

**MINNESOTA STATE COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES
BOARD OF TRUSTEES STUDY SESSION
January 20, 2010**

Board Members Present: Chair David Olson; Trustees Dan McElroy, Christine Rice, Duane Benson, Cheryl Dickson, James Van Houten, Louise Sundin, Jacob Englund, Ruth Grendahl, Scott Thiss, David Paskach, Clarence Hightower and Christopher Frederick.

Board Members Absent: Thomas Renier and Terri Thomas,

Leadership Council Committee Co-Chairs Present: Senior Vice Chancellor Linda Baer and President Patrick Johns.

The Minnesota State Colleges and Universities Board of Trustees held a study session on January 20, 2010 at Inver Hills Community College, 2500 E. 80th Street, Inver Grove Heights, Minnesota. Chair Olson called the meeting to order at 9:45 am.

1. Program Inventory Management

Presenter:

Dr. Manuel López, Associate Vice Chancellor of Learning, Technology and Programmatic Innovations

Dr. Joan Kuzma Costello, Provost/Vice President for Academic Affairs, Inver Hills Community College

Associate Vice Chancellor López presented on the system's Program Inventory Management System. He started by offering an overview of the steps involved in program approval.

Program Approval:

A proposed new program goes through many planning and design steps at the campus level. This includes getting input on the proposal from an external advisory committee and review by internal academic standards and curriculum committees. The proposal is reviewed and approved by campus administration before it is submitted to the Office of the Chancellor for approval.

Inver Hills Community College Provost Joan Kuzma Costello used the computer networking technology program at her college as an example of the development process. She said this program began as an offering in customized training in partnership with CISCO but was later added as a for-credit offering after businesses indicated a desire for their employees to earn college credit.

The campus development and approval process included internal reviews to ensure that there was a need for the for-credit academic program and that it was in line with the college's mission and MnSCU strategic goals. The program's curriculum, labor market information, facility resources and faculty needs were assessed. Before the application was submitted, it went before the before the

college's internal academic council and the Metro Alliance, where proposed programs are discussed by chief academic officers in the metropolitan area to determine if there are concerns about unnecessary duplication.

There was input on the proposal from an advisory committee and an articulation agreement with Metropolitan State University was developed allowing students an opportunity to transfer credits toward a baccalaureate degree.

Once all those steps were completed, the application was submitted to the Office of the Chancellor where it reviewed, approved and added to the Inver Hills Community College program inventory.

There are ongoing reviews of programs, Provost Costello said. Programs and curriculum are assessed. There may be a need to create additional degrees, such as certificates, to enhance employment opportunities. Curriculum may need to be altered to meet the changing needs of industry. Steps are taken to keep the program up to date and relevant, she said.

Provost Costello offered two examples of program closures. Their Associate of Arts degree offered at correctional facilities will soon be closed because the correctional facilities no longer have the resources to fund higher education programs. This closure is being caused by external forces beyond the college's control, she said.

Another program that will soon be closed at Inver Hills Community College is the aviation program, Provost Costello said. Over the past few years, aviation coursework has been centralized at Minneapolis Community and Technical College to reduce unnecessary duplication and make the best use of equipment. This caused an enrollment decline at her college and that, along with the lack of updated equipment and the uncertain status of the aviation industry, are factors leading to this program closure, she said.

Trustee McElroy asked if the closure procedure is different if the program is the last of its kind in the system.

Senior Vice Chancellor Baer said the Chancellor has made it clear they need to do extra duty in reviewing closures when the program is the last of its kind in the system. She added, however, that there may be valid reasons why a program is the last of its kind. Low enrollments, low graduation rates, high program costs or a lack of demand for graduates can all lead to program closure, she said.

Senior Vice Chancellor Baer said there have probably been two to three program closures of this kind in the past five years.

Trustee McElroy said the Board may want to consider if it wants to take a role when the last program of its kind is closing.

Trustee Sundin asked if institutions need to incorporate existing national industry skill standards into programs. Senior Vice Chancellor Baer said national industry standards are used as a benchmark when applicable.

