

**Convocation Address to Faculty and Staff  
Minot State University  
August 19, 2009; 10:00 a.m.  
Missouri River Room Conference Center  
Minot State University Student Center  
David Fuller, President**

## **“GOOD FORTUNE AND FUTURE PROMISE”**

### **WELCOME**

Good morning and welcome to the start of what appears to be another promising and rewarding year at Minot State University.

I would also like to extend a special welcome to our new faculty and staff. We are pleased to have you join us and to contribute in your special ways to the successes of our students and to the vitality of “our” distinctive university, our place in the Great Plains, and to our future as we head toward the completion of our first 100 years in 2013-14.

Thanks to Staff Senate for a wonderful time at the MSU Fall Kick-Off event last night. I would like as well to take a moment to recognize Teresa Loftesnes, who has just yesterday marked her first 30 years as an MSU employee. Congratulations, Teresa, on your long and successful career at Minot State. I’d be remiss at this moment not to express again our sadness in the loss of Jerry Smith from ITC and our sixth president Gordon Olson. We will miss both of these fine MSU individuals. We are a much better institution as a result of their dedication, many contributions, and friendship.

### **REMARKS TODAY**

Today, I would like to say a few words about Vision 2013 and our academic mission and goals and a story about a physics student. And then, most important, I want to highlight our many achievements this past year that can only be seen as our good fortune and our unique strength as an institution. You will see that those achievements collectively demonstrate that we are indeed making significant progress to become a premier university. And finally, I would like to share with you a list of objectives and goals for this coming year. I promise, no bird stories and no quotations from Thoreau, but perhaps a poem at the end. We’ll see.

### **A FEW WORDS ABOUT OUR VISION**

As we head toward 2013, our vision and focus must remain steadfastly on our students, their support in a caring environment, the quality of their learning and academic experience, their growth as individuals, and their abilities to contribute as citizens in our society and in our place and world at large. Our Vision 2013 goal is to become one of the premier, regional universities in the ‘great’ Great Plains, and we are tracking our progress by monitoring our performances and that of our selected ten aspiration universities. I can assure you that we’re doing well in building on our own notable strengths, improving our performances, raising our standards, staying focused on our students, and creating a culture and direction well suited to high performing and dynamic institutions. We are, as a university, being seen and heard by many as a premier

university of note. Thanks to each and every one of you for your contributions to our university and your dedication to making our university the best it can be for the good of our students and our special place.

Last year and in previous years I have mentioned the American Association of State Colleges and University's 2005 study, "Student Success in State Colleges and Universities," and asked that we look to see how we fare in comparison. As a reminder, this study examined 12 high performing state colleges and universities nationally known for their favorable retention and graduation rates to determine what they did to enjoy such a high level of student success. In this study, teams of peer evaluators visited and studied these institutions and concluded that there are three common characteristics describing these successful schools: 1) there is a "pervasive attitude that all students can succeed, reinforced by a wider culture that is not content to rest on past success"; 2) there is "a sense of inclusiveness on the part of all members of the campus community frequently characterized as a 'family'"; and 3) "there is a strongly held sense of institutional mission that recognized the campus as 'distinctive' or 'special.'"

Many of you will agree with me, based on our own experiences at Minot State that we do well on all three. Many of us certainly believe that all students can succeed. We are a friendly and supportive campus and value highly inclusiveness and support for one another. Just look at the friendly family gathering we had last night at the Zoo. And our understanding of our distinct mission is widely held and followed by our campus, and recognized by many off campus and in the state and region. Besides the general purposes noted in our mission and vision of place and engagement, the distinctive qualities are well understood, and for emphasis I'll mention just a few lines:

"The university values critical and creative thinking, vitality of communities and cultures, stewardship of place, and the multicultural and global environment. The university honors and supports the dignity and rights of diverse individuals, freedom of expression, academic freedom, ethical and moral behavior, integrity, fairness, and honesty. Minot State University is first and foremost dedicated to the success of all students: their growth and development as educated citizens, their confidence, and their life-long devotion to the common good and the welfare of others."

