The Minnesota State Colleges and Universities Academic and Student Affairs Committee held a meeting on April 15, 2009, at Wells Fargo Place, 4th Floor, Board Room, 30 East 7th Street in St. Paul. Chair McElroy called the meeting to order at 8:13 am.

1. Minutes of March 17 and March 18, 2009 Meetings

Trustee Van Houten requested that the minutes of March 18 be amended to include a transcript of a portion of the discussion on the agenda item “Overview of Academic Program Review.”

A motion was made by Trustee Rice and seconded by Trustee Benson to approve the minutes of March 17, 2009, as written and the minutes of March 18, 2009, as amended. Motion carried.

2. Bush Foundation’s Goal to Increase Educational Achievement

Presenters:
Peter Hutchinson, Bush Foundation President
Lee-Hoon Benson, Program Officer
Susan Heegaard, Vice President and Educational Achievement Team Leader

The Bush Foundation has a goal of increasing educational achievement in Minnesota, North Dakota and South Dakota. The key strategy in achieving this goal is the creation of 25,000 new and highly effective teachers over the next decade.

In March, Bush Foundation President Peter Hutchinson gave the Academic and Students Affairs Committee an overview of his effort and how this goal may fit into the work done by Minnesota State Colleges and Universities. He said the Foundation now wants the Board of Trustees to offer a resolution of support for the effort.
The Foundation’s ultimate goal will be that the percent of students in the region from pre-kindergarten through college who are on track to earn a degree after high school will increase by 50 percent and disparities among diverse students groups will be eliminated by the year 2018.

The key to this success will be effective teaching, Mr. Hutchinson said. Research collected in Dallas showed effective teaching was a powerful school-related variable that affected student achievement.

The predictors of teaching effectiveness appear to be academic ability, subject area knowledge, content-based teaching skills and effective early support.

At the campus level, producing high-caliber teachers will require a willingness to change the way things have always been done, Mr. Hutchinson said. Recruitment efforts will need to focus on attracting the best and brightest students graduating from high school, as well as mid-career people who are interested in becoming teachers.

Once recruited, those students will need to be exposed to improved teacher preparation, including revamped curriculum, methods and enhanced guidance.

The commitment to create effective teachers will not end at graduation, he added. Efforts will be needed to ensure graduates are placed in receptive classrooms and that they continue to receive support and guidance during their first years of teaching to achieve high levels of classroom performance.

A successful effort will require involvement from a variety of partners, including higher education institutions, K-12 schools, government leaders, stakeholders, program area experts and foundations.

Not all teacher education programs in the state will be involved in the Bush Foundation’s teacher preparation effort, Mr. Hutchison said. The foundation expects to select five to eight institution campuses in the three states to participate.

The campus commitment will need to come not only from the president, but also from campus provosts, deans and faculty. Support from faculty throughout the institution, not just the teacher education faculty, is important, he added.

Campuses selected must be willing to create and sustain a preparation program that guarantees the effectiveness of graduates teaching. They also must be willing to collect and use data as a basis for assessing effectiveness, which includes gains in student learning or value added.

Once a campus is selected, the Bush Foundation will offer an initial planning grant of $100,000 to $150,000 to help fund a four-month planning effort.
After that period, there will be an assessment done of the planning efforts and successful campuses will be given another grant for a seven-month design phase.

The design phase will focus on plans for recruiting, training and support for teachers. There will be efforts to build internal support for the initiative. The campus will need to work closely with stakeholders and partners to develop ways to guarantee the education of and placement of effective graduates.

During this time, experts will be made available to campuses to give them as much support as possible. In order for the effort to succeed, the Foundation will put every resource it can at the disposal of the people who have to do the work and help create an environment in which they can get that done, Mr. Hutchinson said.

Following the design phase will be a nine-month development phase, with a launch anticipated in late 2010 and early 2011.

At the onset of the effort, the Bush Foundation is looking for the Board of Trustees to adopt a resolution which offers commitment to the goal. In addition to offering support to campuses, the system will be asked to develop long-term finance strategies which reward outcomes rather than enrollment levels in teacher education programs.

Teacher education improvement processes have been tried by others but have not been successful, Mr. Hutchinson said. Past failures were caused by several factors, including a lack of understanding about expectations or outcomes, too many parties without clear roles and responsibility, and a lack of agreement regarding the data and its use.

Trustee Benson said many of the measurable outcomes are years in the future and asked how they will be managed.

Mr. Hutchinson said there will be assessments done at various established milestones, including after the recruitment of the first class starting the revamped program. The quality of those recruits will have a large impact on the quality of teachers produced, he said.

There will be additional ongoing assessments, including upon teacher graduation and after the new teachers’ first year in the classroom.

Trustee Olson asked about the potential financial commitment for the system.

Mr. Hutchinson said the system will need to commit to realigning finances so there are incentives in developing effective teachers, not just enrolling students in teacher education.
He added the system can continue to spend the same amount of money it currently does on teacher education programs at selected institutions, but that funding will be concentrated on fewer students. While that may cause a temporary loss of tuition in the programs, he reminded the Trustees that the students will be enrolled for a longer period of time.

