



AT A CROSSROADS

A Report Card on
Public Higher Education in Minnesota

American Council of Trustees and Alumni
with Freedom Foundation of Minnesota

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March 2010

Acknowledgments

This report was prepared by the staff of the American Council of Trustees and Alumni, primarily by Sandra Diaz, Heather Lakemacher, and Charles Mitchell, in conjunction with the Freedom Foundation of Minnesota. ACTA thanks the staff members of FFM for their assistance.

The American Council of Trustees and Alumni is an independent non-profit dedicated to academic freedom, academic excellence, and accountability at America's colleges and universities. Since its founding in 1995, ACTA has counseled boards, educated the public, and published reports about such issues as good governance, historical literacy, core curricula, the free exchange of ideas, and accreditation. ACTA has previously published *For the People: A Report Card on Public Higher Education in Illinois*, *Show Me: A Report Card on Public Higher Education in Missouri*, *Shining the Light: A Report Card on Georgia's System of Public Higher Education*, and *Governance in the Public Interest: A Case Study of the University of North Carolina System*, among other state-focused reports.

The Freedom Foundation of Minnesota is an independent, non-profit educational and research organization that actively advocates the principles of individual freedom, personal responsibility, economic freedom, and limited government. Founded in 2006, FFM hopes to create a better and more vibrant future for every Minnesotan by helping shape sound public policy. This report marks FFM's first major focus on public higher education in Minnesota.

For further information, please contact:

American Council of Trustees and Alumni

1726 M Street, NW, Suite 802
Washington, DC 20036
Phone: 202.467.6787
Fax: 202.467.6784
www.goacta.org • info@goacta.org

Freedom Foundation of Minnesota

900 Second Avenue South, Suite 570
Minneapolis, MN 55402
Phone: 612.354.2192
www.freedomfoundationofminnesota.com

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Introduction

MINNESOTA'S TAXPAYER-SUPPORTED COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES are at a crossroads. In 2011, the chief executives of the University of Minnesota and Minnesota State Colleges & Universities systems will leave their positions, along with the governor of the state. The state will continue to face fiscal challenges, and the campuses will have to figure out how to do more with less. As *Tribune* columnist Lori Sturdevant recently observed, this will require a “paradigm shift.” In such times, citizens and policymakers can benefit from clear information on what their colleges and universities are doing well, and what they are doing not so well.

That is why this report card delves into Minnesota's two public university systems. We focus on what students are learning (the curriculum), whether the marketplace of ideas is vibrant (intellectual diversity), how the universities are run (governance), and what a college education costs (affordability). In each case, we assess Minnesota institutions according to best practices at the national level, awarding a Passing or Failing grade.

Are students learning the things they need to know? Is there a healthy exchange of ideas? Are trustees upholding the public trust? Are taxpayers getting a good value for their money? These are the kinds of questions to which the people of Minnesota deserve answers. It is the goal of this report card to provide answers and to help Minnesota—a state rightly known for its passion for education—be a national standard bearer for excellence, accountability, and efficiency in higher education.

The first section focuses on **general education**—those courses, usually completed within the first two years of a bachelor's degree program, that ensure a common intellectual background as well as college-level skills critical to workforce participation. While most Minnesota institutions require their students to take courses in composition and college-level math and science, there are weaknesses in other crucial areas. Most do not require broad coursework in literature, U.S. history or government, or economics. Instead, students can satisfy requirements in “Social Science,” “Historical Perspectives,” or “Ethical and Civic Responsibility” with courses such as “The Rural World” and “Visual Journalism.” These requirements should be tightened so that they clearly point students to essential knowledge.

In the second section, we focus on **intellectual diversity**, a value that lies at the very heart of the educational enterprise. In the simplest terms, intellectual diversity means the free exchange of ideas. And according to a scientific survey of students we commissioned, it is in trouble in Minnesota. Students unambiguously report violations of professional standards—including perceived pressure to agree with professors' views in order to get a good grade—and exhibit an unsettling lack of awareness of their rights and how to ensure those rights are respected. Many institutions across the country have taken responsible action in recent years to guarantee intellectual pluralism. The University of Minnesota-Twin Cities and St. Cloud State University, the two campuses we surveyed, should join them.

The third section turns to **governance** and actions by the University of Minnesota Board of Regents and the Minnesota State Colleges & Universities Board of Trustees. These board members are responsible for the academic and financial well-being of the institutions they oversee and for safeguarding the public interest. Our examination of board minutes and other publicly available materials suggests that both boards function in a generally transparent manner, and both are addressing issues that bear directly on student success. The MnSCU board deserves particular note for its active engagement in setting institutional priorities and for putting a premium on greater system-wide transparency and accountability. But as this report outlines, Minnesota schools are faced with rising costs, low graduation rates, and curricular gaps that make real and proactive engagement imperative.

Finally, we take a look at **cost and effectiveness**. This is an area of real concern. On average, increases in tuition and fees at the institutions we assessed outstripped inflation by nearly 20 percent between 2003 and 2008, eating up dramatically more of the average family's income. We also found increases in administrative spending of over 30 percent on five campuses between 2003 and 2007. Meanwhile, on no campus did we find even 64 percent of students receiving a degree in six years—suggesting that not only are costs going up, but many students are paying tuition for more than the expected four years. Skyrocketing college costs, of course, are not a problem unique to Minnesota, but they are one it must address.

In facing these challenges, Minnesota citizens deserve leaders and institutions that will no longer accept the status quo. They need—and can rightly expect—that their public universities will prepare graduates for effectiveness in the workplace and voting booth by passing on to them a

baseline of core knowledge. They need institutions that will prepare graduates to disagree intelligently in a free society. They need regents and trustees to debate in good faith how to run their institutions, not to act as rubber stamps. And they need, especially during a painful economic downturn, these objectives to be accomplished at a reasonable cost.

Our hope is that Minnesota's leaders—including the governor, the state legislature, and the regents and trustees they appoint—will use this report card to those important ends.

Anne D. Neal
President
American Council of Trustees and Alumni

CHAPTER I:

| | |
|---------------|---|
| Overall Grade | GENERAL EDUCATION |
| F | Institutions have solid general education requirements in some core subjects. However, large numbers of Minnesota students can graduate without a strong base of knowledge in Foreign Language, U.S. Government or History, Economics, or Literature. |

“GENERAL EDUCATION” OR THE “CORE CURRICULUM” refers to required undergraduate courses outside the student’s specialization or major. Traditionally, these courses have been subject to two limits. First, they are relatively few in number, and second, they are general in scope. These courses—usually completed within the first two years of a bachelor’s degree program and typically comprising about a third of the total number of undergraduate credit hours—are supposed to ensure a common intellectual background, exposure to a wide range of disciplines, a core of fundamental knowledge, and college-level skills in areas critical to good citizenship, workforce participation, and lifelong learning.

To assess the state of general education in Minnesota, we looked at ten campuses drawn from the state’s two public university systems, the University of Minnesota (U of M) and Minnesota State Colleges & Universities (MnSCU). From U of M, we looked at the Duluth, Morris, and Twin Cities campuses. From MnSCU, we looked at the seven four-year universities: Bemidji State University, Metropolitan State University, Minnesota State University-Mankato, Minnesota State University-Moorhead, St. Cloud State University, Southwest Minnesota State University, and Winona State University. These institutions, taken together, represent not only the geographic breadth of the state but also the vast majority of undergraduate students who are enrolled at Minnesota’s four-year institutions.

Using the most recent online course catalogs for the university or, in some cases, the liberal arts division or the Bachelor of Arts degree requirements, we examined whether these institutions require their students to take general education courses in seven key subjects: Composition, Literature, Foreign Language, U.S. Government or History, Economics, Mathematics, and Natural or Physical Science. Of course, arguments can be made for requiring any

number of additional topics, but a core curriculum that fails to require most of these seven key subjects will not satisfy the basic demands of general education.

Simply having requirements called Literature or Mathematics does not in fact mean that students will study those subjects in a manner appropriate for general education purposes. Many colleges give the appearance of providing a core curriculum because they require students to take courses in several subject areas other than their major—often called “distribution requirements.” However, within each subject area, it is not uncommon for students to have dozens or even hundreds of courses from which to choose—many of them on narrow or trendy subject matters. Therefore, to be counted in this report, a course must be a true general education course—broad in scope, exposing the student to the rich array of material that exemplifies the subject. Furthermore, if a qualifying course were one of several options that also included unqualified courses, the institution did not receive credit for the subject. For further details on the criteria used, please see Appendix A.

After researching the institutions, we assigned a Passing (P) or Failing (F) grade for each subject. Every Minnesota graduate should ideally be exposed to all of the broad areas outlined above; however, if a majority of the institutions surveyed (six or more) required the subject, a grade of P was awarded to the state. If five or fewer of the institutions surveyed required the subject, a grade of F was assigned.

On the whole, the state of Minnesota earned an F, with only one out of the ten schools surveyed requiring a majority of the seven core subjects.

GENERAL EDUCATION

| | |
|-----------------------------|----------|
| Composition | P |
| Literature | F |
| Language | F |
| U.S. Government or History | F |
| Economics | F |
| Mathematics | P |
| Natural or Physical Science | P |
| OVERALL GRADE: | F |

Commendably, all of the public institutions surveyed received credit for Composition and Natural or Physical Science, and most received credit for Mathematics. However, not a single one received credit for Literature, U.S. Government or History, or Economics, and all but one fail to require intermediate-level proficiency in Foreign Language. While it is possible for students to study these subjects, the number and variety of courses that satisfy existing requirements make it easy for students to graduate with large gaps in their knowledge. And offering so many courses is undoubtedly costly.

The only institution surveyed that required a majority of the seven subjects was U of M's flagship Twin Cities campus. In addition to requiring solid coursework in Composition, Mathematics, and Natural or Physical Science, U of M-Twin Cities is the only institution surveyed to have a genuine Foreign Language requirement. However, other requirements are less strong, with narrow courses on everything from rock music to film studies satisfying a broad Arts and Humanities requirement.

Furthermore, U of M-Morris, which describes itself as a public liberal arts college, only requires two of the seven subjects. Instead of a required comprehensive literature survey, a cornerstone of a liberal arts education, students may satisfy their Humanities requirement with such courses as "Visual Journalism" or "Digital Media Production." Meanwhile, the Historical Perspectives requirement can be satisfied by courses on narrow topics such as "Existentialism," "The History and Philosophy of Psychology," or "Minnesota History."

In order to be good stewards of their resources and to ensure their students acquire the knowledge they need, Minnesota's public institutions should proceed on two fronts. First, they should retain their excellent requirements in Composition, Mathematics, and Natural or Physical Science. Second, they should tighten their requirements so that students will achieve intermediate competency in Foreign Language, learn basic economic principles, and take broad courses in U.S. Government or History and Literature. Regents and trustees, given their ultimate responsibility to the people of Minnesota, can and should play a central role in this process.