Our mission is what we say we are and what we do, and it is well complemented by a powerful and responsive vision for our future, developed by all of us. As one excerpt from Vision 2013 states:

"Minot State University of the future will be known as one of the premier public regional institutions in the Great Plains because of its direct connection to place, to campus, to the northwest region of North Dakota, and to the larger global environment. This vision rests on the assumption that the university experience will provide an extraordinary connection between academic subjects and the reality of life on the Great Plains, between theory and practice, and between the local and the global. From that local and close-up study, through service learning, through internships, through field trips, through experiential learning activities, through an intense study of local ecosystems, and through use of local issues and topics as the focus of study, student perspective and character should necessarily grow and flourish."

## **THE PRIMARY ROLE OF LEARNING AND SCHOLARSHIP**

All of this—our mission, vision, strategies, and everything we do—remains focused on our obligation to serve our students exceptionally well academically. And the key to all of this is our commitment and our ability to provide students with outstanding teaching and learning, and quality support—that’s central to everything all of us do on campus, from our professors in the classroom and to staff across campus in all of our key support services. All of us must be focused deliberately on our university’s academic success. Our goal depends on high academic performance, standards, rigor, a strong mixture of classroom and experiential work, exceptionally qualified and effective faculty and staff, and an assurance that we give our students the highest quality academic training and with it the academic skills we know are essential for them to succeed and live quality lives as citizens and human beings.

Cognizant of those aims and values, I have been keenly interested in the work of the National Leadership Council for Liberal Education and America’s Promise, an initiative of the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U). The AAC&U is a professional organization founded in 1915 dedicated to liberal education and learning. This has nothing to do with political allegiances; but it has everything to do with proven and liberating experiences of the liberal arts and quality learning expected from institutions of “higher” education. AAC&U has been instrumental in promoting the cause and practice of liberal education. The LEAP project (Liberal Education and America’s Promise), in which Minot State is one of only two institutional members in the state of North Dakota, is a well researched and highly responsive model for setting academic goals and assessing progress.

Our faculty and staff have attended national LEAP conferences, visiting scholars to our campus over the past two years have been instrumental in the work of LEAP, such as George Kuh and Jillian Kinzie, and LEAP institutions across the country have been demonstrating the leadership to refocus higher education on the goals of high quality learning. I was honored to be invited to serve on the AAC&U President’s Trust, a group of 100 presidents from across the country, to consult with AAC&U and to advocate for liberal education and global learning outcomes. This summer I attended a meeting in Washington DC with fellow AAC&U President’s Trust members to participate in a general forum to discuss the LEAP project and the new framework for academic excellence. I can assure you that other President’s Trust members are committed to the values of liberal education and the outcomes and principles in LEAP’s report, “College Learning for the New Global Century” The following extract from the AAC&U literature offers a good explanation of the general project:

“The LEAP National Leadership Council recommends, in sum, an education that intentionally fosters, across multiple fields of study, wide-ranging knowledge of science, cultures, and society; high-level intellectual and practical skills, an active commitment to personal and social responsibility; and the demonstrated ability to apply learning to complex problems and challenges.”

This is the guide we need, one based on solid research and best practice, one that is guided by well-tested and effective liberal education outcomes, and one that is attentive to new global learning needs for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. To be a premier university in the Great Plains will require us to set our bar high for student learning, and I am convinced that Vision 2013 and its philosophy of engagement and place and the Essential Learning Outcomes and the Principles of

