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# The Evolution Of Institutional Mission In Social And Historical Contexts At The University Of North Dakota: 1883 – 2016

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THE EVOLUTION OF INSTITUTIONAL MISSION IN SOCIAL AND HISTORICAL  
CONTEXTS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH DAKOTA: 1883 – 2016

by

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A Dissertation  
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2016

This dissertation, submitted by Stacey L. Borboa-Peterson in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy from the University of North Dakota, has been read by the Faculty Advisory Committee under whom the work has been done and is hereby approved.

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Date

## PERMISSION

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                  the University of North Dakota: 1883 – 2016

Department   Educational Foundations and Research

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12/5/2016

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To Darrin, Karter, and Crosby, much love.

## ABSTRACT

The University of North Dakota, a liberal arts institution founded in 1883, has a mission statement that speaks directly to present-day societal needs and norms. While staying true to its founding object, the mission has specific focus on science, technology, health and diversity. These areas speak directly to national and global economic and societal needs. In order for public institutions to secure funding, they have to respond to legislators and taxpayers; they must respond to current trends. This research looks at the University of North Dakota's evolving mission, from founding in 1883, to present-day 2016. The research focuses on institutional purpose and studies it against the social and historical context of the time, in an effort to identify and understand the culture and motivation of the University of North Dakota and to determine if public institutions of higher education respond to the current needs and norms of society, as evidenced through their missions.

## INTRODUCTION

On August 24, 2016, the University Letter led with the heading, “Strategic Planning Committee announced.” The newly appointed twelfth president of the University of North Dakota had named a 50-person planning committee made up of the President’s Cabinet, college deans, students, staff, and alum. In meeting minutes, compiled from the group’s second gathering, addressed the need for core values “to support the ultimate vision of establishing UND as the premier institution of the Northern Plains” (2016). On February 26, 2016, the Honorable Mark Kennedy presented at the open forum portion of his on-campus interview. It was at this forum that Kennedy first shared his vision of “establishing the University of North Dakota as the premier institution of the Northern Plains” (University Letter, 2016). President Kennedy, upon being appointed, moved quickly to establish a strategic planning committee to determine core values and strategic priorities for the University to meet his vision. In a session recap from October 5, 2016, final draft core values were listed:

At UND, our Core Values include:

- A liberal arts educational foundation that nurtures life-long learning.
- An understanding and appreciation of diversity.
- A welcoming, inclusive, and supportive environment.
- An enthusiasm for discovery, creativity and innovation.
- Collaboration and connectedness.

- Our service to the state, region, nation, and global community.

Just five short months before, Interim President Ed Schafer laid out his own set of priorities (some might say values) for the University.

On March 9, 2016, the University of North Dakota's Interim President Ed Schafer held a budget briefing, attended by university administration, faculty, staff, and students, to address the \$9.5 million in cuts to the University's 2015-2017 budget, in response to the state of North Dakota's forecasted one billion dollar revenue shortfall. In outlining the plan for cutting institutional budgets by five and ten percent, President Schafer defined three principal priorities for the University (2016):

1. provide stimulating educational experiences and advancement and excitement in the classroom by creating the best possible student learning experience;
2. serve the people of the state of North Dakota, through scholarship, research, creative activity, as well as through service programs;
3. provide long lasting affordable and permanent career opportunities for employees, faculty, staff, and administration.

Upon outlining the institutional priorities, President Schafer made the following statement: "We built too much in our system to do and we don't have enough money to pay for it." In Thelin's, *A History of Higher Education* (2004), he writes about this exact matter. "One explanation that perhaps partially reconciles the paradox of such hunger amid such abundance is that American colleges and universities have wandered into a state of continual expansion characterized by overextension of functions without clarity

of purposes...” (p. 361). He continues, “It has also created an aura of confusion as to what our colleges and universities ought to assert as their real purposes and appropriate missions” (p. 361). When faced with the task of making significant cuts the University’s budget, President Schafer directed administration, faculty, and staff to do so with three overarching priorities in mind. One might view those priorities as his version of institutional purpose, or mission.

The unharnessed growth, without mission or primary purpose, that both President Schafer and Thelin discuss, is happening throughout American higher education (Thelin, 2004, p. 361). The danger is that this type of growth cannot be sustained. Public institutions like the University of North Dakota rely on the support of the state, and if taxpayers and legislators cannot clearly identify purpose or mission, their level of support declines, resulting in shrinking appropriations. As Thelin (2004) states:

The challenge for higher education in the United States during the twenty-first century is to acknowledge its historical good fortune and to accept its role as a mature institution, along with the responsibilities that accompany that maturity. This task is not a matter of money but of rediscovering essential principles and values that have perhaps been obscured in the recent blurring of educational activities and commercial ventures (p. 362).

As the University of North Dakota moves forward in 2016 with budget cuts and the reallocation of resources, it seems prudent to acknowledge Thelin’s suggestion, and unearth this institution’s missions and values of the past and present. The University of North Dakota, along with all other public institutions of higher education within the state, should spend time and resources identifying their institutional mission and sharing it with

the state legislature, with the hopes of securing and maintaining the financial resources needed to support the purpose of the university. Identifying mission and purpose does not merely aid the institution in obtaining state funding, but in the event that budgets need be cut mid legislative cycle (something that happened twice during 2016), the University is better prepared to make responsible, well-informed incisions, versus across the board slashing.

This work focuses specifically on mission, in the broadest sense of the word, referring to the objective of the university. In an effort to avoid sounding repetitive, and to align with appropriate, evolving language of specific time periods, the words “mission,” “purpose,” and “object” are used interchangeably, referring to the central duty or charge of the University.

### **A Brief History of the University of North Dakota**

The University of North Dakota, located in Grand Forks, North Dakota, is the state’s oldest institution. The publicly supported university is also the state’s largest. The University of North Dakota was founded in 1883 by an *Act of the Legislative Assembly of the Territory of Dakota*. (The Dakota Territory predated the establishment of the two states of North Dakota and South Dakota which happened in 1889.) The institution was founded with a purpose, that purpose was outlined in a document called the “Object of the University (1883),” which stated:

The object of the University of North Dakota shall be to provide the means of acquiring thorough knowledge of the various branches of learning connected with scientific, industrial and professional pursuits, in the instruction and training of

persons in the theory and art of teaching, and also instruction in the fundamental laws of the United States, and of this Territory, in what regards rights and duties of citizens, and to this end it shall consist of the following colleges or departments, to-wit:

1. the college or department of arts.
2. the college or department of letters.
3. the normal college or department.
4. such professional or other colleges or departments as now are, or may, from time to time, be added thereto or connected therewith.

Throughout the past century, the University has grown in complexity and with that, the object, or mission has also grown. It must be noted however, that the University of North Dakota is not the only public university or college in the state. Presently it is one of eleven publicly supported state institutions.

The North Dakota state legislature has always allocated funds for the higher education system and it has increased that allocation over the years. According to the North Dakota Office of the Governor (n.d.), the following are the most recent figures for the legislature's funding:

1981 – 2013 = overall increase of 202% in 32 years

2011 – 2013 = \$606 million

2013 – 2015 = \$902 million, an increase of \$296 million or 33%

2015 – 2017 = \$961 million, an increase of \$59 million or 6%

(n.b. The later allocation would be decreased unexpectedly in 2016 by statewide budget

cuts brought on by a shortfall in oil revenue.)

In March of 2012, the North Dakota University System published a handout, *NDUS by the Numbers* (North Dakota University System Legislative Highlights). In it, they highlighted the increase in general fund appropriations over an approximate 20 year time.

From 1981 to 2013, general fund appropriations to the North Dakota University System increased 202 percent. In 2012 and 2013, state appropriations made up 25 and 23 percent of the University's budget. As highlighted in the *2013 Annual Financial Report*, tuition made up 28 and 27 percent during those same years. (University of North Dakota Finance and Operations, 2013). It is important to note that there was a 51.4 percent enrollment increase during that time period, as well (North Dakota University System, 2012). State appropriations and student tuition and fees increased 9 and 7.95 percent respectively from 2012 to 2013 (University of North Dakota Finance and Operations, 2013). This level of financial support was not sustainable. In February 2016, Governor Jack Dalrymple ordered North Dakota state agencies to cut budgets by approximately four percent, to make up for a forecasted one billion dollar shortfall (Nowatzki, 2016). It was apparent that the continued increases in financial support (at those levels) for higher education in the state of North Dakota was no longer viable. In 2015, The Pew Charitable Trusts issued a brief titled, *Federal and State Funding of Higher Education: A Changing Landscape*. The brief offered the following, in regards to shrinking state and federal support:

In a constrained fiscal environment, policymakers also will need to consider whether there are better means of achieving shared goals, including student access and support for research. Such approaches could entail more coordination, other

funding mechanisms, or policy reforms. In addition, it will be necessary to think about the implications of parity and whether funding strategies will require changes in order to reach desired outcomes (June 2015).

There is presently great need for defined mission and institutional purpose at the University of North Dakota. Institutional backing and funding are, in many ways, reliant on the mission of the University and whether or not that mission is supported by those within the University and the state. Thelin (2004) said, “By going back to the basics of these fundamental matters of institutional purpose, the diverse constituencies in American higher education can once again connect past and present as a prelude to creating an appropriate future” (p. 362). The University of North Dakota currently operates under a mission statement, and given the current state of public funding within North Dakota, it seems an opportune time to revisit the fundamental purpose of the institution, and make changes, as deemed appropriate. However, the process might be made more meaningful by understanding the historical evolution and context of the University’s mission. As Thelin (2004) said, connecting the past and the present can create an appropriate future (p. 362).

### **Purpose of the Study**

The principal objective of this historiographical study was to identify the distinct, whether stated or unstated, mission of the University of North Dakota, at pivotal points during the history of American higher education. Quinley (1991), provided the following definition for mission within the context of academic institutions:

The mission is a beacon that provides strategic direction for the institution. It is also the blueprint which provides the basic conceptual framework for the entire organization. A mission which provides appropriate direction and linkages can serve as the base for subsequent measures of institutional effectiveness (p. 1).

The mission, a declaration of an institution's purpose, stands as a guide, assisting in the planning and setting of institutional priorities. This research focuses specifically on the explicit and implicit missions of the institution, from the time of founding, to the present day. The full history of the University of North Dakota was analyzed for this study, with specific focus on North Dakota Legislative and State Board of Higher Education dealings, academic program offerings, strategic planning processes, and program and department growth. Contributing to this study, in providing an historical framework for organization, were themes that Thelin (2004), in *A History of American Higher Education*, assigned to specific eras.

This work provides an historical account of an institution's changing mission against the social context of the time. To be clear, the study is not tied to management models, policy, or theory and their place within an institution as it relates to mission. The study does not address, nor define, the specific follow-through or application of each changing mission, but provides an historical narrative of the evolving purpose of the University.

### **Research Question**

I began this study with the following research questions: Considering context, how has the mission of the University of North Dakota evolved, from its founding in

1883 to the present 2016? How do the missions and values of the University of North Dakota align with national trends in American higher education?

My research uncovered two additional questions: How do the priorities and practices of the University differ from what is written as its stated mission? Why have strategic planning and goals changed, but the mission statement of the university remained constant?

### **Significance of the Study**

This study addresses an important piece of the University of North Dakota's past and present and has the potential to impact the future of the institution, by emphasizing the power of a clearly defined institutional mission and purpose. The research findings will recapitulate the historical evolution of the University's mission, along with how each mission was influenced and what institutional, state, and national pressures supported them. The need for definitive purpose, as a way to garner support from stakeholders, legislators, and taxpayers, is imperative if the institution is to continue receiving financial funding needed to successfully sustain itself into the 21st century. Understanding the founding mission of the University of North Dakota and how and why it evolved over time, should provide individuals with an awareness and appreciation for creating tomorrow's purpose. Oral historian Paul Thompson says, "Through local history a village or town seeks meaning for its own changing character and newcomers can gain a sense of roots in personal historical knowledge" (1992, p. 2).

The University's history, as it pertains specifically to mission and purpose, is a significant history to write, however, as important as mission appears to be, a

comprehensive history of the University of North Dakota's mission has yet to be written. In fact, a basic search on the words "university mission" brings up very limited results, yet mission continues to be a focus of legislative studies, accreditation work, State Board of Higher Education concern, and a part of institutional strategic planning and visioning, as evidenced by the North Dakota Legislature's Higher Education Interim Committee work (n.d.), the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association (n.d.), and the State Board of Higher Education's policy 100.7 "Institution Mission Statements" (2001):

The State Board of Higher Education must approve the individual mission/role/scope statements of the constituent campuses as published in their bulletins. Mission statements are expected to reflect North Central Association requirements and, as appropriate, the strategic plan of the North Dakota University System. Such statements must be submitted to the Chancellor's Office for review and forwarding to the Board upon Board's request. If a campus wishes to revise its mission, the Board will consider such a request.

As indicated in the above statement, the mission appears to be a critical university document, one in which multiple agencies are interested.

If the University is to continue operating under a mission statement, spending resources and time revisiting and revising it, then I believe it is important for the individuals tasked with doing so to understand the history and context surrounding its evolution. There is a need for a comprehensive history on the mission and purpose of the University, and that history should be accessible to all stakeholders. By looking at the past, there is opportunity to inform the future focus of the institution. What was the

University's purpose and why? How has it changed? How should it change? What should remain the same? There are many questions to consider, and a need to fully understand the process and context surrounding the mission of the University, to truly understand its purpose for being. A university's identity is in its mission. This study will help define the University of North Dakota, from founding to present, and assist in securing an identity for the future.

### **Research Design**

This body of work focuses on the historical evolution of the mission of the University of North Dakota. The study was conducted mainly through detailed analysis of primary source documents from the Dakota Territory (1861 – 1889), the state of North Dakota (1889 – present) and the University of North Dakota (1883 – present). In addition to examination of primary source documents, I conducted a select number of formal oral history interviews, as well as a number of informal oral history discussions. The latter provided guidance and direction, in terms of what information should be investigated, with whom conversations should be had, as well as the types of documents that should be studied.

My research began in the University of North Dakota's Elwyn B. Robinson Department of Special Collections, a branch of the Chester Fritz Library that houses institutional archival material dating back to the founding of the University. It was expanded to include the North Dakota State Historical Society, for archival legislative and State Board of Higher Education materials. A literature review on institutional mission and history of higher education was completed, providing context for the study.

## **Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations**

As I began the initial research for this study, I quickly became aware of a two significant facts. First, the University of North Dakota published its first document called a “mission statement” in 1980, close to 100 years after its founding. Prior to the 1980 statement there was not a concisely written declaration of purpose, aside from the founding, “Object of the Institution,” which was written at the inception of the University in 1883. Secondly, very little, if anything at all, has been written on the mission and purpose of the University of North Dakota, with the exception of summaries in accreditation reports. There is no comprehensive history on the institution’s mission and purpose. That history has been collected and captured here, in this dissertation.

It is out of necessity that a significant amount of University history, from its founding in 1883 to 1958, comes from Louis G. Geiger's work, *University of the Northern Plains: A History of the University of North Dakota 1883-1958*, with the foreword written by University's seventh president, George W. Starcher. In the appendix, Geiger addresses the exact dilemma I faced in completing this research, stating:

There are a number of miscellaneous records in and about the University, but their condition is generally deplorable owing largely to the absence of any archival policy. Almost none of the correspondence of early boards has been preserved, and not much of that of any presidents, except for one file box of Webster Merrifield's letters and a somewhat larger collection of John C. West's. Save for a few scattered letters and reports, the entire correspondence of every other president has been lost, and in some cases deliberately destroyed. The state of the papers of colleges and schools, of deans and professors and departments,

including even that of history, is little if any better. Only one department, Geology, has compiled its history, as well as two schools, Law and Education. Neither of the latter is adequate, that of Law being complete to only 1924, and Education's being largely a compilation of information drawn from the catalogs (p. 458).

As Starcher indicates, the College of Education wrote a history using mainly the academic catalog. An unpublished document titled, *Teacher Education at the University of North Dakota: Highlights of a Century-Long History*, written by Vito Perrone, PhD, Dean of the Center for Teaching and Learning, (1972-1986) was written in observation of UND's Centennial (1983). (Copies are available from the Dean's office, College of Education and Human Development, UND.) As will be indicated in the methodology section of this paper, I too found the academic catalogs to be an important, critical source for this research.

### **Definition of Terms**

Throughout this work, there are important terms, used multiple times, which are important to understand. These terms are directly related to the research and are used throughout this paper.

Mission. According to Campbell and Yeung (1991) the term "mission" refers to "an organization's character, identity and reason for existence. It can be divided into four inter-relating parts: purpose, strategy, behavior standards and values" (p. 126). In this research, the term "mission" refers to the guiding, central purpose of the University of

North Dakota. The terms “object” and “purpose” are used interchangeably with “mission” throughout the work.

Mission Statement. Campbell and Yeung (1991) define “mission statement” as “the strategic intent and business direction for an organization” (p. 140). In this research, the term “mission statement” refers to the written declaration of the University of North Dakota's guiding objective.

Primary source document. Brundage (2013) says of “primary sources”:

Written primary sources can be divided into two major categories: manuscript sources and published sources. For historians, a manuscript is any handwritten or typed record or communication that has not been printed or otherwise duplicated in significant quantities for public dissemination (p. 20).

