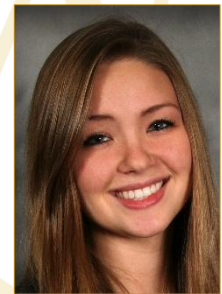


# MnSCU Positioning Assessment *Study Session*



*March 17, 2015*

## Minnesota State Colleges and Universities

The Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system is an Equal Opportunity employer and educator.

# Session *Overview*

- Introduction/History of Project
- Vision/Process/Resources
- Stakeholder input
- PadillaCRT research and recommendations
- Next steps
- Q&A

# Project *Objectives*

Conduct a positioning assessment of Minnesota State Colleges and Universities and to develop a long-term strategy that would:

- Support the system's mission, vision and strategic framework
- Be grounded in primary research of internal and external audiences – deliver a repeatable awareness study, as well as a comprehensive brand audit conducted with full member institution and bargaining unit representation, as well as outside stakeholder groups

# Project *Objectives*

Conduct a positioning assessment of Minnesota State Colleges and Universities and to develop a long-term strategy that would:

- Position the MnSCU reputation/brand, and the brands of the individual institutions, effectively for all stakeholder groups, clearly identifying compelling features and competitive distinctions
- Design a solid visual and brand identity (answering questions about naming structure, logo and taglines) and implementation plan
- Propose a brand/reputation campaign with details, creative examples and cost projections

# Project *History*

- Jan. 2014                      Steering Committee formed
- Feb. 2014                      RFP posted  
*selected PadillaCRT from 18 proposals*
- June – July 2014              Positioning and brand audit
- Aug. – Sept. 2014              Qualitative research
- Oct. – Dec. 2014              Quantitative research
- Jan. 2015                      Positioning recommendations
- Feb. 2015                      Internal input
- March 2015                      Board presentation

# Questions

What type of positioning will drive enrollment at our colleges and universities and facilitate legislative support?

- Identify what our stakeholders value
- Test whether or not we offer these things
- Is there an opportunity to bring value as a whole without diluting the individual reputations/brands?
- Assess and recommend whether we can use the values we share as an avenue for engagement

# Building *Consensus*

- Brand strategy (endorser/halo)
- MnSCU name change
- Descriptor
- Route to engagement on quality, access and affordability
- Thought leadership approach
- Brand position/promise
- Visual identifiers and graphic standards (next phase)



# Research Overview and Positioning Strategy Options

February 2015

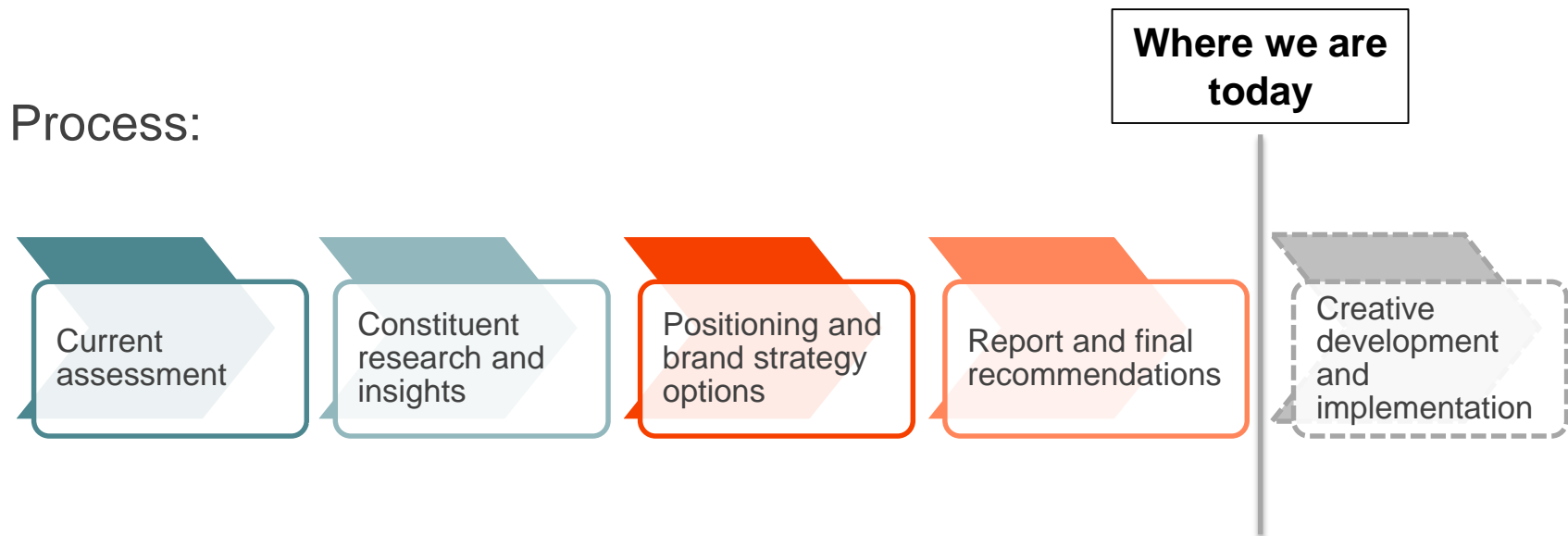


# Our Approach

## Guiding principles:

- Clear and common goals
- Fact-based recommendations
- Internal stakeholders involved throughout

## Process:



# Brand Structures of Peer Institutions

Complex systems usually use an endorsed or hybrid branding structure:



# Qualitative Findings

## Awareness

- Rarely does anyone think of MnSCU in the aggregate
- Understanding of MnSCU is low among those not affiliated with the system
- Even among those most familiar with MnSCU, people do not think of it as the sum of its parts

## Definition

- Prospective students: All post-secondary institutions in Minnesota
- Current students and alumni: MnSCU is the central administrative organization
- Trustees and presidents: The central organization or connection between the schools

## Connections are to Individual Schools

- Students and alumni think of their alma mater
- Business and community leaders have local or regional perspective
- School leaders need autonomy to serve their communities

## System Benefits

- The benefits that all groups mentioned are very consistent with the strategic framework strategy:
  - Accessibility
  - Workforce development/employment preparation
  - Meeting community needs

# Quantitative Survey Method

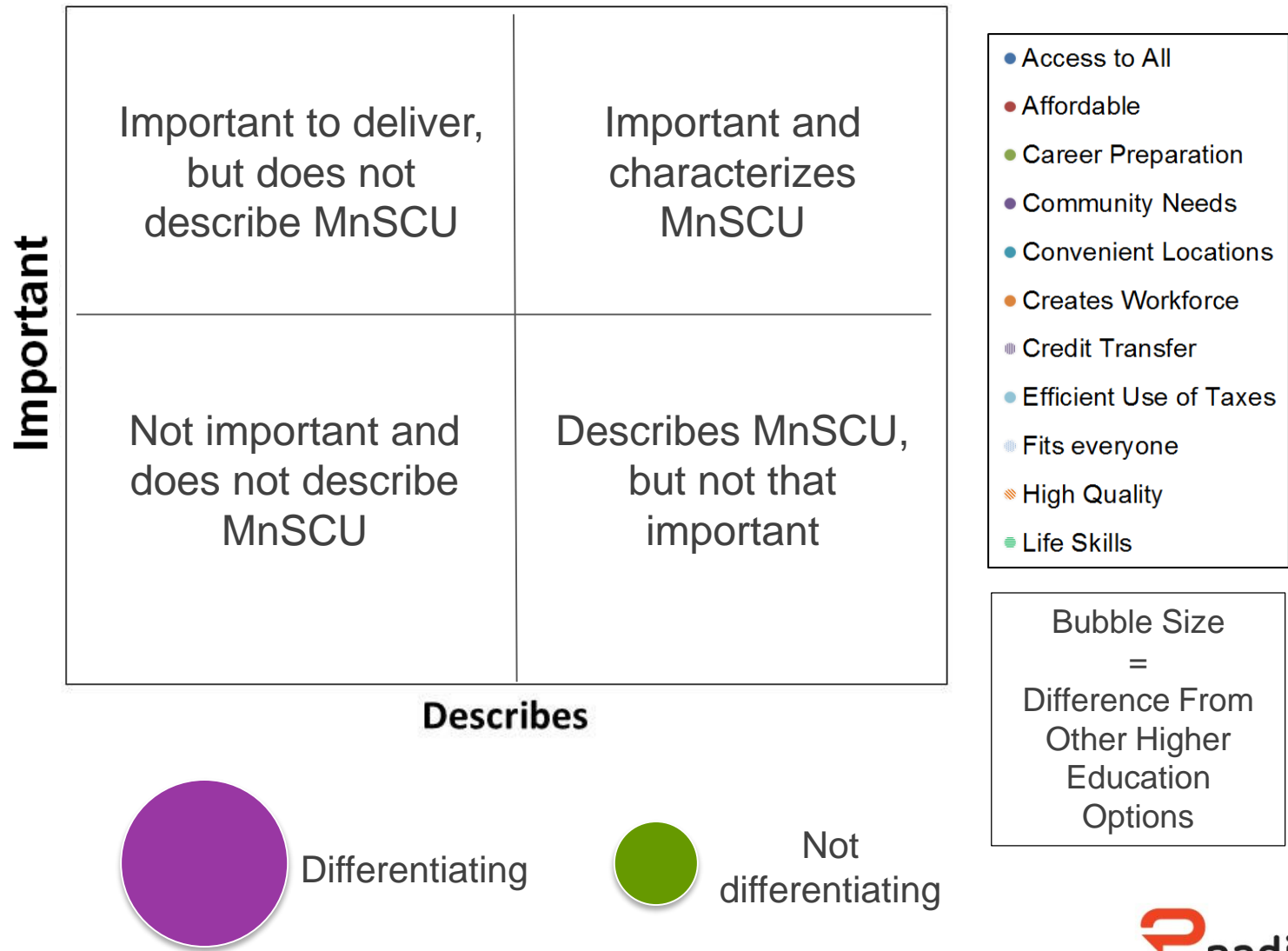
## Gauge attitudes; establish benchmarks

