

NORTH DAKOTA STATE UNIVERSITY

FOUNDATION

MAGAZINE | VOLUME 2 | ISSUE 1 | FALL 2022



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NORTH DAKOTA STATE UNIVERSITY
**FOUNDATION
MAGAZINE**

VOLUME 2 | ISSUE 1 | FALL 2022

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North Dakota State
University Foundation

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The NDSU Foundation Magazine is published twice a year and is mailed to NDSU alumni and friends. Visit NDSUFoundation.com/Magazine to read previous editions and additional stories.



Greg Lardy, Matt Larsen, Colleen Fitzgerald, President Cook, me, and the National Championship Trophy (#9!) during this summer's North Dakota Tour.

Just days ago, North Dakota State University's 15th president, Dave Cook, and his wife, Dr. Katie Cook, welcomed students to campus. Since its very first days as North Dakota Agricultural College, NDSU has provided a teaching, discovery, and service environment that has transformed lives, communities, and the world.

Inside this issue of the NDSU Foundation Magazine, Nicole Thom-Arens shares more about President Cook and his goals for moving NDSU forward. Much has been accomplished in the University's 132 years, with many, many headwinds and challenges popping up along the way. Today, we know NDSU's mission is paramount to the future success and progress of North Dakota. President Cook is here to listen and build upon the opportunities and challenges that his 14 predecessors faced at different points. Read a bit more about the history of the University's presidents in "NDSU President Fast Facts."

In recent months, you may have heard news about NDSU regaining its R1 status as a Carnegie research institution. What does that mean and why should we care? Micaela Gerhardt spent some time exploring the topic and writes about what the ranking means to North Dakota and beyond. Applied and basic research is core to NDSU's role as an 1862 land-grant university, and this needs to be better understood.

Through the *In Our Hands* fundraising campaign (2016-2021), benefactors helped NDSU make significant advancements in the area of named faculty and administrative positions. Named positions such as fellowships, professorships, and chairs are critical investments needed to retain and recruit the best scholars for NDSU. In this issue, you will read about Kwangsoo Park, the Anne Stegner Endowed Professor in the College of Human Sciences and Education, and learn more about his research and scholarship in studying accessibility issues in hospitality and tourism management — a big business in our state.

There's a lot to showcase in North Dakota, and this summer, a leadership team from NDSU, including President Cook, toured the state to visit our Research Extension Centers, staff and students, communities, alumni, legislators, and friends, and made various random stops along the way. We also had a special guest — the ninth FCS Championship Football trophy. It was a popular attraction to be sure, and, of course, enjoyed the attention and selfies. Go Bison! For the record, we like our chances for number 10.

At the NDSU Foundation, our mission is to build enduring relationships that maximize advocacy and philanthropy to support NDSU. Over the last few years, we have worked to bring to life the impact that alumni and friends can have on our University and its people. I hope you'll join us this Homecoming as President Cook delivers his inaugural address on Friday, Sept. 30, in Festival Concert Hall inside Reineke Fine Arts Center.

John R. Glover
President/CEO | NDSU Foundation



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About the Cover

President Cook and Dr. Katie Cook were photographed by Ann Arbor Miller in the McGovern Alumni Center on July 28, 2022. Staging designed by The White House Co. of Fargo.

PAINTING BREATH

Story by Nicole Thom-Arens | Photos by Ann Arbor Miller

When Jessica Wachter '09 returned to Bismarck, North Dakota, from Chicago, Illinois, she hung a huge canvas from the ceiling of her art studio. Large scale paintings are a defining characteristic of Jessica's artwork, the study of which, along with abstract expressionism and oil painting, began at NDSU. One of her professors introduced her to the painter Joan Mitchell, and Jessica's passion for big art grew from there.

But, voices of naysayers rang loudly as she stared at that blank canvas. What was she doing with her life? Did she really want to create art? She was too nervous to touch the canvas, so it sat for nearly a year. Finally, she made her first mark, then a second, and so on. When it was finished, she posted a photo of it on social media.

"I was really proud of this piece, but I didn't know where it was going to go or what I would do afterward," Jessica said.

Jessica's faith in the universe and timing came to fruition in the form of a message from fellow NDSU alumna and architect Kristi Hanson '87.

"Kristi was like, 'I have the perfect place for this — a client's home. I'm flying in tomorrow. Don't sell this. I want to see it in person,'" Jessica recalled. "I was so excited. I met her and she bought it and put it in a client's home in Seattle. That started a relationship with that client that continues to this day. I've done multiple pieces for their different homes, and they've introduced me to other clients. Kristi is another woman doing great things and who is strong in the world,

and she believes in what I'm doing. There's a different confidence that comes with those connections."

As a career artist, Jessica must balance the questions, "Am I creating to sell? Am I not?"

"There's that dance in life you have to figure out. This is my career. This is my livelihood. I'm not just doing this on the side," Jessica said. "Yet, I still have to make work that feels like me and pushes my boundaries."

Through self-love and determination, Jessica continues to expand her craft. She grew up with dyslexia, but what others saw as a trait that would hold her back, Jessica credits as being part of her success.

"It didn't come easy, and this career isn't easy," Jessica said about her determination to persevere. "Anybody who has started something on their own knows it's never easy. It's how you pick yourself up after failures, it's how you keep going that matters."

Today, Jessica has clients across the country who include fellow NDSU alumni. She values the connections within Bison Nation and wants to pay it forward. She's president-elect of NDSU's School of Design, Architecture, and Art alumni advisory board and funds a visual arts scholarship. She tells current students, "What you have to create, only you can create and put out there."

ARTS LIVING



A. 120 INCHES BY 120 INCHES

Jessica started this piece three years ago, and it has been crumpled up, folded, hauled into the woods, and painted on in nature.

“That’s the beauty — it’s a work in progress,” Jessica said. “It’s wrinkled and cracked but it’s not destroyed. You don’t see those imperfections when you step back at this scale. I think that’s who we all are. If we look too much, there are imperfections in all of us, but that’s what makes us. When we step back and really take time to study, we see the beauty or can see something that provokes emotion.”

