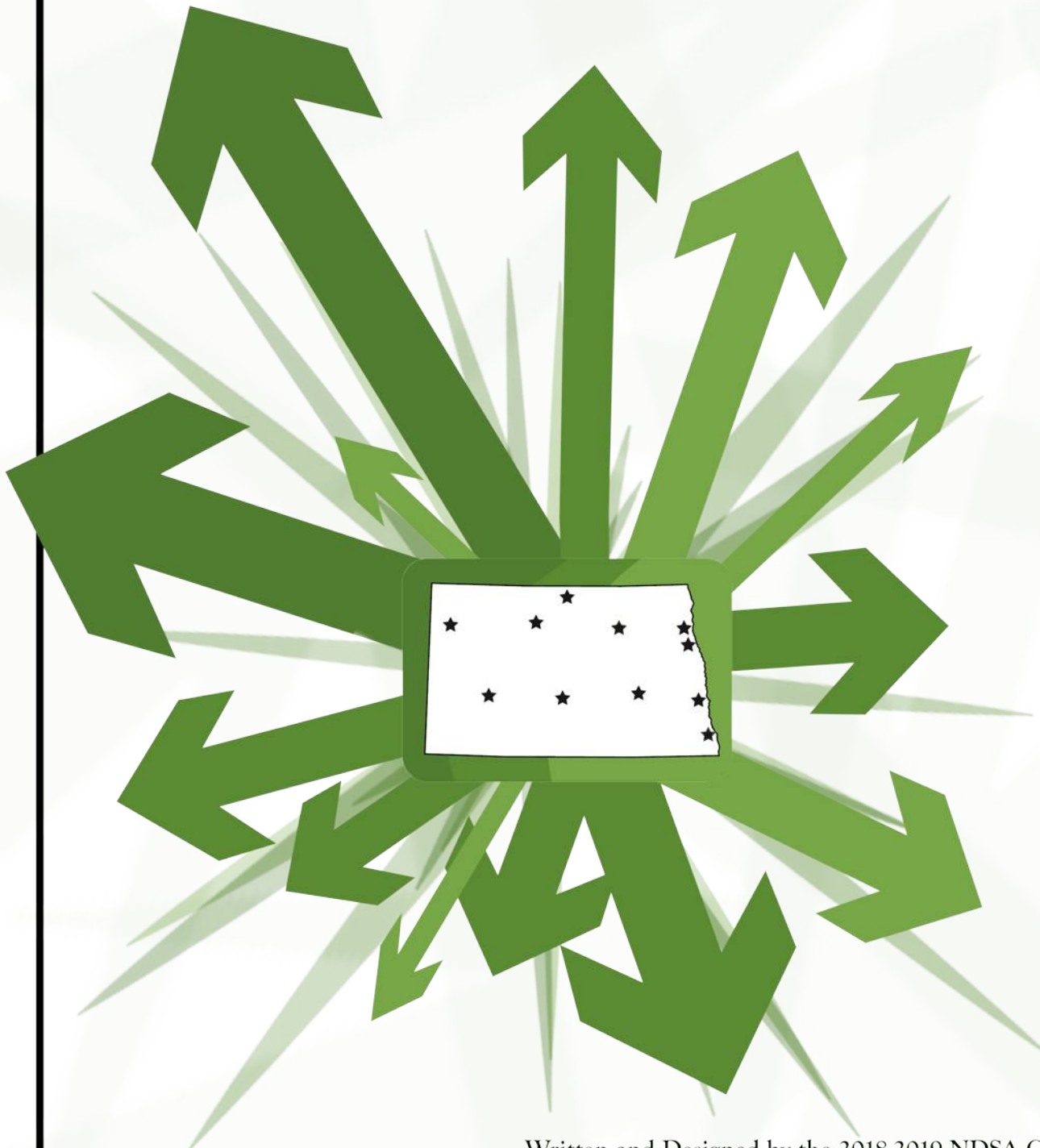


2019-2023 Strategic Plan

North Dakota Student Association



Written and Designed by the 2018-2019 NDSA General Assembly

2019-2023 Strategic Plan

NDSA

The General Assembly of the North Dakota Student Association adopted an ambitious agenda to direct the organization's work as it grows over the next four years. NDSA has approved strategic plans in the past, but this may be one of the first plans developed over a sustained period of time specifically to leverage NDSA's unique strengths and to address the modern challenges faced by state student associations.

