

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

Agenda Item Summary Sheet

Committee: Academic and Student Affairs

Date of Meeting: January 20, 2009

Agenda Item: Ridgewater College Mission Approval

Proposed
Policy Change

Approvals
Required by
Policy

Other
Approvals

Monitoring

Information

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

Board Policy 3.24 System and Institutional Missions, Part 2: Review and Approval of Institutional Missions requires institutions to have new missions approved by the Board. As required by procedure, the institution must indicate:

- a. How its mission and vision respond to the definitions in procedure 3.24.1.
- b. The extent to which the institution will meet expectations of law, how it relates to other institutions of higher education, and how its mission, vision and purposes support fulfillment of the system mission and vision.
- c. Its purposes and the array of awards it offers.
- d. How the new mission compares with the former mission.
- e. Ample consultation with faculty, students, employers and other essential stakeholders.

Scheduled Presenter(s):

Douglas Allen, President, Ridgewater College

Linda L. Baer, Senior Vice Chancellor for Academic and Student Affairs

Outline of Key Points/Policy Issues:

The proposed vision, mission and purposes of Ridgewater College meet the criteria identified in Board Policy 3.24 System and Institutional Missions, Part 2: Review and Approval of Institutional Missions. The Higher Learning Commission requires accredited institutions to get approval from their governing boards for new missions.

Background Information:

The new mission for Ridgewater College has been reviewed and found to meet all Board requirements for institutional missions.

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

RIDGEWATER COLLEGE MISSION APPROVAL

1
2 **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**
3

4 The proposed vision, mission and purposes of Ridgewater College meet the criteria identified in
5 Board Policy 3.24 System and Institutional Missions, Part 2: Review and Approval of
6 Institutional Missions.
7

8 **Ridgewater College’s vision, mission, purposes and array of awards are:**
9

10 **Vision:** Ridgewater College will be a dynamic educational leader exemplifying innovation and
11 excellence within a student-centered learning environment.
12

13 **Mission:** Ridgewater College provides quality educational opportunities for diverse student
14 learners in an inclusive, supportive, and accessible environment.
15

16 **Purposes/Goals:** Ridgewater College’s goals as articulated in its strategic directions are:

- 17 • **Promote access to the college** (includes goals in the areas of college readiness, affordability,
18 and comprehensive/diverse programs)
- 19 • **Commit to student learning** (includes goals in the areas of learning environment, student
20 retention, student success, and multiple delivery options)
- 21 • **Promote economic vitality** (includes goals in the areas of workforce development and
22 regional vitality)
- 23 • **Exemplify innovation and collaboration** (includes goals in the areas of organization capacity
24 to meet future challenges, and faculty and staff support)
25

26 **Array of Awards:** Ridgewater College offers Associate in Applied Sciences, Associate in
27 Science, Associate in Arts, as well as diplomas and technical and advanced certificates.
28

29 **An institution’s mission, vision and purposes shall support achievement of the system**
30 **mission and vision:** Ridgewater College’s proposed mission is “Ridgewater College provides
31 quality educational opportunities for diverse student learners in an inclusive, supportive, and
32 accessible environment.”
33

34 Ridgewater College’s mission relates primarily to the system mission statement in its emphasis
35 on a commitment to quality and to serve diverse learners in an inclusive environment. These
36 emphases correspond with the statement in the system mission that institutions meet the personal
37 and career goals of “a wide range of individual learners.”

1 In addition, Ridgewater College’s mission addresses the importance of providing a supportive,
2 accessible environment, both of which speak to the system’s mission to “enhance the quality of
3 life” of the people of Minnesota. The proposed mission supports the following system strategic
4 directions:

- 5
- 6 • **Strategic Direction One – Increase Access and Opportunity** by providing “an inclusive,
7 supportive, and accessible environment.”
- 8
- 9 • **Strategic Direction Two – Expand High-Quality Learning Programs and Services** by
10 offering “quality educational opportunities.”
- 11
- 12 • **Strategic Direction Three – Strengthen Community Development and Economic**
13 **Vitality** in the college’s efforts to reach “diverse student learners” within the communities
14 and region the college intends to serve.
- 15
- 16 • **Strategic Direction Four – Innovate to Meet Current and Future Needs** by emphasizing
17 the changing environment for learning.
- 18

19 **An institution’s mission, vision, and purposes shall provide a foundation for evaluation,**
20 **accountability, and regional accreditation:** Ridgewater College’s proposed vision, mission,
21 and goals provide a basis for evaluation, accountability, and regional accreditation. Of particular
22 note is the college’s participation in the Academic Quality Improvement Project as well as the
23 Higher Learning Commission's Assessment of Student Learning Academy.

