

**MINNESOTA STATE BOARD OF TRUSTEES**  
Executive Committee Meeting Minutes  
January 6, 2021

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Executive Committee Members Present: Chair Jay Cowles, Vice Chair Roger Moe, Trustees Alex Cirillo, Dawn Erlandson, April Nishimura, Cheryl Tefer, and Michael Vekich, and Chancellor Devinder Malhotra

Other Trustees Present: Asani Ajogun, Ahmitara Alwal, Rudy Rodriguez

**Convene and Call to Order**

Chair Cowles called the virtual meeting to order at 8:00am.

**Chair's Updates**

In thinking of the new year for Minnesota State, I've been reflecting on two major efforts the Board put in place in recent years: first, an extensive expert review of major national trends and challenges in higher education, in order to inform us of the fast pace and multiple dimensions of change, and second, an accompanying commitment for the Board to adopt ongoing practices and agendas that respond in a timely and effective manner to these challenges. In some respects our resulting adoption of Equity 2030 was a prescient recognition of the need for transformational change, but as the past year's events have emphasized, our challenges are deepening and accelerating due to the pandemic and the exposure of widespread systemic racism and disparities.

As a result, the Chancellor and I want to stimulate a timely review of our priority agendas and topics for the next year or two. As a matter of information, we will be bringing to the Board meetings in three weeks a recent report on "Reimagining Higher Education in the Wake of COVID", for discussion in a joint meeting with the Leadership Council. Following that meeting, I will ask the Committee chairs and vice chairs in February to revisit their committee agendas not just for the remainder of this year but also for the next year or two, consulting with individual committee members, Cabinet members, and president liaisons. The point is to not wait for our September Retreat for trustee reflection on emerging or higher priority topics, but begin preparing now so that the Chancellor and staff can prepare well and our Board agendas and discussions can reflect our best strategic thinking.

As a reminder: our next board and committee meetings are scheduled for January 26-27, in a Zoom format for both days.

## Chancellor's Updates

### Legislative Session

- As you know yesterday members of the Minnesota Legislature were sworn in. I want to congratulate new and returning legislators and Minnesota State looks forward to their partnership.
- The work we do with legislators and how we tell our story will be very different this session and I am pleased that we have a plan that will have Minnesota State active with legislators virtually.
- Over the past few years we hosted Minnesota State Day at the capitol and last year's event brought in 100 legislators and the Governor.
- This year we are doing the event virtually and on January 11<sup>th</sup> we will kick off a virtual day at the capitol for each of our campuses.
- The virtual days will go through March 10<sup>th</sup> and each campus will be engaging policy makers on their social media platforms highlighting the work that they do for Minnesota State students and the communities we serve.
- I will be tweeting each day a video introducing each campus and their day and we are excited about the engagement that our effort will generate. I will say recording 30 videos in one afternoon was an interesting exercise and I can tell you I know for sure acting was not my calling.
- I want to thank our government relations and communications teams for working together on this and thinking of new ways to communicate.

### Spring semester/COVID update

- As classes begin to start up again on Monday, the work by our team continued over the holiday break as they stayed connected and in communication with our partners at MDH.
- With the Governor's Executive Order set to expire later this week, we do not anticipate that a new executive order will alter the path our campuses are on right now for spring semester but may provide additional clarity for some of our auxiliary services such as fitness centers and dining services.
- As this board discussed earlier this year, as we respond to the pandemic to reflect on the lessons learned and to look forward to what we will look like post-COVID.
- In that spirit, during our January joint time with Leadership Council, we will be joined by our partners from EAB – a global firm serving higher education with education technology, services, and research.
- They will share with us their work on *Reinventing Higher Education in the Shadow of COVID*.

### Additional Comments

- On January 12<sup>th</sup>, with support from The Joyce Foundation, Minnesota's P-20 Education Partnership will be spotlighted during a webinar.
- Sr. Vice Chancellor Ron Anderson has served as the chair of the P20 Council this year and has helped to focus the council's work on strengthening the bridges between and across K-12, postsecondary and workforce sectors which has provided the council a renewed focus and purpose.