Excellence in the LEAP project are critical as the foundation for our work to achieve our Vision 2013 goal. Our success depends on the extent to which we make our academic programs second to none. Through this, I encourage our faculty, with the support of our department chairs and deans, to examine the rationale and data from this research, and review and endorse the goals. With it, we should work to continue to offer the best education, to identify high-level learning goals, review and update our curricula, assiduously assess our students' performance, and continue to raise our academic performances. It is critical for us to make sure our students in general education as well as in our majors are challenged academically, that they perform well according to our high standards, and they fare well on national examinations and other comparative measures. We have to work to raise our performances on the NDUS's Roundtable accountability measures and our comparisons to the other NDUS institutions,<sup>1</sup> stay on track to exceed the performance scores of our 10 aspiration schools, and focus our attention on measures of serious concern, such as our graduation rates and our scores on the National Survey of Student Engagement. Our graduation rates must increase at the very least to 50% and even higher of the average of our aspiration peers.

And we need to take serious and immediate steps to develop admission criteria that reflect our higher expectations for academic preparation and performances and with it a responsible process to assist students who are willing to succeed but who do not meet automatic admission. We have an obligation to help those who are willing to succeed through concerted and proven means for academic assistance, remediation, and intervention. We cannot continue to emphasize a "come one and come all" and hope that all students can succeed without more effective means of intervention and support. Our graduation rates for our institution and for many of our academic programs reveal that we have considerable justification for reviewing our admission criteria and the ways we work to assist our students through to graduation. We lose too many students in the process.

Toward that aim, I recommend that we revise our admission criteria to reflect and express our strong academic expectations to prospective and current students. I would ask that our faculty and campus support admission standards and processes that reflect higher expectations through higher but multiple criteria, and with it that we take responsible steps to assist and guide those who do not meet those criteria and who are admitted provisionally. We need to be very deliberate about understanding how to help individual students move from admission through their course of studies to complete their programs. These steps are essential for us to hold true to our obligation to help all admitted students succeed.

## **A PHYSICS STORY**

Speaking of student success and liberal learning, I wanted to share with you an interesting story of a physics student. One LEAP principle, which focuses on the arts of inquiry and innovation, recommends that institutions "immerse all students in analysis, discovery, problem solving, and communication...." The following story, which I found the other day on the Internet, titled "Great Moments in Physics," illustrates in an interesting and entertaining way the value of problem solving, analysis, and communication:

The following concerns a question in a physics degree exam at the University of Copenhagen. "Describe how to determine the height of a skyscraper with a barometer."  
One student replied:

"You tie a long piece of string to the neck of the barometer, and then lower the barometer from the roof of the skyscraper to the ground. The length of the string plus the length of the barometer will equal the height of the building."

This highly original answer so incensed the examiner that the student was failed. The student appealed on the grounds that his answer was indisputably correct, and the university appointed an independent arbiter to decide the case. The arbiter judged that the answer was indeed correct, but decided to call the student in and allow him six minutes in which to provide a verbal answer which showed at least a minimal familiarity with the basic principles of physics.

For five minutes the student sat in silence, forehead creased in thought. The arbiter reminded him that time was running out, to which the student replied that he had several extremely relevant answers, but couldn't make up his mind which to use.

On being advised to hurry up the student replied as follows:

"Firstly, you could take the barometer up to the roof of the skyscraper, drop it over the edge, and measure the time it takes to reach the ground. The height of the building can then be worked out from the formula  $H = 0.5g \times t^2$ . But bad luck on the barometer."

"Or if the sun is shining you could measure the height of the barometer, then set it on end and measure the length of its shadow. Then you measure the length of the skyscraper's shadow, and thereafter it is a simple matter of proportional arithmetic to work out the height of the skyscraper."

"But if you wanted to be highly scientific about it, you could tie a short piece of string to the barometer and swing it like a pendulum, first at ground level and then on the roof of the skyscraper. The height is worked out by the difference in the gravitational restoring force  $T = 2\pi \sqrt{l/g}$ ."

"Or if the skyscraper has an outside emergency staircase, it would be easier to walk up it and mark off the height of the skyscraper in barometer lengths, then add them up."

