

North Dakota State Staff Senate Meeting Minutes

January 12, 2026 @ 2:30pm CT via MS Teams



The NDUS Staff Senate serves to represent staff employees from the eleven academic institutions and employees throughout the university system. The Senate identifies staff interests and issues; acts as a forum for the discussion of staff-related matters; and facilitates communication on behalf of the campus staff members with the NDUS Commissioner and the State Board of Higher Education.

- 1) Called to Order at 2:30 pm
- 2) Roll Call
 - a) BSC – Jessie Bessert
 - b) CTSO – Greg Carlson, Marla Hagemeister, Joshua DeNio
 - c) DCB – Jennifer Cote, Misty Lindgren, Mike O’Toole
 - d) DSU – Laura Fetting, Mackenzie Hicks, Ashley Tillman
 - e) LRSC – Meghan Dimmler
 - f) MaSU – Shannon Hofer
 - g) MiSU – Heather Halverson
 - h) NDSCS – Amy Carson, Heather Nelson
 - i) NDSU – Andrea Ludwig, Jenn Young
 - j) UND – Anna Kinney, Brandon Wallace
 - k) VCSU – Erin Edinger
 - l) WSC – Carol Campbell
 - m) HRC Rep (Mindy Oconnor) – Absent
 - n) SBHE Rep (Anna Kinney) – Present
- 3) Approval of Agenda – Approved by unanimous consent
- 4) Approval of [December meeting minutes](#) – Approved by unanimous consent
- 5) Welcome NDUS COO Meredith Larson
 - a) Introduction by SBHE Rep Anna Kinney
 - i) Prior to becoming the COO, Meredith served as an Assistant Attorney General and legal counsel to the SBHE and a number of NDUS institutions. She graduated from UND and holds a BA in Psychology and JD with distinction. She launched her legal career as a prosecutor in Grand Forks County State’s Attorney’s Office, focused on cases involving interpersonal violence and played a key role in major public initiatives. She also currently serves as a board member for the Community Violence Intervention Center and the North Dakota State Bar Foundation. She lives in Grand Forks with her husband and 3 children.
 - b) Open floor to discussion and questions
 - i) Prosecutor for a long time before coming to the Attorney General’s Office. Background is as an attorney mostly dealing with crimes against women and children.
 - ii) Joined the system in August and has enjoyed working for Brent Sanford as the Commissioner.

- iii) Currently a busy time in the NDUS office because of the 3 presidential searches. NDSU is utilizing a search firm but BSC and VCSU searches are being conducted by NDUS.
- iv) Also have a big governance study going on with the consultant called Sagency out of Fargo
- v) Day to day varies
 - (1) Working as the Commissioner's right hand
 - (2) Liaison with staff, with presidents.
 - (3) Manage a lot of the higher level HR issues that come up
 - (4) Work a lot with people on campuses
 - (5) Point person on some of the searches and system alignment project
 - (6) Managing a couple of independent investigations going on in the system
- vi) Tuition waivers
 - (1) Carol Campbell (WSC)
 - (a) Committee is looking at that
 - (b) Data on what waivers are being used and where are they being used.
 - (c) What discussions have gone on regarding the tuition waivers in the past and what were positives and obstacles in the past?
 - (2) Where is the money coming from funding the waivers? Is it coming from the institution where the employee is employed or where the employee is taking a class? It is the institution where the employee is employed.
 - (3) Anna is meeting with an employee that was involved in the previous discussion and Carla on the administration side of things.
 - (4) Joshua DeNio – Difference between online and in person waivers – online is only 50% while in person is 100%
 - (5) Meredith suggested working with faculty counterparts to bring something to the board
- vii) Made a change to council reporting – HRC is now going to report directly to the governing board instead of being part of Administrative Affairs.
- viii) Question/comment regarding communication with employees prior to seeing news in the media
 - (1) There are things that they can't disclose until SBHE makes an announcement
 - (2) Will try to be mindful of letting staff know but some things that Meredith can't do anything about
- ix) Make sure passing on good things as well as concerns
- x) Very willing to work with staff on whatever we need – feel free to reach out to her via email or text

