



# President

Leadership Profile

April 2021



**NORTHERN**  
STATE UNIVERSITY

*Aberdeen, South Dakota*

## **The Opportunity**

The South Dakota Board of Regents invites nominations and expressions of interest in the position of president of Northern State University, one of six universities governed by the board. The regents seek a visionary, innovative, collaborative, long-term leader who can advance Northern's significant achievements as a dynamic, welcoming, liberal arts environment for undergraduate and graduate students. The president serves as the chief executive officer, responsible for the successful management of all facets of the university. The nine-member Board of Regents governs public higher education in South Dakota. Board members are appointed by the governor for six-year terms; one student regent is appointed for a limited term. The BOR employs a full-time staff in its offices in Pierre. Dr. Brian Maher serves as executive director.

Northern serves more than 3,000 students, including dual credit, graduate and international students, from its picturesque 75-acre campus, located in Aberdeen, a thriving community of 29,000 on the South Dakota plains. NSU is a premier, residential university characterized by outstanding instruction, extraordinary community relations and wide-ranging extracurricular opportunities. The university is dedicated to the pursuit of excellence in the liberal arts and in graduate and professional education.

The university's primary sources of support are state appropriations and tuition and fees. Other major sources include the Northern State University Foundation, federal funds (grants and awards) and auxiliary services.

More information about the university can be found at [www.northern.edu](http://www.northern.edu). For more information about candidacies, nominations or other suggestions, please see the section titled "Procedure for Candidacy" near the conclusion of this document.

## The Role of the President

The president is the chief executive officer of the university and reports to the Board of Regents of the South Dakota University System through the Executive Director, which is vested with the constitutional authority to govern the system of public higher education in the state of South Dakota.

Reporting to the president are the provost/vice president for academic affairs; vice president for finance and administration; vice president of enrollment, communications and marketing; vice president for technology and chief information officer; director of intercollegiate athletics; and dean of students. The president also works closely with the faculty senate president, foundation president and CEO, legal counsel and student body president.

## Opportunities and Expectations for Leadership

After the successful five-year tenure of its former president, Northern is very well positioned for the new president to continue its forward momentum. The university is in stable financial condition and has a number of exciting initiatives underway, including campus expansion and building projects; new, robust academic programming; and numerous community and regional partnerships. Northern's mission calls for the university to provide diverse academic, civic, social and cultural opportunities that prepare students through the liberal arts and professional education for their future endeavors, while also enriching the local and regional community. The university's vision is to be regionally recognized as a student-centered, diverse community dedicated to excellence in teaching and learning, creativity and global awareness. Northern's new president will empower the campus community to fulfill this mission and vision for the future.



### Strategic Plan

In 2020, Northern State established its new strategic plan efforts, its Campus of Distinction Initiative. The NSU Strategic Action Team created a new mission, vision and values, emphasizing community, discovery and integrity. The next president will lead the university and its five Strategic Action Pillar Teams in meeting their goals. The teams include the Distinctive Learning Pillar Team, the Distinctive Experience Pillar Team, the Distinctive Partnerships Pillar Team, the Distinctive Leadership Pillar Team, and the Diversity Action Pillar Team.

### Enrollment

Enrollment and retention remain key areas of focus for the next president. South Dakota high schools will see an increase in graduates through 2026, as reported by the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE). Northern must be poised to capture this enrollment growth opportunity. The university has made strides to develop new academic programming and increase its graduate program offering in order to maintain overall credit hours. Additional efforts to grow sustainable enrollment must be framed by strengthening the university's overall curriculum through strategic planning and creating an optimal academic learning and social environment to ensure life-long student success.

## Advocacy

The next president will have ample opportunity to build upon the university's existing, strong foundations of support. It is essential that he or she actively engage the local community, soliciting input from stakeholders and developing partnerships through frequent communication and collaboration. As Northern's most visible advocate, the next president must enlist the assistance of local, state and regional sources to realize the university's future direction. Additionally, as a member of the state system of higher education, Northern must work together with the other five institutions and the system's



Board of Regents to advocate for the state's investment in higher education. In the 2021 legislative session, Gov. Noem and the state legislature supported a one-time allocation of \$50 million to go toward the state's first need-based scholarship. External organizations have a goal of raising an additional \$150 million for the fund. This is a tremendous opportunity for both students and public higher education in the state of South Dakota.

The Board of Regents expects member institutions to collaborate, share resources, increase efficiency and cost savings, limit program redundancy among institutions, and make it easier for students to access programs and transfer easily throughout the system. Northern's next president will need to work closely with the Board of Regents, fellow presidents and legislators to continuously work toward efficient and effective processes as well as advocate for policies and funding priorities that will incentive the kind of creativity and entrepreneurship expected from each system institution.

## Fundraising

The next president will be called upon to develop a continued case for charitable giving based on the strategic plan. The university has enjoyed consistently improving fundraising results, and its up-to-date campus, strong academic programs, community support, alumni base and successful athletics and arts programs are all assets to leverage in continuing success. Fundraising efforts since 2017 are unmatched in Northern's history, with total capital gifts exceeding \$110 million and additional scholarships over \$5 million.