Jessica signs her work “J. Wachter” because she doesn’t want the audience to have preconceived notions about the piece based on her gender. She uses heavy brush strokes and black to convey power and strength. The uses of hot pink or “mac and cheese orange” bring a juxtaposition that completes the piece.

“I’m boundary-less,” she said. “The art can really control the room and take that power.”



B. PRAYER ON REPEAT

This three-canvas piece is a meditation on speaking goals into existence and staying the course even when things don’t happen according to plan. Jessica reflects that some goals take longer to accomplish than anticipated while others happen more quickly.

“It’s kind of this dance that you go through and then you repeat,” Jessica said. “There may be a break or a lull that feels not content or lost or needs a breath and then you get back on that rhythm. Art is a vulnerability. You can’t hide behind it. It’s out there and it’s put out there; it’s very transparent.”



C. I’M HAPPY AS I’VE EVER BEEN

“When the canvases are so big that I have to step back to see it all or be on a ladder to reach it, there’s something magical about that,” Jessica said.

The raw canvas of this piece provides a transparency unachievable with white painted canvas. Jessica uses color, texture, scale, and brush strokes to convey herself.

“There’s something different about this raw unfinished business. Is anything

really finished?” Jessica wondered aloud. “The fun part about this career is that these things were once all my dreams, and I never thought I would get to be living this life. I have to remind myself that at one time, these were just far-off goals and be present in that moment, but then there’s the realization that there is no glass ceiling, so now where do I get to dream?”

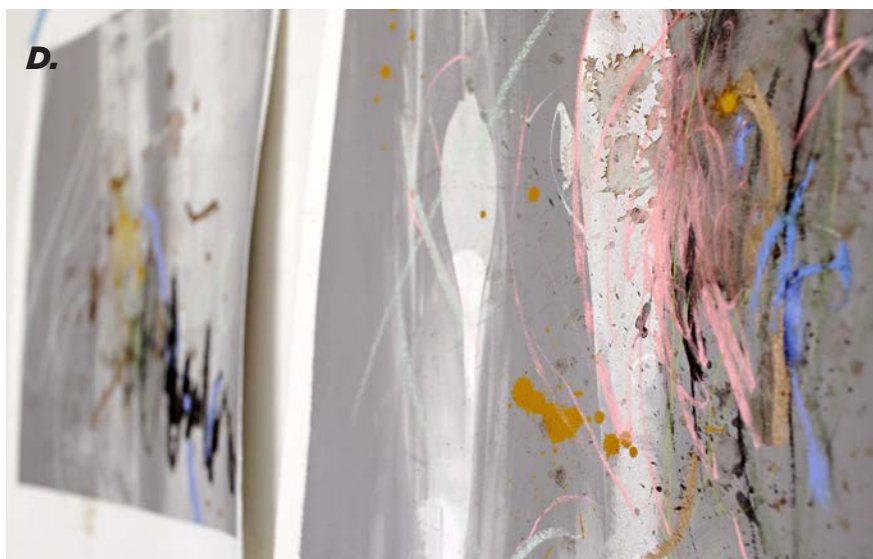




D. DAILY STUDIES

Jessica studied both painting and printmaking while earning her art degree. About two years ago, she started making daily art with prints she had from college. When those ran out, she started using plain white paper. To her, these are a “beautiful mess.”

“It’s taken since birth to create the way I’m creating today — the learning and the trial and error of that,” Jessica said. “I needed to create something daily in one shot and not spend years or months. There’s a different freedom, a different dance that happens, a different place that comes with that.”



E. WILL YOU MARRY ME?

Recently, Jessica started experimenting with new shapes of canvas. Inspired by her romantic relationship, she’s exploring the circular canvas. She used this piece to propose to her fiancé, Nicholas Barranger.

“I didn’t want to use a ring, but I like the round symbolism of eternity. Painting is my language,” Jessica said.

Jessica will keep adding to the piece until the wedding day and gift it to Nick — a new painting for their new life together.

“I’m really excited to be at this place,” Jessica said. “I didn’t want to be married before and really focused on my career. I’m glad I did and put that first, but I’m at that place now where I can have that next step. Every work is documenting a period in your life. It’s documenting an energy, an essence, an embodiment.” 🐘

NDSU'S NEXT

In 2021, NDSU earned recognition as one of the top research institutions in the country, but what does R1 status mean for the University's future?

Story by Micaela Gerhardt | Photo by Ann Arbor Miller | Illustration by Leah Ecklund

Odalis Garcia '26, a Ph.D. student in NDSU's psychology program, grew up in New Caney, Texas, a small town about 20 miles from Houston. New Caney experiences an average annual rainfall of 56 inches — compared to Fargo's average 24 inches — so when heavy rain began falling in August 2017, Odalis didn't think much of it.

But the rain was relentless, and the winds picked up, reaching sustained speeds of 115 mph. Water crept toward the foundation of her family's home. When it crested their front porch, Odalis's parents, José and Elidia, told her and her two younger sisters to pack a bag with clothes. They spent a few nights at José's co-worker's house, keeping a close eye on the news for storm updates.

That storm — Hurricane Harvey — was recorded as the wettest tropical cyclone in U.S. history. When Odalis and her family were finally able to return home, they found it in shambles. The walls were dilapidated, stripped of sheetrock. Their belongings were soggy and strewn haphazardly across the floor. The damage was irreparable.

"I always trusted my parents — they were great for letting us know that everything was going to be OK, that we were going to find a way to get through things," Odalis said. "But for my dad, seeing everything he's ever worked for wash away ... it was really hard on him."

José often struggled to get a good night's sleep, but after the hurricane, things got much, much worse. He was always tired. He spoke of a recurring nightmare in which everything flooded again. Odalis took notice — the storm had seeped into his subconscious.

