



REIMAGINING MINNESOTA STATE

Forum on Reimagining Minnesota State Session 1: The Forces Impacting U.S. Higher Education

Session 1 Summary

Overview

The first Forum Session provided an overview of the forces that are shaping and disrupting higher education across the country and Minnesota. Through presentations by higher education researchers on topics related to changing demographics, competition, funding models, and student needs and expectations, *Session 1: The Forces Impacting Higher Education* served as a common framework by which the Minnesota State community and Forum Advisory Group members discussed the critical questions about how Minnesota State will deliver on our unique value proposition to the State of Minnesota now and in the future.

Forum Participation

Approximately 80 individuals attended the session in person at Minneapolis College and 200 unique log-ins occurred on the live streaming of the event. Every college and university within Minnesota State had at least one individual log-in. A number of locations reported having viewing events where people viewed the event together. Because of this, we believe the actual reach of the event was larger.

Briefing Paper Executive Summary

The Session 1 Briefing Paper (<http://www.minnstate.edu/board/reimagining/docs/BriefingPaper-121018.pdf>) outlined the pressures for change in higher education.

Direction 1: Forces from Context and History

The converging factors of market forces, economics, and the current value proposition of higher education are challenging the traditional business model. Shrinking traditional markets, growing competition, limited tuition and state funding potential, and increasing costs combined with questions about the value proposition of higher education have made current approaches unsustainable.

- Demographic shifts in the traditional college-going population have increased competition for students. Enrollment stability and growth will likely come from non-traditional students, including adult students, part-time students and students who traditionally been underserved by U.S. higher education.
- For public institutions, the declines in state support that resulted from the 2008 recession have created a greater dependency on tuition as a revenue source.
- The industry has struggled to find appropriate strategies for cost reduction that increase efficiencies while improving quality and educational outcomes.
- The public is increasingly questioning the value of a college degree, and higher education is seen more as a private than a public good.

- Completion rates are a topic of concern, as approximately half of all students who pursue a degree actually successfully complete one. The path to completion is especially difficult for students who do not have a strong academic experience in high school; for older students returning to college or enrolling for the first time; and first-generation students.
- A major challenge is simultaneously addressing the critically important but potentially competing goals of enhancing quality, increasing completion and improving affordability.

Direction 2: Forces from a Rapidly Changing Environment

Changing Nature of Work: The world of work is changing rapidly. New technologies and emerging industries are developing quickly and the skills needed to work in those industries are not always part of existing curriculum.

- Responsiveness to rapidly changing work environments will require an increase in the quality and frequency of connections between institutions of higher education and industries and communities.
- The need for a more diverse workforce and a shortage of qualified workers has caused companies to explore new approaches to the credential and how knowledge is validated.
- There is a growing recognition that all graduates, regardless of credential, need an education that includes both liberal learning and practical skills.
- The world of rapid acceleration will require higher education to rethink how to deploy new academic programs more quickly and how to create credentials that can be consumed in smaller chunks and meet both employer and student learning needs in the moment.

Changing Student Expectations and Enrollment Behaviors:

- **Credit for multiple forms of learning.** Institutions are feeling pressure to be more open and willing to evaluate, recognize and apply what students have already learned to future credentials as a mechanism to lower barriers to access, shorten time-to-degree and reduce cost.
- **Open-loop, life-long and just-in-time education.** Students will increasingly be unwilling or unable to dedicate a fixed amount of time to earn a whole degree. Another trend is the recognition that life-long learning will become increasingly important in order to develop new skills and competencies as career paths and work environments change.

Opportunities for Technological and Digital Transformation: There is a growing consensus that technology holds the potential to impact higher education and its learners.

- Technology will provide greater access. Learners are no longer limited by time or place as a determinant of what educational options are available to them.
- Technology will enhance and personalize the learning experience by providing content based on the level of the student and allow them to move quickly through content they already know.
- Technology will allow for the streamlining and personalization of services through personalized pathways and on demand support to improve retention and success.
- A significant concern is that access to technology and high-speed Internet is distributed disproportionately.
- There is emerging consensus that the optimal instructional model in the future is one that blends the traditional and the technological and that advanced technologies should be a complement to faculty and not a replacement.

Direct assessment of student learning: Creating better approaches to measuring learning opens up possibilities for the integration of learning that has occurred through multiple experiences and institutions and also to untether learning from seat time. It also would allow institutions to understand what approaches are most effective with different types of learners.

