

# NORTH DAKOTA YOUTH COUNCIL REPORT TO:

Governor John Hoeven, North Dakota Legislative Assembly, and  
the State Board of Higher Education,  
As ordered by  
House Bill 1463  
(2009 Session laws)



Lieutenant Governor Jack Dalrymple, Chairman

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# INTRODUCTION

The 2009 legislative session created the North Dakota Youth Council to identify issues and provide recommendations that are pertinent to North Dakota residents who have not reached the age of 25.

The Council is chaired by Lieutenant Governor Jack Dalrymple, and comprised of 16 young people ranging from the ages of 17-24, and four legislators. The young people selected have diverse backgrounds including, but not limited to, rural, social and geographic representations. This age range represents three very different stages of life including high school, college and young professionals.

A pool of applicants was recommended by a variety of individuals including teachers, principals, legislators, 4-H, Career & Technical Education organizations such as FFA, Future Business Leaders of America, Family Career and Community Leaders of America, DECA and others. The four legislators, Representative Mock, Representative Karls, Senator Bakke and Senator Flakoll were appointed by the respective majority and minority leaders of the House of Representatives and Senate to serve on the Council. Face-to-face meetings were held in Bismarck and Fargo in October, February and April with numerous subcommittee meetings held via conference call.



At the same time the Youth Council members were announced, the North Dakota Youth Office was established at the Department of Commerce. The office is to serve as a coordinating umbrella for existing programs that focus on youth retention targeting ages 14-24. The Youth Office

identified the brand Youth Forward to push out positive messages of opportunities for young people in addition to creating a forum for feedback of youth concerns and issues. The Youth Council used this brand as a facilitator to gather statewide input from young people to be considered.

***The Youth Council has concluded that job opportunities and quality education attract young people to the state, and the positive quality of life factors contribute to the choice to remain, or come back to North Dakota.*** The following report details the issues, followed by recommendations and implementation strategies for consideration from the Youth Council. The issues and concerns that are facing young people are multi-faceted, and will take many stakeholders, partners and policy-makers working together to address the recommendations. The following key is used in the document to create an at-a-glance view of how all can contribute to retaining youth in the state of North Dakota.

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# EDUCATION

The Youth Council recognizes that the quality of education is an outstanding asset to North Dakota. Students today must have cutting edge technology balanced with face-to-face interaction for success in the classroom and beyond.

## Virtual High School for Scholars

### *Background*

The 2009 legislative session initiated a scholarship designed to reward and encourage students to strive for academic excellence. The scholarship is awarded based upon grade point average, ACT or WorkKeys assessment test scores, and completion of advanced placement (AP) coursework. This scholarship has created a demand for additional advanced courses in both urban and rural schools. For example, Fargo Public Schools have experienced less than a 1% increase in AP course enrollment over the past few years; however since the implementation of the scholarship, Fargo South alone is reporting well over a 10% increase in class sign up.

### *Recommendations*

Create a “Virtual High School for Scholars” to offer online dual credit and AP opportunities to meet the demand of students who desire a higher level of achievement.

### *Implementation*

Expand and reorganize the Center for Distance Education to offer additional online AP and dual credit course offerings.

## Student-to-Student Retention Advice

### *Background*

Students who are struggling academically or with other issues that detract from success in high school or college need to be connected to resources and assistance. Students report receiving information and advice from a similar peer group is relevant, timely and communicated in a familiar way. Successful programs can lead to greater retention rates in high school and college.

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*Recommendations*

1. Implement or modify retention efforts for college students to be driven by peer-to-peer education.
2. Integrate student services activities with academic credit to create connections between co-curricular activities, academic coursework and career preparation.
3. Encourage partial credit to be awarded to mentors in peer education programs in high school and college.
4. Require a first year experience course for college freshmen that includes a peer mentoring component and approval of a plan of study by an academic advisor.

*Implementation*

1. Campuses and schools implement student-to-student peer education programs to increase the retention rate of students in high school and college.
2. North Dakota University System directs campuses to focus retention efforts through peer-to-peer strategies, as supported by the North Dakota University System Strategic Plan 2009-2013, Goal 3, Objective 3.1: Increase completions in targeted high potential programs by \_\_\_% (percentage is in process of being defined).