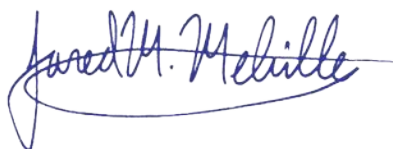
This strategic plan outlines NDSA's goals to influence higher education policy, empower students, pursue organizational development, collaborate with student government associations, and increase its awareness by the public.

I remain incredibly impressed by the commitment and dedication exhibited by the General Assembly throughout this strategic plan's seven-month development process. The futuristic thinking demonstrated by today's young leaders will ensure that our Student Association continues to create meaningful experiences for students for years to come.

In commemoration of NDSA's 50-year anniversary, I am honored to present the 2019-2023 Strategic Plan.

This strategic plan does not belong to any single individual, Executive Team, or even General Assembly. It belongs to the students of today and tomorrow. As we stand unified behind one vision, *The Voice of the Students*, NDSA will shape the future of higher education and the state of North Dakota.

In service,



Jared M. Melville
President of the General Assembly
2018-2019 Executive Team



Organization Graphic

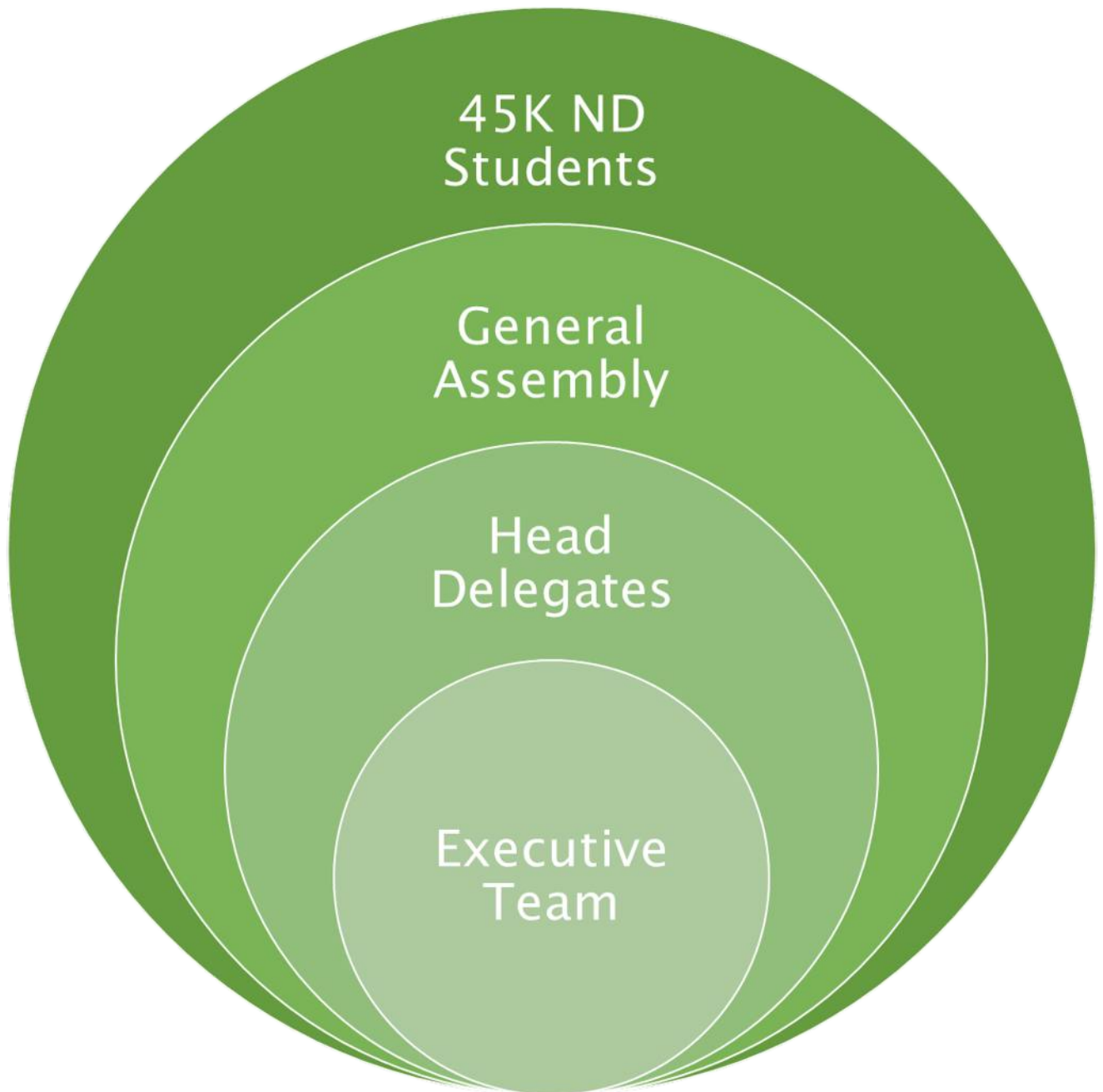


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About NDSA

On February 15, 1969, students from across the state of North Dakota convened in Bismarck to adopt the first constitution for what would become the North Dakota Student Association (NDSA). While NDSA has evolved, its general purpose has remained the same: to connect and advocate for the interests of students to statewide policymakers.

Today, NDSA represents the collective voice of over 45,000 public college and university students. As an organization funded by students with the singular interest of representing students, NDSA meets as a General Assembly on a monthly basis at its member institutions to discuss student concerns and to advance the common interests of North Dakota students. An Executive Team is elected by NDSA's General Assembly during the spring semester to administer the organization and represent the assembly to the State Board of Higher Education, state legislature, Governor's office, and University System.

Plan Development Process