TODAY, ODALIS RESEARCHES DREAMS

as a graduate assistant in NDSU's Personality and Trajectories to Health and Sleep (PATHS) Lab led by psychology professor Katherine Duggan. In the lab, Odalis is examining the relationship between stress, sleep, and nightmares. *Is there a correlation between days with higher levels of stress and nightmare frequency or severity, she questions? How does parental death and divorce affect children's sleep? Does discrimination factor in, or loneliness?*

She wants to find answers that might help her dad, and many others, find respite.

"From what I'm gathering in my own thoughts and observations so far, I think dreams could have a potentially good function, but that for some reason, like maybe after a certain amount of stress, they become maladaptive — these dreams are now disturbing," Odalis said. "I hope to be able to pinpoint different factors that lead to that, and hopefully that can be addressed for people in clinical settings so they can finally have a good night's sleep."

At NDSU, research opportunities like Odalis's are a foundational part of the student experience and a nationally recognized mark of excellence. In 2021, NDSU was one of only four universities in the six-state upper Midwest region to earn recognition from the Carnegie Commission on Higher Education as an R1 research institution, the highest achievable status for research universities in the U.S. Since 1970, Carnegie has been the leading



KT BIG MOVE

classification system for recognizing research activity excellence in higher education.

“Our R1 status really means students are in research labs where they’re working with scholars who are well-known and well-regarded experts in their fields,” Colleen Fitzgerald, vice president for research and creative activity, said. “I think football gives us a good analogy — we want to play in that top-tier division. In research, we’re in that top tier.”

But sustained R1 status is not a guarantee. NDSU has gained — and lost — its status in the past. Carnegie reviews each university’s research status every three years, so R1 is a goal NDSU is constantly working to uphold. In considering its rankings, Carnegie analyzes the number of tenured and tenure-track faculty, post-doctoral and non-faculty research staff, and students awarded doctoral degrees each year.

Carnegie also closely monitors research expenditures, or the amount of money universities spend on research in both STEM and non-STEM fields. Expenditures include grants and



Odalis Garcia is a first-generation student conducting graduate research at NDSU. She’s on track to earn her Ph.D. in psychology in 2026.

awards as well as philanthropic support designated for research. NDSU’s latest R1 ranking scored data from fiscal year 2020. During that year, NDSU’s research expenditures exceeded \$155.6 million. Of that, \$149.9 million was spent on STEM research, and nearly \$5.8 million was spent on non-STEM-related research.

“To reach this top status, a university must excel at both research and graduate education in multiple disciplines, not just one area,” Susan Sell, dean of the College of Graduate and Interdisciplinary Studies, said.

“At NDSU, we have 77 different areas of emphasis available for master- and/or doctoral-level training. This extraordinary depth and breadth provide a foundation for a diverse tapestry of research.”

In the Office of Research and Creative Activity, Colleen is working to identify gaps in NDSU’s resources and services so that the University can make its next big move.

“My vision for NDSU research includes doubling our research expenditures to around \$300 million so we can move forward as a maturing R1



research university,” Colleen said. “For us to succeed and reach new heights in research, we’re going to need revenue and support from every source — our state legislators, federal partners, industry, and alumni and friends of the University.”

Susan, in the College of Graduate and Interdisciplinary Studies, sees a few areas for improvement: more first-year fellowships would recruit more

yourself,” Mila said. “You’re going to fail, but you will have to decide why you failed, or maybe you didn’t fail, and you have to determine what your results really mean. It’s a great learning experience to defend your thinking and stand your ground, or to change your mind when you think it’s appropriate and go back and get different results.”

Many undergraduate and graduate researchers in the physics department

Studying in this nationally recognized research environment and receiving funding for conference participation and travel has been a motivating force for Odalis, who is just beginning her second year of graduate studies. Over the summer, Odalis traveled to Charlotte, North Carolina, to attend SLEEP 2022, a professional conference for sleep researchers, where she presented her research on “The

“When you’re working on a problem that nobody knows the answer to, what are you going to do?

It’s like walking in **the dark**. You don’t know whether your next step is correct or not — you have to rely on yourself.”

NDSU professor Mila Kryjevskaja

graduate students, while more dissertation-year fellowships would help retain current students.

“Graduate students are the workforce of the research enterprise,” Susan said. “Without students, we wouldn’t be able to support the grants (and associated expenditures) required for R1 status. My vision for the future of graduate research at NDSU is to provide more funding and professional development for our students and to continue modeling for them what it looks like to be a successful researcher.”

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF PHYSICS

Mila Kryjevskaja, the James A. Meier Junior Professor in the College of Science and Mathematics, sees how students who conduct research gain enhanced critical thinking skills and more independence. Rather than being able to look up the answer to a difficult problem (like Googling the answer to a question in class), she explained, research forces students to seek out answers independently.

As a researcher herself, Mila seeks the most effective methods for teaching physics to better prepare her students for careers as future physicists and educators. She describes how the process of experimentation places researchers at the edge of the unknown, which leads them to new knowledge and solutions.

“It’s like walking in the dark. You don’t know whether your next step is correct or not — you have to rely on

where Mila teaches have been supported with philanthropic funds as well as grants awarded by the National Science Foundation.

“Financial support is a great way for our students to feel valued, to be recognized, to feel accomplished,” Mila said. “It’s extremely important for moving forward, knowing that your work is valued.”

Colleen added, “As our students enter the workforce and bring the education, training, and expertise they’re getting here with them, it’s a return on the investment.”

FOR MILA AND MANY OTHERS, R1 status indicates that the University is a hub for innovation. It affirms that across disciplines, NDSU students, faculty, and staff are conducting trailblazing research to find new solutions to pressing issues at a local, regional, and global level — an environment that helps their work thrive.

“Being a part of the community where many other people identify as a teacher and researcher is important to me,” Mila said. “I mean, you feel it. You feel it when you come visit a department that is vibrant in research. You can see whiteboards in the hallway with diagrams and equations and people arguing about something. This is a sign of R1, this is a sign of an institution where people are passionate about discovering and promoting new knowledge.”

role of parental absence and parental conflict on child and adolescent sleep.”

