ENSURING EDUCATION AND INDUSTRY ALIGN

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Membership is a funny thing. Whether it be a business or within our personal life, we are all individuals in our own right. Each person has their own goals, values, priorities, perspectives and directives. These specific insights lead individuals through their days and impact their years. However, it’s the joining or coming together, that creates momentum. Maybe it’s as simple as the cliché, many hands make light work, but it goes beyond this basic idea when you think of the concept of impact.

Individuals and organizations come together, through membership, to further their voice to create momentum regarding shared goals. This social construct isn’t a new concept – we’ve all been privy from grade school on. The goals may have changed. Previously, we may have collaborated to build a play fort, fundraise for a school trip, or played a team sport. As professionals, we engage in memberships to support policy and movements, to divide work to move the needle in relation to issues or to ensure we are part of a bigger picture.

GNDC is involved in the North Dakota Transportation Coalition. This coalition is made of state associations and stakeholders who look at the challenges our state is facing specific to moving commerce. The voices represented come from various industries; business, agriculture, local government, etc. Each voice has a different need at a different level but membership in this group ensures a strong network to be proactive in issues that impact transportation or are impacted by transportation.

This coalition goes beyond comradery and relies on the strength of the individual members for impact. This group, as well as other groups that GNDC belongs to, allows work to occur on specific issues outside of the legislative session. Members come together to build consensus to influence action and policies. Shared priorities exist as well as a shared understanding of the importance of the work at hand. Individual interests arise, as they should, allowing the coalition to see individual viewpoints but good policy is about a compromise of ideas, with the best concepts rising to the top.

GNDC membership is similar. Organizations all become members for specific reasons or specific benefits, creating a collection of diverse voices, locations, industries and organization sizes. This variety helps determine our association’s goals and direction. We take the insight gained from our members’ voices and apply them to the groups that we are involved with. GNDC serves as a conduit to express the voice of North Dakota businesses and ensure the policy that is developed and implemented is beneficial to the free enterprise system.

Even though we are closer to the 2019 session than the 2021 session, we are building our game plan to advocate our members’ goals. I encourage you to further make GNDC your chamber and ensure that your voice and your perspective is heard. Whether it’s attending a GNDC CEO Roundtable or participating in developing our legislative agenda by joining a policy committee, membership is what you make it. Join the conversation as there is power in numbers and GNDC is here to amplify your voice.
ENSURING EDUCATION IS IN ALIGNMENT WITH INDUSTRY

Workforce has been the concern buzzed throughout the state for decades. The associated words have changed over time. Fifteen years ago, the conversation centered on brain drain and job creation, but with a paradigm shift the conversation is now peppered with new phrases – retention, attraction, middle skills gap, and even upskilling. These shifts have created pressure for North Dakota’s employers.

No matter the organization’s size, location or industry, workforce challenges demand strategies involving approaches that are collaborative in nature. Partnerships, both formal and casual in nature, have been forged across the state in order to communicate needs and solutions. The relationship between industry and education is paramount to the inner workings of the workforce landscape; education needs to provide instruction that matches the skillsets and training needed by industry. Today’s students are tomorrow’s workforce.

For a further evaluation of the relationship between industry and education, GNDC caught up with state agency heads who prioritize the connection, ensuring that communication and collaboration are occurring for alignment.

KIRSTEN BAESLER
Superintendent of ND Department of Public Instruction (NDDPI)

Amount of time in position: 6.5 years
Previous position: Assistant Principal and Library Media Specialist at Will-Moore and Pioneer Elementary Schools

Q: How are education and industry working together to solve the workforce challenges facing North Dakota?

A: The most recent example of education/industry partnership was in the 2019 Legislature, when business people supported the Department of Public Instruction’s advocacy of a new computer science and cybersecurity credential for our teachers. There is great demand for students trained in computer science and cybersecurity. Business representatives spoke in favor of the Department’s proposal to establish the new teaching credential, and to provide $6 million to train teachers in every North Dakota school in this specialty area. The Legislature endorsed this credential but did not approve an appropriation. The NDDPI is presently searching for funding alternatives.

