

State Board of Higher Education

North Dakota

NDUS Internal Audit Special Assignment

June 16, 2017

STATE BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION SELF-EVALUATION
FOR THE 2017 FISCAL YEAR ENDING 6/30/17

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Conveyance Letter

June 16, 2017

North Dakota State Board of Higher Education – Governance Committee
Mr. Mike Ness, SBHE Governance Committee Chairman

As requested, NDUS Audit Services has completed the board self-evaluation interview process with members of the State Board of Higher Education.

The assignment was completed by myself, and inquiries or comments relating to this may be directed to me at (701) 328-4159. I wish to thank the board members for taking the time to thoughtfully answer the questions presented.

Respectfully submitted,

Laura Anne Schratt
NDUS Director of Audit Services

CC: North Dakota State Board of Higher Education
Dr. Mark Hagerott, Chancellor, NDUS
Dr. Lisa Feldner, Chief of Staff, NDUS

Objective and Scope

Objective - The objective of the board self-evaluation interview process was to collect and summarize responses to the questions and/or statements presented on the SBHE Board Development Instrument document (BDI) created by the North Dakota State Board of Higher Education (SBHE) Governance Committee and approved by the full SBHE on May 15th, 2017.

Scope - On June 6th, 2017, NDUS Audit Services was asked to complete board self-evaluation interviews with the ten members of the SBHE. Interviews took place from June 8th through June 16th, 2017. Of the ten requested interviews, eight were completed. The remaining two interviews were not completed as no response to requests for interviews or email submission of responses was received.

Executive Summary

This following is a summary of the main question categories as defined on the BDI. The full questionnaire and all responses may be found in Appendix A.

Policy:

Overall, board members responded positively that they understood the roles and responsibilities, mission and vision, beliefs and core values and legal responsibilities of the board. It was noted that more regular review of policies may be valuable. Overwhelmingly the board members support board leadership and feel that leadership is doing a good job.

Relationship with the Chancellor:

Most members note a good relationship with the Chancellor, and a willingness on the part of the Chancellor to listen. With regard to the goals and priorities of the Chancellor, a number of members responded that they did not know how or when this occurred. One suggestion included the use of metrics for the measurement of goals.

Meeting Process/Effectiveness:

Members noted they were generally happy with the meeting and decision-making process, materials and detail and quantity of information received, and felt that the board does a good job of advocating for all institutions in the system. Overwhelmingly, the respondents supported the committee structure and feel that the committees do a good job of working on their specific areas of responsibility, and keeping the full board updated. There were a number of comments that some board members could make improvements ensuring that they do not represent particular campuses or constituencies. Responses to the meeting schedule were varied, with some wanting more meetings via technology, and some wanting face-to-face meetings and campus visits.

Communication:

Board members responded that they believe they represent the SBHE to the community, but that the Board chair should be the voice of the board. Members note that conflict is managed productively, and disagreements or opposing points of view lead to valuable discussion, which is positive. A number of members commented that some communication and discussion are constrained by open meeting requirements. Members noted that the time demand is manageable.

Reflections on Past Year:

Many respondents noted the improved relationship with the legislature as a major accomplishment this year, as well as dealing with the financial constraints and budget cuts. Upcoming challenges include the relationship with the new Governor, the upcoming studies and continuing financial challenges. The most commonly noted perceived failure was with regard to tenure.

Final Comments:

A number of comments were received with regard to the recruitment and orientation of new members. Many members noted that they appreciate the opportunity to serve, that it has been an honor, and an experience they will not forget.

Appendix A

The below is the full text of the SBHE BDI as well as responses received. Responses have been randomized for anonymity as was the wish of the Governance Committee, and they may have been edited to improve readability.

SBHE Board Development Instrument – Full text and all responses:

Good governance calls on us to develop the capacity of the State Board of Higher Education (SBHE) to improve both our personal and collective contributions to fulfill the fiduciary duties of care, loyalty, and obedience. Towards this end, and as outlined in SBHE policy 302.5, the Governance Committee will conduct regular board self-assessments. The assessments, both board and individual, are designed to strengthen board culture, develop strategies for improved performance, increase effectiveness, create a vehicle for feedback, and address concerns.