- Survey of target audiences, with most questions consistent across groups
- Data collected using three approaches:
  1. Online survey of general-population adults in Minnesota to capture state residents, parents/families of prospective students and opinion leaders
  2. Online survey (distributed through MnSCU) of current students, faculty and staff, alumni, donors and high school guidance counselors
  3. Telephone survey of prospective students:
    - Minnesota residents, 17 – 54 years of age, who are considering college in the next two years
    - Oversample people of color
    - 55 percent seven-county metro/45 percent greater Minnesota

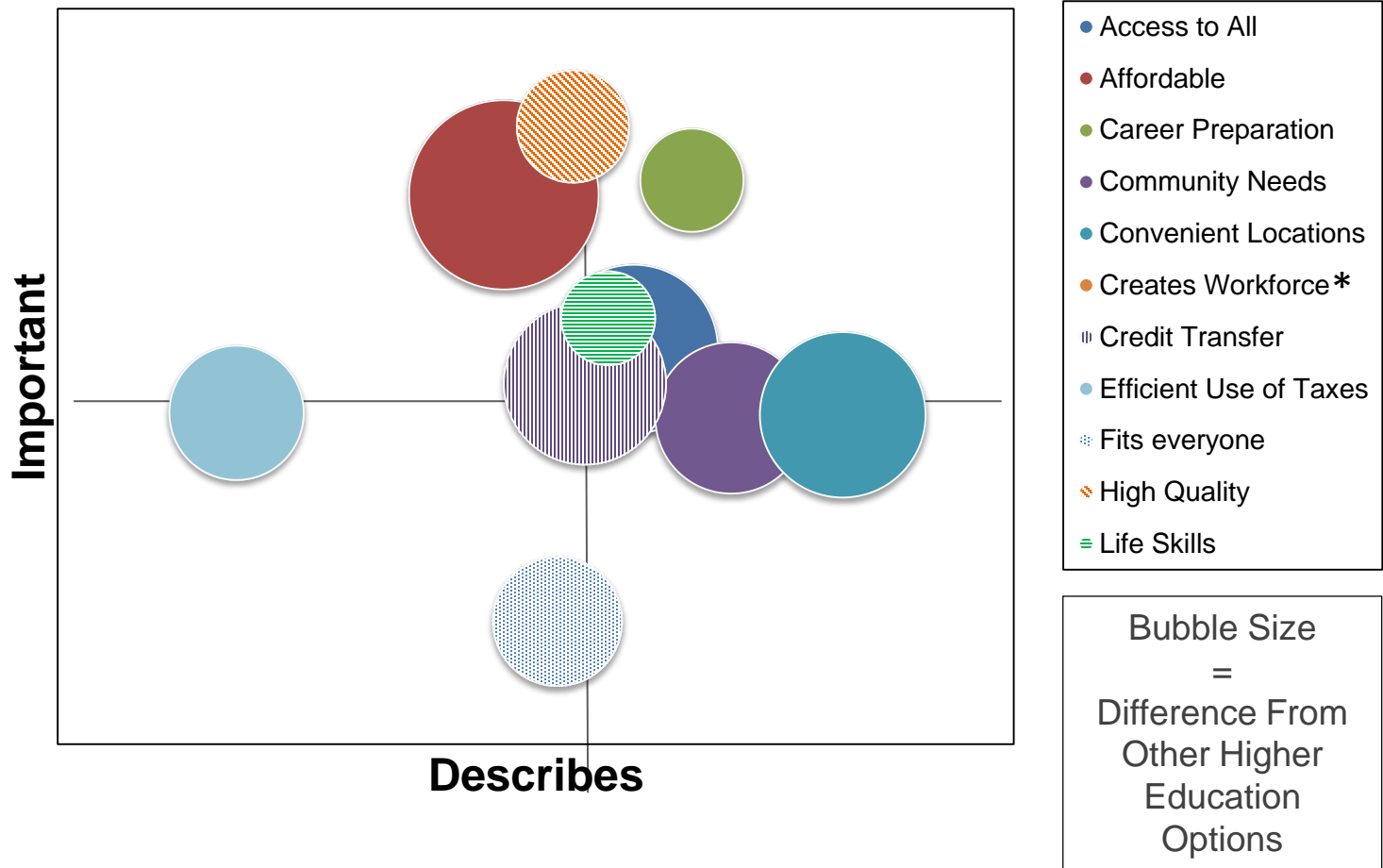
# Attribute Language

- Access to All
  - *“Gives all individuals in the state access to higher education”*
- Affordable
  - *“Provides affordable higher education”*
- Career Preparation
  - *“Effectively educates people for careers and employment”*
- Community Needs
  - *“Serves the educational needs of local communities across the state”*
- Convenient Locations
  - *“Has locations and online programs that are convenient to Minnesotans throughout the state”*
- Creates Workforce
  - *“Creates a workforce that meets the needs of local and state employers”*
- Credit Transfer
  - *“Makes it easy to transfer credits from one institution to another”*
- Efficient Use of Taxes
  - *“Makes efficient use of tax dollars”*
- Fits Everyone
  - *“Has a program or degree that fits everyone’s needs”*
- High Quality
  - *“Provides consistently high-quality education”*
- Life Skills
  - *“Builds the necessary skills for work, life and citizenship, such as critical thinking and a global perspective”*

