Undisclosed contracts, unreasonable timelines and logistical woes plague class planning

Diane Newberry
Dakota Student

In November 2017, Strategic Plan Goal Three Project Manager Jeffrey Holm said the fall 2018 semester was the “go-live watch date” for the University of North Dakota’s digital push. Four months later, the university has signed a contract with Pearson Online Learning Services and two UND graduate programs will be launched and marketed by Pearson in the fall semester.

“Jeff Holm brought it to our attention and they made a really strong sales pitch,” Ronald Marsh, chair of the computer science program, said. “Seemed at the time it was something worth looking into.”

Earlier this year, when the computer science program moved from the school of aerospace to the computer science program, said. “Generally in academic decisions, faculty are the driving decision makers,” she said. Whether or not the two Pearson programs will be complet in time for the fall semester – and whether or not there will be qualified instructors to teach them – remains to be seen.

“There’s a lot of missing pieces,” Marsh said. “If we’re going to undertake this, we don’t want it to fail.”

For now, it remains unclear how UND will go about transitioning online classes to the Pearson system, or even if they intend to transition most or all of their online content. Pamela Kalbfleisch, a communications professor who has taught online classes for UND in the past, said that Jeffrey Holm had also approached the communications department about utilizing Pearson for their online contract, but it seemed to her that her colleagues were not interested.

“It was our choice,” Kalbfleisch said. “At the time it didn’t seem that people wanted to do it.”

Kalbfleisch feels that at this time, it appears to still be each program’s choice whether or not they want to be involved with Pearson.

“Generally in academic decisions, faculty are the driving decision makers,” she said. Whether or not the two Pearson programs will be completed in time for the fall semester – and whether or not there will be qualified instructors to teach them – remains to be seen.

“There’s a lot of missing pieces,” Marsh said. “If we’re going to undertake this, we don’t want it to fail.”

Marsh and other faculty in the program for two reasons. It’s a shockingly short span of time for learning complicated concepts and skills, especially for distance students who likely have full-time careers. Secondly, there are the logistics of class development and hiring staff to teach these new classes. According to Marsh, the computer science program currently has three classes for the upcoming semester with no instructor, one of which is a part of the Pearson program.

“Unfortunately, I think it’s going to fail to hiring adjuncts to do this,” Marsh said. “And the concern there is that some times you’re lucky and you get someone who’s really good. We’ve had, in the past, people who weren’t great.”

There is also the question of the faculty in the program moved from the school of aerospace to the engineering school, they agreed to put their courses and degrees online through an already existing platform, the Distance Engineering Degree Program (DEDP).

“I don’t think we need to use Pearson,” Marsh said. “The DEDP program here is already very successful.”

However, presumably because the program was just beginning the online transition, the university saw an opportunity to develop an entire new cyber security masters program, backed by market research from Pearson. In a combined effort with the electrical engineering program, computer science has been working with Pearson to create an online masters program in cybersecurity.

“The company isn’t meant to be involved in creating curricula, but will work with instructors to create graphics, slides and the general digital infrastructure for online courses. Marsh said the faculty in his program were cautiously optimistic about working with Pearson, but as the company became more flexible, there was less enthusiasm.

“At first it seemed like a pretty good idea but the more Pearson started kind of forcing their – and I do mean that ‘force’ too, that’s a word you can use – force their scheduling plan on us, a lot of the faculty started saying ‘I’m not interested,’” Marsh said. Unlike the types of online courses the university is already offering, which are 16 weeks and often taught alongside in-person classes, Pearson first demanded eight-week courses and has since cut it back to seven weeks.

This tight timeline concerns
A graduating news writer looks back on the year’s major stories

Jacob Notermann
Dakota Student

Last Sunday, a group of students from UND Students for Sustainability paired up with local fifth graders to pick up trash around the Coulee. The Coulee is regularly criticized for collecting high amounts of garbage. It’s important to go to where everything is collected, pick it up, and throw it out.

Otherwise, it starts to pile up and the situation becomes impossible to clean. With that being said, let’s look back at the major headlines from the past year, decide what is and isn’t garbage, and work forward to make it all better.