GENERAL EDUCATION REQUIREMENTS BY INSTITUTION

| INSTITUTION | Gov/ | | | | | | |
|---|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| | Comp | Lit | Lang | Hist | Econ | Math | Sci |
| University of Minnesota System | | | | | | | |
| Duluth | √ | | | | | | √ |
| Morris | √ | | | | | | √ |
| Twin Cities | √ | | √ | | | √ | √ |
| Minnesota State Colleges & Universities System | | | | | | | |
| Bemidji State University | √ | | | | | √ | √ |
| Metropolitan State University | √ | | | | | √ | √ |
| Minnesota State University-Mankato | √ | | | | | √ | √ |
| Minnesota State University-Moorhead | √ | | | | | √ | √ |
| St. Cloud State University | √ | | | | | √ | √ |
| Southwest Minnesota State University | √ | | | | | | √ |
| Winona State University | √ | | | | | √ | √ |
| GRADES | P | F | F | F | F | P | P |

Notes:

University of Minnesota-Duluth: No credit given for Literature because the Literary and Artistic Expression: Analysis and Criticism requirement may be fulfilled with non-literature courses. No credit given for Foreign Language because it is one of many options in the Communication, Computer Science, and Foreign Languages requirement. No credit given for U.S. Government or History because the Cultural Diversity within the United States and the Historical and Philosophical Foundations requirements may be satisfied by courses not specifically focused on American history and often narrow in scope. No credit given for Mathematics because the Math, Logic, and Critical Thinking requirement may be satisfied by a course in linguistics or geography.

University of Minnesota-Morris: No credit given for Literature because the Communication, Language, Literature, and Philosophy requirement may be satisfied with non-literature courses. No credit given for Foreign Language because students may fulfill the requirement with elementary-level study. No credit given for U.S. Government or History because the Historical Perspectives requirement may be satisfied by a wide range of courses that do not necessarily focus on American history. No credit given for Mathematics because students may satisfy the Mathematical and Symbolic Reasoning requirement with courses that have little college-level math content.

University of Minnesota-Twin Cities: No credit given for U.S. Government or History because the Historical Perspectives requirement may be fulfilled with courses narrow in scope. The university recently unveiled revised requirements that will become effective in Fall 2010. At the time of this printing, the lists of courses for the various requirements were not yet complete. Based on the limited information available, the curricular revisions do not appear to change the evaluation provided here.

Bemidji State University: No credit given for U.S. Government or History because the Human Diversity in the United States requirement may be satisfied with courses narrow in scope.

Metropolitan State University: No credit given for U.S. Government or History because a course in American history or government is not required by the History and the Social and Behavioral Sciences, Human Diversity in the United States, or Ethical and Civic Responsibility requirement.

Minnesota State University-Mankato: No credit given for Foreign Language because BA students may fulfill the requirement with elementary-level study.

Minnesota State University-Moorhead: No credit given for Foreign Language because the Foundation Four language study requirement is optional and at an elementary level.

St. Cloud State University: No credit given for Foreign Language because language study is only an option in the Humanities and Fine Arts area requirement. No credit given for Economics or U.S. Government or History because the Democratic Citizenship requirement includes, but does not specifically require, a course in either subject area.

Southwest Minnesota State University: No credit given for Literature because literature courses are included, but not required, in the Humanities and Fine Arts requirement. No credit given for Foreign Language because students may choose between taking two courses in a foreign language or two courses in the disciplines of art, creative writing, dance, music, or theatre. No credit given for Economics because economics courses are included, but not required, in the Social Science requirement. No credit given for U.S. Government or History because surveys of American history are included, but not required, in the history portion of the Social Science requirement. No credit given for Mathematics because the Mathematical/Logical Reasoning requirement may be fulfilled with sub-college level math courses.

Winona State University: No credit given for U.S. Government or History because the Contemporary Citizenship or Democratic Institutions requirement includes, but does not specifically require, introductory American history and government courses.

CHAPTER II:

| | |
|---------------|--|
| Overall Grade | INTELLECTUAL DIVERSITY |
| F | Survey results, certain speech policies, and recent controversies suggest that major Minnesota institutions are not delivering on their well-advertised commitments to academic freedom and free expression. |

“IN ANY EDUCATION OF QUALITY, students encounter an abundance of intellectual diversity.”¹

In 2006, the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U)—a respected national organization of which both the University of Minnesota (U of M) and the Minnesota State Colleges & Universities (MnSCU) systems are members—issued a statement making that assertion.

In order to experience intellectual diversity, the AAC&U explained, students should be exposed to “new knowledge, different perspectives, competing ideas, and alternative claims of truth.” They should learn to think critically—so that they understand “the inappropriateness and dangers of indoctrination... see through the distortions of propaganda, and...[can] assess judiciously the persuasiveness of powerful emotional appeals.”²

To make this possible, the AAC&U maintains that students “require a safe environment in order to feel free to express their own views.” They “need the freedom to express their ideas publicly as well as repeated opportunities to explore a wide range of insights and perspectives.” And as part of this process, the AAC&U noted, faculty play a critical role in helping students to “form their own grounded judgments.”³

These sentiments are not new. In 1940, the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) wrote in its Statement of Principles that faculty “should be careful not to introduce into their teaching controversial matter which has no relation to their subject,”⁴ and its 1915 Declaration of Principles

1 Association of American Colleges & Universities, “Academic Freedom and Educational Responsibility,” a statement from the Board of Directors (2006), 2.

2 Ibid, 2-3.

3 Ibid.

4 American Association of University Professors, “1940 Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure with 1970 Interpretive Comments” <http://www.higher-ed.org/resources/AAUP_1940stat.htm>.

is even more to the point:

The teacher ought also to be especially on his guard against taking unfair advantage of the student's immaturity by indoctrinating him with the teacher's own opinions before the student has had an opportunity fairly to examine other opinions upon the matters of question, and before he has sufficient knowledge and ripeness in judgment to be entitled to form any definitive opinion of his own. It is not the least service which a college or university may render to those under its instruction, to habituate them to looking not only patiently but methodically on both sides, before adopting any conclusion upon controverted issues.⁵

Along these lines, U of M's Board of Regents Policies promise students an open intellectual atmosphere. They say that the "University seeks an environment that promotes academic achievement and integrity, that is protective of free inquiry, and that serves the educational mission of the University."⁶ The Board of Regents policy on Academic Freedom and Responsibility likewise proclaims the university's commitment to the ideals of academic freedom in the search for truth: "Academic freedom is the freedom to discuss all relevant matters in the classroom, to explore all avenues of scholarship, research, and creative expression, and to speak or write without institutional discipline or restraint on matters of public concern as well as on matters related to professional duties and the functioning of the University."⁷

The Board Policies for MnSCU provide for specific Student Rights & Responsibilities:

In addition to the basic constitutional rights enjoyed by all citizens, students in colleges and universities have specific rights related to academic freedom and their status as students. Freedom to teach and freedom to learn are inseparable facets

5 General Report of the Committee on Academic Freedom and Academic Tenure (1915), 1 AAUP Bull 17 (1915), cited in *Freedom and Tenure in the Academy*, William W. Van Alstyne, Editor (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1993), 402.

6 "Student Conduct Code," University of Minnesota Board of Regents Policies, last amended 8 December 2006 <http://www1.umn.edu/regents/policies/academic/Student_Conduct_Code.pdf>.

7 "Academic Freedom and Responsibility," University of Minnesota Board of Regents Policy, amended 12 June 2009 <http://www1.umn.edu/regents/policies/academic/Academic_Freedom.pdf>.

of academic freedom. The freedom to learn depends upon appropriate opportunities and conditions in the classroom, on the campus, and in the larger community. Students are expected to exercise their freedom with responsibility.⁸

Individual institutions within the MnSCU system have also pledged adherence to the principles of academic freedom and the First Amendment. In its Student Handbook, St. Cloud State, for example, lists various rights that students at the university ought to enjoy, among which are “freedom of inquiry, speech, and assembly” and the right to “study and to learn in an atmosphere of academic freedom.”⁹ Likewise, the Student Handbook of another MnSCU institution, Bemidji State, proclaims that the right to freedom of “inquiry, discussion, and debate” is “vital to academic life.”¹⁰

Yet there is ongoing controversy over whether Minnesota’s public universities are honoring these commitments. In late 2009, U of M-Twin Cities drew criticism for a proposed teacher education framework that would have required students to display “cultural competence” and to accept pre-determined viewpoints on controversial issues pertaining to race, culture, class, and gender.¹¹ Several news outlets picked up on the story and the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education—a free-speech watchdog organization—sent a letter warning of the program’s threats to freedom of conscience and expression.¹² ACTA also wrote to the Board of Regents calling on it to ensure that the university honors its stated commitment to the First Amendment and freedom of expression. The university’s general counsel thereafter issued a letter maintaining that it would not enforce political or ideological litmus tests, but it remains to be seen whether problematic aspects of the Teacher Education Redesign Initiative will be adopted.¹³

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- 8 “3.1 Student Rights and Responsibilities,” Board Policies, Minnesota State Colleges & Universities Board of Trustees, 18 January 1995 <<http://www.mnscu.edu/board/policy/301.html>>.
- 9 “Student Code of Conduct,” Student Handbook, St. Cloud State University, 27 July 2009 <<http://www.stcloudstate.edu/studenthandbook/code/default.asp>>.
- 10 “Academic Rights and Responsibilities,” Student Handbook, Bemidji State University, accessed 20 January 2009 <http://www.bemidjistate.edu/students/handbook/policies/academic_integrity/rights_responsibilities.cfm>.
- 11 Katherine Kersten, “At U, future teachers may be reeducated,” *Star Tribune*, last updated 2 December 2009 <http://www.startribune.com/opinion/commentary/70662162.html?elr=KArks8P:Fc:Ug8P:Fc:UiD3aPc:_Yyc:aULPQL7PQLanchO7DiUr>.
- 12 FIRE Letter to University of Minnesota-Twin Cities President Robert H. Bruininks, The Foundation for Individual Rights in Education, 25 November 2009 <<http://www.thefire.org/article/11321.html>>.
- 13 “Victory for Freedom of Conscience as University of Minnesota Backs Away from Ideological Screening for Ed Students,” The Foundation for Individual Rights in Education, 23 December 2009 <<http://www.thefire.org/article/11420.html>>.

For this report, ACTA commissioned the Pert Group, a national firm with offices in Hartford, Kansas City, and Pittsburgh, to perform a survey of students at U of M-Twin Cities and St. Cloud State, the largest campuses in the U of M and MnSCU systems, respectively. The survey was administered in October 2009.

Students were asked to answer questions that correspond largely to four key indicators of intellectual diversity as outlined by the AAC&U: offering different perspectives, competing ideas, and alternate claims of truth; teaching students to think critically; providing a safe environment for students; and ensuring professional responsibility in the classroom. In order to assign grades, we used a standard cut-off of 64 percent as a Passing grade. If fewer than 36 percent of students reported problems for each indicator, then Minnesota received a P. If more than 36 percent reported problems, Minnesota received an F for that indicator.

ACTA has used similar questions and grading standards for previous report cards in other states. The results are summarized in the following table. A methodology report is available in Appendix B, and the full results are available online at <http://www.goacta.org/publications/PDFs/MinnesotaSurveyFull.pdf>.