# Bubble Chart Quadrants



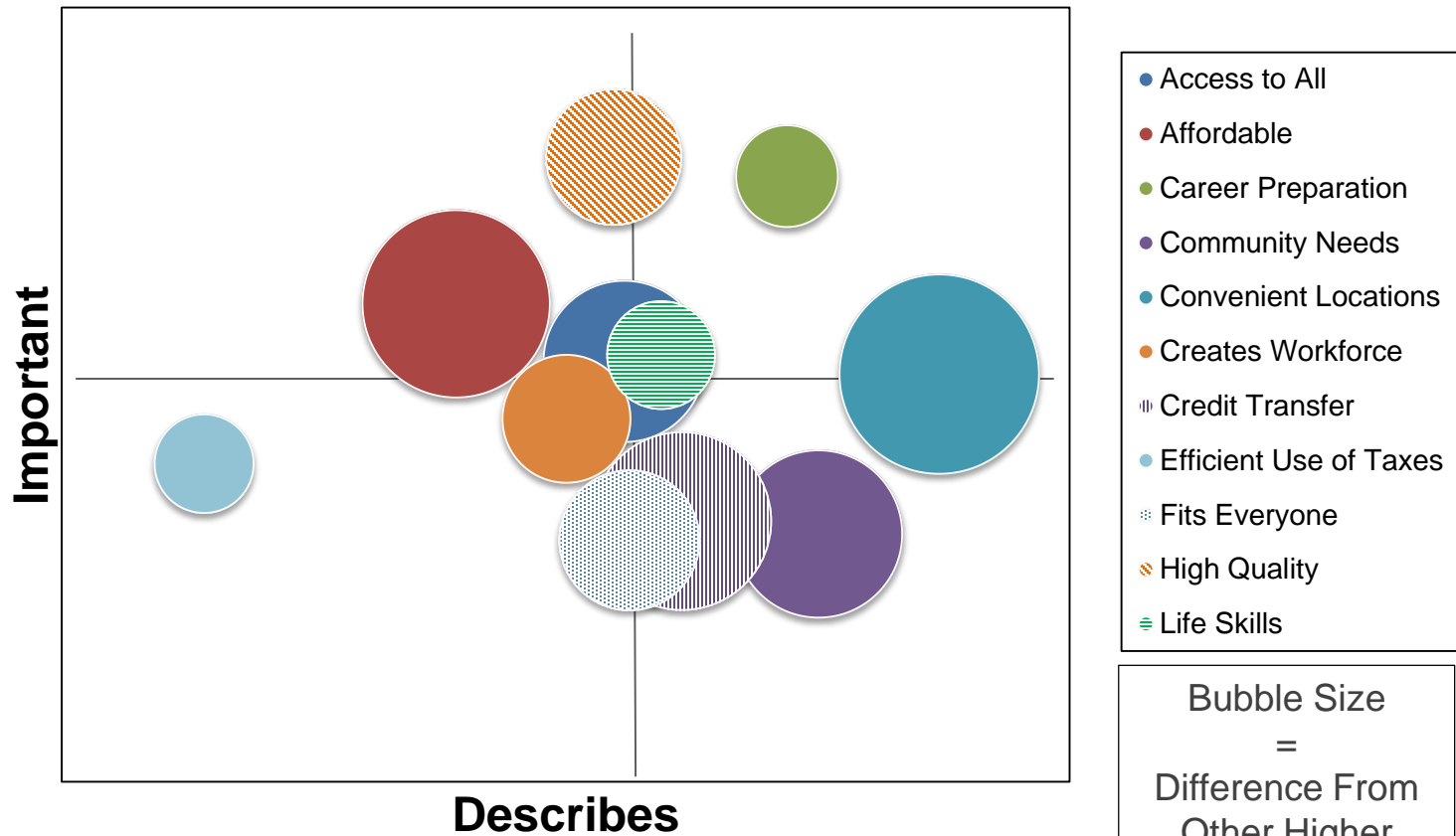
# Total Responses



- Quality, career preparation and affordability are most important
- Affordability differentiates MnSCU, but doesn't describe it especially well. It's not affordable, but it is more affordable

\* "Creates Workforce" bubble is hidden behind "Credit Transfer" as it is slightly smaller.

# Prospective Students



- Quality and career preparation is of top importance
- Convenient location, affordability and ease of credit transfer distinguish the system in the minds of prospective students



# Key Survey Implications

- Nine out of ten say cost is the biggest barrier
  - **The overwhelming barrier to post-secondary education is cost**
- While affordability is a very important and differentiating benefit for MnSCU, it does not describe it strongly
  - The ownable attributes of convenient locations and credit transfer support the concept of affordability. Further, affordability can support access for all
  - This broader concept of accessibility aligns strongly with the strategic framework
- High quality is consistently the most important attribute among the various audiences, and it describes MnSCU reasonably well. Career preparation and, to some degree, life skills, are also key attributes
  - These benefits are likely “table stakes” in today’s environment and will need to be integrated in communication at some level

# Key Survey Implications

If we want to create a stronger MnSCU reputation and brand, we have compelling collective benefits we can use. These benefits align with the Strategic Framework:

- Accessibility
- Workforce development/employment preparation
- Meeting community needs



# Reputation/Brand Platform

Minnesota State Colleges and Universities

# A Shift from Administration to Collaboration

Currently, MnSCU's brand is both weak and misunderstood.

- Inside audiences—including faculty, staff, administrators and others—know the organization for its rule-making and oversight, but not enough for the potential to be an advocate, collaborating with and promoting institutions as they compete in the marketplace for education
- External audiences know even less about MnSCU. They value the educational opportunities available at MnSCU institutions, but have little knowledge of the role the organization plays
- To date, too much of MnSCU's message has been focused internally or on legislators
- MnSCU has the opportunity to become better known as a defender, supporter, promoter and leader of accessible, quality education
- **MnSCU's message must be one that unites institutions around their common passion for providing outstanding, accessible education**

# Brand Position and Promise

## Brand Position

The Best Path to Individual Accomplishment  
and Community Prosperity.

## Brand Promise

MnSCU is a system of colleges and universities united to provide the kind of outstanding, accessible education that makes the people and communities of Minnesota more purposeful and more prosperous.

# A Role as an Endorser of Great Institutional Brands

When evaluating whether to focus on elevating the MnSCU brand or promoting the brands of individual institutions, we found the answer was *both*.

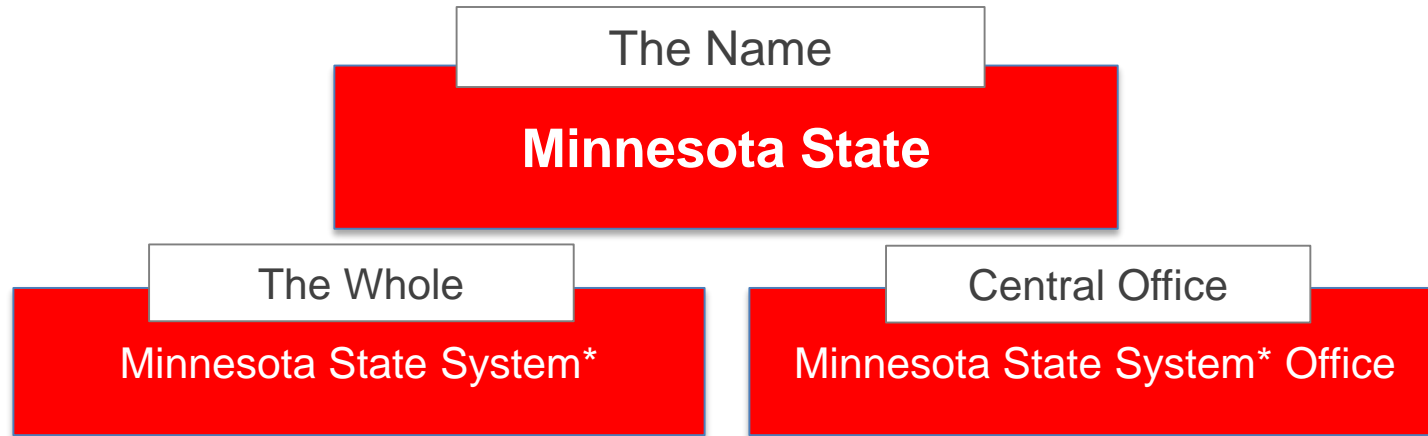
- It's important for students and others to have confidence in the colleges and universities they choose and to form relationships that build stronger educational communities and lead the way to philanthropic support
- It is equally important to create an endorsing brand that can be a leading voice with a statewide presence as an advocate for quality, career-focused education and the institutions that provide it
- For this reason, we recommend either an endorsed or hybrid approach to brand identity

# What's in the Name?

Before recommending investment in any brand, we have to ask ourselves if the name tells the right story.