In pursuit of attaining long-term organizational sustainability and legitimacy, the North Dakota Student Association unanimously adopted a strategic plan on November 13, 2018 during its monthly General Assembly meeting at Valley City State University.

Development of the 2019-2023 Strategic Plan commenced in May 2018. The newly elected Executive Team collected surveys from outgoing officers and conducted an extensive analysis of the internal and

external issues, challenges, and implications facing the organization.

Intensive strategic planning meetings were held on June 16 and August 8, 2018. The effort considered stakeholder feedback, reflections from General Assembly meetings in years past, the organization's previous strategic plan, and numerous discussions occurring within the Executive Team. The Team desired a plan that catered to the domains NDSA works with the most: government, the University System, leadership and organizational development, and Student Government Associations. These meetings culminated in the identification of five high-level goals to guide NDSA for the next four years.

These five goals were introduced to the Internal Affairs Committee during September's General Assembly at North Dakota State University. Members of the General Assembly later completed a survey aimed at gathering additional input, which the Executive Team used to prepare objectives and strategies to support the strategic goals in advance of October's General Assembly at Williston State College. October's meeting solidified the organization's six core values and their role in supporting NDSA's vision: *The Voice of the Students*.

NDSA's 2019-2023 Strategic Plan reaffirms the organization's purpose as a body representing students for the singular, dedicated interest of students.

Vision, Mission, Core Values

Vision: The central vision and purpose of NDSA is to be The Voice of the Students. This broad vision recognizes that NDSA represents and speaks on behalf of all 45,000 students in the state, regardless of which of the public institutions they come from. NDSA collects and relays the concerns of students to changemakers in the higher education policy ecosystem.

