What do you get when you combine the richest soil and best farmland in the world with a flagship university that is home to the only schools of law and medicine in ND? Add to that a premier school of Aerospace that is also the first school in the country to offer a degree in unmanned aircraft systems management. This, in addition to being home to one of the finest hockey facilities in the world and one of the most successful hockey programs in NDAA history. Intertwine all this with a proactive and innovative community of healthcare and government service.

A historic flood and devastating tornado could not squelch the spirit and growth of the communities of Grand Forks and Northwood, where RLND Class VIII hosted its final seminar June 19-21, 2019.

Tim Denney led off our seminar with a presentation on working effectively with different generations.

Debbie Swanson, Director of Grand Forks Public Health Department, explained how civic engagement is a key strategy for public health officials.
A 40-mile bus ride southwest of Grand Forks brought us to Northwood for a tour of Agvise Laboratories. Amber Storey, GLP Nutrient Laboratory Manager, explained that Agvise can process up to 3,500 soil and plant samples per day.

Agvise, the Northwood School, and many other businesses and homes were destroyed by an EF-4 tornado in August 2007. The storm caused destruction to most of the town and killed one person. A tour of the new school was led by Superintendent, Shane Azure. A discussion on the damage caused by the tornado and the rebuilding that ensued was led by Mark Pollert, Police Chief; Tom Engen, Emergency Medical Service Manager; David Korsmo, Economic Development Association; and Rick Johnson, former Mayor.

The Leadership Dinner speaker was business owner and former City Council President, Hal Gershman. Hal gave credit to his staff and management for the success of his Happy Harry’s business. Thank you to the RLND Alumni Association for providing dinner entertainment by Magician, Joe Sowokinos.

Tom Kenville led a tour through the UND Center for Innovation. The next visit was the UND School of Medicine & Health Sciences. The school offers degrees in medicine, medical laboratory science, sports medicine, public health, physician assistant studies and physical and occupational therapy. A panel presentation by Shawnda Schroeder, Research Associate Professor; Brad Gibbens Deputy Director and their colleagues at the UND Center for Rural Health highlighted their many programs that strengthened the health of citizens in rural and tribal communities in ND. A highly anticipated tour of the Ralph Engelstad Arena did not disappoint. Ron Hanson, Account Manager, gave us an up-close view of the home of UND Fighting Hawks men’s hockey program. We saw the installation of the new video display and scoreboard as well as the impressive training facilities.

During a picnic in Lincoln Park and surrounding Grand Forks Greenway, Mayor Brown described his ability to make and stick to decisions as critical in the city’s recovery in the rebuilding of Grand Forks after the 1997 flood. Tony Hodney and Alan Twedt described how Simplot’s Grand Forks operation turns out traditional cuts of French fries, shoestrings, thin cuts, tater gems and hash browns that are sold throughout the U.S. and internationally. ISight drone pilots Mike Link, Russ Nelson and Zach Seeger demonstrated their flying skills and explained the many uses for remotely piloted vehicles.

Tom Astrup, President of American Crystal Sugar, led conversation following dinner prepared by Steve and Darla Adams. Farmer owned ACS is one of the largest sugar producers in the U.S.

Our final day in Grand Forks concluded with presentations by RLND Alumni Association President Jeanna Smalladen and Council President, Barry Medd.