

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

Agenda Item Summary Sheet

Committee: Advancement and
Diversity and Multiculturalism
Board of Trustees

Date of Meeting: May 19, 2009

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Agenda Item: Customer Service Survey Results

Proposed
Policy Change

Approvals
Required by
Policy

Other
Approvals

Monitoring

Information

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

See attached.

Scheduled Presenter(s):

Linda Kohl, Associate Vice Chancellor for Public Affairs

Don Supalla, President, Rochester Community and Technical College

Dave Weber, Chief Operations Officer, Rochester Community and Technical College

Outline of Key Points/Policy Issues:

See attached.

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

INFORMATION ITEM
Customer Service Survey Results

BACKGROUND

A component of the "Reaching the Underrepresented" initiative discussed at the January 2008 meeting of the Board of Trustees Advancement Committee was to "Assist system colleges and universities in evaluating customer service as it relates to providing a welcoming environment to students in underrepresented groups."

In fall 2009, the system embarked on a Customer Service Survey of the colleges and universities within the system with the assistance of Noel Levitz, a national higher education consulting firm. Noel-Levitz staff made inquiries as prospective students to 33 system institutions and nine competitor institutions. They also reviewed institution Web sites looking at content, images and functionality that would be of interest to students of color, first generation students and other underrepresented groups.

Institutions were contacted both by phone and e-mail.

A summary of the results is attached. Individualized results for each institution have been shared with the president and the campus key communicators. The results have been discussed by the Leadership Council Advancement Committee and college and university marketing and communications professionals at the Spring Marketing Conference and with admissions directors at a statewide meeting.

Linda Kohl, associate vice chancellor for public affairs, will give a brief overview of the results. President Don Supalla of Rochester Community and Technical College and Dave Weber, the college's chief operations officer, will talk about how the college uses this kind of research in their continuous improvement efforts.

CONSUMER SERVICE STUDY

Executive Summary

*Minnesota State Colleges and University System
Saint Paul, Minnesota*

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Executive Summary

Minnesota State College and University System • St. Paul, Minnesota

Introduction

In *Minnesota Measures*, the 2008 Report on Higher Education Performance, the Minnesota Office of Higher Education states as its first goal the improvement of success of all students, particularly students from groups traditionally underrepresented in higher education. In its own Systemwide Strategic Diversity Plan for 2006-2010, Minnesota System of Colleges and Universities has set a goal of increasing the number of underrepresented and underserved students who enroll at its member institutions. Achieving these goals requires, among other things, that the state's colleges and universities are intentionally welcoming to diverse students, not only in the classroom, but also from their very first contact with a campus.

Students of color and first generation students often do not have the same opportunities or support as other students. Therefore, it is particularly important for institutions to present an open, welcoming face to these groups. This customer service study was initiated in order to provide a point-in-time snapshot of campus response to diverse students from the perspective of the recruitment and marketing process. This study can serve as a benchmark as system institutions work to ensure that their communications effectively reach all students who could benefit from higher education in the state.

Methodology

This study involved two primary components: actual inquiries to campus admission offices and an assessment of campus Web sites. Both studies are documented in full in the body of this report.

In December 2008, using a list of 34 system campuses and nine competitors, the Noel-Levitz staff made inquiries as prospective students. At the same time, we began a review of the system institution Web sites looking at content, images, and functionality that would be of interest to students of color, first generation students, and other underrepresented groups.

The following institutions were contacted by phone and e-mail at the request of the Minnesota State College and University System.

Minnesota State Colleges and Universities 2-year Colleges

- Alexandria Technical College
- Anoka-Ramsey Community College (Coon Rapids)
- Anoka Technical College
- Central Lakes College (Brainerd)
- Century College
- Dakota County Technical College
- Fond du Lac Tribal and Community College
- Hennepin Technical College (Brooklyn Park)
- Hibbing Community College*
- Inver Hills Community College
- Lake Superior College
- Minneapolis Community and Technical College
- Minnesota State College - Southeast Technical (Winona)
- Minnesota State Community and Technical College (Fergus Falls)
- Minnesota West Community and Technical College (Pipestone)
- Normandale Community College
- North Hennepin Community College (Brooklyn Park)
- Northland Community and Technical College (Thief River Falls)
- Northwest Technical College
- Pine Technical College
- Ridgewater College (Willmar)
- Riverland Community College (Austin)
- Rochester Community and Technical College
- St. Cloud Technical College
- Saint Paul College
- South Central College (North Mankato)

*Member of Northeast Higher Education District, a consortium of five state colleges: Hibbing, Itasca, Mesabi Range, Rainy River, and Vermillion

Minnesota State Colleges and Universities 4-year State Universities

- Bemidji State University
- Metropolitan State University (St. Paul)
- Minnesota State University, Mankato
- Minnesota State University Moorhead
- St. Cloud State University
- Southwest Minnesota State University
- Winona State University