“I was very excited when I saw that we were recognized as R1 because to me that means there are more opportunities to be able to conduct research, to be able to dedicate energy to research and know that it’s being appreciated and valued at the school. That can lead to great things in the world in general,” Odalis said. “With my own research topic, I look to help people, and I know my cohort mates and other people in my program have some great research ideas that are going to improve the world.”

Building a community of ambitious thought-leaders in multiple disciplines will help NDSU maintain and enhance its position as a destination for research and higher education.

“Everybody wants to be with the best,” Colleen said. “I think we know when we’re in a group of people who are the cream of the crop, we do better. We bring our A-game when we’re working with people who have brought their A-game too. That’s the kind of experience we want to continue to offer.” 🐼



NDSU

President Fast Facts

Since its founding as North Dakota Agricultural College in 1890, 15 presidents have paved the way for excellence at NDSU.

- 1890-1893 | Horace E. Stockbridge
- 1895-1916 | John H. Worst
- 1916-1921 | Edwin F. Ladd
- 1921-1929 | John L. Coulter
- 1929-1937 | John B. Shepperd
- 1938-1946 | Frank L. Eversull
- 1946-1948 | John H. Longwell
- 1948-1961 | Fred S. Hultz
- 1962-1967 | H.R. Albrecht
- 1968-1987 | L.D. Loftsgard
- 1988-1995 | Jim L. Ozbun
- 1995-1998 | Thomas R. Plough
- 1999-2009 | Joseph A. Chapman
- 2010-2022 | Dean L. Bresciani
- 2022-Present | Dave Cook**

LEADERS FROM THE CYCLONE STATE

President Dave Cook is the third NDSU president from Iowa. His fellow Iowans include former NDSU presidents John Shepperd and Fred Hultz. Acting president Robert Koob was also from Iowa.



HOMETOWN HEROES

Two NDSU presidents hail from North Dakota. L.D. Loftsgard was born in Hoople, and Jim Ozbun was born in Carson. Acting president Charles Sevrinson was born in Reynolds.

ONCE A BISON, ALWAYS A BISON

Two NDSU alumni have served as the University's president: L.D. Loftsgard and Jim Ozbun. Interim president Richard Hanson was also an alumnus.

DEGREES IN THE B-AG

Five former NDSU presidents had agricultural degrees, including John Shepperd, Fred Hultz, H.R. Albrecht, L.D. Loftsgard, and Jim Ozbun.



BRINGING NDSU INTO THE 20TH CENTURY

John Worst was NDSU's longest-serving president. He led the University for 21 years, from 1895-1916.



GALLERY OF THE GREATS

Three NDSU presidents have been inducted into the Bison Athletic Hall of Fame. L.D. Loftsgard, H.R. Albrecht, and Jim Ozbun earned honorary membership for making major strides toward NDSU's overall athletic success. Interim president Richard Hanson was also inducted in recognition of his success as a football athlete with NDSU and the New York Giants.

LEVELING UP

During Joseph Chapman's presidency, NDSU earned R2 status as a Carnegie Research Institution for the first time and moved from Division II to Division I athletics. NDSU gained R1 under the leadership of Dean Bresciani.



See archival photos of former NDSU presidents and find more fast facts online at

[NDSUFoundation.com/Magazine!](https://www.ndsu.edu/foundation)



N

North Dakota State University's 15th president, Dave Cook, has his eyes on the challenges and opportunities the University faces now and is committed to doing the right thing for the state's 1862 land-grant university and its students. President Cook envisions NDSU as a place where research, workforce, and industry intersect to create "global masterpieces."

"One big theme is going to be transforming. Not where we've been and not where we'll be tomorrow but how can we address these challenges and do things we haven't done before to reorganize, prioritize, and think about where we can go in the next 10 years and beyond," President Cook said, previewing what we can expect to hear in his upcoming inaugural State of the University Address during Homecoming 2022.

The president has spent months — even before officially taking office — in conversations with University leaders, legislators, and community members so that he can understand where NDSU has been, where it is today, and possibilities for the future.

"Dave's a great listener, and he's passionate," Dr. Katie Cook, the president's wife, said. "He is going to work hard to form teams of the smartest, most capable people and work with them. Hopefully, he'll be an amazing leader for them, but he doesn't need to be the leader of everything. He understands that doesn't make less of him."

Both Katie and President Cook grew up in Ames, Iowa, home of Iowa State University where about half the city's population is made up of college students. That highly academic environment was significant in inspiring President Cook to pursue a career in higher education.

"There's this part of growing

A PRESIDENT FOR TODAY, A UNIVERSITY FOR THE FUTURE

NDSU President Dave Cook has been on the job only a few months, but he has a mission to transform the University so that it may be successful today and well into the future.

Story by Nicole Thom-Arens | Photos by Ann Arbor Miller

up in a college town that becomes part of you and gets in your DNA,” President Cook said. “You see a community that cares deeply about education and how an institution of higher education changes a community and the people in that community. I’ve grown up with that, and I think I’ve always had an affinity for being around it.”

President Cook is a proud first-generation student. He talks openly about his struggles as a freshman in college and feeling like he didn’t belong, which motivates him to do more today.

“We have examples where first-generation students, Pell-eligible students, and students of color are not progressing and retaining in ways we’d like to see,” President Cook said. “What can we do as an institution to wrap the right kinds of services around them so they can see this as a place they belong and feel important?”

With each degree earned and in every new academic experience, President Cook learned more about the nuances of higher education and programs that can help retain students and support them through graduation.

“I ran a branch campus, which gave me a good, strong taste for what being a president is about. It was a great laboratory environment because when you’re in a smaller branch campus, you must learn every element,” President Cook said. “A lot of presidents have taken a traditional path; I’ve taken a more nontraditional path, which has allowed me to understand all of these different functions.”

