pound of gear carries with it a much bigger cost than just about any other place in the world.

Even the addition of a 4-pound tent for the outhouse is something to ponder.

“This time, I don’t know if I’m getting soft or I’m just too soft on you guys, but I’m thinking of having a toilet tent,” Putkonen told his student assistants. “Usually, we don’t have those kinds of luxuries because we run very lean camps. …We usually just build a snow wall around the pooper.”

The problem then is if there’s a snowstorm, he said, you get snow in your underpants.

Cold adaptations
This scarcity of resources paired with the extreme environment and the needs of research creates a peculiar lifestyle out in the field, said Putkonen and his graduate research assistant Ted Bibby, both veterans of Antarctic expeditions.

There’s no wood for campfires, and fuel is used only for cooking or to help with research, not to create heat. A lot of shivering is normal, at first, even under multiple layers of fleece and goose down, but the body eventually adapts to life in the cold. Blood circulation to the extremities becomes so good that when they return to indoor heating, their hands and feet feel like they’re on fire for the first several days.

“It’s OK when you have sun and no wind; it feels kind of balmy,” Putkonen said, not unlike Grand Forks under the same conditions.

For several weeks, there will be no bathing, though this is not such a big deal because the cold deadens the sense of smell. When pilots return to pickup field teams, they sometimes have to open the windows to minimize the smell.

All you can eat

But living and working in the cold carries with it a caloric cost. Normally, an adult man who exercises vigorously requires about 2,800 to 3,000 calories a day. An adult man in Antarctica needs about 3,400 calories on average and 5,000 if he’s out pulling a sledge.

“After a week hiking eight miles a day and sleeping in the cold and shivering all the time, you just burn so many calories that it’s difficult to replace them,” Putkonen said. “I tend to lose weight when I’m there.”

For the explorers, it’s a regular meat-and-potatoes diet, fortified by fat and sugar; cheese and candy are favored snacks, he said. “Toward the end of the field season, everybody starts getting so hungry, there’s just not enough time to eat enough, you start grabbing cheese, like handfuls, and just chuck them in your mouth.”

Nothing left behind

Then there’s the matter of waste. The world’s nations have agreed to keep Antarctica clean and pristine as a continent for research. Explorers must leave nothing behind. Even a little spilled fuel must be reported, and all the dirt that’s absorbed that fuel must be carried out, as Putkonen found out on one expedition.

“Everything that comes with you, leaves with you,” Bibby said.

Yes, that means explorers have to take their human waste with them when they go. When they’re in camp, they have buckets that can be fitted with a toilet seat for this purpose. When they’re in the field, they have bottles and bags.

This is critical because organic material doesn’t break down here as quickly as in other places. Explorers have stumbled across dead seals, naturally mumified by the cold and dry climate, that may be thousands of years old.

Putkonen said he once stumbled onto something more prosaic: An old campsite from the 1950s, when explorers were much less environmentally conscious. He ended up camping in the area, kicking aside all the trash, including frozen human waste.

Rock of ages

Putkonen said he’d be happy to spend a year in Antarctica if he had the funding and the winters weren’t so dark and brutal. The evolution of the landscape in the continent’s interior is seldom studied, so what he’s doing is pure exploration, like in the old days when explorers crossed new continents armed with only some rough maps, he said. Nobody knows what use this knowledge will have, though he figures it could have some application in another cold, dry place in the solar system, namely Mars.

In much of the world, landscapes erode because of a few basic factors. Moving water polishes and wears away their surfaces. Windborne dust and sand scours at them. The roots of plants and grass drill into them. Day-to-day temperature variations can cause different crystals inside of rocks to expand at different rates, creating tension that eventually breaks rocks apart.

In Ong Valley and Moraine Canyon, part of the Transantarctic Mountains that divide the continent, there seems to be only the wind. The team will spend three weeks in each campsite; the remaining time being spent prepping at McMurdo.
Putkonen and Bibby said they’ll be gathering rock samples and, back at UND, analyzing their composition to discover how old they are. Like a suntan, the elements in the rocks change to different isotopes over millions of years under exposure to cosmic rays that bombard the Earth every day. Measuring the isotopes in the rocks, they can see the difference between the rocks’ age and how weathered they are, if they weather slower or differently than comparable rocks in other parts of the world.