 Campus Advising & Tutoring Center

*Background*

A traditional college student’s schedule is filled with classroom lectures, often a job either on-campus or off-campus, student organization activities, homework and even online coursework. There is an increasing demand to have a well-rounded resume and meet the increasing education costs, which leads to little free-time within the traditional 8-5 work day to seek advice and guidance.

*Recommendations*

1. Each college campus shall create access to a central “Advising Center” that is staffed with trained academic and career advisors with hours extending into the evening. The centers should include representation from Job Service North Dakota to create career connections to academic and student life activities.
2. Establish a “Tutoring Center” for remedial needs on each campus that has access in the evenings and also with online capabilities and a focus on peer-to-peer education within residence life.

*Implementation*

1. North Dakota University System financially requires advisement support in addition to common outcomes and assessments to understand successful strategies.
2. North Dakota University System implements online degree auditing software.



3. North Dakota University System establishes a student satisfaction accountability measure with specific attention to academic advising.



### ND College Awareness

#### *Background*

North Dakota higher education is of outstanding quality when ranked nationally. North Dakota students are reporting not understanding this quality until later into the degree programs or upon completion of the degree and in the working world.

#### *Recommendations*

Create awareness of the quality of education and the strengths of ND higher education, including national and regional stature.

#### *Implementation*

1. North Dakota University System encourages campuses to implement recruitment strategies that emphasize the quality of education to North Dakota high school students. Implementation of the program should involve current students speaking to prospective students in settings outside of campus.
2. North Dakota Youth Office receives quarterly talking points about North Dakota college programs from the North Dakota University System Public Affairs professionals.



### Sustainable Scholarship Funds

#### *Background*

The funding source for the Career and Technical Education scholarship and the Academic scholarship is not permanent, and there are concerns with tighter funding structures, campuses may be competing against the scholarships for operating expenses.

#### *Recommendations*

Identify and define a long-term funding structure for North Dakota students to receive scholarship funding.

#### *Implementation*

Legislation to ensure sustainability of the North Dakota Career and Technical Education scholarship program and the North Dakota Academic Scholarship. A potential funding source is the interest income from the Foundation Aid Stabilization fund, which currently is deposited into the general fund.

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## Financial Literacy

### *Background*

Youth Council members report that the student loan granting process is convenient and user-friendly with online authorization capabilities. However, young professionals and college students of the Council agree that loans are too easy to receive without knowing what the long-term financial impact will be.

### *Recommendations*

1. Require a full disclosure in lending clause for in-state student loans that will detail what the total cost of the loan will be and an estimated monthly payment.
2. Encourage personal finance to be embedded in academic curriculum in elementary, secondary, and post-secondary education.

### *Implementation*

1. Legislation to require a truth in lending clause for all student loan acceptances.
2. Campuses incorporate personal finance into freshmen orientation classes.

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# JOB OPPORTUNITY

North Dakota has approximately 11,000 jobs available in the state in a range of educational levels. It is imperative that young people are taught the skills to develop career paths for themselves for lifelong career success. These skills are reinforced through awareness and connections to the careers that North Dakota sustains.

## K-12 Career Advisement

### *Background*

The number of careers a student can explore is expanding rapidly with technology increasing and the realization of a global economy. The ability for counselors and career advisors to assist students in a planned and measurable way competes with the essential role counselors serve in connecting students with social and emotional health needs. This presents large disparities in the quality of career advisement across the state.

### *Recommendations*

1. Promote career planning classes in the 7<sup>th</sup> and/or 8<sup>th</sup> grade through a course.
2. Require plans of study for all 9<sup>th</sup> grade students and require they are updated annually.
3. Encourage college and university campuses to include careers and occupations that the degree would qualify a student for on the college department websites.

### *Implementation*

1. Local schools offer a required 9 week, credit earning career planning course in the 7<sup>th</sup> and/or 8<sup>th</sup> grade that includes career exploration and life skill development.
2. Legislation to require a plan of study for every student in grades 9-12 effective August 2012.

## Online Advanced Degrees & Continuing Education

### *Background:*

Continuing education is often a pre-requisite to advancement in a career. Young professionals have grown up with learning online; therefore have come to expect the accessibility of education as they advance professionally as well.

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*Recommendations:*

1. North Dakota University System increases online course offerings in the masters and PhD coursework.
2. North Dakota University System and other continuing education entities increase the amount of Continuing Education Units offered online at a competitive price for the student.