Overall, the results are troubling. Significant percentages of students reported course readings and panel discussions that were one-sided or unfair, professors injecting politics into the classroom when it was not relevant, and pressure to agree with a professor's views—either on the topic at hand or on other issues—in order to get a good grade. Few students reported being aware of procedures in place to lodge a complaint about such concerns, and a large number reported that they would feel uncomfortable doing so even if they had a good reason. And while the results indicate that students believe they find a better intellectual atmosphere outside the classroom, over a third of students believed that the student newspaper would get in trouble if it criticized the administration.

It is also notable that while Minnesota students overwhelmingly knew that the First Amendment protects their free-speech rights, they were largely unaware of whether their campuses had in place restrictive speech codes, which effectively ban certain types of expression. The Foundation for Individual Rights in Education, which maintains a comprehensive database of such policies, has concluded that restrictive policies are in place at U of M-Twin Cities and a number of institutions in the MnSCU system.¹⁴ Taken together,

14 "Institutions in Minnesota," The Foundation for Individual Rights in Education, accessed 18 January 2010 <<http://www.thefire.org/spotlight/states/MN.html>>.

these factors indicate that there are challenges on Minnesota's public campuses in the area of intellectual diversity that go well beyond U of M-Twin Cities' teacher education program. Minnesota's public universities need to take steps to ensure a free exchange of ideas—as institutions in Georgia and Missouri have done in response to similarly negative findings.¹⁵

15 The American Council of Trustees and Alumni, *Protecting the Free Exchange of Ideas: How Trustees Can Advance Intellectual Diversity on Campus*, 2009 <<https://www.goacta.org/publications/downloads/Protecting-FreeExchangeofIdeas.pdf>>, 11-15 ; Phyllis Palmiero, *Shining the Light: A Report Card on Georgia's System of Public Higher Education*, 2008 <<https://www.goacta.org/publications/downloads/GAFinalReport.pdf>> 7-10; The American Council of Trustees and Alumni, *Show Me: A Report Card on Public Higher Education in Missouri*, 2008 <<https://www.goacta.org/publications/downloads/ShowMeFinal.pdf>>.

KEY INDICATORS OF INTELLECTUAL DIVERSITY

OFFERING DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES, COMPETING IDEAS, AND ALTERNATIVE CLAIMS OF TRUTH

GRADE: F

QUESTION

“On my campus, some courses have readings that present only one side of a controversial issue.”

RESULT

65.5 percent agreed

QUESTION

“On my campus, some panel discussions and public presentations on social or political issues seem totally one-sided.”

RESULT

54.8 percent agreed

QUESTION

“On my campus, some courses present social or political issues in an unfair or one-sided manner.”

RESULT

45.7 percent agreed

TEACHING STUDENTS TO THINK CRITICALLY

GRADE: F

QUESTION

“On my campus, some professors use the classroom to present their personal political views.”

RESULT

51.3 percent agreed

QUESTION

“On my campus, there are courses in which students feel they have to agree with the professor’s social or political views in order to get a good grade.”

RESULT

39.7 percent agreed

QUESTION

“On my campus, there are courses in which students feel they have to agree with the professor’s views on the topic at hand in order to get a good grade.”

RESULT

48.2 percent agreed

QUESTION

“On my campus, some professors frequently comment on politics in class even though it has nothing to do with the course.”

RESULT

39.3 percent agreed

PROVIDING A SAFE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT FOR STUDENTS

GRADE: F

QUESTION

“On my campus, there are certain topics or viewpoints that are off limits.”

RESULT

39.1 percent agreed

QUESTION

“Students feel free to state their social or political views through social media, such as Facebook or MySpace, without getting in trouble on my campus.”

RESULT

4.9 percent disagreed

QUESTION

“On my campus, students feel free to state their social and political views outside the classroom without getting in trouble.”

RESULT

5.2 percent disagreed

QUESTION

“On my campus, the student newspaper is free to criticize the university administration without getting in trouble.”

RESULT

37.5 percent disagreed

ENSURING PROFESSIONAL RESPONSIBILITY IN THE CLASSROOM

GRADE: F

QUESTION

“Do you know the procedure on your campus for lodging a complaint about social, political, or religious bias by a professor?”

RESULT

86.9 percent said no

QUESTION

“How comfortable would you feel lodging a complaint about social, political, or religious bias by a professor if you felt you had just cause?”

RESULT

41.7 percent said uncomfortable or very uncomfortable

QUESTION

“Do the student evaluation forms of the faculty at your campus ask about a professor’s social, political, or religious bias?”

RESULT

64.8 percent said no

OVERALL GRADE: F

CHAPTER III:

| Overall Grades | GOVERNANCE |
|---|---|
| University of Minnesota Board of Regents P | Board Structure and Transparency of Operations: The board has transparent operations and is generally well structured to do its work. |
| F | Board Accomplishments: Regents need to be more proactive in improving academic quality, assessing student learning, and controlling costs. |
| Minnesota State Colleges & Universities Board of Trustees P | Board Structure and Transparency of Operations: The board has an efficient, functioning structure and operates in a transparent manner. |
| P | Board Accomplishments: The trustees display an active interest in addressing quality, affordability, and other substantive issues facing the system. |

TRUSTEES MUST BE CARETAKERS of the public interest, ensuring that colleges and universities provide high-quality and affordable education. They need to support their institutions, but also be prepared to question the status quo if necessary. Trustees need to work with the president and the administration but should also be able to exercise their authority independently. Even in a world of shared governance, it is ultimately the trustees who are vested with the responsibility for the academic and financial health of their institutions.

The purpose of lay governance in higher education is to bring the viewpoint of informed citizens to bear on the running of the university. However, it is often the case that lay boards do not live up to the promise of effective citizen governance. Some boards simply function as “rubber stamps” for administrative recommendations, while others are actively involved in working with administrators and other constituencies and are willing to exercise the authority needed to make tough choices.

The preeminence of our system of higher education can be ensured only if there is informed leadership from those who are vested with the financial and academic health of our colleges and universities—namely, college and university

trustees. This section of the report examines the effectiveness of the governing boards of the University of Minnesota system (U of M) and the Minnesota State Colleges & Universities system (MnSCU).

Part I examines the effectiveness of each board's structure and the transparency of its operations, based on elements viewed as effective governance practices by such organizations as Independent Sector, ACTA's Institute for Effective Governance, the Internal Revenue Service, and the Committee on Finance of the United States Senate. These metrics include: availability and accessibility of trustees' names and contact information; meeting frequency; member attendance; board size; the board's periodic review of its bylaws and/or policies; member engagement in professional development; transparency of the board's activities and actions; the board's committee structure including its use of an executive committee; the board's role in presidential searches and its assessment of the president; and the board's involvement in the development and monitoring of a long-range plan.

Part II examines each board's actual outcomes with particular emphasis on system-wide academic quality and fiscal accountability. Elements examined include actions the board has taken to improve academic quality, assess student learning, and control costs. This part also examines whether the items brought by the administration to the board were ever rejected and whether action items ever received dissenting votes. Both criteria are designed to assess whether board members are asking questions and engaging issues thoughtfully as opposed to simply "rubber-stamping" administrative and staff recommendations.

To summarize, Part I examines how well the two boards are structured to do their work, while Part II examines what these boards have accomplished during a given period.

The analysis covers board actions from July 2007 to October 2009. Board meeting minutes, meeting materials, policies and bylaws, other U of M and MnSCU documents, and media reports were consulted. We also wrote to the two systems' board secretaries and invited them to submit information on board accomplishments and practices. The MnSCU board secretary responded with a packet of information.

Grading is on a Pass/Fail basis. Each board received a Passing grade (P) if its formal actions demonstrated good governance practices. If not, then the board received a Failing grade (F). If the information available did not clearly indicate either, the board received an Incomplete (I).

PART I: BOARD STRUCTURE AND TRANSPARENCY OF OPERATIONS

The **University of Minnesota** system is governed by a Board of Regents. The university website explains, “The legislature elects one Regent from each of Minnesota’s eight congressional districts and four from the state at large. One of the four at-large Regents must be a University student at the time of election. Regents serve without pay for six-year terms. The president of the University is ex officio president of the Board.” The University of Minnesota Charter specifies that the terms of the regents are to be staggered so that four regents are elected every two years, but the governor may fill any vacancies that arise between elections.

The **Minnesota State Colleges & Universities** system is under the direction of a Board of Trustees. The Board Policies state that, “The board consists of 15 members appointed by the governor with the advice and consent of the Senate. At least one member of the board must be a resident of each congressional district. Three members must be students who are enrolled at least half time in a degree, diploma, or certificate program or have graduated from an institution governed by the board within one year of the date of appointment. The student members shall include one member from a community college, one member from a state university, and one member from a technical college. The remaining members must be appointed to represent the state at large.” Student trustees serve two-year terms, while all other trustees serve six-year terms.

Governance

| Element | Evaluation |
|---|--|
| Names and contact information of board members publicly available and easily accessible | <p>To hold a board accountable, the public needs to know and have access to its members.¹⁶</p> <p>University of Minnesota System</p> <p>The website for the board contains the names, photographs, biographies, and current terms of service for all board members. The website also lists the preferred mailing address and phone number for each board member so that the public can contact the regents directly. There are personal email addresses posted for almost all of the regents, and an email can be sent to the Office of the Board of Regents directly from the board’s website. This level of accessibility is exemplary.</p> |
| U of M Grade: P | |

16 Martin Anderson, *Impostors in the Temple* (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press, 1996), 202.

Governance

| Element | Evaluation |
|------------------------|--|
| MnSCU Grade: P | <p>Minnesota State Colleges & Universities System</p> <p>The website for the board contains the names, photographs, biographies, and current terms of service for all board members. The website also lists the preferred mailing address, phone number, and email address for each board member so that the public can contact the trustees directly. This is an excellent practice.</p> |
| Board meets frequently | <p>A board should meet as often as necessary to conduct its business.¹⁷ While the necessary number of meetings to conduct business will vary, meeting regularly, at least quarterly, and calling other meetings as necessary, is a good general practice.</p> |
| U of M Grade: P | <p>University of Minnesota System</p> <p>The board bylaws state, “The annual meeting of the Board of Regents shall be held on the second Friday in June each year,” and “Regular meetings of the Board of Regents shall be held in accordance with the schedule of meetings approved at the annual meeting.” The board’s website specifies that regular meetings are held monthly, except for January and August. Meeting minutes were available for 25 meetings during the 28-month period reviewed: 21 regular meetings, two public forums, and two meetings to address time-sensitive university business.</p> |
| MnSCU Grade: P | <p>Minnesota State Colleges & Universities System</p> <p>The Board Policies require that an annual meeting be held every July. There are also provisions for regular meetings, special meetings, Committee and Working Group Meetings, and Emergency Meetings. In practice, the full board meets most months. During the 28-month period reviewed, the board held 16 regular meetings, three special meetings, three retreats, and several study sessions.</p> |

17 *Principles for Good Governance and Ethical Practice: A Guide for Charities and Foundations* (Washington, DC: Panel on the Nonprofit Sector, 2007), 13.

