

## **Executive Summary**

### **Understanding Underrepresented Student Retention Initiatives**

#### **Action Learning Team:**

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Executive Sponsor: *Mike López, Associate Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs*

#### **Project Outcomes:**

- Reviewed and analyzed grant proposals and results from MnSCU institutions
- Assessed the levels of success within the underrepresented student retention programs
- Identified and located best practices utilized by retention programs
- Assessed the transportability of retention programs utilized at participant schools
- Provided recommendations for how to minimize influencing factors of success, data collection measures, utilization of local campus resources and training initiatives

#### **Leadership Lessons Learned:**

- If attempting to use the action learning process on a project, if there's not initial buy in across the board, it will be tough to accomplish a task. On a larger scale, if there is not institutional buy in, for a group to act, to create a shared vision, to work as a team to accomplish a task, to put all personal perspectives into one common goal and to do it together, if this is not there, it may be difficult to get anywhere. The Action Learning Project was a small scale lesson learned that will help me in the larger scheme of things; if belief in the action learning process is not there, the learning will not take place and the process more difficult.
- It requires self-discipline to participate in a group when you don't all share the same vision.
- There are many different ways to look at the same problem/task - be open minded to different perspectives.
- Depending on the make-up of the group, you may unintentionally dial up or dial down specific traits.
- It is frustrating to work on a task that is not well-defined and/or you don't feel committed to.
- It is hard to lead when the end results is not clear. Group work requires the dialing up and down of strengths to get through this project knowing that I was not totally committed.
- I also learned that leadership requires focus and prioritizing. With my current job, this project became almost burdensome. With so much to do, I find my leadership skills threatened. However, I learned that though I may not always like what I am asked to do, it is important to complete the work.
- I also learned that my team work needs improvement.
- It is hard to know when to lead and when to follow when you can't have consistent face to face meetings.
- Moving yourself in and out of your normal work style to ensure everyone is participating is difficult and time consuming, but beneficial.
- Consensus and questions are difficult factors to incorporate into a group project.
- I met a lot of wonderful people who come from many walks of life with several learning experiences that were brought to the table.
- I learned to listen and gained lots of knowledgeable information from others!
- I learned to respect others' opinions as I would like mine to be respected. I learned to work together to organize the overwhelming information flying around the room.
- I learned to bite my tongue when not so nice things were at the end of it...and by doing so learned a lot.