

**MINNESOTA STATE COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES
BOARD OF TRUSTEES
ACADEMIC AND STUDENT AFFAIRS COMMITTEE
SEPTEMBER 8, 2009**

Academic and Student Affairs Committee Members Present: Chair Dan McElroy; Trustees Christine Rice, Duane Benson, Cheryl Dickson, James Van Houten, Louise Sundin and Jacob Englund.

Other Board Members Present: Trustees Scott Thiss, Thomas Renier, Terri Thomas, Christopher Frederick and David Olson.

Leadership Council Committee Co-Chairs Present: Senior Vice Chancellor Linda Baer and President Patrick Johns.

The Minnesota State Colleges and Universities Academic and Student Affairs Committee held a meeting on September 8, 2009 at Wells Fargo Place, 4th Floor, Board Room, 30 East 7th Street in St. Paul. Chair McElroy called the meeting to order at 10:17 am.

1. Minutes of July 22, 2009

The minutes from the July 22, 2009 Academic and Student Affairs Committee Meeting were approved as written.

2. Academic and Student Affairs Update – Senior Vice Chancellor Baer

Senior Vice Chancellor Baer said a meeting was conducted with representatives from the Bush Foundation in early September regarding the foundation's initiative to bolster teacher education. Four system institutions, Winona State University, MSU, Mankato, MSU Moorhead and St. Cloud State University, received planning grants and will participate in summits where they will work with teams of experts to refine their teacher education reform proposals. An announcement on which institutions will continue to participate in the foundation's initiative will come in early November and the Trustees will be given an update at their meeting that month.

3. St. Cloud Technical College Mission Change

Presenters:

Joyce Helens, President, St. Cloud Technical College

Phil Schroeder, Chief Student Affairs Officer, St. Cloud Technical College

Susan Schlicht, faculty member, St. Cloud Technical College

Lori Kloos, Chief Financial Officer, St. Cloud Technical College

St. Cloud Technical College is proposing to change its mission so that it can move from being a technical college to being a comprehensive two-year college that offers its own associate of arts (AA) degree.

The Board of Trustees has approved similar mission changes for Saint Paul College and South Central College, Senior Vice Chancellor Baer said. Colleges interested in changing their mission must complete an extensive process which starts with discussions involving key college stakeholders, including faculty, staff, administrators, students, community leaders and college supporters.

St. Cloud Technical College developed a mission approval package that described the college's new mission, vision, purposes and goals. Office of the Chancellor staff reviewed the application materials and found sufficient capacity within the college in relationship to faculty expertise, library resources, array of offerings and other factors deemed critical to a strong associate of arts program.

President Helens said the AA has been offered on the St. Cloud Technical College campus the past six years through a partnership with Anoka-Ramsey Community College. The mission change would allow St. Cloud Technical College to be the institution issuing the degree and to retain the approximately \$200,000 that is now being paid to Anoka-Ramsey Community College.

Chair McElroy said he has concern about how the change in mission could affect technical education offered in the system. He said he has spoken with several legislators who say they have seen a decline of technical education in the metro area after Minneapolis Community and Technical College and Saint Paul College changed their missions.

If St. Cloud Technical College is allowed to become a comprehensive college, it may become distracted in its mission to train highly-skilled technical workers between now and the end of the century, Chair McElroy said. Manufacturers in western Stearns county or northern Benton County who have need for machinists, welders, CNC programmers and CAD workers may be concerned if the college diverts classroom space or college funding toward liberal arts classes rather than the labs and equipment needed for technical education.

Trustee McElroy pointed out that this is a big decision for the Board. Approving a mission change at St. Cloud Technical College could lead to the conversion of other technical colleges into comprehensive colleges.

President Helens said she doesn't believe the mission change will result in a change in focus for St. Cloud Technical College. If technical education would suffer under a mission change as suggested, it would have already occurred since the AA degree has been offered on campus for the past six years through the partnership with Anoka-Ramsey Community College.

Technical education remains a top priority for the college, she said. Since 2005, new programs in energy technology, water environment technology, land surveying, computer programming, network administration, health information

technology and surgical technology have been added. The college now is working toward a new associate degree in nursing and para-medicine.

There is a difference between “clean technology” programs and programs in manufacturing, mining or construction, Chair McElroy said. Of all the programs mentioned, none will help production of workers for the manufacturing and construction sectors of the economy.

President Helens said the college’s welding and machining programs are healthy and continue to have waiting lists. She said she doesn’t see a distinct division between the applied, technical learning programs and programs designed toward a transfer degree since the ultimate goal is to produce good citizens and workers who fill the workforce needs of the region and state.

Trustee Van Houten said a statement in the mission change application documents indicates that the college has no existing space to expand the allied health care programs due to the growth of general education courses and transfer curriculum. He said this shows a need for prioritization between general education and technical programs and asked how those priorities will be determined.

The college has purchased a building to gain additional space for the allied health programs, President Helens said. The facility space allotted to technical programs has not been diminished, she said, and has remained a top priority because of the needs of the programs.

