1. Minutes of June 17, 2009

The minutes from the June 17, 2009 Academic and Student Affairs Committee Meeting were approved as written.

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

Minnesota State University, Mankato has received a Campus Technology 2009 Innovators Award given by Campus Technology. The university was one of 11 winners selected out of 349 nominations submitted from higher education institutions across the globe.

The Campus Technology Innovators Awards recognize higher education institutions that have pursued, and successfully launched, initiatives that reach beyond today's IT applications to create tomorrow's educational technology practices.

Minnesota State University, Mankato’s award was for developing a curriculum design system. An antiquated, paper-based curriculum approval process has been replaced with a transparent, web-based, user-centered Curriculum Design System that allows faculty and administrators to create, review, track, access and approve curricular proposals.

Project leads were Brenda Flannery, Assistant Vice President of Academic Affairs, and Brenda Hanel, Lead Web Application Director.
Chair McElroy asked if this system could become available to the other six universities so they wouldn’t have to reinvent it on their campuses.

Senior Vice Chancellor Baer said this is a good model for all universities and they will be in discussions with MSU, Mankato staff regarding possible duplication.

3. Metropolitan Area Planning – Senior Vice Chancellor Baer

The Academic and Student Affairs Committee has been reviewing recommendations for a system response to meet the need for more baccalaureate and graduate education in the Twin Cities metropolitan area and to respond to emerging workforce needs.

Population forecasts by the Metropolitan Council anticipate nearly 1 million additional residents in the seven-county area between 2005 and 2030. Projections by the Office of the State Demographer for the region are more modest, but still forecast over 500,000 additional residents by 2030. Uncertainly over the size and location of population growth complicates system planning but does not eliminate the need to assume that the system will need to accommodate more Twin Cities resident students in the years ahead.

With 10 community and technical colleges located across the metropolitan area, the system is well-positioned to increase capacity at the lower division level. There is a growing need for more upper division and graduate education.

In June 2009, the Board was asked to adopt a framework for on-going metropolitan area planning. Trustees asked that specific reference to efficiency and cost-effectiveness be added to the framework and that further consideration of the recommendation be placed on the July committee agenda.

Materials in the Board packet included added language in the background and proposed resolution to specify that cost-effective use of resources will be required as the system expands in the Twin Cities. In addition, a second revised resolution was distributed to Trustees at the meeting which added a new strategy: “Assigning responsibility to the institution that demonstrates the ability to offer a high quality program at the lowest cost when selecting among several potential programs that could address a need in the Twin Cities.”

Trustee Benson asked who would be responsible for the decision on which institution would offer a program. Chair McElroy said the Board has delegated authority for program approval to the Office of the Chancellor, but Trustees would have the ultimate oversight responsibility.

Trustee Englund asked if it would be possible to come up with some kind of process to ensure that the most competitive proposal is adopted.
Senior Vice Chancellor Baer said the program approval process already involves a deep analysis, including a cost-benefit review and review of labor market information. She added that the Office of the Chancellor will be reporting, on a regular basis, program approvals to the Board.

Chair McElroy asked if this report could include program denials and Senior Vice Chancellor Baer said that would be possible.

Trustee Van Houten said since the state will be operating under tight financial conditions the next few years, it is important that the most cost-effective programs be approved. If programs are of equal quality and the programs are delivered on equal geographic configurations in relationship to the customer, they ought to be done at the lowest possible cost, he said.

He added that even if a new program is projected to be cost-competitive in a few years, the system should not be paying more for it in the meantime.

Decisions on which institution would offer a program should be based on a comparison of objective criteria, Trustee Van Houten said. This objective analysis should be presented as part of the approval process.

Chair McElroy said he believes the added strategy would do that, but they may need to move to amend a policy or procedure in the event when the Chancellor’s staff is recommending a program other than the lowest cost-provider be approved. He asked Senior Vice Chancellor Baer to review policies and procedures to determine where exception language would be appropriate.

Trustee Van Houten said some approved programs remain very modest in size and there may be a need to revisit them. The Board should be given a chance to go back and look at programs that have been recently established in the metro area and re-assess them if they do not appear to be cost-effective, he said.

Chair McElroy said that suggestion should be considered on another time.

It is important that the metropolitan area planning recommendation does not call for a new institution or campus in the Twin Cities area, Chair McElroy said. Rather, it calls for serving the growing population using existing facilities. He added the plan also does not carve the Twin Cities into territories to be served by designated universities.

While acknowledging that the state and system are facing tough fiscal conditions, Trustee Dickson said she is uncomfortable with the focus being on providing the lowest cost programs. If cost is the driver and there are no provisions for quality, innovation and other factors deemed valuable in education, that would set an alarming precedent, she said.
Chair McElroy said innovation could be included in the cost-effective strategy and offered the following amendment: “The Office of the Chancellor has the authority to make an exception in selecting the lowest-cost, high quality program in a case when it is their judgment that a program is particularly innovative, leverages unique characteristics of an institution or its partners or has some other compelling reason to make an exception to the low-cost tradition.”