Governance

| Element | Evaluation |
|--------------------------------|---|
| Board members attend regularly | A board that meets to conduct business cannot be effective if a majority of the board members are not present or members fail to attend regularly. ¹⁸ |
| U of M Grade: P | <p>University of Minnesota System</p> <p>The University of Minnesota Charter says that a quorum—a majority of the regents—must be present in order for the board to conduct business. The board governing documents do not outline any procedures for dealing with absences from meetings. During the period reviewed, attendance at regular board meetings averaged 96 percent.</p> |
| MnSCU Grade: P | <p>Minnesota State Colleges & Universities System</p> <p>The Board Policies state that a majority of the members of the board must be present in order for the board to take official action. Although the policies do not establish attendance requirements or a process for dealing with absences, the Board of Trustees Code of Conduct does allow the board to recommend to the governor that a trustee be removed for violations of “professional or fiduciary responsibilities.” During the period reviewed, attendance at regular board meetings averaged 89 percent.</p> |
| Effective board size | While there is no magic number for the size of a governing board, an effectively functioning board should generally be no fewer than seven nor greater than 15. ¹⁹ |
| U of M Grade: P | <p>University of Minnesota System</p> <p>As outlined previously, the board has 12 members. This is an appropriate number of regents to allow for meaningful discussion and committee work.</p> |
| MnSCU Grade: P | <p>Minnesota State Colleges & Universities System</p> <p>As outlined previously, the board has 15 members. The size of the board is appropriate for facilitating meaningful committee work and discussion of issues.</p> |

18 “Best Practices in University Governance,” expert testimony by ACTA’s Institute for Effective Governance at U.S. Senate Finance Committee Roundtable Discussion, March 3, 2006.

19 “Ensuring Quality Trusteeship in Higher Education,” expert testimony by ACTA at U.S. Senate Finance Committee Roundtable Discussion, March 3, 2006.

Governance

| Element | Evaluation |
|---|--|
| <p>Periodic review of bylaws and/or policies</p> <p>U of M Grade: P</p> | <p>Periodic review of bylaws and policies helps boards ensure that they are abiding by the rules they have set for themselves.²⁰</p> <p>University of Minnesota System</p> <p>During the period reviewed, more than 20 policies were either adopted or amended—about a quarter of the total. The minutes indicate that an administrative staff member typically suggested policy changes to the relevant board committee, which then voted on whether to recommend the changes to the full board. Often, recommendations were presented in one meeting and voted on in the next, allowing regents time to consider the changes prior to voting. Although the board takes a limited role in the initial process, it has developed a system that ensures rules are followed and up to date.</p> |
| <p>MnSCU Grade: P</p> | <p>Minnesota State Colleges & Universities System</p> <p>The board has delegated initial review of all policies to the chancellor, who then makes recommendations to the board about possible revisions. The Board Policies also prohibit substantive policy changes from being approved during the same meeting in which they are first proposed, thus allowing board members time to consider the changes prior to voting. The meeting minutes for the period reviewed indicate that these practices are being implemented. Although the board takes a limited role in the initial review process, its current system ensures that rules are followed and up to date.</p> |
| <p>Pre-service training and/or professional development</p> <p>U of M Grade: I</p> | <p>Trustees should be oriented in their new role and receive expert advice from inside and outside the institution throughout their board service.²¹</p> <p>University of Minnesota System</p> <p>The board’s policies and meeting minutes are silent on formal orientations. In response to a telephone inquiry, a representative in the board’s office stated that new regents participate in a one-to-two-day orientation program consisting mainly of meetings</p> |

20 *Principles for Good Governance and Ethical Practice*, 18.

21 “Best Practices in University Governance”; *Principles for Good Governance and Ethical Practice*, 17.

Governance**Element****Evaluation**

with administrators. The Board of Regents Policies state, “Retreats, typically held annually in the summer, are opportunities for the Board to step back from its usual business to plan, to assess its performance, and/or to consider a particular topic.” The minutes include announcements of the dates of upcoming retreats, but no reporting on the retreats themselves or whether the board receives advice from inside and outside the institutions. It is also unclear if the board is using its retreats for any sort of ongoing professional development or self-assessments. Accordingly, the board receives an Incomplete.

MnSCU Grade: P**Minnesota State Colleges & Universities System**

Trustees are generally appointed in even numbered years, and one orientation session was held during the period reviewed. According to the agenda on the board’s website, the orientation included presentations by the board chair, the committee chairs, the chancellor, the system’s general counsel, and the board secretary. At that time, the board chair also assigned mentors to the new student trustees.

The Board Policies state that the Executive Committee is responsible for “board development,” that the Audit Committee is to receive annual training on its responsibilities, and that members of the board may receive reimbursement for expenses related to attendance at higher education conferences. The meeting minutes often include reports by trustees on events attended inside and outside the system. They also reflect other professional development including training on system accounting standards, touring the Office of the Chancellor to understand system administrative functions, and a presentation on the grant writing process. Minutes reflect that trustees use the board retreats to conduct an annual self-assessment and hear the perspective of outside professionals on how the system can improve. Taken together, these practices underscore exemplary commitment to ongoing professional development.

Governance

| Element | Evaluation |
|---|---|
| <p>Transparency of board activities and actions</p> | <p>The ability of the public to see how the board operates and what it is doing is a critical element to a board’s success.²² Transparency helps the board communicate with the university community at large and build trust and confidence in the university’s overseers.</p> |
| <p>U of M Grade: P</p> | <p>University of Minnesota System The board gives advance notice online of all of its meetings. Meeting minutes from July 2001 to the present are available on the board’s website, which also notes that minutes dating to 1889 are available from the University of Minnesota Libraries Digital Conservancy. Agendas, dockets, and video recordings of board meetings dating back several years are also available. Additionally, the University of Minnesota Charter, the Bylaws of the Board of Regents, the Board Operations, and the Board of Regents Policies are all posted on the website. This level of transparency is excellent.</p> |
| <p>MnSCU Grade: P</p> | <p>Minnesota State Colleges & Universities System The board gives advance notice online of all of its meetings. Meeting minutes from the system’s inception in 1995 are also available online, and additional documents such as agendas, committee schedules, meeting packets, and summaries are posted from 1997 to the present. Notices of important actions taken by the board are summarized and posted online prior to the release of official meeting minutes. Audio broadcasts of meetings are streamed live from the board’s website.</p> <p>In addition to its minutes, the board posts system policies, procedures, and guidelines, and the Board Policies require that all changes to policies and system procedures be posted on the website within five business days of being made. The board also sets and approves its own operating budget. The transparency and clear financial autonomy of MnSCU’s board offer a national model.</p> |

²² *Principles for Good Governance and Ethical Practice*, 12.

Governance

Element

Evaluation

Functioning committee structure

For a board to conduct its work effectively and delve into issues in meaningful ways, it should have standing committees with specific roles and duties.²³

U of M Grade: P

University of Minnesota System

The Board of Regents Policies describe specific roles and duties of nine committees: Audit; Educational Planning and Policy; Facilities; Faculty, Staff, and Student Affairs; Finance and Operations; Litigation Review; Nominating; Presidential Performance Review; Special. The first six committees are standing committees of the board. They typically meet prior to regular board meetings, and each has up to six members. Special committees may be appointed by the board chair. The bylaws specify that the board chair is responsible for assigning regents to each of the committees and naming the chair of the committee.

The board policies also state, “Each year the Board and its committees develop work plans with the advice of the president or delegate,” and, “The president identifies a senior administrator for each committee to facilitate committee meetings [and] assist in agenda development ...” The minutes reflect that committee workplans are often presented by administrative staff for regental approval. The regents do not appear to be actively engaged in the development of committee agendas. However, the board has a good committee structure in place and can build on that foundation.

MnSCU Grade: P

Minnesota State Colleges & Universities System

The board currently has seven standing committees outlined in its Board Policies: Executive; Finance, Facilities and Technology; Human Resources; Academic and Student Affairs; Audit; Advancement; Diversity and Multiculturalism. The board chair is responsible for assigning trustees to the committees, each of which currently has five to eight members. The board minutes and Committee Schedules indicate that the standing committees typically meet in conjunction with the regular meetings of the full board.

23 “Best Practices in University Governance.”

**Governance
Element**

Evaluation

The Board Policies also state that working groups—or ad hoc committees—may be formed to examine a particular issue and may include members who are not on the board itself. During the period reviewed, the board formed the Work Group on Technology, the Ad Hoc Chancellor Assessment Committee, and the Ad Hoc Committee on System and Institutional Assessment.

Executive
Committees

Executive Committees are typically responsible for developing meeting agendas, planning board activities, reviewing compensation and reappointments, and monitoring committee work. In some cases, they also act on emergency or other items when the full board cannot convene. Given the important issues the Executive Committee frequently addresses, it is important that it not represent a quorum so that its actions are not binding on the full board.²⁴

U of M Grade: F

University of Minnesota System

The board does not have an Executive Committee per se, but instead delegates several responsibilities to the board chair in conjunction with the administration. The bylaws state, “The Chair of the Board, in consultation with the President and Vice Chair ... approves items of business and the agenda to be considered at meetings of the Board of Regents and the standing and special committees.” The Board of Regents Policies expand on this by saying, “... the executive director develops a draft agenda for discussion at ... a meeting with the president and senior administrators ... The Board chair approves the agenda at a subsequent meeting ...” In practice, the agenda for the board is largely set by members of the administrative staff without input from regents other than the chair and vice chair.

The Board of Regents Policies also say, “Upon the recommendation of the president, the Board chair, vice chair, and the respective committee chair may act on behalf of the Board when delay for Board approval poses a significant health, safety, or financial risk to the University. Any such emergency approvals will be brought

²⁴ “Best Practices in University Governance.”

**Governance
Element**

Evaluation

to the next meeting of the Board, consistent with Board policy.” Although several regents must agree to act on behalf of the board in an emergency, the president must recommend the action.

A strong working relationship between the board chair and the president is good for the health of the system, but it is important for the board to act independently of the president if needed. The lack of a formal executive committee and existing practices seem to discourage independent action and input by the board. Thus, a Failing grade.

MnSCU Grade: P

Minnesota State Colleges & Universities System

The board has an Executive Committee which, according to the Board Policies, “is charged with conducting ongoing reviews of board operations procedures, assisting board members with ethical and legal obligations and board development.” The Executive Committee consists of five to seven members, which is less than a quorum, and includes the board chair, the vice chair, the treasurer, the past chair if he or she is still a trustee, and other trustees who are appointed by the chair. The full board may on occasion delegate responsibility for specific issues to the Executive Committee. The Executive Committee may also act on behalf of the full board in an emergency, but only if the board chair deems that there is insufficient time to call an Emergency Meeting of the full board. All actions taken by the Executive Committee in an emergency must be ratified by the full board at the next regular meeting. The Executive Committee is also responsible for developing the operating budget of the board office, which is then approved by the full board.