Chase Johnson
On the night of March 1, then-UND Student Body Treasurer Chase Johnson was arrested on embezzlement charges. According to public records, he was charged on a Class B felony, which puts the amount taken from his fraternity between $10,000 and $50,000. Johnson, the former treasurer of Phi Lamba Theta, allegedly used money from the fraternity’s funds to buy name-brand clothes and accessories. His next hearing is scheduled for early June.

WHAT JUST HAPPENED!?!?

USA Today

President Mark Kennedy announced he was applying to become the President for the University of Central Florida. For the next month, Kennedy spent a lot of time working his way up to being named a finalist for the position. Despite receiving some praise from UCF Board Members, he would ultimately not receive votes for the job. Since then, Kennedy has been repeatedly questioned about how low morale on campus might be associated with his quest for a new job.

April Fools

On Easter Sunday, April 1, the Dakota Student posted a story online saying that a U.S. District Court judge ruled that the Sioux logo could be re-trademarked by UND and thus available to be used by the school. This story was shared over 250 times on Facebook and read by thousands. When it was ultimately discovered that this was an April Fools’ prank, other local news platforms ran stories and editorial responses covering the public’s response to the prank.

UND Skiing’s Historic Season

For the first time since 2002, the UND Men’s Hockeys team didn’t earn an appearance in the NCAA Tournament. The season finished with an 11-10-2 record and placed fourth in the NCHC.

Voter Fraud

Back in November, it was discovered that UND was working with Pearson Education to create more online classes for the university. These classes would be created by UND faculty, but the classes would only last up to eight weeks. Faculty were concerned that the education would suffer due to this accelerated semester. Just a few weeks ago, it was announced that UND and Pearson had re-negotiated the contract.

Greek Village

As part of UND’s Master Plan released in January, the university announced it will be rezoning a section of the High Performance Center parking lot for residential development. UND won’t be building houses themselves; rather, they will be selling or renting plots of land to Greek communities for new houses to be built. There are a number of houses already pursuing plots.

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The Dakota Student reserves the right to publish articles and other local news platforms ran stories and editorial responses covering the public’s response to the prank. The Dakota Student reserves the copyright privilege for all stories written and published by the staff. Permission must be given by the Editor to reprint any article, cartoon, photograph or part thereof.

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The Dakota Student welcomes feedback regarding articles, photographs, and printing corrections for articles containing factual errors.

Dakota Student Editorial Board
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Jacobs Newberry / Dakota Student

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A creative solution to America’s gun violence

Bilal Suleiman
Dakota Student

The gun control debate was complicated enough. Then the Las Vegas shooting happened, followed by the too many school shootings, and now the citizens of the United States are demanding change. Some call for arming teachers and police officers and security guards, as if that would stop a psycho-path. Others call for stricter regulations on guns, as if that would deter people from getting determined to get their hands on a gun. Many others, myself included, believe proposed solutions are the equivalent of putting a Band-Aid on an open wound and instead started calling America’s gun violence “mental health issue.” While I do agree with the sentiment that it is a mental health issue, that still leaves us at square one with no solution. Now we know the problem, but the issue of mental health is such a unique problem that it’s laughable to think we can get this one right this time when they can barely keep the government running. That’s why I’m proposing a solution that would not only help with the mental health overall mental health, it’ll make us all nicer as a species.