24

25 **Compliance:** Ridgewater College’s vision, proposed mission, and purposes are consistent with
26 statute, policy, and regional accreditation requirements.

27 **BACKGROUND**

28
29 Ridgewater College was created in 1996 with the merger of Willmar Community College (first
30 accredited in 1972) and Hutchinson-Willmar Regional Technical College (first accredited in
31 1976). The previous institutions had been founded in the early 1960s and had gone through
32 several name changes and configurations up until the formation of Ridgewater College in 1996.
33 Ridgewater College was accredited as a single entity on July 1, 1996. The College has two
34 campuses, in Willmar and Hutchinson, located approximately 60 miles apart in central and west
35 central Minnesota.

36

37 Ridgewater was accepted into the Higher Learning Commission's AQIP program in November
38 2002, and as of fall, 2008, is in its sixth year of the seven-year accreditation cycle. The College is
39 currently preparing for a Quality Check-up Visit scheduled for February 18-20, 2009, with
40 reaccreditation expected later in 2009.

41 **Mission, Vision and Purposes Application Analysis**

42
43 The proposed vision, mission, and purposes of Ridgewater College meet the criteria identified in
44 Board Policy 3.24 System and Institutional Missions, Part 2: Review and Approval of System
45 Institutional Missions.

- 1 As required by procedure, the institution must indicate:
2 a. How its mission and vision respond to the definitions in procedure 3.24.1.
3 b. The extent to which the institution will meet expectations of law, how it relates to other
4 institutions of higher education, and how its mission, vision and purposes support fulfillment
5 of the system mission and vision.
6 c. Its goals/purposes and the array of awards it offers.
7 d. How the new mission compares with the former mission.
8 e. Ample consultation with faculty, students, employers and other essential stakeholders.

9
10 Additionally, the institution's mission must be compliant with statute, policy, and regional
11 accreditation requirements.

12 **Review of Ridgewater College's Mission, Vision and Purposes**

13 Ridgewater College's proposed vision, proposed mission and purposes meet these requirements.

- 14
15
16 a. The mission and vision respond to the definitions in the procedure:

17
18 Ridgewater College's proposed mission emphasizes that the college intends to provide quality
19 educational opportunities in an accessible learning environment.

20
21 The proposed mission for Ridgewater College is guided by a vision to be "a dynamic educational
22 leader exemplifying innovation and excellence within a student-centered learning environment."
23 Ridgewater College envisions the following future:

- 24 • A visible, institution-wide belief that permeates the staff and faculty, the support services, the
25 curriculum, and all the College's stakeholders, that Ridgewater College is focused, above all
26 else, on its students.
- 27 • As the communities of Willmar and Hutchinson (particularly Willmar) are rapidly changing
28 in their demographics, Ridgewater considers it an opportunity, as well as a responsibility, to
29 be proactive, flexible, and innovative in meeting the changing needs of its learners.
- 30 • Ridgewater College, because of the changing demographics in the communities it services, is
31 a rural institution dealing with a mix of traditionally urban issues in addition to changing
32 rural issues.

- 33
34 b. The extent to which the institution will meet expectations of law, how it relates to other
35 institutions of higher education, and how its mission, vision and purposes support fulfillment
36 of the system mission and vision:

37
38 The Ridgewater College proposed vision, mission, and purposes are consistent with statute,
39 policy, and regional accreditation requirements. The proposed Ridgewater College mission and
40 vision support the system mission and vision in providing quality educational opportunities for
41 diverse student learners and in advancing excellence and innovation.

