

MINNESOTA STATE COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

**BOARD OF TRUSTEES
JOINT STUDY SESSION
ACADEMIC AND STUDENT AFFAIRS AND DIVERSITY AND EQUITY
COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES
APRIL 22, 2015
MCCORMICK ROOM
30 7TH STREET EAST
ST. PAUL, MN**

Present: Margaret Anderson Kelliher, Chair, Academic and Student Affairs Committee; Elise Ristau, Vice Chair, Diversity and Equity Committee; Duane Benson, Kelly Charpentier-Berg, Alexander Cirillo, Jr., John Cowles, Dawn Erlandson, Robert Hoffman, Philip Krinkie, Maleah Otterson, Thomas Renier, Louise Sundin, Erma Vizenor, and Michael Vekich

Leadership Council Representatives Present: Steven Rosenstone, Chancellor; Leon Rodrigues, Dr. and John O'Brien, Senior Vice Chancellor for Academic and Student Affairs

Guests Present: Craig Schoenecker, Senior System Director for Research; Scott Olson, President, Winona State University; Alex Hines, Director of Inclusion and Diversity, Winona State University; Barb Oertel, Associate Vice President of Enrollment Management, Winona State University; Karen Johnson, Associate Vice President of Student Life and Dean of Students, Winona State University; Keith Turner, Dean of Student Services, Fond du Lac Tribal and Community College; Sherry Sanchez-Tibbetts, Chief Diversity Officer /Director of Institutional Research, Fond du Lac Tribal and Community College

Convene

The Minnesota State Colleges and Universities Board of Trustees held its meeting on April 22, 2015, 4th Floor, McCormick Room, 30 East 7th Street in St. Paul. Chair Margaret Anderson Kelliher called the study session to order at 8:53 a.m.

Joint Study Session: Closing the Achievement Gap

Chair Margaret Anderson Kelliher introduced Dr. Leon Rodrigues, Senior Vice Chancellor John O'Brien, and Senior System Director Craig Schoenecker.

Dr. Rodrigues stated that in January 2013 there was a study session with ambitious goals for reducing and ultimately eliminating the achievement/opportunity gap. In March 2014, updates were shared and in June 2014, the board heard from Metropolitan State University and Hennepin Technical College on their effective strategies for improving the success of students of color and American Indian students. This is a part of a broader conversation on the academic achievement gap that Chancellor Rosenstone, system leaders, and colleges and university presidents are engaged in, including the Minnesota P-20 Education Partnership, business and community leaders, Governor Dayton, and the legislature.

Dr. Rodrigues shared the definition of ‘achievement gap.’” He states that the definition of “achievement gap” illustrates the complexity of the challenge. Put simply, the gap is the difference in performance on a variety of academic measures between White students on the one hand and American Indian students and students of color on the other. Some use the term “opportunity gap” and there is value in using the term as it acknowledges that the gap we are turning our attention to is not intended to suggest any lack of desire on the part of our students to *achieve* their academic goals.

Dr. Rodrigues said that, to make the progress, a universal sense of urgency and accountability is needed. Key measures related to narrowing these gaps are part of the institutional performance measures and each president’s annual evaluation reflects this. The measures include:

- Student Diversity: Percent of Students of Color and American Indian Students
- Employee Diversity: Percent of Employees of Color and American Indian Employees
- Student Success – Ratio of Students of Color and American Indian Students to White students
- Completion Rate – Ratio of Students of Color and American Indian Students to White Students
- Campus Diversity Climate

Dr. Rodrigues stated that the analysis of system data has been estimated and the completion gap is attributable to three factors: gaps in preparation, gaps in financial resources, and a range of other factors. Since the first two are external factors, they are more difficult to change, but we are focusing considerable effort in these areas:

- Intensive work has been done with the Minnesota Department of Education to improve the college readiness of high school graduates through testing, communication, targeted intervention, and access to college credit courses for those who are ready.
- Efforts on financial resources have included scholarships, pilot programs, and tuition freezes.
- The colleges and universities address all of the other factors through a number of high impact practices.

Dr. O’Brien stated that it is known that the gaps in preparedness start very early, as early as early grade school years when measures are first taken. These gaps are persistent through to graduation rates. Dr. O’Brien shared that Minnesota’s high school graduation rate for white students ranks 30th among the states, but graduation rates for students of color and American Indian students are among the lowest in the nation. He stressed that these gaps in elementary and secondary education have enormous implications for the work that our colleges and universities are doing to close the gaps. On the one hand, they underscore the urgency of working with our K-12 partners to improve readiness of high school graduates. On the other hand, the gaps make both the depth of the problem and the difficulty of addressing it quite clear.

Dr. O’Brien shared some indicators that the work is paying off. Although we still have substantial gaps in high school graduation between white students and American Indians/students of color,

the rates have steadily improved for all groups during the last five years. He shared the Accuplacer reading scores at colleges and ACT Composite Scores at the universities and stressed that these gaps underscore the importance of the work with Minnesota Department of Education to interview early on so that all high school graduates are college ready.

