

**MINNESOTA STATE COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES
BOARD OF TRUSTEES
STUDENTS FIRST STUDY SESSION
MEETING MINUTES
November 18, 2009**

Trustees Present: Chair David Olson, Duane Benson, Cheryl Dickson, Jacob Englund, Christopher Frederick, Clarence Hightower, Dan McElroy, Gail Olson, David Paskach, Thomas Renier, Christine Rice, Scott Thiss, Louise Sundin, and James Van Houten

Trustees Absent: Ruth Grendahl, Terri Thomas

Leadership Council Representatives Present: *Vice Chancellor Laura King and Senior Vice Chancellor Linda Baer*

The Minnesota State Colleges and Universities Joint Meeting of the Academic and Student Affairs and Finance, Facilities and Technology Committee held its meeting on November 18, 2009, at Wells Fargo Place, 4th Floor, Board Room, 30 East 7th Street in St. Paul. Chair David Olson called the meeting to order at 10:16 A.M.

1. Students First Study Session

John O'Brien introduced the discussion of the Student's First initiative. The system has always put students first. However, in a time of dynamic change, the system needs to be more responsive to student needs. Since the last Board meeting, the following realizations have come to light. First, the students' involvement in this initiative has added energy and valuable insight. The students' participation and contributions are greatly appreciated and are an essential component of the success of Student's First. Second, the Board is spending valuable time talking about the system and asking if it is as responsive as it could and should be to the needs of students. The third realization is the important benefits of improved communication. Communication must take place not only with the Board but also with the campuses, students and faculty. In an effort to improve communication, a Students First website has been developed to provide the most current information on the progress of this initiative. This website (<http://www.studentsfirst.project.mnscu.edu/>) includes responses to frequently asked questions. The text in this area reflects the honest questions and answers and will not be polished. Other areas on the website include the list of projects; contact information; documents; links to monthly updates; and a list of the consultation meetings scheduled.

John O'Brien invited the Board members to ask any questions they have on Students First. Trustee Frederick inquired what kind of feedback John O'Brien has received at the campus consultation meetings. John O'Brien stated that at this time the meetings have taken place only with the universities; this is not a complete sample of campus representation. The campuses have raised some

concerns about functionality and resource allocation on different projects, for example, the Graduation Planner project. There are individuals that are concerned that the new application will diminish the relationship students have with advisors and faculty.

Christine Rice asked John O'Brien to describe the resistance to the Student First projects. John O'Brien indicated that concerns about the Single Registration project have been expressed. For example, there are concerns that the students will receive inaccurate registration information and take courses at other colleges/universities that do not meet requirements at their home institution. John O'Brien pointed out that at this time students are able to make these mistakes, but with Students First it will be easier to see which courses meet (or don't meet) requirements.

Chancellor McCormick indicated that it was appropriate for John O'Brien to begin these discussions with the communication plan. As meetings are held project expectations are clarified and concerns alleviated. Communication will play an important role in keeping this initiative on track.

John O'Brien stated that it is important not to focus just on addressing the needs of students attending more than one institution. The six Students First projects will result in improvements that will benefit all students.

Trustee Hightower inquired about what concerns about retaining campuses autonomy have been expressed. John O'Brien responded that worry about autonomy is the basis for many of the concerns expressed. Students First will not discourage students from participating in the full campus experience at their home campus. He added that creating a more interactive and responsive system should not diminish the value of the home campus.

Trustee Benson inquired if the information will be tied to career data to aid students in program and career path decision-making. John O'Brien and Vice Chancellor Baer replied that this is not a separate project but that it will be part of projects like Graduation Planner.

Trustee Frederick inquired if there was anything impeding campuses from considering outsourcing courses to meet student demands. Vice Chancellor King responded that the campuses currently participate in agreements to outsource courses. The Single Bill / Single Payment projects will address this issue; however, this is built around the thought that terms start simultaneously. They do not and this issue will require some creative thinking to resolve.

Trustee McElroy requested a definition for home-campus. The home-campus is the one where the student applies, is accepted to and the campus which takes the lead in the student's financial aid.

Trustee McElroy inquired if the Students First initiative leads us to better retention and graduate rates, will this be measurable. John O'Brien responded that a comparison, for example, between the students who use graduation planner and those that do not would be measurable.

Trustee Thiss inquired if the changes to technology will utilize existing systems or will require new systems. John O'Brien responded that the current Degree Audit Reporting System (DARS) / CAS system would be a foundation for the new Graduation Planning system.