Competitor Schools

- Augsburg (Minneapolis)
- Hamline (St. Paul)
- Minnesota School of Business (Rochester)
- Dunwoody Institute (Minneapolis)
- St. Scholastica (Duluth)
- St. Mary's (Winona, Minneapolis)
- University of Phoenix (Minneapolis)
- Brown College (Minneapolis)
- Concordia University (Moorhead)

Summary of Findings

There was a great deal of variation in the way in which system campuses handled the student inquiries in this study. Some had extensive communications flows while others sent a single mailing. In a few instances, no response was received. The e-mail inquiry was male, spoke English as a second language, and was a first generation college student; the phone inquiry was female, low income, and a student of color.

Following is a summary of the responses to these inquiries across the system, listed in order of fulfillment success rate. The chart illustrates that the more targeted or specific the request, the fewer the number of institutions who completed it.

Summary of inquiry response assessment – All System institutions

Review area (where responses could be categorized as yes/no).	Percent "yes"
Mailed information to phone inquiry	97%
Sent information about business programs to phone inquirer	73%
Sent information on financial aid to phone inquirer	70%
Mailed information to email inquiry	67%
Personalized response in material mailed to phone inquiry	61%
Personalized response in material mailed to email inquiry	42%
Emailed response to email inquiry	36%
Sent information on financial aid to email inquirer	33%
Personalized response in email reply to email inquiry	27%
Sent information about test requirements to email inquirer	21%
Sent information for non-English speakers to email inquirer	21%
Sent information for first generation students to email inquirer	21%
Replied in Spanish to email inquiry	15%
Sent information about multicultural student organizations to phone inquirer	9%
Sent information about multicultural scholarships to phone inquirer	6%

On many items the nine competitors in this study performed at a significantly lower rate than system institutions. For example, only six of the nine private competitors (67%) sent material in the mail to the phone inquirer compared with 97% of system campuses. If this performance is typical, it represents a significant opportunity for the system to assume the leadership position in diversity-related recruitment initiatives.

The following chart shows competitor performance listed in order of successful fulfillment rate.

Summary of inquiry response assessment – Competitor institutions

Review area (where responses could be categorized as yes/no)	Percent “yes”
Mailed information to phone inquiry	67%
Emailed response to email inquiry	56%
Personalized response in material mailed to phone inquiry	44%
Personalized response in email reply to email inquiry	44%
Personalized response in material mailed to email inquiry	44%
Mailed information to email inquiry	33%
Sent information on financial aid to phone inquirer	33%
Sent information on financial aid to email inquirer	33%
Sent information about business programs to phone inquirer	22%
Sent information about multicultural student organizations to phone inquirer	11%
Sent information for non-English speakers to email inquirer	11%
Replied in Spanish to email inquiry	0%
Sent information about multicultural scholarships to phone inquirer	0%
Sent information about test requirements to email inquirer	0%
Sent information for first generation students to email inquirer	0%

System Web Site Customer Service Review

The following chart summarizes campus performance in terms of Web site focus on under-represented students, sorted by highest degree of fulfillment to lowest. Overall, there was significant room for improvement of content, visual images, navigation, and functionality.

Summary of Web Site Assessment – All System Institutions

Review area (where responses could be categorized as yes/no)	Percent “yes”
Is there a system tagline on the home page?	91%
Is there an indicator that institution is an Equal Opportunity Employer and Educator?	82%
Photos of students of color on the Web site: African American?	82%
Are there images of minority students on the home page?	76%
Photos of students of color on the Web site: Asian?	76%
Are there clear links to information about financial aid, scholarships, and grants?	71%
Photos of students of color on the Web site: Hispanic?	67%
Are there clear links for information about tutoring?	62%
Is there information about ESL student services: e.g., ESL tutoring?	62%
Is there information about multicultural advising/advisors?	62%
Is there information about multicultural clubs?	59%
Does evidence exist that the institution is welcoming to minority students from the home page?	56%
Information on childcare services?	53%
Photos of students of color: Multiracial or not able to identify, but non-white?	53%
Is there information about ESL courses?	50%
Is there scholarship information for underrepresented/minority students?	44%
Are there links to sources of scholarships for underrepresented/minority students?	44%
Are there clear links for information about a Writing Center?	41%
Does the language/content indicate that the institution serves this market?	32%
Photos of students of color: Native American?	27%
Profiles of students of color: African American?	15%
Profiles of students of color: Hispanic?	15%
Profiles of students of color: Asian?	9%
Are any portions of the Web site available in Spanish?	9%
Are there alternative language option links?	6%
Profiles of students of color: Multiracial or not able to identify, but non-white?	6%
Are any portions of the Web site available in other languages?	6%
Profiles of students of color: Native American?	0%

Key Recommendations

The following represent Noel-Levitz's recommended best practices for ensuring that system institutions are receptive to diverse student populations:

1. First, ensure institutional commitment.

Successful marketing to underserved populations requires three things: a specific institutional commitment – including resources, a culture of respect for differences, and a set intentional recruitment practices. Before any marketing tactics are employed, the first two foundational elements must be in place. If marketing is initiated in an environment where there is no articulated institutional commitment, no allocated resources, and no culture of support, the marketing tactics ultimately will fail.