Governance

Element

Evaluation

Involvement in presidential search committees

Selecting a president is a board’s most important decision. While boards should seek input from higher education’s varied constituencies, they should always maintain control over the search process and ultimately the candidates from which they will make their selection. Boards must remember that they hire, fire, and evaluate the chief executive and to delegate or abdicate their most important fiduciary duty is not good governance practice.²⁵

U of M Grade: I

University of Minnesota System

At U of M, the head of the system is called the president, and the heads of the individual campuses are called chancellors. The bylaws state, “The President of the University shall be elected by the Board of Regents whenever there is a vacancy and shall hold office at the pleasure of the Board.” The Board of Regents Policies also say the board has the responsibility to “Appoint, monitor, advise, motivate, support, evaluate, and, if necessary or advisable, replace the president.”

The last search for a new president was conducted in 2002, well outside of the period reviewed. According to news reports, at that time, the board conducted non-public interviews of presidential candidates in violation of Minnesota’s open meeting laws. The board was subsequently sued, lost the case, and was ordered to release the names of the candidates considered. Almost all of the regents who then served have been replaced. President Bruininks has announced that he will return to faculty duties in 2011, but based on public records, it does not appear that the board has begun to prepare for the upcoming transition or created a search process that will assure substantive regental involvement in the early stages of the selection process.

²⁵ *Selecting a New President: What to do Before You Hire a Search Firm* (Washington DC: ACTA’s Institute for Effective Governance, 2004).

Governance

Element

Evaluation

Since the board did not conduct a presidential search during the period reviewed, it receives an Incomplete in this category. However, given the supreme importance of this task, the board should focus immediately on developing a system that will be transparent and allow substantial board engagement in this central decision.

MnSCU Grade: I

Minnesota State Colleges & Universities System

At MnSCU, the head of the system is called the chancellor, and the heads of the individual campuses are called presidents. The Board Policies say, “The Board shall appoint the chancellor, set the conditions of employment, establish levels of compensation, and provide for an expense allowance for the chancellor.” The last search for a new chancellor was conducted in 2000, well outside of the period reviewed. However, Chancellor McCormick announced in 2007 that he will retire in 2011, and minutes reflect that the Human Resources Committee has been having discussions since that time to plan for the upcoming search. According to an existing HR policy, the board will use a search advisory committee—to be comprised entirely of system constituents and no members of the board—to review applicant resumes and conduct initial interviews.

Since the board did not conduct a chancellor search during the period reviewed, it receives an Incomplete in this category. However, the planned search process delegates too much of the responsibility for this most important duty. Going forward, the board should focus urgently on ways to ensure appropriate board engagement in this important decision.

Governance**Element****Evaluation**

Renewal of presidential contracts based on regular evaluation

Regular evaluations of the president prior to compensation adjustments and contract renewals or reappointments are important to ensure that board goals are being achieved.²⁶

U of M Grade: I**University of Minnesota System**

The Board of Regents Policies state, “The Presidential Performance Review Committee evaluates the president’s performance annually in order to: assess outcomes; support the president’s efforts to strengthen performance; enable the president and the Board to establish mutually-agreeable goals; and inform decisions regarding annual compensation and other terms of employment.” The president’s contract was not up for renewal during the period reviewed, but the minutes indicate that the board’s Presidential Performance Review Committee did meet. It is not clear, on the basis of the public record, what specific criteria the committee used to judge the president’s performance or whether the evaluations directly affected compensation.

The board deserves praise for having a committee dedicated to this important function. However, as the board prepares for its upcoming presidential search, it should work hard to establish a more transparent and structured review process.

MnSCU Grade: P**Minnesota State Colleges & Universities System**

The Board Policies say, “The chancellor shall be evaluated by the Board annually based on goals and objectives approved by the Board.” According to meeting minutes, the board holds a closed session, typically in June or July, to deliver the chancellor’s performance review. This meeting is announced ahead of time, and a summary of the evaluation is presented at the next open meeting of the full board. Any pay raises or performance bonuses are also announced at that time, and in July 2008, the meeting minutes specifically noted that the chancellor would be receiving an additional \$23,500 for the “attainment of performance indicators established for Fiscal Year 2008.” These performance indicators are tied to the annual system action plan, which is a set of interim goals that measure progress toward the board’s Strategic Plan.

²⁶ *Principles for Good Governance and Ethical Practice*, 15; *Assessing the President’s Performance: A “How To” Guide for Trustees* (Washington DC: ACTA’s Institute for Effective Governance, 2006).

Governance

Element

Evaluation

In 2007, the Human Resources Committee undertook a review of the presidential evaluation process, and in 2008, the board approved a revision to the Board Policies making it explicit that employees in the Office of the Chancellor are to be evaluated annually. At the board retreat in 2009, one trustee summarized the board’s position by saying, “accountability has been an important focus for the Board. Performance goals were established for the Chancellor, presidents and vice chancellors. Eventually, other employees also will be evaluated on performance goals.” These practices reflect desirable transparency and board engagement.

Development of a long-range plan

Trustees, working with the university stakeholders, have a responsibility to clarify the mission, articulate the vision, and set broad strategic goals for the institution in achieving that vision. Once approved, the strategic plan should become the guiding plan that drives decision-making and evaluation processes.²⁷

U of M Grade: P

University of Minnesota System

In 2004, the university began a strategic planning process which culminated in 2007 with a document called Transforming the U. The details of the plan and a timeline of its development are available on the university website. Although the planning process appears to have been spearheaded by the president and the provost, the board held several work sessions on the plan and approved various steps during its initial implementation. Meeting minutes reflect that the board continues to discuss the primary goal of becoming one of the top three research universities, but there is little evidence that regents have taken concrete steps to achieve this goal. While greater engagement is desirable, the board’s interest and participation earns a Passing grade.

27 *Strategic Planning and Trustee Responsibility* (Washington, DC: ACTA’s Institute for Effective Governance, 2005).

Governance**Element****Evaluation****MnSCU Grade: P****Minnesota State Colleges & Universities System**

The board's 2008-2012 Strategic Plan—which is posted on the system website—is an eight-page booklet that outlines four Strategic Directions: increase access and opportunity; promote and measure high-quality learning programs and services; provide programs and services that enhance the economic competitiveness of the state and its regions; and innovate to meet current and future educational needs. The plan explicitly states that annual Action Plans further these goals by establishing priorities and setting benchmarks for evaluating the performance of key system personnel. Based on meeting minutes, it is clear that the board and administrators use the plan to guide the activities of the campuses.

Although the current strategic plan is in effect until 2012, the board is already looking ahead. At its retreat in 2008, the board developed major themes to guide the system through 2020. It also directed two trustees, the chancellor, and other administrators to draft a strategic plan based on those themes and return to the full board for further input, revisions, and approval. These steps mark a notable commitment to developing a long-term institutional vision and goals.

U of M SYSTEM GRADE: P**MnSCU SYSTEM GRADE: P**

PART II: BOARD ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Governance

Element

Evaluation

Actions to improve academic quality

U of M Grade: F

University of Minnesota System

The board has an Educational Planning and Policy Committee which, according to the Board of Regents Policies, is tasked with “[advising] on academic priorities and the teaching, research, and outreach missions of the University.” Minutes indicate that the committee spends most of its time hearing reports from administrators and faculty members. Topics such as retention and graduation rates have been on the agenda, but the committee does not appear to have taken concrete action in these areas to improve student outcomes. In 2008 and 2009, the faculty of the various campuses began developing new liberal education requirements, but neither the Educational Planning and Policy Committee nor the full board seems to have been involved with the process. For this lack of proactive engagement on academic quality, the board receives a Failing grade.

MnSCU Grade: I

Minnesota State Colleges & Universities System

The board’s strategic plan and Accountability Dashboard pay prominent attention to promoting high-quality learning programs and services. System Action Plans include quantifiable goals in these areas, and the board regularly assesses the system’s progress toward these goals in conjunction with the chancellor’s annual review.

During the period reviewed, the Educational Policy Committee provided training to the full board on academic program review and development. The board also revised the Board Policy on Academic Programs to require a general education component in all undergraduate degree programs. However, as outlined previously, the current general education programs on MnSCU campuses allow students to graduate with woeful gaps in certain key areas.

In light of the fact that the board is generally moving in the right direction but has much more work to do—especially in the critical area of general education—it receives an Incomplete.

Governance**Element****Evaluation**

Actions to assess student learning

U of M Grade: F

University of Minnesota System

During the period reviewed, the Educational Planning and Policy Committee and the Faculty, Staff, and Student Affairs Committee received reports from administrators about freshman ACT scores, retention rates, graduation rates, and the National Survey of Student Engagement. The committees also heard reports about faculty efforts to “assess curricula to determine where learning outcomes will be realized” and “the University’s strategy to coordinate assessment efforts, linking student data from pre-matriculation through alumni.” There is little indication that the board played an active role in initiating these assessment measures or that it has used the results to inform its actions and agendas. Thus, a Failing grade.

MnSCU Grade: P

Minnesota State Colleges & Universities System

During the period reviewed, the full board and several committees regularly discussed indirect measures of student learning such as retention rates, graduation rates, and the results of student engagement surveys. The Internal Auditor—who reports directly to the board—also examined the reliability of system-wide measures. Most significantly, the board rolled out its Accountability Dashboard to provide easily accessible information to the general public and “to open up conversations about the best practices that produced exemplary results and the underlying causes of unsatisfactory results.” The dashboard—which is now available on the board’s website—presents key performance measures such as Related Employment of Graduates, Licensure Exams Pass Rate, Persistence and Completion Rate, and Student Engagement.

The website is in need of functional improvements to alleviate frequent crashes and browser compatibility issues. Moreover, it currently provides only a partial picture, since information is still being collected and posted.

However, the board’s commitment to transparency and improving academic quality and affordability on the basis of precise data is exemplary and should serve as a model for other institutions. For this promising and important effort, the board receives a Passing grade.

**Governance
Element**

Evaluation

Actions to control costs and increase efficiency

U of M Grade: F

University of Minnesota System

During the period reviewed, the board approved every construction project, real estate transaction, and purchasing contract brought before it. All of the items except one were approved unanimously. Although the board usually reviews an action item during one meeting and then votes on it at the next, several multi-million dollar construction projects and real estate transactions were brought for both review and action in a single meeting. Other purchases were approved using an emergency approval process, initiated by the president, in which only the board chair, the vice chair, and the chair of the committee are required to vote.

Although the state faced serious budget shortfalls and the university sustained cuts in its appropriations in late 2008, it does not appear that the board played any significant role in responding to those cuts. Meeting minutes record that the president “reported on the University’s response to the challenges posed by recent economic changes,” “charged [the vice president] with a comprehensive review of all possible current and future financial impacts on the University,” and “described cost-reductions the administration will concentrate on to meet financial challenges.”

During the period reviewed, the board (with only one regent opposed) approved operating budgets recommended by the president that included annual tuition increases of 6 to 7 percent—well above the rate of inflation. The board also approved a new “Student Capital Enhancement Fee,” which—although the board reduced the final amount from the administration’s proposal—will increase during each semester of its implementation.

Given the statewide fiscal challenges, the board needs to show more active oversight and engagement in finding ways to provide Minnesota students and taxpayers the best education at the lowest possible cost.

