



Chris Flynn / The Forum

NDSU President Dr. David Cook and UND President Andrew Armacost speak at TEDxFargo on Thursday at Brewhalla in north Fargo.

NDSU, UND presidents set rivalry aside for collaborative talk at TEDxFargo

BY GRANT HUBBARD
The Forum

FARGO

Embracing the “Thread” theme of this year’s TEDxFargo event, two area university presidents wove together a tale of two threads connecting across 80 miles of Interstate 29. The University of North Dakota and North Dakota State University have been rivals since 1894, with residents of Grand Forks and Fargo allying themselves with the Fighting Hawks or Bison, cheering for one and jeering the other. As it turns out, the presidents of the two schools have woven a tight bond, and they showcased the achievements both schools have contributed to making North Dakota a state everyone can be proud of, no matter which shade of green they show on their chest.

UND President Andrew Armacost and NDSU President David Cook took the stage during the second day of the TEDxFargo conference at Brewhalla on Thursday, July 24. They displayed right from the top of their presentation that they enjoy the rivalry. “When people think about our universities, the first thing that comes to mind is competition,” Cook said. “We love the rivalry; we think it makes our universities better.”

However, the NDSU president said, there is something much more important that these two schools share, “And that’s how our two universities work together to make North Dakota better.”

Armacost brought a large number to the forefront as their presentation kicked off: \$3 billion.

“This is the estimated economic impact of our two schools each year in the state of North

Dakota,” he said. “It’s about creating great citizens, it’s about creating great industry, great workers for the state of North Dakota. This number is great, but it’s much bigger than this.”

The duo’s first major talking point was the research the two schools do every year, as both are Carnegie Classification R1 research universities.

Having that title brings in over \$400 million between the two schools, they said.

“It puts us in the upper echelon of research universities across the nation; we’re very proud of that,” Cook said.

Armacost spoke about how the two universities help the health needs of the state, educating doctors, physical therapists, pharmacists “and anybody who’s contributing to the medical professions.”

“We have amazing opportunities to influence the health care of our citizens,” he said.

He also talked about a joint program called “Transcend.”

“This is an \$11 million federally funded research effort between UND and NDSU, as well as Sanford Health. This is to attack the state’s toughest medical issues, the things that are providing the most difficulty for our citizens,” Armacost said. “These are diseases like cancer, diseases like Parkinson’s disease. It’s psychiatric issues for the youth, including suicide, as well as binge drinking.”

North Dakota’s agricultural industry brings in \$41 billion annually, producing 14 of the top crops in the country, they said. That list includes the Dakota Russet potato, which they suggested the audience may have eaten without even knowing it.

“It’s one of eight that McDonald’s selected for



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NDSU President Dr. David Cook speaks at a TEDxFargo with UND President Andrew Armacost on Thursday at Brewhalla in north Fargo.

their McDonald’s french fry,” Cook said. “It’s an amazing commercialization story where we took something right here in the Red River Valley, thanks to the partnership of great farming partners in industry.”

According to Cook, the two schools are contributing to the NASA Artemis mission by researching how astronauts can grow food in space.

Armacost talked about how the two schools work in the energy field.

“You guys (NDSU) are involved in biofuels; we’re looking at the operations of our drilling rigs and how to make them more efficient,” he said. “In addition, we’re looking at rare earth elements and how we extract those valuable elements that power our technology.”

He also talked about both schools’ contributions to national security and defense, such as NDSU’s work on computer chips and UND’s work on unmanned aircraft drones and counter-unmanned aircraft.

UND has also launched two satellites, he said.

“Above the Earth, we had two satellites with UND’s name on them, circling the Earth. We had launched them in June, and the purpose of that mission is we take two satellites, separate them, and then bring them back together,” Armacost said. “They separated about 2 kilometers apart, then came back together. It’s the first time a university

has actually been able to pull together this type of magic of satellites in orbit.”