The team also would bring along instruments to measure local climate — temperature, wind speed, humidity — mounted on heavy-duty tripods and GPS receivers to measure the minute movements of the ground. Both would be picked up in a year.

In other words, Putkonen already is planning to come back. It’s more than just the science; he seems to like it there.

“It’s so peaceful,” he said. “There is no noise, no people, no cars honking, no airplanes, nothing. It’s just like some kind of a different world when you are there.”

Reach Tran at (701) 780-1248; (800) 477-6572, ext. 248; or send e-mail to tran@gfherald.com.

First phase of WSC campus beautification begins
Landscapes, heated sidewalks planned
By: Nick Smith, Williston Herald

To view the original article, please visit:

The first phase of a campus beautification project in front of Stevens Hall is under way at Williston State College.

Improvements to the area in front of the building are to be completed by next spring.

When completed, heated sidewalks stretching from the archways to the parking lot are to be in place in front of Stevens Hall.

Also part of the project is a larger than life-size statue of Lakota Hunkpapa Chief Sitting Bull. Plentywood, Mont., artist Michael Westergard created the statue.

Benches and landscaping are expected to be in place by spring. The statue is to be in place by late spring or early summer. The project is the first of three projects in the works.

WSC President Dr. Raymond Nadolny said in a press release that the project is an offshoot of the campus' master planning process.

"When we went through the master planning process, the number one complaint from students is that we look like a Walmart parking lot. So we knew that we needed to respond to that by creating an environment like we see at other campuses across the state," said Nadolny.

The second project, a monument of a likeness of a pioneer, is set to be placed in 2012. The final project, commemorating the expedition of Lewis and Clark, is to be placed in July 2013.

Funding is being split by the college and the WSC Foundation.
Higher Education Notebook: New partnership targets science, math proficiency
By: Amy Dalrymple, INFORUM

A new partnership aims to improve the math and science proficiency for Native American K-12 students in North Dakota.

Valley City (N.D.) State University and Sitting Bull College in Fort Yates, N.D., will provide professional development to 40 K-12 teachers at Native American schools.

The training, funded by a $360,000 grant from the North Dakota Department of Public Instruction, will equip the K-12 teachers with the latest research and trends on science, technology, engineering and math education.

Faculty from VCSU and Sitting Bull College will deliver a 10-day professional development institute next summer and follow up with a series of one-day workshops.

Scientists from the North Dakota State University Electron Microscopy Lab and the North Dakota State College of Science nanoscience program also will participate.

N.D. officials divided on earmarks
By: Rebecca Beitsch, Bismarck Tribune

Earmarks, pork barrel spending, Christmas tree bills, pet projects. All have found their way to North Dakota.

But the stream of federally funded earmarks might be reduced with a Republican-proposed ban for the upcoming session of Congress.

Earmarks are spending items attached to a bill that directs part of the funding for that bill to a different and specific project.

North Dakotans benefit more from earmarks than any other state with the exception of Hawaii, according to data from the Center for Responsive Politics, a non-partisan group that tracks campaign donations and federal spending.

In the 2010 fiscal year, North Dakota received more than $150 million in earmarks, or $234 per person. Compare that with the similarly populated Wyoming, which got only about $6 million in earmarks.

Though often spoken of as a waste of federal spending, the popularity of an earmark depends on perspective.

North Dakota State University and the University of North Dakota together received more than $32 million from the defense bill and other legislation.

Mark Andrews, a former North Dakota senator and representative, said he used earmarks numerous times over his 24 years in Congress.

"Earmarking is not bad," Andrews said. "I put in earmarks for ag research to develop sunflowers that faced down when they're ripe. Sure does make it hard for a blackbird to get on it. Now I doubt some character from some other committee would know that much about sunflowers to request that."
Any other session, federal funding to help deal with the water problems in Devils Lake and Fargo would likely come from an earmark.

Jim Fuglie, a former state Democratic Party leader, said one of his concerns with the two new Republican members of North Dakota’s delegation isn’t their passion for addressing North Dakota’s water problems, but whether or not they’ll be able to get the funding.