The information below serves as an interview protocol to collect information regarding the perceptions of individual board members regarding the work of the Board and to note areas for strengths as well as areas for continuous improvement.

I would like to thank you for taking time to speak with me regarding the performance of the North Dakota State Board of Higher Education. The purpose of our conversation is to strengthen board culture, develop strategies for improved performance, increase effectiveness, provide board members with a formal opportunity to provide feedback regarding the work of the board, and address any concerns. Our conversation today will last approximately one hour during which I will be asking you about your perceptions on how Board practices align with policy, the Board's relationship with the Chancellor, meeting effectiveness, communication, and overall perceptions regarding significant accomplishments and opportunities. Following conversations with each Board member, answers will be compiled. The SBHE Governance Committee will receive an aggregate for discussion and consideration. The Governance Committee will identify next steps prior to sharing with the full Board.

Before we begin, do you have any questions?

Policy

This first section addresses the alignment of policy and practice. For each statement, please indicate how well you believe the board is doing in each area, provide examples of the statement in action, and if possible, suggestions for improvement.

❖ The Board has a full and shared understanding of the roles and responsibilities of the SBHE as stated in policy.

- I do not know if we have a full, complete understanding, and we have our own perceptions of what they are. I think the office has done as good a job as they can spreading the work out to other people.
- Yes, I think this board does have a good understanding and should be commended for that.

- I think it is a continually improving understanding, including myself. A continually better job of understanding roles and responsibilities.
- I think board members have a fair understanding of policies.
- I think we do OK, there could be improvement, specifically understanding the board rules. Improvement on the SBHE Policy 100 series. I would give us a passing grade, could be improved easily by going over the 100 series periodically at short intervals. As far as the rest of the policies we can learn them on the fly, there are too many to learn all at once.
- Yes.
- For the most part that is true, can we do a better job with the orientation of new board members, we certainly can. This is a volunteer board, a board that has individuals with other working lives, and commitments; there is a balance we need to hit.
- Yes, the SBHE does have an understanding. However, in one occasion I felt that the SBHE could have intervened more, this was in the case of the ending of the music therapy program. The SBHE in general puts much trust in the presidents, but I think should go in more detail when there are controversies.

❖ **The SBHE meets its legal responsibilities as stated in constitutional and statutory authority.**

- Yes, I think they do
- Yes, as well as our understanding allows us to.
- The SBHE has made great strides in this. I think the SBHE's recent policy change to include the foundations is crucially important.
- I think it does, yes.
- Yes.
- Yes, the board took a lot of heat recently with regard to open meetings; we depend on the system office for the posting of meetings and locations.
- I think the board is very confident in how they deal with issues and have a good handle on the legal responsibilities, and I think that is a strength of the board right now.
- My reaction would be that we try as hard as we can to do that.

❖ **Board members understand the mission and vision of the NDUS (SBHE Policy 100.4)**

- Yes.
- I think the board members understand it, but it should be highlighted more often, perhaps put on the board agenda each meeting...this is our mission and vision. The visibility of that is important.
- I think that goes back to my first answer, we could do a better job, it is not that we do not understand them, we may forget.
- Yes.

- I would say for the most part yes, there are certainly times we do not understand the total mission, and we each bring a perception of our own vision to the board, but yes.
- Yes.
- Yes, SBHE members have a clear idea of the mission and vision. Different SBHE members have other backgrounds. This is also clear in the discussions and the topics they bring up, for instance in education, financial or legal issues.
- As far I can tell they do, yes.

❖ **Board members understand the beliefs and core values of the SBHE (SBHE Policy 100.5)**

- Yes, I agree we do.
- I think that goes back to my first answer, we could do a better job, it is not that we do not understand them, we may forget.
- I think we operate in the way they are currently written, but I think we need to review those, as I question the relevance of some of them.
- I am impressed by the SBHE members' belief in the "students first" value. Over the last year, financial considerations have necessarily been given the highest priority. I am though concerned that some members believe that the NDUS system should be run like a private sector company, presidents were even called CEOs. Instead, I strongly believe that the NDUS system is a public service and a non-profit.
- Yes.
- As far as I can tell, they do.
- Yes.
- Same as above, to the best of our abilities. We certainly do try.

