

THE VALLEY CITY

THE OFFICIAL NEWSPAPER OF BARNES COUNTY

TIMES RECORD

Monday, June 5, 2017 — Volume 136, Number 109 — 75 cents

VCSU: What Waits in the Aftermath of Budget Cuts

By Ashley Limesand
trnews2@times-online.com

Valley City State University, like the 11 other North Dakota University System institutions, spent the first five months of 2017 keeping an eye on the budget status, gathering ideas, vetting and prioritizing those ideas, recommending the best solutions, leaving time for open comments from those affected, and finally making the decision on how to best reduce its \$25 million budget for the 2017-2-19 biennium by 20 percent.

Although the process was tedious, methodical, and often took a lot of courage, Director of Marketing and Communications, Greg Vanney states simply, "We are not happy to have had to go through this process, but we are not coming out of it complaining or thinking this is such a tough lot in life we have to lead here at VCSU."

"We are very proud of this institution and proud of the people and what we have been able to do,

and looking forward to continuing to do what we do."

VCSU President Tisa Mason agrees with Vanney and explains how VCSU tried to remain true to what they do throughout this budget cut process.

To start, Mason describes, "We set up a process that really involved campus and gave opportunity and high encouragement for everyone to be involved in the process. That was really important, but that also created a lot of transparency which sometimes is very challenging.

"Everybody thinks they want to know what is going on, but you know the saying, 'Sometimes you really just don't want to know how the sausage is being made.'"

While Mason kept an eye on the status of the legislative session, government leaders from the faculty, staff, and student senates were asked to create a process emphasizing what worked previously and im-

VCSU, Page 2

New National Guard Facility in Valley City Dedicated Thursday

By Heidi Harris
treditor@times-online.com

North Dakota National Guard members were joined by local, state and national officials Thursday for a dedication ceremony at the Valley City-based 231st Brigade Support Battalion's new vehicle maintenance facility and unheated vehicle storage facility.

The dedication ceremony began with speeches by guests followed by a ribbon cutting, refreshments and tours.

Col. Clark Johnson, director of facilities engineering, began the program by saying, "These facilities support field level maintenance and repair of the North Dakota National Guard's tactical equipment."

He added that the facility takes advantage of an energy efficient heating and cooling system and has efficient plumbing and lighting.

Other speakers included U.S. Sen. John Hoeven, Lt. Gov. Brent Sanford, Valley City Mayor Dave Carlsrud, Maj. Gen.



Heidi Harris/Times-Record

U.S. Sen. John Hoeven was one of the speakers at the dedication ceremony for the North Dakota National Guard's new vehicle maintenance shop and unheated enclosed vehicle storage facility in Valley City. The \$12 million project broke ground in June 2015 and now will service the vehicles and equipment of the North Dakota National Guard's 231st Brigade Support Battalion.

Alan Dohrmann, North Dakota National Guard adjutant general, Megan Edwardson of U.S. Sen.

Heidi Heitkamp's office and Rick Collin of U.S. Rep. Kevin Cramer's office.

Hoeven said, "There's no question hands down that we have the absolute

GUARD, Page 7

Follow us on

facebook

at Facebook.com/
VCTimesRecord



INDEX

Classifieds	6
Comics	7
Community	2
Contact	4
Education	5-6
Events Calendar	3
Lottery Results	3
Obituaries	3
Opinion	4
Public Notice	5
Sports	8
Weather	3

CONTACT US

701-845-0463
treditor@times-online.com
www.times-online.com



HELLO
Barnes County

Gail Davidson
Valley City

Farm Rescue Helps Sanborn Family



Ashley Limesand/Times-Record

Farm Rescue's team Ken (left), Kenneth, Levi, Lincoln (in front), and Kyle, along with Jim Berntson of the Sanborn Fire Department and Ron Rogers stand together before heading to the field to plant 550 acres of crops.

By Ashley Limesand
trnews2@times-online.com

On May 26 just southwest of Sanborn, N.D. Kent and Connie Lettenmaier welcomed Farm Rescue's help in planting their 550 acres of land after Kent's unfortunate fall leaving him with a broken

right arm, fractured ribs, and an inability to get his crops in on time.

