

**System Strategic Plan 2006-2010
Final Draft
Approved by the Board of Trustees, January 19, 2006**

Ten years ago, Minnesota created a new system of public higher education by merging formerly separate systems of community colleges, technical colleges and state universities. Over the past decade, these institutions educated 1.2 million students. In addition to that achievement, the system devoted major efforts to bring our organizational climate, policies and administrative systems in line with the merger. That work continues, but we are now poised to take advantage of our collective strength to meet the challenges of the new century.

With that history in mind, we are pleased to present the system strategic plan for 2006 – 2010. This plan grows out of the previous three-year plan, retaining strategic directions in access and opportunity, quality and economic development of our state.

The new fourth strategic direction focuses on innovation. We see the challenges in global competition, other important demands on state resources and the growing recognition that virtually all young people will need higher education for career and life success. Innovation throughout the system, by the Board, by system leadership and by all faculty and staff, will be essential to achieving the quality, efficiency and capacity that Minnesota deserves.

Robert H. Hoffman, Chair
January 2006

James H. McCormick, Chancellor

Vision

The Minnesota State Colleges and Universities will enable the people of Minnesota to succeed by providing the most accessible, highest value education in the nation.

Mission

The Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system of distinct and collaborative institutions offers higher education that meets a wide range of individual learners' personal and career goals, enhances the quality of life for all Minnesotans, and sustains vibrant economies throughout the state.

Guiding Principles

- Provide affordable access
- Focus on student success
- Work collaboratively and in partnership
- Advance diversity
- Promote global competency
- Practice stewardship
- Encourage innovation
- Demonstrate accountability
- Provide value
- Pursue quality and continuous improvement
- Meet community and workforce needs

Strategic Plan 2006-2010

Strategic Direction 1: Increase access and opportunity

Access and opportunity are fundamental to Minnesota State Colleges and Universities. Many of our institutions were founded to serve the sons and daughters of farmers and Main Street store owners. Today, that commitment continues as new generations of Minnesotans look to higher education to advance their careers and contribute to their communities.

Goal 1.1

Raise Minnesota's participation and achievement in post-secondary education by meeting the needs of students with diverse backgrounds and educational goals

Minnesota must increase the numbers of people with education beyond high school. Recently, the Citizens League called for an expectation that every Minnesotan should attain at least two years of post-secondary education. The Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system, which enrolls 61 percent of the state's undergraduates, is key to bringing more people to higher education and to increasing the number of graduates. Growth in educational attainment can happen only if our institutions find ways to enroll and graduate many more students from populations historically underserved by higher education. Equity in educational attainment is increasingly important to our state's future.

Goal 1.2

Maintain an affordable cost of attendance for Minnesota residents

Minnesota State Colleges and Universities have long been an affordable way for students to attend college, and our tuition and fees remain lower than those of other institutions in the state. However, the cost of education is a significant barrier to enabling more Minnesotans to attend college. When our students graduate, they face mounting debt burdens. Our commitment to this goal requires us continually to examine the impact of cost on the ability of students to afford our institutions and to develop solutions to maintain affordability, especially for students from low income families.

Goal 1.3

Work with other organizations to prepare all young people to graduate from high school and enroll in college ready for success

Too many students give up on higher education before they arrive at the doorsteps of our institutions. When they do enroll, a significant number of new high school graduates are not ready to succeed in college-level courses. As a state, we also need to increase the number of students of color who finish high school, a goal that begins with quality early childhood education and continues throughout the primary and secondary grades. We need all students to take the high school courses that prepare them for college, especially in mathematics. As a system, Minnesota State College and Universities is an founding participant in the P-16 Partnership, which works to accomplish this goal. Our institutions must work with schools in their regions to let students know what will be expected in college and to afford opportunities for early college enrollment for students who are ready. We bear a special responsibility to educate the child care workers, teachers, social workers, public health professionals and others who can successfully support and prepare today's children for post-secondary education.

Strategic Direction 2: Promote and measure high-quality learning programs and services

Minnesota students have many choices in higher education; our degrees and courses must be of high quality. We must be able to prove to potential students, to employers and to the citizens of Minnesota that our academic programs and student services meet objective standards for quality.

Goal 2.1

Demonstrate high quality in all educational programs

To assure that all of our programs are up-to-date and externally validated, we participate in accreditation, standards-based program development and formal quality improvement processes. The quality of our programs must be reflected in the success of our graduates—including their success in getting jobs that serve Minnesota and their professional aspirations. We also survey students and graduates about their satisfaction with the quality of the education at our colleges and universities.

Goal 2.2

Produce graduates who have strong, adaptable and flexible skills

Our graduates and their employers face new demands in the 21st century that will call upon solid skills in reading, writing, mathematics and speaking, the ability to learn and think critically, and technical and professional expertise that is globally competitive. In addition, our students need enriched opportunities to understand and participate in the global community. Assessment of student learning should be embedded throughout our academic and career programs. During the next five years, we will explore new ways to assess our students and assure that they meet high expectations, starting with core skills needed by all graduates. Surveys of employers who hired our recent graduates should be part of this assessment.

Goal 2.3

Provide multiple delivery options for learning programs and student services

While the importance of the relationship between teacher and student does not change, higher education must be provided in multiple ways to suit the learning styles, schedules and preferences which contribute to the quality of each student's educational experience. Options are also critical to achieving our aspirations for growth in access and opportunity. In current technology, online options offer an attractive means of reaching students looking for the convenience of learning and services delivered over the Internet. We are committed to enabling faculty to enrich their online teaching skills and to establishing the system as a leader in online education. Our students expect online access and other flexible means to take advantage of student services and conduct business transactions.

