

# Minnesota State Colleges and Universities

**BOARD OF TRUSTEES  
STUDY SESSION  
JUNE 17, 2014  
McCORMICK ROOM  
30 7TH STREET EAST  
ST. PAUL, MN**

**Present:** Clarence Hightower, Chair, Duane Benson, Alexander Cirillo, Cheryl Dickson, Dawn Erlandson, Philip Krinkie, Maria Peluso, Alfredo Oliveira, Thomas Renier, Elise Ristau, Louise Sundin, and Michael Vekich

**Leadership Council Representatives Present:** Chancellor Steven Rosenstone and Chief Diversity Officer Leon Rodrigues

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## **Convene**

The Minnesota State Colleges and Universities Board of Trustees held its meeting on June 17, 2014, 4<sup>th</sup> Floor, McCormick Room, 30 East 7<sup>th</sup> Street in St. Paul. Chair Hightower called the study session to order at 10:42 a.m.

## **Study Session: Charting the Course for Diversity: Assessment and Priorities for 2014-2015**

Chancellor Rosenstone introduced Chief Diversity Officer Leon Rodrigues. Dr. Rodrigues was named chief diversity officer in January 2014. Since February 2014, Dr. Rodrigues has been executing on a bigger, bolder, more powerful plan to advance diversity throughout Minnesota State Colleges and Universities. Part of that plan includes a very deep campus assessment of current-state strengths and weaknesses, as well as the identification of elements needed to develop a plan. During the presentation, trustees will have an opportunity to see the results of the assessment as well as the steps that will be followed to push this plan forward.

Dr. Rodrigues expressed excitement to be a part of the mission of Minnesota State Colleges and Universities, to help address the formidable challenges the system faces, to work on *Charting the Future*, and to work toward eliminating the achievement/opportunity gap.

Dr. Rodrigues said that this presentation represents five months' work and is in no way inclusive. The system office has a Strategic Diversity Plan that includes a broader framework. Diversity has evolved over the past few decades, starting with civil rights, achieving equity, achieving inclusiveness, and has moved on to a multicultural focus. In the last 15 years, diversity has moved to focus on academic diversity. One may find that institutions have all of these focuses integrated or only one.

Dr. Rodrigues completed an environmental scan to become familiar with the system by reading documents, attending meetings, and talking to people on campuses and at the system

office. These activities also provided perspective on the model of diversity practices the campuses are using.

Dr. Rodrigues stated that the one of the goals is to move from a reactive model to a proactive one. Campuses may need to be reactive to deal with a crisis or to address issues that certain interest groups or communities have applied pressure to address. However, the preference is to have a more proactive approach. In other words, a plan for strategic diversity to happen.

There are several models of assessing diversity on campuses.

1. Educational opportunity model, which deals with students of color and deals with recruitment, retention, or academic preparation;
2. Self-contained model, which strongly focuses on developmental programs and retention programs;
3. Advocacy model, which focuses on single issues. This model may lead to conflict as students have to make the decision on which model to choose or where they would like to be, which issue they align with or support;
4. Integrated model, which says diversity is not the responsibility of a single department, but that recruitment, retention of faculty, staff, and student, and the development of a suitable campus environment are the charge of the entire campus and places emphasis on collaboration between departments.

Dr. Rodrigues has visited at least ten campuses thus far, and found that all of the models were present on campuses.

Dr. Rodrigues shared his observation that the campuses are doing a lot of work to address diversity issues and to create a welcoming environment for students. These programs range from efforts that assist students with diverse ethnic and racial backgrounds to ones that empower women, GLBTQ members, and other groups. Contemporary diversity practices are moving away from programs that meet social needs to ones that are intentional about student learning, access and opportunity, and graduating students with higher order skills into the workplace. How strategic are these? How do they meet the diverse needs of the students on campuses?

Dr. Rodrigues noted that during the April 2013 Board Study Session, the trustees discussed the issue of diversity in hiring and talked about the progress made, in particular at the administrative and the managerial levels, as well as professional and support levels. The instructional faculty level still needs to be increased. A goal is to move beyond the level set at the April 2013 Board Study Session and to achieve at least 12% in the next 5 years.