Renewed Focus on Teaching and Learning: But with all of the interest in new credentials and approaches to learning, the richness and rigor of learning still depends on the quality of instruction and student connections to faculty, requiring higher education to reward high quality and effective teaching and invest in ongoing professional development for faculty in promising teaching methods.

Forum Session 1: Speaker Key Points

Jon McGee - Author of *Breakpoint: The Changing Marketplace for Higher Education*

U.S. higher education is characterized by remarkable intellectual, technical, and professional diversity. In the U.S. there are 4360 institutions of higher education (1000 more than 30 years ago) that enroll more than 20 million students of all ages, types and abilities. There are nearly 1900 academic programs described in the U.S. Department of Education's classification of instructional programs. The diversity of the types of institutions matches the diversity of types of students engaged in higher education. Today, 70% of all high school graduates enroll in a post-secondary institution within 1 year of finishing high school. Participation rates have climbed from 60% since 1990, though flattened out by 2004 and have remained stable even as demographics have changed.

The returns to college, both baccalaureate and associate, are compelling. Compared with someone with a high school degree only, the median annual earnings for individuals 25 and older for someone with a bachelor's degree was more than \$22,000 higher and an associate's degree was more than \$7000 higher. In October 2018, the unemployment rate was 2% for those with a bachelor's degree or more and 2.4% for those with an associate's degree, as compared to 4% for those with a high school diploma only. Labor force participation rates are also significantly higher for those with a degree: 73% for those with bachelor's or higher; 66% for those with an associate's degree and 58% for those with a high school degree only. Even with the financial returns on a college education, the key reasons students go to college have been relatively stable over time and they are not all economic. They go for access to better jobs and more money but they also express a strong interest in learning – in gaining a general education and to learn about things that interest them.

Currently market pressure points in higher education occur along four lines:

- *Accessibility:* Who will have access to what kind of college? This is a demographic, economic, market position, and moral question.
- *Affordability:* How will they pay for it? Who can afford us and who can institutions afford, especially as institutions need to provide financial assistance.
- *Accountability:* What kinds of outcomes should students, parents, and society expect of higher education? What is the purpose of college and is this an investment worth making? These are both market *and* mission questions.
- *Sustainability:* What resources will colleges have to continuously improve quality *and* maintain accessibility, even when these goals often work at cross purposes?

The four market pressures play out along four challenging lines for most colleges. These forces individually and collectively create a complex set of choices for both colleges and families. They impact different institutions in very different ways, and every institution needs to understand how each influences them.

- People (changing demography),
- Price (challenging economics),
- Purpose (expectations and perceptions of value), and
- Pace (the influence and speed of technological and social change).

Who do we serve and how do we serve? The young population in the U.S. is rapidly becoming more racially, ethnically, and culturally diverse. By 2025, nearly half of all high school graduates in the U.S. will be students of color. Young people of color today make up 46% of all Americans under age 18, compared to just 28% of those 45-64. Today students of color comprise a majority of all elementary and secondary school children in the U.S. (51%). We cannot wrestle with demographic change without also looking at its economic dimensions. There are significant differences in family incomes by race and ethnicity, differences that influence opportunity for both these students and their families.

What's clear is that most colleges will face an enormous enrollment challenge in this era of new demography. There's a long and well established relationship between income and college attendance. Lower income students enroll in college at significantly lower rates than high income students. In 2016, the median income for families with children aged 6-17 was more than \$90K for white, non-Hispanic and Asian households and \$45K and \$40K for Black and Hispanic households respectively. Currently, 18% of White students and 15% of Asian students were Pell-eligible. In contrast, 36% of Hispanic students and 40% of Black students are Pell-eligible. We've made some progress over 30 years in college enrollment rates (particularly among young Hispanics), though that progress is wildly uneven and still plagued by significant gaps. We've made significant strides in the last 30 years increasing enrollment rates among the lowest income students. They now go to college at higher rates than middle income students. Still, wide gaps persist between students from the highest income families and everyone else.