In reference to published “primary sources,” Brundage (2014) states:

Published primary sources can be divided into two categories: (1) manuscript materials such as letters, diaries, and memoranda, usually intended as private, sometimes intimate, documents often published after the death of their authors; and (2) materials that were intended from the outset to be printed and made public – for example newspaper articles, congressional debates, autobiographies, annual reports of corporations, and reports of the United States Census (p. 21).

In this research, the term “primary source documents” refers to the items used to research the evolving mission of the University of North Dakota, from founding to present day. The documents include academic catalogs, meeting minutes, government documents, university documents, newspapers, and oral history interviews.

Oral history. Thompson (1992) defines “oral history” as “a history built around people. It thrusts life into history and it widens its scope.” (p. 23). In this research, the term “oral history” refers to interviews conducted with both former and present University of North Dakota faculty, staff, and administrators around the topic of institutional purpose and mission statements.

Accreditation. The Council for Higher Education Accreditation (2010) states, “Accreditation is a voluntary, non-governmental peer review process by the higher education community” (p. 1). In this research, the term “accreditation” refers to the evaluation process that the University of North Dakota goes through to ensure specific standards are being met and that the institution continues to improve. The University of North Dakota’s accrediting body is the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association.

Higher Learning Commission. "The Higher Learning Commission [is an organization which] accredits degree-granting post-secondary educational institutions in the North Central region of the United States" (Higher Learning Commission 2016). In this research, the “Higher Learning Commission” is referred to when discussing the University of North Dakota accreditation reports and findings.

Secondary Resources. Brundage (2013) says of “secondary resources”:  
“Secondary works or sources come in a great variety as well – from multivolume works of collective scholarship to short essays, from general histories to the most specialized monographs” (p. 24). In this research, “secondary resources” refer to the written histories, mainly books and articles, used to support the examination of the University of North Dakota and the history of higher education.

Strategic planning. In *The Rise and Fall of Strategic Planning*, Mintzberg (2007) defines “strategic planning” as the process of

...capturing what the manager learns from all sources (both the soft insights from his or her personal experiences and the experiences of others throughout the organization and the hard data from market research and the like) and then synthesizing that learning into a vision of the direction that the business should pursue (107).

In this research, the term “strategic planning” refers to the process of outlining the University of North Dakota's mission and vision, as well as establishing definitive steps for growth and improvement.

## **Outcomes**

This dissertation provides an important historical account of the University of North Dakota's institutional mission and it serves as a framework for future revisions of the University's guiding mission statement. The University of North Dakota's mission statement has remained unchanged since 1991. My hypothesis was that, although the mission statement remained the same for the past 25 years, the institution's mission (broadly defined) has in fact changed and evolved. I believe that throughout the University's entire history, the mission has continually evolved. As institutional purpose evolved, the mission statement remained. It remained for approximately 35 of the University's 133 years. I believe the statement, as important as it has seemed, has not effectively stated or affirmed the mission of the University of North Dakota, but planning documents, specifically strategic plans, have made the attempt to do so.

## **Conclusion**

Through this dissertation the University of North Dakota will have something of a comprehensive history of institutional mission. Machiavelli (n.d.) said:

Whoever wishes to foresee the future must consult the past; for human events ever resemble those of proceeding times. This arises from the fact that they are produced by men who ever have been, and ever shall be, animated by the same passions, and thus they necessarily have the same results (University of Memphis Department of History).

The University of North Dakota, founded in 1883, will exist for many more decades, possibly centuries or millennia and its past will undoubtedly be repeated. History allows for examination and strategic planning, creating opportunities to correct problems of the past and avoid recurrence of those problems. If the University is to advance (while state and federal resources diminish) it should operate with a direction and purpose that are supported by both the University community and the state. This research is meant to serve as a resource for future mission creation and strategic planning efforts to provide that direction and purpose.

## **METHODOLOGY**

Historiography, the study of historical writing or writing of history, was the methodology applied to this piece of work. In Becker's (1938), *What is Historiography*, he states that, "The chief object of such enterprises in historiography is to assess, in terms of modern standards, the value of historical works for us" (p. 20). The decision to study institutional mission arose out of an interest to understand more about the purpose and place of the University of North Dakota, which ultimately led to the discovery and piecing together of a comprehensive story of its mission. Preexisting history acts as data in the collection process. For this particular study, the research focused on the consolidation and analysis of existing data that was, in some way or another, speaking to institutional purpose.

The research of this historical dissertation consisted of secondary and primary source documents and oral history interviews. This paper in itself will serve as a secondary source document, compiling and reviewing mainly primary source materials. The following is an overview of the primary source documents that were reviewed as part of this study.

### **The Academic Catalog and Strategic Planning Documents**

Much of my research started in the University of North Dakota's Elwyn B. Robinson Department of Special Collections, a branch of the Chester Fritz Library that houses institutional archival material dating back to the founding of the University.

Unfortunately, the library does not have a box marked “mission statements,” in fact, the word “mission” is not even catalogued. I performed a standard search on the University’s main webpage, using the words, “mission statement,” and after scrolling through a number of entries, mainly linking to departmental mission statements, I came upon a link, directing me to the institutional mission statement, as listed in the 2013-2015 academic catalog. It was this finding that led me back to the Department of Special Collections, to review all prior editions of the university academic catalog, knowing that the mission statement was printed at the beginning of every academic catalog I had ever used. It was through the collection of catalogs that I was able to determine what year the University of North Dakota first published a mission statement and every year in which it was altered.

I started with the very first academic catalog (1883) and worked my way through every year (2013-2015). It was in the *1982-1984 Undergraduate Bulletin* that the words “Mission of the University” first appeared. In the *1984-1986 Undergraduate Bulletin*, the following was written underneath the university’s mission statement: “The mission of the University of North Dakota has been articulated in a planning document, ‘Toward the Second Century,’ submitted by President Thomas J. Clifford to the State Board of Higher Education in 1980.” Once located through the Department of Special Collections, it was through this document, and the 1982-2013 academic catalogs, that I got my start. In my review of the planning document, *Toward the Second Century*, I very quickly realized that strategic planning documents could prove highly informative to my quest for information. University Presidents, Kendall Baker (1992 – 1999), Charles Kupchella (1999 – 2008) and Robert Kelley (2008 – 2016), had each laid out the institution’s

strategic priorities in some form of a planning document. Included in each planning document was a list of committee members, who included faculty, college deans and vice presidents. I identified two names on the 1979 planning document as individuals who were still living in Grand Forks, and in some ways, still associated with the University. I set up a time to meet with both men; both were long-time faculty who served as department chairs and served on a number of University committees. These were my first two respondents of oral history interviews, a method that would prove valuable in my search for documents related to the altering of the University's mission.

### **Oral History**

Prior to conducting any interviews, I completed a class focused specifically on oral history as a form of historical research methodology. Valerie Yow defines oral history as “the recording of personal testimony delivered in oral form” (2005, p. 3) An oral history, once completed, is considered a primary source document. My intent is not to create primary source documents from the interviews I have conducted, but to help fill the gaps in a different story and ultimately create an historical document on the creation and evolution of the University's mission statement.

Throughout my research, I conducted a series of formal oral history interviews with faculty and administrators whose tenure with the University occurred sometime between the 1970s and the present-day. Interview subjects included a former director and vice president of student affairs, two former university faculty members, a former professor and dean emeritus, a former student affairs administrator, and an interim president. Informal oral history interviews, meant to be strictly document-directing, were conducted with University accreditation leaders and long-time faculty members. Leading

up to the interviews, I prepared by reading up on the responsibilities and work of each participant. I researched biographies and spent time preparing a list of questions related to the person, the institution, and the mission. Very few of the interviews resulted in mission-specific information; most subjects were unaware of the actual mission at the time they worked for the institution, much less the part they potentially played in the creation. Two individuals were listed as members of a committee from which the first mission statement was written, but both were unaware of the role they played in forming the University's mission statement. However, all subjects were able to recount their perception of institutional purpose, as well as generate a list of additional documents that they felt might contain mission-specific information, reasons for why a specific mission would have been appropriate during a distinct time period, along with supplying other potential interviewees who would have thoughts, memories, or professional experience with the University's mission. It was through these interviews that formal titles of institutional planning documents (*SCOPE, The Eleventh Decade, Toward the Second Century, etc.*) were unearthed, assisting in what could have been a difficult finding process.

The information gathered from the oral history interviews did not provide hard, accurate data, as I had intended them to do at the beginning, but provided information of significance, nonetheless. "The importance of oral testimony may lie not in its adherence to fact, but rather in its departure from it, as imagination, symbolism, and desire emerge" says Portelli (2016, p. 53). He goes on to say that 'false' oral sources do not exist. Without historical memory, there would be a loss in the personal piece of the story, and without the personal, we would lose the ability to have a total history. Through oral

history, individual truths are told and those truths find their place in a much larger story. In the end, the oral history interviews I conducted were not necessarily part of the historical retelling of the University's mission, but provided specific titles of documents and working groups that made the identification and location of said items much easier to locate and access. These primary source documents were integral to the research I conducted.

### **University Accreditation**

Based on information provided in one of the interviews, I began looking for documents related to accreditation and visits from the Higher Learning Commission and North Central Associations. I have thus far, reviewed the final draft of the *Institutional Response to the 1993 Accreditation Visit Final Report* and through this document, found a section focused specifically on the institution's mission statement, as written in 1991. It was my intent to recover all accreditation final reports and institutional self-studies that were completed at the University of North Dakota. Not only did I look at institution-specific reports, but I also researched the rise of college and program-specific accrediting agencies and national organizations. One interviewee spoke about the rise of college, or discipline-specific certification and wondered how these national expectations might have impacted the mission of the institution. Both interviewees provided great direction, recommending possible resources, along with the names of individuals who might be able to provide supplementary information. In my continued research, I conducted additional interviews, both informal and formal, with hopes of gathering information about the mission statement, but also to get a feel for the University's culture and environment during the time in which these documents were written.

The institution's strategic planning documents have proved useful, in terms of identifying potential individuals with whom to have conversations, however, strategic planning documents tend to be a more recent trend, historically speaking, and can only provide some direction, when looking at the institution's overall scope and focus.

Prior to strategic planning and mission statements, the institution still had purpose and a definitive charge. As a part of my research, I looked at the University's early objectives. In order to understand more about the "Object of the University of North Dakota," (1883) I need to look at documents dating back to the founding of the University. I have secured copies of the University of North Dakota Board of Regents meeting minutes from 1883 to 1893.

### **University Governing Bodies**

The Board of Regents acted as the governing board for the University of North Dakota during its first years (1883 – 1893). The Board's minutes provide details regarding the founding and planning of the University. At its founding, the University set forth with a very specific mission. I anticipate that the University's founding charge would have been discussed, possibly written, by the Board of Regents. Today, the University is "governed" by a few different bodies.

The University Senate and University Council are two of those agencies. Both played an active role within the institution since before the first mission statement was created. According to the University of North Dakota University Senate website (2015), "The University Council has served since 1961 as the legislative body for the University of North Dakota, membership that exceeds 800 individuals." Directly related to one

another, “The legislative authority of the University Council is vested in the University Senate” (University of North Dakota University Senate, 2015). If the mission statement was ever a focus of conversation at the University, the University Senate would have discussed it. According to the University Senate (2015) “About University Senate” webpage, they have authority over a number of different academic areas, and it is my thought that the mission of the University has, at some point, been included in their discussions. University Senate meeting agendas and minutes are catalogued online, dating back to 2000. Meeting minutes dating back to 1960 are archived in the University of North Dakota’s Department of Special Collections, under the title, “University Senate Documents.” I reviewed both the agenda and minutes for University Senate meetings occurring during the late 1970’s through the early 2000’s. I want to focus on the specific periods of time in which the mission was written and then altered, however, it is just as important to look at conversations that occurred about the mission, in which resulted in no change.

In addition to University Senate, the institution also follows the directives of another governing body, North Dakota’s State Board of Higher Education (SBHE). The SBHE was created in 1938 and has guided the state’s public colleges and universities for the past 78 years (North Dakota University System, 2016). The University of North Dakota operates alongside 10 other publicly supported colleges and universities, all reporting to a seven-member voting board, made up of governor-appointed citizens. The initial charge for creating an institutional mission statement, as indicated in the 1984 – 1986 academic catalog, came from the SBHE. The State Historical Society of North Dakota, located in the state’s capitol, is the home of the SBHE’s archival material, which

includes meeting minutes. Directives from the SBHE to create or alter an institutional mission statement are documented in meeting minutes.

### **State and Institutional Culture**

In addition to reviewing all possible locations in which the mission statement was discussed, printed or disseminated, I analyzed the context in which each was created or revised. It was important that I understood the institutional culture and societal norms of each time period, in an effort to better appreciate the messaging within the object and the mission of the University. This understanding of culture and society was accomplished by looking at the large archival of the *Dakota Student*, the University's student newspaper, as well as the *Grand Fork Herald*, the newspaper for the city of Grand Forks and surrounding communities. I focused attention on factors impacting the environment and decision-making processes of the institution, such as the level of SBHE and state legislative involvement, total enrollment numbers and the pattern of growth or decline. Additionally, I found that there was a correlation between the institutional budget, both the size and type of dollars, and the content of the mission. The University of North Dakota is literally a university in the state of North Dakota, meaning it is a public institution, funded by the people and meant to serve the people. Recognizing this, it was important to study the social framework of the state, from which the University was created.

My reading list focused on the history of the Dakota Territory and the state of North Dakota, including Robinson's (1966) *History of North Dakota*, Porter's (2009) *North Dakota: 1960 to the Millennium*, Henke and Albers' (1998) *The Legacy of North Dakota's Country Schools*, and the North Dakota Centennial Heritage Series' (1988)

*North Dakota's Ethnic History Plains Folks*. These books provided a cultural understanding of North Dakota during its earliest years, around the time that the University of North Dakota was founded. In addition to these texts, historian Clay Jenkinson's (2012) collection of essays, *For the Love of North Dakota and Other Essays: Sundays with Clay* in the *Bismarck Tribune* describes North Dakota's transition from a solitary state to one connected to the rest of world. There is evidence of this transition in the changing of the University's mission statements.

Since this research focuses on the mission of the institution and because of that, it was imperative that I know and understand its historical context. I worked with the University's Department of Special Collections to identify institutional biographies that provided a historical foundation for my research. That reading list included Geiger's (1958) *History of the University of the Northern Plains*, Tweton and Wilkin's (1983) *Century on the North Plains: The University of North Dakota at 100*, *The Quarterly Journal of the University of North Dakota* (1910-1929) and a collection of archived dissertations and photographs.

## **PROVIDING CONTEXT: A BRIEF HISTORY OF AMERICAN HIGHER EDUCATION**

At the time of the University of North Dakota's founding, Harvard University, America's first and oldest institution, had been operating for approximately two and a half centuries. By 1860, still 23 years prior to the University of North Dakota's inception, 281 colleges and universities were founded nation-wide (Thelin, 2011). The University of Georgia, received its charter in 1785, making it the first public institution to be founded (2011). The University of North Carolina received its charter in 1789 and enrolled students in 1795, making it the first operational public institution in the nation (University of North Carolina, n.d.). Both were close to 100 years before the University of North Dakota would receive its own founding document. When the University of North Dakota was founded in 1883, there were a number of colleges and universities that had been operating for years and had been functioning under similarly themed missions. "Religion occupied a central but confined place in the colonial colleges" (Thelin, 2011, p. 13). In addition to religion, colonial era colleges focused on educating the elite. Both King's College (1754), subsequently renamed Columbia College at Columbia University, and the College of New Jersey (1746), known today as Princeton University, had missions that spoke to the need for educating the "higher ranks of life" (Thelin, 2011, p. 27). During the latter part of the 18th century, those missions were expanded. "Their space was transformed dramatically to play a central role in the American campaign for independence. Classrooms became sites of legendary patriotic oratory, and dormitories were pressed into service as hospitals and barracks for troops during the Revolutionary

War" (Thelin, 2011, p. I). Higher education's mission evolved during the colonial era, just as it has throughout the history of higher education. This chapter focuses on the themes of evolving missions throughout the history of higher education beginning, not at the time of American higher education's birth, but from the University of North Dakota's founding in 1883, to the present day. The historical overview provided below, serves as a guiding framework and provides context for the findings of the research carried out in this study of the University of North Dakota's mission.

### **Americanization, Citizenship, and Democracy**

As the end of the 19th century came to a close and the 20th century began, the number of immigrants coming to America was rapidly growing. This period of growth was termed the "great wave" of immigration (Grieco, 2014, para.1). According to a paper written on the United States Census Bureau's page, the rate of increase was significant. In referencing the term "great wave" of immigration, Grieco says. "This is not surprising, as the foreign-born population grew rapidly during this period, doubling in size from 6.7 million in 1880 to 14.2 million in 1930" (Grieco, 2014, para. 1). The foreign-born population continued growing from 1880 to 1930, eventually making up "12 to 15 percent of the total population" (Grieco, 2014, para. 1). In North Dakota, population increased "from 16,000 in 1878 to 191,000 in 1890" and "an additional 250,000 settlers" came to the state between 1898 and World War II (Henke and Albers, 1998, p. ii). During that same time, there was a shift in the mission of American higher education. Colonial colleges and universities had focused on educating the elite and had strong religious influence and undertones (Thelin, 2011). As the immigrant population grew, the mission of higher education began to shift, to one of citizenship (2011).