NDSU has been working in the biomedical engineering space, Cook said.

“We have actually been working hard to focus on breast cancer metastases,” he said, referring to when cancer spreads to other parts of the body. “One in eight people will be diagnosed with prostate or breast cancer. That’s way too many people.

“About a million people globally are affected and pass away from those two cancers, and science is not caught up in the end,” he said.

NDSU researchers are working on personalized therapies, medicines and biomarkers to combat those cancers.

“The goal here is to cure them someday,” Cook said.

In closing, Armacost said, “It’s about our two schools coming together. I’m proud of the work that Dave has done at NDSU and all of his faculty, staff and students.”

Cook agreed, saying, “I’m very proud of all the great things that you guys do, of course, everything that we can do together. So, to bring this full circle, it’s not about rivalry. It’s about the threads that connect us as institutions. ...

“When NDSU and UND get better, the state of North Dakota gets better.”

Reach Forum newsroom intern Grant Hubbard at ghubbard@forumcomm.com.



Contributed / TEDxFargo

Maribeth Joraanstad, in white shirt, is surrounded by her daughter, Mirlanda, left, and daughter, Mitialove, right, as well as son, Amos, and Bryan Stern, who led the rescue of the girls in Haiti in early June.

Back together

Rescuer is reunited with adopted Fargo girls after dramatic Haiti mission

BY KEVIN WALLEVAND
WDAY

FARGO — There was an incredible reunion Thursday, July 24, and it happened at TEDxFargo.

It’s a follow up to a story WDAY TV first brought you in June, the dramatic special-ops rescue of two girls from an orphanage in gang infested Haiti.

A Fargo family had adopted them more than a year earlier, but could not get them out because of the unrest

On Thursday, the founder of Grey Bull, the rescue team, came to TEDxFargo to share his story, just hours after arriving from another extraction and rescue in Syria.

Forty days after he and his team flew a helicopter into the chaotic capital of Port-au-Prince, Haiti, Grey Bull Rescue founder Bryan Stern was reunited with the two girls he rescued.

“We got ‘em,” Stern is heard saying over the radio after the rescue on June 10.

Maribeth Joraanstad brought all three children to hear Stern tell his story at TEDxFargo. This, just hours after Bryan returned from rescuing Americans in Syria.

“Grey Bull is kind of like the last option. When all others can’t do anything and you are still in trouble, you call us and we say ‘Yes,’” Bryan said.

“It is very nuanced what we do, because we can and someone needs to. Because we are the last resort, the end of the food chain, we are who you call when everyone else tells you ‘No,’” he added.

For the Joraanstads, it has been a month of firsts. Bringing 12-year-old Mitialove and 6-year-old

Mirlanda to the lake, family reunions and more.

There have been amazing moments and also a transitional time as the girls get adjusted to life here.

“There was a quote I saw, ‘Everyone can do their part in the healing of the world,’ I thought it was important for today as we heard about Bryan’s work and families around the world,” Joraanstad said.

“I think that you have that idyllic ‘We are going to be a family,’ but you also know there will be hard times but when you are in the hard times, the feeling is hard. Like when someone has a meltdown and you can’t communicate so you have to figure that out and they might be feeling down because they just left everyone they know,” Maribeth said.

Stern and his team have rescued 9,000 people in just four years, more than 780 operations.

“If you are calling us, you are desperate, and so when an American mother or father calls and they are desperate for Americans in trouble that is the end of the conversation — we are going,” Stern said.

And for the Joraanstads, it was important to try anything to get those girls out of the chaos of Haiti and home to Fargo.

“It is funny, Amos was an only child moving now to the middle child. At first he was nervous about sharing a room and sharing toys, and at first he had that feeling but I asked him last night if he was sad and he said, ‘No, mostly this is fun,’ and I was like, ‘Yay,’” Maribeth said.

Reach WDAY reporter Kevin Wallevand at kwallevand@wday.com.

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