Chair McElroy asked if college representatives had conversations with the advisory committees for the technical programs about this mission change and, if so, what was their reaction.

During the mission change process, the college has worked extensively with advisory committees and many committee members represent organized labor, President Helens said. She said the business and industry advisory committees are 100 percent behind the change.

Trustee Sundin said she shares Chair McElroy’s concern over the possible decline of technical education in the system. She said they need to be cognizant of how the decision may affect the future of other institutions with that label.

If the Board is serious about making college affordable, more students across the state should be given the opportunity for a lower-cost, two-year option, Trustee Dickson said. Approval of this mission change in St. Cloud would be a way to help achieve that goal.

Trustee Rice said it appears that the change in mission is what the people in and around St. Cloud want and the Board should recognize that. She added that the endorsements for the change made by St. Cloud State University and Anoka-Ramsey Community College presidents helped sway her opinion.

Trustee Benson noted that the benefit to students seems to be missing from the discussion about the mission change. Students should be allowed to make the decisions about what it is that they want, he said.

A motion was made by Trustee Rice and seconded by Trustee Benson that The Academic and Student Affairs Committee recommend that the Board of Trustees approve the St. Cloud Technical College request to change its mission to become a comprehensive two-year college, with a future Board study session planned to look at the broader implications. The new mission is, “St. Cloud Technical and Community College prepares students for life-long learning by providing career, technical and transferable education.”

Trustee Van Houten said before he could vote in favor on the motion, he would need to know more about what considerations are in place to protect the technical programs, or at least ensure that they remain a priority equal to the community college programs.

President Helens said the protection of technical programs always has been central to their mission change discussions. Applied learning at St. Cloud Technical College is critical and she said everything done in terms of strategic planning with faculty, staff, constituents and stakeholders has been with that premise.

Chief Student Affairs Officer Phil Schroeder said maintaining the technical college mission has been a priority from day one and he doesn't see that changing. If the mission change is approved, the college will propose that its new name be St. Cloud Technical and Community College to show the importance of its technical education mission.

Susan Schlicht said she is speaking on behalf of the faculty and they are 100 percent behind the new mission. St. Cloud Technical College meets the needs of the community and this change is what the community wants, she said.

Trustee Van Houten said nothing has been offered that would indicate an alignment of management authority or responsibility would ensure that technical programs would remain a priority in the future. He said he doesn't think enough information has been offered pertaining to this issue.

President Helens said such alignment is in the college's strategic plan. If the college is listening to the needs of its community, there will be healthy programming in both the technical college and community college areas, she said.

Trustee Van Houten said he would like more information before voting to approve the change.

Trustees Rice, Benson and Dickson voted in favor of the motion. Voting against the motion were Trustees McElroy, Sundin and Van Houten. Trustee Englund was not present at the time of the vote.

Since the motion failed on a tie vote, Chair McElroy said he will ask that it be brought back for further discussion at the November committee meeting.

4. Preliminary Report to the Legislature: Degree Credit Caps

A report regarding the Board's policy on degree credit caps is being presented to the Trustees prior to its submittal to the House and Senate Higher Education Committees in October.

Following recent legislative action, the Board of Trustees adopted a policy that set the maximum number of semester credits required for a baccalaureate degree at 120 and for an associate of arts degree at 60. By statute, associate of applied science degree programs are exempt from the legislated requirements until 2012.

The statute affects approximately 1,100 programs, of which nearly 800 are above credit limits. Notices of Intent to Seek a Waiver from the credit caps have been submitted for 163 programs. Colleges and universities are expected to offer programs with their new credit lengths by the fall of 2012.

The report presented:

- Provides a background for the development of Board of Trustees' policy and Chancellor's procedure regarding degree credit caps;
- Presents a summary of programs affected by statute; and
- Lists programs by college or university for which a Notice of Intent to seek a waiver was submitted to the Office of the Chancellor.

Trustee Van Houten said when the legislation imposing degree credit caps was passed, the Board had concerns that the Legislature shouldn't arbitrarily assign the number of credits. However, degree credit caps could prove beneficial to students if they could receive their degrees quicker and at a lower cost and the system could benefit it takes fewer classes to graduate students. If credit caps are possible without damaging the quality of the programs, both the system and students could benefit, he said.

The report presented shows an enormous list of waiver requests but gives no indication of how many programs were reviewed with an honest attempt to determine if credits could be reduced to meet the cap limit, Trustee Van Houten said. He said it appears that many colleges and universities are opting to try and keep their programs at current credit level without any attempt to accommodate the legislation.

Senior Vice Chancellor Baer said campuses have done extensive work in the past two years. There have been institutions that have reduced their credits to 60 at the

college level, with a few requesting higher limits for various reasons. At the university level, there are programs in engineering, teaching and nursing that can't come to that limit because of certification and quality restraints.