After the accident, Connie says she contacted Farm Rescue.

When the day arrived for them to come and she had to help them find the place she recalls, "When they were coming up from Dickey and I had to show

them how to get here, as soon as I saw the tractors I was emotional. It's been very emotional."

Levi Wielenga, Farm Rescue's Equipment Specialist and Team Manager, says this reaction is something he has seen before.

"Yeah, it is like a huge weight, like 'how are we going to do this?' And

now it is okay. It is going to happen. It is going to get done," Wielenga describes.

Wielenga details the Lettenmaier's situation stating, "You have got a four week window and if you don't get (the crop) in you are not going to make it, and if you don't get ahold of custom seed-

ers early enough they are booked until it is not good to seed anymore."

That is where Farm Rescue steps in to help.

Farm Rescue has been "bridging crisis" in agricultural communities for 11 years and has helped over 420 families during that time. The program began in North Dakota and has expanded into South Dakota, Minnesota, Iowa, Eastern Montana, and most recently Nebraska.

Farm Rescue can help farmers with planting, harvesting, haying, hay moving, commodity hauling, and most recently added livestock feeding.

Wielenga says the organization is always looking for ways to expand and grow because "If you are not growing, you are dying, so you have only got one choice."

As for who Farm Rescue helps, Wielenga explains, "So our goal is to bridge crisis. We don't want to be a handout, we don't want to enable."

"We want to help an operation so the next generation can continue to farm," he further states,

FARM, Page 2

Take advantage of rates as low as
2.50%
APR*



My "Off-Road Adventure" Loan.

Find your consumer loan. Ask us how.

FC First Community
CU Credit Union

FCCU Valley City
115 5th Ave NE
(701) 845-4647

myFCCU.com

*Rate effective as of 4/3/2017. Loans subject to credit approval. Annual Percentage Rate of 2.50% available up to 36 months, credit scores of 730+. APR is subject to increase after account opening. Offer not valid on FCCU refinances. Limited time offer. Other terms and conditions may apply. Federally insured by NCUA.

FARM

From 1

“We want to see more sustainable small farmers that are in operation, and so we consider ourselves a bridge over crisis and we try to help people in crisis to bridge that gap to continue valuable operations.”

This includes coming in to help during times of major injury (such as Kent’s case), illness, or natural disaster.

About 50 percent of the time Farm Rescue gets connected with those in need through a family member Wielenga says, and the other 50 percent it might be through a volunteer or a business.

Wielenga’s love for the organization he works for is evident and he makes sure to recognize all his coworkers for their work as well as Bill Gross, President and Founder and Reuben Liechty, Director, but even more than that he takes time to stress the importance of the organization’s over 250 sponsors, almost 1,000 volunteers from around the world, and of course the fami-

lies.

Farm Rescue comes into a location, usually in teams of four, bringing their own equipment, sponsored by RDO Equipment Company, and their own trucks, sponsored by three North Dakota branches of Chevrolet, and they spend anywhere from one to three days helping the farmer.

In this case that involved planting 550 acres of land. Wielenga says in planting season Farm Rescue will plant up to 1,000 acres free of charge for a family farmer in crisis, and anything above that they will plant for a custom rate to account for added wear and tear of equipment.

Besides Wielenga, the crew helping Lettenmaier’s included Kenneth from Ky., Kyle from Moorhead, Minn., and Ken from Omaha, Neb..

Farm Rescue is always looking for more volunteers, stating that two-thirds of their volunteers are retired farmers, and one-third are just guys who “grew up farming and have it in their blood.” Volunteers are asked to commit at least a week of time and pay for their flight,



Ashley Limesand/Times-Record

An airseeder was used at Farm Rescue’s operation in Sanborn that helped the Kent and Connie Lettenmaier family put crops in the ground.

but once they arrive other costs are covered.

Besides the “incredibly fun toys” Wielenga says volunteers also will experience “the camaraderie and the feeling of when you give you get back.

