

**MINNESOTA STATE COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES  
BOARD OF TRUSTEES  
STUDY SESSION  
STRATEGIES FOR MANAGING STRATEGIC RISKS  
JANUARY 26, 2016**

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**Board Members Present:** Chair Michael Vekich; Trustees Margaret Anderson Kelliher, Duane Benson, Kelly Charpentier-Berg, Alexander Cirillo, Jay Cowles, Dawn Erlandson, Robert Hoffman, Philip Krinkie, Elise Ristau, and Louise Sundin

**Absent:** Ann Anaya, Maleah Otterson, Thomas Renier and Erma Vizenor

The Minnesota State Colleges and Universities Board of Trustees held a study session on January 26, 2016 at Minneapolis Community and Technical College, 1501 Hennepin Avenue, Minneapolis. Board Chair Michael Vekich called the session to order at 3:05 pm.

### **Strategies for Managing Strategic Risks**

#### **Presenters**

Steven Rosenstone, chancellor

Noelle Hawton, chief marketing and communications officer

Mark Carlson, vice chancellor, human resources

Ron Anderson, vice chancellor, academic and student affairs

Laura King, vice chancellor - chief financial officer

#### **Introduction**

Chancellor Rosenstone commented that the trustees discussed strategic risks which could challenge the system's ability to deliver on its core mission and strategic framework during a board retreat in September. These risks include declining enrollments due to a smaller student pool, changing student demographics, fiscal sustainability, student affordability and debt, and course delivery issues.

Strategies for managing these risks include elements of the Charting the Future workplan, metro baccalaureate planning, universal branding efforts, work done by the long-term financial sustainability workgroup, the system's scholarship campaign, and ongoing work with the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) and the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED).

During the board's retreat in September, Trustee Erlandson suggested the system become more proactive or pre-emptive with its risk management strategies. Emphasis could be put on offensive measures, rather than always focusing on defensive ones.

With that focus, Chancellor Rosenstone asked four members of his cabinet to offer a slate of bold ideas and approaches to risk strategy management. At this point these are only ideas, not proposals. At the end of the presentation, there will be time for trustees to discuss and comment on whether the ideas are on the right track or if more calibration of the ideas is needed.

## **Ideas and Approaches**

Vice Chancellor Anderson offered bold ideas pertaining to learning strategies and course delivery, including:

- A credential and degree pathway that moves away from time-dependent measures of achievement and progression to competency-based measures where learning and achievement are aligned from pre-K through graduate education and throughout workforce experiences;
- A pathway with multiple entrance and exit points that would allow students to integrate and individualize their learning both inside and outside of the classroom across their lifetime;
- Customized learning, heavily supported by technology, with a focus on individualization rather than standardization. Progression would be based on subject mastery.
- Student engagement with content would be customized to meet specific student needs. All learning would be intentionally linked across disciplines and skill areas;
- Students would receive the academic support when they need it and faculty would be free to engage students in deeper analysis of content, knowledge, knowledge creation, and cross-disciplinary connections;

Vice Chancellor Anderson noted that overall, these bold ideas have the potential to increase equity, opportunity, and success across the educational lifespan of MnSCU students.

Chief Marketing and Communications Officer Noelle Hawton discussed the creation of universal branding platform which would allow colleges and universities to keep their individual identities while binding them together in a way that is easily grasped by consumers. The branding platform would raise the collective value of MnSCU colleges and universities and would help students understand that they stand for high-quality education accessible throughout the state at an affordable price. Possible strategies in this effort could include:

- Billboards throughout the state, especially near the borders, which tout the outstanding educational opportunities offered in the system;
- Enhanced digital content featuring college and university alumni. Prospective students would learn about the jobs alumni have, what salary they earn and their student debt load;
- Through traditional media stories and local events, students would learn about educational partnerships that colleges and universities have with business, cultural and civic organizations. These partnerships would work to ensure that students have the right knowledge and skills for the jobs and roles needed in their communities;
- The chancellor would become a well-known opinion leader in the state, speaking to groups and writing newspaper commentaries on the state's talent shortage, the latest thinking about student debt and the need for more post-secondary education.

