

**MINNESOTA STATE COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES  
BOARD OF TRUSTEES**

**Agenda Item Summary Sheet**

**Committee:** Technology Committee

**Date of Meeting:** May 15, 2012

**Agenda Item:** Students First Project Close

- Proposed Policy Change       Approvals Required by Policy       Other Approvals       Monitoring
- Information

**Cite policy requirement, or explain why item is on the Board agenda:**

The Board of Trustees Technology Committee 2011 goal included monitoring progress on the Student First initiative. This report will provide information on the accomplishments made with Student First.

**Scheduled Presenter(s):**

Robert Musgrove, President, Pine Technical College

Jonathan Eichten, System Director Students First

**Outline of Key Points/Policy Issues:**

**Background Information:**

On November 17, 2009, John O'Brien presented the Students First projects at the Board of Trustees Students First Study Session meeting. Since July 2010, Jon Eichten has provided the Board of Trustees with progress reports on these efforts.

There are six projects, which comprise Students First:

- Single Search
- Single Application
- Graduation Planner
- Single Registration
- Single Bill/Single Payment
- Shared Services

**BOARD OF TRUSTEES  
MINNESOTA STATE COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES**

<b>INFORMATION ITEM</b>
<b>STUDENTS FIRST PROJECT CLOSE</b>

**BACKGROUND**

The Board of Trustees Technology Committee 2011 goal included monitoring progress on the Student First initiative. This report will provide information on the accomplishments made with Student First.

**Students First Accomplishments**

The Students First initiative makes it easier for students to find information about courses, programs, colleges and universities, and to do business with the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities. Endorsed by the Minnesota State College Student Association and Minnesota State University Student Association, the initiative began in 2009. Students and staff from campuses were consulted to achieve more consistent, efficient and effective Web-based processes. Policies also were updated to remove barriers. For example, the system now has common dates for tuition payments and withdrawing from a course. The Students First initiative was made possible after the system received a state appropriation in 2008 to rebuild and maintain a technology network for all campuses that is fast, secure and reliable. Each year, more than 400,000 students, faculty, staff and others rely on this network. The Students First initiative ended in July 2011, though some projects continue. Here are some accomplishments.

**Single search**

Students can search systemwide from one website, [www.mnscu.edu](http://www.mnscu.edu), to find courses, programs, colleges or universities. The website also offers a seamless transition to other Students First features. Results include:

- The website ranks first or second on most search engines when using search terms, such as “Minnesota colleges or universities.”
- More than 80,000 referrals of potential students were made to universities and colleges from July to December 2011.
- More than 12,000 students submitted an application online to one or more universities or colleges from July to December 2011.
- Student leaders from the state universities offered positive comments on being able to search for and compare graduate programs in the system.

**Single application, registration and payment**

Students can complete a single application and submit it to one or more system colleges or universities. This feature more easily identifies equivalent courses across the system; allows students to register for courses during the same term at more than one college or university and

lets students view and pay one bill if they take courses from more than one system institution at the same time. Specific results include:

- During National College Application Week, Minnesota high school students completed 15,600 applications to one or more institutions.
- More than 87,000 admissions applications were submitted online from July to December 2011.
- Students have paid \$76 million in tuition and fees between July and December 2011 using the single payment feature.
- More than 3,000 students paid tuition to two or more institutions from July to December 2011.
- Students admitted to one MnSCU college or university can now take courses at another one without being admitted under a board policy adopted in June 2010. This helps students stay on track to graduate.
- Student leaders from the state universities expressed that it is now easier to be in cross-institutional programs.

#### **Waitlist with email communication**

Many students can elect to be placed on a waiting list and notified by email when an opening arises in a course. Specific results include:

- Nearly half of the courses in the system offered this feature for the spring 2012 semester.
- Student leaders from the state universities expressed high degrees of satisfaction regarding their experiences with the waitlist and encouraged more courses to add the waitlist function.

#### **Loan acceptance**

Students can accept Federal Direct Student Loans via the Web. Data automatically becomes available to financial aid staff. Specific results include:

- More than 160,000 student loans have been accepted via the Web since April 2011.
- Student leaders from two-year colleges reported students received financial aid much more quickly and were very pleased.
- Student leaders from the state universities appreciated the clarity and simplicity of completing the loan process with the new Web-based feature.

#### **Other enhancements**

- A new portal offers students current information on registration, financial aid status (e.g. your award letter will be sent in 24 hours) and tuition payment.
- The portal also provides students with tax information such as amount of tuition paid and income earned.
- Students no longer need to obtain a paper transcript when transferring within MnSCU.
- E-transcripts simplify the transfer process under a board policy adopted in April 2010.
- Students can merge records from multiple institutions.

- Students can see their grade information as soon as faculty members enter it.
- Colleges and universities can tailor letters or email messages to prospective students and applicants by a variety of attributes, including time, major or program.
- Stronger passwords to better protect student data.

### **Projects in progress**

- **Communication enhancements:** Students will be able to receive text messages, among other modifications. This will give colleges and universities another way to reach students, particularly if they are at-risk of dropping out.
- **Proxy bill pay:** Students will be able to assign rights to a third party to perform an action on the students' behalf.
- **Single financial aid payment:** Students will be able to receive financial aid at one institution and use it to pay tuition and fees at another system institution.
- **Academic planning tools:** Students will be able to do "what if" scenarios with majors and programs, enter planned courses and explore transfer and programs, enter planned courses and explore transfer.