

2.C. The governing board of the institution is autonomous to make decisions in the best interest of the institution in compliance with board policies and to ensure the institution's integrity.

2.C.1. The governing board is trained and knowledgeable so that it makes informed decisions with respect to the institution's financial and academic policies and practices; the board meets its legal and fiduciary responsibilities.

The North Dakota University System (NDUS) was organized in 1990 to include two research universities, four regional universities, and five community colleges. The State Board of Higher Education (SBHE) was formed in 1939. [Article VIII, Section 6 of the North Dakota Constitution](#) outlines the composition of the Board, Board member qualifications, and the given authority for Board members. Section 5 notes that the SBHE was “created for the control and administration of...state educational institutions.” As such, the SBHE has final authority in matters affecting WSC but entrusts the day-to-day operations of WSC to the internal administration of the college in collaboration with the institution's faculty and staff.

The SBHE acts in the best interest of WSC and the other ten state educational institutions within the NDUS. [SBHE Policy 302.7](#) explains that the SBHE Research and Governance Committee must ensure “the effectiveness of SBHE governance through thoughtful, focused attention placed on strategic evaluation and improved SBHE performance.” This committee leads the assessment and improvement of the SBHE by developing and implementing orientation materials for Board members. The Board

practices annual self-assessment to meet its legal and fiduciary responsibilities while guiding the NDUS and its strategic plan.

The SBHE conducts a yearly self-assessment as a mechanism of continuous improvement within the NDUS. Meeting minutes from February 29, [2024](#) note the SBHE's self-assessment [timeline](#) along with its Board Development [Instrument](#); this instrument outlines criteria that the SBHE should meet and asks board members to list strengths and upcoming challenges that the SBHE will face. A 2021-2023 biennial review of the NDUS explains the SBHE's role in the NDUS and provides more information about various goals for the NDUS.

The SBHE creates a five-year Strategic Plan that includes all the institutions in the NDUS. Six goals are presented on the [2021-2026 Strategic Plan](#), and a [public dashboard](#) presents numerous data points to track the progress of those six goals. On page 15 of the [2021-2023 biennial review](#), between December 2020 and September 2022, 112 SBHE policies, NDUS procedures, and NDUS human resource policies were reviewed and updated to reduce the amount of “red tape” within the NDUS.

2.C.2. The governing board's deliberations reflect priorities to preserve and enhance the institution.

The NDUS was organized in 1990 to include two research universities, four regional universities, and five community colleges. As the governing board of these various higher education institutions, the SBHE acts as the policy-making body for the entire NDUS. As stated in [SBHE Policy 100.4](#), the mission of the SBHE is “To enhance economic growth, social vitality, and quality of life for North Dakota through the discovery, sharing and application of knowledge.” This shows that the governing board's deliberations reflect the priorities of the institution.

2.C.3. The governing board reviews the reasonable and relevant interests of the institution's internal and external constituencies during its decision-making deliberations.

The SBHE acts as the policy-making and advocacy body for two research universities, four regional universities, and five community colleges within the state of North Dakota. [SBHE Policy 100.4](#) notes that the SBHE's mission is "to enhance economic growth, social vitality, and quality of life for North Dakota through the discovery, sharing and application of knowledge." The SBHE considers the needs of WSC during its deliberations while balancing them against the needs of other NDUS institutions. Multiple voices may be heard at the SBHE by designated faculty, staff, or student representations from WSC; legislators also attend SBHE, and members of the public are often present, too. This ensures that WSC's internal interests are voiced and that external constituents may also add to SBHE discussions.

The SBHE's approval of WSC's masterplan shows the reasonable and relevant interest in WSC's institutional wellbeing. [WSC's 2021-2022 masterplan](#) explains the need for trained healthcare workers throughout western North Dakota and eastern Montana and plans for a new healthcare training facility to be built on WSC's campus. In addition to a new physical space, existing healthcare programs would be enhanced, and new healthcare programs are planned to add more educational offerings at WSC. [The SBHE approved WSC's masterplan on May 26, 2022.](#)

2.C.4. The governing board preserves its independence from undue influence on the part of donors, elected officials, ownership interests or other external parties.

Any member of the SBHE, like every employee within the NDUS, is expected to follow SBHE policies and procedures. [SBHE Policy 100.5](#) lists the core values of the SBHE, one of which specifically notes that "We expect all of our conduct, in discussions and actions, to be based on integrity, mutual respect, and civility, and that conduct is driven by the highest ethical standards." Further policies throughout the [300-series of SBHE Policy](#) outline expectations of board members and officers. SBHE policies regarding [Conflict of](#)

[Interest](#), [Political Activities](#), or [Internal Audit Charter](#) must also be followed by board members. Specifically for the Conflict of Interest and Political Activities policies, disclosure requirements are outlined in the policies to avoid and manage potential conflicts of interest; forms required for disclosure are completed annually and generated by the NDUS Office of Audit and Compliance.

2.C.5. The governing board delegates day-to-day management of the institution to the institution's administration and expects the institution's faculty to oversee academic matters.

The day-to-day operations of WSC are handled in a hierarchical structure, as explained in the [Organizational Chart](#). Presidential responsibilities are outlined in [SBHE Policy 305.1](#), and the college president is the point of contact between WSC and the State Board of Higher Education. The WSC President delegates managerial tasks to various members of the institution to ensure efficient operations across campus. Most departments are led by a director or manager who serves on the President's Executive Cabinet.

Policies and procedures that specifically apply to academic matters are handled through Faculty Senate and Faculty Council. Faculty Senate is comprised of a small, cross-divisional group of faculty to discuss academic matters, including the creation, emendation, or removal of policies and procedures. Once drafted and approved by Faculty Senate, those drafts are reviewed and amended by Faculty Council. Student Senate may also be asked to provide feedback on certain policies and procedures that influence instruction, and the college president is the point of contact between WSC and the SBHE. The WSC President delegates managerial tasks to various members of the institution to ensure efficient operations across campus. More information about this process can be found in the [Governance and Continuation Process](#) graph.

Sources

- North Dakota Legislature, Article VIII: Education
- SBHE Policy 302.7: Research and Governance Committee
- 2-29-2024-SBHE-Agenda.pdf

- 202402INFO-RGC-2024 SBHE Self-Assessment Timeline with status.docx
- 202402INFO-RGC-2024 SBHE Board Development Instrument.docx
- North Dakota University System website, “2021-2026 Strategic Plan”
- North Dakota University System website, “Public Dashboard”
- NDUS-Biennial-Review-2021-2023.pdf
- SBHE Policy 100.4: Mission and Vision of the State Board of Higher Education
- WSC website, “Williston State College 2021-22 Master Plan”
- 5-26-22-SBHE-Agenda.pdf
- SBHE Policy 100.5: Principles and Core Values of the State Board of Higher Education
- North Dakota University System website, “300 Series – Governance and Organization”
- SBHE Policy 308.4: Conflict of Interest
- SBHE Policy 308.3: Political Activities
- SBHE Policy 306.2: Internal Audit Charter
- WSC website, “Organizational Chart”
- SBHE Policy 305.1: Institution President Authority and Responsibilities; Contract Terms
- WSC website, “Governance and Continuous Improvement Process”