❖ **The SBHE has clear goals.**

- Yes, there are, and I especially like the SBHE's believe in a closer collaboration between the different institutions.
- I think they can be clearer, personally, that is extremely important. Our efforts need to be on narrowing our focus and being more specific with our goals.
- The board does have clear goals and is working to improve upon that. There is always room for improvement.
- Certainly, specific goals continually change, but yes, in general, as our goals are directly related to students.
- What are our goals?
- Yes.
- I think we do, but we really need to narrow them down and focus on a number we can manage and work on. It becomes overwhelming when there are too many issues and goals.
- Clear goals, yes, could they be clearer, yes. We need goals with metrics; we need to do a better job of establishing goals with measureable metrics.

❖ **The SBHE regularly evaluates its bylaws and policies.**

- Not quite sure, I think that they do review them, and I think there has been more review in the past couple of years.
- This goes mostly through the system office. A close reading of all policies proactively is not done, rather most is done reactively.
- Yes.
- I am not sure we regularly evaluate, usually, it is need based and we determine if changes are needed.
- I think we continually work through them. This is a major task. The system office keeps us working through them, which I think is appropriate.
- Yes, and when you do have a volunteer board, it is nice to have engaged and dynamic committees to spread out the work. This allows a small group of people to dig deep and keep the rest of us informed.
- Needs improvement, this is ongoing.
- I know we have been evaluating our policies at each board meeting, I do not know how to answer the bylaw question.

❖ **The SBHE reviews the strategic plan regularly to discuss the progress of the system toward fulfillment of the plan.**

- Yes, I believe the board does that; we also need to make more efforts to be proactive rather than reactive.
- This happens on a regular basis, the answer is yes.
- We review it, but I do not know how disciplined we are with regular review. It happens intuitively when issues come up. We could do a better job of reviewing this regularly.
- Yes, I think we are proficient in this area, especially as Ryan goes through the on-line metrics.
- Yes.
- We do refer to the strategic plan a lot, and it is a vision we need to keep in focus.
- Yes, I have seen that in the time that I have been there. Sometimes we can get lost in policies and procedures, but they are there for a reason and I understand that.
- Both the institutions and the SBHE's strategic plans are evaluated. When this happens, the SBHE members do pose frequent questions.

❖ **Board leadership effectively perform their roles.**

- Yes, I think so, it starts with the board chair and Kathy has done an excellent job these two years as board chair.
- Yes, I am pleased with the strength of our leadership.
- I think our chair does an outstanding job leading our organization, above and beyond what is required, she does it for the good of the organization.

- Yes, I think the leadership is good. Leaders have different styles, but overall leadership is good.
- I believe so. I think we do a great job in this area. Especially with Chair Neset, we have greatly improved in this area.
- Yes.
- I was personally impressed by both the SBHE chair and vice chair. They welcomed discussion and allowed this to take place to the maximum. Both were also very active with the legislature.
- Yes, very much so.

Relationship with the Chancellor

Thank you. The next couple of questions address the Board's relationship with the Chancellor.

According to AGB, the most fundamental element of achieving a higher level of board performance centers around a strong working relationship between the board and the CEO. Strategic governance is about the board as a "thought partner" with the chief executive. With that framework in mind, please comment on the following.

❖ Would you describe the relationship between the SBHE and the Chancellor as a strong partnership? Please explain.

- I think as we have had a chance to know our new Chancellor and he has gotten to know us as board members, the partnership is continuing to mature and increase.
- The chancellor did very well; he prepared the SBHE for the issues at stake and was always prepared to talk. He also changed his views when necessary. A job well done.
- I am not sure I would say it is strong, but it is a good relationship, and the Chancellor keeps me informed and I can call him to discuss things I think are an issue.
- Yes, it is gaining in strength, and will continue to improve with continued strong leadership from the board and clear directives for the Chancellor.
- There is a good relationship between the SBHE and the Chancellor. The Chancellor has his direction and tries to follow that to the best of his ability. There are other outside factors that try to influence the university system, and to balance that is a challenge.
- I think we have a good relationship, which leads to a pretty good partnership, but I believe we can make improvements, moving from managing the system to leading the system forward.
- Yes, great communication and a willingness to listen, by the Chancellor.
- Yes, I think it is a strong partnership. Because of open meeting laws, the Chancellor will likely always have a closer relationship with the chair and vice-chair, especially on smaller issues. He will not have the same relationship with all board members, and will probably be closer with leadership.