Referring to the University of California's "Western version of Progressivism," Thelin (2011) states, "The philosophical base of this Progressive plan for higher education was the premise that a sound, affordable state university was a good way to educate future generations of enlightened, capable state leaders and citizens" (p. 139). In the state of Wisconsin, it was thought that the campus and state capitol should be working together, with the mission of educating for the good of the state. "The university was a model system for providing educated, responsible experts to fill the state's civil service in a range of fields, including accounting, public health, geography, medicine, law, and engineering" (Thelin, 2011, p. 138).

As immigrant numbers continued to grow, schooling took on a new role. Simply educating for the sake of knowledge was no longer a curricular agenda. Acculturation, or more kindly put, citizenship, became the focus of education. "Citizenship education was once argued by educational reformers as necessary in assisting immigrants on the 'way to citizenship in the Republic (to) offset the feudal heritage brought from Europe' (Beard, 1944, p. 218). The mission of schools became one of citizenship, or more specifically Americanization.

In the early 1900s, "Americanization" - both as a term and as an ideological expectation - described an immigrant's acculturation into the language, ideals, traditions, and ways of life in the United States. Reacting to the mass emigration from Eastern and Southern Europe between 1880 and the beginning of World War I, immigrant-fearing nativists, along with social workers crusading for housing reform and leaders in business and industry seeking profit margins on the backs of

a disciplined labor force, collectively campaigned for financial and educational support of Americanization (Prinzing, 2004, p. 2).

The mission of public education, one of citizenship, democracy, and Americanization, remained the central focus as the country continued its rapid growth until finally slowing in 1921 with the passing of restrictive immigration legislation known as the Emergency Quota Act (Prinzing, 2004).

### **Big Science and the Military**

With the slowing of immigration, American higher education moved into the 1920s, 30s, and 40s with new institutional focus. University mission shifted from citizenship education to military participation and scientific inquiry, more specifically "big science" that involved expensive research and large teams of scientists. The period of time between World War I and World War II saw campuses create military training programs, funded by the federal government through the National Defense Act of 1920, specifically the U.S. Military Academy and the Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) program (Stewart, 2010, p. 58). Campus military initiatives were born out of support for the war, but also concern of the potential impact the war would have on the institutions themselves. "President Woodrow Wilson offered a mutually beneficial solution with the creation of the Student Army Training Corps in 1917" (Thelin, 2011, p. 200). It was thought that by increasing military support and involvement, the impact of a decrease in enrollment, as a result of the war, would be offset by an increase in federal funding. The move towards a military supportive mission, meant a shift in curriculum. "Instruction was predictably slanted toward support of military policies. Customary

courses in, for example, history were suspended in favor of more focused, practical studies" (Thelin, 2011, p. 201).

Almost as central as the military mission, was the focus on scientific exploration. Leading up to this period, scientific research and development had been handled by corporate and private entities. They continued to be the lead on science and technology, but America's universities began wading into the water of investigation and experimentation. The creation of the National Research Council and the Naval Research Laboratory in 1916 displayed the move towards university science and research. Those two research entities brought collaboration among the government, universities, and corporations (Thelin, 2011, p. 201). Science and the military (Sobkiw, p. 115) drove university research initiatives. Sobkiw states:

Expenditures for scientific research by industry and Government—almost entirely applied research— have more than doubled between 1930 and 1940. Whereas in 1930 they were six times as large as the research expenditures of the colleges, universities, and research institutes, by 1940 they were nearly ten times as large (2008, p. 115).

Some of the most notable scientific exploration of the time period was the work surrounding the Manhattan Project (1942-1945). The research, leading to America's first atomic bombs, was a collaboration of inquiry and investigation from multiple universities. The electromagnetic process was developed at the University of California, Berkeley, the diffusion process at Columbia University (which is how the Manhattan Project got its name), detonators at the California Institute of Technology (Caltech), and

the plutonium-239 production process at the University of Chicago (US Department of Energy). Thelin (2011) explains:

This and related research endeavors signaled the maturity of academic science in the United States. The universities' effectiveness during the crises of World War II had an enduring legacy – namely, the success of academic cooperation in large-scale applied research projects provided the rationale for future partnerships between the federal government and universities. This accomplishment would indelibly transform the missions and funding of American higher education in the period following the end of World War II in 1945 (p. 259).

This collaboration, between American universities and the United States government, marked the beginnings of a new type of university, the research university, and meant a more sustainable support system, with the government taking on a financially supportive role.

### **Access and Expansion**

As World War II ended and U.S. soldiers returned home, American colleges and universities were on the cusp of massive expansion, in terms of enrollment and mission. The *G.I. Bill of Rights* passed in 1944, allowing millions of veterans to attend institutions of higher education. President Harry Truman created a Commission on Higher Education. Their final report, *Higher Education for American Democracy*, focused specifically on affordability and access to postsecondary opportunities as a way to provide a college education to more Americans. The number of programs increased, as

colleges and universities expanded their masters and doctoral degree offerings. Higher education, in all areas, was expanding.

With growth and extension, curricular focus began to diversify. American higher education no longer had one central theme or purpose, but was operating with a variety of visions. There was a post-war thought that higher education should shift its focus from military training and war support to "...large-scale planning for the transition to a peacetime society, including a civilian economy, long after the end of the war" (Thelin, 2011, p. 261). Along the lines of creating a peacetime society, it was thought that a university could assist America in "its international and social roles as well as national defense" (Thelin, 2011, p. 268) by creating well-informed, educated citizens. In addition to the above, scientific inquiry, specifically related to the military, expanded significantly during World War II and included federal research grants, support and partnerships with federal departments, and ultimately The National Defense Education Act, all of which created resources for scientific research and experimentation. Purpose was everywhere: peacemaking, national defense, international education, and scientific inquiry, to name areas of focus.

As colleges and universities continued growing, so did their function, but it did appear to be controlled growth. Enrollment ballooned and the, "Universities in the United States after World War II were hard pressed to identify a central, cohesive mission. In 1963 Clark Kerr, University of California Berkeley's first chancellor and twelfth president of the University of California, dryly noted that central heating was about the only unifying element in a contemporary multipurpose campus" (Thelin, 2011, p. 314). Some might argue and say that the sixties saw colleges and universities take on

social justice as a central mission, however that work was primarily carried out by the students, as opposed to the institution. Student protests formed around civil rights, primarily against the discrimination of black Americans, women's rights, the Vietnam War, gay liberation, and the exploiting of natural resources. The student body was at the core of those social justice movements, not the institution or administration. "The black, ethnic, and later women's studies debates of the late 1960s and early 1970s were rooted partially in the desire to obviate accepted myths and stereotypes used to rationalize inequality and exclusion" (Miller, 1990, p. 84). On college campuses, this meant creating courses, departments, and centers focused on advocacy and inclusion of marginalized populations.

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, students and faculty began demanding that the knowledge learned and shared in college around the country be more inclusive of women's issues, and they asked to see more women in leadership positions on college campuses" (Shaw & Lee, 2012, p. 2).

Students, with the assistance of faculty, appeared to be the driving force of this curricular change.

Public universities were simply operating, with no regard to mission, purpose, vision, or scope. Thelin (2011) writes, "But to a generation of university presidents between 1945 and 1970, there seemed to be little time or need for clarifying the matter of mission" (p. 314). It would not be until 1970 that institutions would realize that they were on a path to failure and that they could not continue operating the way they had been for the past forty years, if they wanted to survive. It seemed that mission, or lack thereof, was more important than universities had realized. Thelin states, "By 1970, one

piece of conventional wisdom was that the prototypical American university was under duress because 'its center had failed to hold'"(p. 316). He continues on to say, "The problem was not that the center had failed, but rather that the modern American university had no center at all" (p. 316). Institutions had continued to expand without any direction or focus, and as a result, had completely lost their purpose.

### **An Attempt to Refocus Higher Education**

Colleges and universities had experienced a tremendous enrollment and economic increase midway through the century up until the early 1970's, due in part to the post-war *G.I. Bill of Rights*, the *Truman Commission's Report on Higher Education*, and an increased need in job training (Thelin, 2011). The number of students heading off to college had increased dramatically since the conclusion of World War II. That growth eventually slowed, and around 1975, enrollment dropped for the first time since the passing of the *G.I. Bill of Rights*, post-World War II. The economic conditions in the country were faltering, a significant rise in oil prices, double-digit inflation, and overall financial insecurity (Monthly Labor Review, 2014) left many wondering just how many colleges and universities would survive the dismal conditions. To make matters worse, American institutions of higher education were experiencing an extreme case of mission drift (Thelin, 2011), something that occurs when an organization moves away from its mission, sometimes intentionally, but in this case, resulting from rapid growth, lack of deliberate planning, and lack of awareness or indifference to its mission and its value. As a consequence, colleges and universities were unable to explain their purpose to external audiences, the very people whom public institutions had become reliant on, for the financial support they provided.

During this time period, there was great concern that large numbers of colleges and universities would be forced to close their doors. Fortunately, the impact was minimal as institutions began to focus heavily on strategic operations. In 1979, *The Chronicle of Higher Education* published Chait's article titled, "Mission Madness Strikes Our Colleges," referring to an increase in the creation and application of college and university mission statements across American institutions. Some research has attributed this rise to a management revolution in American higher education. This planning, which Keller (1983) refers to as "academic strategy" (p.140), was a form of institutional management, and gave birth to the university's recently formed fascination with strategic planning, a word commonly heard today across American colleges and universities. "Academic strategy ... seeks to draw upon the strengths of incrementalism and management science while avoiding their deficiencies;" basically, attempting to take management best-practices and applying them to institutions of higher education. In the decades prior to the 1970s, the mission statement – as an organization tool – seized corporate America (Morphew & Hartley 2006), and before long was considered a management best practice. The practice of publicly displaying institutional goals and objectives became an integral part of college and university planning and would remain an important presence in defining an institution's scope and vision. As the management revolution overtook the nation's colleges and universities, it continued to be an issue with defining a guiding academic purpose.

At the start of the 21st century, institutions were operating with mission, vision, scope, and strategic priorities, but many would say that these were strained and ineffective. Thelin (2011), referencing this states, "...colleges and universities are

unclear and inarticulate about their primary purposes. If the higher education community cannot make sense of itself and explain itself to external audiences, who can?" (p. 361)

Oftentimes, these documents were not accurate portrayals of what appeared to be the university's focus. According to Thelin (2011, p. 381), "By 2010 American public higher education had drifted into a new 'A&M.' Instead of the historic 'Agriculture and Mining' or 'Agriculture and Mechanics,' the 2010 model stood for 'Athletics and Medicine.'" It was no longer the case that colleges and universities focus solely on agricultural, mining and engineering, a mission directly related to the industrial revolution. Athletics and medicine-related programs took over college and university budgets, and as "A&M" grew bigger, the arts and sciences (A&S) seemed to be getting smaller. Thelin elaborates:

'A&S' could be rebranded as 'a&s' - lower case to connote shrinking budgets, deteriorating centrality, and reduced visibility. This real and symbolic marginality within the budget and curriculum of the total university operation meant that the historic academic core of the multipurpose state university became literally a step-child (2011, p. 385).

Although mission statements were a fundamental part of the institution, there seemed to be a question as to what purpose they served. Today, mission and vision are still deemed integral pieces of the university, but there is a need to shift the purpose behind having them. Following the 2008 financial crisis, funding for higher education began to shrink. Diminishing state budgets, directly impacting public funding, resulted in cuts to university budgets. When budgets are cut, something has to go. If a university moves from 100 percent funding to say 95 or 90 percent funding, operations must change. (It is important to note that because of the North Dakota oil boom occurring at the same time,

the state was not experiencing the same financial difficulties that the rest of the nation was.)

When resources become scarce, difficult choices must be made. A college might have to decide whether to curtail faculty hiring in disciplines with low student enrollments or to initiate across-the-board cuts. Again, a conversation grounded in the campus's mission statement might help bring about consensus (Meacham, 2008, p. 21).

Institutions have an opportunity, one might say an obligation, to make informed, strategic, intentional cuts, as opposed to arbitrary, across the board cuts. A well thought out mission has the ability to provide direction for budget cuts and future planning.

The following chapter contains the paper's research findings, focused on the evolution of the University of North Dakota's mission. Thelin's work is critical, as it provided context for the research, a framework from which to begin the study. The results focus on mission, beginning with the 1883 founding and concluding with present day purpose, using Thelin's text as a backdrop.

## **FINDINGS: THE EVOLUTION OF THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH DAKOTA'S MISSION**

What follows is less a complete history of the state of North Dakota or the University of North Dakota (Both histories have been written and in fact proved to be key pieces of this research.) than a summary of and reflection on both of their pasts, in an effort to provide context for this study of mission. The stylistic layout of the findings chapter allows the reader to focus on a summarized history of a shortened period of time within the state of North Dakota, followed by a summarized history of mission of the University North Dakota during that same era. The findings are arranged chronologically, beginning with Dakota Territory and the founding of the University of North Dakota (1883).

### **Dakota Territory: Citizenship and Expanded Education**

Dakota Territory, specifically the northern tier that would eventually make up the state of North Dakota, was at one time an ethnic and culturally diverse landscape represented by a large number of foreign-born settlers, arriving from all over the country and world (Sherman et al., 1988).

The most significant driver behind the increase in immigration to Dakota was low-cost or free land. It was available in several ways: 1.) following the Transcontinental Railroad bill (1864), the Northern Pacific Railroad sold nominally-priced land cheaply (insuring trains filled with people and product); 2.) through the Pre-emption Act (1841) private land owners sold land more cheaply than the Northern Pacific Railroad, 3.) the

Homestead Law (1862) and 4.) the Timber Culture Act (1873) gave free land to men and single women (Sherman et al., 1988). All four of the above measures provided inexpensive means of owning land. It was incentive enough to uproot and move to this undeveloped land known as Dakota Territory.

Various forces pushed and pulled immigrants from their native homeland to the northern plains. Whatever their reasons were – the desire for a new home in a new country, the promise of wealth, dissatisfaction with the conditions in their old country or personal considerations – the immigrants moved into North Dakota rapidly in astonishing numbers (Henke & Albers, 1998, p. 1).

Settlers arrived from Scotland, Ireland, Germany, Russia, Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Ukraine, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria, Holland, Syria, France, Belgian, Spain, Mexico, and others. Additionally, the building of the railroad brought Japanese, Chinese, Italians, Armenians, and Greeks. “In 1890, one year after statehood, the foreign-born comprised 43 percent of the state’s 191,000 people” (Henke & Albers, 1998, p. 2). The largest groups of immigrants came from Norway, Canada, Germany, England, Ireland, and Russia. Twenty years later, 77 percent of the population was made up of foreign-born immigrants and their children (Henke & Albers, 1998). The immigrant population, a large number of them European, remained in Dakota Territory under rules laid out by homestead legislation. Once initial payment was made towards the purchase of land, the homesteader had six months to begin living on the property. The homesteader needed to remain on the land for five consecutive years and could not take up residency anywhere else. The required a dwelling and needed to be cultivated

(Bradsher, 2012). The immigrants coming to Dakota Territory established roots and grew their families during the five years they were required to occupy their land.

Dakota Territory expanded in population and higher education entered the scene with purpose. In Elwyn B. Robinson's *History of North Dakota*, he writes of the state's institutions of higher education, "Like the railroads, towns, churches, schools, and newspapers, they were to help along a speculative boom, to be symbols of civilization that was to come, a part of the dream of the future" (1966, p. 306). The work during the territorial legislative session of 1883, held in Yankton, awarded the capitol and penitentiary to Bismarck, the insane asylum to Jamestown, the agricultural college to Fargo, and the state's university to Grand Forks.

### **The Early University: Citizenship, Democracy, and Expanded Education Opportunities**

The University of North Dakota was founded in 1883 by an *Act of the Legislative Assembly of the Territory of Dakota*. It is interesting to note, that North Dakota was not yet a state, and wouldn't be for another six years, at the time of the University's installation.

In the document, *An Act Establishing a Territorial University at Grand Forks, North Dakota*, founding details for the University of North Dakota were laid out, including such things as location, governing bodies, laws and regulations, funding, tuition, and compensation. Included in the Act was the University's founding purpose, referred to as the "Object of the University:"

## “Object of the University”

The object of the University of North Dakota shall be to provide the means of acquiring a thorough knowledge of the various branches of learning connected with scientific, industrial and professional pursuits, in the instruction and training of persons in the theory and art of teaching, and also instruction in the fundamental laws of the United States, and of this Territory, in what regards rights and duties of citizens, and to this end it shall consist of the following colleges or departments, to-wit:

1. The college or department of arts.
2. The college or department of letters.
3. The normal college or department.
4. Such professional or other colleges or departments as now are, or may, from time to time, be added thereto or connected therewith.

A supplemental description, immediately following the “Object”, of the University's purpose was included in the document, *An Act Establishing a Territorial University at Grand Forks, Dakota*.

The college or department of arts shall embrace courses of instruction in mathematical, physical and natural sciences, with their application to the industrial arts such as agriculture, mechanics, engineering, mining and metallurgy, manufactures, architecture, and commerce, in {and} branches included in the college of letters, as shall be necessary to proper fitness of the

pupils in the scientific and practical courses for their chosen pursuits and in military tactics; in the normal department the proper instruction and learning in the theory and art of teaching, and in all the various branches and subjects needful to qualify for teaching in the common schools; and as soon as the income of the University will allow, in such order as the wants of the public shall seem to require, the said courses in the sciences and their application to the practical arts shall be expanded into distinct colleges of the University, each with its own faculty and appropriate title. The college of letters shall be co-existent with the college of arts, and shall embrace a liberal course of instruction in language, literature and philosophy, together with such courses, or parts of courses, in the college of arts, as the regents of the University shall prescribe (1883).