Institutions must apply the same discipline to recruitment of diverse students as they do to the general population. This means setting specific annual goals and developing written strategies that support these goals. In order to implement appropriate marketing tactics, institutions must answer these question related to their target populations:

- What are the messages that will resonate with them?
- What factors influence their college choice?
- What are the perceptions they hold of our institution?

These questions are best explored through focus groups and surveys on each campus.

2. Answer the specific questions that are asked by prospective students.

“Economizing” by sending the same information to every inquiry no matter what their profile will not lead to enrollment success. Admissions representatives should take the time to respond to specific questions, not just send general information and hope the question goes away. When information is only distributed through the school's Web site, those responding to phone inquiries should have the capability of sending e-mails with links to specific sections of information.

Some campuses did not have room on their online request for information form for inquirers to ask specific questions; this functionality should be part of a standard Web inquiry form.

3. Optimize information about admissions and financial aid.

Among the first priorities of system campuses should be optimizing written communications (letters, brochures) and Web site information about affordability, scholarships, and the financial aid process. This includes admissions and financial aid checklists, examples of typical aid packages, clear Web site links, simple site navigation, and explicit contact information for questions. A high percent of underrepresented students are navigating campus Web sites without assistance from parents, family members, or counselors. Therefore, information must be clear and intuitive. Many system Web sites needed work in this area.

4. Invest in up-to-date, non-static Web site functionality.

For example, in its 2007 research study, *Hispanic Students and the Web: The E-Expectations of College-Bound Hispanic High School Students*, Noel-Levitz showed that the Web site expectations of Hispanic students closely parallel those of white students. This suggests that institutions that do a good job of keeping up to date in general with Web trends will meet the needs of many types of students. Many system institutions did not have these Web site functionalities:

Activity Students Would Like To Do on a Web Site	Hispanic	White
1. Complete a financial aid estimator form	87%	88%
2. Complete a tuition cost calculator	84%	83%
3. Complete an admissions application online	83%	81%
4. Request a campus visit by completing a form	78%	80%
5. Exchange instant messages with an admissions counselor or student worker	75%	72%
6. Complete a form to RSVP for a campus event	75%	72%
7. Read a blog written by a current student	68%	64%
8. Read a blog written by a member of the faculty	67%	64%
9. Submit a form to receive information in the mail or e-mail	67%	69%
10. Enter information about your interests to see a personalized Web page	67%	62%
11. E-mail a faculty member	65%	64%
12. View a virtual tour	65%	63%
13. Read profiles of current students	63%	63%
14. Read profiles of faculty	61%	63%
15. Fill out a form to get a personalized viewbook PDF	58%	59%

© Noel-Levitz, Inc., E-Expectations Class of 2007 Report: Hispanic Students and the Web

5. Supplement the Web site with other e-technologies.

Although they differ in some ways, diverse students often are active users of technologies. For example, in the 2007 Noel-Levitz report *African American Students and the Web: The E-Expectations of College-Bound African American High School Seniors*, African American students showed a high receptiveness to using e-communication channels such as instant messaging and cell phone text messaging. We would expect these numbers to have increased in the past year:

- Do you currently use instant messaging? Yes: 56%

- Would you consider sending an instant message to a college representative through the school's Web site? Yes: 64%
- Would you consider reading and responding to an instant message from a college representative if he or she noticed that you were online? Yes: 76%

6. Implement bilingual communications.

For institutions targeting the Hispanic market, consider having Spanish Web pages, e-mails, and other communications for prospective Hispanic students and their families, especially for key items such as financial aid and admissions information. The same holds true for other languages if an institution is targeting a sizeable non-English-speaking group.

7. Ensure that the Web site's search function works as intended.

Many system Web sites did not return relevant information when we entered key words. This is often a matter of not having the correct metatags (metatags are hidden codes that search engines use to index a Web site) or not appropriately cataloging or categorizing pages on the site. This is a task that can be done in collaboration between the admissions office and the Web master.

8. Create a section of the Web site that specifically addresses underrepresented students' needs, rather than burying the information in general sections.

Include underrepresented students quotes, testimonials, profiles, and alumni success stories through the Web site and in publications. Use currently enrolled underrepresented students to help develop the themes and content for promotional materials to these audiences.

We commend the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system and campuses for initiating this study and trust that these findings will lead to increasing levels of service for the diverse populations of Minnesota.