In 1988, Dr. Stephen Ragan, Chair of Special Education, Dr. John Knicheloe, Dean of Education, and Dr. David Williams, Chair of Communication Disorders began working on establishing a University Affiliated Program (UAP) in North Dakota. The first proposal submitted to the US Department of Health & Human Services, proposed a two-location partnership between Minot State University and the University of North Dakota. It was not approved for funding. Ultimately, MSU and UND each submitted their own independent proposal the following year. MSU was awarded the grant.

NDCD absorbed two state funded contracts from MSU’s Special Education Department: 1. Minot Infant Development Program, Ms. Kathy Lee, Program Director 2. Community Staff Training Program, Dr. Demetrios Vassiliou, Program Director

NDCD’s first federal grant was awarded to Dr. Ann Maria Rousey to study conditions of Native American’s with disabilities. Besides the UAP Core funding, this grant was one of the biggest MSU had ever received at that time. This grant was quickly followed by other awards on topics like Aging and Vietnam Veterans’ Client Assistance Services.

An INTERDISCIPLINARY was formed to lend expertise and direction to NDCD staff. This was a statewide council with members from various agencies including State Council on Developmental Disabilities, ND Dept of Human Services, ND Dept of Public Instruction, NDACF, NDSU and a consumer.

A CONSUMER ADVISORY COUNCIL was also formed during this time to solicit consumer input and guidance to NDCD staff. During this timeframe, there were three liaisons: Dr. Daler Singh, Ms. Kathryn Erickson and Ms. Gladys Mack.

In 1990-1995
53 Funded Grants & Contracts $4,483,089

On October 1, 1990, the North Dakota Center on Disabilities (NDCD) at MSU became part of a national network of University Affiliated Programs (UAPs). UAPs were established in the 1960’s by President Kennedy in an effort to improve services to people with disabilities. NDCD was designated as a satellite UAP of the Utah Center for Persons with Disabilities. NDCD was housed on the 1st floor of Old Main with a budget of $150,000.

NDCD was established to provide statewide interdisciplinary training, exemplary services, and research and dissemination in the area of developmental disabilities. The Mission Statement then: “To enable persons with developmental disabilities by building capacity of an integrated service continuum through the conduct of training service demonstration, technical assistance, and dissemination activities.” The first staff at the Center were faculty from various MSU departments who are listed below:
- Dr. Stephen Ragan, Executive Director
- Dr. David Williams, Associate Director
- Dr. Audrey Lunday, Director of Clinical Services
- Dr. Brent A. Askvig, Director of Outreach & Development
- Dr. Ann Maria Rousey, Director of Research & Dissemination
- Dr. John Torgerson, Director of Training

Two additional employees were hired in 1991, Dr. Joseph Ferrara and Miss Susie Leintz. Dr. Ferrara, known as the “Father of Grant Writing” was nationally known for his grant writing experience and thus, he served as the Center’s Associate Director for Development. Miss Leintz was hired as the Center’s first secretary.

In 1991, Dr. Ferrara initiated grant writing efforts to develop a portfolio of federal proposals to grow NDCD. Staff began writing as teams, not individuals and started making bold need statements and requests for funds. Dr. Ferrara taught staff formatting tricks and how to think like the reviewers. He started a file system to make sure several staff could write on a proposal at the same time while avoiding simultaneous edits. Staff worked through the nights, on weekends and during the holidays to assure the Center would get funding to keep people employed.

During this period, NDCD had 2 site visits directed by the Center’s funding agency, AIDD. The first was in 1993 with Dr. Richard Offner (MT UAP) who praised NDCD staff for their writing abilities and their technical assistance outreach efforts. The second site visit was in 1996 with Bob Calderon (__) and Leola Brooks (____) who complimented NDCD staff on the wealth of information provided for the site visit.

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