## Personal Qualifications and Personal Qualities

The successful candidate will thrive in a public university system led by a Board of Regents and Executive Director. NSU is poised to attract its next president following its significant investment in modernizing the campus with state-of-the-art facilities, including three new residence halls; the Harvey C. Jewett IV Regional Science Education Center; and a completely expanded, remodeled and rehabilitated theater and fine arts building. Northern is also currently completing construction on a new regional sports complex, including a new football stadium, scheduled for grand opening in fall 2021.

The successful candidate will possess the following qualities, experiences and characteristics:

- A strategic and forward-thinking visionary that brings people together to forward initiatives and goals for the university.
- The ability to effectively shape productive and collaborative relationships with multiple constituencies and be a champion for the university.
- A student-centered leader who will enrich the student experience, and foster a culture of innovation and excellence.
- An outstanding communicator and listener with a willingness to embrace the university's culture and traditions.
- The ability, insight and organizational skills needed to develop talent, build and empower effective teams and incorporate best practices.
- A transformational, energetic presence with entrepreneurial spirit to enhance both image and support of the college.
- The highest personal integrity, ethics, and an executive presence demonstrating a strong moral compass, with kindness and humility.
- The ability to effectively organize information and priorities and make prompt, sound decisions in the midst of complex and exacting circumstances.
- Business sense and success in finance, budget allocation, and resource generation with private gifts.
- Knowledgeable about key issues affecting public universities, including enrollment, retention strategies and innovations in education and will be willing to take risks as a change agent.
- The ability to positively and effectively engage with the local community through development of interpersonal connections and relationships with community leaders and local industry partners, the successful candidate will be visible, approachable and integrated in the Aberdeen community.
- An earned doctorate or a combination of graduate degree and senior level experience that would earn the respect of the academic community is required.

# About Northern State University

## History

Since the university was established as the Northern Normal and Industrial School in 1901, progress has been a constant in curriculum and life at Northern. In its 120-year history, Northern's faculty and staff have continued to meet the needs of students at the university level and those in K-12 education through traditional, distance delivery and online teaching. As time passes and technology advances, NSU remains dedicated to providing superior and affordable education to students.

Today, Northern fosters personalized attention to students similar to that found in small, independent college settings at an affordable public university tuition cost. Students praise its capacity to encourage their positive intellectual, social and personal growth during their formative years.



## Academics

NSU maintains the highest standards of excellence in academic rigor and fosters engaged learning through both traditional and nontraditional teaching opportunities. The university offers a comprehensive curriculum featuring more than 50 academic programs. Northern offers associate, baccalaureate and graduate degrees. While the university has always been known for graduating a superior level of teachers in South Dakota, today it is also known for superb instruction in fine arts, business, and arts and sciences. Students are enrolled in programs in the NSU College of Arts and Sciences, the School of Business, the School of Education, the School of Fine Arts and the Graduate School. Northern also has an accelerated nursing program offered in partnership with South Dakota State University, and collaborative programs in pre-engineering with SDSU, and in pre-law with the University of South Dakota.



Northern State holds accreditation from the Higher Learning Commission. NSU teacher education programs are accredited by CAEP, and they comply with South Dakota Department of Education guidelines. Music programs are accredited by the National Association of Schools of Music. The art program is accredited by National Association of Schools of Art and Design. The school's theatrical and musical offerings consistently attract large audiences from around the region. Northern is also accredited by the ACBSP, CACREP and NACEP. The university is in the process of achieving full membership in COPLAC.

Since 2001, NSU's Center for Statewide E-learning, unique to South Dakota and the Midwest, has provided small, rural high school students across South Dakota with high school coursework in areas of teacher scarcity. As of January 2021, there were 2,954 total student registrations for E-learning, an increase of nearly 15 percent year-over-year.

### **Campus**

Several major campus improvement projects have been completed in recent years at Northern. New and renovated facilities on campus since 2016-17 have an added value of over \$110 million. Those include the expansion of the Johnson Fine Arts Center, Northern's main performance facility; construction of three brand new residence halls offering suite-style living; addition of the Athletic and Recreation Fields project, which includes a soccer competition field, football practice field and pavilion; and the opening of the state-of-the-art Harvey C. Jewett IV Regional Science Education Center, which enhanced research and science education for NSU students as well as K-12 students around the region. In fall 2021, an on-campus regional sports complex will open, including a new football stadium and softball field. Through a unique, collaborative partnership between Northern and the School for the Blind and Visually Impaired, a new SDSBVI facility was constructed near the NSU campus, which will be instrumental in the success of Northern's new M.S.Ed. in Special Education with a specialization in Visual Impairment.

### **Students**

In fall 2020, Northern State University enrolled 3,431 students and saw slight growth in headcount for the year. The university particularly saw growth in graduate students, and it experienced its fifth consecutive year with a freshman to sophomore retention rate above 73 percent. While most NSU students are from South Dakota and surrounding states, Northern draws students from all over the country and the world.