**Governance
Element**
Evaluation
MnSCU Grade: I
Minnesota State Colleges & Universities System

In the face of major state fiscal challenges, the board proactively sought ways to cut costs in 2008 and 2009. Several committees prepared reports on how their areas of oversight would adjust to lower budgets, and the board chair instructed the Audit Committee to trim the board’s own budget. In July 2009, the board approved the Board Early Separation Incentive Program to “encourage early separation of selected employees” in order to “[r]educe salary and benefit obligations,” “[r]eallocate resources ... in response to changing needs or strategic objectives,” or “[a]chieve other cost savings or efficiencies.” The minutes also indicate that the board kept its own spending below 75 percent of its operating budget in both FY2008 and FY2009.

In September 2008, after the Internal Auditor reported that the system’s Annual Gifts and Grants Report was not useful, the board took the unusual step of suspending its rules of order to direct the administration to end its preparation. In response to another report by the Internal Auditor, the board insisted that system institutions finish implementing two online tools—the Degree Audit Reporting System and the Course Applicability System—that would aid students in mapping out their course loads in preparation for graduation or transfer within the system. At a board retreat in October 2009, trustees discussed offering three-year degrees, providing incentives for faster degree completion, and trying to “narrow and focus program offering[s]” as possible ways to reduce costs for students. However, no definitive actions were taken. The board has also reviewed multiple reports on the costs of offering online courses and requested a new report on the true cost of attendance at system institutions.

During the period reviewed, the board did approve some significant expenditures, which were not always well received. In 2007, the board spent more than \$60 million to upgrade MnSCU’s technological systems—drawing criticism from members of the legislature, faculty, and some students. In 2009, the board was also criticized for awarding \$287,500 in performance pay to administrators during a budget crisis. Meanwhile, tuition rates at system

Governance

Element

Evaluation

universities rose by 14 to 24 percent between 2003 and 2008, even after adjusting for inflation.

While the board’s efforts in recent years to cut costs and reallocate funds are most promising, there is still much work to be done to keep tuition affordable. Thus, an Incomplete.

Avoiding the rubber stamp

U of M Grade: I

University of Minnesota System

During the period reviewed, the board approved every action item brought before it. Out of more than 170 votes, only seven recorded any “no” votes, and more than 40 percent of the approvals were via consent agendas or omnibus motions where several items were voted on together. Those motions that recorded “no” votes were often significant issues and generated longer than usual discussions. Motions related to alcohol sales at campus sporting venues and the extension of light rail transit through the Twin Cities campus, for example, were both extensively discussed and opposed by some regents. These cases offer promising signs of the board’s ability to avoid the rubber stamp. Accordingly, the board receives an Incomplete.

MnSCU Grade: P

Minnesota State Colleges & Universities System

During the period reviewed, the board voted on more than 100 motions and approved more than 90 percent of them unanimously. Normally, this is cause for concern since it frequently indicates that the board is not examining issues critically. However, at MnSCU, the Board Policies state, “Requested board action on ... agenda items not marked for action shall be postponed until the next board meeting.” In practice, this means the board uses a three-step procedure in which items have a “first reading,” a “second reading,” and a final vote. During the first reading, the appropriate oversight committee typically hears a report from an administrator, discusses the item, makes suggestions for revisions, and notifies the full board that a first reading was held. At the next committee meeting, the oversight committee has a second reading of the revised item and votes on whether to recommend action to the full board. The committee chair then presents the item to the full board for a final vote. This procedure allows in-depth examination of issues and time to think about matters outside of board meetings.

Governance

Element

Evaluation

The board also uses a consent agenda, usually consisting of only a few items, and minutes show that items can easily be removed and voted on individually. For its appropriate use of consent agendas and high level of attention to issues in committee, the board receives a Passing grade.

U of M SYSTEM GRADE: F

MnSCU SYSTEM GRADE: P

CHAPTER IV:

| | |
|---------------|--|
| Overall Grade | COST AND EFFECTIVENESS |
| F | Undergraduate tuition and fees in the state of Minnesota have been outpacing inflation in recent years; meanwhile, graduation rates remain disturbingly low. |

PRICES OF PUBLIC FOUR-YEAR COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES across the country rose more rapidly between 1998–99 and 2008–09 than in the preceding decade, and tuition and fee levels at four-year public colleges increased 18 percent in just five years—after adjusting for inflation.²⁸ Faced with these increases, according to a 2010 report by the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education, 83 percent of people believe that students have to borrow too much money to pay for their college education.²⁹ On average, a family at the 20th percentile of income would have to spend 38 percent of their annual income³⁰ for one of their children to attend a public four-year college, compared with 13 percent in 1980.³¹

According to the Lumina Foundation for Education, “Rising prices are the tip of the iceberg. The amount of money that colleges and universities spend to provide education to their students is rising faster than consumer prices and health care costs.”³²

With costs out of control, many question the effectiveness and cost management of the higher education enterprise. Four out of ten Americans surveyed in 2007 considered waste and mismanagement a major factor in driving up higher education costs.³³

28 College Board, *Trends in College Pricing 2008*, 11.

29 John Immerwahr and Jean Johnson, *Squeeze Play 2010: Continued Public Anxiety on Cost, Harsher Judgments on How Colleges Are Run*, a report prepared by Public Agenda for The National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education (Washington, DC: 2010), 6.

30 *Trends in College Pricing 2008*, 11 and 16.

31 The National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education, *Losing Ground: A National Status Report on the Affordability of American Higher Education* (Washington, DC: 2007), 5.

32 Lumina Foundation for Education, *Hitting Home: Quality, Cost, and Access Challenges Confronting Higher Education Today* (2007), 3.

33 John Immerwahr and Jean Johnson, *Squeeze Play: How Parents and the Public Look at Higher Education Today*, a report prepared by Public Agenda for The National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education (Washington, DC: 2007), 23.

Given these numbers, it is imperative that higher education earn the confidence of the public in the use of funds.

This section examines the University of Minnesota system (U of M) and the Minnesota State Colleges & Universities system (MnSCU) in terms of cost and effectiveness. For U of M, the campuses at Duluth, Morris, and the Twin Cities have been analyzed. For MnSCU, Bemidji State University, Metropolitan State University, Minnesota State University-Mankato, Minnesota State University-Moorhead, St. Cloud State University, Southwest Minnesota State University, and Winona State University have been included.

The report takes a look at trends in spending and tuition and fee increases. It examines whether the systems are successful in graduating first-time, full-time freshmen. It also looks at whether the universities are successful in retaining full-time freshmen after their first year of study. In addition, this section evaluates the handling of unproductive programs and whether institutions use performance as a criterion in funding allocations.

The period of evaluation is generally five years. However, periods of measure may vary based on data availability and the specific measure. The most recent year for which data is available is generally 2007 or 2008.

Grading is on a Pass/Fail basis. The following describes the various elements used to evaluate the universities and explains the grading criteria.

Instructional vs. administrative spending. This measure assesses the commitment of the institutions to instructional versus administrative spending. It examines instructional and administrative expenditures as a percentage of Educational and General expenditures (E&G) relative to the base year. The percentage change in instructional and administrative spending over the period is also examined. If the percentage increase in instructional spending was equal to or higher than the percentage increase in administrative spending—signifying that instruction was a priority—the universities received a Passing grade. If the opposite was true, the institutions received a Failing grade.

Trends in in-state undergraduate tuition and fees. This measure assesses the commitment of the universities to keeping tuition and fee increases at reasonable levels. If during the period reviewed, tuition and fees increased at a rate equal to or less than the rate of inflation (using the Consumer Price Index), the institutions received a Passing grade. If, however, tuition and fees increased more rapidly than the rate of inflation, the institutions received a Failing grade.

Tuition and fees as a percentage of median household income. This measure indicates whether the universities have kept higher education affordable relative to median household income. If the percentage of median

household income required to pay for tuition and fees decreased or remained relatively unchanged from the base year, the universities received a Passing grade. Conversely, if tuition and fees required a greater percentage of a family's income, the universities received a Failing grade.

Baccalaureate graduation rates for first-time, full-time freshmen. This measure examines the current four- and six-year graduation rates for each institution. While ideally 100 percent of first-time, full-time freshmen should graduate in four years and certainly by six years, we have applied a 64 percent benchmark—a typical grading scale used to assess students' Pass/Fail rate. If less than 64 percent of students graduated within six years, the institution received a Failing grade. The national six-year baccalaureate graduation rate of 56.1 percent³⁴ is unacceptable, and is not used as a standard for grading purposes.

First-year retention rates for first-time, full-time freshmen. This measure examines the percentage of first-time, full-time students enrolled as freshmen who continue the following year as sophomores. In effect, this is the first-year drop-out rate. It is an important measure for two reasons. First, remaining after the first year is an indicator that the student is more likely to complete his or her degree. Second, it can also suggest—especially to an institution that has a large drop-out rate after the first year—that the students were not sufficiently prepared (either academically or socially) to succeed. Both are important indicators for board members to examine. If the first- to second-year retention rates were less than 64 percent, then the universities received a Failing grade.

Ratio of new programs to closed programs. This is an efficiency and cost measure that attempts to assess how well the universities are monitoring program growth through approval of new and closure of old programs. If a university established twice as many or more programs than it closed, it received a Failing grade.

Performance as a criterion for funding. Rewards and incentives for good outcomes can lead to better results. This measure ascertains whether or not the universities use, either in part or fully, performance as a criterion for funding. If performance is used as a criterion, the institutions received a Passing grade. If not, they received a Failing grade.

34 Graduation Rates, NCHEMS Information Center for State Higher Education Policy Making and Analysis <<http://www.higheredinfo.org/dbrowser/?year=2007&level=nation&mode=data&state=0&submeasure=27>>.

Cost/Effectiveness

Element

Evaluation

Instructional vs. administrative spending

U of M/MnSCU Grade: F

**University of Minnesota System/
Minnesota State Colleges & Universities System**

During the period reviewed, six out of the ten institutions surveyed increased their spending on Administration by more than 28 percent—more than double the rate of inflation during the same period. In contrast, none of the institutions increased their spending on Instruction by more than 24 percent.

In 2003, spending on Instruction at U of M institutions ranged from 43.9 percent to 53.2 percent of each institution’s respective Educational and General (E&G) expenditures. At MnSCU institutions, spending on Instruction ranged from 49.2 percent to 61.2 percent of E&G. In that same year, spending on Administration at U of M ranged from 6.1 percent to 7.5 percent of E&G, while at MnSCU it ranged from 8.3 percent to 14.9 percent of E&G.

In 2007, Instruction as a percentage of E&G declined slightly for seven of the ten institutions examined. Spending on Instruction at U of M institutions ranged from 43.4 percent to 54.1 percent of E&G, and at MnSCU, 49.0 percent to 60.6 percent of E&G was spent on Instruction. Meanwhile, all of the U of M campuses and four out of the seven MnSCU universities increased their spending on Administration. At U of M, spending on Administration ranged from 6.6 percent to 8.2 percent of E&G, and at MnSCU, it ranged from 9.9 percent to 14.8 percent of E&G.