Although reading like an institutional mission statement, the “Object of the University” was included in the academic catalog, under a section on "Scope," following a brief history of the institution and prior to a supplemental paragraph that more closely addresses the curricular focus of the University. In the academic catalog, the departments of arts and letters referred specifically to the fine arts and literature, while the normal school focused specifically on training teachers in educational standards, or norms. In a supporting paragraph, following the “Object,” the catalog lays out three "courses" (presently referred to as majors): the “Course in the Arts,” the “Course in Science,” and the “Normal School.” The University's first graduating class in 1892 consisted of eight graduates: two students graduated with the Bachelor of Arts; four students graduated with the Bachelor of Science; and, two students graduated from the Normal School (p. 81).

The Normal School graduating with only two students, was soon to see an upturn of course participation.

Leading up to the founding of the institution, Dakota Territory was experiencing a tremendous increase in immigration. "A great settlement "boom" in northern Dakota occurred between 1879 and 1886. During those years, over 100,000 people entered the territory" (State Historical Society of North Dakota, 2016, para. 2). The large number of settlers continued to increase as the 20th century arrived. "So significant was this foreign immigration that in 1915 over 79% of all North Dakotans were either immigrants or children of immigrants" (State Historical Society of North Dakota, 2016, para. 3). In the University's "Object," one of the guiding goals is to teach United States laws, specifically the duty of citizenship. Given the considerable and continual growing number of immigrants arriving in Dakota Territory, it was deemed necessary to graduate teachers who could go on to educate the foreign-born population in the public schools in the ways of a democratic United States.

In addition, the Civil War, having ended approximately 20 years prior, was ever-present in the minds of Americans. It was thought that education was the way by which to protect the values for which the United States stood. Geiger describes this belief that money was no better spent than on education, stating, "...to prepare young Americans for useful employment in an increasingly complicated economic system and to impart such principles of religion or economics as would render them socially stable defenders of the system" (Geiger, 1958, p. 12). There seemed to be a need for values-based education, focused on democratic citizenship, both at the state (territory) and national level. In his address to the legislature in 1884, the University of North Dakota's first president,

Reverend William Maxwell Blackburn, spoke of the "...University's potential influence in bringing law and order to an era distinguished by a 'wild hatred of wealth'" (Geiger, 1958, p. 48). He went on to say that, "'We must educate our young men of today so that they will not become the mad socialists of tomorrow'" (Geiger, 1958, p. 48). Just six short years later, when Dakota was granted statehood and became North Dakota, *The Constitution of the State of North Dakota* (1889) Article VIII which made provision for the establishment of free public schools, to include primary, normal, colleges and universities (p. 466). Furthermore, *The Constitution* included a section focused on citizenship:

A high degree of intelligence, patriotism, integrity and morality on the part of every voter in a government by the people being necessary in order to insure the continuance of that government and the prosperity and happiness of the people, the legislative assembly shall make provision for the establishment and maintenance of a system of public schools which shall be open to all children of the state of North Dakota and free from sectarian control (Geiger, 1958, p. 466).

*The Declaration of Independence*, a few years shy of a century old, represented the birth of American democracy, and an important piece of the University's mission, was to ensure democracy held strong.

The "Object" not only addresses a focus on democratic education and support, but also the need for specific colleges, or departments. Departments of arts, letters, and a normal school were all priorities for the newly founded university. At its founding, the University of North Dakota, under the leadership of Governor Nehemiah Ordway, held a ceremony for the laying of the cornerstone. On October 2, 1883, the Governor presided

over the opening remarks, and recalled the activity which led to the founding of the institution. He described a territorial meeting, in which leaders followed his wish for two universities, divided between the large piece of land, both required to operate a normal department (Geiger, 1958, p. 5). He also addressed the need for Dakota to educate "their children on their own soil" (p. 6).

As the population in the territory grew, the need for well-trained educators increased. As a result, in the normal department alone, "Enrollment grew from twenty-eight in 1887 to fifty-seven in 1888" (Geiger, 1958, p. 74). The University may well have had a hand in the increase in the number of people seeking out the Normal School track, as a subsidiary piece of the "Object" addressed both a state and University interest. The following was printed in the University of North Dakota's *1885-1986 Academic Catalogue*:

In absence of suitable fitting schools in the territory from which the patronage of the University must chiefly be drawn, it has been found necessary to provide instruction temporarily in subjects preparatory to those pursued in the University proper. This instruction covers two years, known as the Junior Preparatory and Senior Preparatory Years. The work of this department is entirely foreign to the scope of a true University, and it is strongly urged upon the High schools of the Territory that they prepare themselves as speedily as may be to relieve the University of all instruction of a preparatory nature. The University is a part of the public educational system of the Territory, and the interests of this system will be best promoted by the mutual and hearty co-operation of the University and the Common and High schools of the Territory (p. 29).

The needs of the institution and the Territory were cyclical; there was a partnership, a reliance on one another. Through the “Object” and its ancillary documents, the needs of both were addressed, and the University had a place on which to focus its efforts, as a way to help support the betterment of the larger society.

In looking at the implied mission of the institution at the time, it closely aligned with national trends in higher education, democracy and expanded education, being two of those. States Christopher Lucas in *American Higher Education: A History*, "Again, democracy was appealed to by proponents of the idea that collegiate institutions should expand their 'service' role to the public at large" (2006, p. 151). Regarding common schools in the early 1900s, Lucas writes, "By the turn of the century, no fewer than forty-two state universities and land-grant colleges and an additional number of private colleges had established licensure linkages with secondary schools" (p. 158). This work, carried out by colleges and universities helped eliminate the preparatory work that was part of an institutions' curriculum. The University of North Dakota was aligned with the larger, national curricular agenda. As its “Object” indicates, it too was focused on educating its new citizens and offered a democratic curriculum intent on expanding education throughout the state.

### **The State of North Dakota: Establishing State Institutions During a Time of War**

As people settled in North Dakota, farming, specifically wheat farming, became the number one economic interest in the region. Expanded wheat production, grain elevators, cooperatives, markets, and grain trade became common terms of the day. The number of common schools continued to grow as Dakota Territory earned statehood in 1889 and became North Dakota. "School enrollment grew with settlement. In 1900 there

were some 78,000 children enrolled, by 1920 over 168,000; the number of teachers roughly doubled, rising to about 8,000" (Robinson, 1966, p. 300). Enrollment increased, as did the number of public schools. In 1883, there were a total of 385 public schools and by 1889 there were 1,401 schools (Henke & Albers, 1998, p. iv). As the number of students participating in the state's common schools increased, so did the number of students attending the state's number of post-secondary opportunities.

As decreed by the *North Dakota Constitution of 1889*: Bismarck kept the capitol; the insane asylum was to be located in Jamestown; the agriculture college in Fargo; normal schools in Mayville and Valley City; the school of science in Wahpeton; a reform school in Mandan; an industrial school in Ellendale; and, a school of forestry in either Rolette, Ward, McHenry, or Bottineau (eventually Bottineau would be the location) counties (Robinson, 1966, p. 307). Less than 20 years later, a constitutional amendment added normal schools at both Minot and Dickinson. "Enrollment rose rapidly. In 1884-1885, the first year, there were only 79 students in the state's one institution (UND); in 1917-1918 there were 3,409 students in eight state institutions" (p. 307). In 1915, "To eliminate duplication and competition, the legislature established a single board of regents..." (p. 315). A study was done, yielding little, due to the fact that the constitution had clearly laid out institutional purpose for each school and all were still operating under those founding directives. The criticism that the state had too many schools for such a small a population, began in the early 1900s and is still a concern of many today. In 1930, the problem was addressed head on:

When Professor W. E. Peik of the University of Minnesota made a thorough study of the state institutions for the N.D. Board of Administration in 1930, he pointed

out that only Maine had more teachers colleges and normal schools in proportion to its population than North Dakota (p. 495).

Created by a constitutional amendment, the State Board of Higher Education was established in 1938 specifically for the following purposes (Geiger, 1958):

...control and administration of the following state educational institutions, to-wit:

- (1) The State University and School of Mines, at Grand Forks, with their substations.
- (2) The State Agricultural College and Experiment Station, at Fargo, with their substations.
- (3) The School of Science, at Wahpeton.
- (4) The State Normal Schools and Teachers Colleges, at Valley City, Mayville, Minot and Dickinson.
- (5) The Normal and Industrial School, at Ellendale.
- (6) The School of Forestry, at Bottineau.
- (7) And such other State institutions of higher education as may hereafter be established (p. 467).

The State Board of Higher Education's role would be important in overseeing the operations of the institutions, as they grew and became more dependent on state support.

Around this same time, the United States was closely watching as the countries abroad entered into the First World War. North Dakota was initially seen as anti-war, until the United States entered, at which time they became strong supporters of the effort. Following the end of World War I, North Dakota experienced a multitude of ups and downs, however more downs than anything: an agricultural depression, a collapse of the banks, an increase in urban population growth as farmers departed the rural lifestyle, the creation of the Bank of North Dakota and the State Mill and Elevator, an increase in organized farming associations, and eventually the drought and Great Depression. All of these events occurred before the start of the Second World War. Once again, North Dakota was not in support of the War, or the United States' allies fighting the war, however, upon the United States' entrance into the war, North Dakotans stepped up into a role of great patriotism. "They bought \$397,000,000 worth of government bonds, an extraordinary record, and some sixty thousand North Dakotans served in the armed forces" (Robinson, 1966, p. 421). Since its founding in 1883, North Dakota had experienced growth, change, adversity, opportunity, and victory, in a matter of half a century.

### **The University of North Dakota: Military Support and Nationalism**

At the start of World War I, the University of North Dakota had been open and operating for approximately 30 years. The school had seen an increase in enrollment since first opening its doors, and as more students sought out higher education opportunities, the number of academic departments grew. According to the *1914 Academic Catalog*, students could elect to take courses from the following colleges: the College of Liberal Arts; the Division of Education (School of Education and High

School); the School of Law; The Division of Engineering (The College of Mining Engineering, The College of Mechanical and Electrical Engineering, and The Course in Civil Engineering); The Division of Medicine (The School of Medicine, The Course for Nurses, and The Public Health Laboratory); The Graduate Department; The Summer Session; and The Extension Division (The Bureau of Educational Cooperation and The Bureau of Public Service). The offerings were far larger than those printed in the founding “Object” and academic catalog (college or department of arts, college or department of letters, and normal college or department). In addition to those colleges, schools, departments, and divisions, the University of North Dakota had oversight over many entities: the Public Health Laboratories at the University, Bismarck and Minot; the State Geological Survey; the Biological Station at Devils Lake; the Mining Substation at Hebron; the United States Weather Bureau; and the Board of Public Accountancy.

State funds, negatively impacted by the agricultural depression of the early 1900s, needed to be shared amongst the growing number of public service entities that had become reliant on the state for operating dollars (Robinson, 1966). The large number of state colleges and universities, along with newly formed services, and the aforementioned laboratories, provided a significant amount of competition for financial support. In comparison, at the time of its founding, the University of North Dakota was the only institution of higher education in the state, and had relatively small fiscal need, offering only a course in the arts, a scientific course, and a normal department (Geiger, 1958). As the share of the state's financial pie became smaller, it became even more important for the institution to serve the state, but not necessarily in the same way as it had done at its founding.

Other colleges and universities of the time felt it necessary to show their funding source (state government and tax payers typically) what it was they could do for them. The University of North Dakota was not different. At the presidential inauguration of Frank McVey, the University's fourth president, addressed the necessity to connect the University of North Dakota's work and purpose to the needs of the state in his address title, *The University and Its Relations*. He stated:

It is time to recognize the fact that the University is a great latent force that can be utilized in many directions. It ought to be closely related to every department of the state. It should be the medium through which statistics are gathered, information collected, advice given, problems solved, in fact a real part of the state government... (McVey as cited in Geiger, 1958, p. 194).

In addition to McVey's address, there were a number of speakers who shared similar sentiments. Titles of speeches given that day included the following: "The Two-fold Function of the University;" "The Unification of a State's Educational Forces;" and "The Relation of the State University to the Commonwealth" (Geiger, 1958, p. 197). The University worked to support the needs of the state, through its graduates, educating North Dakota's citizens to be teachers, lawyers, accountants, engineers, doctors, and nurses. Establishing institutional purpose, McVey adopted the motto, "To Be the Servant of the People" (p. 217). McVey's plan to serve the state and all departments seemed to have worked, not only for the University of North Dakota, but all state colleges and universities in North Dakota. The result was specific mission for each institution, with the intent of serving the state. The newly established (1911) State Board

of Regents carried out a survey of all entities of public higher education in the state and it was recommended:

(1) that all public school administrators and high school teachers were to be trained at the University or the Agricultural College, depending upon their major interests, (2) that the University and the Agricultural College were to offer graduate work only as far as the master's degree and only within their legitimate fields, and (3) that all professional training and a full liberal arts program be offered only at the University (Gieger, 1958, p. 233).

The University of North Dakota, with intentionality under the direction of President McVey, had created strong ties to the state and its governing bodies, ties that ended up serving the institution well, as State Board regulations seemed to only benefit the University.

Staying true to McVey's message of serving the people, the University of North Dakota played an active role in supporting the war efforts of both the First and Second World Wars. This was not necessarily a big surprise, as the national trends for colleges and universities was to get behind the war efforts. Enrollment appeared to be the first impact felt by the institution, much like the rest of the nation who saw the number of students attending college level off, after previous, continuous growth. The 1915-1916 to 1916-1917 academic years saw numbers stagnate at 441,000 students nationwide (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 1993, p. 76). The 1941-1942 to 1942-1943 academic years saw a decrease in enrollment nationally, the first significant decrease since the 1869 (NCES). During World War I, a significant number of North Dakotans registered for the draft, with eligibility beginning at 18 years of age. Not all

who registered went to war, but many who did were of college age. Of 21-30 year olds, 24,382 were listed as Class I and able to serve (Bismarck Tribune, 1931). World War II saw a significant number of male students leave the institution, the remaining student population mainly women.

Those students who did not leave the University to serve in either war, remained on campus, and participated in the war effort in a variety of alternate ways. According to Robinson (1966), during World War I, "...students began to drill under volunteer faculty instructors" (p. 359). Additionally, "In the fall of 1918 the federal government established units of the Student Army Training Corps at some five hundred colleges and universities throughout the nation to combine military training and college courses and to train officers and technical experts" (p. 359). The University of North Dakota served as one of the SATC sites.

The role of the University increased heavily during the Second World War. The first program to arrive on campus was an engineering defense training. The Institution offered specialized training in areas of flight, nursing, medicine, and radio, working directly with the Army Signal Corps, the Army Air Corps glider pilots, and the armed forces (Robinson, p. 430). In addition, the campus hosted the Civil Aeronautics Administration, responsible for the civilian pilot training program (Geiger, p. 401). There were army and navy medical groups, army engineering, and cadet nursing corps. The University was viewed, not as a school, but more a military camp, and the administration, faculty, and students who remained, supported this newly established mission.

Theelin (2011) writes about the role of colleges and universities in federal government, as well as the pivotal part they played in both World War I and World War II. The third focus, or mission, of higher education during this period, approximately 1910-1945, was science, specifically "big science." Derek de Solo Price (1986) says of "big science,"

The large-scale character of modern science, new and shining and all-powerful, is so apparent that the happy term "Big Science" has been coined to describe it. Big Science is so new that many of us can remember its beginnings. Big Science is so large that many of us begin to worry about the sheer mass of the monster we have created. Big Science is so different from the former state of affairs that we can look back, perhaps nostalgically, at the Little Science that was once our way of life (p. 2).

The University of North Dakota did not participate in the Manhattan Project or work on the creation of the Hubble Space Telescope, but science, maybe not *big* science, and research were growing at the relatively small North Dakota institution. The University's research mission focused on scholarship pertinent to the state of North Dakota. Initial research-related activity began with the creation of laboratories, to supplement traditional lecture in the hard sciences. Research journals, intended to motivate faculty to engage in scholarly investigations were brought to the institution, and the first sabbaticals were issued as a way to promote a culture of research. Accrediting agencies, focused both on specific fields of scholarship and the overall University itself, began to assess pieces of the institution. Accreditation bodies such as, the American Council for the Advancement of Medical Education, Association of American Law Schools, the United State Bureau of

Education, the Committee on Graduate Instruction of the American Council on Education, the Council on Medication Education, the Association of American Medical Colleges, and the agency most present-day university professionals are familiar with, the North Central Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools, known today simply as the North Central Association, started evaluating the University and its programs during this time period. Their presence helped improve the standard of scholarship and teaching at the institution.

A significant amount of the research carried out at the University of North Dakota was directly tied to state and federal government needs or initiatives. There were studies focused on lignite in western North Dakota, clean water and wind power in the plains state, geographical mapping, and the uses of flax seed from the prairie. One of the larger research actions involved a partnership between the University of North Dakota and the United States government. "In 1913 the University obtained a license from the United States government to operate a 'technical experiment' radio station and began broadcasting standard time signals and official forecasts of the University weather station" (Geiger, 1958, p. 221). Before long, these experiments had resulted in the creation of a United States Weather Bureau-sponsored meteorological station (Geiger, 1958, p. 221). Through this research and scholarship, the University continued McVey's message of serving the people, both the people of the state and the country.