"If you merely wanted to be boring and orthodox about it, of course, you could use the barometer to measure the air pressure on the roof of the skyscraper and on the ground, and convert the difference in millibars into feet to give the height of the building."

"But since we are constantly being exhorted to exercise independence of mind and apply scientific methods, undoubtedly the best way would be to knock on the janitor's door and say to him 'If you would like a nice new barometer, I will give you this one if you tell me the height of this skyscraper'."

The student was Niels Bohr, the only person from Denmark to win the Nobel Prize for Physics. This story can be found at this web address: <http://www.short-funny-stories.com/funny-stories/story-88.html>.

I am certainly not suggesting that we strive to get our students to respond and communicate as this student did, although I believe many of us would think it remarkable for a student to approach a problem this way. But students who are challenged to truly be critical

thinkers and test assumptions should be given the wide latitude, I suggest, for independent thought and inquiry and unique problem solving, which is afforded by the liberal arts, high expectations for student performance, and an institutional commitment to student success and high standards.

## **APPRECIATING OUR GOOD SUCCESS AND FORTUNE**

Now, to the point of my remarks today. At a time when our colleagues in other states are experiencing huge shortfalls, cutbacks, and budget reductions, not to mention no salary increases and in some cases reductions through mandatory furloughs, we are experiencing increased support for higher education this past year, with salary increases, dollars for building renovations, increased support for deferred maintenance, added dollars for affordability and equity, and increased attention and recognition about the profound role we play not only in contributing to the local economies and cultures but also in the way we contribute to teaching, learning, and student growth and success.

With this increased support this year and our need for future growth in enrollment, we will be able to fulfill our mission, remain attached to our core values and purpose, and focused on our strategic goal to become one of the premier, regional universities in the 'great' Great Plains, known for engagement, commitment to place, high expectations for student learning and success, and high performance outcomes. To continue this growth will require increased enrollment, new revenue sources, and continued legislative support, of course, but this year shows that we are on our way. We cannot rest on our laurels and the success we have garnered this year. Our goal will be to work to see how we can continue to increase our support in subsequent years.

Let me share with you a few items from a list of many that reveal our good fortune this year and future promise. I have included only a few achievements under each of our seven Vision 2013 strategies.

### **1. Creating a Distinctive Mission Focused on Engagement and Place**

- a. Wide-spread regional and international marketing campaign (Teresa Loftesnes and marketing committee)
- b. The selection of Great Plains performance indicators to allow us to measure and monitor our progress (Planning and Budgeting Council)
- c. MSU featured on national production of 'The Economic Report with Greg Gumbel' (Mark Lyman)
- d. Vision 2013 featured in national magazine, American Executive Magazine, as a distinctive and effective strategic planning process.
- e. A broad-based and active Sustainability Committee and a national pledge set for a commitment supporting environmental health of our campus and place (Linda Olson and committee)
- f. Second institute of higher education in the nation to earn Cancer Gold Standard; accredited with the CEO Cancer Gold Standard™ certification, which demonstrates the university's commitment to the health of Minot State employees and family members, by certifying MSU's efforts to meet an

exceptionally high standard of cancer prevention, screening and care guidelines (Caren Barnett and Paul Brekke).

- g. One of the first campuses in the country to go smoke free two years ago, Minot State University turned a tobacco-free campus starting Jan. 1, 2009 (nursing students and campus).
- h. MSU NOTSTOCK, a second-year event to engage the campus and region, hosted to rock the Beaver Dam at Minot State University, as four popular artists and 20 local bands converged to offer a unique art and music experience in October (Bill Harbort, Laurie Geller. Patrick Sheldon)
- i. Exceptionally successful and unique Summer Theatre program, with packed houses (Kevin Neuharth).
- j. One of two institutions in the state to join the LEAP project to guide our efforts in academic reform.