Bemidji State, Metropolitan State, and St. Cloud State are all to be commended for cutting their spending on Administration during the period reviewed. However, at the remaining institutions, spending on Administration either has been increasing faster than spending on Instruction or has been increasing while spending on Instruction has been decreasing. Thus, a Failing grade for the state.

INSTRUCTIONAL VS. ADMINISTRATIVE SPENDING

| INSTITUTION | | 2003 Expenditures | 2007 Expenditures | \$ Change | % Change | GRADE |
|---|-----------------------|-------------------|-------------------|--------------|----------|-------|
| University of Minnesota System | | | | | | |
| Duluth | <i>Instruction</i> | \$ 57,759,620 | \$ 65,243,319 | \$ 7,483,699 | 13.0% | F |
| | <i>Administration</i> | 8,257,268 | 10,816,649 | 2,559,381 | 31.0 | |
| Morris | <i>Instruction</i> | 13,905,634 | 17,009,552 | 3,103,918 | 22.3 | F |
| | <i>Administration</i> | 1,796,079 | 2,348,907 | 552,828 | 30.8 | |
| Twin Cities | <i>Instruction</i> | 761,959,365 | 898,484,304 | 136,524,939 | 17.9 | F |
| | <i>Administration</i> | 106,513,916 | 136,856,545 | 30,342,629 | 28.5 | |
| Minnesota State Colleges & Universities System | | | | | | |
| Bemidji State University | <i>Instruction</i> | 22,972,999 | 26,405,000 | 3,432,001 | 14.9 | P |
| | <i>Administration</i> | 6,353,066 | 6,678,000 | 324,934 | 5.1 | |
| Metropolitan State University | <i>Instruction</i> | 23,436,493 | 29,023,000 | 5,586,507 | 23.8 | P |
| | <i>Administration</i> | 5,945,240 | 7,115,000 | 1,169,760 | 19.7 | |
| Minnesota State University-Mankato | <i>Instruction</i> | 66,614,418 | 80,189,000 | 13,574,582 | 20.4 | F |
| | <i>Administration</i> | 10,932,357 | 14,622,000 | 3,689,643 | 33.7 | |
| Minnesota State University-Moorhead | <i>Instruction</i> | 37,601,541 | 41,280,000 | 3,678,459 | 9.8 | F |
| | <i>Administration</i> | 5,187,741 | 6,934,000 | 1,746,259 | 33.7 | |
| St. Cloud State University | <i>Instruction</i> | 73,756,551 | 90,463,000 | 16,706,449 | 22.7 | P |
| | <i>Administration</i> | 13,448,218 | 14,847,000 | 1,398,782 | 10.4 | |
| Southwest Minnesota State University | <i>Instruction</i> | 18,164,932 | 19,454,000 | 1,289,068 | 7.1 | F |
| | <i>Administration</i> | 4,114,795 | 4,890,000 | 775,205 | 18.8 | |
| Winona State University | <i>Instruction</i> | 38,198,123 | 45,714,000 | 7,515,877 | 19.7 | F |
| | <i>Administration</i> | 7,352,441 | 10,036,000 | 2,683,559 | 36.5 | |

| INSTITUTION | | 2003 as a % of E&G | 2007 as a % of E&G | Change in % Points | % Change | GRADE |
|---|-----------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|----------|-------|
| University of Minnesota System | | | | | | |
| Duluth | <i>Instruction</i> | 52.7% | 49.3% | -3.4% | -6.5% | F |
| | <i>Administration</i> | 7.5 | 8.2 | 0.7 | 9.3 | |
| Morris | <i>Instruction</i> | 53.2 | 54.1 | 0.9 | 1.7 | F |
| | <i>Administration</i> | 6.9 | 7.5 | 0.6 | 8.7 | |
| Twin Cities | <i>Instruction</i> | 43.9 | 43.4 | -0.5 | -1.1 | F |
| | <i>Administration</i> | 6.1 | 6.6 | 0.5 | 8.2 | |
| Minnesota State Colleges & Universities System | | | | | | |
| Bemidji State University | <i>Instruction</i> | 49.2 | 49.0 | -0.2 | -0.4 | P |
| | <i>Administration</i> | 13.6 | 12.4 | -1.2 | -8.8 | |
| Metropolitan State University | <i>Instruction</i> | 58.6 | 60.2 | 1.6 | 2.8 | P |
| | <i>Administration</i> | 14.9 | 14.8 | -0.1 | -0.7 | |
| Minnesota State University-Mankato | <i>Instruction</i> | 57.9 | 56.5 | -1.4 | -2.4 | F |
| | <i>Administration</i> | 9.5 | 10.3 | 0.8 | 8.4 | |
| Minnesota State University-Moorhead | <i>Instruction</i> | 60.3 | 58.7 | -1.6 | -2.7 | F |
| | <i>Administration</i> | 8.3 | 9.9 | 1.6 | 19.3 | |
| St. Cloud State University | <i>Instruction</i> | 61.2 | 60.6 | -0.6 | -1.0 | P |
| | <i>Administration</i> | 11.2 | 9.9 | -1.3 | -11.6 | |
| Southwest Minnesota State University | <i>Instruction</i> | 50.6 | 51.5 | 0.9 | 1.8 | F |
| | <i>Administration</i> | 11.5 | 12.9 | 1.4 | 12.2 | |
| Winona State University | <i>Instruction</i> | 58.6 | 55.8 | -2.8 | -4.8 | F |
| | <i>Administration</i> | 11.3 | 12.3 | 1.0 | 8.8 | |

U of M/MnSCU GRADE: F

Source: Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS)

Note: 2003 is used as the base year since it was the first year both systems used the same accounting standards.

Cost/Effectiveness

Element

Evaluation

Trends in in-state undergraduate tuition and fees

U of M/MnSCU Grade: F

**University of Minnesota System/
Minnesota State Colleges & Universities System**

Inflation-adjusted tuition and required fees increased significantly throughout Minnesota during the period reviewed. From 2003 to 2008, in-state tuition and fees increased by double-digit percentages at every institution except U of M-Morris, where it increased by 7 percent. Students at the state’s flagship campus, U of M-Twin Cities, experienced the largest increase—29.2 percent. Thus, a Failing grade for each institution and the state as a whole.

TRENDS IN UNDERGRADUATE TUITION & FEES

| INSTITUTION | 2003 | 2008 | % Change | GRADE |
|---|-------------|-------------|-----------------|--------------|
| University of Minnesota System | | | | |
| Duluth | \$8,153 | \$10,260 | 25.8% | F |
| Morris | 9,349 | 10,006 | 7.0 | F |
| Twin Cities | 8,327 | 10,756 | 29.2 | F |
| Minnesota State Colleges & Universities System | | | | |
| Bemidji State University | 5,909 | 6,996 | 18.4 | F |
| Metropolitan State University | 4,507 | 5,473 | 21.4 | F |
| Minnesota State University-Mankato | 5,273 | 6,263 | 18.8 | F |
| Minnesota State University-Moorhead | 4,978 | 6,144 | 23.4 | F |
| St. Cloud State University | 5,324 | 6,147 | 15.5 | F |
| Southwest Minnesota State University | 5,401 | 6,696 | 24.0 | F |
| Winona State University | 6,676 | 7,626 | 14.2 | F |

U of M/MnSCU GRADE: F

Source: IPEDS

Note: 2003 dollar amounts are expressed in 2008 inflation-adjusted numbers.

Cost/Effectiveness

Element

Evaluation

Annual in-state undergraduate tuition and required fees as a percentage of median household income

U of M/MnSCU Grade: F

**University of Minnesota System/
Minnesota State Colleges & Universities System**

In 2008-09, annual in-state undergraduate tuition and fees at both U of M and MnSCU required a greater percentage of median household income than they did just five years earlier. In 2003-04, Minnesota families could expect to pay an average of 10.3 percent of their household income for annual in-state tuition and fees; in 2008-09, an average of 13.9 of median household income was required. This represents an average increase of 35 percent for the period reviewed, even after adjusting for inflation. Thus a Failing grade for each university and for the state as a whole.

**UNDERGRADUATE TUITION & FEES AS A PERCENTAGE OF
MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME**

| INSTITUTION | 2003 | 2008 | Change in | | GRADE |
|---|-------|-------|-----------|----------|----------|
| | | | % Points | % Change | |
| University of Minnesota System | | | | | |
| Duluth | 13.2% | 18.7% | 5.5% | 41.7% | F |
| Morris | 15.1 | 18.2 | 3.1 | 20.5 | F |
| Twin Cities | 13.5 | 19.6 | 6.1 | 45.2 | F |
| Minnesota State Colleges & Universities System | | | | | |
| Bemidji State University | 9.6 | 12.7 | 3.1 | 32.3 | F |
| Metropolitan State University | 7.3 | 10.0 | 2.7 | 37.0 | F |
| Minnesota State University-Mankato | 8.5 | 11.4 | 2.9 | 34.1 | F |
| Minnesota State University-Moorhead | 8.0 | 11.2 | 3.2 | 40.0 | F |
| St. Cloud State University | 8.6 | 11.2 | 2.6 | 30.2 | F |
| Southwest Minnesota State University | 8.7 | 12.2 | 3.5 | 40.2 | F |
| Winona State University | 10.8 | 13.9 | 3.1 | 28.7 | F |

U of M/MnSCU GRADE: F

Sources: IPEDS and U.S. Census Bureau

Note: 2003 dollar amounts for tuition & fees and median income were based on 2008 inflation-adjusted numbers.

Cost/Effectiveness

Element

Evaluation

Baccalaureate graduation rates for first-time, full-time freshmen

U of M/MnSCU Grade: F

**University of Minnesota System/
Minnesota State Colleges & Universities System**

During the period reviewed, nine of the ten institutions surveyed improved their six-year graduation rates. Most significantly, U of M-Twin Cities increased its six-year graduation rate by almost ten percentage points, and Bemidji State increased its six-year graduation rate by almost fifteen percentage points.

Although the trend is headed in the right direction, there is still a great deal of work to be done as graduation rates throughout the state remain unacceptably low. Depending on the institution, between a third and half of the students who entered Minnesota universities in 2001—expecting to graduate in 2005—had still not earned a degree by 2007. Thus a Failing grade for each institution and the state as a whole.

BACCALAUREATE GRADUATION RATES FOR FIRST-TIME, FULL-TIME FRESHMEN

| INSTITUTION | 1996 COHORT | | 2001 COHORT | | CHANGE | | GRADE |
|---|-----------------|--------|-----------------|--------|-------------|--------|----------|
| | GRADUATION RATE | | GRADUATION RATE | | IN % POINTS | | |
| | 4-Year | 6-Year | 4-Year | 6-Year | 4-Year | 6-Year | |
| University of Minnesota System | | | | | | | |
| Duluth | 23.7% | 43.9% | 23.5% | 49.6% | -0.2% | 5.7% | F |
| Morris | N/A | 55.7 | 43.5 | 57.4 | N/A | 1.7 | F |
| Twin Cities | 25.9 | 53.7 | 36.9 | 63.4 | 11.0 | 9.7 | F |
| Minnesota State Colleges & Universities System | | | | | | | |
| Bemidji State University | 27.5 | 35.5 | 3.4 | 50.3 | -24.1 | 14.8 | F |
| Metropolitan State University | N/A | N/A | 11.1 | 17.8 | N/A | N/A | F |
| Minnesota State University-Mankato | 20.6 | 47.7 | N/A | 50.0 | N/A | 2.3 | F |
| Minnesota State University-Moorhead | N/A | 41.4 | 18.4 | 45.1 | N/A | 3.7 | F |
| St. Cloud State University | 16.4 | 41.1 | 17.6 | 45.2 | 1.2 | 4.1 | F |
| Southwest Minnesota State University | 20.5 | 39.9 | 20.8 | 43.3 | 0.3 | 3.4 | F |
| Winona State University | 25.2 | 49.2 | 25.9 | 53.4 | 0.7 | 4.2 | F |

U of M/MnSCU GRADE: F

Source: IPEDS and Minnesota Office of Higher Education

Note: N/A = not available.