LAND-GRANT MISSION IN THE 21ST CENTURY

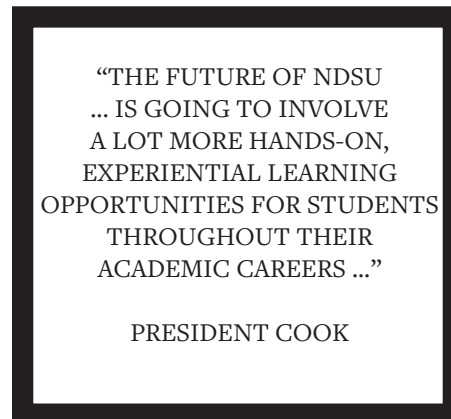
During July, the president toured the state as part of NDSU’s annual Field Days. Each year, the state’s Research Extension Center sites feature speakers, presentations, and tours covering an array of topics. From July 11-21, President Cook traveled from Streeter and Hettinger to Dickinson and Williston, from Casselton to Carrington, and from Minot to Langdon. He hosted public events in Bismarck, Watford City, Wahpeton, and Grand Forks. He met with legislators, business owners, industry leaders, and North Dakotans from varying backgrounds and communities.

“I had the opportunity to see the diversity of the state in terms of the geography and topography and the people,” President Cook said. “I gained a deeper understanding of the land-grant mission and what agriculture, in particular, means to the many stakeholders across the state — the growers and producers and so on. There is an intimate relationship between those folks and NDSU and how we’re working together.”

The two-week tour also allowed him to witness the deep pride people have across the state for NDSU athletics.

“One of the great things about this institution is the legacy of athletics. I think what athletics does for the brand, what it does for the pride, and what it does for the institution is going to be critical,” President Cook said.

Conversations with locals and legislators expanded beyond athletics and agriculture.



During his time on the road, President Cook gained a greater understanding of the value of the land-grant mission and how it can meet the needs of the state today.

“A lot of those conversations were about what we can do from an educational and research perspective to work with business and industry leaders and aligning with them for what their needs are,” the president said. “Workforce is a huge issue. We’re at a moment in time where we have a grand opportunity to think about transformation, and it’s going to happen with business and industry leaders. A lot of the tour involved listening to them about not just what they need now but really what we need tomorrow.”

Yes, industries across the state need

engineers, computer scientists, and nurses, but there are also great needs for liberal arts majors — people who can think on their feet and are adaptable to technology and innovation.

“There’s still a deep interest in what I would call traditional liberal arts thinking,” President Cook said. “They want people who are critical thinkers who can think around the next turn and see what’s happening, people who are great writers, people who are great communicators, and people who know how to work in teams. That’s traditional liberal arts — people don’t use that language, but that continues to be an incredible part of what we need to have in a new, uncertain world.”

The president is also interested in exploring NDSU’s role in career technical education (CTE). He sees opportunities aligning with pharmacy, telepharmacy, and radiologic technology.

“One of the things I learned during the tour is that it’s important for us to get out across the state to listen, engage, and hear what it is that people need and want so we are truly on the cutting edge of thinking about those critical issues. That’s an incredibly important piece, especially for a land-grant university,” President Cook said. “The future of NDSU, and in higher education in North Dakota and beyond, is going to involve a lot more hands-on, experiential learning opportunities for students throughout their academic careers so that they hit the ground running and are career ready.”

In late 2021, NDSU regained an R1 designation by the Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education, an indicator that the University is operating at the highest possible level regarding research.

“NDSU being an R1 is very important,” President Cook said. “How do we invest and build the right culture to be an R1 and be one that’s excelling? Right now, we’re there and we’re proud, but we’ve got to do some things differently if we really want to take it to the next level. That’s going to be a priority.”

Being an R1, according to the president, is a north star for the University. The designation is something to strive toward and it helps recruit top faculty members whose work continues

to enhance the research happening at NDSU. Success in research impacts students and staff, the region, and beyond.

THE BUSINESS OF HIGHER EDUCATION

Enrollment and revenue are major challenges facing higher education across the country; NDSU is no exception. The North Dakota Legislature factors enrollment into the funding formula for each of the state's universities and community colleges. Enrollment and the budget go hand in hand, and it's been widely publicized that NDSU's enrollment has been declining. As a result, the University has seen a decrease in funding and faces a significant budget shortfall. These issues are certainly challenges, but President Cook sees opportunities within these difficulties.

“WE NEED TO BE LOOKING CLOSELY AT THE CURRICULA AND CHANGING IT TO MAKE SURE STUDENTS ARE PREPARED FOR WHERE THEY NEED TO GO.”

PRESIDENT COOK

In part, President Cook can see opportunity in the challenges because of the work done prior to his arrival. In early 2021, NDSU partnered with Huron Consulting Group to conduct a comprehensive Academic Program Prioritization Assessment. Over several months, Huron worked closely with the University to assess the current program portfolio, market position, and opportunities for growth to develop recommendations in support of key strategic initiatives. The final report was released in May 2021 and will be used to guide decisions moving forward.

“I'm starting to help people understand and appreciate where we're at. We have some hard things to do this fall and next year that are critical in thinking about how we position ourselves for the future,” President Cook

said as he listed issues like efficiencies, responding to the marketplace, and recruiting and investing in a workforce.

“I think a modern president has to embrace those principles. At the same time, we're an institute of higher education that is advancing knowledge, advancing education, investing in students, and thinking about and asking hard questions that don't have immediate answers that people can see the impact of — but maybe someday will,” the president continued. “It's a balancing act for us to be as well-rounded as we absolutely can while being true to our mission.”

As the president begins identifying priorities for the University, philanthropic support remains crucial in enhancing the NDSU experience.

“Donor support for the University in recent years is exciting,” President Cook said. “I look forward to working with benefactors and learning more about how their passions may align with NDSU's needs as we move forward. Philanthropy, for example, can help close the gap in areas of research and scholarships, which creates new opportunities that help get us where we need to be.”

A PLACE WHERE STUDENTS SUCCEED

Creating a place of belonging for all students is critical for the Cooks. President Cook's experiences as a first-generation student motivate him to work at creating welcoming environments for first-generation students, Pell-eligible students, and students of color at NDSU now and in the future. Katie is an educator at heart. She holds a Ph.D., has been a special educator in K-12, and was faculty at the University of Kansas. She acts with passion and has a deep understanding of the student experience.