Mission: The North Dakota Student Association (NDSA) advocates for all students in the North Dakota University System. NDSA provides opportunities for student engagement, enhancement of the University System, and student education about higher education policy. NDSA facilitates inter-campus collaboration and communication to ensure that diverse student interests are represented in the formulation of higher education policy.

Core Values: The North Dakota Student Association adopts these six principles as core values:

Empowerment: We create an environment that develops transformative leaders by giving them the skills to succeed in everyday endeavors. Our students will become the leaders of today and tomorrow.

Transparency: We practice honesty, openness, accountability, and integrity in order to ensure that the public and all stakeholders—internal and external—are informed of the intentions and actions of NDSA. We will be a model of transparent government to inspire ethical leadership.

Inclusivity: We amplify the voice of students coming from diverse viewpoints and backgrounds to secure their representation throughout the development of higher education policy.

Collaboration: We embody an organizational culture built on cooperation and consensus building because the best ideas are the ones we work on together. Our work will support the best interests of students at all institutions.

Advocacy: We support the views of students. Our activism in policymaking discussions ensures the student interest is kept front and center.

Community: We create an atmosphere that embodies support, respect, and collegiality where students will forge lifelong connections and friendships that will help them during their time in higher education and afterwards.

SWOT Analysis

To shape the Student Association's strategic plan, the Executive Team completed an environment scan to assess the strengths, weakness, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) affecting the organization. Data was collected via surveys administered to the Executive Team, past officers, and the General Assembly during its September meeting at North Dakota State University. Additionally, the Executive Team expended a significant amount of time and energy in analyzing the issues, challenges, and implications facing the organization, which is reflected in the SWOT Analysis.

SWOT Analysis



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STRENGTHS

NDSA is the only organization with the capacity to represent the voice of all students on the state level

The Governor's Office selects one of three students nominated by NDSA to serve as the Student Member of the SBHE, giving NDSA a hand in public governance

A forum for educating students about the public policy issues of the day

Membership includes insightful people who care about and want to impact higher education

Diverse membership allows for broad representation and the continuous inflow of new ideas

Sustainable funding model

Multiple years of growth in trust, support, and legitimacy for NDSA



W

WEAKNESSES

Lack of equal representation by institutions on the Executive Team

Lack of involvement from students who are not a member of their campus' respective government

Lack of awareness among students not involved with the organization

Institutions do not collaborate or communicate frequently outside of NDSA meetings

Institutions with unique and different characteristics create challenges for collaboration and advancement

Communication and collaboration challenges arise with geographically diverse leadership

Numerous groups of students, i.e., graduate or international students, are not generally represented within the General Assembly

O

Highly active General Assemblies and Executive Teams would enhance the organization's strength as an advocacy group for students

Present a united front for higher education to state policymakers

NDSA is continuously receiving more opportunities to participate in activities and collaborate with the University System and state government

A sustainable organization provides a constructive environment for both leadership and professional development

Founded with the intent of elevating the interests of students, NDSA can champion the student voice today by adopting well-articulated positions on the issues of the day

OPPORTUNITIES

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Uncertainty of what higher education across North Dakota will look like in the future, especially with frequent proposals by policymakers to change the framework of University System governance

The assembly tends to focus on internal affairs as opposed to student affairs, complicating NDSA's ability to focus on higher education issues and instigating fractures within the assembly

External actors may seek NDSA's support on affairs not aligned with the organization's mission

Delegations in isolation could brew animosity that perpetuates an "us versus them" divide

One poor transition between Executive Teams would significantly undermine the organization's image and ability to provide quality leadership for several years

THREATS



Goal 1: Influence

★ Goal 1: Emerge as the most influential voice in the formation of higher education policy

NDSA's ability to influence advances the organization's vision as the voice of the students. Through public advocacy, NDSA exercises its ability to influence in order to support the concerns, needs, and issues facing all 45,000 students in North Dakota.