**2. Fostering Engaged Learning and Place for the Benefit of Students (raise academic standards and expectations exceptionally high for quality teaching and engaged learning)**

- a. \$500,000 academic classroom enhancements (e.g., renovation of two classrooms in the Social Sciences, Honors center renovation, music equipment upgrades, and many more).
- b. \$1.5 million dollar one-time projects to enhance academics and campus programs.
- c. \$2 million Title III award to support a new Center for Engaged Teaching and Learning (Linda Cresap, Gary Rabe, and Title III steering committee)
- d. Foundations of Excellence for First-Year Students program implementation of the objectives set in the self study and developed with guidance from John Gardner and the FoE (Dick Jenkins and committee)
- e. LEAP and AAC&U training and initiatives to review and strengthen general education for students
- f. Four Minot State University students finished in the top 10 in four competitive events at the Phi Beta Lambda National Leadership Conference in Anaheim, CA, in June. One MSU student was honored as a national champion (Dean Frantsvog).
- g. The Northwest Broadcast News Association recognized the Minot State University broadcasting program with Eric Sevareid Radio and Television Awards in Bloomington, MN. The NBNA awards were handed out as part of the Midwest Journalism Conference. An Award of Merit for Best Student Weathercast, and two Awards of Merit for Best Broadcast Writing were given to MSU students (Neil Roberts and others in broadcasting)
- h. Countless student and faculty research honors and rewards and activities, such as Mikhail Bobylev's student's recognition in Washington DC.
- i. MSU at the Mall included outstanding projects and programs from all of our colleges and special programs to highlight for the community at large.
- j. Northern Plains Writing Project's continued success and promotion of improving the teaching of writing within the state. (Ron Fischer and Robert Kibler)

- k. Student Government Association leadership, enhanced engagement in the campus, and active student groups have contributed in significant ways to the engaged life on campus.
3. **Valuing Faculty and Staff within an Engaged Community (recruit, retain, and support well qualified faculty and staff as valued members of an inclusive community)**
- a. Compensation Task Force (CTF) realized continued success in meeting its five-year goal to reach 100% market; this year we were able to fix the floor, raise specific classifications significantly, such as full professors who now have an average salary that exceeds the average salaries of our ten premier institutions. Our average salary increase this year of 6.3% was the highest average increase in the 11 NDUS institutions. We accomplished the higher percentage by moving extra dollars into the salary pools (Wes Matthews and CTF faculty and staff committee and others).
  - b. The start of the first sabbatical program in the university's history this fall (Paul Markel and committee, and others).
  - c. MSU Fall Kick off at the Zoo high level participation by campus (Staff Senate)
  - d. Awards and recognition banquet; continued support for the Board of Regents Faculty and Staff Achievement Awards (committee).
4. **Building a Diverse and Multicultural University Climate (Support a diverse, multicultural, and inclusive campus community)**
- a. Friendly and open campus culture, with frequent forums, acknowledgements, shared governance principles, and improved communications in the enhanced Public Information Office (senates, Mark Lyman, full campus)
  - b. University Diversity Committee initiatives (committee and Lisa Borden-King)
  - c. Norwegian and American professors conduct focus group research with persons with disabilities (Brent Askvig)
  - d. Visitation by group of Telemark University faculty from Norway.
  - e. Minot Area Council for International Visitors (Joseph Jastrzembski)
  - f. Native American cultural initiatives (Wylie Hammond)
    - i. MSU Pow Wow
    - ii. Native American Cultural Awareness Week
    - iii. Native American enrollments proportionately high for all of the NDUS institutions.
    - iv. Native American Community College partnerships
  - g. International Program initiatives
    - i. Summer study abroad trip to Peru (Kemerlee Moorhouse)
    - ii. International Faculty Association initiatives
    - iii. English as a Second Language service (Libby Claerbout)
      - 1. The Language Company, an internationally recognized company based out of Edmond, OK, will partner with MSU to provide this service for our international students)
      - 2. Fully renovated offices in the first floor of Dakota Hall (Roger Kluck and his maintenance staff)