Cost/Effectiveness

Element

Evaluation

First-year retention rates for first-time, full-time freshmen

U of M/MnSCU Grade: P

**University of Minnesota System/
Minnesota State Colleges & Universities System**

From 2002 to 2007, the percentage of first-time, full-time freshmen who returned the next fall for their sophomore year increased slightly or remained relatively unchanged for six of the seven institutions for which complete data were available. U of M-Morris was the sole exception, increasing its retention rate by 8 percentage points.

There is still much work to be done since between 12 and 31 percent of Minnesota students are not returning to college for their sophomore year, but all of the institutions surveyed met the criteria of having at least 64 percent of their freshmen return for a second year. Thus a Passing grade for the state.

FIRST-YEAR RETENTION RATES FOR FIRST-TIME, FULL-TIME FRESHMEN

| INSTITUTION | 2002 Cohort | 2007 Cohort | Change in % Points | GRADE |
|---|--------------------|--------------------|---------------------------|--------------|
| University of Minnesota System | | | | |
| Duluth | 74.0% | 78.0% | 4.0% | P |
| Morris | 77.0 | 85.0 | 8.0 | P |
| Twin Cities | 86.0 | 88.0 | 2.0 | P |
| Minnesota State Colleges & Universities System | | | | |
| Bemidji State University | 72.0 | 69.0 | -3.0 | P |
| Metropolitan State University | N/A | 71.0 | N/A | P |
| Minnesota State University-Mankato | 78.0 | 77.0 | -1.0 | P |
| Minnesota State University-Moorhead | 67.0 | 71.0 | 4.0 | P |
| St. Cloud State University* | 0.0 | 73.0 | N/A | P |
| Southwest Minnesota State University | 66.0 | 69.0 | 3.0 | P |
| Winona State University | N/A | 74.0 | N/A | P |

U of M/MnSCU GRADE: P

Sources: IPEDS and Minnesota Office of Higher Education

Note: N/A = not available. Original data were reported without decimal places.

*St. Cloud State's reported retention rate for the 2002 cohort appears to have been a data entry error, since all other cohorts from 2003 to 2007 retained at least 71 percent of the cohort.

Cost/Effectiveness

Element

Evaluation

Ratio of new programs to closed programs

U of M Grade: F

University of Minnesota System

According to meeting minutes, the U of M board approved 89 new academic programs between July 2007 and October 2009 and discontinued only 34. Since new programs outnumbered discontinued programs by nearly a 3 to 1 ratio, U of M receives a Failing grade.

MnSCU Grade: P

Minnesota State Colleges & Universities System

Meeting minutes do not reflect the ratio of new programs to closed. In response to a telephone inquiry, the MnSCU board secretary provided a written report which showed that between January 2007 and December 2009, the board approved 191 new programs and closed 345. For this attention to efficiency and costs, MnSCU receives a Passing grade.

Performance as a criterion for funding

U of M Grade: F

University of Minnesota System

Although the state of Minnesota has undertaken some efforts to tie appropriations to performance, it does not appear that U of M has taken any steps to allocate resources based on performance at the campus level. Greater attention ought to be paid to performance during budgeting sessions, and the system should consciously incorporate performance elements into its funding allocations. Thus, U of M receives a Failing grade.

MnSCU Grade: P

Minnesota State Colleges & Universities System

Meeting minutes show that data on existing programs—such as enrollment numbers, student retention and graduation rates, and employment outcomes—are used to assess and close underperforming or duplicative programs. Additionally, high level administrators are annually evaluated on their progress toward specific goals and receive bonuses for outstanding performance. For aligning resources with outcomes, MnSCU receives a Passing grade.

OVERALL GRADE: F

Appendices

APPENDIX A SELECTION CRITERIA FOR
CORE COURSES

APPENDIX B STUDENT SURVEY
METHODOLOGY

Appendix A

SELECTION CRITERIA FOR CORE COURSES

Distribution requirements on most campuses today permit students to pick from a wide range of courses that often are narrow or even outside the stated field altogether. Accordingly, to determine whether institutions in fact have a solid core curriculum, ACTA defined success in each of the seven subject areas outlined, as follows:

Composition

An introductory college writing class, focusing on grammar, style, clarity, and argument. “Writing-intensive” courses or seminars and writing for a discipline where the instructors are not from the English or composition department do not count if they are the only component of a writing requirement. Remedial courses and SAT scores may not be used to satisfy a composition requirement.

Literature

A comprehensive literature survey. Narrow, single-author, or esoteric courses do not count for this requirement, but introductions to broad subfields (such as British or Latin American literature) do.

Foreign Language

Competency at the intermediate level, defined as at least three semesters of college-level study in any foreign language, or three years of high school work, or an appropriate examination score.

U.S. Government or History

A survey course in either U.S. government or history, with enough chronological and topical breadth to expose students to the sweep of American history and institutions. Narrow, niche courses do not count for the requirement, nor do courses that only focus on a limited chronological period or a specific state or region.

Economics

A course covering basic economic principles, generally an introductory micro- or macroeconomics course taught by faculty from the economics or business department.

Mathematics

A college-level course in mathematics. Includes advanced algebra, trigonometry, calculus, computer programming, statistics/probability, or mathematical reasoning at or above the intermediate level. Remedial courses or SAT Reasoning Test scores may not be used as substitutes. Symbolic or mathematical logic courses and computer science courses count, while linguistic courses or computer literacy courses do not, as the math content is usually minimal.

Natural or Physical Science

A course in astronomy, biology, chemistry, geology, physics, or environmental science, preferably with a laboratory component. Overly narrow courses, courses with weak scientific content, and courses taught by faculty outside of the science departments do not count. Psychology courses count if they are focused on the biological, chemical, or neuroscience aspects of the field.

Appendix B

STUDENT SURVEY METHODOLOGY



**Minnesota Public Schools
Campus Climate Survey Report
October 9, 2009**

A project sponsored by:
American Council of Trustees and Alumni
www.goacta.org

Research conducted by:
Pulsar Research & Consulting: A Member of The Pert Group

Pulsar Research & Consulting was contracted by the American Council of Trustees and Alumni (ACTA) to conduct campus climate surveys with students at two of Minnesota’s largest public colleges. The foremost objective was to use a professionally-designed survey instrument that was similar to several previous studies conducted to gather quality information that would inform higher education policy.

Findings are based on a sample of sophomores, juniors, and seniors amassed through in-person data collection of 309 at Saint Cloud State University and 312 completed surveys at the University of Minnesota at Twin Cities. Freshmen were intentionally excluded from this round of surveying, as it was too early in the school year for them to have yet formed experiential opinions.

Methodology

Questionnaire Design

The survey instrument was based on the instrument used in the 2004 ACTA survey of students at the top fifty colleges and universities in the United States, as well as instruments used in Missouri and Georgia in 2007 and in Illinois in 2009. The instrument includes a series of questions on student perception of political and social issues on campus as well as demographics questions that were used to ensure the sample accurately represented the student population. The survey instrument was pre-tested to ensure the questions were properly constructed and understood by respondents.

Data Collection

Pulsar researchers have previously determined that in-person interviewing is the most effective method of interviewing large numbers of college students at a single institution. The method has the lowest level of coverage error and previous experiments revealed it to be an efficient and representative methodology.

Students were intercepted at various times of day and at several places of high student traffic on or adjacent to each campus to ensure randomness. Times of day ranged from 9am until 9pm for each school. A few examples of both indoor and outdoor places of high student traffic that could be utilized, depending on the school, included eateries, coffee houses, exercise facilities, student centers, and major walkways. The process took place for multiple days per campus until sufficient completed interviews were achieved. Respondents are guaranteed anonymity, as names and contact information are not recorded with the dataset.

Respondent Selection

Second stage sampling and respondent selection was accomplished through the following steps. After the selection of the individual schools, operations staff collected demographics, population statistics, and geographic maps for each school. Dormitory and other residential student data, as well as classroom buildings and other data germane to establishing traffic flow estimates were assembled. A list of preliminary sites was selected based on these estimates. Survey supervisors verified site suitability upon reaching each campus. They established flow at selected locations and verified that key traffic flow areas were not inadvertently omitted. Following the verification, a final selection of sites was determined and specific times and locations for a given target number of completes for each intercept location was selected based on the flow data gathered. Different times were used at each location, based on traffic flow counts. Data collection consisted of multiple days per school, depending on the size and complexity of the school. Sampling ratios at individual sites varied by traffic volume and school size to accommodate target completes. A ratio was established for respondent selection and every *n*th person was verbally asked the screening question of "Are you a student at (college)?" and a verbal follow up of "Are you a sophomore, junior, or senior?" The questionnaire repeated the undergraduate screening question. Refusals were replaced with the next available person. Data collection continued at each school until the total number of completes for the particular school were collected. Demographic questions were used to monitor potential bias on contact rates and did not reveal any issues.

Verification Methods

A systematic, multi-level verification process was used to ensure error rates were well within acceptable norms and provide assurance of high quality data. The numerous, rigorous quality control measures include, but are not limited to:

1) Manager Field Training

Data collection managers on this survey have all received extensive training and conducted multiple campus surveys. They have participated in extensive training that included mock interviewing, human subject treatment and other training.

2) Manager Verification

Every survey received by a manager is hand-checked so that questionnaires with potential problems, such as incompletes, incorrect class status, or erroneous data entries, are not included in their final submissions.

3) Data Cleaning Procedures

The dataset is further scrutinized for irregularities using statistical diagnostics. Further observations are removed from the dataset if incompletes, incorrect class, statistical irregularities, or other such items are present.

Weighting

Data was weighted to account for variance in enrollment between the two schools. Enrollment data was gathered from individual schools as well as from the National Center For Education Statistics' (NCES) restricted Peer Analysis System (IPEDS). Minnesota data was weighted by school and class.

Weighting factors were as follows:

- University of Minnesota at Twin Cities = .55 to 3.00
- Saint Cloud State University = .55 to 2.00

Sampling Error

Sampling error for 621 completed surveys is +/-4%



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American Council of Trustees and Alumni
1726 M Street, NW, Suite 802
Washington, DC 20036

Phone: 1-888-ALUMNI-8 or 202-467-6787

Fax: 202-467-6784

Email: info@goacta.org • Website: www.goacta.org