The ecology of fit. As more difference and variance is introduced to the marketplace, we have to know what that means for the student experience. All students come with a bundle of characteristics: academic, socioeconomic, cultural, social and values characteristics that collectively shape their attitude, aptitude, and aspiration. How do we think about and plan for that change on campus? What assumptions do we make about the academic, cultural, social, value, and socioeconomic capital our student bring – and how are those assumptions being challenged? How do our new students challenge the values and practices that have defined us? How will we change and adapt to insure they are successful?

How do current college students and their parents value a college education? Americans have complicated and sometimes conflicting views about the value and role of higher education. Seventy-five percent (75%) of Americans believe it is “easier to be successful with a college degree than without.” Nearly 80% agree that “most people who enroll in higher education benefit.” Eighty-three percent (83%) say that they are willing to stretch financially to obtain the best they college opportunity can for themselves. But fewer than 25% believe that higher education in America is “fine how it is.” The reasons for discomfort about higher education are many – ranging from concerns about cost to elitism to lack of value to its disconnectedness from a changing labor market, and (for some) a liberal and even anti-American bias.

The Ecology of Perception. When we talk about outcomes, we need to understand what is valued. People understand and evaluate higher education along four dimensions:

- What skills do our graduates possess? What can they do?
- What experiences have our students and graduates had? And why do those experiences matter?
- What kinds of values do our graduates express or represent? What kind of people are they?
- What kind of leaders are our graduates? How do they engage or lead in their communities or professions?

We all have an organizational genome that defines us – a stock of values, mores, practices and traditions that define who we are and how we act. Higher education's DNA has developed over hundreds of years

in a variety of different and changing circumstances. Much of it is shared among colleges and universities – with similar missions, administrative structures, market practices, financial practices, and pedagogical practices.

In today's environment, market health and market success requires comparative advantage. If 98% of your educational genome is shared with your peers or key competitors, from the vantage point of students and families, what of the 2% of difference is consequential or distinctive versus the other choices they have? True sources of distinction must be valued (there must be a market), must be conveyed as valuable (you have to tell people why it matters), and must deliver value (must be more than rhetorical and deliver something tangible to the people who experience them).

Distinction must address a number of key questions:

- What programs, experiences, or outcomes make you distinctive?
- How are you understood as distinctive now? What about you now do people describe as distinctive (and how do you know that)?
- What is the footprint of your distinction? Is there a market for it? Is that market large enough (or does it offer you enough growth opportunity) to sustain you financially?

In the face of disruption and change (crisis or not), we have to address a series of difficult questions that form the foundation of strategy.

- What are our primary sources of distinction and comparative advantage today versus our key competitors?
- Are we prepared to meet the needs of students who are new to our campus and our campus culture?
- Do we have a compelling narrative linking price to value?
- Is what we do financially sustainable in the context of changing student needs and our revenue model?
- Do we have the tools to understand and measure the relationship of spending and the value it adds?

Nathan Grawe: *Author of Demographics and the Demand for Higher Education*

There are a set of persistent demographic trends that have the potential to impact future post-secondary enrollment.

- *Immigration:* Net internal migration is draining the New England, Middle Atlantic, and East North Central regions to other parts of the country. Minnesota has a small in/out internal migration depending on year. Minnesota does more to draw immigrants than many states in our region. Immigrants make up about 10-15% of Minnesota's population.
- *Fertility patterns:* There are demographic and geographic differences in fertility patterns. If a region's fertility rates are below replacement rate, the population will not sustain itself without immigration. Prior to 2007, MN was just above the replacement rate. Precipitated by Great Recession in 2007, fertility rates are down about 17%. Unlike previous cycles, fertility rates have not rebounded as the unemployment rate has declined.

Projecting future demand for higher education beyond headcount. Students have vastly different probabilities of attending college, especially when you look at type of college. Race, region, parental education and family income all influence an individual's probability of attending college and the type of college they attend. These patterns are more pronounced at the more elite institutions but much less pronounced difference at 2-yr colleges. It is within the 4-yr institution sector where these gaps grow. The HEDI model combines these factors to predict enrollment patterns for children currently in the primary and secondary school system. These are predictions based on historical behaviors by institutions and students and assumes these behaviors will stay the same. This is unlikely. Using the results of the HEDI predictions, institutions should not be only thinking about how to attract those

individual students who have a high probability of attending but how to increase the probabilities of those students who have not historically participated in higher education.