Trustee Van Houten requested a clarification of the issue of banded course rates for students who attend more than one institution. If the campus presidents are agreeing to reduce tuition rates, they may be in violation of policy. The single registration and single payment issue for students who attend more than one institution may require a policy change to the tuition rules. Vice Chancellor King responded that there is no doubt that Students First will result in changes to Board policies and procedures. This issue is one of many for consideration. Trustee Van Houten stated that there are number of reasons to pursue these changes, making the Students First initiative valuable. Trustee Paskach shared his support of these efforts to optimize the system. With regard to the potential enhancements, changes should not be rejected solely because of policy. The Board will be consulted as needed; this may pose opportunities for changes that should have happened a long time ago.

Trustee Englund stated that "technology is a great source of quantitative information, but it will never replace the mentorship one can receive from an actual person" and inquired if it was possible to provide an incentive to the advisors for participating in these projects. John O'Brien responded that Students First work will respect bargaining agreements and appropriate rules of engagement. The working groups will be engaged in addressing the issues identified here today as well as those that not yet been identified.

Trustee Hightower inquired where Students First is housed and financed. Vice Chancellor King responded that the housing and financing are under the Finance and Academic Students Affairs Committees and divisions. John O'Brien is on the Information Technology (IT) roster. There is financing in the IT budget to support the technology work needed. No new funding is available to cover the demands placed on the campuses for loaning us key leaders and talent to work on committees. The campuses contributions to these efforts are greatly appreciated. A commercial environment would judge this initiative substantially underfunded. It will succeed because individuals make a career commitment to be a part of it.

Chancellor McCormick stated that the development of the idea for Students First before inclusive consultation meetings has created some bumps in the road. Since

John O'Brien came on board, consultation has taken place. John O'Brien responded that there is a tremendous benefit to getting everyone together to brainstorm and not worry about how things have always been done. These consultation sessions have brought people together to discuss what needs to be accomplished.

Trustee Sundin inquired when the board might see a list of policy roadblocks that need attention. Senior Vice Chancellor Baer indicated that the list of roadblocks is still in development. A process of sorting and aligning the issues will be completed and then those that need attention will be brought to the board. Vice Chancellors King stated that the policy issues would be resolved before they become issues in the design phase. The consultation process will allow stakeholders to determine the scope of policy issues. The challenge will be resolving these issues while not delaying design. Vice Chancellor King indicated that one could expect to see the first changes to board policies around the second quarter of next fiscal year.

Trustee Frederick inquired if this is the right time to undertake this initiative. This initiative relies on campus support and resources. Of the six projects listed, some have unanimous support; should those that do not have unanimous support be delayed? John O'Brien stated the projects listed are ongoing efforts which have been broken down to FY2010-2011 specific deliverables. As the projects are undertaken, we will learn more about IT resources requirements and campus capacity. Flexibility has been built into the projects.

Trustee Frederick inquired with the tough times that campuses are having what are they giving up. Senior Vice Chancellor Baer responded one must understand that campuses have indicated this is what they need. The campuses are providing leaders to give guidance on these efforts and determine what they can contribute. The question on what the cost to campuses will need to be asked in six months.

Trustee Van Houten inquired if this initiative will address the issues like fraud in the area of student loans. Senior Vice Chancellor Baer responded that this issue would be addressed by the single bill and payment projects. Trustee Van Houten stated it would not take long to pay for these projects if issues like this are addressed.

Trustee McElroy inquired what would be done for those students who are non-proficient with technology (non-digital natives). Senior Vice Chancellor Baer responded that the campuses are aware of the need for a dual approach to accommodate the needs of non-computer users. They are using many techniques to meet their needs for instance using student groups to assist them. Trustee Dickson stated that this is a great leap forward for the system. Change has been discussed and this process is a great opportunity to change. This is possible

because of previous infrastructure investments, and now initiatives like Students First are opportunities to make dramatic changes for the better.

Trustee Hightower inquired if the Board should consider what must happen to provide a budget for this initiative. John O'Brien responded that the initiative has received funding for Fiscal Year 2010 to complete deliverables planned in FY10. Trustee Thiss responded that the deliverables should save some money and support the board allocating funding for these important initiatives.

Trustee Benson stated that this is an opportunity to educate the students explaining the finance behind their education.

Chair Olson adjourned the meeting at 11:20 a.m.

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Respectfully submitted,
Christine Benner, Recorder