❖ **Has the Board agreed on the goals and priorities for the Chancellor to achieve? If so, describe when and how this happens. If not, how would you envision this process?**

- I think the board does have goals and priorities for the Chancellor, I just cannot think of any right now.
- Honestly, I do not know if we have agreed on that, or if it has taken place. There is a general understanding of what we want to take place, but it would be helpful to have, if possible, an executive session, or board leadership, to sit down with chancellor to lay down these expectations. I do not know if this has taken place.
- Mostly they were approved before I entered the SBHE; however, there is much participation by SBHE members in Envision 2030.
- I think the evaluation process for the Chancellor and campus presidents is something we need to discuss and continually improve, getting back to measurable goals, we can do a better job of being more specific. If you are a President or Chancellor and doing a good job, you want it to be recognized and if you do not have good metrics in place you cannot do this.
- I do not know when that happens, but we do have goal setting for the Chancellor, I believe it is in the fall. I would suggest a review during the year to see how things are progressing, and then the final review.
- Yes, we have annual goal setting and I like the current process where the chair leads the goal setting and review process with the Chancellor.
- Yes, these are provided to be the board clearly, in May of each year.
- I think last year there was less involvement of the board as a unit and more involvement of leadership, with the Chancellor putting together his own goals and priorities. As we go forward with the evaluation process in the future, I hope the board as the whole has a little more input than has happened in the past.

❖ **Do you believe the policy and procedure for assessing the Chancellor is understood by all Board members? Why or why not?**

- No, I don't think it is, I do not think it is in place. I think all board members should be involved. Perhaps a twice a year update. All board members should be part of the final review. I do not know where we are with the review this year.
- Somewhat, I do not know if we have discussed as a full board what the primary evaluation metrics of the Chancellor's performance are.
- Similar to above. I do not think in the past it was understood by all board members but going forward more input will be provided.
- I do not know that I have seen the assessment for the chancellor, so I do not know if I can comment on that.
- I believe the framework is understood by all, but as far as policy and procedure, this is worthy of reviewing to ensure the board members understand how it works.

- Yes, board members have an opportunity to submit their input to board leadership. There are clear guidelines.
- It is probably not completely understood by all members. It is a process the leadership, chair/vice chair, undertake. The board will be fully informed of the evaluation and summary and they provide input during the process.

❖ **What ideas might you offer for improved SBHE operations, effectiveness, communication, and relationship with Chancellor?**

- Ongoing communication with board leadership, specificity of metrics, ongoing discussion regarding those specific metrics.
- Nothing comes to mind.
- I think it is a very difficult situation with funding, not enough staff to keep on top of everything. The Chancellor's staff is overworked, stressed; perhaps we need to do something. The workload is overwhelming; perhaps the Chancellor/Board could brainstorm ideas for addressing workload together. This is a real problem.
- Again, I think the Chancellor should be mainly engaged with the campus leadership, the staff of the office, and interactions should be with board leadership. Governance is the base, but there is a fine line, we have regular operations that have to be accomplished.
- The communication is good, no needed improvement. Where I would offer some improvement, I have seen a couple of times that items have come before the board on a rather quick basis and it seems that there was not enough time to review or have information digested by the board.
- I think the Chancellor is very coachable and responsive to suggestions from the board.
- The chancellor started doing something about my concern: sometimes proposals change without understanding why. This was especially the case with the faculty leave policy. Maybe the SBHE should have the opportunity to talk to all decision makers in the NDUS office. I also think that the institutions presidents should be encouraged to speak out more openly.
- Personally, I have had a good relationship with the Chancellor, we have called each other. The communication with the Chancellor is dependent on both parties reaching out to each other. As we work together to develop a strong partnership and relationship, it gets better.