“If earmarks go away North Dakota is a big loser,” Fuglie said, referring to the Fargo diversion project, among others. “Absent federal funding they’re not going to be able to do it no matter what the state does because it’s like a billion dollar project.”

Representative-elect Rick Berg, R-N.D., said he supports the ban because he wants to change business as usual in Washington. Berg said agencies can make the evaluations of which projects should be a priority, including flood control.

“Flood control is a critical area and the (Army) Corps of Engineers would address that,” Berg said. “America’s going to spend money every single year on flood control and if based on priorities, Red River flooding should rank high.”

Some worry that agencies should not be making these decisions. It’s all about the job of effectively representing one’s district. If a member of Congress doesn’t earmark a project within a bill, the decisions of how to spend that money are left to the agency administering the project who may not be as familiar with the needs of a district as the representative.

“Some are asking, ‘are we giving agency bureaucrats too much control?’” said Kevin Cramer, a Public Service Commissioner and former candidate for Congress. “At the same time, one might argue it gives the professionals control who can make decisions in a less-biased way.”

A ban on earmarks might also change the debate process in Congress. Some earmarked bills are held up by certain senators or representatives until they get promises from colleagues to support their own earmark. A ban could put more pressure on agency heads, who in turn might face stiffer opposition in terms of appointment confirmations.

Those against earmarks classify it as wasteful government spending. Earmarks, others claim, seldom add money to the budget, only direct money within the budget to a specific project.

“People think they bust the budget or they’re immoral or illegal, but as far as I’m concerned, it’s Congress doing its job,” said Tracy Potter, a former candidate for the U.S. Senate and director of the Fort Abraham Lincoln Foundation, which has received earmarks.

Potter said it was an earmark on the National Park Service budget that brought in the nearly $2 million needed to restore the On a Slant Village in Fort Lincoln State Park. Potter said that money enabled them to restore the earthlodges, bring in artifacts, create new museum exhibits and hire interpretive staff to give tours.

“The National Park Service doesn’t like that because they want to spend it on their own items,” Potter said. “The Legislature should have this power over unelected bureaucrats.”

Fort Abraham Lincoln isn’t the only place to get earmarks.

“Congressionally directed spending is responsible for some critical and lasting projects in North Dakota, like rebuilding Grand Forks and permanent flood protection there, the new Memorial Bridge in Bismarck or the new airport terminals across the state,” said Sen. Kent Conrad, D-N.D., who is against the ban.

“I think it would be a mistake to do away with congressionally directed spending altogether. But the process should be made more transparent,” he said.

Senator-elect John Hoeven, also is not supporting the ban.

“Appropriations are one of the powers assigned to Congress in the Constitution,” said Don Canton, spokesman for Hoeven. “But earmarks need to be available for discussion and debate.”

Canton said Hoeven wants to reform the process to emphasis on responsible spending and transparency.
Bob Harms, director of Citizens for Responsible Government and an active tea partier, said he thinks the ban is a step in the right direction but said there are a number of other measures that could be taken that would bring more transparency to the process.

“You could require projects to go through the usual appropriations process rather than have them hanging on or earmarked onto regular legislation,” Harms said. “If there’s a bonafide policy case that we have a specific need for flood relief than there should be an ongoing process in Congress to convince them this is a good use of federal money.”

Berg said that process is in place because “any spending project can still come through as a bill.”

Cramer said the move is more symbolic than significant in terms of impacting the budget, but agrees with Harms that the process should be more transparent.

“Every project, whether it’s research at a university or a road project at least now will be debated in full view of the country, and that’s good for everyone,” Cramer said.

Cramer said even if the ban does pass, it may not have much impact on North Dakota.

“Some of these projects would probably get funded anyway,” Cramer said. “Earmarks are just an insurance policy.”

Published November 29, 2010

**Last-minute appeal: Spirit Lake members urge NCAA to heed 'voices of our people'**

By: Chuck Haga, Grand Forks Herald

To view the original article, please visit: [http://www.grandforksherald.com/event/article/id/185071/group/homepage/](http://www.grandforksherald.com/event/article/id/185071/group/homepage/)

Members of the Spirit Lake Sioux Nation who favor UND retaining the Fighting Sioux nickname made a last-minute appeal Monday to the NCAA, asking that the association “re-examine” the 2007 legal settlement that imposed a deadline for the university to obtain tribal permission to continue using the name.