- iv. Campus hosted Tora Aasland, Norwegian minister of higher education and research, along with others from Norway. The visitors met for breakfast on campus with 15 leaders from Minot State as ideas and information were shared to better help the two higher education groups and to contemplate collaborate activities.
  - v. Conrad Davidson, MSU College of Arts and Sciences dean, spent time in southern Africa helping a Minot State alumnus with a radio program designed to benefit the country of Sudan
  - vi. Student and faculty exchanges. Two MSU students spent the spring semester in Sweden; two Danish students from our partner institution Alborg University, in Denmark, studied here for the entire spring semester; Chinese students, Ghanian students, and many others took advantage of our international partnerships and opportunities for exchanges.
  - vii. International enrollments have increased significantly last year and this year.
5. **Focusing on Student Success and Future Achievements (provide strong and engaging academic experience for intellectual and personal growth, formation of sound character, and development of abilities and skills required for success in future careers and endeavors)**
- a. Mentoring program has continued to positively impact our retention and support of first-year students (Debra Chandler and Lynda Bertsch)
  - b. CETL program's focus on enhanced advising, career support services
  - c. Student Success Center implementation and funding
  - d. New Energy, Economics, and Finance major (Dr. Linrud and her colleagues in the College of Business)
  - e. New athletic training major (Heather Golly and HPER faculty)
  - f. Athletics and MSU have been named a "Champions of Character Institution" for 2008-09.
6. **Creating a Commitment to Civic Engagement, Service, and the Common Good (Enhance and strengthen the university's mission and purview to include civic engagement, experiential learning, and related activities)**
- a. Center for Community Research and Service funding award at \$975,000 to support campus outreach and community research and support for problem-based collaboration with communities; supported by Senator Dorgan and the delegation
  - b. Community Bowl project and collaboration with city partners
  - c. Pilot Recycling project; 20K grant from XCEL to underwrite a pilot project starting this fall.
  - d. Over the recent spring break members of Minot State University Rotaract Club were hard at work with Kids Against Hunger, another nonprofit organization, fighting the growing problem of world hunger. Also, MSU Rotaract began 'Bentley the Bear' service project to benefit area children. The Rotaract club has been raising money to purchase teddy bears, which were donated to the Minot Domestic Violence Crisis Center during the holiday season (Anthony Anderson and other MSU students)

- e. Student Social Work Organization again sponsored "Freezin' for a Reason" at the Town and Country Shopping Center parking lot in November to raise awareness of homelessness in the community and gather food items for the Minot Area Homeless Coalition and local food pantries (Debra DeWitz, Ruth Kihm).
- f. MSU nursing students helped 'e-rase e-waste' in April by organizing a community-wide "e-rase your e-waste" recycling event in April. (Nursing students, and IT Staff; Cathy Horvath and George Withus)
- g. Faculty, Staff, and Students turned out in force in the spring to volunteer to fill sandbags to address local flooding dangers and disaster. The number of MSU staff and many with red "Be Seen, Be Heard" tee shirts at the State Fair Center revealed our strong commitment to others and the common good.