*Implementation:*

The State Board of Higher Education includes an accountability metric in the *North Dakota University System Strategic Plan 2009-13* that relates to online graduate level coursework. [Goal 1: The North Dakota University System is accessible, a view held by all North Dakotans, Objective 1.2: Increase the percentage of North Dakota’s total young adult population (25-34) enrolled in North Dakota University System institutions for credit to 6% and Objective 1.5 Increase the total number of graduate and professional degrees awarded by 3%.]

 Internship & Scholarship Opportunities

*Background:*

Many students point to an internship opportunity as the source of experience and the transition to their first job. Employers are able to promote their internship opportunity through a campus faculty member, a campus career service office, posting their internship position on [www.teamnd.org](http://www.teamnd.org) (a consortium of some ND college career service offices), or Job Service ND. The number of places to post positions creates too many places for students to search for an internship position. At the same time students are searching for internships, they often are also seeking scholarship opportunities. Scholarships and grants are imperative to many students entering and staying in college.

*Recommendations:*



1. A single-source student website that offers only internship opportunities, job shadowing and other beginning career opportunities readily available to North Dakota students.

*Implementation:*

1. The North Dakota Youth Office in conjunction with Career Services offices and Job Service North Dakota, North Dakota University System and the Young Professionals network, create one portal website that encompasses internship opportunities, scholarships, and other resources for young people and career advisors/counselors. Legislation should be developed to fund and structure the single information source.



2. The North Dakota University System strongly encourages campuses to create a singular process for employers to connect with campuses to promote internship offerings. This may include a communication plan that includes social media strategies between faculty, career services and other supporting entities to share internship postings that will result in a clear process for the employer and the student.

  Career & Technical Education Courses

*Background:*

The opportunities for a successful and high paying career in North Dakota with a technical degree are plentiful. Supplying demand for occupations such as electricians and welders can be obtained through offering educational opportunities in high school. This opportunity coupled with the Career & Technical Education scholarship creates a demand for increased course offerings as well.

*Recommendations:*

Increase the number of available Career & Technical Education courses for high school students.

*Implementation:*

1. Local school districts increase the number of Career & Technical Education courses available through traditional course offerings, collaborative efforts, and online/distance education.
2. Center for Distance Education offers supplemental curriculum to allow for lab time for hands on activities.

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## RECREATION & ENTERTAINMENT



North Dakota has a wide diversity of recreation and events to attend for all ages. The biggest challenge for young people is knowing what is available. Many of the concerns and recommendations can be improved upon by inviting young people to the planning table at local community level and targeted marketing activities.

### ▶ Entertainment & Transportation

*Background:*

North Dakota has first-class entertainment venues that host a variety of concerts, sporting events and trade shows. The opportunity for young people to attend these events can depend upon having transportation available. Distance to events can be an obstacle for individual, private transportation.

*Recommendations:*

Increase the availability of transportation for young people to metropolitan areas.

*Implementation:*

Local communities coordinate “fun buses” to major events or shopping days to the metropolitan areas that are targeted for young people. This should be done in cooperation with existing Senior Citizen and other Department of Transportation programs.

### ▶ After School Activities

*Background:*

After school activities provide fantastic opportunities for students to become engaged in experiential learning in a safe environment. Often local events are not well attended by young people because their opinions were not asked, or they were not part of the planning process.

*Recommendations:*

Create incentives for young people to become involved in planning community events and school activities.

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*Implementation:*

1. Local city councils and other community organizations embrace youth leadership through creating a voting youth position in board structure, or creating a separate entity such as a youth council.
2. Youth Office provides technical assistance for communities to find ways to involve young people in community planning and activities.

 **Technology Infrastructure & Environment**

*Background:*

A 24 year old is likely to pay bills with their Blackberry, invite their friends to a party through an “e-vite” versus a paper invitation, and have over 500 “friends” on Facebook. Accessibility to technology is not considered a privilege, it’s a necessity to do business, socialize and communicate. Therefore this necessity translates into workplaces in order to create a welcoming environment to attract and retain new graduates.

*Recommendations:*

1. Workplaces create and adopt social networking policies with input from younger professionals.
2. Communities work to ensure adequate cell and wireless internet services.
3. Assure online services are functional using wireless mobile devices.

*Implementation:*

1. North Dakota professional industry associations and businesses take the lead in creating sample social networking policies that business and government agencies can modify and adopt.
2. Communities create and implement technology satisfaction surveys with age demographic breakdowns to understand access satisfaction.