Objective 1: Exert a political influence in state and legislative affairs.

Political developments occurring at the state level wield a powerful impact on the lives of students. Therefore, it is imperative NDSA practices its core value of advocacy by striving to influence the policymaking process to ensure the best interests of students remain the prerogative of government officials.

- Approve a Legislative Strategy during the fall semester preceding a legislative session.
- Host a Higher Education Social during the biennial legislative session to share the student perspective with policymakers.
- Attend state government meetings during the legislative session and during the interim.
- Publish an open letter to the state legislature in advance of the legislative session that communicates the legislative strategy.

Objective 2: Foster a healthy relationship with the North Dakota University System.

Developing an intimate relationship with the NDUS allows NDSA to collaborate and pursue common objectives. The System Office works every day with higher education. Establishing rapport with the University System provides an avenue for NDSA to advance constructive changes to higher education policy.

- Invite NDUS staff to General Assembly meetings.
- Form NDSA task forces to advise and collaborate with the NDUS.
- Promote student representation on NDUS Councils.
- Attend meetings of the State Board of Higher Education.
- Advocate for student involvement with Envision 2030.

Strategic Goals and Objectives

Objective 3: Partner with stakeholders to broaden NDSA's reach and amplify the student voice.

Partnering with stakeholders broadens NDSA's reach, amplifies the voice of the students by demonstrating widespread support for organizational goals and interests, and increases the credibility of NDSA by showing other entities take the organization seriously.

- ❑ Maintain open lines of communication with college and university presidents and administrators.
- ❑ Build mutually beneficial relationships with state and local business leaders.
- ❑ Invite external stakeholders to NDSA meetings.

Objective 4: Build capacity to be informed about and influence policymaking on the federal level.

Advocacy on the federal level spreads NDSA's influence beyond the state of North Dakota. This influence can be accomplished through partnerships with other student associations, meeting with federal representatives, and creating task forces to track policy changes relevant to students on the federal level.

- ❑ Staff a task force responsible for being informed about discussions relating to higher education occurring on the federal level and proposing action that can be taken by NDSA.
- ❑ Organize an annual or biennial trip to Washington D.C. for student advocates to meet with federal representatives while in session.
- ❑ Build a coalition with other State Student Associations to advance the common student interest.

Goal 2: Empowerment

Goal 2: Empower a generation of transformative leaders

NDSA devotes itself to providing students the tools and knowledge to use their voice for themselves and others. Through compiling, explaining, and sharing information, students can transform the world of higher education. This coincides with NDSA's mission to provide opportunities for student engagement and the enhancement of the University System as an empowered group.

Objective 1: Stress the importance of civic engagement.

By stressing the importance of civic engagement, students will feel empowered to become informed advocates and voters about relevant issues. In order to achieve NDSA's mission of providing opportunities for student engagement, students must know how important it is to be involved in their communities and that their voice matters.

- Prepare a student voting guide that explains to students the steps required in voting in the North Dakota General Election.
- Invite guest speakers on civic engagement and public service.
- Generate a list of public service and civic leadership opportunities for students to pursue.

Objective 2: Connect students with opportunities to enhance their professional development.

Nearly all NDSA delegates aim to move forward to some sort of career requiring specialized knowledge, but will still branch out in various areas to become multifaceted individuals. By providing the NDSA delegation with opportunities to grow in a professional setting, they will gain the skills and expertise to be successful in their future endeavors.

- Support the development of an NDSA alumni organization to keep graduates connected to the organization and to enable professional networking.
- Design project-based Director positions for students to apply for to offer meaningful leadership experiences.
- Solicit requests from the General Assembly for specific presentation topics and guest speakers.
- Embody a culture of professionalism that supports Executives, Directors, and other members of the General Assembly with producing professional grade work applicable to their future careers.