Dr. O'Brien discussed financial need and stated that when it comes to readiness and financial need, these factors are far more powerful in determining student success than all the efforts underway at the colleges and universities to improve student achievement. These factors present significant challenges—especially since readiness is determined before our students arrive on campus and financial need is outside our control. However, board support for a funded tuition freeze is appreciated and any steps taken to approve affordability are crucial for our students.

Dr. O'Brien stated that the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system takes great pride in the diversity of our student population and sees these diverse communities as tremendous assets for the state and for our colleges and universities. It is also a great point of pride that we serve the lion's share of these students now throughout Minnesota. MnSCU's enrollment of students of color and American Indian students has grown dramatically during the last ten years, an increase of 85%. MnSCU serves more Minnesota students of color and American Indian students than all other higher education institutions combined.

Dr. O'Brien said we use the term "persistence" to measure the degree to which a student stays enrolled and followed up with statistics on completion rates. He also stated that it is important to understand the timing of these measures. Since most student attrition occurs in the first few terms after entry, there was relatively little opportunity to change the completion rate or achievement gap for this cohort by the time the goals were set. He clarified that the sixth spring completion gaps for our universities have worsened for recent periods since we are looking back to students who entered before the recession. The university students for whom the most recent completion rate is reported entered in fall 2008, four and one-half years before the achievement gap goals were set. It will take several more years to see improvement in these long-term completion measures.

Dr. O'Brien shared the persistence leading indicator data, reporting the gaps for each racial-ethnic group compared to white students. At both the colleges and the universities, American Indian students have the largest gaps and Black student gaps are increasing. Although there were increases in the gaps for several of student groups during the recession, most groups now have decreasing gaps. Since Asian students at the colleges have persistence rates that are slightly higher than white students, their gap is negative.

Dr. O'Brien shared a comparison of the gap in developmental course-taking and the gap in completion rates. It indicates that we had some modest success in closing the gap among students at our colleges, though not at the universities.

Dr. Rodrigues introduced Winona State University President Scott Olson. President Olson introduced Shenae Davis, a freshman; Tyrize Cox, a parent; Tytiana Reid, a freshman; Lai Loni Middlebrook; and Jessie Mancilla, a graduate student.

Ms. Davis stated she and the others will talk about H.O.P.E. Academy, Family Ties, Success Coach Program, On-campus Employment Program, and the KEAP Diversity Resource center, which are all programs that are made available out of the access and opportunity funding.

Mrs. Cox shared her experience with the H.O.P.E Academy, noting that it is different from other academic camps as it provides an academic environment that mirrors the belief that her family already holds. It provides a community of adults who believe in their ability to be successful.

Ms. Reid shared her experience Family Ties, which welcomes new and transfer students to the university and helps with a successful transition. The program fosters student leadership, cross-cultural relationships, and cultural competency awareness and skills. Through a broad range of organized academic support, advising, leadership, mentoring, and social support activities, students learn new things about themselves and their new “home away from home.” It provides a sense of preparedness for campus life.

Ms. Middlebrook shared her experience with Success Coach Program. Faculty and student life professionals reach out to new entering students of color to establish a one-to-one relationship. These coaches connect students to resources, monitor their progress, and meet regularly with their students and each other. She has enjoyed being part of the program.

Ms. Reid shared her experience with On-campus Employment Program. This program assists new entering students of color in finding on-campus jobs in key offices. Twice a month there are sessions on professional development and workshops. This has helped with connecting with the campus community and has opened doors that might not have otherwise been available.

Mr. Mancilla described the KEAP Diversity Resource Center, which he helped create. KEAP stands for Knowledge, Empowerment, Advocacy, and Pluralism. The center nurtures a supportive and inclusive campus across the boundaries of culture, identity, and discipline. It celebrates unity in diversity. All WSU students, faculty, staff, administrators, alumni/ae, and friends are invited to join in its work to support a diverse and inclusive “community of learners improving our world” within and beyond WSU. Mr. Mancilla pointed out that he is a KEAP success story since the center helped him finish his undergraduate degree at Winona.

Chair Anderson Kelliher asked if these students were aware of the programs prior to coming to the campus. Did it attract them? Or did they find them after coming to campus? What is the effect of the program? Ms. Middlebrook shared that she was not aware of the programs prior to coming to campus. She was invited after starting her freshman year and it has been essential in campus relationship building because it has allowed her to meet others in the program. Ms. Davis stated that it started for her at H.O.P.E. Academy in her junior year of high school. She did choose Winona specifically for the support program. The other campuses that she looked at did not have the same appeal for her as a student of color. Ms. Reid shared that she attended H.O.P.E. Academy for three years. She attended Winona for the programs as well. She does not want to attend college only for the academics; she also wants to feel a change and to know who she is as a person. With H.O.P.E. Academy she has had that experience and became a new person. Mrs. Cox shared that she was not aware of the other programs until she was able to get her daughter into H.O.P.E. Academy. Ever since her experience with H.O.P.E. Academy and learning of the other

programs, she has encouraged other family members to also look at Winona as an option for college. Mr. Mancilla shared that he was a transfer student from Texas. Some of these programs were not available prior to his start. The sense of support and motivation from the staff, faculty, and administration has kept him at Winona.