One of our most notable education/industry collaborations is the Department’s partnership with the National Math and Science Initiative (NMSI). NMSI is a nonprofit organization that is supported by XTO Energy Inc., a subsidiary of ExxonMobil Corp. NMSI has provided resources and incentives to encourage students to take advanced courses in math, science, computer science and English. NMSI also hosts summer professional development workshops for teachers of Advanced Placement classes. This project results in more students receiving especially rigorous instruction in math and science. Students with this academic background are in demand in private industry.

Q: There have been many programs introduced through legislation that tie industry with education – what elements are essential to ensure these programs are successful for the state?

A: Programs that seek to make education a partner with industry should be focused, with a simple, understandable and easily communicated set of objectives. They must be accessible to all students, regardless of their economic condition or where they live. They must be sustainable, by showing a record of success that is worthy of continued support. They must be accountable and transparent to our taxpayers, with thoughtfully developed criteria and readily available, detailed documentation available about their implementation and results.

Q: What is the biggest opportunity for the future of North Dakota’s workforce?

A: Families are drawn to places where they can raise their children in a safe, healthy, stable environment, with opportunities for jobs and career advancement. One of the essential elements for this is a quality public education system. We already have excellent public schools, but even top-notch schools hunger for continuous improvement. We are fortunate that our educators and our business people accept this premise and are willing to work to make it happen. I believe North Dakota’s quality schools and sense of
community are, and will be, powerful in attracting families to our state, which will strengthen our workforce and build momentum for the future.

Q: What advice do you have for educators?

A: Educators are my heroes. I would like to remind them to care for themselves and have them know that they are honored and respected. They have the most important job in the world. I encourage educators to find and share their voice on a local, state and national level. This will teach others how to better benefit students and our futures.

WAYDE SICK
Director of Career and Technical Education (CTE)

Amount of time in position: 1.25 years
Previous position: Workforce Development Director at ND Department of Commerce

Q: How are education and industry working together to solve the workforce challenges facing North Dakota?

A: If I consider only high school CTE programs, the primary method on how education and industry are partnering is CTE Industry Advisory Committees. In order to be an approved and funded CTE program, a local program must have an advisory committee that meets at least twice a year. The purpose of the committee is to advise the instructor and administration of what skills should be taught, what equipment is necessary and to be an advocate for the program.

Q: What challenges are currently in play that cause fragmentation or misalignment between education and industry?

A: One challenge is the rate of change. Business and industry workforce needs often change faster than education can adapt. Educational programs take time to come on-line – whether finding facilities, purchasing necessary equipment, developing curriculum or securing an instructor with the appropriate skillset. A second challenge is education sometimes does not understand what industry needs and industry is unsure what education can deliver. There are great education programs that can potentially fill workforce needs, there is just a lack of communication and marketing.

Q: How is your agency connecting education and industry?

A: The Department of Career and Technical Education is attempting to connect business with education through our Perkins V Consultation Process. Perkins V is the federal act that provides oversight to the federal funding the state receives that is in turn granted to CTE programs. The Department is in the process of developing the state’s plan, to be submitted in April 2020. A focus of Perkins V is stakeholder engagement with multiple entities, including business and industry. We have spent a considerable amount of time during the spring and summer of 2019 visiting with various business groups and employers, receiving feedback on what should be the focus of CTE in North Dakota.

Q: What advice do you have for students?

A: Don’t wait until after graduation to take advantage of career exploration opportunities. Take courses, try hands-on experiences, have internships, ask questions. It’s just as important to find out what you don’t want to do as well as what you may want to do. Finding yourself in college is too expensive.
Q: How are education and industry working together to solve the workforce challenges facing North Dakota?

A: Two examples that come to mind are HB 1171 and TrainND.

HB 1171, the Skilled Workforce Bill, supports education and industry in meeting North Dakota’s workforce challenges. The bill provides $6 million in state funds that can be matched by industry for a combined total of $12 million. Campuses will be involved in raising matching contributions to support the scholarship and loan forgiveness programs from their respective industry partners. The Workforce Development Council (WDC) produced a comprehensive and current list of “in-demand” occupations.

TrainND has over 150 non-degree certificate programs available throughout North Dakota. Training can be customized for organizations to upskill individuals and the costs are covered by the employer. TrainND regions serviced by Williston State College (WSC), Lake Region State College (LRSC), Bismarck State College (BSC) and the North Dakota State College of Science (NDSCS) in Wahpeton.