“It is a beautiful thing God has built in us that the

more you give the more you receive. It really attracts some incredible people and I have been honored to know most of the volunteers that come year after year.”

He concludes, “It brings a lot of meaning to a lot of guys lives. I know when I

follow up they find a lot of fulfillment and a lot of joy. There is nothing wrong with that.”

Connie thanks Farm Rescue sincerely, and also thanks the Sanborn Fire Department for their help and participation and others locally who have made

an effort to help.

She concludes, “It has really been kind of a community effort.”

For more information on Farm Rescue go to farm-rescue.org, call 1-701-252-2017, or email info@farm-rescue.org.

VCSU

From 1

proving on what hadn’t. With the process used this time around VCSU hopes to engage the community earlier giving them more involvement and input.

Everyone on campus was encouraged to submit different ideas on how to make the necessary cuts. After receiving over 250 ideas the leadership team then treated all ideas equally and vetted them with what data was available to collect to determine which were the most feasible.

VCSU’s cabinet, minus Mason, then took the options and prioritized them before making a recommendation that was presented to President Mason and then presented to all those involved. Students, faculty and staff were given a little more than a week to comment and work through their issues with opportunities for face-to-face discussions with Mason.

“We made a commitment early on to really communicate with the students and we had principles in terms of really doing everything we could to not impact the student experience as well as student enrollment to the best of our ability,” Mason affirms.

When students and faculty were hearing stories of other campus’ students

finding out their program or their sport had been cut, Mason made sure to tell her constituents that they would hear directly from her if they were to be effected and that she would do her best to make adjustments.

After making \$5 million in necessary cuts, Mason said only 20 positions were eliminated, with only six being reduction in force and the rest being early retirements or eliminated vacancies, 26 positions impacted through reorganization, and there was no elimination of any academic program or athletic team.

Mason explains, “You can’t get through a big reduction without losing positions and it is very hard when you are a smaller institution because we don’t have wiggle room. We are already generalists and we already have people having to do multiple tasks within a job.”

Besides the lost positions, those who are being reorganized are having to do different tasks within their job description than before as programs and departments grow more efficient.

Mason further adds, “One of the things that we did, and the things I am most proud of is we were able to work with our students and not eliminate any academic programs or any athletic teams.”

She does say that the

theater minor was put on hold for three years, which wasn’t desirable, but the six students in the minor were given a year to finish if they wished and VCSU was able to work with the educational standards board to give teacher education students an opportunity to pursue a theatre endorsement.

Other cuts include a process to eliminate Myfolio, a platform used in education by students and faculty that charges a user fee per individual resulting in substantial savings. Also other IT efficiencies and consolidations with online services through renegotiations of contracts.

Mason says there were reductions in student labor, travel, and other miscellaneous areas where operations could be made more efficient. As was a state concern when the legislature was in session, revenue was looked at as well.

A one day furlough, or a day without pay, was considered as an option in the reduction as well, but at the last minute was determined unnecessary.

“We always budget conservatively on a flat enrollment, but we have continued to be blessed really with enrollment growth,” Mason explains. VCSU’s summer enrollment was again a record enrollment and fall enrollment is also looking promising.

She concludes, “In the end other than the minor that we had six students in all of our programs are fully operational and not one athletic team got cut. So there should be no impact on enrollment negatively.”

When asked how students, staff and faculty responded to the changes, Mason replied, “People came in and I think they were honest. We talked through some things, some things I had to say no to, but mostly we were able to get to solutions and I have not really heard more than that in terms of concerns.”

Vanney adds, “I think people were worried that

it was going to be much worse. We are obviously concerned because we know some of the people that were affected, you know nobody feels good about that, but I think in the end that people were accepting of the notion that something has to change.

“Even some of the people who were affected, you know, it takes courage to say, ‘I know it is affecting me but I understand that a change needed to happen to make this work.’ So I think in that regard people have gotten on board with the decision making and I think that is a function of the process that we were able to utilize.”