This work has already begun, Hawton said. Stories about MnSCU's affordability, accessibility, partnerships, and talent are being placed in local market media throughout the state. During 2015, there were 38 metro market media stories featuring colleges and universities that supported the system's strategic framework initiatives and themes.

An array of innovative ideas pertaining to student services was offered by Vice Chancellor Laura King. The goal would be a seamless student, faculty and staff experience across the system both academically and administratively. Ideas suggested included:

- A unified administrative experience at colleges and universities for every student, faculty and staff so they could move easily from campus to campus and experience the same look and feel in those interactions;
- A greatly simplified registration process, allowing students to pay one tuition bill for coursework being taken at more than one college or university;
- A single financial aid application and award process;
- The ability to easily check grades and coursework online at more than one college or university, and a single sign-up for student ID purposes and computer access;
- Faculty and staff teaching at multiple campuses with easy access to student and course information. Staff would be able to back each other up without complicated system changes.

Vice Chancellor King commented that these strategies would take work currently underway by various system workgroups and committees to the next level.

Vice Chancellor Mark Carlson outlined bold concepts for an integrated metro-wide educational collective to address complexities in the system, including:

- Academic planning would have seamless curriculum and enhanced transfer pathways with coordinated program development. Students would be offered "crystal-clear" baccalaureate pathways with increased course offerings through a shared academic catalog;
- Student support activities would be centered on synchronized financial aid management and processing, coordinated transportation schedules, integrated technology services, and fully coordinated advising;
- Fractured and cross-marketing efforts would be eliminated through the creation of a unified brand. MnSCU would have a much larger competitive presence and consolidated alumni relations;
- Faculty and staff efficiencies would be enhanced through innovations such as pay management and coordinated, metro-wide teaching loads. This bold idea would foster faculty assignment mobility, staff-sharing opportunities, and a wall-to-wall administrative shared-service environment.

This collective approach could potentially transform the student experience into one that is truly unified, coordinated, and more responsive to individual needs, Vice Chancellor Carlson said.

### **Trustee Discussion / Comments**

Trustee Charpentier-Berg praised the bold ideas, saying they would provide a seamless plan for students. A strategy pertaining to generating funds, such as a potential statewide levy, was not included in the slate of bold proposals, Trustee Sundin noted. Vice Chancellor King said the long-term financial sustainability workgroup will have a revenue discussion and she'll make sure that topic is included.

Trustee Cirillo suggested that the system could realize an alternative source of revenue if it would run some programs that provide credentialing opportunities as a small business. He added that this idea would take customized training to another level for added income.

Trustee Anderson Kelliher said she appreciates discussion centering on bold ideas for strategic planning. It is very powerful to imagine what the system could be five to ten years from now. Trustee Benson commented that it would be revolutionary for a public institution such as MnSCU, to embrace bold, offensive strategies which cause every other player in higher education to "play defense."

Trustee Hoffman said outdated programs and methods may need to be jettisoned for futuristic, innovative ones. Trustee Cowles suggested the use of pilots as a way to gather empirical evidence of a bold idea's cost, as well as its successes and failures. He added that although it may be difficult, collaboration and relationship building in the sphere of work that serves student goals will be integral to the success of these measures.

Chair Vekich said when it comes to moving these bold ideas along, it will be necessary to promote experimentation and not punish for failure. Another study session to continue the discussion on the proactive strategies will be scheduled.

On another topic, Trustee Anderson Kelliher said trustee campus visits were discussed during that day's lunch. Several campus presidents suggested trustees could visit when a special event is scheduled on campus, such as during an agricultural symposium planned at South Central Colleges or during a concert at Minnesota State College - Southeast Technical featuring students from their musical instrument repair and construction program.

Chancellor Rosenstone said the Leadership Council will work with Board Secretary Inge Chapin to get more campus events like these on the trustees' calendars.

### **Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 4:03 pm

Respectfully submitted,  
Margie Takash, Recorder