“I am really proud of what Katie has accomplished,” the president said. “She is compassionate and caring. The work she has done educating children with autism and/or challenging behaviors, as well as coaching fellow teachers, is incredible. I'm excited to see how she grows into this new role, and I know she'll bring the same care and passion when working with the NDSU community.”

As parents, the Cooks have an

“REALLY THINKING ABOUT STUDENT SUCCESS — ESPECIALLY FOR SOME OF OUR MOST VULNERABLE — CREATES AN EVEN BETTER CULTURE FOR US MOVING FORWARD.”

PRESIDENT COOK

appreciation for the challenges students face today. They have three children, Gage (23), Peyton (20), and Ella (19).

“They've grown up in a completely different world than we're used to. There are significant challenges around mental health, and the world around us now is way different than what we dealt with as college students,” President Cook said about today's traditional college student. “Seeing what our kids and their friends have had to deal with, what their struggles are, what's exciting to them, how they view the world, and what they see as possibilities are a big part of helping me, I think, do this job and hopefully do it better.”

President Cook's passion for the mission of higher education runs deep. He believes education changes lives — he looks at himself and Katie as prime examples. He also understands different students face different obstacles and the University must be responsive to meet students where they are, help them rise to the challenges they face, and get them ready for an ever-changing future.

“Really thinking about student success — especially for some of our most vulnerable — creates an even better culture for us moving forward,” the president said.

Since his official first day in office on May 17, 2022, the president has welcomed each day as an opportunity to grow his perspective. He's embracing the challenges while focusing on what's ahead with Midwestern grit and a positive attitude.

“This really is fun. It's hard, but it's fun,” President Cook said. “I am constantly learning something new about North Dakota and the University that makes me proud to be in this role.” 🍌



President Cook will deliver his inaugural State of the University Address on Friday, Sept. 30, 2022. You can read more about President Cook and Dr. Katie Cook in “Q&A with the Cooks” at [NDSUFoundation.com/Magazine](https://www.ndsu.edu/foundation/magazine).

FACING THE UNKNOWN

Senior years are full of unknowns, but COVID-19 brought unprecedented challenges to new graduates. For Gwen Toay '20, it led to an unexpected career that gave her the confidence to take the next step for her future.

Story by Nicole Thom-Arens | Illustration by Leah Ecklund

In

January 2020, Gwen Toay '20 was looking forward to her final semester at NDSU. She was involved in several student organizations and a member of the Alpha Gamma Delta sorority, so spring semester began with prospective senior celebrations, events, and formals. There was a lot to look forward to, but everything changed in March in a surreal way.

"It was a Thursday before spring break; I had two classes that day," Gwen remembered. "I was in my morning class when we got the email from the president saying we were going to virtual learning for two weeks after spring break. Both of my professors were like, 'This is probably the last time I'm going to see you.'"

Gwen couldn't believe what they were saying. These were the strategic communication professors she'd had for years. How could this be the end — so abruptly? She continued with her day and went to work at the McGovern Alumni Center. She was a guest service representative at the time and often worked during events in the building. She and her co-workers speculated about the mysterious virus that was sweeping the nation, but no one knew what the future would hold.

"Two weeks later, I didn't have a job anymore. It was mid-March, and I was terrified," Gwen said. "I didn't know what the future was going to look like. As a senior in college, I was trying to figure out what I was going to do after graduation. I was applying for jobs at the time, and they all stopped hiring."

Without a job or any prospects, Gwen faced financial uncertainty for the first time in her academic career. She immediately applied for funding through NDSU's Student Emergency Fund, which helped her make rent payments and brought a bit of comfort during a crisis.

"It provided a little bit of a breather during that time when it felt like there wasn't time to breathe," Gwen said. "Receiving that aid changed a lot of things for me."

With support, Gwen was able to face her future — unknown though it may have been. She was healthy and safe, and she had what she needed to finish her coursework virtually and earn her degree. That's why the Student Emergency Fund was created in 2016, "to provide funds to help students who encounter an unforeseen financial emergency

or crisis that would otherwise prevent them from staying in school and progressing toward a degree."

At the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, many students received funding that helped them finish the semester, and since its establishment, the Student Emergency Fund has distributed more than \$122,400 to NDSU students in sudden need.

"That funding meant a lot because even with the uncertainty at that time, so many people were still willing to donate to so many students," Gwen said.

As graduation neared and a 21-year-old Gwen learned to balance the uncertainties around her, she leaned into her natural charisma and optimism and took a chance on a career she never imagined herself in — real estate.

"When I started, it was really hard. It takes a lot of work to find

success in that field, and it wasn't something I planned on doing or necessarily what I wanted to do, but I knew I needed a job and I found myself there. I wouldn't change it for the world," Gwen said. "Coming in and not knowing anything and then turning it into a really successful career right out of college, I remember thinking, 'I could do any job.'"



For

two years, Gwen gave her all to her newfound career in her home city of Fargo, North Dakota. She learned quickly, rebounded from failure, succeeded, and grew her confidence, but she wasn't following her heart. During her underclassman years at NDSU, Gwen formed a passion for philanthropy as a Bison Ambassador. She wanted a career in fundraising at a big university.

In May 2022, Gwen accepted a position as a development specialist at the University of Minnesota Foundation working in partnership with the Mesonic Cancer Center and M Health Fairview. Gwen's mom is a cancer survivor and her grandpa passed away due to cancer in early 2022, so the chance to work in development and fundraise for cancer research was too big an opportunity to pass up.

"I love Fargo; it was really hard to leave," Gwen said. "My education and my

experiences at NDSU have carved out the path of my career. I am only in development and want to be in development because of my experience at NDSU."

Gwen's short time living outside her home state has reinforced for her what it means to be from North Dakota.