Compared to other campuses, VCSU’s approach may seem long, but Mason describes it as methodical and while some might see that as an advantage to get the best solution Mason also recognizes that it is hard.

“When you are hearing your positions, departments, programs, and the priorities on the list of 250 things it is a pretty humbling experience and it takes courage to be part of that conversation and do that with dignity and community with people,” Mason describes.

She continues, “I think overall there was pain, but I think we rose to the challenge. I think that is the kind of institution this is. We are innovative, and nimble, and we are strong, and we are a vibrant institution. We will continue to serve the state of North Dakota and in particular our students.

“I am pretty proud of everyone in getting us through this.”

Mason did recognize that state legislation, while in session, had “Extraordinary positive reactions” to wards VCSU and made it clear that “we didn’t get cut because we weren’t doing well, but we got cut because there wasn’t any money.”

During the legislative session rumors continued to float around about the possibility of losing some

NDUS institutions.

Although currently out of the woods, when asked if this was a concern in future legislative session Mason says simply, “Of all the things I lose sleep over, Valley City State University closing is not one of them. I just don’t see it happening. I think that we are going to continue to thrive.”

As for preparing for the future Vanney and Mason say they are closely monitoring the market, participating in interim legislative studies, continuing to look at efficiencies to make “data-informed decisions”, and they will focus on expanding enrollment in appropriate ways “that will continue to give us elasticity as well.” Mason says the foundation, consisting of alumni, businesses, and friends of the university, despite economic struggles, continues to grow and demonstrate their support.

If they should have to go through the process again, Vanney adds, they at least now have a place to start with their list of 250 ideas.

As for increasing revenue, the institution, like all institutions, is required to raise tuition four percent, but Mason says despite that increase they hope to continue to find ways “to keep this institution an affordable, accessible institution for our students.”

One such way the campus hopes to increase their revenue and keep costs affordable is through utilizing its new heating plant by BETA testing a new technology allowing the campus to use the steam from the plant to produce activated carbon, a product in high demand and in low supply.

Mason explains, “The heat plant is going to give us an opportunity to create an independent stream of revenue which has the potential of being a game changer for Valley City State University.”

She continues, “With the pro forma that they have designed, even with our expenses and paying back

the revenue bond, during that ten year period of that payoff, while we pay off and pay our expenses we will bring in an additional \$2.5 million of revenue and after that it could go from \$4.5 million or higher in projected revenue for the institution.

“This will give us more elasticity to absorb any cuts and more importantly invest in the infrastructure of the campus with deferred maintenance and innovative strategic priorities for the institution.”

According to Vanney and Mason activated carbon is in high demand and the market is steady and rapidly expanding so the potential for growth is large and could lead into countless opportunities for research and expansion into other kinds of energy sources.

Currently about 40 percent of VCSU’s budget is state appropriations, while 31 percent is from student tuition and fees, 116 percent is from gifts, grants, and other, and the remaining 13 percent is from auxiliary enterprises (ex. book store funds, etc.).

Even with these exciting new opportunities, VCSU still hopes to put a focus enrollment and the students.

Vanney concludes, “Because of out enrollment growth over time we have been able to cushion ourselves a little bit from some of the negative impact of the cuts in state appropriations. So the way that we have prepared going forward is to continue to work really hard to provide a place where people want to go to school and that is a community effort.

“Everybody pitches in or we all row.”

Mason agrees, adding about this entire process over the last five months, “Again, we have people coming together, thinking collectively, which I think empowers and creates more ideas. You know, that is how we are able to survive and actually I think thrive, which I know we will do.”

GET AN AD THIS SIZE
for your community event, summer happenings, special celebration, or any other need!

2x2
North Dakota Advertising Network

This ad runs in all 90 daily & weekly N.D. newspapers for \$7.00 or less! (full state and regions available)
Contact the N.D. Newspaper Association: 701-223-6397

Watford City Job Service ND
www.jobsnd.com
(701) 774-7900

1Day
June 14th
3PM-7PM
Rough Rider Center
2209 Wolves Den Parkway
Watford City, ND

1Fair