Monday, January 7, 2013

Members present:
- Mr. Duaine Espegard, President
- Dr. Terry Hjelmstad
- Mr. Don Morton
- Dr. Kirsten Diederich, Vice-President
- Ms. Kathleen Neset
- Ms. Janice Hoffarth, Staff Senate Adviser

Staff members present:
- Dr. Hamid Shirvani, Chancellor
- Ms. Claire Holloway, General Counsel
- Ms. Linda Donlin, Director of Communications
- Ms. Rebecca Duben, Executive Assistant
- Mr. Noah Brisbin, Special Assistant

The Board met for a dinner social in the Gorecki Alumni Center Burgum Presidential Suite at the University of North Dakota, 3501 University Avenue, Grand Forks, ND, beginning at 5:00 p.m. CT.

To begin the evening, there was casual conversation among Board members, NDUS staff members, and NDSA representatives in attendance. Several people in attendance expressed their disappointment that illness and business travel kept other Board members from joining the dinner.

As dinner was served, Chancellor Shirvani took the opportunity to formally introduce to the Board two new members of the NDUS office senior staff.

Noah Brisbin is the special assistant to Chancellor Shirvani, and joined the office in November. Chancellor Shirvani described Mr. Brisbin’s background to the Board, and the Board members extended their welcome to him.

Chancellor Shirvani next introduced Claire Holloway, the newly appointed NDUS general counsel. The chancellor described Ms. Holloway’s legal experience and expressed his enthusiasm at her arrival to the NDUS office and confidence in her ability to excel in her role. The Board also welcomed her warmly.

Casual conversation continued throughout dinner. Board and staff members interacted, coming to a better understanding of each other’s backgrounds and perspectives, and considering how those varied experiences could help the Board and the NDUS office improve higher education in North Dakota.

After finishing dinner, Chancellor Shirvani previewed for the Board the presentation he would give to the Senate Appropriations Committee. Various aspects of the presentation included a history of the North Dakota University System, an overview of the Pathways to Student Success plan, an analysis of the governor’s recommended budget, a request for additional NDUS office
staff, measurements of the NDUS institutions’ successes, and a list of goals for the next several years.

While reviewing the retention rates, graduation rates, and research expenditures of NDUS schools, Mr. Morton observed that statistical methodology for graduation rates does not account for transferring students. He further noted, however, that the NDUS schools and comparator schools follow the same methodology; thus, according to Mr. Morton, the statistics provided an apples-to-apples comparison. He also suggested that improved admissions standards would lead to enrolling classes better prepared to succeed in their institutions, leading to better retention rates.

Chancellor Shirvani discussed the academic quality indicators that are the top priority for the Board, particularly the Academic Committee. These indicators are retention of first-year students, four- and six-year graduation rates, student learning as measured by a national assessment model, research expenditures at UND and NDSU, and public-private partnerships. In response to these goals, Dr. Hjelmstad responded that he was encouraged to see a clear directive emanating from the NDUS office for the first time. Dr. Hjelmstad stated that these targets would give institution presidents clear direction, and that they would bring the campuses together as a true system of higher education.

Dr. Diederich added that academic quality is at the heart of the Board’s mission to the state. The goals described by Chancellor Shirvani, she said, have been the kind of impetus missing from higher education administration in North Dakota for years. Dr. Diederich and others expressed the sentiment that Chancellor Shirvani’s goals were modest in comparison to their ideas for North Dakota colleges and universities of wide renown, and suggested that Chancellor Shirvani and the NDUS office staff consider setting more ambitious growth targets.

The social concluded at 8:45 p.m. In parting, Chancellor Shirvani gave his thanks to the Board for their service and to his staff for their efforts.

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Executive Secretary                      President

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Date