**7. Ensuring Future Institutional Viability, Vitality, and Growth**

- a. Increased retention has been recorded as a result of focused first-year programs highlighted by the Foundations of Excellence Program.
- b. Significant increases in funding and support through the legislative process, support from local legislators, SBHE, and Governor, and many others.
- c. Enrollment: the anticipated 5% decline last fall did not happen, but instead we realized a slight increase in headcount. Increased activity and attention through improved marketing and other enrollment management initiatives has led to this fall's preliminary projections, if they hold true, for a 3-5% increase of nearly 200 students.
- d. Grow North Dakota initiative for a flat-rate tuition model has led to notable jumps in enrollment from out-of-state and international students (Ron Dorn, Kevin Harmon, John Girard, and many others)
- e. Beautiful and well-maintained campus, and clean buildings (Roger Kluck and his full staff)
- f. Outstanding CEL program, online deliveries, off-campus sites, and responsiveness to all students continues to serve students at a distance exceptionally well.
- g. Grants and contracts (Linda Cresap)
  - i. Department of Special Education recently received a four-year \$800,000 federal grant from the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, U.S. Department of Education, which is an interdisciplinary early childhood special education training project.
  - ii. A \$2 million grant to strengthen engaged teaching at Minot State University. This Title III grant from the U.S. Department of Education will assist Minot State University, over the next five years, in improving services for students and faculty and aid Minot State in increasing retention and graduation rates.
  - iii. A \$1.9 million dollar federal earmark awarded to Minot State, Bismarck, Williston, and Dickinson to support an energy workforce and education project (Kris Warmoth, JoAnn Linrud, and Senator Dorgan)
  - iv. The North Dakota Center for Persons with Disabilities on Minot State University's campus was awarded an exclusive two-year \$196,000

federal contract to develop diagnostic, management and technical protocol that will be utilized as a basis to replicate audiologic testing of infants employing a telemedicine network (NDCPD).

- h. Acceptance by NCAA Division II membership committee (Rick Hedberg, athletic staff, and others)
- i. Residence hall registrations have increased significantly (Lisa Eriksmoen).
- j. Food service contracts have increased notably for fall (Chartwells)
- k. \$13 million award from the legislature to renovate Swain Hall into a new teacher education and human performance center
- l. Students approved a fee to support the construction of a \$10 million wellness center, with construction set to begin next spring.
- m. A major first phase of our ten-year master plan will be fully completed prior to Homecoming in September. The Monument Sign, designed by Professor Walter Piehl and supported by Roger Kluck, will serve as a beautiful entrance and marker noting Minot State and its theme of place and the North Dakota landscape (Walter Piehl, Roger Kluck, Nancy Fuller, the Board of Regents, and many others).
- n. The \$2.5 million dollar award from the legislature for renovation of coal boiler or, if possible, a new \$17 million full-campus systematic geothermal system, which will replace all fossil fuels and eliminate the need for a central heating system.

And, of course, we could go on and on, but I am confident you see the point that we have done very well this past year academically, in support of students, enrollment, campus infrastructure, salaries, grants, fulfilling our mission and reaching our vision, hiring outstanding new faculty and staff, and taking large and impressive steps to our goal of becoming a premier university. Thanks to all of you for your outstanding efforts to help realize these achievements and the myriad other ways that support Minot State University and the students and place we serve.

## **THINGS ON OUR PLATE THIS YEAR**

I want to share with you a few of our goals and projects. These will require all of us, through our shared governance process and our regular campus deliberations, to contemplate and help move forward.

- Write and submit Student Support Services grant proposal (Title IV) to the Department of Education; in order to provide special support to students who are less likely to succeed in college.
- Establish the Dakota Northwestern Consortium, a partnership with communities in the northwest section of North Dakota to collaborate and identify common problems, with partial support of the Center for Community Research and Service earmark grant.
- With designated earmark funds awarded as a result of Senator Dorgan's efforts, establish the new Center for Community Research and Service, which will include direct support for community research, service, grant writing, internships, and other civic engagement activities.