Meeting/Process Effectiveness

Thank you for your feedback. I would now like to focus our conversation on meeting effectiveness. Please share with me your reaction to the following statements – and again, make comment where you see opportunities and specific suggestions for improvement.

❖ **Board meetings have a good balance of information sharing, discussion, and decision-making.**

- Yes, but I am missing the reports of the campuses.

- Yes.
- Very much so...I think every year I have been on the board, with new members, there is more discussion. I think it is getting better constantly and I am happy with that change. In the past, it seemed like some decisions we made before coming to the full board, again, I am happy with the change, not all decisions are unanimous, and that is fine.
- Board meetings to have a good balance. There is ample time for discussion on topics.
- I would agree with that statement.
- Yes.
- I think the amount of information we get is just right, relevant, not overwhelming, we have good discussions and the meetings are well run.
- I agree with that statement, again, the open meetings rules do stifle conversations, it does not lead to the open dialog you can have in say an executive session. I would like more input from the presidents and the campuses, that is where the action is. I would like them to be more candid about the good and bad, but we cannot get that in an open meeting situation. We need more opportunities to go into executive session with campus leaders.

❖ **The Board's decision-making processes are effective.**

- Overall, the processes are effective in making decisions for the university system.
- Yes.
- Yes.
- I would agree with the statement especially as it relates to a public board. We do a really good job to ensure the processes are effective for decision-making within the confines of the ND open records laws.
- I think it really is effective, sometimes the discussion are very deep, long, which is a strength. Board members are not afraid to ask questions, we understand what we are deciding on, and it is a good process.
- Yes.
- I think they are very effective.
- I have been impressed by the discussions and arguments of the SBHE members.

❖ **Board members avoid representing particular campuses or constituencies when deliberating policy or actions.**

- I have concerns sometimes that people living in a certain area think they only represent the area that they live in. We need to mention more frequently that we are there to represent all campuses.
- I think board members try to and we work hard at it, but it is difficult, particularly if a member is an alumnus or if lives in the city where a campus is located. There are difficult decisions to make, some members do, and some do not.
- As best we can, but some territorial things take place.

- I would say we do a pretty good job of this.
- Yes, I did not have the feeling any campus was prioritized.
- Needs improvement.
- Yes, for the most part this is very true. However, sometimes those that live in the cities can provide background. Not sure you can totally avoid that from campuses and constituencies, and that is fine. At the end of the day, we react to what is happening with the entire system and not just that constituency.
- It is hard sometimes not to represent one campus or another, especially if it specifically affects one campus, but in general, the board tries not to do this. We need to be mindful of this.

❖ **The Board advocates for all institutions and the system.**

- Yes, very much so.
- Yes.
- I think the board does, but some of the same concerns as above. Some members advocate more for their region, but overall the board advocates for all.
- I would agree with that.
- Yes. We do a good job of advocating for all campuses, they all have a core mission which is critical to our state, workforce, teachers, research; all vitally important to our economy, but about 65% of our students are at the larger institutions, and we just cannot spend the same amount of time on each school, we will get the biggest return on our investment of time with the largest schools. It does not mean they are not all critical.
- Yes, the board does advocate for all institutions, but the larger institutions tend to have more needs, due to size, so may appear to have more attention given to them. The board could advocate more for the smaller campuses in times like that.
- Yes.
- Yes, I did not have the feeling any campus was prioritized.

❖ **The Board receives the appropriate amount of financial information to carry out its fiduciary responsibilities.**

- Yes.
- I believe we do.
- Yes.
- It was due to some excellent questions by SBHE members that this was handled effectively.
- Yes, we do receive adequate information, and I would like to commend the audit committee on keeping us updated on the financial issues, as most of the work is done at the committee level, and I appreciate that.
- Yes.

- We get more than enough information, well done, well organized, easy to understand. We are indebted to Tammy; she has done a really great job there.
- I think the board does receive enough financial information.