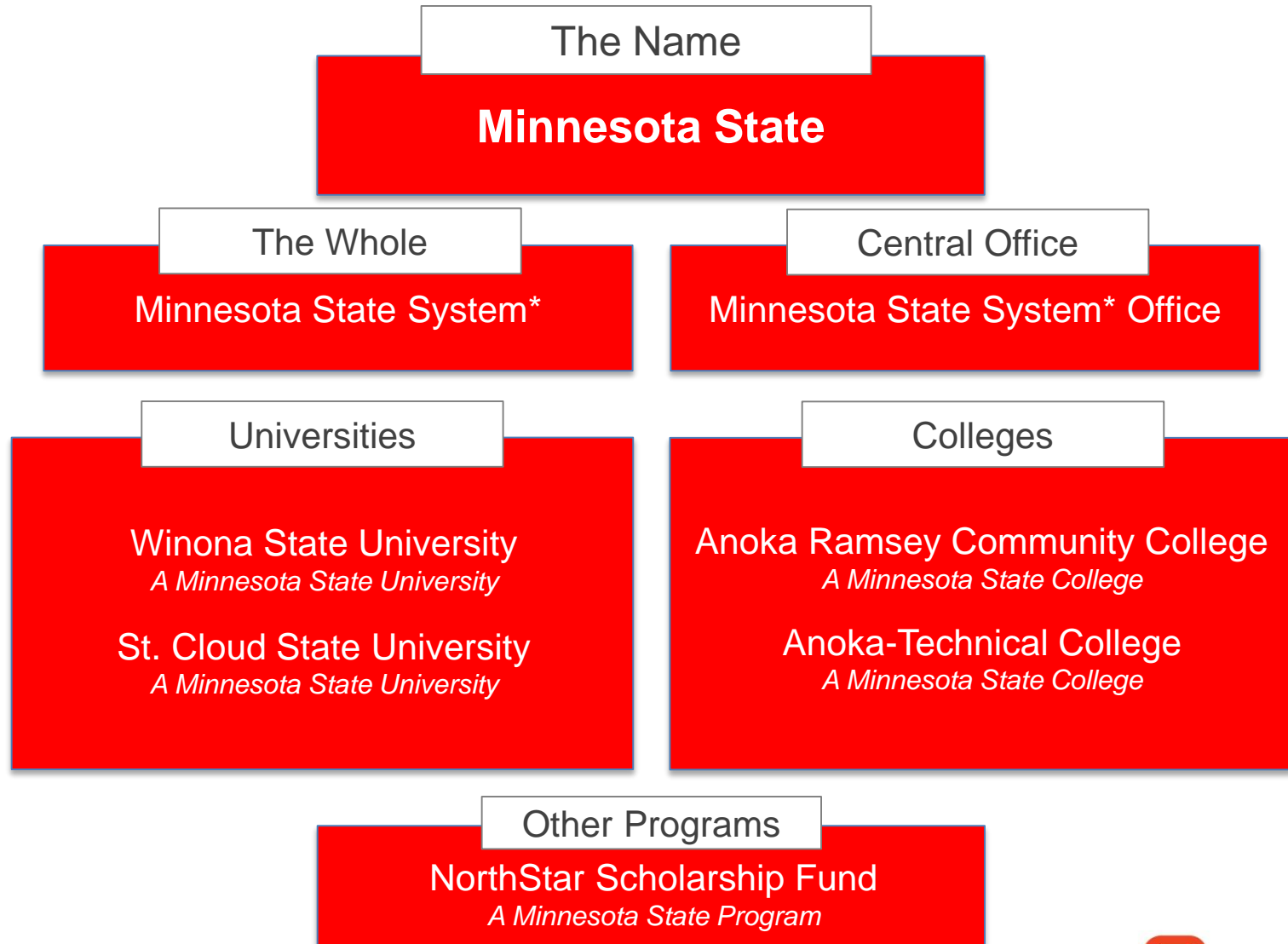
- The name Minnesota State Colleges and Universities is a mouthful, and for that reason alone, audiences avoid using it
- The shortened version, MnSCU, is nearly as awkward, and it is hard to say and complicated to look at
- Even more importantly, the name communicates very little. It is merely a generic description that could be seen as representing every institution in the state
- Understanding of what MnSCU is remains very low
- This is the right time to explore alternatives

# Recommendation





# Recommendation





## **We are living in demanding times.**

Our world is rapidly changing.  
Our businesses crave new ideas.

Our environment is at risk.  
Our communities are often struggling to keep up.

And our people are being challenged to learn more, and to keep learning throughout their lives.

A good education has never been more important.

For everyone. All ages. All cultures. All over our state.

But for many, getting a good education can be challenging.

Higher education can be too costly.

Too inconvenient for working people.

Too limited to provide options for any career path.

Too uniform for an increasingly diverse population.

Too exclusive to open doors to those who need more help.

And too far away from those who have responsibilities at home.







It's not surprising that higher education is facing criticism. Some institutions have made college too difficult to afford and too hard to attain, while others suffer from inferior quality, untrained staff and low completion rates.

We understand the need to question some of higher education's practices, but we should never question its value.



There is no greater vehicle for driving individual accomplishment than higher education.

There is no better path to a more fulfilling life.

No investment more likely to lead to individual accomplishment.

No better way to stimulate community prosperity.

And given the demanding times we live in, there is no better way to address the economic, environmental and social challenges we face.

In order to take Minnesotans to a higher level of success, higher education is our best answer.

Minnesota State is an alliance of colleges and universities united to provide the kind of outstanding, accessible education that makes the people and communities of Minnesota more purposeful and more prosperous.



## **We are Minnesota State.**

An alliance of outstanding colleges, universities, educators and staff.

We are deeply committed to greater educational success and access.

We understand that a higher education can be made practical for every student, from every culture, every part of the state and every walk of life.

We support each other, challenge each other and promote each other.

Knowing that while we are strong individually, we are more powerful collectively.

And we won't rest until high-quality higher education is a reality for everyone who aspires to do more for themselves, their communities and the state we all share.



# Project Objectives

- Inform decision making on how best to communicate the collective value of the 31 colleges and universities of MnSCU in a manner that:
  - Strengthens the brand and positioning of each college and university;
  - Improves the ability of each college and university to serve students and communities; and
  - Increases awareness among key audiences, strengthens partnerships with communities and businesses, leads to stronger support among opinion leaders and public officials, and results in increased enrollment.
- Develop and assess positioning options that align with the mission of our colleges and universities and the Strategic Framework

Endorser brand, tailored to institution type, supports identity of each institution.

Collective value of MnSCU supplements each institution's individual benefits.

Creation of logo lockup/standard tagline/etc. will build awareness of the collective benefits among all audiences and will open up opportunities for joint communication. Subordination of Minnesota State brand bolsters institutions' community connections.

Multiple options narrowed to single recommendation presented today.

## Long-term Initiatives: Things beyond the scope of current work

- **Environmental Inventory** – Discovery, review and cataloging of all communications materials and channels that could or should be used to communicate the brand
- **Visual Identity Exploration** – Take the brand strategy and concept to the application level. It includes development of the graphic look for the agreed-upon name and brand hierarchy. This may include type selection/creation, color palette selection, logo mark creation (if desired), and specific system and individual name lock-up schemes
- **Brand Standards Guide** – A detailed guidebook, most likely in a digital format, that provides specific direction in application and use of the brand in all collateral materials



# Long-term Initiatives: Things beyond the scope of current work (cont.)

**Brand Adoption Plan** – A well-thought-out process to infuse the brand both internally and externally. This includes discussion of who enforces and monitors brand use and a process for resolving issues. This may include any of the following:

- *Brand Anthem* – A brief video that captures the spirit and emotion of the brand
- *Brand Lexicon* – A printed or digital collateral piece that fully captures the language of the brand and provides recommendations/examples of some of the more common uses of phrases about the brand
- *Brand Training* – A training session on the new brand and its use for employees and others who may use the brand
- *Short-term Brand Application* – Design and production of communications and collateral materials with a one-year or less life cycle; this includes updating/redesigning the website, school catalog, email signatures, presentation templates, letterhead, forms, etc.
- *Long-term Brand Application Plan* – A system-wide plan for applying the brand to places that require significant investment, such as building signage, vehicle fleet graphics, etc.
- *Advertising* – Development of an external campaign to introduce and jumpstart awareness for the new brand. (This could be in conjunction with some initiative, such as collaborating with all Twin Cities institutions in an enrollment campaign)