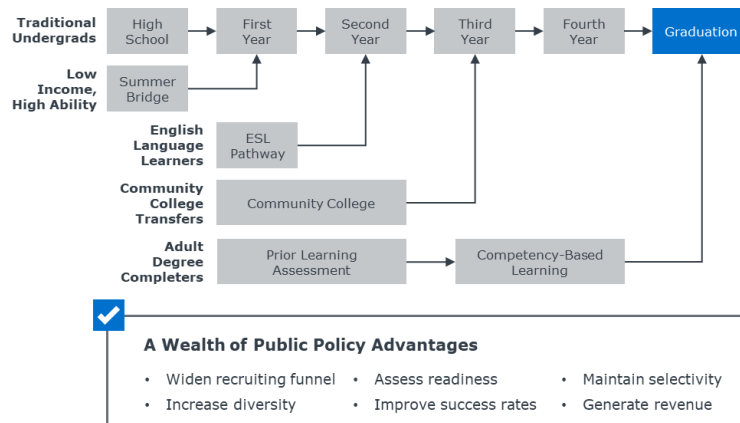
Forecasted growth in students who will attend a two-year institution, 2018 to 2029: Enrollment at 2-year institutions is almost entirely driven by population changes in the state. For Minnesota, the HEDI model predicts a decline of -7.5 to -15% of traditional aged students in the 2-yr college sector.

Forecasted growth in students who will attend a regional four-year institution, 2018 to 2029: For 4-yr institutions who are not in the Top 100 in the country, there are pockets of growth in other parts of the country but Minnesota is predicted to see a decline in traditional aged students. It varies by region, with the Twin Cities metro area expected to a decline of -2.5 to -7.5% and outstate Minnesota expected to see a decline of -7.5 to -15%.

Chris Miller, Vice President, Educational Advisory Board

There are a few major trends that all higher education leaders across the country are tracking. There will be fewer full-time, first-time students than there once were. The value and affordability of higher education is under question. There is a growing recognition that a bachelor's degree isn't going to be sufficient across a lifetime. In order to become a source for higher value, more predictable life-long educational pathways, higher education needs to create more on-ramps and off-ramps for students to achieve their goals.

Institutions and systems are developing pathways as a model for recruiting and graduating non-traditional students. Historically, alternative pathways have not been embraced by four-year institutions because it is not in their financial best interest. Increasingly public institutions are embracing them.



Students are embracing 2-yr as a pathway because of affordability, and they are recognizing that employers are just looking at the last institution they went to. A recent EAB survey of students found that regardless of income, affordability was the top reason for starting at a 2-yr institution. Because of this trend, students that look like yesterday's 4-yr students are now today's two-year students. There are some institutions who are embracing transfer pathways at scale. University of Central Florida's Direct Connect Program is one example. UCF has created a regional density strategy. They have an anchor campus and have created 11 other center facilities on partner two-year college campuses. They provide services such as advising, library, financial aid, and testing service. These are lower cost facilities with a rich technology offering hybrid and online program opportunities for 4-yr completers. For UCF, Direct Connect begins in high schools where counselors provide advising to high school students about course selection to support 2-yr college success. Students complete select AA degrees that are mapped to eight meta-majors at UCF, which maximize credit transfer and progress toward 4-yr degree. This model really focuses on the place bound student without access to a four year institution.

Other institutions are developing ways to provide accessible and clear information about transfer so the students can make informed choices. Franklin University has developed an app-based, self-service transfer portal that provides students personalized information on their transfer status, including transferrable credits; progress toward general education, major, and elective requirements; estimated time-to-degree; estimated cost-to-degree; and suggested course corrections to save time and money.

Still other institutions are developing and expanding short-format programs to support life-long reskilling. These include accelerated programs (micro-credentials and boot camps), modular content that eventually combine into credentials; experiential models that create work-based opportunities to build skills and demonstrated mastery programs that award credentials based on direct assessment of competencies (MOOCs and competency-based education). Still other institutions are building “try it before they buy it” models, where the student completes a first module for free or very low cost as a way to test the experience and program.

Another emerging area is the development of “Industry Verticals” that provide modularized content by industry that can be customized for specific organizations and industry sectors. The combination of “mix-and-match” modules and specialized curriculum allow for a customized programs that match the needs of diverse industry sectors.