The University of North Dakota, still a comparatively young institution, continued to align itself with the larger national trends of American higher education. Thelin (2011) described this period of time as one focused on science and research, government connection and support, and military-infused campuses. The little University on the

plains adopted all three components as a part of their institutional purpose, without specifically stating this in the form of a mission. The institution's prioritizing of these initiatives made it known, their place in its greater purpose.

### **The State of North Dakota: An Economy of Farming and Oil (1944 – 1960s)**

As the war came to an end, North Dakota began a transformation, as small farms closed, the rural population moved to the city, and a number of North Dakotans left the state altogether. Farming remained the economic engine in the state, but due to its instability, it was a poor provider for those who owned and operated the land, as well as for those who worked it. A number of small wheat farms were sold and larger farms of beef, barley, flax, and wheat replaced them. Fewer people had their hands in farming. The state, for the first time, was able to see the importance and need of diversifying its economy. As population and farming decreased within the state, there were still areas of growth. Electricity, roads, and conservation were three of those areas that came to North Dakota and expanded throughout the state. Rural electric brought power lines, telephones, and television to the country landscape. The United States Soil Conservation Services helped with the start-up of conservation, in the form of crop rotation, dams, and shelter belts. The North Dakota Association of Soil Conservation Districts, numbering 66 in 1947 and 78 in 1957 (State Historical Society, 2016), helped transform the physical landscape of North Dakota.

As North Dakota's landscape changed, the focus on the diversification of the state's economy began. An economic boom occurred throughout the state from the 1950s to 1960s. Large projects, funded in part by the federal government, created job opportunities across the plains state. After years of exploring and drilling in the Williston

Basin, a pint of oil was recovered from the Clarence Iverson Well, in 1951 (Bluemle, 2001). The oil Boom of the 1950s drastically altered the western part of the state, much like the Bakken oil boom, that began in 2006, that rocked the state of North Dakota. "Crowds of strangers-oil operators and scouts, promoters, geologists, drillers, lease buyers and brokers, as well as unskilled labor-invaded the oil region" (Robinson, 1966, p. 459). The impact to region was significant, as more and more people headed west to take part in the extraction of North Dakotan oil. "They and their families jammed community services, crowded schools, wore out roads, and brought on a boom which meant dozens of new enterprises, ranging from lunch counters, to oil-field equipment houses" (p. 459). The state had expanded its economic interests to now include farming and oil.

Other large-scale works included the Garrison Dam, a project that controlled the Missouri River as a way to generate electrical power and as a method of irrigation. The massive dam was completed in 1960, and employed thousands of workers during its creation. The oil boom in the Williston Basin occurred in the far western part of the state. The Garrison Dam was centrally located. One additional, federally funded project created even more jobs, industry, and growth in the center of North Dakota. The Air Force Base, located in Minot, North Dakota, had its groundbreaking ceremony in 1955 (Minot Air Force Base). The Grand Forks Air Force Base was established in the same year, 1955, in the eastern part of the state. Both military bases were part of a larger response to the United States and Russian Cold War, equipped with intercontinental anti-ballistic missile missions. These massive enterprises brought new hospitals, schools, clinics, businesses, and churches to cities and towns across the state. The highway

system expanded and spread throughout the state of North Dakota. The plains state that was once losing product, money, and people, had turned itself around.

### **The University of North Dakota: A Time of Great, Unbridled Expansion (1944 – 1960s)**

During the postwar era, colleges and universities across the nation, had similar, identified purpose. According to higher education scholars, there was increased focus on global education, a direct result of the time spent fighting back-to-back wars abroad. Scientific inquiry, given its big break in earlier decades, became a much larger focus of colleges and universities, with more federal and state funding, in the form of grants, supporting its existence and creating greater ties to government and industry. Access and affordability were part of the national higher education mission, and thanks to the work of federal policy focused specifically on this, the *G. I. Bill of Rights*, 1944, and the *President's Commission on Higher Education for Democracy*, 1947, resulted in significant enrollment increases. Kerr wrote about the post-World War II transformation in the American university stating, "The university is being called upon to educate previously unimagined numbers of students; to respond to the expanding claims of national service; to merge its activities with industry as never before; to adapt to and rechannel new intellectual currents" (1963, p. 65). In this statement, he established institutional purpose, however, it was in regard to one of many areas of university focus during the time period.

The final focus or theme of higher education, during the post war years, beginning later in the 1960s, was social justice. Students on college campuses protested the civil rights movement, the women's movement, the gay rights movement, the Vietnam War,

nuclear proliferation, and the environmental movement. Kerr, when identifying university themes, said, "The federal influence from the outside was already being felt in 1963 – the 'federal grant university' had arrived. In retrospect, the two great new forces of the 1960s were the federal government and the protesting students" (1963, p. 99). These were some of the larger, national trends, occurring throughout the vast majority of America's colleges and universities. At the University of North Dakota, the mission differed slightly.

As World War II veterans returned home, the number of those who decided to attend a college or university was much larger than many ever thought possible. This held true for the University of North Dakota, as overall enrollment grew to 3,077 students. "War veterans alone numbered 1,550, a figure within a few hundred of the previous enrollment record of 1,960 set in 1939" (Geiger, 1958, p. 407). Enrollment grew rather quickly, and although increased state appropriations did not occur overnight, they did eventually grow as well. With enrollment and funding on the increase, the institution could focus on purpose and priorities. For the University of North Dakota, this was an opportunity to distinguish itself against the large number of public institutions in the state. The excitement and possibility resulted in varied purpose and multiple priorities. Fifty years prior, the lone University in the Northern Territory had been founded with a focused object. With focus no longer present, and budgets ever increasing, the University began to grow its mission, but the growth was completely unbridled.

Expansion occurred within academics, research and scholarship, athletics, and even the physical space of campus, with the addition of a number of new buildings. The addition of new majors, sports teams, and classroom and student spaces was exciting, but

there was very little planning going into the decisions to add more to the University. Of the time, Geiger (1958) wrote:

The extensive building program, along with the rise in enrollment, the new winds of educational doctrine, the substantially enlarged faculty-up to nearly 250 by 1958-and the greatly expanded financial support, all combine to produce a companion expansion in the curriculum and some marked changes in its content and emphasis, particularly in the areas of science, technology, and vocational or professional training (p. 421).

According to the University academic catalogs (1940s-1950s), a variety of programs were added to the University curriculum. Graduate departments in anatomy, bacteriology, biochemistry, pathology, and physiology were added. Additional medical related fields of focus, including nursing and medical technology, were offered. Social work, spun from sociology, was added to the undergraduate list of majors. The state's western oil boom resulted in the addition of the petroleum engineering degree. The engineering department grew, to include chemical engineering, civil engineering, mechanical engineering, electrical engineering, and petroleum engineering. Additionally, in the late 50s, engineering added a graduate program to its college. Medicine and engineering were growing at a great rate, both supported by state funding, with a new campus Medical Center being built in 1957 and three buildings devoted to engineering occupying the southwestern end of campus, Harrington Hall (1952), Babcock Hall, and Chandler Hall (Geiger, 1958, p. 423). The Reserve Officers' Training Corps, ROTC, continued to be a part of University curriculum, along with the addition of Air Force ROTC, even though both wars had ended. An opportunity presented itself to the

University when the co-located Wesley College dropped its music program. The University of North Dakota made the decision to not only add a music department, but with it, create a fine arts program (Geiger, 1958, p. 427). As academic programs increased, a majority of the additions occurring in the sciences, technology, and professional areas, University President, John West (1933-1954), addressed the exploding curriculum, as majors and courses continued to be added.

West observed in a memorandum to the Administrative Committee in 1948 that the catalog was 'getting out of hand both as to size and as to cost' and recommended a number of revisions and deletions. On several occasions the Board and Commissioner attempted to curb what they considered an unnecessary expansion of offering" (Geiger, 1958, p. 421).

The University was heading down a path of unchecked expansion, one that would continue until present-day and would ultimately lead the institution into significant turmoil and controversy, regarding the ability to financially support all University programs.

As academic offerings increased, so did the number of faculty, specifically highly qualified faculty with advanced degrees, a number of them researchers and scholars, not necessarily educators. Outside funding, in the form of national grants and contracts were added to the University's funding sources, mainly in the areas of science and technology, more specifically medicine, engineering, and chemistry. Hundreds of thousands of dollars were brought in from federal agencies, including the United States Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, the United States Bureau of Mines, and the United States military. The amount of financial support was significant. "...the University now had

available increasing sums of money from outside the state, nearly all for scientific or technological research. The most important sources were agencies of the United States government, civil as well as military" (Geiger, 1958, p. 434). State appropriated dollars awarded to the institution were increasing and at the same time, so was the out-of-state funding and support. This type of external influence, in the form of large dollar amounts, would make certain fields critical to the University, as to lose them would result in significant financial losses.

As the curricular and scholarly landscape of the institution expanded, so to did the number of campus buildings. Buildings added to the University between the 1940s and 1960s included the following (sites2C@UND, 2013): O'Kelly Hall (1947) served as the Medical Science Building, Memorial Union (1951), Hyslop Sports Center (1951), Energy and Environmental Research Center (1951), Harrington Hall (1952), Education Building (1954), McCannel Hall (1957), Ireland Hall (1957), Chester Fritz Library (1961), Abbott Hall (1961), Twamley Hall (1962), Burtness Theatre (1963), Leonard Hall (1964), Gamble Hall (1968), and Witmer Hall (1968). In addition to these University-constructed buildings, there was also the purchase of previously existing facilities, buildings that were part of Wesley College, that were converted to dormitories. The amount of added campus real estate was impressive, having increased in property value, from \$2,000,000 in 1940 to \$17,000,000 in 1957 (Geiger, 1958, p. 420). In my research of the University during this time, I was unable to locate any form of campus master planning records, which is not surprising, given the fact that these types of documents did not arrive on the scene until the University's much more recent past. However, in looking at the increase of buildings and campus program offerings, and the fact that there was no

apparent theme to which anything was added, it brings up the question, or thought, of focused, intentional growth. There seemed to be very little intentionality to University's expanding academic mission.

Not nearly as large as the increase in buildings or curriculum, but an addition, none the less, was the budding expansion in athletics. The University of North Dakota's Alumni Association played a notable role in the maturation of the school's athletic programs. Hockey was added to the already competing basketball, baseball, and football teams. The Alumni Association established scholarships for student athletes competing in basketball, football, or hockey. In addition, it was the Alumni Association who financially supported the improvements to the Winter Sports Building, home of the University's hockey team. In 1951, the campus added the Hyslop Sports Center, and with that, the University gained a gymnasium, fieldhouse, and swimming pool. Athletics, not nearly what they are today in terms of size and expense, were increasing and occupying a stronger hold of Alumni and university dollars (Tweton and Wilkins, 1983).

With all this development, it seemed as though the University was drifting from its original mission and as President West prepared to leave the institution, he publicly addressed this concern in his 1953 valedictory address, *Famous Last Words*.

In the last decade 'brick and mortar' has been emphasized to the extent that the real purpose of the University may have become over-shadowed. The ensuing decade will still emphasize construction, but academic attainments will become more evident. Traditionally, the University has been a teaching or educational institution: now research in all fields has been stimulated and there has been

notable response in the fields of physics, chemistry, medicine, and engineering. This trend will continue (Geiger, 1958, p. 443).

As he passed the presidential reigns on to George William Starcher (1954 – 1971), the University president shared what he believed to be the role of the University of North Dakota. In his inaugural address, *The Responsibilities of the University*, he specifically addressed “mission.” Mission was his word of choice in 1955, but it was a word that would not truly arrive on college campuses until the late 1970s, early 1980s. Starcher stated:

The mission of the University is to prepare men and women for life in a changing dynamic society. We would fail if we should concern ourselves solely with turning out men and women prepared to fit neatly into the grooves of an established society...The principal source of our strength in the future is not alone our technology, our natural resources, our concepts of justice and equality, or the unity of spirit underlying our diversity in religious beliefs. It is our concept of the free society in which all of these can be brought to bear on the lives of people through an appropriate education... The educated person, prepared to act responsibly, is more than a polished and well-stored mind, or a sound and well-coordinated body, or a sensitive soul aroused to intense purposes. He is a person having what is, for him, an effective conceptual scheme, or way of thinking, that enables him to think and act in complex wholes, freed from limitations imposed either by indolence or from ignorance. Responsibility in its broadest sense means judgment and action based upon simultaneous awareness of complicated fact, high purpose and complex morality (George Starcher Papers, 1985).

What Starcher was referring to was the need and innate value of a liberal arts foundation to support the professional offerings of the University. His follow-up of this specific priority was swift: in 1955, he created a one-year program mandatory of all students, the University College, that would deliver a common core, prior to a student beginning in his or her selected major program. In looking back at the University's curricular history, from founding to 1955, it appeared to be the first time that intentional emphasis was placed on curriculum tied to the University of North Dakota, a "liberal arts institution."

In Starcher's "Collection Historical Note," it was written:

Although Starcher responded vigorously to campus construction needs, the essence of his 17 year tenure focused on enhancing the academic stature of UND and instituting administrative reform. He encouraged graduate and faculty research activities and improved faculty compensation. He enacted a faculty tenure policy in 1964 and honored distinguished faculty with the rank of University Professor. A freshmen advisement program was established through a new University College in 1955 and an Honors Program began in 1961. In striving towards a decentralized administration, Starcher appointed Thomas Clifford, Dean of the College of Business and Public Administration, as Vice President for Finance in 1959 and created two other new administrative positions, VP for Academic Affairs in 1962 and VP for Student Affairs in 1967 (1985).

Starcher spoke about the importance of a liberal arts education and created the University College, meant to establish a core foundation in all students, but in addition, he focused heavily on University faculty and administration. It was largely during Starcher's time as University president that the administrative positions of today were created.

From this point forward, I will address each decade, 1970, 1980, 1990, 2000, 2010, separately, for two reasons. The first being the fact that the archival system for University records increased tremendously, closer to present-day, meaning primary source documents were able to be located. There is still a great deal of information that was not retained, either by accident, or intentionally, due to the state's open record policies, but the increase in resources was immediately apparent. The second reason being that this period of time is when the mission statement and strategic planning got its founding.

### **North Dakota in the 70s: Focus on Economic Diversity**

As North Dakota left the post-war boom times behind them and moved into a new decade, the 1970s, agriculture prospered and oil busted. "Indeed, after an initial decade and a half oil rush, the international price of oil, as well as the expense of drilling for North Dakota's deeply seated basins, discouraged continued exploration and exploitation" (Porter, 2009, p. 111). On the other hand, the agricultural economy experienced a boom all its own. Acreage increased, along with the price of wheat, durum, corn, beans, and beets. What was not increasing, in fact decreasing, was the population in the state. Population numbers fell from 632,446 in 1960 to 617,792 in 1970 (U.S. Census Bureau, n.d.) resulting in the loss of one of the state's representatives at the national level.

From 1913 through 1933, the state had three federal representatives, but following the census of 1930 suffered reapportionment and the loss of a representative.

Now, it appeared that North Dakota would once again lose a representative.

Indeed, as other regions of the nation grew, North Dakota felt the sad truth of

their declining population. Following the election of 1972, only one individual would represent the state in Washington, D.C. (Porter, 2009, p. 112).

The state would never regain the position. As the population in rural areas decreased, Grand Forks experienced a significant increase, as the Grand Forks Air Force Base's role in Cold War activities brought more people to the eastern part of the state. The Soviet threat occupied much of the state's military purpose, as opposed to the Vietnam War. Both Grand Forks and Minot began a Minuteman III intercontinental ballistic missile missions (Porter, 2009, p. 124).

The state, under Governor Arthur Link, continued a focus on energy production, taking on lignite coal production gasification. With the success of lignite, and the energy taxes applied to it, the state experienced an increase in finances. The additional dollars left the state in a place to financially support its public entities. "Other tasks before the governor included funding public kindergarten, finding additional support for the expansion of services to the developmentally disabled..." (Porter, 2009, p. 158). The State Mill, Elevator, and State Bank of North Dakota grew during the 70s. The State Bank expanded its service to include student loan underwriting, a move that would make it possible for many North Dakotans to participate in post-secondary opportunities. The growth and fortunes of the previous decades continued in the 70s. "Clearly the 1970s brought considerable change to the state of North Dakota: agricultural successes, increasing oil revenues, a growing population, altered relations with the federal government, changing social values and much more" (Porter, 2009, p. 165). The times were good.

## **The University of North Dakota: The Rise of the Mission Statement and Planning**

In 1971, a North Dakota native, schooled in commerce, law, and business administration and executive management, assumed the role of president of the University of North Dakota. Thomas J. Clifford served as UND's eighth president, from 1971 to 1992. Clifford began his presidency at a time when colleges and universities across the nation were fearful of their future, due to previous growth and prosperous times that had suddenly stopped. Institutions across the country, the University of North Dakota included, were experiencing extreme cases of mission drift and had no organized means of strategic planning. Clifford's business background, apparent from the day he stepped into office, would change pieces of that for the University of North Dakota. In his inaugural address, he stated:

It has often been said that principles of business management cannot be applied to an educational institution...I don't believe it. My orientation in business administration leads me to believe that an academic system that gave birth to the management concept surely should be able to adapt its teachings to solve its problems...We will have to know what we are doing, and why we are doing it. We will have to be ready and willing to make changes to find new ways of performing our basic functions (Tweton & Wilkins, 1983, p. 28).