"When you leave — no matter where you go — you realize, 'Oh yeah, I'm from a special place.' The most successful people are the ones who don't need to be asked to do something; they just work hard. Not everyone has those values."

The hard work, dedication, and kindness she grew up with in Fargo resonated through her time at NDSU

and her first career at Hatch Realty.

Throughout her life, Gwen has practiced showing up, doing the job, and doing it well. She looks back at her time of need with gratitude and is investing in future NDSU students today by making a gift to Bison Ambassadors on Giving Day.

"My hope is that every student who goes to NDSU has a great experience, and if they did, I think it's important to look back and support the things that made you who you are today," Gwen said. "Being able to be involved in *In Our Hands: The Campaign for North Dakota State University* as a student solidified what I wanted to do with my life. Trying to stay involved and make an impact after graduation is really important."

Numerous crises can impact students throughout their academic career. If you'd like to support the NDSU Student Emergency Fund, visit NDSUFoundation.com/Donate/Student-Emergency-Fund. 🐾



A Journey to Inclusivity

In the U.S., more than 25% of adults have some degree of disability. NDSU professor Kwangsoo Park is conducting research to create a more inclusive society for all.

Story by Micaela Gerhardt | Photo by Ann Arbor Miller

Kwangsoo Park, associate professor of hospitality and tourism management, remembers being 10 years old and standing at the base of Geumosan, a mountain in South Korea, beside his dad and older brother. They each carried a water bottle and two uncooked sweet potatoes for hiking fuel.

Standing before the mountain, Kwangsoo felt small but mighty. His dad, a retired military officer, took Kwangsoo and his brother on adventures across South Korea every summer, often with minimal supplies. Because there was no path to follow, they had to carve their own way to the top of Geumosan. The climb was treacherous, and by the time they descended, it had taken practically an entire day.

For Kwangsoo, travel plays a pivotal role in quality of life, but when he reflects on some of his most impactful experiences, like climbing Geumosan, he recognizes they weren't very inclusive or accessible.

As the inaugural Anne Stegner Endowed Professor in the College of Human Sciences and Education, Kwangsoo hopes to conduct research that will lead to more inclusive and accessible experiences in the hospitality and tourism industries so that people with disabilities can enjoy traveling without any barriers. His research focuses on how society can be more universally accommodating versus how an individual with

a disability can be medically treated or rehabilitated

“For example, if we didn’t have stairs — if no one actually invented stairs — it would be all ramps. It’s simply accessible, right?” Kwangsoo said. “So rather than thinking about, ‘You are in a wheelchair, so you need a ramp, or you need an elevator,’ if our society made physical or environmental things accessible, we wouldn’t even have to say who is able or disabled.”

His findings will be imperative for everyone. Not all disabilities are physical, visible, or disclosed. Plus, ability fluctuates. Throughout a person’s lifetime, their cognitive and physical abilities can change due to injury, illness, lifestyle, or aging.

Kwangsoo’s inclusivity and accessibility research is supported by his named faculty position. Anne Stegner ’49, who established the endowment through estate giving, earned her NDSU degree in textiles and clothing. Like Kwangsoo, she loved to travel. Anne skied in the Swiss Alps and fished for salmon at her cabin in Shawl Bay, British Columbia, while pursuing career opportunities across the country. Her obituary describes a spirited, trailblazing woman who “was a jet-setter before that term even existed.”



Anne Stegner

Anne’s gift was enhanced by matching funds from the North Dakota Challenge Grant, which leverages private gifts with a partial state match to advance higher education in the state. Since the Challenge Grant’s inception during the 2013-2015 biennium, the state has

matched philanthropic support at NDSU to the tune of \$20.35 million. These matching dollars have enhanced scholarship funds, named positions, and infrastructure.

Kwangsoo received Anne’s philanthropic support just as he reached a pivotal turning point in his research. When one of his students asked a question about accessibility for people with mobility limitations at events, it illuminated an area that Kwangsoo felt deserved more attention and research in the hospitality and tourism industries — as well as in the world at large.

“That question sparked many more questions, and I found that while more than 25% of adults in the U.S. have certain degrees of disabilities, accessibility is still lacking,” Kwangsoo said, referencing data from the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). “As a scholar, I started to think, ‘I have to do something for those who aren’t really well accommodated.’ I started to strategically think about how I could use the Stegner Endowment to move forward with that research.”

The Stegner Endowment granted Kwangsoo the funds to support two student research assistants. First, Kwangsoo worked with a post-doctoral student from Texas A&M University and conducted a study to observe how people without disabilities perceived and reacted to inclusive service situations in the hotel and event industries.

“How often are you traveling? Maybe once or twice a year. It’s a really small amount of time, right?” Kwangsoo said. “But the impact of those experiences is way bigger — an individual’s quality of life or mindset can be dramatically changed.”

When the COVID-19 pandemic hit, Kwangsoo’s research shifted toward a digital focus. He hired Hong Kyun Jeon ’20, a master’s student from NDSU who studied software engineering. Together, they measured web content accessibility and collected data from travel, restaurant, and event management websites.

“I started to think about how people with disabilities have been communi-

cated with and how they are learning about what’s going on — that was the internet. So what if those web pages are not accessible?” Kwangsoo asked. “That’s why I started to think about web content accessibility.”

In his findings, Kwangsoo identified some conflict between accessibility and current web design aesthetics.

“We need some negotiation between ‘fancier’ design versus accessible design,” Kwangsoo said.

NDSU benefactors have established 38 named positions at NDSU. These positions are critical for recruiting and retaining world-class educators and researchers.

In order to make progress, the 75% of U.S. adults who do not identify as having a disability need to advocate for and implement universal design in both digital and physical spaces.

“According to the social model, we need to change society,” Kwangsoo said. “Any barriers or any inaccessible things are made by whom? People without disabilities, so those people have to be educated.”

Kwangsoo frequently discusses opportunities for accessibility with his students, and he serves as a committee member on the President’s Council for Diversity, Inclusion, and Respect to continue advancing conversations about accessibility at NDSU. He also plans to collaborate with other NDSU scholars to develop educational programming for K-12 students that will raise more awareness about accessibility and inclusion.

