

**MINNESOTA STATE COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES
BOARD OF TRUSTEES
STUDY SESSION MINUTES
JULY 18, 2007**

Trustees Present: *David Paskach, Chair; Trustees Cheryl Dickson, Christine Rice, Scott Thiss, James Van Houten, Caleb Anderson, Ruth Grendahl, Michael Boulton, Dan McElroy, Duane Benson, David Olson and Tom Renier.*

Trustees Absent: *Ann Curme Shaw, Clarence Hightower and Carol Wenner.*

Leadership Council Committee Present: *Senior Vice Chancellor Linda Baer and President Ann Valentine.*

The Minnesota State Colleges and Universities Board of Trustees met for a Study Session on July 18, 2007, at Wells Fargo Place, 4th Floor, Board Room, 30 East 7th Street in St. Paul. Educational Policy Committee Vice Chair Benson called the session to order at 1:07 pm.

1. Targeted Program Review

The topic of Targeted Program Review has been discussed by Trustees in April and May following an article in the *St. Paul Pioneer Press* about the state's supply of electrician program graduates and the System's intent to cap enrollment in these programs for one year.

Educational Policy Committee Vice Chair Benson said the study session should give Trustees a better understanding of the program approval and targeted program review processes.

Program approval involves several distinct steps, including institutional program planning, design and approval, followed by program application to the Office of the Chancellor and final review by System staff.

A new program typically is initiated by the faculty or academic leadership at an institution. Colleges and universities have an analytical data tool called the Gap Analysis which is used during the development process to determine the viability of a program. It offers a deep set of data including salary projections, job vacancy rates, unemployment data, graduate outcomes, labor market supply and demand figures, as well as information on similar programs already offered in the state.

At the institution, a proposed program is typically reviewed by academic staff, advisory boards and institution-wide committees before it is submitted to the Office of the Chancellor for review. A Notice of Intent to offer the program is posted to a statewide listserv to collect comments from other institutions. The program application is then reviewed by System staff. The Gap Analysis tool is again used during the staff review of the application.

It typically takes a new program one to six weeks to be approved once the application is submitted. A new doctoral program takes two to six months, while a program change, such as a credit or name change, can be done in a few days.

As part of continuous improvement, colleges and universities review all academic programs on a designated cycle. The programs are assessed using various criteria, including enrollment, student retention, established articulation agreements, transfer rates, graduation rates and employment outcomes. Students and alumni are surveyed to determine overall program satisfaction and feedback is sought from business and industries that employ the graduates.

Vice Chair Benson noted the different roles and responsibilities involved in the System's academic program approval process. The Board of Trustees has the role of setting policies pertaining to academic program review and approval, while the Chancellor is accountable to the Board for implementing these policies. The Senior Vice Chancellor for Academic and Student Affairs is accountable to the Chancellor for the management of the System's program approval and review processes. The institutions conduct, on a systematic basis, program development and program review.

Accreditation (both institutional and specialized/programmatic) validates the processes by an independent third party.

Chancellor McCormick said he takes responsibility for the System's decision to temporarily cap enrollment in electrician programs. He said he felt it was a valid decision based on the data the System had pertaining to student enrollment and labor market supply and demand. The decision took on a political nature since union representatives were taking their case on an oversupply of electricians to the Legislature.

Trustee McElroy said there is a difference between consulting with the board prior to a decision and informing the board after the decision has been made. Chancellor McCormick said in this case the decision process would have benefited from increased communication with the Board prior to a final decision.

Associate Vice Chancellor Manuel López said the System's intent is for a one-year cap on enrollment, not immediate closure of any programs. During the year, people from the field, including representatives from the unions, businesses and industries, will meet to get a clearer picture of the situation and work out a process for the future.

2. Transfer of Course Credit

A brief discussion was conducted on the transfer of course credit. Course credits from one college or university are accepted for transfer by another college or

university when they meet requirements in a major, general education or as a free elective.

Trustee Van Houten expressed concern that general education courses be valid and rigorous. He said some courses appear to be political in nature and asked if all transfer courses are subject to review.

Dr. Lopez said curriculum comes under the purview of institution faculty. Each college and university has a process to evaluate credits for transfer based on quality, comparability and applicability to the institution's programs in light of student goals. There is also periodic System review of transfer curriculum courses. Institutions conduct course review as part of their accreditation and program review processes.

Trustee Dickson said she does not believe it would be appropriate for the Board to review individual courses. This discussion, she added, highlights the struggle Board members face as they strive to understand often complex issues. Abbreviated Board meetings may work for some members, but others, especially people new to the Board, may need more time to examine and address these issues. She said the Board may need to consider how to address these varying levels of understanding when setting meetings in the future.

The Study Session adjourned at 3:03 pm.