Clifford, familiar with business practices of earlier decades, immediately turned the University's focus to planning and program evaluation, something that had not yet been done. He was on a mission to mend relationships between the state and the University, and knew that in order to do so, needed to increase accountability. In 1971, the year of Clifford's inauguration, he established a task committee, the Study Committee on

Planning and Evaluation (SCOPE), with the purpose of planning for the 70s. They created a "Statement" of the University, which read much like a present-day mission statement:

The University of North Dakota, a state-supported public university, exists to enhance the lives of the present and future citizens of the state. To fulfill this role, the institution carries out three complimentary functions. First, it preserves and transmits the heritage of the past. Second, as a research center it prepares the way for new discoveries and makes knowledge available to all who need it. Third, the University provides an arena in which different intellectual concepts and value systems confront one another on the basis of respect for all rational approaches to the study of mankind and his environment (SCOPE, 1973, p. 11).

In addition to the "Statement," SCOPE outlined five goals for the decade. They acknowledged the evolving University, but declared that its primary goal has remained the same, "...to enhance opportunities for human beings to learn" (SCOPE, 1973, p. 7).

The University of North Dakota's five goals for the future were written as follows:

1. Provide challenging undergraduate liberal arts education for a large number of the state's most talented and promising young men and women. The aim is to produce graduates who are genuinely educated persons, with intellectual skills cultivated to the maximum, capable of making their own critical assessments about themselves and their beliefs, and hence able to examine those beliefs critically.

2. Advance learning through the discovery of new knowledge. The University has a special obligation to use faculty and laboratory resources to contribute to a better understanding of the social problems of the state, to help in the better utilization of its human and other resources, and to contribute to the cultural enrichment of its people.
3. Prepare students for professional careers in the areas of business, law, education and other human resource development fields, engineering, medicine and other health professions, and in the creative arts. Professional students need to be prepared to lead not only personally satisfying lives but to meet the needs of society as professional people of competence, integrity and compassion. The University's role in preparing professionals must include provision of opportunities for its graduates to keep abreast of new developments and practices and to gain inspiration for better service to their clients.
4. Provide an integrated program of graduate study, consistent with the University's historical development, for those entering the professions for actual practice, for post-secondary teaching, or for research. Attention is focused on the professional fields of education, human services, engineering, business administration, fine arts and health sciences, and the liberal arts and sciences (humanities, social and behavioral sciences, natural sciences) out of which the professions have developed and upon which the professions still rely for their theoretical grounding and continued evolution. Quality master's degree programs should be offered in all of these areas and reputable doctoral degree programs should be offered in a selection of these fields.

5. Provide lifetime learning opportunities to citizens generally and satisfy the growing desire for intellectual and cultural development.

In addition to SCOPE's "Statement" and goals, the University, through its planning process, created its first mission statement. The process that led to the development of the mission was guided directly by the University's founding "Object of the University," President Clifford's statement of role and scope, and SCOPE: Report for the 70s. The President's Planning Council approved the work and the following was the first official, published, mission statement for the University of North Dakota:

The mission of the University of North Dakota has been articulated in a statement submitted by President Thomas J. Clifford to the State Board of Higher Education (University of North Dakota, Academic Catalog, 1980, p. 2):

1. To provide challenging and diverse programs of undergraduate education. Each of the undergraduate colleges has the responsibility to establish objectives and goals which are necessary to strengthen and continually improve the college's undergraduate mission within the context of the general university undergraduate mission. This implies a responsibility for each college to place as much emphasis on its obligations to the general undergraduate student population as on its narrower responsibilities to those students selecting fields within that college in which they major.
2. To provide educational programs in the professional fields. Such a mission implies a responsibility to offer strong and accredited programs in the undergraduate professional colleges, in those professional fields located within

the traditional undergraduate liberal arts disciplines, and in post-baccalaureate professional colleges.

3. To offer an integrated program of graduate education at the master's and doctor's level in order to prepare students for advanced professional practice, for teaching, and for careers in research and creative activity.

4. To maintain an active program of basic and applied research, scholarship, and creative endeavor for the benefit of the students who participate and learn thereby, and for the contribution of new knowledge to the state and the nation.

5. To cooperate with other institutions to provide educational opportunities throughout the state for those who cannot come to the campus. The University directs special attention to offering specialized graduate instruction through outreach programs.

Under Clifford, through SCOPE, and "guided" by the mission, curricular growth continued at the University. The College for Human Resources Development was created, along with the College of Fine Arts, both areas identified in the SCOPE's goals. Additionally, in 1973, the North Dakota state legislature approved an expansion of the University's medical program to a full M.D. granting school, a move from a two year program to a four year program (UND Courseleaf, n.d.). This curricular change not only expanded the academic mission, but also created partnerships between the University's medical school and other North Dakota communities, where students finished years three and four of the program. The legislature's approval of the four-year curriculum paved

the path for the only in-state medical education opportunity, something that would benefit the University of North Dakota for decades to come.

Aside from the curricular focus of the institution, the 1970s brought attention to social justice, something that had already been occurring within other colleges and universities across the nation. It was during the 1970s that the University added an Indian Cultural Center, The Black Student Union, and Women's Center to its campus (Tweton & Wilkins, 1983). The centers, a direct result of increased diversity on campus, were part of a new institutional mission. The impact of a growing diverse population made its appearance in academics, as courses dealing with women and the black experience were added to the curriculum.

Construction continued, buildings were added, academic programs increased, and student enrollment grew, not as significantly as previous years, but growth nonetheless. Enrollment in the 60s had gone from 4,000 to 8,000 students and reached 10,000 in the 1970s (Tweton & Wilkins, p. 80, 1983). The 1970s University of North Dakota, with planning document in hand, appeared to be continuing the unhinged growth of previous decades.

### **North Dakota: From Boom to Bust in the 1980s**

North Dakota, having experienced tremendous growth and prosperity in the 1970s, would make its way into a new decade that would prove extremely challenging for the plains state. The economy of the 70s, mainly agriculture and oil, having filled the coffers of the state, would come to an abrupt stop and cause financial distress, some analysts say, worse than the state's current fiscal crisis. The 70s saw agricultural prices

rise to all-time highs, and then turn around and drop significantly in the 80s. The price of land followed, dropping to lows not seen since the 50s and 60s. To make matters worse, a drought, not nearly as severe as the Dust Bowl, caused additional strain on farmers and their crops.

Those who could not withstand the crisis, began to leave their farms, some choosing to leave the state altogether. "Over the course of the latter 1980s, North Dakota lost approximately 2,000 farmers and ranchers, with 6,500 leaving agricultural pursuits over the entirety of the decade" (Porter, 2009, p. 212). Many made the move to industry work, as North Dakota's economy began a slight move towards diversification. Manufacturing plants, such as Hebron Bricks, Bobcat, and Motor Coach Industries, along with North Dakota tourism, Medora, the International Peace Gardens, state parks, and the North Dakota Heritage Center, offered employment opportunities that had nothing to do with farming and oil (Porter, 2009). The exodus from farming impacted rural communities, as schools, churches, restaurants, and stores were forced to close or consolidate with other shrinking towns.

The price of the nation's oil in the 1980s was greatly impacted by Saudi Arabia's excess in production, thus creating a considerable gap in the state's finances, as millions of dollars were tied to the oil extraction tax. *The Bismarck Tribune*, comparing the bust of today to that of the 80s, wrote:

The state also saw a rise in tax revenues in the late 1970s and early 1980s, but it wasn't as rapid of an increase as recent years have brought, according to figures provided by the North Dakota Office of the State Tax Commissioner. The state

then saw a 19 percent decline in tax collections between fiscal years 1985 and 1987 before picking up again (Hageman, 2016, sec. 3, para. 2).

The brutal tax hit resulted in legislation meant to protect the state if something similar ever happened. It was after the 1980s economic crisis that the state created the foundation aid stabilization fund, meant to hold the state's schools harmless. But for the 80s, the damage had been done. As the decade moved on, the state's population continually decreased.

...the 1980s had been a difficult one for North Dakota: mild drought, farm crisis beyond the wildest of imagined fears, a lawsuit against the state which severely tarnished its image, continued out-migration, and oil prices which did not seem to meet the challenges of OPEC's power (Porter, 2009, p. 203).

The financial stresses of the state would undoubtedly impact North Dakota's institutions of higher education, as state appropriations, up until that time, had only been increasing.

### **The University of North Dakota: A Decade of Planning**

When President Clifford authored his letter of support for the 1980s planning document, *The Eleventh Decade 1984-1989: A Strategy for the 1980s and Toward the Second Century*, he hinted towards the impact state funding was having on the University of North Dakota, saying:

As we move forward in the eighties, the University of North Dakota can and will grow stronger in at least two ways: by pursuing frugality, integrity, and quality internally, and by pursuing new sources of funding beyond the legislature to

enhance not only existing programs but to develop new ones (*The Eleventh Decade*, 1985).

The institution had experienced a significant budget cut in the 82-83 biennium and then budgets were frozen for the 83-84 biennium. The planning document of the 70s, having been focused on expanding the University's mission and reach, was no longer relevant. Clifford, understanding this to be the reality, called for a committee, comprised of 21 faculty and four students, to begin work, with the directive to conduct a review of the University's previous planning documents and create a document meant to guide the institution forward into the next century. The first paragraph of *The Eleventh Decade* reads:

A combination of diminishing resources, increasing enrollments, changing economic and societal variables, and ten year plans that were beginning to lag seriously in their schedule for implementation required that the academic sector re-examine its two planning documents and update their contents in terms of today's needs and priorities (1985, p. 11)

Clifford, skilled in business management, was well-versed with the corporate theory that believed planning, goals, and purpose constantly needed to be reviewed, and changed if needed. The University's much smaller state appropriations required alterations to the current planning documents. Additionally, much had happened to the University since Clifford's first planning reports were created. There were multiple program evaluations conducted, the most notable being the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central review, which accredited the University every ten years. All reviews came back generally positive, recommending increases in salary and operating expenses for the

University. Academic deans were asked to work with their departments to create missions and annual goals for their areas. Out of that exercise, a Comprehensive Planning-Mechanism Task Force was created.

Clifford's planning committee and task force looked at national trends in higher education and made recommendations to address those trends at the University of North Dakota. Nationally, there was a push to expand liberal arts education within America's colleges and universities, and as a result the University made the decision to increase its general education requirements. The committee also examined conditions within the state, directly impacting higher education. They focused on the needs of North Dakota, of those, technology, including computer and interactive learning, rose to the top. From the 1930s to the 1950s, a new state school opened, bringing the number of publicly-supported schools from eight to eleven. Approximately 30 years after the founding of Williston State College (1957), the state became interested in the operation of the eleven North Dakota institutions. "The 1985 legislative session has created a climate for restructuring and re-organizing higher education in the state, and has requested in 1985-86 a study of governance and duplication in higher education" (*The Eleventh Decade*, 1985, p. 11). As a result, the University outlined the mission and scope written as part of the 1970s planning document. In a section titled, "Basic Planning Assumptions" found within *The Eleventh Decade*, it's written, "Two additional documents are also included in this section because they reflect the basic assumptions of the State Legislature and the Commissioner of Higher Education regarding higher education: (1) Role and Scope Statement and (2) House Concurrent Resolution 3003" (1985, p. 23). The legislature and Board outlined planning parameters, role and scope for the system (made up of the 11

institutions) and institutions. In Resolution 3003, they made the following institutional requirement: "Each institution shall have a distinctive mission, role, and scope" (1985, p. 32). The institutional goals, as recommended by the State Legislature and Board, were present in the University of North Dakota's first mission statement, written years prior.

In an attempt to reduce program duplication, the Board made the following request of its 11 institutions: "Each institution will develop its own uniqueness based upon its historic mission and the specific educational needs of its service area" (The Eleventh Decade, 1985, Appendix E). This new interest in, and resistance to program duplication would be something that would remain a conflicting part of the relationship amongst the State Legislature, the Board of Higher Education, and all eleven institutions.

Regardless of the new legislative and Board oversight and economic struggles of the state, the University of North Dakota continued to grow its programs. Aviation and a number of other programs were added to the University's academic offerings. "By 1983, students could choose from over 130 programs of study – testimony to the University's mature status" (Tweton & Wilkins, 1983, p. 31). That number continued to grow. It was as though the number of programs offered by a campus directly correlated to the institution's maturity. And it was as if the University were not listening to the messages in the Legislature's communication with the Board, something that would continue to be a problem, for not just the University of North Dakota, but all of the state's 11 institutions.

## **North Dakota in the 90s: A Declining Population**

As North Dakota moved from the difficult conditions of the 1980s, into what many hoped would be a better, more prosperous 90s, much of the difficulties remained the same. The state's population continued to decrease, as people migrated out of state. Counties continued a trend towards older median ages, meaning that the number of births was decreasing. Between the outward migration of North Dakota's youth and lower birth rates, the number of school districts continued to decrease. There were 4,700 independent school districts in 1918, in 1947 there were 2,200, in 1961 districts numbered 1,021, in 1973 there were 364, and in 1992 the number fell to 270 (Porter, 2009, p. 276). During this time, North Dakota's overall population experienced a decrease, followed by an increase, then a decrease, and finally an increase (North Dakota State University, n.d.). In 1920, North Dakota's population was listed at 646,872, in 1950 at 619,636, in 1960 at 632,446, in 1970 at 617,761, and 1990 at 638,800 (North Dakota State University, n.d.). Fewer schools meant fewer students, which meant fewer high school graduates attending North Dakota's 11 state institutions.

As for those who remained in the state, much of the state's small amount of migration would consist of more diverse populations. The number of African Americans in the state rose from 2,568 in 1980 to 3,524 in 1990. The number of Hispanics increased from 3,902 to 4,665 (United States Department of Commerce, 1993). Much of that growth was thought to be tied to the state's military bases and the farming industry.

Agriculture continued to be the number one economic stimulus in the state, but was still struggling. Energy production, previously made up of lignite and oil, expanded to include wind, however, the majority of income from energy production came from oil

taxes. After decades of difficulty, many began to wonder when North Dakota's economy and population would turn around.

### **The University of North Dakota: A Mission Statement for the Present and Future**

On May 5, 1990, President Clifford signed the final planning document *The University of North Dakota: A Strategic Plan for the Nineties*. The document opened with the 1972 (SCOPE) mission statement. The University's mission statement would change dramatically in 1991, one year after the 1990 strategic planning document was printed. In a 1993 document summarizing the institution's follow-up response to the 1983 Higher Learning Commission's accreditation visit report, it was written, regarding Criterion One: "The University of North Dakota 'has clear and publicly stated purposes, consistent with its mission and appropriate to a post-secondary educational institution,'" the following:

While concluding that the University's mission was understood by its various constituencies, the 1983 NCA [Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association] team stated that the mission statement was rather general and had not been translated into 'a useful set of specific goals for the institution.' The team included among its concerns 1) the need to clarify the institution's goals and purposes and 2) the need for 'a coherent and comprehensive planning mechanism for deployment of resources to achieve institutional goals.'

The University's response:

In that context, the University of North Dakota undertook a strategic planning exercise in 1989 which culminated in *The University of North Dakota: A*

Strategic Plan for the Nineties, a comprehensive and detailed plan for the institution's development that appears as an appendix in the Self Study. In 1991, the UND Senate approved a new mission statement for the institution which grew out of the strategic plan. The mission statement was approved with some modifications by the Board of Higher Education in November 1992, and it appears in the University's official publications (1993).

It was at this time that the University's mission statement (below) was altered in a way that used language similar to mission statements of today. The statement included a new, added focus on the University's regional, state, and national role and the impact it intended to have on public, private, federal, and corporate interests. Morphew and Hartley (2006), in a piece on mission statements and rhetoric, state that "...as recently as the mid-1990's, the Association of American Colleges (1994), found that fully 80% of all colleges and universities were making major revisions in their mission statements, goals, curricula, and general education courses" (p. 456). The 1991 mission statement makes a shift from the initial five objectives, to the three categories that makeup most present-day university mission statements: research, teaching and learning, and public service. The revised mission statement was first printed in the *1992-1993 Academic Catalog* and reads in part:

#### MISSION OF THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH DAKOTA

The following mission statement is on file with the State Board of Higher Education:

The University of North Dakota serves the state, the country and the world community through teaching, research, creative activities, and service. State-assisted, the University's work depends also on Federal, private, and corporate sources. With other research universities, the University shares a distinctive responsibility for the discovery, development, preservation, and dissemination of knowledge. Through its sponsorship and encouragement of basic and applied research, scholarship, and creative endeavor, the University contributes to the public well-being.

The University maintains its legislatively enacted missions in liberal arts, business, education, law, medicine, engineering and mines; and has also developed special missions in nursing, fine arts, aerospace, energy, human resources and international studies. It provides a wide range of challenging academic programs for undergraduate, professional, and graduate students through the doctoral level. The University encourages students to make informed choices, to communicate effectively, to be intellectually curious and creative, to commit themselves to lifelong learning and the service of others, to share responsibility both for their own communities and for the world. The University promotes cultural diversity among its students, staff, and faculty.

In addition to its on-campus instructional and research programs and its branch campuses, the University of North Dakota separately and cooperatively provides extensive continuing education and public service programs for all areas of the state and region (p. 2).

It is interesting to note the addition of a statement on cultural diversity, knowing that the number of diverse persons, specifically international, foreign-born persons, entering the state had increased in the nineties. "Between 1993 and 2000, over three thousand [legal] individuals immigrated to North Dakota from foreign lands" (Porter, 2009, p. 267). Porter goes on to write, "Besides Canada, the legal immigrants came in the largest numbers from the former Soviet Union, Vietnam, and India. Estimates of illegal immigrants ranged as high as six thousand individuals" (Porter, 2009, p. 268). The nineties' planning documents didn't address the increase in diverse populations coming to the state, but rather focused on interdependence and globalization.