6) Reports

- a) Campus Updates – Submit to website
 - i) Jessie – BSC – Bylaws committee that is making revisions and updating things; do they need to redistrict with some of the changes; host a toast masters on campus and offered staff membership fee up to 10 members to be paid; looking at offering CPR and other trainings for all staff – think it's important; mystic mornings – once a month offer staff an opportunity to meet and

discuss and have opened that up to faculty; staff luncheon was delayed but had that last month and invited faculty to that

- ii) Erin – VCSU – interim president (Dr. Allen Burgad – formerly Dean of the VCSU School of Education) started and joined last week's Staff Senate meeting; put forth some names for the presidential search committee; some internal things – cocoa crawls, thinking about a Caribbean night event; plan for professional development over spring break since all the staff are still working
- iii) Jenn – NDSU – Shari Veil started as Provost on 1/5; Heidi Pecararo started as Attending Veterinarian on 1/2; Kelli Maddock as the interim Director of VDL; Co-interim VPs of Marketing and Communications Brynn Rawlings and Seinqis Leinen; still haven't heard who the interim President will be
- iv) Mike – DCB – Campus Dean search under way – hoping to have someone hired by the end of February; Committee met 1/8 to go over applicants and will start interviews in a couple of weeks
- v) Brandon – UND – starting master planning process that will take about a year; community coat project; suggestion box has been inundated with concerns regarding snow removal and closings and safety of staff especially during the break
- vi) Carol – WSC – new healthcare building opens for students on 1/13; committee designed to see who takes over the spaces that the healthcare vacated

b) SBHE Staff Advisor Report (Anna Kinney):

- i) Haven't had an official board meeting since our last meeting; did have an emergency meeting that went straight into executive session – regarding compliancy issue at DCB and DSU
- ii) Next board meeting Jan. 29th in Williston
- iii) Jan 22nd – special board meeting to determine the interim president for NDSU
- iv) Conversations that will most likely continue at the next meeting:
 - (1) Interim legislative sessions
 - (2) Reduced credit hour degrees
 - (3) Shared services

c) HRC Update (Mindy Oconnor):

7) Business Agenda

a) Taskforce Chair Updates –

- i) Legislative Taskforce/Bylaws (Anna Kinney)
 - (1) Last changes to the Bylaws was 10 years ago.
 - (2) Track changes version of Bylaws: [Redline North Dakota State Staff Senate Bylaws.docx](#)
 - (3) Cleaned up version:
<https://ndusbpos.sharepoint.com/:w/s/NDUSNDStateStaffSenate/IQDcP7TozrRNSaCN6rL-B6UfAVAIJmuvOD5I0HmaoPvk0XU?e=uLU4D3>
- ii) Staff Recognition (Heather Halvorson)
 - (1) Ready to move forward once have approval from Commissioner
 - (a) Chris Peske gave us feedback to make sure award is awardable

- (b) Made some changes and now just waiting on approval
- (2) Heather did get access to the email
- (3) Will send an email asking people to join the decision committee for the Award
- iii) Professional Development (Greg Carlson)
 - (1) December meeting was cancelled due to storm closures on campuses and some additional conflicts
 - (2) Next meeting is scheduled for January 29th
- iv) Staff Affairs (Carol Campbell)
 - (1) Gathering information
 - (2) If you have input, please send it on.
 - (3) Did put some data on Teams – if you have any data, feel free to dump it into the folder on Teams.
- v) Executive Committee (Mike O'Toole)
 - (1) Has not met since October
- b) ND State Staff Senate Email Account (Mike O'Toole)
 - i) Worked with CTS to get an email
 - ii) Started with Mike (President), Greg (President Elect), and Heather (Staff Award)
 - iii) Will need to update annually with who will need access to the email
- c) Nominations for SBHE Representative
 - i) Brandon Wallace nominated Anna Kinney; Anna accepted nomination
 - ii) Laura moved to cease nominations; Jessie at BSC seconded. Nominations are closed.
 - iii) Election is at next meeting
- 8) Open Discussion
 - a) Anna regularly passes on feedback anonymously to SBHE and NDUS; Also passes on when institutional administrators are doing a good job passing on information
- 9) Next Meeting: February 9, 2:30-4:00 CT.
- 10) Adjournment at 3:34 pm.

Additional Information:

- NDSSS Website - <https://staffsenate.ndus.edu/>
- Campus Updates Submission - <https://staffsenate.ndus.edu/campus-update-submission-form/>