Strategic Goals and Objectives

Objective 3: Promote congeniality between institutions and delegations.

When NDSA delegates are filled with respect and understanding for their peers, ideas may be shared more freely and frequently, which allows the assembly to work more productively. This further strengthens NDSA's strong values of collaboration and community and prevents conflict that would otherwise pollute the meeting space. The General Assembly cannot function to its full capacity without the input of each delegation.

- ❑ Cultivate intercollegiate friendships by organizing post-Friday meeting gatherings in the host community.
- ❑ Organize a formal icebreaker to occur immediately before Friday General Assembly meetings.
- ❑ Foster a friendly meeting environment by incorporating teambuilding activities during NDSA committee meetings.



Goal 3: Sustainability



Goal 3: Maximize operational efficiency and sustainability

The maintenance and the improvement of the sustainability and operations of an organization are key to its future success. Students also need access to an efficient organization to ensure their thoughts and opinions are heard. NDSA must then be sustainable and effective to meet student needs, to be the voice of the students, and empower students to influence their respective institutions and the University System as a whole.

Objective 1: Ensure that General Assembly meetings are enjoyable and serve the needs of all delegates.

If students do not find any level of enjoyment in partaking in NDSA, then students will likely not return to the organization. Providing a meaningful experience will create an environment where students will want to return and potentially invite other students as well. This would help increase and stabilize NDSA's attendance and membership.

- Implement governing structures that are efficient, transparent, equitable, and simple.
- Solicit feedback for improving monthly General Assembly meetings by distributing paper or digital surveys.
- Utilize Office 365 SharePoint as a hub for all NDSA resources and documents.

Objective 2: Set consistent standards and deadlines for monthly General Assembly meetings.

Standards and deadlines provide a structure that enhances organizational legitimacy. These standards ensure delegates receive information in a timely fashion so students can adequately prepare for meetings.

- Publish a preliminary meeting agenda two weeks prior to any General Assembly meeting.
- Publish a revised meeting agenda one week prior to any General Assembly meeting.
- Convene a Head Delegate meeting at least one week prior to any General Assembly meeting.
- Maintain a Hosting Guide that assists Head Delegates with hosting a General Assembly meeting.

Strategic Goals and Objectives

Objective 3: Develop curriculum to orient new members of NDSA.

Properly onboarding new members to NDSA rapidly reduces the amount of time required before they begin to engage with the organization. If new members do not feel comfortable with the organization, then they could feel lost or isolated.

- ❑ Prepare workshops to teach topics including parliamentary procedure, resolution writing, and recruiting students for NDSA.
- ❑ Have a short committee meeting during September's General Assembly that introduces new members to the organization.
- ❑ Develop a terminology guide that helps new members acclimate to NDSA.
- ❑ Encourage Head Delegates to brief new members about the inner workings of NDSA.

Objective 4: Commit to a strong transition between Executive Administrations.

Strong transitions ensure the work of one administration continues to blossom, rather than being lost and forgotten. This step is especially critical if the organization intends to successfully execute the strategic plan.

- ❑ Require officers to submit structured transition documents midway through and at the end of their terms.
- ❑ Mandate that each Executive Team member has at least one meeting with their elected successor before the end of the academic year.
- ❑ Maintain an archive that serves as a collection site for NDSA documents.

Objective 5: Promote diversity within NDSA.

Diversity within the General Assembly allows for a greater number of viewpoints and experiences to be heard. This allows NDSA to satisfy diverse student interests and better represent the voice of all 45,000 students in North Dakota.

- ❑ Ensure that the NDUS Diversity Council continues to possess student representation.
- ❑ Empower the NDSA Executive Team to work in conjunction with Head Delegates to develop an annual Diversity Action Plan to determine how online, graduate, minority, international, nontraditional, and other diverse student groups may be better represented within the voice of the students.
- ❑ Create task forces to serve as empowered platforms in advancing the needs of underrepresented populations.