“Based on my research, I would like to continue to educate our students to think about accessibility issues — how they can operate and manage an accessible tourism site or hospitality business, for example,” Kwangsoo said. “That way, our students and future students can actually make our society more beautiful and accessible.” 🐾

VOICES OF NDSU

HOMECOMING:

AT THE GAME, ON THE ROAD, FROM AFAR, WITH FAMILY

Members of the NDSU community share what it means to come home.

What does homecoming — the game, the week, or the feeling — mean to you? Share your story by visiting “Voices of NDSU” at NDSUFoundation.com/Magazine. Select submissions may be published on our digital magazine site!



As the director of athletics, Homecoming is one of my favorite weeks of the year. It’s a popular time for coaches to bring recruits to campus. We want recruits to see that NDSU is a really special place, that the community is involved, and that athletics is important here. Homecoming is a great way to showcase that.

It’s the week people circle on their calendar. Bison Nation genuinely cares, and they invest in the University, whether it’s athletics or other areas. They want to see their institution, their alma mater, their hometown team have success.

I always say what we do at NDSU matters, but the Homecoming game has a different feel. There’s a buzz all week, and it’s important to make it a really special time for our current students, our recruits, and all the people who are coming back to campus. Homecoming represents so much of what makes NDSU special: the collective pride and passion everyone has.

Matt Larsen
Director of Athletics



Home to me is the land. I was raised in the Turtle Mountains, so driving through the landscape between Fargo and northern North Dakota is very much a homecoming journey for me. It feels comforting to see the slopes, small lakes, trees, and rivers as I drive. I used to always drive the main roads home, but in the last 10 or so years, I’ve found new routes to take. I make things more interesting for myself by venturing off the beaten path.

One of my favorite family gatherings is our New Year’s celebration in the Turtle Mountains. Back home, there are two major cultures that thrive: one is the traditional Ojibwe, and the other is what they call Michif, which is a blend of Ojibwe and French lineages and the influence of the Catholic Church.

Lots of people used to come to my grandma’s house on New Year’s. People would go from house to house, and there’d be a soup called boulettes and bangs, which is a hamburger soup served with fry bread. Even though I don’t make it back home as often now, I try to make that meal yearly.

Here at NDSU and in our state, there are a variety of cultures. It’s important for everyone on campus to understand that what feels like home to you might still seem different to somebody from another culture. People come to our campus and communities with different ways of living, and we must be willing to listen to and welcome their ideas.

Jaclynn Davis Walette, M.S. '06
Director of Multicultural Programs



When I was younger, my hometown of Hickson, North Dakota, suffered from a flood. Many families were in a state of panic as their homes filled with water, but the North Dakota Air National Guard (NDANG) came to help sandbag. Watching this act of selflessness stuck with me, and I enlisted in the NDANG when I was 17 years old.

At first, I was so excited to leave home and gain some independence through the military, but I quickly realized how different life away from home could be. Different food, scenery, and accents made me feel homesick at first, but soon I was able to bond with others over our love of people and the things we value.

Being away from home has helped me shape a new way of thinking about it. I've found that even when I'm physically away, I can still enjoy the things I love most about my community. Once, I was going to miss seeing NDSU play in the National Championship game because I was training in a different state. I had been wearing my green and yellow to NDSU football games since I was 8 years old, so I was really disappointed. My friends knew it was a big deal to me, and they found a way to stream the game so I could watch it. It started out with just a few friends, but some people at training camp heard us cheering, so they joined in. Like me, they were seeking familiarity and a sense of comfort, and we were able to find it together by cheering on NDSU football. It showed me that home is not necessarily a place but a sense of belonging.

Photo by Tyberias Ford

Staff Sgt. Laura Biewer '23
Nursing Student and Bison Ambassador



My grandmother, Thora Bettina Nelson Dennis Johnson, was a leader before women were often given leadership opportunities. She graduated from NDSU with a degree in mathematics in 1934. Very few women went to college back in the '30s, so it was a pretty big deal.

Her first job out of college was as a teacher in Flasher, North Dakota. Partway through her first year of teaching, she was asked to step in as the school principal. She was only 22 years old. Later, she became an elected official. She was an inspiration for our entire family.

I graduated from NDSU in 1983 — 49 years after my grandmother graduated. She wanted me to stay at NDSU for an extra year so that my graduation would fall on the 50th anniversary of her own graduation, but I was anxious to start my career.

Instead, I attended my first Homecoming as an NDSU alumna alongside my grandmother, who was celebrating her 50th year as an NDSU alumna. We toured some of the older buildings she remembered from her time on campus, like Ceres Hall, Old Main, and Minard. She shared that when she was in school, NDSU's campus gates opened to a dirt path, and people came in via horse and buggy. When I was on campus, strangely, those gates had been shut. There was grass and flowers and it was very pretty, but the gates weren't open.

Now, when I come back to celebrate Homecoming and go tailgating with my nephew, who is a fourth-generation Bison and the eighth person in my family to attend NDSU, I'm really pleased to see that those gates have been reopened — that they're doing what they should be doing, which is representing an entry point and welcoming the next generation of Bison.

Kim (Dennis) Timmers '83
NDSU Foundation Trustee

McGovern Alumni Center
North Dakota State University
PO Box 5144
Fargo, ND 58105



JOIN THE FUN

Get involved! Celebrate and connect with NDSU alumni and friends at upcoming events throughout the next year. We hope to see you!

2022

Bison Bidders Bowl 41
Saturday, Oct. 1

Harvest Bowl Banquet
Friday, Nov. 18

NDSU Giving Day
Tuesday, Nov. 29

2023

Meet Us in Florida
Monday, Feb. 6

Meet Us in Arizona
Thursday, Feb. 23 -
Sunday, Feb. 26

Evening of Distinction
Thursday, April 20

Meet Us in Bismarck
Wednesday, May 31 -
Thursday, June 1