Trustee Benson said he preferred the wording of the original strategy since it is more concise in stating the Board’s desire for high-quality programs provided at the lowest cost.

Trustee Van Houten agreed. The expectation is that the Chancellor, as the system’s chief executive officer, and Senior Vice Chancellor Baer, as the chief operating officer in this area, understand the Trustees’ concern about cost and quality and that both sides of the choice are treated equally.

Trustee Dickson said she was willing to forgo the amendment proposed by Chair McElroy, but she asked that the committee minutes reflect that Trustees recognize the necessity of high quality programs and that low-cost is not the over-riding principle.

Senior Vice Chancellor Baer said the system is already committed to quality and promoting innovation.

A motion was made by Trustee Van Houten, seconded by Trustee Englund and carried that the Academic and Student Affairs Committee recommend that the Board of Trustees approve the following amended recommendation:

The Board of Trustees directs the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities to expand access to baccalaureate and graduate programs in the Twin Cities metropolitan area through immediate action and long-range planning. Expanded programs should offer competitive, attractive opportunities for Twin Cities residents and serve workforce needs of the changing Twin Cities economy. All programming should meet high standards for quality and cost-effective use of the investment provided by Minnesota taxpayers and students.

The Board approves the following core strategies to guide continuing work by the Office of the Chancellor and universities and colleges serving the metropolitan area:

1) Strengthened partnerships between Metropolitan State and the ten metropolitan colleges.
2) Additional partnerships between metropolitan area colleges and carefully chosen non-metropolitan state universities when necessary to supplement the program capacity of Metropolitan State University.
3) Assigning responsibility to the institution that demonstrates the ability to offer a high quality program at the lowest cost when selecting among several potential programs that could address a need in the Twin Cities.

4) Online delivery and collaborate programs and services that conserve resources and expand resources.

5) Marketing that promotes the strength and power of the system to offer the full range of programs – associate, baccalaureate and graduate degrees – in the metropolitan area.

6) Students First and other information technology improvements that aid institutional partnership and student mobility by creating common administrative processes at system institutions.

7) Facilities on the campuses of Metropolitan State University and the metropolitan area colleges to support expanded opportunities for baccalaureate and graduate education.

8) Development by Metropolitan State University of a Master Facilities Plan which incorporates a metropolitan-wide programming strategy to guide facilities planning.

9) Selected learning when on-campus facilities are not available or appropriate to serve the student market.

10) Investment of additional resources at Metropolitan State University to accelerate its growth in programs and facilities, when feasible, within the constraints of meeting other system obligations.

4. FY 2010 Academic and Student Affairs Committee Work Plan

Trustees discussed the Academic and Student Affairs Committee’s work plan for the upcoming year and planned topics of discussion.

Chair McElroy said the September meeting agenda will include a report on the credit cap waiver process. This report is due to the Legislature in October. Also on the agenda will be a mission change proposal by St. Cloud Technical College, which may spur a discussion on whether allowing technical colleges to offer the Associate of Arts degrees enhances technical education or threatens it.

Trustee Englund said he would like to have the topic of program transfer and articulation be put on a future meeting agenda. Chair McElroy said that could be added to the November or January agenda.

Trustee Benson asked about the upcoming Bush Foundation report on teacher education. Senior Vice Chancellor Baer said a report is to be made at the November meeting since that would allow the Bush Foundation staff time to report on the status of planning grants being used to improve teacher education at several system universities.

Trustee Benson asked if the Bush Foundation initiative is considering gender diversity since nearly all graduates of elementary education programs are female.
He urged staff to bring this into the discussion with Bush Foundation representatives.

Attracting more males into the elementary education field could be a system internal recruiting goal, Trustee Van Houten said.

Trustee Van Houten said this is the 11th time he’s brought up the subject of educational quality since the strategic goal for this area was first discussed over two years ago. A Board workgroup helped to create an accountability dashboard, but the educational quality portion of that dashboard does not yet function.

He said he understands that an objective measurement of quality may be difficult to define, but the system could stipulate subjective measures which, if followed, should result with the outcome desired, such as if courses are being taught by an expert in the field, if program material is updated or if courses have an evaluation component that ensures students’ performance can be judged accurately.

Subjective standards could be set system-wide and every dean could, from time to time, review their courses and then report back to the Office of the Chancellor to help in oversight, he said.

He added he would like this topic of educational quality measurement to return to another workgroup until it is resolved. It should be in the upcoming year’s work plan, he said.