Trustee Van Houten said it would be helpful if the report included the number of programs that have reduced credits to meet the requirements. He said that appears to be a big missing piece and that information would add to the validity of the report.

Associate Vice Chancellor Manuel López said that the report refers to intents to waiver, not the actual waivers. The intent process is an attempt to determine issues with consistency. The task over the next three years is to call groups together to discuss and determine what the appropriate credit level is for the particular disciplinary degree program, he said.

Chair McElroy said credit reduction is not a simple issue since accreditation and industry expectations are involved. He asked if there are differences in the program credit requirements in surrounding states. That information may be helpful to the Legislature, he said.

Associate Vice Chancellor López said the report does contain information on the programs offered in Florida, Georgia, Ohio, Texas and Wisconsin.

Chair McElroy asked that information on credit limits from institutions in surrounding states, such as Iowa or Michigan, be included in the report.

The system needs to look at the policy seriously, Trustee Rice said. It would be important to know why all these programs are seeking waivers from the cap levels.

Trustee Dickson said this issue goes to the very heart of the challenges the system faces – being able to offer high-quality programming that properly prepares students, while at the same time keeping costs low. She said she appreciates how seriously the issue is being taken since this is important to the future of higher education in Minnesota.

The variation in credit length among similar programs is concerning, Trustee Frederick said. He noted nursing programs at community colleges are at different lengths, as are some engineering programs at universities.

Senior Vice Chancellor Baer said bringing groups together to discuss program competencies will be helpful in terms of program credit length consistency.

It seems counter-productive to have faculty members initiating the decision-making process to determine which programs should be applying for waivers, Trustee Englund said. He asked if there has been any talk about reviewing all

programs rather than establishing a waiver process on a program-by-program specific basis.

Senior Vice Chancellor Baer said faculty members lead the process because they are the experts in the field. They are the ones who have the core knowledge of what it takes to be certified and graduate in the degree or field.

As for variation in credit lengths, it ends up being a balancing act, Senior Vice Chancellor Baer said. There are programs that must meet quality standards prescribed by national and regional accrediting associations. Other programs may be above the credit limits for other reasons.

Associate Vice Chancellor López said that would be a daunting task to evaluate all programs in the system considering there are over 4,000 programs across 37 accredited institutions. Programmatic review based on policy is done every five years at the campus level. Accredited programs, such as nursing and engineering, are reviewed according to an established cycle. Most programmatic reviews are driven at the institutional level, he said. Faculty initiate the review, after which it goes to the deans' level and then to the institution's chief academic officer for review before being submitted to the Office of the Chancellor.

Trustee Van Houten said the report shows one institution has requested 19 waivers, each one for exactly 128 credits. He said that indicates to him that there was not a significant effort toward reducing the credit length. The major fields are probably the most precise in terms of what the expectations are, but there are so many other ways to meet curriculum requirements that faculty expertise just fades and it becomes political with everyone dividing up the student and getting their share of the pie, he said.

Associate Vice Chancellor López said national accreditation reviewers in the engineering field, for example, don't specify the exact number of credits required for a degree in the field, but they will say that a program capable of delivering what is required of a graduate engineer typically needs at least 128 credits.

Teaching degrees also tend to be at 128 credits, Associate Vice Chancellor Lopez said. An external factor with those degrees, he added, is that the system is preparing teachers who are going to be licensed and the Board of Teaching has licensing expectations which cause those degrees to go beyond 120 credits.

Chair McElroy said it is necessary to look at the number of waiver intents submitted compared with the total number of baccalaureate degrees offered by the institution to see the complete picture. That may indicate a greater effort than assumed, he said.

Senior Vice Chancellor Baer said the report can be revised to include the information requested and will be sent to Trustees because the report is due to the Legislature before the next committee meeting.

5. Higher Learning Commission Campus Visits Update

An information report regarding Higher Learning Commission campus visits in the past year was presented. Chair McElroy asked that Trustees who participated in the visits and want to make comments should do so during Trustee reports at the full Board meeting.

Trustee Van Houten asked how Trustee representatives are chosen for the visits.

Board Chair Olson said members have been assigned based on their history or relationships with various institutions. He said a broader scope of participation can be considered for future visits.

6. Annual Sabbatical Report

An informational annual report which summarizes sabbatical leaves taken at system institutions during fiscal year 2008 was presented.

Sabbatical leaves are awarded for various reasons related to scholarly growth, development, or other creative endeavors that promise to enhance the professional effectiveness of the applicant.

Anoka-Ramsey Community College President Patrick Johns noted a faculty member used his sabbatical to research and develop online chemistry lab activities and an associated chemistry lab kit. The sabbatical was successful since it resulted in the college now being able to offer effective online labs, he said.

Trustee Dickson said she would be interested in hearing a report from Century College President Larry Litecky on research he did while on sabbatical involving the high school senior year. Senior Vice Chancellor Baer said she would look into the request.

The meeting adjourned at 12:05 pm
Respectfully submitted,
Margie Takash, Recorder