❖ **Board meeting materials are at the appropriate level of detail to enable the Board to conduct its business.**

- Yes.
- Yes, absolutely, we get the materials we need. The people who put the agendas and materials together and should be commended.
- I would agree, and over the last 2 years, this has really improved.
- For the most part there is. Sometimes there is too much detail, which may make certain situations confusing as far as documentation, but too much information is better than not enough.
- Yes, they are well done, easy to read and you can go through the materials in 60-90 minutes before the meeting. The board materials are very good.
- Yes.
- Yes, and I think they are very well done, agenda, links to summaries and background, very well done.
- Yes, there was appropriate detail, and when necessary additional details were given by excellent NDUS office staff.

❖ **The committee structure is effective.**

- Yes.
- I like that I was able to listen in to other committees. The committees allow for prior orientation on the topics.
- From what I listen to, I think the committees are good. I think that individuals with specific expertise/background could be used more appropriately on the committees.
- I would agree the committee structure of the board is effective. The layers of approvals before it gets to the board are a little extensive, although they are valuable.
- Yes, I appreciate that we were without committee structure for a number of years, and it is good to reintroduce the committees, it is effective.
- Yes, it is.
- We have come a long way here, before we did not have any committees, and that was a disaster. We will keep improving.
- I think it is very effective. My only concern is the appointment of the committees; I would suggest the board meet to let members know responsibilities of each committee.

❖ **The meeting schedule is effective.**

- The schedule is effective, we do not need to meet more than once per month. We have had some challenges with distance meetings and we can work to improve that.

- Yes.
- It can be improved. Personally, I would like mandatory in person meetings 5 times a year with none in July and August, the rest over IVN or Skype.
- Yes, very effective.
- I would agree with that.
- I believe more meetings should be face to face and on the different campuses. An SBHE should not rule by distance, but visualize the students and campuses.
- I think we are moving in that direction, and hope we can come out of the retreat meeting 4 times a year face to face. If we meet monthly face to face, and you see the campus leadership in the room, it is not the most effective way to run a meeting. Skype or IVN meetings are a very effective way to have meetings. We have the technology to have effective meetings with out the travel, which will result in time and money savings. We do not need to tour the campuses; it's nice, but we do not need to get to that level of detail, I do not think it moves the needle. I would propose we meet in Bismarck, it is central. Perhaps a fund if board members want to visit a campus. If there are events, board representation could be there.
- Yes.

Communication

I appreciate your comments regarding board meetings. I would now like to discuss communication. Like the set of questions we just discussed, please share with me your reaction to the following statements – and again, make comment where you see opportunities and specific suggestions for improvement.

❖ Board members effectively represent the SBHE to the community.

- I cannot speak for anyone else; I attempt to do so as best I can.
- Yes, I think that happens naturally in the different communities. I go to numerous events, if we get an invitation, we typically participate.
- I like that this is done by one person only, the SBHE chair, this brings unity.
- I would agree with that.
- In my opinion, that is a high priority part of our jobs. My answer is I hope so, that is what we are there for.
- I think our chair does an excellent job of doing that, need to remember our roles are individuals, and we are not “the board”, when issues come up, we need to go through the chair to address issues, must really emphasize that the board chair is the spokesperson for the board.
- Yes.
- Community to me would mean local community. If it were the state, I think the board does a fair job.

❖ **The SBHE collectively demonstrates strong problem-solving skills.**

- I agree, most problems were discussed and solved. Some though were tardy. For instance, the issues brought up by the legislature two years ago were not all resolved.
- In my opinion, it is not the board's role to solve problems, they are there to set policy and set the tone and direction.
- Yes, I think we really dig into issues, and we problem solve at each meeting.
- I think so. I think we have a very good board, with good background, the strongest board we have had in a while.
- I believe so, under the existing leadership, and hopefully we will under new leadership.
- Within the confines of following open records laws, I would say we do.
- Yes.
- Yes, I think that is very true.

❖ **Conflict on the Board is managed productively.**

- Yes, and professionally.
- I believe so, and I want to make sure that conflict does not mean having a difference of opinion, differences are healthy and create valuable dialog.
- In the time I have been on the board, I have not seen any conflict, so it must be managed productively. When things do come up, they are managed directly; I know of no conflict.
- Conflict on the board is managed adequately. Conflict is healthy; you need some level of disagreement that is good in a sense.
- I would agree with that. We are a pretty cohesive group right now.
- Yes.
- I have been pleasantly surprised that if there were differences of opinions among SBHE members, they did not lead to any personal issues at all. I found this very professional.
- Yes. I think at times we have to remind board members that executive session is executive session and should not leave the room.

