

**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:** Joint Range Task Force Report

- Proposed Policy Change       Approvals Required by Policy       Other Approvals       Monitoring
- Information

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

To inform the Board on the work of a joint task force with the University of Minnesota to plan for new and enhanced programs in the Mesabi Range region.

**Scheduled Presenter(s):**

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

**Outline of Key Points/Policy Issues:**

- Chancellor James McCormick and University of Minnesota President Robert Bruininks agreed to report to state higher policymakers on plans for new and expanded programs in the Mesabi Range region. The Joint Iron Range Task Force is identifying potential programs and their finance and facilities implications.
- Focus of the task force has been on upper division and graduate programs that will strengthen economic and community development and that could be delivered by a state university or the University of Minnesota.
- In addition to on-site classes and faculty, hybrid and online education will likely be part of the solution to access for area residents.

**Background Information:**

- A new Iron Range Higher Education Account funded with taconite tax revenues was established by the 2008 legislature.

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***INFORMATION***

**JOINT IRON RANGE TASK FORCE REPORT**

**BACKGROUND**

In a letter to the chair of the House committee on Higher Education and Workforce Development Finance & Policy, Chancellor James McCormick and University of Minnesota President Robert Bruininks agreed to report jointly to state higher education policymakers on plans for new or expanded programs for the Mesabi Range region of Northeastern Minnesota. They established the Joint Iron Range Task Force to identify opportunities for expanding public higher education on the Mesabi Range, outline facility requirements, and estimate financial resources needed.

The report is in its final stages of development and review and is expected to be delivered by the end of January.

The Task Force is co-chaired by Linda L. Baer, Minnesota State Colleges and Universities Senior Vice Chancellor for Academic and Student Affairs, and Robert J. Jones, University of Minnesota Senior Vice President for System Academic Administration.

Previously, a needs assessment for the region had been funded under a 2007 appropriation to Minnesota State Colleges and Universities. That study was directed by the Range Association of Municipalities and Schools and conducted in collaboration with the University of Minnesota Duluth.

**IRON RANGE HIGHER EDUCATION ACCOUNT**

In the 2008 legislative session, a new Iron Range Higher Education Account was authorized to be funded by a tax of five cents per taxable ton of taconite mined in the Taconite Assistance Area. At recent production levels, revenue from this new source of higher education funding had been anticipated to generate \$1.8 million or more per year.

Expenditures from the fund are under the authority of the Iron Range Resources and Rehabilitation Board (IRRRB) and a related Iron Range Higher Education Committee established in statute. The president of the Northeast Higher Education District is named in statute as a member of this committee.

## **ARROWHEAD UNIVERSITY CONSORTIUM**

There are no baccalaureate degree-granting institutions located in Mesabi Range region. The Arrowhead University Consortium, with a director who reports to the President of the Northeast Higher Education District, facilitates delivery of upper division and graduate programs through Bemidji State University, the University of Minnesota Duluth, the College of St. Scholastica and other institutions.

## **TASK FORCE UPDATE**

The Task Force has drafted a vision, mission and focus for development of higher education in the Mesabi Range Region. Recommended core principles and operating assumptions have also been drafted.

Universities are proposing new and expanded baccalaureate and master's degree programs to offer in the Range communities. Most proposed programs employ online education or instructional television to supplement on-site classes or staffing. Some program enhancements could be implemented quickly with little or no new expenditures for programming and facilities. Other programs would require more time to develop and greater investment in facilities and faculty.

In addition to guiding institutional plans, it is expected that the programs identified and analysis of their finance and facilities requirements can assist the IRRRB Iron Range Higher Education Committee in determining how to invest revenues from the Iron Range Higher Education Account.