# Discussion and Questions

# Appendix

# Project Objectives

- Inform decision making on how best to communicate the collective value of the 31 colleges and universities of MnSCU in a manner that:
  - Strengthens the brand and positioning of each college and university;
  - Improves the ability of each college and university to serve students and communities; and
  - Increases awareness among key audiences, strengthens partnerships with communities and businesses, leads to stronger support among opinion leaders and public officials, and results in increased enrollment.
- Develop and assess positioning options that align with the mission of our colleges and universities and the Strategic Framework

# Brand Strategy Objectives

- **Identify the common perceptions and collective benefits of our colleges and universities across key audiences**
- Articulate them in a clear and compelling way
- Develop a strategy that will provide a framework for building brand awareness and reputation
- Consistently communicate the collective benefits to support each of the colleges and universities
- Create additional value while supporting the strengths and identity of each college's and university's brand

# Opportunity for Stronger Brand Standards



- The MnSCU Graphic Identity Standards Manual could provide more specific guidance for implementation
- Visual examples can reflect both stronger system-brand presence and consistency
- The resulting impression is that the system brand is loosely enforced and it is really up to each college's Web or marketing team to determine extent of brand alignment or adherence to the standards

Minnesota State Colleges and Universities Graphic Identity Standards Manual 7.10

GRAPHIC IDENTITY	GRAPHIC STANDARDS	APPLICATION OF GRAPHIC STANDARDS
------------------	-------------------	----------------------------------

### Member Institution Seal Usage Examples

The examples show the seal being used on a campus website, a college catalog, and a tri-fold brochure. The website example shows the seal in the top right corner of the page. The college catalog example shows the seal in the bottom left corner of the page. The tri-fold brochure example shows the seal in the bottom right corner of the back cover.

Use of seal on campus website

Use of seal on college catalog

Use of seal on back cover of tri-fold brochure

# Potential for More Consistent Use

Website home page footers – examples of inconsistent ties to the system brand:



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9000 Brooklyn Boulevard,  
Brooklyn Park, MN 55445

**Eden Prairie Campus**  
13100 College View Drive,  
Eden Prairie, MN 55347



# Survey Sample Breakout

	Target	Completed
<b>Current Students</b>	N=400	N=462
At 2-year schools	n=200	n=222
At 4-year schools	n=200	n=240
<b>Faculty and Staff</b>	N=400	N=449
Faculty at 2-year schools	n=100	n=130
Faculty at 4-year schools	n=100	n=109
Staff at 2-year schools	n=100	n=110
Staff at 4-year schools	n=100	n=100
<b>Alumni</b>	N=400	N=615
Of 2-year schools	n=200	n=262
Of 4-year schools	n=200	n=353
<b>Donors *</b>	N=400	N=98
To 2-year schools	n=200	-
To 4-year schools	n=200	-

\*We were not able to obtain donor lists from affiliated schools, so our internal survey was not distributed to that group. We did, however, get 98 people from the general-population sample who indicated that they are MnSCU donors.

- There were a total of N=2,269 completed interviews in the survey.
- N=215 interviews were completed with prospective students
- A total of N=312 people of color participated
- Sample for the general population of Minnesota and prospective students was gathered using techniques to provide a projectable, random sample from each population; prospective students of color were supplemented using a convenience sample



# Key Measure Overview

## Audiences

- Prospective students
- Parents of prospective students
- Current students
- Alumni
- Faculty and staff
- General population

## Dimensions

- Important

*“...please indicate how important you think it is that the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system delivers each of the following.”*
- Describes

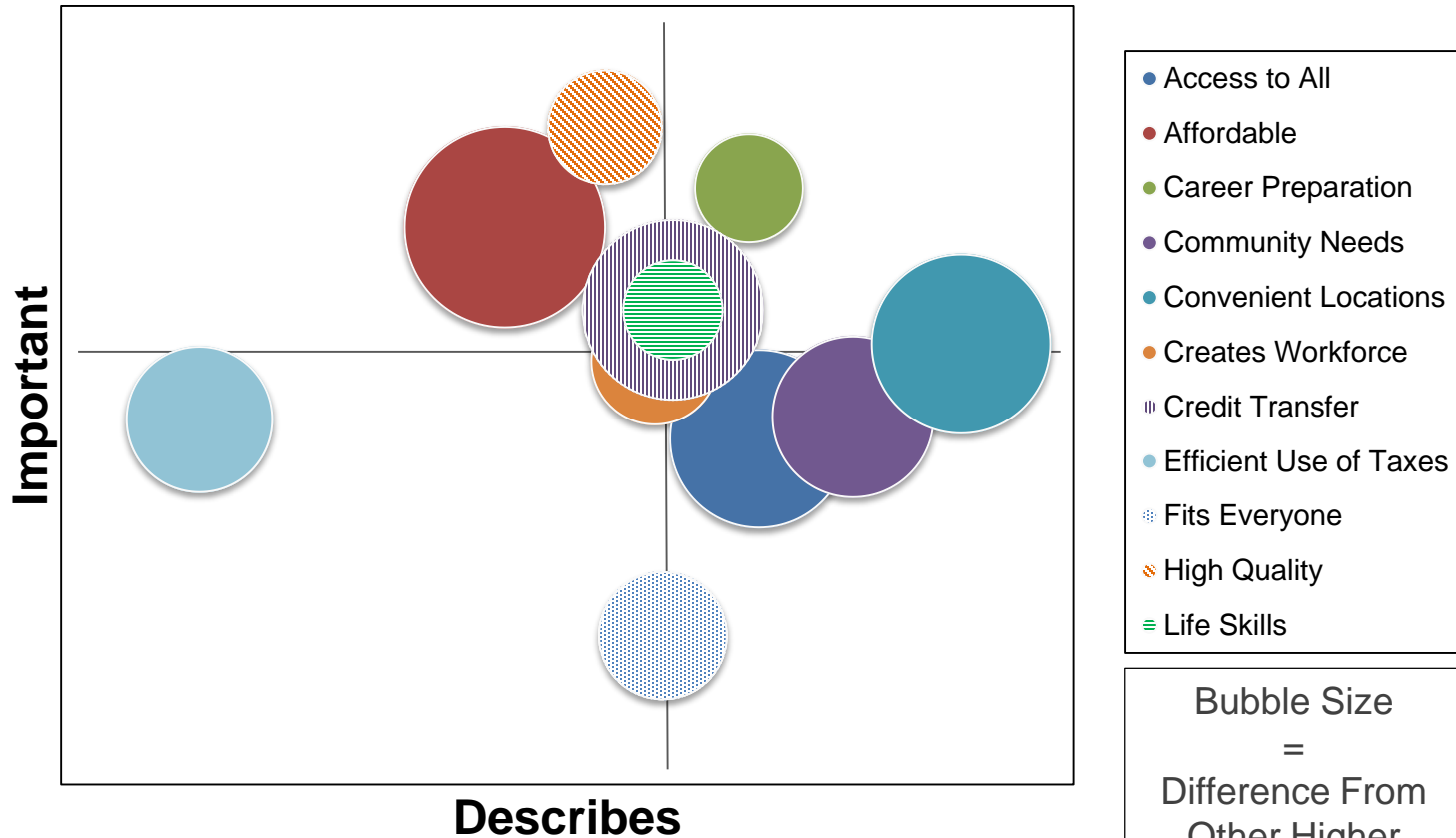
*“...please indicate how well you think each of the following statements describes the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system.”*
- Different

*“...please indicate how different you think the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system is from other higher education options in Minnesota for each of the following.”*