- Secure funds and proceed to move forward to implement a system-wide geothermal project on campus; follow up on \$22 million dollars of stimulus grants submitted.
- Support the submission of the Stage II proposal for the new interdisciplinary, problem-based curriculum called Studies in the Community and Environment.
- Monitor the performances and work to raise our university's performance scores to exceed the average scores for the Great Plains Premier institutions by 2013-14; meet the annual objectives set in response to those indicators.
- Apply and seek membership in the Northern Sun Intercollegiate Athletic Conference, a NCAA Division II conference.
- Continue to examine potential Center of Excellence grant opportunities with the institutional committee to identify viable projects; write and submit at least one competitive proposal.
- Revised search and recruitment processes manual to ensure that we continue to hire only the highest qualified faculty and staff—those who have proven potential and who are devoted to our values, mission, vision, and goals.
- Graduation rate strategies: conduct follow up meetings and forums from the intensive meetings this summer in which the graduation rates were studied, causes identified, and strategies to improve the institutional rate above 50% and program rates.
- Continue to study our admission criteria, related research and results, and develop a proposal for revising our admission standards. The task force study will be brought forward to faculty and discussed through campus forums and meetings with the senate; the initial recommendations include proposed new criteria with a 22 ACT and progressive level of high school GPA and other qualitative measures, with effective provisional, remedial, and support actions to help students not meeting automatic admission standards to succeed. The study of other institutional criteria and standards and research on effects on our current students will accompany the proposal to the faculty, the three senates, and the full campus. Open forums will be scheduled for campus discussion and recommendations.
- Confirm minimum requirement for doctoral preparation for all new tenure-track faculty lines. Doctoral training and exceptional quality and promise in teaching will be established as a minimum requirement for selection of new faculty.
- Support efforts to redefine the role of full-time adjunct faculty.
- Ask the Vice President for Academic Affairs to proceed with a plan for all programs to conduct a deliberate and formal review of curriculum, faculty activities, performance indicators (e.g., graduation rates, retention, student placement percentages, alumni survey results, performances on disciplinary examinations) or strengthen our academic programs and their support of students.
- Enrollment management and assessments of Grow North Dakota and initiatives in the second year of this program.
- Begin construction of the new wellness center.
- Begin construction on renovated football field.
- Complete Swain Hall renovation.
- Begin the process to identify niche academic programs to enhance the support of academic programs.
- Meet the five-year goal set by the Compensation Task Force.

In my monthly president's report, I will provide periodic updates on the progress and activities related to these goals as well as other initiatives on campus. I encourage all of you to read those reports and attend campus open forums and other meetings called by our senates.

## CONCLUSION AND BIRDS

The last few years I have shared a personal observation and story about birds—pelicans one year, cormorants, the next, which most of you probably thought were totally irrelevant. I will spare you a story this year, but I would like, in the spirit of irrelevancy and the liberal arts, to share a poem I read in Garrison Keillor's edited anthology of poems titled Good Poems, which I took with me to Lake of the Woods at the end of July. The poem I would like to share with you is by Wendell Berry, and it is called "The Peace of Wild Things." Please know that this poem has no special message connected to what I have mentioned today, except that it captures a beautiful sentiment and mentions only a couple of birds! So with that, here is my irrelevant but meaningful ending to my remarks this morning.

"The Peace of Wild Things"  
Wendell Berry

When despair for the world grows in me  
and I wake in the night at the least sound  
in fear of what my life and my children's lives may be,  
I go and lie down where the wood drake  
rests in his beauty on the water, and the great heron feeds.  
I come into the peace of wild things  
who do not tax their lives with forethought  
of grief. I come into the presence of still water.  
And I feel above me the day-blind stars  
waiting with their light. For a time  
I rest in the grace of the world, and am free.<sup>ii</sup>

Peace be with all of us as we begin our new academic year, working in the most rewarding and satisfying profession of all. Granted, our work can be frustrating and challenging, but it is always filled with a variety of different, provocative, and sometimes life-altering meanings. And in the end and over the long haul, the meanings can be profound. That's the power of higher education. How much better can that get? I suggest that that is why we enjoy what we do and why you and I are looking forward to another fine year.

By the way, please join me at 3:00 p.m. this afternoon as my office will be hosting root beer floats and ice cream bars in the quad.

Thank you for your kind attention and, as always, for everything you do on behalf of our students and Minot State University.

---

<sup>i</sup> If anyone wants to review the accountability reports showing the most recent scores from the 11 NDUS institutions, please stop by my office.

<sup>ii</sup>Wendell Berry, "The Peace of Wild Things," Good Poems, ed. Garrison Keillor (New York: Penguin Books, 2003) 426.