Q: What challenges are currently in play that cause fragmentation or misalignment between education and industry?

A: It is a challenge to translate highly specific industry needs into programs and/or certificates that are beneficial to more than just a single industry. Other problems exist in career exploration communication. By combining the high number of jobs in North Dakota that only require a high school degree with those that require a certificate or associate degree, it sends conflicting messages as to whether college is necessary or not. Yet many in-demand jobs require a four-year degree – teachers, nurses, technology, business.

Q: What is the biggest opportunity for the future of North Dakota’s workforce?

A: The biggest opportunity for the future of North Dakota’s workforce is the responsiveness of the State Board of Higher Education (SBHE) in meeting workforce needs, and the adaptability of the state’s various institutions to the new industrial revolution. SBHE has recently changed the missions of two of the institutions, Dickinson State University (DSU) and BSC, in response to workforce needs.

DSU, traditionally a teachers’ college and a liberal arts institution, to develop a “dual mission.” That means that in addition to its traditional programming, DSU will soon be offering less-than-four-year programs, some in technical fields. To jumpstart this initiative, DSU is partnering with BSC to begin offering welding training in the Dickinson area.

BSC to become a “polytechnic” institution. So, in addition to its normal offerings in technical and transfer programs, BSC will be offering an array of four-year bachelor of applied science degrees in technical areas.

During the 2019 legislative session, the Legislature provided and the Governor approved $1M in funding for each of these two mission changes, as well as $700,000 in new program funding for WSC. Thus, the SBHE and state officials have ensured that workforce needs are being addressed in the boom areas of central and western North Dakota.

Q: What advice do you have for industry?

A: The ground is shifting underneath more and more. It is important to partner with higher ed to ensure credentials and training are available for your current and upcoming workforce. To do this, tell us what we are lacking and what we can build together.
WDC, re-energized in 2017, is comprised of 32 members, with representatives from industry, labor organizations, legislators, state and local elected officials, as well as leaders from K12, CTE and higher education. There is great energy around collaborating to connect systems to ensure alignment between education and industry needs. As I understand it, each of the respective systems’ strategic plans contain the shared goal of addressing workforce needs.

**Q:** There have been many programs introduced through legislation that tie industry with education – what elements are essential to ensure these programs are successful for the state?

**A:** From increased funding for new career and technical education programs, to HB 1171 that creates a scholarship/loan repayment program for educational programs that align with in-demand occupations, the connection between industry and education is an essential element to ensure that we are seeking to solve the same challenges, that citizens are aware of these opportunities, and that we build and maintain an ongoing connection to ensure that the programs are adapted to needs in real time.

**Q:** What challenges are currently in play that cause fragmentation or misalignment between education and industry?

**A:** I believe we possess the most important ingredient for future success, which is the motivation to work collaboratively. That said, we must intentionally build communication frameworks and platforms where ideas can be exchanged, with the expectation that this is an ongoing and continuous process. Adequate resources must be dedicated to advance new ideas, and systems must be in place to maintain these connections and ensure accountability for future success.

**Q:** What advice do you have for legislators?

**A:** I don’t believe it’s my role to advise legislators – I empathize with their hard jobs, am grateful for their commitment, and I am enthusiastic about working together, and supporting our legislators to accomplish strategies that build a better state for the citizens of North Dakota.

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**WIND ENERGY IN NORTH DAKOTA**

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- Wind energy produces nearly 3,100 megawatts of electricity
  - coal generation is 4,000 megawatts
- Wind energy provided nearly 26% of electricity generated in ND in 2018

**Benefits:**
- Nearly 3,000 people are directly employed in wind energy ranging from technicians to manufacturing
- $2.8 billion in infrastructure/capital investments
- $8.8 million in state and local tax payments
- Nearly 15 million in annual lease payments to landowners

ndforallenergy.org
There has been a lot of conversation around HB 1171 and rightfully so. The legislature created the Skilled Workforce Scholarship and Loan Repayment Program that consists of $6 million in state funds that requires a 1:1 match from industry. This results in up to $17,000 for each student. Participants must live and work in the state for three years to maintain eligibility.