The deadline stipulated in the settlement is today, though it would appear action taken April 8 by the State Board of Higher Education and subsequently by UND to retire the nickname rendered the NCAA deadline moot.

While the university’s athletic teams continue to use the 80-year-old nickname this academic year, UND has formed committees tasked with finding ways to honor the name as it is retired and to plan for the possible selection of a replacement. Also, a timeline has been set for the ending of licensing agreements concerning Fighting Sioux merchandise.

In a letter e-mailed to NCAA President Mark Emmert, Eunice Davidson and nine other Spirit Lake members said “the vast majority of all people across our state feel great pride and honor” in UND’s use of the Fighting Sioux name and logo, “especially the traditional Sioux elders.”

The writers noted again that Spirit Lake members authorized UND’s use of the name by a nearly three-to-one margin in a 2009 vote, a position subsequently affirmed by the Tribal Council.

“You intentionally desired the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe to have input in this matter,” Davidson and the others wrote, “and it must have been your intent to allow the Sioux Nation of Standing Rock the right to a democratically held election.”

After the State Board acted in April, Davidson and others at Spirit Lake urged Gov. John Hoeven to intervene and “correct this wrong.” Hoeven responded by advising the chancellor of the North Dakota University System to “give due consideration to any vote by the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe.”
But efforts by nickname supporters at Standing Rock to arrange a vote there — including presentation of petitions containing more than 1,000 signatures — did not lead to a popular vote.

In June, the Standing Rock Tribal Council voted to stand by an earlier council decision to oppose continued use of the nickname. At the same time, the council declared "there is no need to talk about it any more."

Davidson said Monday night that she and the others "waited for so long (before appealing to the NCAA) out of respect for the people at Standing Rock," and she said they "are hoping there’s still a chance” to preserve the name and logo.

“At least, we want our voices at Spirit Lake to be heard,” she said. “We’re hoping there’s a good response from the NCAA."

She said the letter was e-mailed to NCAA officials, with a hard copy sent via overnight mail. She said she called the association president’s office late Monday to confirm that he had received the e-mail.

There was no immediate response from the NCAA.

Duaine Espegard, Grand Forks, a member of the State Board of Higher Education, said he thought it unlikely that the Spirit Lake letter would change the course of things now.

“I do think it is a moot issue,” he said.

“I understand what they are trying to do, but it’s pretty late in the action. We’ll see what the NCAA does, but we’ve waited for the Native Americans (at Standing Rock) to come forward with an approval, as the lawsuit says, and to this point they have not.

“We have a lawsuit, we have a settlement, and we have to follow it.”

In addition to Davidson, the appeal to the NCAA is signed by two Tribal Council members, several elders and other members of the tribe.

“I’ve been asked by many, many people on our reservation, ‘Are we going to be able to do anything yet?’” she said. "We’ll just have to wait and see how the NCAA responds. Hopefully, they’ll respect us.

“They’re messing with a real fighting Sioux,” she said.

Three options

The letter writers offered three “possible solutions” for the NCAA to consider, including extending the settlement deadline "until the voices of the people of Standing Rock are heard."

The second proposed solution would be to accept a 1969 action by Standing Rock elders, a pipe ceremony in which "they gave the right of the name Fighting Sioux to our University of North Dakota, thereby fulfilling NCAA requirements."

A third option, according to the Spirit Lake nickname supporters, would be for the NCAA to allow time for a vote “of all the people of the state” through an initiated measure that would inscribe the nickname in the state constitution.

As the university began its transition away from the nickname, statements made by UND and State Board officials as well as the NCAA “pose as if they are honoring the wishes of the Sioux of North Dakota,” the letter states. “But please know and recognize that this is not the truth.

“We give you the benefit of the doubt that your insistence (on getting involved in) our sovereign Sioux Nation affairs was an attempt to ‘help us.’ But your additional help is now demanded by our Sioux Nation to allow the voices of our people to be heard before taking away another treasure from us.”

Reach Haga at (701) 780-1102; (800) 477-6572, ext. 102; or send e-mail to chaga@gfherald.com