Non-higher education organizations are beginning to provide higher education type services. For example, LinkedIn is developing a “College and Career Explorer App” that will provide personalized career advice and provide suggestions for the best institutions for you based on your interests and profile and the career paths and experiences of other LinkedIn members. Amazon is reportedly exploring the higher education industry by providing:

- Massive, Industry-Informed Catalog Space: “Any course you can imagine”, High-quality online experience up to 90 students
- Affordable Self-Pay Options: Subscription and loyalty programs, Tuition Reimbursement
- Personalized Recommendations Powered by AI Engine
 - Past History - Fields and formats previously taken
 - “People Like Me” - Demographic profile and personal network
 - Career-Track Modeling - Reverse-engineered from industry and income goals
 - Employer/Professional Profiles - Courses and credentials endorsed by employers

Panel Discussion

The declining numbers of traditional students is causing higher education to rethink their enrollment process. Increasingly enrollment management is not a single bite at the student apple. Institutions need to be reaching out to them earlier and at different points along their lifelong educational pathway. Institutions also need to address customer support issues. Traditional institutions do not always think about students as customers but in certain ways they are our customers. Part of our challenge is that not every student had a great experience in college. EAB research found that those individuals who have some college but no degree are really resistant to college. They walked away for some reason and the reason was often that colleges made it really hard for them to participate. To successfully address completion and grow enrollment, institutions will need to improve how we support students inside and outside of the classroom. This type of change will be difficult because many institutions are tradition bound. Success in the future will require institutions to make difficult choices but also be more open to experimentation. Many institutions rode the demographic and economic wave and got much bigger. Given the predicted traditional student enrollment trends, some institutions might rescale their size to match the trends. This is a challenge because the more you get, the more you need. Whatever strategic path an institution follows, it is important that those choices are made in relation to their mission.

Institutions put themselves at risk when they attempt to grab market share in a way that is independent or at odds with their mission.

Even as the traditional student numbers decline, many CEOs are most worried about the availability of human capital. For their organizations to be successful, we need to accelerate significantly the number of students obtaining the degree. This will require increasing connections with industry. Institutions who have established, existing industry connections are doing really well right now. Those with co-op learning programs or signature programs that are connected with industry are thriving. Making more overt connections will be important and helping students understand and articulate that connections will be key. This will require expanding partnerships in many directions, with industry, with other institutions and with non-traditional institutions.

Forum Advisory Group Discussion:

- Potential areas of discussion for Reimagining Minnesota State:
 - How would we identify and scale up practices the work across the system?
 - How does the system stabilize enrollment?
 - What is the role of technology to impact scale and cost?
 - How do we impact the probabilities of enrollment in higher education?
 - We have populations that are not being served. How do we serve them better?
 - Does Minnesota State have the right culture to do this work?
 - What can we do to give students data about outcomes on the front end so they can make informed choices?
 - What are the needs of employers? Focus on the marketplace.
- Responding to the future will be more complicated than how higher education has responded in the past for a few reasons:
 - Education is more complex today than it was before.
 - The definition of higher education used to be more concrete; now it is an indescribable potpourri of purposes and options
 - The methodology of how it is taught has changed and grown
 - The subjects taught, the methods that are used to teach them and the context where it is taught are all changing and when combined creates a stunning number of combinations.
- Minnesota State has historically attempted to do everything for everybody. In this changing environment, is that still possible or appropriate? Envisioning the future will require the system to answer some difficult questions:
 - What is there new to do?
 - What should you not do?
 - What do you do now that should be done differently?
- Through Reimagining Minnesota State, the system needs to make a better case for the return on investment of a public higher education. The case needs to include both price and value gained.
- The need for an educated workforce will only continue to grow. Addressing retention and completion will be important since 70% of high school graduates begin a post-secondary education within one year of graduation but only 40% finish. Closing that gap holds tremendous opportunity for institutions to address their enrollment challenges and meet industry needs for a more educated workforce.
- Could Minnesota State engage with industries/employers at a mega-scale? Can we build greater conduits of information between Minnesota State and industries that could serve as a continuous force for change and as a mechanism to identify needs? Could Minnesota State partner with industry to validate learning in the workplace or provide industry-based

credentialing? Could faculty teach on location in industry? Some of this is happening already but mostly non-credit. How do we take the non-credit and give it credit and eventually a credential?