### **Review of proposed Inclusive Board Leadership Plan**

Chair Cowles noted that as a follow-up to the Board training held last July, he has had conversations with the Chancellor and Trustee Rodriguez who chairs the board's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee to talk through next steps for this important piece of board and trustee development. He thanked Trustee Rodriguez for his efforts to draft a plan for this work and turned it over to him to walk us through an overview of the proposed plan. He also noted that we are joined by Interim System Diversity Officer Andriel Dees who assisted in the development of this plan.

Trustee Rodriguez noted that this work is the result of conversations with the Board Chair, Chancellor and Interim System Diversity Officer Dees and also the entire Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee. He noted that today's discussion is based on three areas of interest:

- Deliver on Minnesota State's Equity 2030 plan
- Support the D&I business case – students and key stakeholders expect us to innovate and deliver an inclusive culture to effectively compete, which includes building diverse teams that are more innovative, draw talent to inclusive workplaces where they feel they belong and deliver on the workforce needs of our state and nation
- Focus on trustee development and leading by example in this area

Trustee Rodriguez explained that this plan has the following objectives related to trustee learning:

- Build self-awareness and learning journey about different dimensions of diversity
- Demonstrate leadership commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging
- Begin to embed inclusive leadership key learning in key trustee decision-making process
- Help trustees become allies for underrepresented populations

Trustee Rodriguez presented a graphic commonly used in diversity discussions – a wheel that showcases that diversity is more than race and ethnicity; it encompasses all our lived experiences, including visible and invisible dimensions. We want to take this perspective to ensure we are including all perspectives in our discussions.

The proposed inclusive board leadership plan includes the following:

- Three sessions facilitated by Trustee Rodriguez and others as appropriate:
  - Kick-off and self-assessment
  - Practical application of unconscious bias
  - Understanding racism and how to mitigate it in our behaviors and system policies and decision-making processes (other “-isms” would be covered in the future)
- Short monthly updates focused on relevant cultural events and learning topics
- Suggestions for self-directed learning
- Other ideas based on trustee feedback

Trustee Rodriguez noted that the timeline includes the following for calendar year 2021 with adjustments made according to trustee feedback:

- January– review at Executive Committee meeting; introduce plan at board meeting
- February – review learning objectives; conduct voluntary self-assessment
- June - Practical application of unconscious bias session
- September – Combatting racism session
- Ongoing: information about cultural observances for each month; links to self-directed learning

Trustee Rodriguez acknowledged comments in Zoom chat from Trustees Erlandson and Tefer related to neurodiversity as another aspect of diversity and committed to including that more visibly in the plan. Interim System Diversity Officer added that the Office of Equity & Inclusion has kicked off a competency series earlier this year focused on accessibility which includes neurodiversity. Many of our accessibility directors have a focus on neurodiversity and the related needs within our student population. She also noted that her office is working on how to support and provide resources in this area.

Trustee Rodriguez encouraged trustees to take some time to digest the information and provide him with feedback. He also noted that this plan is for and by the board in order to become a better leadership body, with support and input from key stakeholders.

### **Executive Search update**

Chair Cowles called on Vice Chancellor Davis to provide an update on the status of trustee participation on upcoming executive searches. Vice Chancellor Davis noted that we have a slate of seven active executive searches and thanked trustees for responding to a request to express their interest in participating in those searches. He noted that preliminary assignments have been made based on interest while keeping in mind potential conflicts with open meeting laws. He anticipates finalizing these assignments yet this week after consultation with HR Committee Chair Vekich, Chair Cowles and Chancellor Malhotra. He also noted that there is a plan to offer training on executive interview and selection, most likely as part of the January Board meeting schedule. This training is intended for new trustees but will be open to all trustees.

Chair Cowles asked if the searches are going well in terms of attracting quality candidates. Vice Chancellor Davis noted that he is encouraged by the progress made and the diverse and qualified candidate pools we are seeing. Chancellor Malhotra added that we have revamped our approach to finding good fits with search consultants and we are having good discussions with our search consultants. Chancellor Malhotra shared that for the upcoming vice chancellor searches, we are in the process of securing AGB search to assist with the Vice Chancellor for Equity and Inclusion search and Next Generation Partners for the Vice Chancellor for Information Technology search.

### **Adjourn**

The meeting adjourned at 9:00 am.