Strategic Direction 3: Provide programs and services integral to state and regional economic needs

The “people’s colleges” are not ivory towers. As public higher education institutions, our colleges and universities have special relationships with their communities and regions. Our graduates are the backbone of the workforce in many industries, and our institutions serve the economic development and social vitality of their regions through service and access to leisure and cultural activities.

Goal 3.1

As a major partner in educating Minnesota's workforce, participate in identifying and meeting regional and statewide economic development priorities

From the Chamber of Commerce to the local workforce council, our administrators, faculty and staff should be involved in appropriate ways with economic development initiatives that can help inform academic planning and become productive collaborations. All communities benefit when we educate the pool of entrepreneurs and talent that will create new engines of economic growth. For most institutions, customized training is a significant service that supports economic development by maintaining a productive workforce. All career programs need to be aligned with needs of the workforce now and in the future. Professional programs, such as nursing and teaching, while fostering personal and intellectual growth as well as career objectives, also need to be connected to workforce needs in terms of the numbers of graduates and job-related learning outcomes.

Goal 3.2

Support regional vitality by contributing artistic, cultural, and civic assets that attract employees and other residents seeking a high quality of life

Libraries, theaters, sports, lectures and exhibitions make our institutions centers for learning and recreation even for people who are not enrolled as students. Particularly in Greater Minnesota, our institutions are vital to the fabric of life. As Minnesota's communities become more diverse, our colleges and universities have new opportunities to enrich cultural life and to enable area residents of many cultures to benefit from institutional resources and services.

Goal 3.3

Develop each institution's capacity to be engaged in and add value to its region

In addition to formal relationships with economic development initiatives, institutions can support their regions by stimulating community involvement of faculty and staff in most departments, including liberal arts and sciences. While faculty members at all institutions use their knowledge to solve local problems, state university faculty, in particular, engage in applied research that can assist their regions. Students at all campuses should have opportunities to link classroom learning with civic engagement provided through service learning and community-based research. Student services support for volunteer programs, civic awareness and community-based work-study also add to institutional capacity for partnerships in sustaining healthy regions.

Strategic Direction 4: Innovate to meet current and future educational needs efficiently

An innovative culture and climate will enable the system to take advantage of the work over the last decade to strengthen the ability of institutions to work together. Innovation will make it possible for the system to meet the expectations of today's and tomorrow's students. And innovation will be critical to reaching our potential as a solution to the state's needs for an efficient way for all Minnesotans to complete some form of higher education.

Goal 4.1

Build organizational capacity for change to meet future challenges

To serve our students in the new century, we need to enlarge the system's future orientation and capacity for change. At the system level and on each campus, we must become comfortable with taking risks and moving fast when opportunities arise. Renewed attention should be given to how the system identifies trends and future issues. Knowing that our students live in a world of global communications and competition, we need to incorporate global perspectives into a culture of innovation and strengthen our international outlook and programs. Our organizational structures need to be efficient and adaptable to sudden changes in the student and business markets. Technology to meet the service expectations of today's tech-savvy students is essential to keeping up with new learning and teaching models, improving student convenience and gaining efficiency in business practices.

Goal 4.2

Reward and support institutions, administrators, faculty and staff for innovations that advance excellence and efficiency

Innovation means becoming a national and international leader, adopting best practices or just doing a job better or with greater efficiency. To promote innovation throughout the system, we will reward it. We will utilize features in the system funding allocation to reward institutions that take risks and innovate. We will work with our faculty and staff to identify and carry out ways to reward innovators with recognition, compensation and other benefits.

Goal 4.3

Identify and remove barriers to innovation and responsiveness

Our faculty and staff are hard-working and dedicated to helping students. But change can be difficult in a large organization. Some barriers to change may be due to organizational climate; others are embedded in state and federal legislation, system policies, formal

procedures and informal practices. We need to ask everyone in our system what barriers prevent innovation and responsiveness and then take action to remove unnecessary impediments and restrictions.

Goal 4.4

Hire and develop leaders who will initiate and support innovation throughout the system

The Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system needs people with vision, personal integrity and high standards who can motivate colleagues and challenge the status quo. Our presidents and senior administrators must be chosen for their leadership abilities and supported with professional growth opportunities. We need leaders in our academic departments, in our business offices and on our student services staff as well. Our practices for selection, development and retention need to address this essential foundation for progress in facing the future.

Goal 4.5

Promote accountability for results through a system of accessible reports to the public and other stakeholders

The system-level accountability framework enhances the ability of the Board of Trustees, system leaders and others to measure progress in achieving the goals of the strategic plan. Continuing implementation of the accountability framework should focus first on measures for the highest-priority goals. Performance results must be easily available to the public. This system-level framework should be complemented by accessible reports from institutions to prospective students and to their communities.

How the Strategic Plan Drives Results

The Board of Trustees and system leadership carry out the strategic plan by adopting and being accountable for workplans which identify specific initiatives and outcomes.

- A system workplan, adopted each year, establishes the short term actions that will be taken to advance the longer term strategic goals.
- The chancellor's priorities are to achieve the system workplan. The Board of Trustees reviews his performance in leading the system on these initiatives annually.
- Presidents use the strategic plan to establish campus priorities. The chancellor and each president negotiate the activities and results that the institution will pursue during the coming year, and presidents are evaluated on the progress they make.

The Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system measures performance in meeting the goals through the system-level accountability framework. The framework may be viewed at <http://www.mnscu.edu>. Following adoption of the strategic plan, measures in the framework are adjusted if necessary to reflect new goals, starting with goals that are of the highest priority.

Finally, the strategic directions and goals in the plan will be reflected in the budget requests of the system during the next five years.