- *Innovation and change.* Currently Minnesota State institutions are working to address many of the areas discussed by the presenters. Our challenge is that we need to do these things on steroids. To get higher education to move faster is a very big deal. We need to encourage that and incentivize more and decide where we need to disinvest. Through this process, Minnesota State needs to be clear about what it wants to accomplish and then create the infrastructure for innovation.

Minnesota State Community Comments and Observations

- An education cannot be bought and sold. It can only be obtained by commitment and concentrated/ concerted effort (by all involved parties). When someone puts down money (or someone puts it down for them) they may be able to "buy" a diploma or certificate in some sense, but without commitment and concerted effort they will receive a poor education.
- The schools in the Minnesota State system must develop close ties with the communities (private and public sectors) in which they reside. I would go as far as to say that, while there are many elements involved in maintaining a strong university, there is almost a one to one relationship between the strength/health of a university and the breadth and depth of its relationship with the community in which it resides.
- Teachers should be the engines that power these institutions. Sometimes they are treated like they are the wheels being driven by another engine. Maybe there was a time when teachers could do it all, but they can't anymore. Administration and support staff are vital to the delivery of educational services. But if we want our universities to be excellent at helping students become capable and responsible citizens we must do everything we can to help teachers inspire, instruct, and lead students.
- The fact that the core issue of a declining economy (long term assessment) wasn't addressed was a flaw in the presentation. Student debt wasn't even mentioned, and it's considered a national crisis.
- It is imperative to know your customer, target market, and product. We need a dedicated process for capturing and integrating voice of customer into both the strategy and ongoing operational review cycle. The customer is both the student and the employer. We need to establish a competitive advantage – why will customers (employers and students) choose your product over others – what is our “go to market” strategy and how do we win in the marketplace (customers have more choice than ever).
- Think about innovating from 2 perspectives: Best in class – How do we identify and then replicate as appropriate best in class systems and structures; and Leap Frog – it is not good enough to just catch up to the best in class. What are the strategic areas we want to leap frog in to gain our competitive advantage and become best in the nation and world?
- Bring a business mentality to the table: what opportunities are there in the state/region/nation/world to enter into joint ventures or strategic partnerships. This applies not only to educational but educational to non-educational (tech companies, various industries, etc). Collaborate versus compete.
- We need to think/reimagine MN State as more than academics. Students also go to school for the “experience” – it is a transition from being an adolescent to a functional young adult in society. Pure academics is less than 50% of the education experience. If academia does less of providing this “whole experience”, how does society pick up what has been lost because the need has not disappeared. Whole experience: Academic experience/life-social experience/work experience.

- Netflix subscription model – innovate how we go to market – The Florida 2yr/4yr model (speaker 3) – this is what I would call best in class innovation. Education as a tiered subscription service--certain levels of access, unlimited access, access for your whole family, CTE/Continuing ed – access for your whole work force or so many credit seats per year.
- Disparities: We cannot look at education in isolation. Tie the work to the disparities and the work many of the metro cities and counties have done as part of their 2040 comprehensive plans now being approved and sent to Met Council.
- At one point, a speaker stated that declining public funding for higher education is a reality that we cannot do anything about. This is only true to the extent that we have already embraced the narrative of higher education as a consumer good whose sole value to students and to the state of Minnesota is economic. That is a perspective currently used at the federal level to deliberately undermine public higher (and K-12) education. For us to accept that framing of who we are and what we do, as the paper and forum have done, is to assist in our own demise. In Reimagining Minnesota State, I would like to see us be proactive and to reclaim the narrative around our function and value. We must reassert the idea of Minnesota State as a public good belonging to and benefitting all Minnesotans, whether they attend or not. Minnesota has a rich and unique history of political participation and civic engagement. As a state, we have enjoyed a vibrant democracy that puts other states to shame. Our voter participation rates were highest in the nation this election cycle, thanks in no small part to the incredible efforts by Minnesota State faculty, students and student life staff. Just ask MSCF and LEAD MN about some of the incredible voter education and engagement efforts that took place! Another part of the broader context we must exploit is a deep concern, on all points of the political spectrum, for the future of democracy itself. What are we doing to frame public higher education as the cornerstone of democracy? We create citizens, not just workers. That needs to be an equal part of our story and I believe it is one that will resonate with Minnesotans in this historical moment. Even within the framing of jobs and employment, the forum speakers only talked about the extent to which we serve private business and industry. Why are we not talking about the number of teachers, firefighters, police, social workers, city engineers, and other public sector workers we educate who provide crucial services to every single community in the state? Is it any wonder that the people of Minnesota are questioning the value of higher education? We refuse to point it out to them!
- Here’s an example, on the local level, of what proactive vs. reactive looks like. At my institution, we’ve noticed that students of color have a more difficult time getting internships and jobs. In some cases, there is obvious discrimination taking place. A reactive approach would accept this condition and simply focus on teaching students of color to better navigate racial discrimination. That’s what Reimagining Minnesota State feels like right now. Instead, our conversation has been around how to reach out to industry partners and bring them onto campus for professional development events like an Equity Brunch, and inviting them to other equity related campus events in the hopes of bringing about changes in hiring that will benefit our students. That’s the approach this process needs to take. As a system, what does it look like for us to be a proactive agent of social change? How do we restore the narrative around public higher education in Minnesota to one of a public good? If we simply accept the “private consumer good, market value” model and attempt to compete on those terms, we’ve already lost. We’re just delaying the end of public higher education, and of democracy, a little longer. I’d like to aim higher.
- While the presenters were thorough, I believe much of the information given came from too limited a perspective. The presentation, though it did touch on demographics, failed to have a hard look at the extreme economic factors presenting themselves as the greatest contemporary challenges facing students today. Perhaps the trend in online enrollment addressed during the presentation has something to do with exhausted students' inability to navigate bureaucratic systems or fit school into a crammed schedule lined with full-time employment and outside