## Attributes

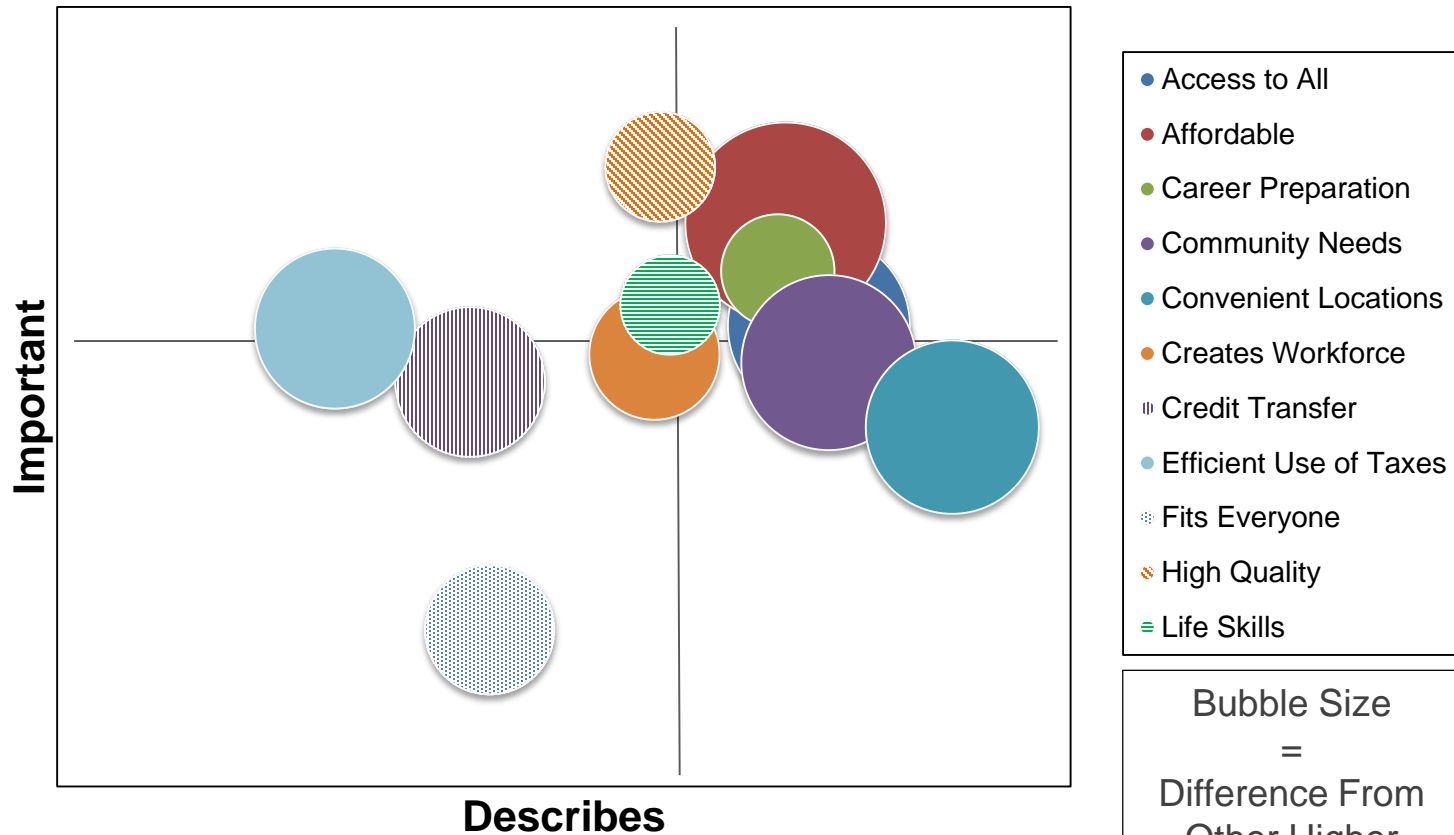
- Access to All
- Affordable
- Career Preparation
- Community Needs
- Convenient Locations
- Creates Workforce
- Credit Transfer
- Efficient Use of Taxes
- Fits everyone
- High Quality
- Life Skills

# Alumni



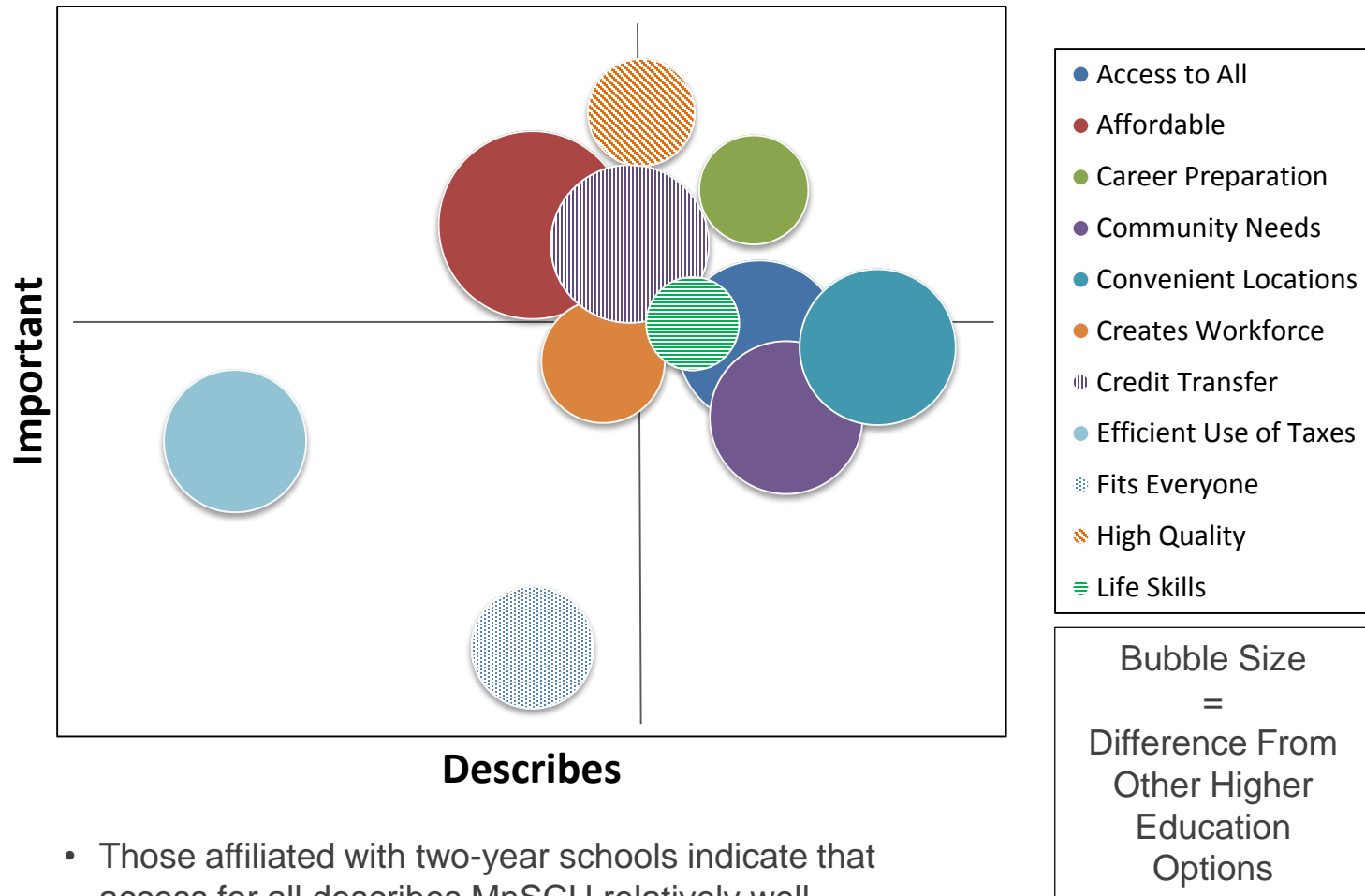
- Alumni take a more communal perspective than prospective students, ranking community needs as relatively more important
- They also place a greater importance on credit transfer