Everyone should be required to work at a restaurant at least once. Working at a restaurant can teach real life lessons in a way that books, unlike school, which often goes in one ear and out the other. It could be a part of school curriculum to work at a restaurant for a summer in order to graduate. It could be like mandatory military service, only at McDonald’s instead. Before you ready your counter arguments on why this is a nonsensical idea, hear me out. Working at a restaurant is a brutal teacher of life. Hunger brings out the worst in people, and there’s nothing quite like dealing with a hungry, angry person. All rational sense goes out the door and they proceed to verbally assault the employee as if they are responsible for messing up their food. It’s not even standing there, being forced to take it while you apologize profusely for something you didn’t do. Once you’ve been in this situation, however, you learn to have some patience and empathy. Being able to control your emotions is a necessary life skill and nothing teaches you to bite your tongue better in food service. It makes you a nicer person to others in general because you realize that the extra effort it takes to be rude is not worth it. The restaurant makes you a more humble person because you spend all day catering to the people’s demands. Being bossed around doesn’t feel good, but being stood on doesn’t feel any worse. It’s everyone’s goal to be the boss and order others around, not the opposite. A summer of long hours and low pay would help tame the inflated egos and sense of entitlement among some of us. It’s this entitlement that causes people’s rudeness to come out when one little thing doesn’t go exactly their way. Can you imagine if someone with an ego like Donald Trump was put in a position like that? It would instantly humble and excite some how insignificant you and your worries are in the grand scheme of life and the universe. This would be tough to regulate and probably not very realistic. But so are the ideas being thrown around Capitol Hill, such as requiring students to wear clear backpacks to school. Instead of providing students and the faculty the assurance of the safety of their environment, they added more fuel to the already fiery debate of gun control. The lessons in humility and empathy that results from working in food service would make more of an impact than anything that the lawmakers on Capitol Hill have come up with since these senseless tragedies.

Jill Morton
Dakota Student

Most people think that Christmas is the most wonderful time of the year, probably because of the song “The Most Wonderful Time of the Year.” But let’s be real, right now it is a pretty great time of the year, too. It’s definitely a close second to Christmas time at the very least.

It has finally been warm enough this spring to wear flip flops. You can now go outside on a late night and still have the weather as opposed to running straight to your car to avoid the piercingly cold wind that was created from the ferociously cold winter. The weather has made me enjoy the beautiful outdoors now that the wind doesn’t hurt your face.

There are many reasons I love the spring, but here are a just a few of the biggest reasons that make the spring the best time of the year.

First of all, I think the weather is great. You can love the spring because you can still play games and grill out outdoor, but it’s still too cold to go swimming. For that reason, you don’t have to have that beach body ready quite yet. You can finally enjoy time with a couple more weeks before it gets to be in the 90’s.

Another reason that it’s such a good time, especially for people who are college students, is because it’s cheaper than other times of the year. When it’s sixty degrees out, you can finally turn off the heat that keeps your bills to break your bank. It’s not fun standing in quite yet so you don’t have to waste your money by using the air condi- tioner either. You have to love being able to save money on heating and AC, which I have learned is one of the biggest bills to break your bank. It’s a fast and best way to love the spring.

Summer is a season that the end is near especially when you’re in the middle of finals week. Which I agree is one of the biggest stressors of the year. We only have two more weeks of school, three more days of real classes and then finals week. We just have to make it through a few more days of studying for hours a day. For that reason, I love spring and think it’s one of the best seasons of the year. The stress is too much. Freedom and happiness are coming in the springform that constant stress is coming.

Go outside and study instead of staying trapped in the library all day. Enjoy the warm weather even if it isn’t fun for quite yet. But in two weeks after finals grade are out, you will appreciate the beautiful weather that the spring has to offer. North Dakota offers us

Dakota Student File Photo
Members of the UND opera rehearse a scene for Friday night’s performance of Dido and Aeneas.

Devon Abler
Dakota Student

Grand Forks was grasped with the presence of the biannual operatic performance by the UND Vocal Department on Friday. In collaboration with the UND Chamber Orchestra and the Masonic Temple, this was a pleasant addition to Friday night festivities.

The opera, ‘Dido and Aeneas,’ was written by English composer Henry Purcell. This is rather uncommon as a majority of operas were written by Italian or German composers and were sung in their respective languages. ‘Dido and Aeneas’ is unusual because it is an opera sung in English. Operatic works are known for being long and elaborate; Dido and Aeneas is a short, three movement work that lasts approximately an hour.

Two years ago, the music department performed ‘Cendrillon,’ which was a lavish affair that dazzled the community with a spectacular show. This operatic performance, while it was excellent, was lacking in comparison. Building an excellent opera begins with the cast. Undergraduate students performed the opera after an intense rehearsal period. Students from different majors within the music department came together to collaborate with one another. Individuals studying music education and vocal performance became professionals during this night of music. The opera was a 4 month project,” Michael Thompson, singing the role of Aeneas said, “We started early music re-hearsals in January, singing in February, began singing with the orchestra at the end of March and put the show on the end of April. Although group rehearsal started in January, most of the cast started looking at the music before the semester started.”