responsibilities? Our students are juggling their commitments; the system accommodating this with "best practices in juggling" workshops fail to address the larger issue; systemic shortcomings of an overly demanding economy--cultural paradigm of excessive, *highly inefficient* work practices.

- I am not sure what the objective is here? What is the vision for MNSCU? If it is to completely adopt corporate models that continue to disconnect our students from the harsh realities of an unstable, transitioning economy, then I say to you, we can cut plenty more out of our budget, dice up our programs, fire our teachers in favor of more "flexible" [affordable] online schooling. I warn you of following too close to market trends. By the time you institute all of your new policies for MNSCU, in response to your excessive data mining, new trends will have emerged and you will be back to the drawing board before receiving your first round of metrics. I only ask that you adopt these "best practices" not at the expense of providing students the opportunity to earn the tools necessary to meet the growing demands of today's turbulent economy. Instead, focus on the **soft skills** that employers across the board are demanding; interpersonal skills, negotiation, prioritization of time, conflict resolution, social skills. In my opinion, the opportunity to gain these very skills is severely diminished through online education. We are assuredly ALL facing hard times, but we must not lose sight of why we find ourselves in the education system; "...to provide an opportunity for all Minnesotans to create a better future for themselves, for their families, and for their communities. " Remember your youth, the vigor we all once held in our commitment to the belief that, "I can make a difference."
- Listen to your constituency. Along with your outstanding educators, we are the front line of defense in this education conversation. Third-party corporate jargon may sell you on "best practices," but this student is not sold. Considering the federal state of our education system in contrast to international PISA scores, my confidence wavers at an out-of-date system's ability to innovate itself from within when those "best practices" have the potential to miss the trees for the forest.
- It is clear that we need to adapt to our changing demographics, and we need to decide if we want to actively recruit from the demographics we tend to ignore. However, we know which models work for under-served and under-represented student populations. Things like TRIO have a proven track-record. Things with "high touch" tend to work better than things with "low touch." Before we embrace a model that starts students in free MOOCs (which are horrible models of online teaching best practice pedagogy) and then holds out badges and credentials to get them enrolled, we should invest in actual research on the educational benefits of such models for the demographics we are looking at. Actual research needs to go beyond looking at retention/completion numbers and student satisfaction surveys, and needs to examine whether actual learning takes place.
- MinnState is one of the largest educational enterprises in the country. Rather than chasing models that may bring in dollars but have little data about whether or not they actually teach students what they say they're teaching, let's be innovative by actually developing data-based practices; innovating on methods to successfully recruit, retain, and teach under-represented students; and using data to examine whether we're actually doing what we say we want to do: provide an extraordinary education (which presumably means that students have learned something and can demonstrate this learning) for all Minnesotans. It's time for MinnState to stop chasing trends and listening to special interest business groups and start paying more attention to the people in the front lines who actually interact with our students, both inside and outside of the classroom.