Now that the bill has passed and the program has been branded as “ND Career Builders” where do we go from here. Here is an outline of what’s in it for businesses in North Dakota.

The primary goal of this program is to recruit and retain workforce into high need and emerging occupations. With low unemployment across the country, North Dakota employers are in tough competition for workforce, with a need to fill the middle skills gap. This program will assist employers by providing scholarships or loan repayment programs for individuals who enter two-year or less degree programs or are employed in a high demand or emerging career field as identified by the Workforce Development Council (WDC). The WDC, which is well represented by industry, used data to further refine the list of high demand and emerging careers list to best suit the current needs of the state. This list will provide parameters for this program and will continue to serve as a decision-making tool for many programs, such as the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and Operation Intern.

As the administrator of the program, the North Dakota University System (NDUS) has been working diligently to create a process that meets the intent of the legislation while working for students and employers utilizing the program.

The big question is what’s next? The legislature heard the needs from industry and challenged them to invest in individuals with dollars to meet the challenges of North Dakota’s workforce. Similar individual programs have been enacted by businesses across the state but now there is a statewide effort to recruit and retain employees. Businesses now need to support this program, which is set to expire at the end of June 2021 – work with current employees, promote it to students, and provide dollars for match to ensure this recruitment and retention tool helps to move the needle in bridging the skills gap, ensuring the competitiveness of North Dakota’s business.

This ND Career Builders will be administered by the NDUS and is available to all students at any North Dakota accredited institution. Visit ndus.edu/career-builders/ for more information and to get involved.
Earlier this year, the University of Mary launched its Workforce Development Initiative and performed a study on workforce conditions in North Dakota. They needed to better understand the workforce challenges facing the state in order to become more involved in meeting those needs.

The study identified many well-known challenges such as too few workers, highly competitive labor markets, lack of affordable housing and more. As hoped, the study illuminated opportunities where the University of Mary could make a difference. Two of those opportunities are skill gaps and facilitating career exploration for our youth.

We often hear about skill gaps in digital and technical fields. Through conversations with employers across North Dakota, the university learned that skill gaps run much deeper to include leadership, communication and many soft skills. Employers also identified areas such as project management, process improvement, customer service, and relationship management as skill gaps with high impact potential for their organizations. With a clear call to action, the university has ramped up efforts to provide professional development opportunities for North Dakota’s workforce.

Initially, they are accomplishing this in two ways. First, by offering programming that is available to the general public. So far, programs have been delivered in Bismarck, Watford City, Fargo and Grand Forks. Topics addressed include communication, conflict management and project management.

University of Mary is also collaborating directly with employers to tailor programming to meet specific workforce needs. They’ve partnered with one North Dakota employer to design a seven-session program that is delivered on-site over three months for a core group of employees. The program is designed to be repeated for additional employees and provides a foundation that can be built upon in the future by addressing expanded skillsets identified by the employer.

This has been an amazing partnership that would not be possible without the employer’s commitment to investing in and developing its own workforce. Make no mistake, it is not easy to pull busy employees away from their daily responsibilities. However, this employer has set their sights on building up its existing employees and defining its future workforce.

The University of Mary held their first Rising Leadership North Dakota camp. They hosted 28 high school students in Bismarck for three days of career exploration. Most of the time was spent meeting employers who demonstrated multiple career paths within their industries. For example, on the visit to CHI St. Alexius, students learned about 10 different career tracks within healthcare.

Our speakers framed discussions on leadership, “right-sizing” your education, and soft skills essential to success in the workplace. It was clear their comments resonated based on the quantity and quality of questions the students asked throughout the camp.

These students deserve so much credit for choosing to spend a portion of their summer learning about the exciting career opportunities available right here in North Dakota. If they are any indication, the future of our state’s workforce and leadership is bright!

For more information, contact Brian Opp, blopp@umary.edu.

The North Dakota All-Energy Conference & Expo defines and details the trends and opportunities present in the multifaceted energy industries of North Dakota. Designed to unite energy executives, service providers, investors, developers, product vendors and decision-makers, the two-day event includes critical content presentations and networking sessions that will highlight the current and future opportunities for creating, producing, maintaining or expanding the vast energy resources available in North Dakota.
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When trying to fill positions in an industry that is technical in nature, organizations have two choices; you can try and steal employees with the experience needed from competitors, or start from scratch and “grow your own.”