The cast did a fabulous job transporting the audience members back in time to Renaissance Greece. Using costumes created by local individuals and backdrops that depicted what was occurring in the music, it wasn’t difficult to imagine the salty air or looming storm. ‘Dido and Aeneas’ is the story of a young woman named Dido, played by Bethany Look, who feels that she will never be able to love again until the death of her husband. She wishes to her courtiers. The opera was a 4 hour performance and “Bravo, Bravissimo!” could be heard from the balcony. Collaborating with an orchestra is no easy feat, especially when each singer is performing without microphones. Finding a delicate balance between not-too-loud and not-too-quiet is difficult, however the orchestra worked with the opera members with a fluidity that only professional musicians could achieve.

The acoustics, the hand painted backdrops and the beauty of the hall added to the performance.”

While this opera was lacking compared to past productions, it was a well put together performance that still brought the professionalism and expertise the community has come to expect from the UND music department.

Most musical concerts and recitals occur on campus at the Josephine Campbell Recital Hall, the Chooor Fette Auditorium, or at the Empire Theater. This opera production was in an unfamiliar space located downtown.

“I think the biggest difference for me this year was the involvement and the venue,” Thompson said. “Every rehearsal was an adventure in improvement and required constant work and focus. The venue this year was the Masonic Temple in Grand Forks and it was such a pleasure performing in that space. The acoustics, the hand painted backdrops and the beauty of the hall added to the performance.”

The decision to sail back across the sea was a sudden decision made by Aeneas. His sailors round up any sailors that they can find in port. While they are loading the ships, Aeneas returns to Dido’s court to say farewell. Feeling emotionally, used by Aeneas, Dido shuns his farewell and throws him out of court only to realize that she is destined to die from a broken heart, then dies after giving her last wishes to her courtiers.

Every student filled each scene with convincing passion. Emotions were felt and the audience members erupted in applause after the end of each movement. The music department received a standing ovation at the end of the performance and “Bravo, Bravissimo!” could be heard from the balcony. The opera comes alive at the Masonic Temple in Grand Forks and it was a pleasant addition to Friday night festivities. The venue this year was the Masonic Temple in Grand Forks and it was such a pleasure performing in that space. The acoustics, the hand painted backdrops and the beauty of the hall added to the performance.”

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UND hosted the annual Big Event on Saturday, April 28th. Students gathered together for a community service event that served the Greater Grand Forks community. Some places volunteers served were churches, non-profits, homes of the elderly and many more.

“This is a great way for students to give back to the community and help alleviate needs of Grand Forks,” UND student Jordan Mysen said. College Life, the group that Jordan is a part of, went to a non-profit house and cleaned up their yard by raking leaves and mowing the lawn for them.

“The Big Event is very special,” Jordan continued. “It’s a great way of teaching students cooperation, teamwork, responsibility and more while also giving back to the community. Keep your eyes out next year for another fun service opportunity!”

Devon Abler
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Club lacrosse team frustrated by treatment

Nick Erickson
Dakota Student

UND’s club sports seasons are coming to a close, but the men’s lacrosse club ended their season a bit earlier than they hoped with a cancellation of their only home game of the season due to field conditions and the inability to move the venue from their practice fields near BussLife Plasma Center.

“It’s quite frustrating when you’re given a slated spot in the schedule to play at home for once and you still don’t get it,” lacrosse club president Zach Petron said. “We traveled all spring long to Wisconsin, Iowa and the Twin Cities area, but nobody comes to us because we’re so far out of their way.”

On a higher note, UND had a high retention rate of the new play and an excitable group of new players that came out this year. After making attempts to reach out to those who can sign off on allowing and scheduling teams for the High Performance Center practice facility, UND lacrosse went unheard. They also made attempts to reach out to UND’s neighboring city, East Grand Forks, in attempts to move the venue for their one home game to their high school football field.

The call was sent to voicemail and was never responded to.