## HEALTH, WELLNESS & SAFETY

Advances in medicine have been teaching young people from an early age the importance of a healthy lifestyle. Therefore, having access to facilities, education and support is necessary to empower individuals to lead safe, healthy lives.

### Depression & Suicide Prevention

#### *Background:*

Suicide is a rising epidemic that can be prevented with an increased understanding of the warning signs and action of teachers, peers and parents.

#### *Recommendations:*

1. Increase and focus on training for K-12 teachers and staff on identifying at-risk behaviors and signs of depression, and procedures for notifying qualified professionals.
2. Implement a local awareness mental health initiative in schools to educate students on the warning signs of suicide and depression.

#### *Implementation:*

1. Local school districts implement training and professional development opportunities on behaviors of depression and suicide prevention.
2. Department of Public Instruction, Indian Affairs Commission, Health Department, North Dakota Education Association, Regional Educational Associations and other North Dakota teacher professional organizations focus on providing informational materials and professional development to teachers.

### Sports Participation

#### *Background:*

High School student athletes are demonstrating the ability to perform physical activities and comprehension of skills. Student athletes can be doubling up physical activity levels with practice and games in addition to physical education requirements. All students, including athletes, need greater knowledge to develop healthy lifestyle skills.

#### *Recommendations:*

1. Student athletes should be provided a portion of a physical education credit.

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2. Lifestyle skills should be emphasized as a separate classroom activity.

*Implementation:*

Local schools, with guidance from the Department of Public Instruction, explore awarding credit for athletic participation, and expanding curriculum to lifelong wellness skill development.

 Wellness Initiatives

*Background:*

Wellness is not a destination, but a lifestyle that can be learned at any age. Wellness encompasses many factors of well-being; but a focused effort is needed on physical health and mental well-being.

*Recommendations:*

1. Implement targeted informational campaigns on wellness with a focus on fitness for young people.

*Implementation:*

1. The North Dakota Health Department in conjunction with campus wellness centers, lead the effort to provide health and wellness information to North Dakota young people.
2. Local schools should create more rigor in physical education curriculum and include wellness/preventative health education to teach lifelong skills.
3. Colleges, communities and high schools implement a specific initiative on physical fitness for young people that include competitions that model the “Biggest Loser”, community/social activities and the application of technology such as the “Wii Fit.”
4. School boards evaluate the a-la-carte offerings to ensure that school lunch offerings are healthy.

 Substance Abuse

*Background:*

North Dakota young people rank as one of the highest users of alcohol nationwide. The use of alcohol as a minor can be detrimental to many aspects of life from career achievement to personal health. One of the key strategies in changing the social culture of drinking for North Dakota is to provide fun alternatives and alternate activities that have positive impacts. Students also report that certainty and consistency in punishment from local authorities is more important than severity of punishment.





*Recommendations:*

1. Parental education on alcohol with child participation.
2. Increase awareness of professional consequences to alcohol abuse through presentations from employers.
3. Address teen alcoholism directly—especially on reservations through peer-to-peer strategies.
4. Change the social culture of drinking. One way this can be accomplished is by providing alternative social activities that are more enjoyable than activities based on alcohol consumption.

*Implementation:*

1. Local middle schools, high schools and colleges focus on peer-to-peer programs that promote positive role models.
2. College campuses are encouraged to support safe ride programs. (supplemented taxi cab or bus services from a business to a residence)
3. Local district judges are encouraged to assign responsibility jointly to parents and minors under the age of 18 for alcohol violations.
4. Local school boards are encouraged to emphasize the importance of enforcing suspension rules for alcohol violations, including violations during the summer.

  Fitness Centers

*Background:*

Exercise has become part of a healthy lifestyle, in addition to recreation for all ages. Accessibility to fitness centers creates opportunities for socialization.

*Recommendations:*

1. Communities assess, review and discuss the use of existing fitness centers, local school facilities and policies to ensure fitness facilities and programming are available for young people.

*Implementation:*

1. Communities develop accessibility to facilities for individual and group fitness (baseball, volleyball leagues, flag football, and aerobics).

**COMMITMENT TO NORTH DAKOTA YOUTH**

The members of the Youth Council are committed to informing policymakers, stakeholders and community leaders on the issues and recommendations in the report.

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