Drug and alcohol addiction are very real concerns as the state continues to work to diversify its economy and workforce. As the state’s population boomed during the past few years, so have the incidences of drug and alcohol addiction, including an increase in the use of opioids such as fentanyl. The number of drug overdoses tripled in the state between 2012 and 2015.

The University of North Dakota is educating the talent pool needed to help North Dakota fight head-on with addiction problems. For example, nurse practitioner, social work, nutrition and clinical psychology students are being educated to ask questions of patients or clients about drug and alcohol use, do a brief intervention if necessary, and raise awareness of risky behavior. “The goal is to be more proactive and catch drug and alcohol abuse early,” said Chris Harsell, clinical associate professor of nursing and a nurse practitioner. “Primary care is on the front lines. We hope intervention raises awareness. The state and community response has been amazing.”

UND is educating nurses, social work graduate students, and others by leveraging funding through the North Dakota Screening and Brief Intervention and Referral to Treatment (SBIRT), a three-year, $556,000 award from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, part of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. On campus, within the Grand Forks community and across North Dakota, faculty and staff are working to raise awareness, develop screening tools, educate students and health providers and conduct research to help solve the opiate epidemic. Here are just a few examples of UND’s participation and leadership:

• Partnering with the community to raise awareness of the threat of opioids on our communities such as the documentary, Faded: Fentanyl’s Impact, and a UND-produced public video announcement.
• The UND Counseling Center (UCC) provides fully accredited counseling services, including alcohol and drug use for students.
• Been There Done That is a UND student organization for students in recovery.

“No one plans to become an addict. There isn’t a part of society that isn’t touched by alcohol and drug abuse.” Laurie Betting, Interim Vice President for Student Affairs
‘In it together’ — UND responds to opioid crisis

In the classroom and across state, University experts have issued a clarion call about rising drug epidemic.

Raising awareness
On campus, within the Grand Forks community and across North Dakota, faculty are working together to raise awareness, develop screening tools, educate students and health providers and conduct research to help solve the opiate epidemic. Some areas also offer free or low-cost counseling to North Dakotans.

“No one plans to become an addict,” said Laurie Betting, interim vice president for student & outreach services. “There isn’t a part of society that isn’t touched by alcohol and drug abuse.”

Betting said the problem is affecting younger and younger people, and she, along with the Grand Forks County state’s attorney’s office, helped find funding for Fadat: Fentanyl’s impact, a 2016 video documentary that follows four families who have been impacted by the drug. “The story is told through individuals impacted. It’s gripping and real.”

The documentary, a UND initiative, has been shown on campus, and is shown to students in Grand Forks schools. It is also shared with other communities and states.

“Nearly every kid in Grand Forks sees that video,” said Cindy Juntunen, dean of the College of Education & Human Development and a psychologist who has done addiction counseling. “You can’t talk about education anymore without talking about health in this area. Addiction is a major public health issue.”

The College has long had an addiction counseling program, said Juntunen, and they now integrate some of that training in other teaching fields.

Community response
“Community response needs to focus on prevention, treatment and recovery, and using science to enhance that,” said Thomassine Heitkamp, professor of social work at UND.

She and a UND team conducted a training workshop last November to give behavioral health professionals from across the state the skills they needed to better identify and reduce substance abuse. The “train-the-trainer” event featured national experts and was part of a grant-funded program at the College of Nursing & Professional Disciplines.

Heitkamp and others are also part of a project that trains students, along with health providers in communities across the state, to catch and reduce substance abuse.

The grant, the North Dakota Screening and Brief Intervention and Referral to Treatment (SBIRT), is a three-year, $556,000 award from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, part of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. It was designed to train nurse practitioner and social work graduate students, and others have since been invited to take part. The project includes faculty from psychology, nursing, and social work.

“As a university, we want to be part of the solution and be a real partner at the table,” said Heitkamp. “We want to help develop evidence-based practices in the community. There has to be an interprofessional response to this.”

The funding is used to train nurse practitioner, social work, nutrition and clinical psychology students to ask questions of patients or clients about drug and alcohol use, do a brief intervention if necessary, and raise awareness of risky behavior, said Chris Harsell, clinical associate professor of nursing and a nurse practitioner. This can help people who are willing to decrease use, or refer people with dependencies to counseling. “The goal is to be more proactive and catch drug and alcohol abuse early,” said Harsell.

Community response needs to focus on prevention, treatment and recovery, and using science to enhance that. — Thomassine Heitkamp, professor of social work at UND.

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GENERATING OPPORTUNITIES FOR NORTH DAKOTANS

Daniel Patrick Moynihan opined, “If you want to build a world class city, build a great university and wait 200 years.” Our visionary ancestors built a university on the Dakota frontier in 1883 that has contributed greatly to the wonderful state we have today. Investing in the University of North Dakota continues to offer opportunities for a brighter future for our citizens.

NURTURING ECONOMIC DIVERSITY

Today we are in a soft patch because agriculture and energy markets are both in a slump. Investing in UND is the best path to diversifying our economy so we are not as dependent on the price of oil and wheat. UND’s aviation school helped spark the birth of North Dakota’s unmanned industry. Our unmanned aviators, engineers and entrepreneurs are diligently pursuing the goal of making the Red River Valley the Silicon Valley of drones, with recent investments by Northrop Grumman and General Atomics just the start. The North Dakota Geological Survey’s Wilson M. Laird Core and Sample Library located at UND played a role in helping to spark the recent oil boom. UND’s researchers are working hard to increase the amount of oil recoverable from Bakken shale, while reducing the cost and environmental footprint of doing so. UND is applying its unmanned and technical expertise to leverage the precision agricultural expertise of other universities as the lead university for a National Science Foundation funded Digital Agricultural Spoke.

GROWING NEEDED TALENT

Even during these challenging times, we face a skills deficit that constrains our growth. UND’s doctors, nurses, teachers, and lawyers are needed to address acute shortages, but so are our scientists, engineers and unmanned systems integrators. Two out of three MDs and eight of ten American Indian nurses in the state are graduates of UND. UND offers a wide range of programs online, enrolling nearly 3,000 students, providing lifetime learning opportunities throughout the state. Our online graduate business program is ranked #30 nationally by U.S. News & World Report.

LEVERAGING STATE FUNDING

For every state dollar supporting UND research, we attract six dollars in outside funds. UND’s more than $97 million in annual research expenditures funds high paid jobs in North Dakota and offers multiple opportunities for entrepreneurial spinoffs. UND fully utilized the state’s fundraising and maintenance matching programs, magnifying the impact of the state’s investment resulting in more scholarships and action on deferred maintenance. With state funding constrained, these matching programs are even more important.

Research Expenditures – 2016

$13,241,428

State

$83,893,210

Other Sources

$13,241,428

State

$83,893,210

Other Sources