General Equipment & Supplies (GES) determined that the best path may be to cultivate and invest in individuals. GES began recruiting high school graduates into the Komatsu Diesel Technician Service Program at North Dakota State College of Science (NDSCS). Young potential employees started with GES as interns, then became enrolled students at NDSCS. At graduation, these students became fulltime GES employees. This “grow your own” process resulted in individuals with credentials who were totally immersed in General Equipment & Supplies’ culture and company values.

This success brought a realization that creative solutions could be developed for other positions that they could not fill through an existing post-secondary technical program. This was accomplished when GES established their own apprenticeship program. The model utilized on-the-job mentoring with internal training coupled with specifically selected classes offered through NDSCS, either online or in the classroom.

GES’s goal was to develop well-rounded employees who have learned skills on the job with education filling in potential gaps while providing additional continuity and formal accreditation. Developing their own apprenticeship program was not difficult and has served a viable option for filling future technical positions in their company, a win:win for General Equipment & Supplies and the potential or current employee. These employees are ingrained with the organization’s culture and understand the needs of GES’s customers.

Formal apprenticeship programs are still relatively new to General Equipment & Supplies, starting just a year ago, but already they have seen success and are confident that apprenticeship is a key component of workforce development for GES.

For more information, contact Ann Pollert, apollert@genequip.com.
MEMBERSHIP MAKES A DIFFERENCE

ONE YEAR IN

By Christopher Kalash, GNDC Membership Services Director

It's official – I have celebrated my first work anniversary at GNDC this past summer. First year’s traditional gift is paper – consider this your gift from me, no thank-you cards need to be sent. If we’ve talked at all in the past year, you have heard me say two things: membership is important and the work GNDC does is essential to making North Dakota a great place to do business. These things hold true and my conviction is deeper than it was a year ago. These principles are concepts that I’ve learned based on the conversations I’ve had and the progress I’ve seen... so what else have I learned over the past year?

I’ve learned that recruiting and retaining members cannot just be a matter of regurgitating our accomplishments. Anyone can brag about all the things that they do. If you’ve sat down with me, I’ve asked you, “What can GNDC do for you?” I want to ensure your goals and our mission align. GNDC’s efforts are focused on making North Dakota’s business climate the best in the nation. These efforts do not happen in a vacuum. GNDC is always looking for feedback and discussion about what type of policies our members would like to see.

One way that this happens is by member participation on policy committees. Leading up to the 2019 Legislative Session, GNDC had three policy committees: workforce, infrastructure and business climate. These meetings outlined our Legislative Agenda, the document that guided GNDC’s stance on the bills that were proposed during the session. This approach came from the input, experience, research, needs and wants of our members. We are a membership-based organization. Having members who actively participate in the policy development process assures us that we are working on issues that will benefit members. Ultimately, our members’ success is our success.

I have learned that GNDC has members from every industry and every corner of the state. Our CEO Roundtable events provide C-Suite level networking opportunities with industry leaders. I have seen the value that members get from attending – learning takes place, connections are made, seeds of future opportunities are planted. If you are not making time in your schedule to attend some of our CEO Roundtable events, you are missing out on a great benefit of GNDC membership. Do you have a topic that you would like to see GNDC focus on at a future CEO Roundtable? Let me know.

I’ve learned that this magazine and our email newsletter are full of great information that our members eagerly read. When visiting members, it is common to hear great compliments on the quality of the content in our publications. We strive to make these valuable to you. Dakota Digest and Report on Business reach leaders like you.

I learned that GNDC has a talented team and we work well together. Brainstorming sessions are fun while still producing results. Everyone pitches in when and where they are needed. All of this is done with serving you, our members, in mind.

Finally, I’ve learned that it’s hard to say no to a free cup of coffee – so let me treat you. I’d love to sit down and hear about what’s going on in your organization. Maybe that’s a better anniversary gift?

We are pleased to welcome these businesses and associations to GNDC!

- Laventure LLC
- Sunbelt of North Dakota
- CrossCountry Freight Solutions
- DCI Credit Services, Inc.
- Minot State University
- Red River Commodities, Inc.
- BBI International
- Wency Associates Inc - Mandan
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