In 1992, Kendall Baker became the University of North Dakota's ninth president, and the institution's focus on interdependence and globalization remained, additionally, Baker added a much greater concentration on the value of liberal arts and its place in the advancing society. On February 7, 1994, Baker gave a speech to University Council faculty and announced the creation of a 13-member Planning Council. The speech was reprinted in handout form and given the title, *Investing in UND's Future*." In it, Baker emphasized the value of the arts and sciences, stating: "For such a world, I can think of no better preparation than a strong foundation in the liberal arts and sciences. But will the professional curricula UND offers change markedly in the future?" He went on to say that as the state's flagship University, there are expectations "to offer a comprehensive range of learning opportunities." The General Education curriculum grew significantly under Baker and students left the institution having completed required coursework in communications, social sciences, arts and humanities, and mathematics, science, and technology, along with major course requirements. Additionally, students were required

to take a course meeting the “World Cultures” designation. In 1998, Baker's Planning Council published the report titled, *Goals and Strategies: A Report from the University Planning Council*. The document contained a summary of goals and action items. On the front cover, the following was written: "The University of North Dakota will be Upper Great Plains university of choice for both students and faculty. As a community of scholars, UND will provide a strong liberal arts education and focused professional and graduate programs of highest quality." The University's mission statement would remain unchanged throughout Baker's time as president, with no additional attention paid to the value of a liberal arts foundation.

### **North Dakota Goes from Bust to Boom to Bust (2000 – 2016)**

North Dakota entered the twenty-first century with many of the same difficulties experienced in decades prior. Population had not yet recovered to previously recorded rates, due in part to the Grand Forks Air Force Base losing its tanker mission, resulting in a significant loss of military personnel within the state and the number of farmers leaving the state for other opportunities (Porter, 2009). Agricultural conditions were slightly better, but at the start of 2000, economic conditions did not appear to be improving quickly enough for North Dakotans (Porter, 2009). All this would change, quickly, and dramatically. In 2006, new technologies made it possible to pull shale from deep depths in North Dakota's Bakken region. Towns turned to cities nearly overnight, as the state's population rapidly increased. In 1990, census data indicated 638,800 people were living in the state. By 2000, the number had increased slightly to 642,200. In 2010, census totals were at 672,591, and only five years later, in 2015, the population had hit 756,927 (United States Census Bureau, 1992). From 1990 to 2015, population had increased

approximately 16 percent. The increase in oil production had created a growth in other economic sectors, restaurants, stores, hotels, and housing. It also added strain to the western part of the state, similar to the 1950s: roads were worn, towns crowded, and schools overpopulated. But for many in the state, it did not seem to matter, because the tax revenues coming in, at a time when the rest of the nation was experiencing a great recession, outweighed the negatives. In a 2014 CNN report on state gross domestic products (GDP), it was said that North Dakota had moved to second highest state when looking at GDP.

Fueled by a massive oil boom, the state's economic output has more than doubled in just 11 years, according to Bureau of Economic Analysis data on state gross domestic products (GDP) released Wednesday. In 2013, North Dakota's economy produced a record \$49.8 billion -- up from a mere \$24.7 billion in 2002 (Isidore, para. 1).

North Dakota's economy was growing and public entities within the state were reaping the benefits. Taxes decreased, as the state saw more money coming in through oil, agriculture, and sales. "North Dakota's total economic base has grown from \$13 billion in 1990 to \$18.7 billion in 2000 and \$30.5 billion in 2010. During these two decades, the state's economic base grew by \$17.5 billion, a 135 percent increase" (Coon, 2013, para. 7). But all this would not last. North Dakota, at its peak, was operating 200 plus oil rigs, and in by 2016, only 44 were in operation (Yardley, 2016). The drastic drop in oil prices resulted in a billion dollar shortfall for the state, that would increase as the year went on. History had repeated itself, not once, not twice, but three times. Oil had resulted in a 1950s boom, a 1980s boom, a 2000s boom, and eventually all three were followed by

busts. The state never seemed prepared for the impact the bust would have on its public services and people.

### **University of North Dakota: A Decade of Strategic Planning (2000 – 2016)**

The University of North Dakota welcomed the twenty-first century, and did so for good reason. The booming state economy provided physical expansion opportunities to the University that had not been seen since the early eighties, under President Clifford's leadership. In June of 1999, President Baker resigned from the University of North Dakota and Charles Kupchella assumed the role as the institution's tenth president. Kupchella's educational background was comprised of programs in education, microbiology, and philosophy. He was an academic scholar and professor in biology and medicine. It is interesting to note that his degrees came from three different academic homes: education, science, and the humanities, suggesting Kupchella saw value in all three fields of academic study.

President Kupchella led the University through tremendous growth, both in terms of enrollment and campus physical space. As he navigated this growth, he made it clear, that the work of his presidency would be guided by strategy. In one of his first interviews, he told a news source, when asked about enrollment, faculty salaries, and leadership, that each would be addressed with strategic approaches and prioritization (University Letter, 1999). Under President Kupchella, the University would undergo strategic planning exercises and multiple plans would be created, as he made every effort to lead institutional operations with intentionality.

Between the years 2000 and 2005, President Kupchella filed three different strategic plans for the University of North Dakota. They were: 1.) *Strategic Plan 2000* (2000); 2.) *Strategic Plan: Pathways to the Future* (2001); and 3.) *Building on Excellence: Strategic Plan 2005* (2005). Additionally, there was a document, from the President's Office, with the title, *Strategic Plan: Final Working Draft*, June 2001. As President Kupchella presented *Strategic Plan 2000*, he shared a University working mission, one that was meant to guide the planning process. It read:

The purpose of the University is to provide students with high quality, accessible and affordable educational programs and to serve the public through high quality research and public service programs linked to learning. All of the University's programs will be responsive to the needs of North Dakota, the nation, and the world. UND supports a wide range of research and public service programs that enrich and extend the learning environment (Kupchella, 2000).

Kupchella included a statement at the bottom of the paragraph about the University's formal mission, saying it was approved by the State Board of Higher Education and included in the document. The mission statement to which he was referring, was the same one used under Baker's presidency. In 2001, this statement would be slightly altered to include a statement about the University being a member of the North Dakota University System. In the *2003 Higher Learning Commission's 2003 Team Report*, under Criterion One, dealing specifically with mission, it was reported:

Some campus sentiment suggests that, as the UND mission statement is more than ten years old, a revised mission statement should be considered as part of the strategic planning initiatives, in order more specifically to identify desired

attributes and priorities and more inclusively to provide direction to all major organizational components (2003 Team Report, 2003).

The recommendation by the team was that evidence of a clearly and publicly stated institutional purpose in mission was sufficient and no action or follow-up was necessary. Two decades prior, the accreditation team expressed concern with the institution's mission, resulting in significant change to the layout and slight changes to the content. The reworking of the mission, following that visit, seemed to satisfy the Commission. Rather than revisiting the mission, President Kupchella chose to create a new strategic plan.

In a 2005 State of the University Address, President Kupchella, unveiled the plan *Building on Excellence*, but not before sharing the impact and success of his first strategic plan. Calling it "...the first of its kind at UND...one that connected planning to budgeting..." (UND News, 2015). He went on to share the eight priority areas that made up, what he referred to as, *Strategic Plan II*.

The eight priorities included:

- a) Prepare students to lead rich, full lives, to enjoy productive careers, and to make meaningful contributions to society by providing them with a high-quality educational experience solidly grounded in the liberal arts;
- b) Expand and strengthen the University's commitment to research and creative activity, both as a means of enriching the learning environment and as a driver for economic development;
- c) Serve the people of North Dakota and the world more effectively through applied and basic research, cultural programs, and

economic development programs as well as through a comprehensive array of educational offerings; d) Sustain a positive campus climate for living and learning; e) Optimize and stabilize enrollment to achieve the desired number and mix of students appropriate to the University's mission; f) Optimize the use of information technology to improve student learning, research, and the administration of the University; g) Take resource development to a new level through an enhanced cooperative approach involving the President, Vice Presidents, Deans, and Chairs in concert with the UND Foundation and other foundations, while building greater public understanding and support of the University's mission, distinctive qualities, and strategic agenda; and h) In support of all of the above, ensure that the University has a well-prepared, enthusiastic faculty and staff, first-rate physical facilities, an adequate financial resource base, and an appropriate, efficient organizational structure (UND News, 2005).

Each priority area was followed up by a listing of multiple action items. Separating each priority and the corresponding action items, were statements which read like expanded parts of the University's mission statement.

President Kupchella focused on the liberal arts, research, teaching, service, diversity, and technology, all present in the University's mission statement. *Strategic Plan II* was meant to continue adding to the University's accomplishments from the first strategic plan. Addressing the work of both, President Kupchella said, "The last plan was very successful and it showed that if you match the plan with dollars, you can actually make things happen. And that's what we're going to do with this one" (UND News,

2005). Under President Kupchella's leadership, the University's enrollment grew by 1,969 students, an increase of almost sixteen percent (Student Body Profile, 2015). Campus buildings added during the Kupchella presidency numbered at eleven. The University of North Dakota was booming. Growth continued after Kupchella's retirement and into following presidential appointment. In July of 2008, Robert Kelley became the University's eleventh president.

In 2010, in preparation for its 2013 Higher Learning Commission accreditation visit, the University of North Dakota rolled out an institutional vision with five strategic priorities, however the University's official mission statement (1991) remained unchanged (Exceptional UND Background, 2015). Those priorities included the following: enrich the student experience, encourage gathering, facilitate collaboration, expand UND's presence, and enhance quality of life (Exceptional UND Background, 2015). In 2013, the University welcomed the Higher Learning Commission's accreditation team. This visit, under President Kelley's leadership, produced the same positive evaluation, in regards to institutional mission, as the previous visit did. In the *2013 HLC Final Report*, regarding Criterion One: Mission, it was written:

A review of mission related documents and institutional websites provided evidence that UND's mission is clear and articulated publicly; it guides the institution's operations. Interviews and discussions with individuals and groups for the campus and community validated the fact UND is mission driven (p. 9, 2013).

Throughout times of stagnation and growth, the University's current mission statement, as written under President Clifford (1991), remained the same, as no action was deemed

necessary. For over twenty years, the institution's mission remained constant, while changing vision and strategy.

In January of 2016, Kelley ended his eight year presidential appointment. Under his leadership, the University continued its growth in students, programs, buildings, and endowments.

The University Letter (2015), in announcing President Kelley's retirement, wrote:

During President Kelley's term, and under the Exceptional UND strategic roadmap, the University saw unprecedented growth and progress in a number of areas, including:

Academic Programs: UND's petroleum engineering was initiated, and has since increased in size from 7 students to over 300. The nation's first degree program in Unmanned Aircraft Systems was begun. A number of endowed chair positions were established in departments such as Music, Health Sciences, and Business and Public Administration. Significant class expansion took place in the School of Medicine and Health Sciences.

Buildings: The renovation of the new Education Building and key portions of the Memorial Union, as well as the construction of the Gorecki Alumni Center. The expansion and renovation of the School of Law, as well as construction of the Athletics High Performance Center and the new building for the School of Medicine and Health Science also commenced. Ground was broken for Robin Hall and the renovation of the Wilkerson Commons.

Enrollment: UND saw its highest-ever levels of enrollment under President Kelley's leadership. The University recruited its most academically-prepared freshman class, with an average ACT score of 23.8 and an average GPA of 3.4.

North Dakota Spirit/The Campaign for UND: This UND Alumni Association and Foundation Campaign was the largest capital campaign in North Dakota history, raising \$324 million for student scholarships, faculty endowments, and other support for the University.

The University had gone from a limited, but focused curriculum, to one proud of its multitude of major, minor, and certificate offerings. At the time of Kelley's retirement, there were a total of 225 fields of study offered through undergraduate, graduate, and online degrees. Student enrollment had increased by 2,203, bringing the total 2015-2016 enrollment to 14,951 students.

The 2000s and early 2010s were good to the University, allowing it to increase in size and scope. University Senate curriculum minutes indicate that there were deletions in programs, but the number was far less compared to that of program requests and additions. The University of North Dakota was expanding its mission, and it had the resources to do so. The state's economy was thriving and tuition dollars were greater than they had been in decades prior. But, the bust was looming.

On February 11, 2016 oil prices dropped to a low not seen since 2003. Price per barrel fell to \$26.21, a 75% decrease since the 2003 price of \$108 (Riley, 2016). Oil prices fell and North Dakota rigs began to shut down. It did not take long for the state and the University to see what was on the horizon. Around the same time, President Kelley

was preparing to leave the University of North Dakota and set to replace him was former North Dakota governor, Ed Schafer. When Schafer assumed responsibility in the spring of 2016, his work centered primarily around the budget. Schafer spent the majority of his interim presidency making the governor-mandated 4.05 percent budget cuts to address the state's one billion dollar shortfall. Some athletic and academic programs were eliminated from the University, and departmental budgets were slashed. At two separate forums, Interim President Schafer said that in the past, the University had added programs, departments, and operations without cutting anything, and had created an unsustainable reality (2016), adding that they (institution) "cannot be all things to everyone" (2016) and that it was in the University's best interest to define its mission.

During Schafer's time in office, he made it his priority to position the University in a place such that when a new president was appointed, they would be able to get right to work. Ultimately, he made the cuts, announced departmental moves, and announced big changes within the institution. However, the work he did to prepare the University financially for the future, would not be quite enough. In the fall of 2016, under newly appointed president Mark Kennedy, the University needed to make an additional 2.5 percent cut in programs and staff due to yet another downturn in state-appropriated funds.

At an August 2016 meeting of the Legislature's Interim Higher Education Committee, Bismarck State College President, Larry Skogan, presented the results of the North Dakota University System's mission study, in response to the Interim Committee's study on institutional mission. In Skogan's (2016) presentation, he provided a brief history of the schools within the system, sharing their academic purpose, and went on to explain current mission, providing data which he indicated supported the decisions to

expand and/or alter institutional mission. He explained that state needs have expanded missions, using the teacher shortage as an example as to why the State Board of Higher Education approved a masters in education program at Mayville State University. His presentation was met with questions and comments, one in particular by District 3 Representative Roscoe Streyle, who suggested missions not be expanded or altered based on state needs, but rather for efficiency, reminding the room that the upcoming legislature would need to cut one billion dollars from the state budget. A senator in the room asked Skogan if he felt the State Board of Higher Education or University presidents had the flexibility and willingness to cut programs, or if he thought that was something that the legislature would need to do. Although Skogan's presentation ended that morning, the legislature's focus on mission did not.

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

When I began researching this topic of evolving institutional mission, it was my hypothesis that, although the University of North Dakota's mission statement has remained unchanged since 1991, the institution's mission has in fact changed and evolved since its founding in 1883.

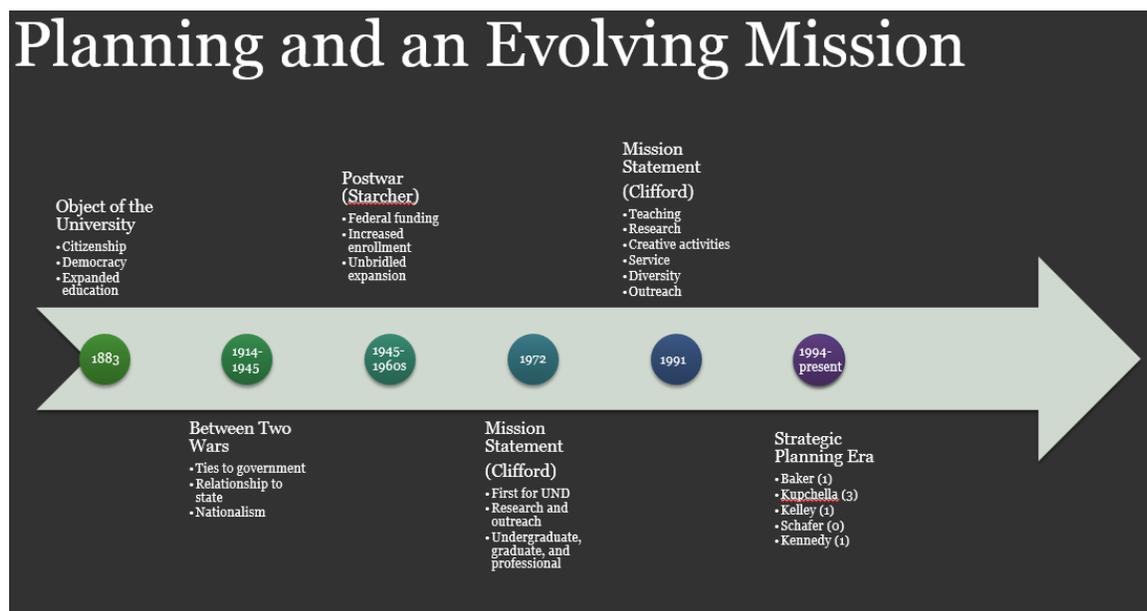


Figure 1. A timeline of planning and evolving mission at the University of North Dakota.