Trustee Dickson noted that students who are not accepted into these programs likely will end up being absorbed into other teacher education programs.

As for the Foundation, Mr. Hutchinson said he doesn’t think money will be a limiting factor as the process evolves. The Bush Foundation has adequate resources to fund this and is prepared to provide the resources, he said. If the process fails, it will be because of a lack of commitment, rather than a lack of funds.

Trustee Van Houten said he feels the system has not done a good job of closely supervising its presidents and institutions in the past. If the Board commits to this effort, he asked the Chancellor if the presidents will be held accountable to direct and supervise deans and faculty in their efforts to promote selective recruitment in the teacher education program and to reduce faculty levels to accommodate the reduced number of enrolled students.

Chancellor McCormick said the system office has had a policy of not micro-managing institution presidents. The system was designed by the Legislature to allow campus presidents to have a fair amount of autonomy in the operation of their institutions and in turn the system expects them to be good managers. He said presidents or deans who are not committed to this process and all that it involves probably will not seek to be one of the institutions selected by the Bush Foundation.

Trustee Van Houten said if the Board commits to the effort, it should be made clear that job descriptions will changed from the president down through the dean and faculty levels to ensure there is accountability and these efforts should be included in performance reviews.

The Chancellor said it will be his responsibility to include an assessment of the efforts during presidential evaluations.

Mr. Hutchinson said the Foundation is not interested in working with any president, provost or dean who is not strongly committed to the effort, or where the faculty is not committed. Commitment on all levels is integral to a successful effort, he said.

One barrier to the success of the effort may be cultural in nature, Trustee Renier said. In our society, teaching is a profession that is undervalued and there will be a need to change how people, including parents and students, view the teaching profession, he said.
Mr. Hutchinson agreed. Altering compensation options to attract high-caliber students and retain effective teachers would help. The Foundation also could work on ways to enhance the public’s perception of teaching in various ways, such as public service campaigns, billboards or public speaking opportunities.

Trustee Van Houten asked about teacher education curriculum and expressed concern about the rigor of current courses. He said curriculum will be another key ingredient in the success of the program.

Mr. Hutchinson said curriculum will need to be rigorous in terms of content and pedagogy. The Foundation would be available to help support the development of curriculum that is challenging and rigorous, since that will be a cornerstone for the creation of effective teachers.

There was a discussion on the learning environment that will be needed for these new teachers.

Trustee Sundin said hiring standards and human resources practices at the K-12 level will need to be changed in order for these teachers to be hired and be effective in the classroom.

There needs to be much work done on the K-12 human management efforts, Mr. Hutchinson said, adding, effective teachers will have more clout when it comes to hiring and classroom environment. In design process, campuses will be encouraged to be explicit in what is expected from the districts where students will be teaching.

Trustee Dickson said a uniform curriculum is another necessity when it comes to effectiveness.

It will be necessary for K-12 system to be involved in the development of the program, Mr. Hutchinson said. There have to be mutual expectations on what the classrooms should be like and consistent curriculum across the district should be promoted. These new teachers need to be put in a system where they can succeed, he said.

Trustee Benson said it has been his experience that superintendents tend to focus more on funding rather than teacher quality. It will be important to include them in the development phase since they steer the operation of the districts.

Chancellor McCormick agreed that the superintendents’ commitment is vital and measures should be taken to include them in the process. He said this effort will not be successful without them.
Mr. Hutchinson said in the 1970s there was a Bush Educators program which worked with superintendents and there has been discussion on bringing it back to promote the development, training and support of current school superintendents.

Trustee Rice said this effort is exciting. While it may not work, the Trustees would be remiss to dismiss it, she said. It is frustrating to see bright people who will not consider teaching as a career or end up leaving the profession, she said.

Chancellor McCormick said he would like to keep the system’s goals of accesses and affordability at the forefront of the process. This may include developing some kind of scholarship opportunities to attract low-income or diverse populations. There also needs to be continued efforts to close the achievement gap for students of color and increase teachers in the area of math and sciences.

Trustee Dickson said she supports the Board’s commitment to a resolution of support, but she has some trepidation pertaining to the use of the word guarantee. It may not be possible for the system to guarantee school districts effective teachers.

Mr. Hutchinson said that the Board should concentrate on the partnership at this point. The Foundation is asking the Board to agree to be a partner with the Foundation on designing a program that results in more effective teachers in the classroom.

Chair McElroy said a draft resolution may need to be fine-tuned and he directed Senior Vice Chancellor Baer to work with Susan Heegaard and Lee-Hoon Benson in that task. The resolution will then come before the committee in mid-May and then will proceed to the full Board for a vote.

Mr. Hutchinson expressed concern over the timeframe. By mid-May spring semester will be over and many faculty will be off campus.

Chair McElroy said the committee will not be able to adopt a resolution until Mid-May when the full Board meets, but added he hasn’t heard anything from members that would lead him to believe that a resolution won’t receive committee support at that time.

The meeting adjourned at 9:55 am
Respectfully submitted,
Margie Takash, Recorder