



**Minnesota**  
STATE COLLEGES  
& UNIVERSITIES

STEVEN J. ROSENSTONE  
Chancellor

30 7<sup>TH</sup> ST. E., SUITE 350  
ST. PAUL, MN 55101-7804

ph 651.201.1696  
www.mnscu.edu

October 2, 2013

TO: Workgroup Members

FROM: Steven Rosenstone

RE: Draft Report: *"Charting the Future of Minnesota State Colleges and Universities"*

I am writing, first and foremost, to thank you for the tremendous work you have done to date and for your willingness to reconvene to consider revisions to the report in light of the suggestions made by trustees, students, faculty, and staff across our system. I am fully aware that this is one of the busiest months of the academic year, and I am extremely grateful for your willingness to devote your time to making the final report as effective and visionary as possible.

As you know, Karen Hynick has been deeply engaged over the past several months gathering as much input as possible from constituent groups across the state. There have been 55 sessions to date with key stakeholders throughout the system, and she has been present for many of these conversations to gather feedback and suggestions. I hope you will join me in thanking Karen for the hundreds of hours she has devoted towards listening and bringing this feedback to you for your consideration.

I too have taken part in conversations with students, faculty, and staff, as well as with trustees and the Leadership Council (our college and university presidents and my cabinet). These conversations have given me a good sense of those areas in the draft where I would suggest revisions. For your consideration, I have enclosed a copy of the memo that President Earl Potter and I sent to the Board of Trustees on September 17 summarizing the suggestions that emerged from the Leadership Council's discussion of the draft report.

The final report you put together is, of course, yours to write, and I will welcome a final report that modifies the draft or a report that is different – as you see fit. Having said that, as you think about the work ahead, I want to share several thoughts about the draft based on my own listening sessions and discussions. Some of these observations build upon comments found in the Leadership Council memo.

Although I was pleased to see the *StarTribune* praise your draft report, I was distressed to see your recommendation about statewide planning interpreted as campuses "yielding to central planners." I do not want to see any of what we eventually implement leading toward more centralization or more system office control. I have stressed this conviction repeatedly over the past two years, and I hope that the final draft of your report will be another powerful statement of what I consider non-negotiable: the future we chart must be a collaborative future in which we

work together in new creative partnerships, not a future that leads to more power and control in the system office. The solutions to the challenges we face will not be solved by centralization, but rather by collaboration and coordination that takes advantage of the distinct strengths of each of our colleges and universities. This will position our campuses to better serve Minnesota students and communities by fostering efficiency, entrepreneurship and innovation. If you share my conviction, I urge that you clarify this point in your next draft.

Second, I urge you to clarify statements made relative to bargaining agreements. I hope you will affirm our commitment to fully honor our collective bargaining agreements and recognize that, if they need to change, we would bring such proposals to the bargaining table and would negotiate changes in good faith. Regrettably, the language in the draft report has been interpreted by some as hostile to collective bargaining and to the bargaining units themselves.

Third, some colleagues in Greater Minnesota view the report as too metro-centric and even threatening to our commitment to communities across our state. I understand and appreciate your concern about the population shifts that have occurred and will continue to occur over the decades ahead. It seems to me that these facts present a challenge: how can we best continue to meet the needs of communities across our state in the face of the changing demographics and real financial constraints? Along with not seeing the mission of rural colleges and universities strongly represented in the initial draft, some believe the language implies we should retreat from our historic commitment to access for all Minnesotans. The challenge, as I see it, is to identify the strategies for ensuring that we meet our commitment to all Minnesotans. I would urge that the final draft clarify that turning our back on some communities is not the path you are recommending.

Fourth, as you will see in the attached Leadership Council memo, the final report should do a better job framing the work of our colleges and universities: 1) articulating our commitment to providing an opportunity for all Minnesotans to create a better future for themselves, for their families, and for their communities; 2) foregrounding the three powerful commitments we make in the strategic framework – our commitments to providing access to an extraordinary education for all Minnesotans, to being the partner of choice to meet community and workforce needs, and to delivering to students, employers, communities, and taxpayers the highest value/most cost effective education in the state; and 3) reminding readers of the commitment we have made to the kind of education envisioned in Board Policy 3.36:

The academic programs of the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities should prepare graduates for work, life, and citizenship. Academic programs should create graduates who are creative, innovative, and able to respond with agility to new ideas, new technologies, and new global relationships. Graduates should be able to lead their professions and adapt to the multiple careers they will have over their lifetimes. Graduates should have the ability to think independently and critically; be able to resourcefully apply knowledge to new problems; proactively expect the unexpected, embrace change and be comfortable with ambiguity; and be able to communicate and work effectively across cultural and geographic boundaries.

October 2, 2013

Page 3

Our commitments to providing the opportunity for all Minnesotans to create a better future for themselves, to the system's strategic framework, and to Board Policy 3.36 are foundational to who we are, what we value, and to the future we chart. I would urge that these foundational commitments be reaffirmed in the final draft report.

The "guiding principle" you have suggested and the six recommendations are strategies to address some of the challenges we face – challenges that undermine our ability to deliver on our core value, on the commitments in the strategic framework, and on the education we aspire to in Board Policy 3.36. This key point needs to be more clearly articulated. The recommendations are not intended to encompass everything we are about, they are suggested strategies in response to the specific questions I posed about the challenges we face.

These are only a few of the issues I suggest you wrestle with as you hammer out the final draft. Karen Hynick will also share with you the wealth of feedback and suggestions received from your colleagues across our colleges and universities. You will find other suggestions about the recommendations themselves and suggestions about the format of the final report in the September 17 letter President Potter and I wrote to the Board of Trustees. Karen will also share with you the suggestions that emerged from the Board's discussion of your draft – suggestions that further build on the ideas brought forth by Leadership Council.

Again, thank you for your tremendous work, all that you have accomplished to date, and for the work you will be undertaking to finalize your report. Like you, I am confident that, working *together*, we can accomplish more than we can individually. Your ability to work together as leaders from across our colleges and universities is powerful testimony to that proposition. Your work together is a great example to others of how our shared values, shared passion for education, and shared commitments to serving communities across the state will enable us to meet the challenges we face and help ensure student success over the years ahead.

Enclosure