A meeting of the Diversity and Multiculturalism Committee was held on July 16, 2008 at Wells Fargo Place, 4th Floor Board Room, 30 7th Street East, St. Paul. Chair Benson called the meeting to order at 11:25 a.m.

1. Minutes of the May 20, 2008 Diversity and Multiculturalism Committee

The minutes of the May 20, 2008 meeting were approved with the addition of the following, to be added at the end of indicator three in the Diversity and Multiculturalism Update: “In response to a question, Dr. Harris said that hiring decisions are based on qualifications, not on demographics. Affirmative action is practiced according to the policies and laws that govern it.”

2. Diversity and Multiculturalism Update

Dr. Harris framed his report in terms of the four divisional priorities and the goals from the Board of Trustees’ retreat.

1) Develop and enhance strategies to support the post-secondary access and success of underrepresented students and American Indian students.

The staff of the Diversity and Multiculturalism Division conducted eight campus visits to work with campus staff on various recruitment and retention activities and held five meetings with student leaders who are engaged in campus activities that support access and opportunity. Division staff is working with these groups to develop outcome-based diversity work plans that focus on access and success for students from underrepresented groups.
2) Provide institutions with models to improve the success of underrepresented, underserved, and American Indian students.

One of the reported problems for potential American Indian students has been challenges with registration and funding. The Diversity and Multiculturalism division has conducted several workshops for frontline workers on such issues as how the American Indian Scholarship Program works.

3) Increase the diversity of faculty and staff and administrators.

The Diversity Committee of the Leadership Council is working to review the hiring process, with an aim of increasing inclusivity. Dr. Harris expects to bring a more complete report at a later date.

4) Coordinate and manage the Office of Civil Rights program for reviewing campuses.

The division completed and submitted a 1,000-page Compliance Review Report for the Office of Civil Rights of the Department of Education. This report summarizes the system’s ongoing review to ensure that campuses are complying with all relevant civil rights laws and policies and includes plans for the future. This is part of the work of making campuses more accessible.

Update on the board’s retreat initiatives:

This update was presented in the joint committee meeting with Advancement Committee.

3. Update on Funding for Diversity and Underrepresented Programming

Trustee Benson referred to the ongoing process of determining the portion of recruitment and retention funding that is related to diversity and called on Whitney Harris to further clarify the issues.

Dr. Harris said that in FY 2007 while total enrollment was up 3.7%, enrollment for students of color was up by 10.6% or 32,412 total students of color. This increased the percentage of students of color to approximately 13.9% of the student body. In answer to questions, this number is a headcount of actual students, not full-time equivalents and only includes United States citizens and permanent residents.

The tentative FY 2008 figures show a similar trend, with preliminary figures showing enrollment of students of color at 11.3%, increasing the percentage of students of color to approximately 15.8% of the student body. The actual numbers will be available in September.

The staff was asked to provide information on funding for recruitment, retention and success for underrepresented students. Dr. Harris referred Trustees to the PowerPoint
printed in the committee materials. Data on funding for campus diversity programming are on page 13 of the committee report, and additional information on underrepresented students’ enrollment, persistence and completion is included in pages 10 - 14. Most of this information is based on campus self-reporting. On pages 7 - 9 are updates on the three College Access and Opportunity Centers.

Trustee Rice asked about the grand total the system has spent on recruitment and retention for the underrepresented. In response, Judy Borgen, Associate Vice Chancellor for Budget, said that the figures provided in the report are an estimate from the campuses on what they have spent on the underserved. The numbers do not include estimates of the relatively small amount spent by the Office of the Chancellor. In response to requests by the Board of Trustees, work is now underway to modify the accounting system so that it will yield the overall recruitment and retention figures directly. This should be completed within the next year or two, and it will then be easier to compare the portion of recruitment and retention funds spent for underrepresented students to the total amount spent. The calculated total spent will include federal funds, private dollars and the general fund. The recruitment and retention portion will continue to be an estimate.

Trustee Hightower asked about the implications of the data and the ramifications for the system, for example, the figure that 42% of the students are from underrepresented groups. Dr. Harris said the trends are important in determining the success of programs and allocations of resources. If more at-risk students with lower academic achievement levels enroll at the system’s institutions, more support programs will be needed to help these individuals achieve their educational goals. In the short term it could impact the success rate of the colleges and universities. The data are useful in determining standards of success for both students and institutions.

Trustee Van Houten asked if it would be possible to tally the new immigrant class separately from the other people of color. Craig Schoenecker, System Director for Research, said that this is possible to a limited extent, but there is not always complete data identifying new immigrants.

The meeting adjourned at 11:53 a.m.

Respectfully submitted by Gale Rohde