# Faculty and Staff



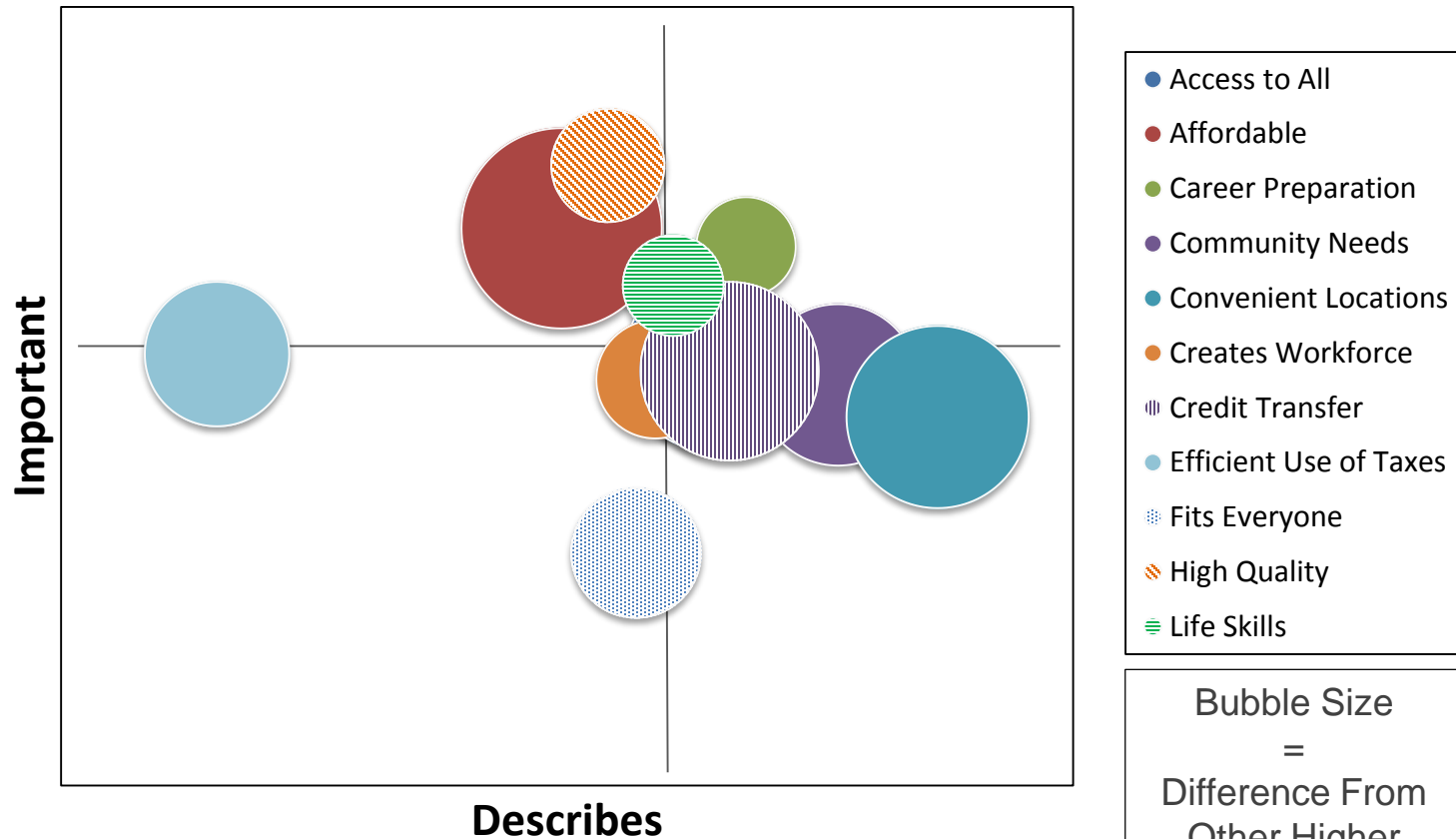
- Faculty and staff have a more negative view of how well credit transfer describes MnSCU than outside audiences do
- In contrast, those inside MnSCU think affordability describes to organization better than others

# Two-Year Schools (Students, Alumni, Faculty/Staff)



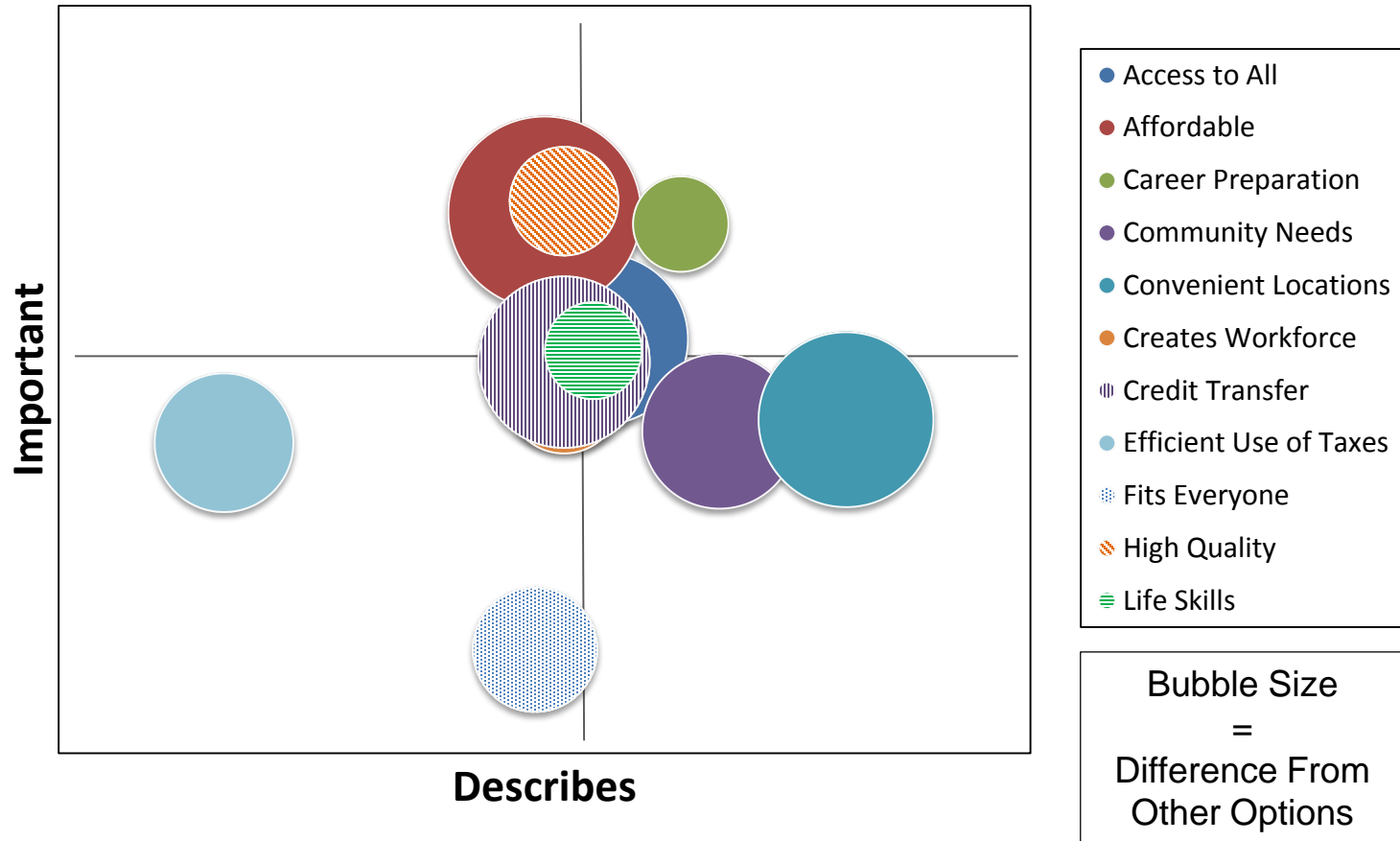
- Those affiliated with two-year schools indicate that access for all describes MnSCU relatively well
- Credit transfer is also relatively important to this group