- 42
43 c. Its purposes and the array of awards it offers:
44
45

1 Ridgewater College's strategic directions are:
2

- 3 • Promote access to the college (includes goals in the areas of college readiness, affordability,
4 and comprehensive/diverse programs) corresponds with and supports the System's strategic
5 direction to "increase access and opportunity."
6
- 7 • Commit to student learning (includes goals in the areas of learning environment, student
8 retention, student success, and multiple delivery options) corresponds with and supports the
9 System's strategic direction to "promote and measure high-quality learning programs and
10 services."
11
- 12 • Promote economic vitality (includes goals in the areas of workforce development and
13 regional vitality) corresponds with and supports the System's strategic direction to "provide
14 programs and services that enhance the economic competitiveness of the state and its
15 regions."
16
- 17 • Exemplify innovation and collaboration (includes goals in the areas of organization capacity
18 to meet future challenges, and faculty and staff support) corresponds with and supports the
19 System's strategic direction to "innovate to meet current and future educational needs."
20

21 The College has aligned its strategic directions with those of the system, establishing goals within that
22 structure to address specific institutional needs.
23

24 d. How the new mission compares with the former mission:
25

26 The former mission of Ridgewater College was, "Ridgewater College provides quality learning
27 opportunities for students in accessible, affordable and supportive settings. The College will provide:

- 28 • Technical and occupational education enabling students to think critically and acquire
29 skills and knowledge leading to employment or transfer.
- 30 • Comprehensive general education and associate degree programs that are transferable to
31 four-year colleges and universities.
- 32 • Supplemental and developmental education to enhance student success.
- 33 • Extensive student support services and student life opportunities.
- 34 • Continuing and customized education addressing present and emerging needs of
35 employers and employees.
- 36 • Economic and community development opportunities through partnerships with business
37 and industry, the K-12 educational system, government, and other non-profit
38 organizations.
- 39 • Community services, cultural forums and lifelong learning experiences for all citizens.
- 40 • Access to baccalaureate and advanced degree offerings through expanded association
41 with public and private colleges and universities."
42

43 The new mission reads, "Ridgewater College provides quality educational opportunities for diverse
44 student learners in an inclusive, supportive, and accessible environment."
45

1 The new and old mission statements do not differ greatly, but there are a few differences that the faculty
2 and staff, in the process of breaking down the mission into its components and rebuilding it, suggested:

- 3 • The addition of the word “diverse” to the “student learners,” to reflect the changing face
4 of Ridgewater’s service region.
- 5 • The addition of the word “inclusive,” to show the faculty and staff’s desire and
6 commitment to effectively serve all learners.
- 7 • Removal of the word “affordable.” This does not mean the College will not be working
8 at ways to make education more affordable [as one can see from one of the College’s
9 strategic directions, listed later on in this document.] It simply means that, in today’s
10 public education environment and with declining public financial support, the College
11 has less and less influence on affordability, at least as it relates to tuition. The College
12 will continue to promote accessibility through other means, such as building collaborative
13 relationships with the K12 system, the business community, and other entities.

14
15 Ridgewater’s proposed mission is considerably shorter than the previous one. The current
16 mission was created at the time of the merger of two distinct institutions, one technical college
17 and one community college, each with distinct missions. The longer mission statement with
18 several bullet points was necessary in order to allay the fears of the faculty and staff of both
19 former institutions that their own unique missions would be lost once the College had merged.
20 That is no longer necessary, twelve years into the merger.

21
22 e. Ample consultation with faculty, students, employers and other essential stakeholders:

23
24 Over the course of the FY2008 school year, the College engaged the faculty, staff, and
25 administrators in reviewing the College's current values, vision, mission, and goals as part of the
26 strategic planning process. Several hours of input activities on multiple in-service days
27 throughout the year, as well as presentation in venues such as the Administrative Council and
28 other constituent groups, resulted in proposed values, vision, mission, and strategic plan goals
29 which were then synthesized and submitted to the college community for final review.

30
31 **RECOMMENDED COMMITTEE MOTION**

32
33 The Academic and Student Affairs Committee recommends that the Board of Trustees approve
34 the proposed vision, mission, goals, and array of awards of Ridgewater College as listed in the
35 executive summary.

36
37 **RECOMMENDED MOTION**

38
39 The Board of Trustees approves the request by Ridgewater College to approve its proposed
40 vision, mission, goals, and array of awards as listed in the executive summary.