NSU continues to attract an increasing number of high-achieving students, particularly to its growing honors program. Students have numerous opportunities to work side by side with faculty on undergraduate research projects. Northern is also committed to non-traditional and first generation student success. Students see Northern as a nurturing university with low student/faculty ratios (average class size of 17) and personalized student/faculty interactions. Students see Northern as a welcoming university with a community feel, with dedicated professors who care about their ability to succeed in life.

Students are hard-working in the classroom and beyond, as opportunities abound for campus involvement in organizations such as student government, student newspaper, band and choral groups, theater productions and intramural sports. They are enthusiastic about outdoor activities including hiking, fishing, hunting, and enjoying a snowy day in winter.

One vital component of enrollment success at NSU is the WolfPACT, the highest guaranteed scholarship program in South Dakota. A student's award amount is based on ACT score as well as high school GPA, with the highest award being \$12,000 over four years. These are significant scholarships at a university whose annual tuition, room and board costs total approximately \$17,000.

Northern State University's NCAA Division II athletics program has one of the strongest community and regional fan bases in the country. The NSU men's and women's basketball programs have led the nation in attendance for NCAA Division II for an unprecedented 13 years running. Northern participates in the expanded Northern Sun Intercollegiate Athletic Conference.

## Faculty

NSU's vibrant campus community thrives on teamwork, cooperation and mutual respect in an environment that is diverse in knowledge, culture and worldview. Faculty members at Northern State University take deep pride in their teaching and in student development.

There is opportunity to expand research and grant-related activity on campus. Northern faculty believe in the academic strength of their work and seek greater visibility and recognition of the quality academic environment they have worked so hard to create over many years. They welcome the strong partnership of an engaged and supportive president who will help them achieve at even higher levels. Facility enrichments have been made in support of this expanded role and include a new science center, research greenhouse, a completely remodeled performing arts center, and upgraded technology in many instructional classrooms.

## Resources and alumni

The Northern State University Foundation, campaign committee and the leadership team of NSU have recently completed the Educational Impact Campaign, which raised more than \$60 million for a new South Dakota School for the Blind and Visually Impaired, new athletic and recreation fields, and an on-campus regional sports complex.

## About Aberdeen

Aberdeen is a vibrant community that offers the welcoming atmosphere of a small town while boasting big-city amenities. The city features a thriving arts scene, excellent schools, and abundant recreational and outdoor activities. The university enjoys a positive and strong relationship with the community and region. Located in the northeastern section of South Dakota, Aberdeen is the business, medical and cultural center for the region.

Along with serving as a hub for smaller communities in the region, Aberdeen is also an attractive tourist destination. The city is a prime destination for pheasant hunters and anglers. The well-known Wylie Park and Storybook Land are popular draws for families, both local and visiting. Downtown Aberdeen is home to the historic Capitol Theatre, hosting numerous live and film productions year-round, as well as the annual South Dakota Film Festival. Local performance venues range from an outdoor summer concert series to large-scale indoor spaces such as the Dakota Event Center.

Northern State University is a highly valued asset of this growing community and key to its economic development, generating about \$229 million of annual economic impact to South Dakota. There is extraordinary community support for Northern, with plentiful employment opportunities for students and active engagement among community members in the cultural and athletic activities of the campus.



## **South Dakota Board of Regents**

South Dakota State University's governance structure exemplifies the collaborative principles set forth by the South Dakota Board of Regents. Northern is one of six universities in an integrated system of higher education in South Dakota governed by a single nine member board of regents. Eight members are appointed by the Governor for six-year terms; one student regent is appointed for a term of two years coinciding with enrollment at a postsecondary educational institution under the control of the board. The Board of Regents has constitutional authority to govern the system of public higher education in the state. Supported by an executive director and staff, the board provides leadership and sets policies for the programs and services delivered through its six universities and two special schools.

(The above language regarding the student regent is taken from the statute that authorizes the position: SDCL § 13-49-6.1).

## **Procedure for Candidacy**

Nominations and applications will be accepted until an appointment is made, within the practical limits of the process as finalists are identified. The position will be available in July 2021. For fullest consideration, materials should be submitted by May 23, 2021. Applications should include: a letter describing how the candidate's interest and qualifications match those described herein; a current vitae or resume; a list of at least five references, including all telephone, email and postal contact information. All nominations and applications should be sent electronically to [nsupresident@sdbor.edu](mailto:nsupresident@sdbor.edu). If interested parties have questions they can reach out to Dr. Brian Maher, Executive Director of the South Dakota Board of Regents, or Kayla Bastian, System Director of Human Resources, at 605-773-3455.

All names will remain confidential except those of individuals invited for campus interviews.

*Northern State University is an Equal Employment Opportunity Employer and encourages the nominations and candidacies of individuals from underrepresented groups. Applicants with disabilities are invited to identify any necessary accommodations required in the application process.*

The material presented in this leadership profile should be relied on for informational purposes only. This material has been copied, compiled, or quoted in part from NSU documents and personal interviews and is believed to be reliable. While every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of this information, the original source documents and factual situations govern.