# Four-Year Schools (Students, Alumni, Faculty/Staff)

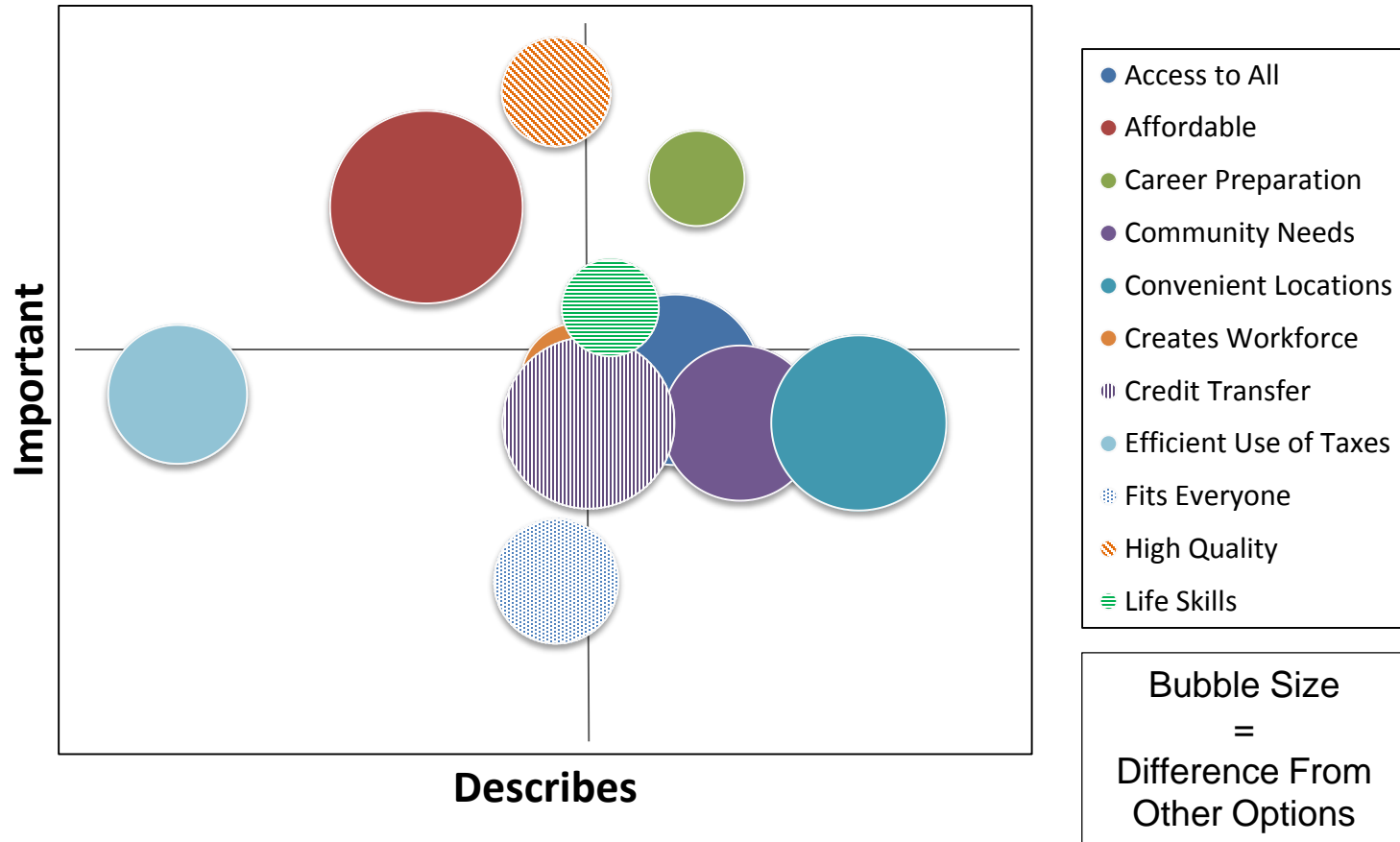


- Compared with two-year schools, those associated with four-year institutions view fitting everyone and efficient use of tax dollars as relatively important

# Metro Residents



# Greater MN Residents



- Residents of greater Minnesota view quality as somewhat more important than metro residence and perceive MnSCU as a little less affordable than their metro counterparts

# These Are Not Ordinary Times

The backdrop MnSCU is communicating against is a challenging one.

National enrollments are down, value is being questioned and the field of higher education is at a crossroads.

## American Higher Education in Crisis?

What Everyone Needs to Know®



Ethan Miller

♥ Become a fan ✉ 🐦 👍

Organizer and Activist

## The Crisis in Higher Education

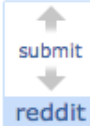
Posted: 02/21/2013 11:43 am EST | Updated: 04/23/2013 5:12 am EDT

### The Academe Blog

The blog of Academe Magazine do not necessarily represent t

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### The Looming Crisis in Higher Education

The “real problem” behind the exploitation of adjunct faculty is that universities have continued to produce a reasonable number of Ph.D.s, but are unwilling to hire a reasonable number of them into full-time, never-ending positions.

This situation will change when enrollment in graduate programs even to crater, because students confront the reality that they have a fifty percent chance of finding full-time employment after completing their degrees—when they confront the reality that the majority of them are spending more in graduate school, and in the process accumulating far more debt than undergraduates accumulate, all in order to earn a wage comparable to what they could earn as an “associate” at WalMart.

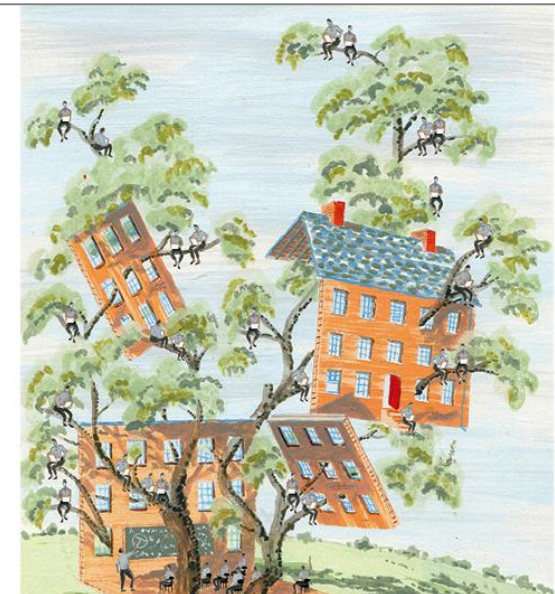
Because the current pool of adjunct faculty has been built up over

## *The Crisis in* **Higher Education**

Online versions of college courses are attracting hundreds of thousands of students, millions of dollars in funding, and accolades from university administrators. Is this a fad, or is higher education about to get the overhaul it needs?

By Nicholas Carr

Illustrations by Brian Cronin





## A Focus on the Big Picture

To make the brand more important, MnSCU must spend more time and effort communicating about the big issues facing higher education.

- MnSCU offers accessible, affordable education at a time when affordability is being challenged in the media and in the minds of students and families
- MnSCU institutions are seen as offering an ideal path to career and life success
- Despite current perceptions, higher education has never been more valuable to students or society. Americans with a four-year degree earn almost twice that of counterparts with only a high school education, and they pay 78 percent more in taxes
- In this time of turmoil, changing demographics and declining enrollments, MnSCU must be seen as a very public voice for a group of outstanding organizations united to provide students a better path. And MnSCU must be more vocal in communicating the value of higher education
- **This is the right time to shift to a more visible external role**

# Key Components of Value

Who

MnSCU is **an alliance** of outstanding colleges, universities, educators, staff and others who collaborate to make education work—but our focus is on **individuals and communities** who benefit from the value higher education delivers.

What

We work to help our member colleges and universities make **outstanding, accessible education** available to all Minnesotans.

Why

Because outstanding, accessible education is **the best path to greater purpose and success** for our citizens and communities.

How

At MnSCU, we are **connectors, collaborators, promoters and advocates**. An alliance that exists to help make our member colleges and universities more successful, so they can make their students and communities more successful.

# Brand Experience Drivers

A guide to  
aligned behavior

**Standards, not Uniformity:** Standards are needed and should be established to elevate programs, but the goal should not be institutional uniformity. Adaptable approaches lead to innovation and access.

**Tools over Rules:** Focus on empowering the success of institutions with tools that enhance their work rather than rules that restrict it.

**Accessibility and Diversity:** MnSCU must continue to expand access to all students from all backgrounds with programs that meet them where they are.

**Advocacy and Promotion:** MnSCU should become a much louder voice for the value of higher education and a collective promoter encouraging participation.

**A Path to Success:** MnSCU should focus its efforts on the link between higher education and individual accomplishment that leads to community prosperity.

*“There is no more powerful engine driving an organization toward excellence and long-range success than an attractive, worthwhile, and achievable vision of the future, widely shared.”*

*– Burt Nanus, USC Leadership Institute*

Brand Manifesto