### Citizenship and Expanded Education

The University of North Dakota, when founded in 1883, had specific focus laid out in the “Object of the Institution,” and through that clearly defined statement, the institution concentrated on educating the teachers of the territory and spreading state and national values in the fields of democracy and citizenship. Large numbers of immigrants

established settlement in Dakota Territory. The programs and courses offered, those pursued by the University's graduating students, prepared them to leave the institution, but stay and serve the people of the Territory. They were to educate the growing number of immigrants in the growing number of schools. *The Constitution of the State of North Dakota* (1889) Article VIII made provision for the establishment of free public schools (Geiger, 1958), primary schools listed specifically. In addition, *The Constitution* referred to insuring “the continuance of government” (Geiger, 1958, p. 466), speaking directly to the idea of citizenship education. The academic curriculum aligned closely with the University's academic priorities, as established in that founding mission, and it provided a purpose and rationale to stakeholders within and outside the institution. The University was operating with a mission that was directly serving the needs of the state.

In the document, *An Act Establishing a Territorial University at Grand Forks, Dakota*, it is written: “...and as soon as the income of the University will allow, in such order as the wants of the public shall seem to require, the said courses in the sciences and their application to the practical arts shall be expanded...” (1883). This statement suggests permission for the University to adapt to the changing times, as to meet the needs of the state. This is evident in the founding document and the curricular focus of the University at the time.

### **Military Support and Nationalism**

As the United States transitioned from a peacetime society to a society engaged in back-to-back world wars (1914 – 1945), the institution's mission shifted, although never formally defined, to one of military support and nationalism. It is important to note that the University appeared to be meeting the needs of the state, altering curriculum and

focus, just as they said they would in *An Act Establishing a Territorial University at Grand Forks, Dakota* (1883), however, they never formally identify that focus, as was done in the Object or future mission statement. The campus' physical landscape was transformed alongside the academic curriculum. On-campus military training grounds were created. Academic programs, focused on military training and war efforts, began during this time. The University expanded their purpose from solely state support to national support. It was apparent that the mission had evolved to meet the needs of not only the state, but also the nation. Although there was not a formalized object or mission statement, there was a statement President McVey (1909 – 1917) worked under: “To Be the Servant of the People” (Geiger, 1958, p. 217), which was well-defined and seemed to provide purpose. From its founding through World Wars I and II, the University indicated (through “Object” and statement) that their mission was to serve the people. The University’s actions (through curriculum) aligned with their written purpose. In reflecting back on this period (1914 – 1945) in the University's history, it appears to be the last time that the institution operated with a well-defined, written purpose that matched supplemental planning documents and curricular focus.

### **Unbridled Expansion**

In the decades following World War I and II, thanks in part to federally-sponsored programs like the *G. I. Bill of Rights* (1944), enrollment increased at colleges and universities across the country. The same held true for the University of North Dakota. Student enrollment was not the only area of growth for the University. Buildings, programs and departments were added, with science, medicine, and professional programs being the focus of much expansion. In reviewing the academic catalogs, newly

added programs in the 50s and 60s included: anatomy, bacteriology, biochemistry, pathology, and physiology and engineering (chemical, civil, mechanical, electrical, and petroleum). These areas of growth aligned with national trends in science and technology. Additionally, the University continued operating under the mission of “serving the state,” as programs tied to energy (engineering) helped meet the needs of a state which recovered oil (1951) and made gains in hydro-electricity by means of the Garrison Dam (1960). The gains in students, faculty, staff, courses, and square footage made for an exciting time at the University, however, it seemed to occur with a lack of planning. From post-war time (1945) through the 60s, the University operated under the leadership of presidents West (1933 – 1954) and Starcher (1954 – 1971), neither of whom had any formal planning documents on file with the University’s archives, however, both presidents addressing the expanding University during their inaugural addresses, spoke specifically to mission. West commented on the size of the academic catalog, saying it was “getting out of hand both as to size and as to cost” (Geiger, 1958, p. 421). Starcher, addressing mission by name, said that the strength of the University’s future was in technology, natural resources, concepts of justice and equality, diversity in religious beliefs, and the concept of a free society (Starcher, 1954). Those areas of strength align with the curricular areas of expansions, suggesting that Starcher provided some type of academic planning, whether formalized or not. The growth continued throughout both presidencies and persisted into Clifford’s era (1971 – 1992).

### **The Start of Strategic Planning and the Birth of a Mission Statement**

Under the direction of Clifford, a president educated in business, the University embarked on its first (recorded) academic planning exercises. Clifford, with direction

from the State Board of Higher Education, understood the need for the University to define itself for both internal and external audiences and in 1972 wrote its first mission statement. The mission statement was part of a larger strategic planning exercise in which the institution summarized all it was currently accomplishing and with additional resources, what it might accomplish in the future. The mission statement, a product of this planning, was broad and all-encompassing, so that every program offered, operation carried-out, and dollar spent, fit within the overall "mission of the University." The mission statement was separated into five goals: 1.) liberal arts; 2.) research; 3.) professional careers; 4.) graduate study; and 5.) providing lifetime learning opportunities to citizens. In 1991, adhering to feedback from the 1983 Higher Learning Commission report, the University altered the look of its mission statement. The mission, printed in the *1992 – 1993 Academic Catalog*, made specific mention of the University of North Dakota's role in serving the state, the country, and the world. In subsequent paragraphs, it addresses research, the wide range of programs offered, diversity, and the mission of providing continuing education and public service for all of state and region. Both mission statements (1972 and 1991) included two themes of common focus for the University up to that point: liberal arts and serving the citizens of the state.

Under Presidents Baker (1992 – 1999), Kupchella (1999 – 2008), and Kelley (2008 – 2016), the University continued expanding. Resources, specifically funding, were being spread across numerous state agencies and the University had to share its purpose with stakeholders. Under Baker's leadership, the University carried out one strategic planning exercise, out of which he emphasized strong liberal arts, professional, and graduate programs. Under Kupchella's administration, the University underwent

three strategic planning exercises. The goals and priorities that came out of those exercises focused on the liberal arts, research, economic development, student learning, and service to the state of North Dakota. Kelley's strategic plan included five priorities: enrich the student experience, encourage gathering, facilitate collaboration, expand UND's presence, and enhance the quality of life. Kelley's was the first planning document to not make mention of the liberal arts. Service to the state was included in the priority "expand UND's presence." It is not yet known what Kennedy's strategic plan will entail, but the past would indicate that service to the state and liberal arts will have a place in it.

Since the first mission statement was printed in the 1980-1982 academic catalog, it has only undergone one significant rewrite. The original 1972 mission (published in the 1980 academic catalog), after recommendation from the Higher Learning Commission, was rewritten as the 1991 mission, (both under President Clifford), are identical to the mission statement of today. Whether or not this is representative of the actual number of times that the mission statement has been altered is unclear.

The University of North Dakota, with a history of 133 years, has held onto two constant areas of concentration: liberal arts education and service to the state. A third area, added early in the University's history, was research. The University is a liberal arts institution, with a focus on research, and a priority of serving the people of the state and region. These items can be found in the most current mission statement, the institution's very first statement, and the "Object of the University," established during the founding. The purpose of the University has evolved, expanded, and never really scaled back. The University's statements on mission did not evolve nearly as much as

the institution itself did. The mission statements of 1972 and 1991 were written in such a way that the five strategic plans that were completed after the mission statement was published (1992 – 2016) did not require a rewrite of the University’s guiding statement. This is problematic in the sense that a mission statement is meant to guide the University and all its operations. In the case of the University of North Dakota, the strategic plans lay out an active agenda, an actual mission of the institution and the mission statement simply remains unchanged.

In looking solely at the mission statement of the University of North Dakota, the institution appears to lack an academic identity. The strategic plans of the University seem to be the drivers and guiders, establishing current and future purpose for the institution. What is interesting to note, however, is how constantly changing and evolving the strategic plans have been, since arriving to campus under President Clifford’s leadership. With each new plan (new president), the previous plan is completely scrapped. President Kennedy’s strategic planning committee is not looking at Schafer’s three principal priorities for the University, nor are they looking at Kelley’s “Exceptional UND.” They are starting from scratch, as though the University has just been founded. University priorities and purpose looked different under each president, but the mission statement has remained unaffected.

The University of North Dakota was founded with distinct purpose, both in writing and in works. The institution began by serving the Territory, and in some ways the country, and continued doing so into through the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. In years following World War II, the University began to expand rapidly and it became increasingly harder for me to perceive how state needs aligned with University

operations. As the University entered the decade of the 70s, strategic planning took hold and each president oversaw the creation of at least one, in the case of Presidents Clifford and Kupchella, multiple, strategic plans. In reviewing each strategic plan, there was language indicating motivation to serve the state, however, how or if those plans ever materialized is not clear. What is clear, is how the University continued to grow, in enrollment, programs, employees, and buildings/acreage. I struggle to identify a central purpose or theme for all the expansion, as what is written in the strategic plans, is not necessarily accounted for through the extreme growth on campus. There is a lack of alignment between the two, additionally, this same misalignment seems to be true of the University's actual working mission (purpose), mission statement, and written planning documents, which suggests that strategic planning exercises and processes are mainly symbolic in nature and that the University operates aside from the paper and documents.

President Clifford oversaw multiple strategic planning processes and created and altered the University mission statement. President Baker led the University through one strategic planning exercise and did not revise the mission statement. President Kupchella took the University through three strategic planning processes and the mission statement remained unchanged. President Kelley created a University vision, tied to the Higher Learning Commission visit, with no change in mission statement. Interim President Schafer did not revise the mission statement, and with such a short appointment time, it was not an expectation. Current University President Kennedy has begun the process of strategic planning. It is unknown at this time whether a change in mission statement will follow the final plan, or it will, as in previous years, remain the same. This history of multiple strategic plans and one mission statement begs the question of why. Why, under

three presidents and an interim, over twenty five years, did the mission statement endure untouched? Some might suggest that the process and the product itself were tied to external agencies, making it a much larger undertaking than the internal process of strategic planning. The State Board of Higher Education, the legislature, and the Higher Learning Commission all have interests, some might say control, in the University's mission statement. And there's the old adage, "If it's not broke, don't fix it." Perhaps this can be said of the mission statement. Since 1991, there has been no formalized criticism of the mission statement, which may have resulted in a lack of motivation to address the content within it. A third possibility is that the mission statement is merely a piece of pageantry, with strategic plans being the actual driver of the institution. The latter raises a question of purpose. What is the function of the mission statement?

### **The Purpose of a Mission Statement**

Mission statements are common across colleges and universities, however, a clear definition for their existence is not. Some say that the mission statement is instructional and that it "...helps organizational members distinguish between activities that conform to institutional imperatives and those that do not" (Morphew & Hartley, 2006, p. 457). These same people believe that, "The mission statement therefore is rightly understood as an artifact of a broader institutional discussion about its purpose" (p. 457). The other side of the argument sees university mission statements, "as a collection of stock phrases that are either excessively vague or unrealistically aspirational or both" (p. 457).

In my review of the University of North Dakota's mission statement, I tended to view it as part of the second category in Morphew and Hartley's analysis. The institutional mission statement was written in such a way that, even after 25 years, has

needed little to no editing. Society was very different twenty-five years ago, and the idea that an institution would be, or even could be, guided by the same objectives today, as they were then, seems unrealistic. However, if one reads the 2016 mission statement, they will see that it is appropriate for the era, just as it was in 1991.

It is clear that the University's mission statement is vague and has a level of generality that allows for it to be applicable throughout multiple decades, and the small amount of empirical research shows that this is not uncommon across most colleges and universities. "In other words, rather than surfacing values that might guide everyday decision making, colleges and universities fashion mission statements that maximize institutional flexibility. They communicate that nothing is beyond the reach of the organization in question" (Morphew & Hartley, 2006, p. 458). By doing this, an institution legitimizes nearly all decisions, as they undoubtedly "align" with the mission of the university. For any public institution that is receiving state funding, it is imperative that the actions the University takes follow the objectives and goals that have been approved and are supported by the legislature and board.

The University of North Dakota's mission statement, like all other institutions, serves much purpose. Mission statements are an expectation brought on by external agencies (e.g., legislatures, higher education board members, accrediting agencies, prospective students) and an institution without a mission statement would surely lack credibility with its external stakeholders. If it is the expectation that an institution will have a mission statement, and that the mission statement will speak to external constituents, does the statement offer any benefit to those working in and attending that institution? Newsom and Hayes (1991) conducted a study of 142 institutions, looking

specifically at the generality of mission statements. “In recent years, however, both of us have been dismayed at several university mission statements we have seen because they did so little to focus activity. Rather, the statements seemed to represent a compromise designed to offend no one and at best to limit a few options (p. 29).” When I read the introduction to this study, I found myself hung up on their statement regarding focused activity. I asked the question, “Does the University of North Dakota’s mission statement contain specific, activity-driven objectives?” The answer, in looking at the mission statement of today, was no. However, directly below the mission statement, as sort of an addendum, is the institution’s vision, “Exceptional UND.” The vision of the University is highly focused and driven by action. “Exceptional UND” is part of the University’s strategic planning process that began in 2010 under the University’s 11th president, Robert Kelley.

For the University of North Dakota, the mission statement (something that should be direction-driven) seems broad and all-encompassing. It’s only when coupled with a university’s strategic plan or vision, that a forward-planning path is defined.

My research on the University of North Dakota’s mission statement did not end as I thought it would. The idea that mission statements were ubiquitous to the American university (since the very beginning), turned out not to be the case. The University of North Dakota did not have a mission statement during its founding, nor did it have one at mid-century. It created the mission at the behest of the legislature, and in doing so, joined every other American college and university on a path to generalization. When I initially prepared this section of my research, I wrote that the University was without academic identity and void of focus. Upon further reflection, I have come to the conclusion that the

University of North Dakota has expanded its focus to include many majors, departments, and colleges. Its academic identity is all-encompassing, inclusive of all programs that the University deems worthy. Nonetheless, if one were to solely investigate the last five strategic plans, they would see an institution working at evolving to meet the needs of the state, just like the act which established the territorial university said, "...the University will allow, in such order as the wants of the public shall seem to require..." (An Act Establishing a Territorial University at Grand Forks, Dakota, 1883). One would see the University of North Dakota meeting the state's needs by reading the strategic plans, not by reading the various iterations of a mission statement. In point of fact, the mission itself has not evolved.

A university's mission statement should be an important document within an institution, however that does not seem to be the case in my research. When I reflect on the fact that members of the planning committee, which created the mission statement, cannot recall having a hand in such a process, it leads me to question the importance. In the future, the university's mission statement may find itself with more influence than it currently has. The state of North Dakota currently supports eleven institutions within the state and the legislature has become more involved in the happenings of the North Dakota University System. So much so, that in 2014, North Dakota citizens voted on whether or not to abolish the elected State Board of Higher Education and replace it with a governor-appointed commission of three people (North Dakota Legislative Branch, 2016). It failed by a fairly significant margin (61,007 to 182,492), but the damage had been done (North Dakota Legislative Branch, 2016). The amount of skepticism and distrust with the state's institutions is high and transparency and accountability are necessary. A powerful

mission statement, indicative of an institution's purpose, might be of great importance when communicating the University mission with state and local partners.

### **Future Research and Recommendations**

This research, limited in scope, has introduced the possibility of additional research topics and areas of recommendations for the University of North Dakota. The following, directly related to mission statements and planning, are potential subjects for future study:

1. How have the University of North Dakota's mission statement and strategic planning documents shaped policy and action?

When core values, goals, and initiatives were laid out in University documents, specifically strategic plans, what action was taken by the institution to adhere to the plans? Were non-priority programs cut, so that resources could be allocated to those programs determined to be University priorities? Were new departments or policies created to support University core values?

2. Why did the University of North Dakota's past three (four including interim, five including current) make the decision to not change the institutional mission statement?

President Clifford (1971-1992) was the first and last person to create or revise an institutional mission statement. Presidents Baker (1992-1999), Kupchella (1999-2008), and Kelley (2008-2016) spanning a period of 24 years, had many planning committees and documents, but none revised the University's mission statement. All individuals are living and could be interviewed, making this a potential oral history project.

3. How do university leaders operate outside of the institution's "guiding" paper documents?

The final question refers to decisions that are made outside of strategic plans. For example, in 1968, the University's Department of Aviation began, with two planes and small group of students. The College of Aerospace Sciences would evolve into a world-renowned program, attracting students interested in flight from all over the globe. The Department of Aviation was not a part of strategic planning processes, nor did it align with Starcher's written focus on liberal arts. What programs and policies were created and passed outside of the planning documents meant to guide the University?

The research I conducted offers a solid starting point from which these topics could be examined. In addition to potential research topics, I also identified recommendations which I believe to benefit the University of North Dakota. Geiger wrote the history of the University of North Dakota, spanning from 1883 to 1958. In 1983, Tweton and Wilkins wrote the history of the University at 100 years. A comprehensive history of the institution, founding to present-day, has not been written. The University has witnessed significant growth and changes since 1983 and it would serve the institution well, if someone were to capture that history while those with institutional memory are still here.

A second recommendation focuses on the University's historical archiving. While searching for documents, I was told to check with a specific department. There were many occasions in which I was informed that documents were either thrown or that they presumably were sent to the University's Archives. Some individuals indicated that they were not entirely certain those documents had anything to do with their area and did

not know why or where they would be. University departments, whether administrative or not, should be educated on the importance of archiving documents. Additionally, there needs to be more resources put towards the electronic public archiving of all documents located within the University of North Dakota's Department of Special Collections. The finding process, specifically without the assistance of archivists, is extremely difficult.

The University of North Dakota, the oldest institution in the state, has a history that is unique and of great importance. Both recommendations would help capture and secure that history for future generations.

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