Chair McElroy said the system has several ways to track quality, including the percentage of graduates who pass national accreditation examinations and student satisfaction surveys.

Senior Vice Chancellor Baer said every program in the system periodically goes through a program review process on the campus. These reviews typically include experts in the area to help assess the program’s quality, she said. Institutions must also go through periodic accreditation processes to ensure they meet quality standards.

The American Association of Colleges and State Universities has developed a Voluntary System of Accountability (VSA) and every one of the system’s universities has agreed to participate. Student learning is one of the measures that will be included on the VSA website.

The dashboard already includes student satisfaction information and student pass rates, which are indications of quality. There is information on how many of the system’s technical programs are based on national industry standards.

Trustee Paskach said he would propose that educational quality measurement be the focus of a Board study session. There are many examples of outstanding academic programs in the system, he said, but there also are examples of
programs that are deficient. There should be a discussion on how to differentiate them and work on deficient ones so they get on the right track.

Trustee Benson said it would first be necessary to define what a quality program is and what the system wants to accomplish. Only with a definition can the Board create guidelines on quality programming, he said.

5. Proposed Response to the Office of the Legislative Auditor Program Review Report

At a previous Board of Trustees meeting, members requested an update on the actions taken and/or proposed in response to the Office of the Legislative Auditor Evaluation Report on MnSCU Occupational Programs. The audit was ordered by the Legislature in response to concerns about the supply of electricians.

Recommendation #1: College/University mission review
- Mission policy 3.24 System and Institutional Missions will be reviewed/revised; and,
- Chancellor's procedures will be prepared to assure missions meet legislative and policy requirements.

Recommendation #2: Policy on program review to include labor market information
- Policy has been drafted; and,
- Pending remaining steps in policy development process.

Recommendation #3: Assessing graduates’ success at finding related employment
- New approaches to measure graduates' success at finding related employment will be identified and tested;
- Revisions to Policy 3.31 Graduate Follow-up System; and,
- Will convene an advisory group during the 2009-2010 academic year relating to advisory groups; review policy and make recommendations to the Senior Vice Chancellor and others regarding the various elements of the way graduate follow up data is collected and reported.

Recommendation #4: Regional response for Electricians
- Completed.
- Senior Vice Chancellor communiqué to Presidents and Chief Academic Officers of colleges with an electrician program. Memorandum includes an analysis by region that retains an enrollment cap in all regions except southwest MN.

Recommendation #5: Policy on Advisory Committees
- Policy has been drafted (including explicit reference to the Program Advisory Committee Handbook referenced by the OLA Report);
• Remaining steps pending in the policy development process for the 2009-2010 academic year; and,
• Accountability measures/processes will be considered.

Recommendation #6: Policy on getting career explorations and job information to students
• Policy will be developed in the 2009-2010 academic year.

Recommendation #7: Inform students about job prospects
• Process alternatives, such as iSeek, will be developed to assure students are aware of job prospects.

Trustee Benson asked if the audit ever acknowledged that the system is not the only educational system in the state that trains electricians.

Associate Vice Chancellor Manuel Lopez said the background report supplied to the auditor’s office included information the preparation of electricians, including graduation numbers from programs outside the system. But that fact was not explicitly acknowledged in the auditor’s report, he said.

Trustee Van Houten said the system shouldn’t be focused on training electricians who only work for unions. It would be more accurate to go directly to various employers hiring in this field to get a better idea of supply and demand.

John Asmussen, Executive Director of the Office of Internal Auditing, said a formal, written response has been presented to the Auditor’s office. His office is following up on the Program Advisory Committee deficiencies, and these deficiencies have been discussed during presidential evaluations.


Trustees were presented with the annual Charter School Report, which summarizes the status of charter school sponsorship in the system during Fiscal Year 2008 and identifies recent trends in charter school operation and sponsorship.

Sponsorship in the system remains stable at three colleges sponsoring a total of five charter schools:
• Century College sponsors three related charter schools, Twin Cities International Elementary Schools (TIES), servicing grades K-4; Minnesota International Middle School (MIMS), serving grades 5-8; and Ubah Medical Academy, which enrolls students in grades 9-12.
• Alexandria Technical College sponsors Lakes Area Charter School, which serves students in grades 9-12.
• Rochester Community and Technical College sponsors Rochester Off-Campus Charter School, which serves students in grades 9-12.
Trustee Dickson said the sponsorship of charter schools can present a risk for system institutions, and she is concerned that the investment is worth this risk. She said she is concerned about the low enrollment at Lakes Area Charter School with only 77 students.

She also said it doesn’t appear that Century College has a liaison to the Ubah Medical Academy Board. She said it is critical that a sponsoring school have a liaison at board meetings.

The meeting adjourned at 11:00 am
Respectfully submitted,
Margie Takash, Recorder