❖ **The quality of communication among Board members is high.**

- Yes.
- I think it is as high as it can be with the restrictions around open meetings.
- I would agree with that, within the confines of open records laws.
- Yes.
- I think the quality of communication is high, good. From what I have observed is it good.
- I trust the board members, and feel I can call any of them at any time to discuss any issue. We need to remember that our communication is confidential, and when we do talk to someone, it needs to stay there.

- Yes. Certainly the open record requirement is an issue, but if we operate as we should, knowing it is state law, the answer is yes.
- Yes, there were good conversations. The state rules on open meetings are somewhat restrictive.

❖ **The current time demand for SBHE responsibilities is appropriate.**

- The time demand is what you put into it, that is also what you get out of it. Not only is the Board appointment made, most board members have 2-3 additional committees. This is perhaps more than new board members realize, but the more you put into it the more you get out of it as a board member.
- Yes, I don't know of any member that does not go above and beyond their time commitment, most have full time jobs and most make an effort to approach the SBHE as a full time job, we are serving a greater good and everyone approaches it that way.
- I think the time for meeting is appropriate and we spend our time wisely. Committee work can become overwhelming; board members really need to buy into being on a committee and spending the right amount of time on committee work. The board chair spends a great deal of time on other issues. Not sure if there is a way to split up that work, perhaps the vice chair can take on some responsibilities.
- I would agree with that, although it is a significant demand of time to serve on this board... more or less for free.
- I think so. I think the chair and vice chair take on more responsibilities, and I commend Kathy on being chair and running her business, she balances it well.
- Yes, and I think this is a very professional board.
- It is a lot of work, all SBHE members did put in time to prepare well.
- We all have full time jobs, we all balance it as best we can, and it is not overwhelming, it is not too much.

My final set of questions are focused on your reflections on the effectiveness of the SBHE during the past year.

❖ **Please identify any significant accomplishments made by the SBHE during the past year.**

- Difficult decisions during difficult budgetary times that were made in an effort to not compromise the quality of education provided to our students.
- I think one of the main things that has happened is that the SBHE has a much better image, perhaps related to the chair and her work with legislature and K-12. I like that we have really looked at the legal issues of open meetings and open records laws. My concern, and that of the public, is that we stay within the law and within our roles and responsibilities as far as what we can and cannot do.
- The single biggest accomplishment was to improve relations with the legislature, which did come at a big price. Tentatively also the faculty leave policy.

- I think the board did very well this legislative session advocating for all institutions. We are addressing workforce demands, and trying to be as nimble as possible. We dealt with the financial downturn and had a deliberate process for presidential contract renewals.
- I think we are making progress on graduation rates and our research institutions are raising academic standards. We are doing better at realizing that not one size fits all. Campus level decisions are made at the campus level (example....tenure decision is at the campus level).
- I think that the SBHE has fostered a much stronger relationship legislature, cabinet and Chancellor.
- I think that the board and the system office, have improved the working relationship with the legislature.
- I think we have been fairly effective in managing the legislative demands on our fiscal position, so working with the campuses and allowing them to make the budget cuts, (close to 20%). It may not have been what we wanted, but it is an accomplishment, made by the board working with the campuses, to get that resolved.