Program Review:

Associate Vice Chancellor López said the system has over 4,000 programs and they go through periodic institutional program reviews. Results are reported to the Office of the Chancellor and posted on the website.

He said the Office of the Chancellor reviews and approves programs, not courses. The curriculum is submitted and reviewed as part of the application process, but ongoing curriculum review is done at the institutional level.

Trustee Van Houten said it appears the Office of the Chancellor has not offered specific guidance on how the course reviews will take place and that would mean each institution is reviewing its programs using its own criteria. He asked what assurances trustees have that programs are being reviewed in a vigorous way and are quality programs.

Senior Vice Chancellor Baer said the system has defined indicators and a set of criteria which colleges and universities are to use in program review. The criteria includes: Contributions to mission and plans of the system college or university; assessment of student learner outcomes; academic program assessments; compliance with accreditation, licensure or certification requirements; input from advisory committees or other business/industry groups; and compliance with Minnesota Transfer Curriculum requirements.

Sample indicators include enrollment, transfer rates, program retention, graduation percentage, student satisfaction feedback, business-industry partnerships feedback and job placement. Also considered is feedback from key stakeholders, such as current students, advisory groups, alumni, employers and graduate schools.

Trustee Van Houten asked Senior Vice Chancellor Baer if she would agree that the indicators and criteria are vague enough that the reviews could be very vigorous on some campuses but not on others.

Senior Vice Chancellor Baer said the indicators are sound. She added that programs must meet the accreditation standards set by the Higher Learning Commission. Programs with national accreditation also have to meet the rigors of those accrediting organizations and that helps ensure quality, she said.

Trustee Paskach said program quality has been an issue with the Board in the past. He questioned if Higher Learning Commission accreditation is a satisfactory check on quality for this system. Perhaps the system should be doing annual program reviews or certifications as a way to ensure quality, he said.

Trustee Benson said curriculum is only one part of quality programs. A teacher who is skilled and a good communicator in the classroom can make a big difference in terms of learner outcomes, he said. He asked how the human factor should be factored into the determination of quality.

The evaluation of faculty is separate from the program review process, Anoka-Ramsey Community College President Johns said. Teachers are evaluated through student surveys and direct observation. Their curriculum and outlines are reviewed and learner outcomes are assessed, he said. Student enrollment levels in classes also are considered.

Trustee Paskach said he worries that the rigor of professor evaluations, as well as program review, is not equal across the system. He said the bar should be raised so this is not a concern for the Board.

President Johns said program review is more likely to be consistent across the system than the evaluation of individuals.

Trustee Dickson said the Board should ask itself what outcome it is trying to achieve. The Board should be looking to ensure students are successful, she said, and there are existing measurements that can assess that. They include certification and licensure rates, admissions to graduate schools, placement rates, employer feedback and meeting national accreditation standards. Good measurement indicators are available, and it is incumbent upon Board members to ensure those indicators are reported to them as often as possible, she said.

Chair Olson asked what would make Board members comfortable with the rigor of program review.

Trustee Hightower said he is comfortable with rigor of programs and that reviews are taking place. However, he said there is a disconnect in how that information gets back to the Board.

Trustee Van Houten said he feels it is absolutely appropriate to have system-level academic affairs people be more than an administrative agency that gathers the data and files it away. The system should have more input in terms of determining if a program is one of quality.

The Academic and Student Affairs Committee is the appropriate place for further consideration of program review, Trustee McElroy said, adding they should never become comfortable in terms of striving for quality programs.

Provost Costello's presentation on the program approval at her college was impressive, Trustee McElroy said, and there may be merit in doing more of those to learn how individual programs and courses are reviewed.

Senior Vice Chancellor Baer said she is ready to work with the Academic and Student Affairs Committee on improvements in the validation of quality programs and communication back to the Board.

The meeting adjourned at 10:50 am

Respectfully submitted,

Margie Takash, Recorder