Dr. Rodrigues shared some of the priorities for the 2014-2015 year:

1. Enhance the capability of system diversity practice. This looks at comprehensive diversity on the campuses. How is the entire campus involved and committed to diversity? This will require a philosophical paradigm shift, from diversity

professionals to including the entire campus – from the president to academic and student affairs to research and development. Dr. Rodrigues would like to put together a work group to study the diversity professional. How do we hire diversity professionals? How do we appoint them? At what level these appointments function? What influence do they have for leading and empowering the campus to do strategic diversity?

2. Increase diversity recruitment and retention. Vice Chancellor Mark Carlson and Dr. Rodrigues have met around a strategy for recruitment, for growth, for diverse employees, for training for human resource practitioners, and for building a database of candidates for positions, as well as networks with organizations from which we can draw employees.
3. Facilitate strategic diversity leadership. What does it mean to create a welcoming environment? What does welcome mean across cultures? What does it mean to feel included? What does it mean to feel a sense of belonging on a campus?

Dr. Rodrigues talked about regularly sharing a variety of topics related to diversity and inclusion, particularly with the Leadership Council. One of the goals will be to help position the chief diversity officers to better assist presidents in attaining institutional diversity goals as well as providing ideas for effective implementation and effective institutional diversity practices. Presidents are leaders of diversity on their campuses and should have the ability to ensure regular communication with chief diversity officers and the inclusion of feedback into how they are attaining diversity objectives as a part of the institution's strategic plan.

Dr. Rodrigues shared some means to assess and monitor diversity efforts, including tools to assess practice and its impact. The campuses participate in many surveys, including CSSE/NSSE, which look at student satisfaction. These surveys would include questions on how a student feels but also gender, color, and GLBTQ issues. Survey assessments are not a general practice for diversity, as the topics may be controversial. We also do not know how to conceptualize some of the questions. Dr. Rodrigues recommended more measurement and assessment of culture on campuses to track progress and the impact on those targeted groups.

Dr. Rodrigues described changes in higher education in the last five years: student satisfaction, flexible learning, and student engagement are essential components that need to be tracked on the campuses to show progress and how it is impacting the student experience. One campus has taken on mapping study sessions. Minnesota State University Moorhead has engaged a study that will measure where diversity is happening on the campuses. Finally, there will be a need to assist campuses in building objectives, monitoring goals and outcomes, and building strategies and indicators.

Dr. Rodrigues stated that the colleges and universities are already providing incentives by awarding, motivating, and celebrating achievements. In terms of giving incentives to try new ideas, currently we are funding a mini grants program that allows campuses to submit proposals to try out new ideas in order to stimulate innovation. There are also diversity awards presented annually at the ASA and Diversity Conference.

Dr. Rodrigues discussed community engagement and partnership and their importance politically and socially. These things also assist with our branding, buy-in, and advocacy. Dr. Rodrigues attends regular meetings and sits on boards with organizations whose mission aligns with ours, as well as organizations that are doing innovative work or who advocate for diversity. Currently, he is on the Native Nations Task force with Vice Chancellor John O'Brien. They work closely with tribal administrations, colleges, and universities to provide better native community education.

Dr. Rodrigues asked the trustees if the priorities presented are the right ones. If so, do the trustees know of strategies that may be used to accomplish them?

Trustees raised the following key points:

1. Encouraged collaborative interaction with all bargaining units in the attainment of system diversity goals.
2. Encouraged tracking of student and employee diversity
3. Encouraged support and resources for campus diversity progress
4. Encouraged CDO to work closely with the board diversity and equity committee
5. Asked that the board to be informed of community feedback and engagement
6. Asked that the board be involved with diversity awards and incentives
7. Emphasized diversity focus beyond just race and ethnicity to include other aspects of broader diversity

Chancellor Rosenstone stated that this is a great start to the conversation and expressed appreciation to Trustee Cirillo, chair of the Diversity and Equity Committee, for working closely with Dr. Rodrigues. There will be very important discussions in the months ahead.

Dr. Rodrigues thanked the board for the engaging conversation and questions.

Chair Hightower called the session to a close.

The meeting adjourned at 11:34 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Sonya Castillo, Recorder