❖ **What future challenges or new issues do you believe the SBHE should address.**

- I think the financial issues are hard hitting for everyone, growth and improvement within this environment can be difficult. I am concerned with level of staff lost. SB2003, deal with some of the identified issues. This is an important process, to be more effective, perform due diligence, and work on in a serious manner, as it could be a serious change for the whole system.
- Delivery of our product and continuing to improve efficiencies in the system while getting 11 institutions to work towards those goals while also competing for many of the same students.
- Off the top of my head, I cannot think of anything.
- I think there are a number of issues: State challenges with finances, how will we address this? How will we address the governor's drive toward more distance, on-line education? How are we going to take care of different maintenance issues on our campuses? Our governor has a direction where he want to see higher education go, has a roadmap, and we need to sit down with him to understand this, the sooner the better.
- I do not think it is new, but need to increase our efforts of collaboration between institutions to find efficiencies.
- Upcoming study of campuses, and to continue to build as an effective system.
- Relationship with the governor. Also, I believe more knowledge of day to day running of universities and colleges by SBHE members as well as NDUS office members.
- We did not raise our core standards and we do need to address this. If you raise academic standards, enrollment goes down, we are moving in that direction. Our graduation rates are just not good and there is too much student debt. Are we meeting the workforce needs, are we delivering what the workforce needs in ND. NDSCS has a

plan, and the Bismarck academy are some examples. We have to have the discussion around workforce training, generic or specific to a company (diesel mechanics, or John Deer or Bobcat diesel mechanics). Certifications get to specific workforce issues; NDSU has done a great job with the sales certificate program, as many jobs have a sales component. Businesses will build relationships with schools who can specialize. Make sure we are addressing the skills that manufacturers and health care need. The 2-year schools are the first responders, and the vast majority of jobs do not need a four-year degree. The 2-year study will be critical. Shared services, we must look at this. The real value of shared services is that you can focus on strategic work. A good organization will utilize to add more value. Shared services are a tremendous savings. We should have one campus doing administrative....payroll, procurement, etc...

❖ **In your view, if there were important matters the SBHE failed to address during this past year, please identify and explain.**

- Nothing jumps out at me. I think for some reason, our approach to tenure was not communicated to the campuses properly, and the presidents are responsible for this. I think we did the right thing here and we got beat up for it.
- The SBHE failed to appreciate the importance of maintaining the generally accepted standards for tenure. I think there are some tasks ahead to retain students, staff and faculty.
- I think we failed as a board to properly underscore the financial issue with the legislature. We did not take a strong enough position as to why the cuts should not have been so large, and we should have played a bigger role. I think we probably could have done a better job there.
- A somewhat liberal approach when granting tenure. I am not against tenure, but I think we need to be judicious in the manner in which it is granted. There are matters of system efficiency, which the board could have been more forceful with.
- I do not think so, we did a good job this year.
- I always feel the board could communicate better amongst themselves outside of the meetings, while respecting open meetings laws.
- I am not sure we failed to identify or deal with it, but we should continue to look at the review process for presidents and Chancellor and the contracts for both. We are working on that, but it is important enough, and it seems like things moved slowly on that.
- Not necessarily a failure to address, but budget constraints as they were, and are, I think the board or the system office could have addressed the financial shortages more proactively. They did an “OK” job of doing so.

Before we conclude this interview, is there something about your experience as a member of the SBHE that we have not yet had a chance to discuss?

- Just one thing....the term lengths to the board, one year does not seem to be efficient for the student, staff and faculty roles. We should look at 2-year terms. Perhaps an “incoming” or “elect” type of role, to learn prior to taking the position. I think it would be beneficial to the

board to have those be longer terms. I have enjoyed my time on the board very much and have learned a great deal. I appreciate the opportunity.

- I want our board to continue to be as proactive as possible, to be a governing board that truly leads, without being in the headlines. I do believe that our board and university system office are making progress on the orientation of new members, and I am happy to see that. It is imperative that all interested parties improve communication and trust at all levels. If we truly have common defined goals, it is easier to attain.
- I do not think so.
- It was a pleasure to serve on the SBHE to work with my colleague SBHE members, with the Chancellor and Vice Chancellors. I was impressed by their professionalism, and their willingness to listen to all opinions, and consider them even if they had different opinions.
- No, I think we are good.
- Look at new members...this is a time consuming board that you must dedicate yourself to, and you must be prepared. Maybe we can do a better job of that during the recruitment process. It is so important that you dedicate yourself to it.
- I just truly appreciate the opportunity to serve on this board. I enjoy it, and it has been an honor.
- Serving on the board has been an experience I will never forget, the time commitment is more than you initially think, but you are working with a group of people toward a common goal, making a higher education system that is stronger and making students successful.

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