

**MINNESOTA STATE COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES
BOARD OF TRUSTEES STUDY SESSION
JANUARY 19, 2011**

Board Members Present: Chair Scott Thiss; Trustees Duane Benson, Cheryl Dickson, Christopher Frederick, Clarence Hightower, Phil Krinkie, Dan McElroy, Thomas Renier, Christine Rice, Louise Sundin, James Van Houten and Michael Vekich. Trustee Jacob Englund participated via telephone.

Board Members Absent: Trustees David Paskach and Alfredo Oliveira.

Leadership Council Committee Co-Chairs Present: Interim Vice Chancellor Scott Olson and President Sue Hammersmith.

The Minnesota State Colleges and Universities Board of Trustees held a study session on January 19, 2011, at Wells Fargo Place, 4th Floor, Board Room, 30 East 7th Street in St. Paul. Chair Thiss called the session to order at 11:00 a.m.

Presenters:

Scott Olson, Interim Vice Chancellor for Academic and Student Affairs

Leslie Mercer, Associate Vice Chancellor for Research, Planning and Effectiveness

Interim Vice Chancellor Olson said the focus of the Study Session will be to gather suggestions for the development of the Fiscal Year 2012-2014 System Action Plan.

There have been improvements in the system action planning process, Associate Vice Chancellor Mercer said. Rather than operating on an annual cycle, the plan now will be a multi-year action plan. It will be developed and approved in the spring, which will allow better alignment with campus planning and budget cycles. The plan also will be more flexible to support localized institutional planning.

Interim Vice Chancellor Olson asked Trustees to identify two or three key concepts that they would like to be included in the upcoming Action Plan. Once those concepts are identified, staff will develop a draft action plan for review and discussion at the March Board meeting. It is hoped that the 2012-14 System Action Plan will be approved by the Board in May, 2011.

Office of the Chancellor staff worked with the Leadership Council to identify some possible key issues that could be addressed in the Action Plan and Interim Vice Chancellor Olson said they could be used as the basis for their discussion. Those concepts are:

- **Focus the system on the completion agenda**
This could include improving student access, opportunity and success. The needs of students unprepared for college and increasing graduate rates could be addressed.
- **Advocate for Higher education as a public good**
Advocacy could mean emphasizing institutional collaborations and leading an effort to promote higher as a public good for the state.
- **Increase productivity for fiscal sustainability**
Ensure campuses are fiscally sustainable by managing costs and available funding.

Chancellor McCormick asked if the new Chancellor, who takes over in August, will have an opportunity to offer input on the plan. Interim Vice Chancellor Olson said that would be possible since the new Chancellor will be named before the plan is approved. This also will be a multi-year action plan, so there will be time for adjustments in the future.

Focus the system on the completion agenda

Trustee Dickson said she would like to see a goal aimed at re-imagining post-secondary education in the state. An example would be the elimination of current “stopping points” between secondary and post-secondary education. Colleges or universities could partner with high schools in their region to help accomplish the P-14 or P-16 approach, she said.

Trustee Rice agreed that the merged approach should be a consideration since the secondary system seems to be failing in adequately preparing students for college-level coursework. The system’s colleges and universities could help fill the void, she said. This approach probably would call for a reallocation of resources, she added.

Trustee Sundin said adoption of a merged secondary/post-secondary strategy is an admirable goal, but the system may be limited in its ability to make any immediate or significant changes in the current delivery of secondary education.

Chancellor McCormick agreed. The system can have input in the preparation of teachers, but it does not have control over the governance of secondary education. It would be important to get the systems to work together and promote this comprehensive concept.

Trustee Krinke said while K-12 education is the fastest growing segment of the state budget, there continues to be no better results. The system doesn’t have control over what happens in K-12 system, but it can show concern and play an active role in forging solutions. The three higher education systems were folded into one with merger 15 years ago, and now it may be appropriate to talk about adding high school into the mix, he said.

President Hammersmith pointed out that the state will not meet its workforce needs in the future without attracting and educating a large number of adult learners in addition to high school students.

Increase productivity for fiscal sustainability

Trustee Dickson said she is uncomfortable with the words “increase productivity for fiscal sustainability” since they carry a negative connotation. Re-imagining higher education for fiscal sustainability is a more positive approach, she said.

Trustee McElory said the term productivity could be replaced with re-invention. Re-invention could involve reorganization of work, better use of technology and systems and use of incentives and rewards, with the ultimate goal of fiscal sustainability.

For the foreseeable future, the state will be facing fiscal pressures and reducing costs will be of utmost importance, Trustee Van Houten said. Costs can be reduced in many ways which may not even be outwardly noticeable. Restructuring or adopting regional approaches would be a good way to reduce costs, he said.

Chancellor McCormick pointed out the current model of higher education delivery may not be sustainable long term. The system likely will need to utilize its facilities, technology and workforce in different ways to be fiscally viable in the future.

Trustee Dickson agreed the current higher education model may not be sustainable. She suggested system leaders go to the Legislature and offer to take the lead in rethinking higher education in Minnesota.

Advocate for higher education as a public good

Trustee McElroy said the concept of advocating for higher education as a public good sounds like a plea for increased funding. Considering the state’s financial situation, receiving additional funding for higher education isn’t likely, he said. A better approach would be to engage the public in finding innovative ways to provide higher education.

Promoting higher education as a public good does not have to include increased funding, Trustee Sundin said. There needs to be a push to recreate the understanding that higher education is a common public good that not only benefits individuals, but also the state as a whole.

Trustee Frederick agreed that it is imperative that education at all levels be promoted as a common good for the state.

The meeting adjourned at 12:02 pm
Respectfully submitted,
Margie Takash, Recorder