Trustee Hoffman asked if this group is unique or do other students feel just as successful. Ms. Davis shared that most of her other peers in these programs feel just as successful as she does and are grateful - and they feel ready and prepared.

Trustee Sundin asked if any took PSEO. Ms. Middlebrook took PSEO and did not feel it was successful at North Hennepin Community College. When she arrived at Winona State, Ms. Middlebrook retook all the classes again and was more successful at Winona than at North Hennepin. She was more successful at Winona due to the support she had.

Trustee Benson asked if students who are included are first generation. Ms. Middlebrook confirmed the first generation students are included and the pride that she had in receiving her first gen sticker. Ms. Middlebrook spoke about not having the opportunity to ask about her parents' college experience since they did not attend a college. In her program she was able to have mentors. Trustee Benson clarified that first generation regardless of race or ethnicity are included in these programs.

Trustee Otterson asked if there are any cross-campus ties. Mr. Mancilla responded that they have not specifically gone to other campuses but have spoken to campuses about the KEAP Center and other programs, specifically at the Power in Diversity Conference at St. Cloud State University and at Metro State.

Dr. Sherry Sanchez Tibbetts and Keith Turner, dean of student services at Fond du Lac Tribal and Community College, briefed the board on their achievement gaps. Success was important for Fond du Lac, as the only tribal and community college in existence. Being a member of American Indian Higher Education Consortium (AIHEC) and a Land Grant Institution has allowed some creativity in programing at Fond du Lac.

Mr. Turner discussed how Fond du Lac is closing the achievement gap by getting some of the athletes on campus early so that they can be integrated into campus life and work on life skills. Campus cultures come together and work together on their core values. All work on the core values, from the president to the maintenance workers.

Dr. Tibbetts described how the campus culture creates a welcoming environment for everyone regardless of their background. Knowing that students are a little older than on other campuses, there are more hands-on situational learning opportunities where they can learn and apply what they've learned. One program to highlight is the NASA program where students go to work with NASA scientists, side by side, on environmental modeling on Ojibwe life. College-Connect is a program that creates actual classroom connections to high schools students, focusing on high school students with a GPA between 2.0-2.9. Fond du Lac provides the instruction, transportation, and materials for these classes, which focus on English, reading, and math, and also include an

elective/certificate component. It connects high school to campus in a way that they never thought possible.

Mr. Turner shared information about the *Nandagikendan* Academies. This is an intensive week-long program built on three areas, consisting of:

1. Basic Tools of College Student Life—focused on providing students with early hands-on experience with the essential tools of college life.
2. Academic Success—focused on preparing students for classroom life.
3. Intercultural Communication/Relationship Building—developed throughout the week by virtue of the composition of the program itself; however, some specific activities are included that emphasize communication and relationship building.

Mr. Turner pointed out that for students who lack a support system at home, this program provides an opportunity to build a support network before the rest of the students start school.

Dr. Tibbetts described the Learning Communities program. It is recognized that students may be parents, working full-time, or with limited support systems, and this program affords them some flexibility in scheduling. There is a cooperative working agreement among faculty on joint programming to ensure that all participants are on the same page.

Mr. Turner talked about Holistic Student Services. Fond du Lac recognizes that not all people who come to their campus are just students, so the following services are available:

- Young Student Parent program, on-site day, child care grants
- Student Ambassadors
- Food shelf/food assistance
- Poverty coaching
- Cultural mentoring: an elder comes on campus and helps students reconnect with their culture

Dr. Tibbetts talked about the 0-40 program, a structured semester so that the college and students can meet completion goals. It helps with retention and completion. It is also a way to help them keep their costs down so that the loan deficit is not so high. Retention is everyone's responsibility and so a student retention budget committee and an open budget process have been set up. A dollar amount is assigned to a student. Finances are public and the economic impact of one student is clear. This process helps staff keep in mind when they are engaging with students that they need to do a little extra so that students feel more welcome.

Chair Anderson Kelliher asked how Fond du Lac is doing in terms of persistence and completion. Dr. Schoenecker shared their data, second fall persistence. The average for all colleges in the most recent data point is 62%; third spring completion is 38%. Chair Anderson Kelliher followed this up by sharing the importance of cultural fit and design to make sure it's fitting with what makes sense and welcomes people in. Also commends the college on educating the entire staff and that the entire campus project with open budget process is one in which contributes to welcoming and inviting environment. Chair Anderson Kelliher shared that what she heard from

both groups is that cultural fit and cultural match and diversity and inclusion programs help students be successful, and that is one of the most important pieces in terms of closing the gap.

Trustee Sundin stated that what she feels is important is situation-based learning, and it is just excellent instruction.

Trustee Cirillo noted that we need to change the slope of the date lines. A way to change the slope in the lines is that all people of color have programs to participate in.

Chair Anderson Kelliher called the session to a close.

The meeting adjourned at 10:15 a.m.

Respectfully submitted, Sonya Castillo, Recorder