“It’s frustrating when you’re trying to develop a good relationship with the community and you just aren’t given the chance,” Petron said. “Our atmosphere besides the club sports fields so we can establish a standard of class and authority in the league we play in,” Petron said. “We have first class facilities, but since we’re simply just students that aren’t being paid to play, we get pushed aside and forgotten.”

With the change in administration, event staff and the Alerus for making this unique opportunity available to us.”

Zach Petron, Lacrosse club president

Other teams we play are given spectacular access to their universities’ facilities. But here we are, confined to a field with gopher holes, that’s also completely underwater during the spring season.”

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Zach Petron, Lacrosse club president

It’s been a strange season for the Hawks due to inclement weather. The team virtually played at the Apollo Sports Complex, but moved to the Alerus Center for its last three games remaining and lost all three in the conference standing with a 22-24 record overall and an 8-7 record in conference.

“Our team was able to pull together on short home games and keep these events in Grand Forks,” Anna Rosburg, General Manager of the Alerus Center, said. “We value our partnership with UND Athletics and the opportunity to work with them outside of football season.”

This upcoming week, the Hawks will battle for a spot in the conference tournament, playing Idaho State at the Apollo Sports Complex this upcoming weekend.

Dakota Student File Photo

Softball sliding into the home stretch

John Gregg
Dakota Student

Fighting Hawks softball struggled against Big Sky rival Sacramento State this weekend as the Hawks fell to the Hornets. The Hawks finished one and two games behind the Hornets, winning UND’s first ever game against Sacramento State.

UND’s play this weekend ends their season plus one game from qualifying for post-season play. The Hawks have three games remaining and sit third in the conference standings with a 22-24 record overall and an 8-7 record in conference.

“We’re thankful for our administration, event staff and the Alerus for making this unique opportunity available to us.”

Jordan Stevens, Softball head coach

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Dakota Student File Photo

“I would have to give them a gopher hole for UND’s lacrosse team. We would have more resources to work with, but since we’re simply just students that aren’t being paid to play, we get pushed aside and forgotten.”

Zach Petron, Lacrosse club president
This week marked one of the final weeks in an abnormal season for the Fighting Hawks track and field team. With a tune up meet in Fargo next weekend and the conference meet less than two weeks away, the season is quickly winding down. For a select few, this past week was filled with travel to one of the biggest meets in the nation, the Drake Relays. Erica Eades had a standout performance in the Women’s 800 meter run. She ran her best time in 2:12. Eades is happy, but not satisfied and used the weekend as a stepping stone. “I think the race went well,” Eades said. “I have some things to fix in my race like getting out, running a faster first lap and trying not to get boxed in with 200 meters to go.”

Ian Collins and Matt Culhane just missed out on finals in the Men’s Discus Throw on Saturday morning. They threw 48.87 meters and 48.70 meters, respectively. Madison Overby Dakota Student

The majority of the team travelled to Moorhead on Wednesday night for the Cobber Twilight meet at Concordia College and again on Saturday for the Ron Masanz Classic at Minnesota State University Moorhead. At the Cobber Twilight meet, UND freshmen Hannah Anderson, Amanda Robbins and Ellyssa Peterson went 1-2-3 in the 800 meter run. Two pole vaulters, Nick Knella and Alex Torp, also went 1-2 in the men’s pole vault at the Cobber Twilight. Janessa Muslemers was able to get in her first two steeplechase races of the 2018 season, the weather having cancelled the previous meets. She ran 12:20 seconds on Wednesday night to start things off. Wind dying down and the sun coming out. The times on the track reflected these conditions. Sydney Raboin, who has been training all season but had yet to compete because of class conflicts, was finally able to step out on the track. She did so with a bang, running a new personal record in the 5k in 18 minutes with a time of 1:57.

“I’m just excited to have another chance to compete and improve my time at conference.”

Erica Eades, UND distance runner

The UND Track and Field team was able to keep busy across three meets this past week and weekend. Although the end of the season is coming quickly, the team is adapting just as quickly. “Overall it was a good experience racing at Drake,” Eades said. “I’m just excited to have another chance to compete and improve my time at conference.”

With many personal and season bests this past week, it looks like it’s going to be an exciting championship season for UND.