University System Launches Smart Restart Task Force

<< All News

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To help guide best practices as recommended by the Governor Doug Burgum's ND Smart Restart plan as well as comply with Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidelines, the North Dakota University System has launched a task force led by Dr. Joshua Wynne to implement a three-tiered approach to re-opening North Dakota campuses. Wynne is currently serving as the interim president of the University of North Dakota and the vice president for the university's School of Medicine & Health Sciences. The task force held its first meeting Friday of last week.

State Board of Higher Education Chair Nick Hacker said, "The task force has been formed to assist the North Dakota University System (NDUS) campuses in their responses to the COVID-19 pandemic so that students, faculty, and staff can return to their institutions in a way that maximizes safety and minimizes the chance of further spread of the virus. In addition to health and safety, student success and learning is our priority."

The group will collate the guidelines that have been created for each NDUS campus, recognizing that location, size, and mission differences among the various campuses necessitates specific accommodations and differing local arrangements. The task force will also collect data for individual policies, procedures, and approaches for use by the NDUS campuses, which will encourage higher learning success in the current and eventual post-COVID-19 era. The group will include inputs from students, staff and faculty, as well as a member of the State Board of Higher Education.

"Our hope is to provide a collaborative tool that recognizes the differences of each campus, but also considers the significance of higher education in the state. While we look at the importance of safety mechanisms that each campus can put into place, we also need to remember the sacred trust of education our state's population and providing a diversified

workforce to help the entire populace," said NDUS Chancellor Mark Hagerott. "We are proud to be part of restarting the economy and provide a path for learners wanting to increase knowledge and opportunity, especially during this time."

The task force will be composed of three working groups, one focusing on the large campuses, one on the medium-sized campuses, and one on the smaller campuses. In addition, the task force will have representation from a faculty infectious disease expert, NDUS staff and legal counsel, and will invite input and assistance from a member of the State Board of Higher Education (SBHE).

The NDUS Smart Restart Task Force is formed to assist the NDUS campuses in their responses to the COVID-19 pandemic so that students, faculty, and staff can return to their institutions in a way that maximizes safety and minimizes the chance of further spread of the virus while at the same time facilitating the important educational, discovery, and service missions of the NDUS and its constituent campuses.

"I am honored to have been asked by Chancellor Hagerott to assist the various NDUS institutions in this effort" said Wynne. "We hope to provide useful assistance as each campus responds to the COVID-19 threat."

The task force will meet periodically in the beginning stage to provide its findings, guidelines and suggestions to the chancellor, then with the NDUS institutions and the North Dakota State Board of Higher Education.

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