Goal 4: Collaboration



Goal 4: Facilitate development for and collaboration between Student Government Associations

Collaboration through NDSA is a critical tool that allows institutions and the Executive Team to work together and better represent the voice of the students. The organization's structure fulfills its mission and vision by creating a medium for representatives from each of North Dakota's 11 public institutions of higher education to come together and collectively represent and advocate for all 45,000 students.

Objective 1: Empower the role of Head Delegates.

Empowering Head Delegates in NDSA allows them to promote the organization throughout their campus and be better leaders for their delegations, which in turn benefits the General Assembly.

- ❑ Curate articles, data, and other important information to distribute with Head Delegates for sharing with their constituents.
- ❑ Train Head Delegates as ambassadors of NDSA to their constituents, so they can also prepare others to be ambassadors for students.
- ❑ Allow Head Delegates to nominate students to the Executive Team for selection as a "Delegate of the Month."
- ❑ Support Head Delegates with using NDSA as a platform to unite their voice with institutions with similar objectives.
- ❑ Provide instructions to support seamless communication between Head Delegates and the Executive Team.

Objective 2: Promote the relationship between NDSA and Student Government Associations as a two-way partnership.

With the unique opportunity NDSA has, there must be a mutual cycle of meaningful information. Through the sharing of information with heavy sustenance, student government associations can process the information and give the appropriate feedback to NDSA. Such feedback allows the organization to move forward with any given topic thanks to the hard work of those that help the information cycle.

- ❑ Have the Executive Team attend at least one Student Government meeting at each institution.
- ❑ Provide a "debriefing" document to each delegation following General Assembly meetings to highlight important actions taken.

Strategic Goals and Objectives

Objective 3: Utilize Student Government Associations as a mechanism to promote the full representation of the student voice.

As an organization that operates from a statewide, high-level perspective, it can prove challenging to directly engage with students. Establishing working relationships with student governments supports NDSA's aim of directly impacting students.

- Encourage each institution to bring their full delegation size to every meeting, filling their delegation with at-large students as members.
- Promote the submission of resolutions to NDSA by Student Government Associations.





Goal 5: Increase the public awareness of NDSA

By increasing the public's awareness of NDSA, the organization can better represent and advocate for student interests and concerns. For students, the more they learn about NDSA, the more empowered they become to make change that will shape higher education through participation in monthly meetings and insight on policies relating to their student experience. In order to be the voice of the students, NDSA should work to make stakeholders aware of our voice to expand our influence and recognition within the public sphere.

Objective 1: Earn Recognition by offering resources and services directly to the students.

Offering resources is critical to increasing awareness because it demonstrates how the organization provides value to its stakeholders.

- Prepare a student voting guide that explains to students the steps required in voting in the North Dakota General Election.
- Encourage institutions to publicize NDSA as an organization they can join in addition to Student Government.
- Generate a list of public service and civic leadership opportunities for students to pursue.

Objective 2: Share NDSA's achievements with relevant stakeholders.

NDSA misses an opportunity to spread its reach whenever it fails to share its successes. Publicizing NDSA's triumphs allows relevant stakeholders to stay up to date, which builds a level of confidence in the effectiveness of the organization.

- Publish an email newsletter to be distributed to students following monthly General Assembly meetings.
- Create an annual report.

Strategic Goals and Objectives

Objective 3: Market NDSA in the digital sphere.

Using social media and the internet, NDSA can expand its awareness to reach as many students as possible. These tools allow students to learn about NDSA and discover resources that could improve their experience. NDSA should ensure that it maintains an active presence on social media platforms and its website to keep students and stakeholders informed.

- ❑ Post content to NDSA's Facebook and Instagram page on a regularly defined basis.
- ❑ Produce educational content relating to higher education for an NDSA YouTube channel.
- ❑ Maintain a professional grade website with content accessible to the public.



