

**MINNESOTA STATE BOARD OF TRUSTEES
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES
SEPTEMBER 2, 2020**

Executive Committee Members Present: Chair Jay Cowles, Vice Chair Roger Moe, Trustees Alex Cirillo, April Nishimura, Louise Sundin, Cheryl Tefer, and Michael Vekich, and Chancellor Devinder Malhotra

Other Trustees Present: Ahmitara Alwal, Ashlyn Anderson, Samson Williams

Convene and Call to Order

Chair Cowles called the virtual meeting to order at 8:00am.

Chair's Updates

Chair Cowles noted that he has made committee assignments and trustees should have received that information last week. As noted in that communication, assignments are based on the current trustee roster and will be updated as needed based on forthcoming Governor trustee appointments. The finalized committee assignments roster will be distributed and published to the Board website once we have trustee appointments from the Governor and have determined presidential liaisons to each committee.

Chair Cowles also noted that the Board's annual retreat will be held on September 22-23. We will be meeting in a Zoom format for both days. We will be reviewing the draft agenda for this later during this meeting.

Lastly, Chair Cowles expressed thanks to all who participated in the Board training held July 23 and also thanked trustees for submitting feedback related to their training experience. We had a good response rate and in general heard from trustees that they found the training valuable (78% agreement). Chair Cowles is planning to use this feedback, along with discussions from our upcoming retreat, to help inform next steps for the Board.

Chancellor's Updates

Chair Cowles, Vice Chair Moe, and trustees.

Today marks the first meeting of the new academic year of the board and our 37 colleges and universities have begun a year unlike any other that I have been a part of.

Yesterday, I had the opportunity to share with the Senate Higher Education Committee – our campus reopening and COVID preparedness plans. In addition, I was joined by:

- Presidents Robbyn Wacker and Adenuga Atewologun
- Vice Chancellor Bill Maki, and

- Senior System Director Kim Lynch

The following information was shared with the committee.

We all know that safety is on the minds of our students, parents, faculty, staff, and campus leadership in every community we serve. At Minnesota State we have continued to stay focused on two guiding principles; the safety of our campus communities, and giving students a path to continue their educational journey.

Our presidents are focused on these two principles which was evident in their welcome videos that Noelle shared with the board last week.

Over the past five months, I have been asked many “what if” questions, as well as the hardest question...Can you guarantee my safety? I wish I could guarantee everyone’s safety that comes to our campuses.

What we can guarantee is:

- We will mitigate risk based on guidance from the CDC and MDH
- Minnesota State will continue to be a partner with the Legislature, Commissioner Olson, MDH and the Governor’s Office
- Minnesota State implemented mandatory mask wearing prior to the executive order, and we will continue our sharp focus on social distancing
- We developed a Minnesota State screening tool that will enable us to respond more effectively
- We will have a public health statistics dashboard in place that will help the system office and campus leaders in their decision making process
- And just as we did in the spring, we will not shy from making tough decisions quickly to safeguard the health and safety of our students and employees

I am proud of our students, staff, faculty, and campus leaders who have enabled the completion of spring semester and summer classes. Their resilience ensured that the students across Minnesota continued their education and had the skill set necessary to enter Minnesota’s workforce. While we are in a pandemic and a time of economic uncertainty, we must not lose focus on having a well-trained workforce to lead Minnesota’s recovery - our work is critical in this area.

Vice Chancellor Anderson shared with you in June a preliminary look at the breakdown of fall semester courses across our colleges and universities. We are now at approximately 30% of courses will be taught face-to-face, 48% will be taught online, and 22% of courses will be delivered with a hybrid format.

Enrollment is tracking a 6% decline systemwide, which will add to financial stress of our colleges

and universities. The pandemic has impacted communities of color and economically fragile families disproportionately, and these populations make up a large number of our students.

Update on Law Enforcement

On August 26, over 30 members from Minnesota State and external community members gathered together for the first meeting of the Minnesota State Taskforce on Law Enforcement Reform.

My deep appreciation to Trustee George Soule, Commissioner Dennis Olson, and Associate Vice Chancellor Satasha Green-Stephen for convening this taskforce.

As you know, this work was sparked by the death of George Floyd as Minnesota State seeks to be a part of the solution by focusing on reform of law enforcement education. We will do this by directly addressing issues of racism and social justice by producing graduates who are culturally competent and able to equitably respond to all of those whom they are charged to serve and protect regardless of who they are or what they look like.

As I have stated, Minnesota State is only one piece of the puzzle. Our role will focus on reform of law enforcement education: directly addressing issues of racism and social justice by producing graduates who are culturally competent and able to equitably respond to all of those whom they are charged to serve and protect - regardless of race, ethnicity, or national origin.

I look forward to providing the board with future updates on the work of the taskforce.

Executive Searches

In early fall, we began to prepare for the executive searches that will be conducted this year. I shared with the board the retirement announcements of Presidents Richard Davenport and Dennis Bona. In addition to the searches that we will kick-off this fall at Minnesota State University, Mankato and Northland Community and Technical College, we will also launch searches at Saint Paul College, Northeast Higher Education District, and Minnesota State College Southeast. The team is finalizing details with search firms and search chairs. I will kick-off each search with campus listening sessions this fall and plan to bring my recommendations forward to the board this spring.

With the recent departure of Clyde Pickett, we will begin in earnest this year a search for the system diversity officer. I have charged Vice Chancellor Davis to complete an analysis of this position and to explore similar positions in other systems. Just as I do for presidential searches, I plan on conducting listening sessions with this board, presidents, campus diversity officers, bargaining unit and student association leaders to understand what characteristics and qualities we should be looking for in this position.

Board assessment overview

Chair Cowles introduced this agenda topic and noted that he has launched this effort as a next step in improving board governance and performance. In recent years the Board has built a solid foundation of committee charters and trustee guidelines, and has adapted agendas and processes, such as adding President liaisons for each committee, in order to keep up with the full dynamics of our system. Two years ago the Board participated in the multi-faceted learnings from the Reimagining Minnesota State project, spanning much of a year and many critical topics. As the pace of change and complexity of higher education continues to accelerate, and the role and focus of trustees continues to evolve to meet that change, adding a regular assessment of Board work by the trustees themselves will be a valuable benchmark of successes and challenges as a Board, and will help us to improve our ability to meet our trustee responsibilities. Chair Cowles will continue to work with Interim Board Director Kari Campbell and trustees on this project, and will also continue to focus on opportunities for trustees to remain current with national trends and issues, including governance best practices. Chair Cowles also acknowledged Vice Chair Moe & Trustee Cirillo for their contributions to shaping the board assessment work thus far.

Interim Board Director Kari Campbell provided an overview of the board self-assessment starting with the following goals for the effort:

- Enable the board to understand and strengthen its performance
- Ensure a clear grasp of board mission and responsibilities
- Strengthen relationships and clarify expectations among board members and between the board and system leadership
- Establish a process for regular and ongoing assessment and improvement

Multiple resources were consulted in the drafting of a self-assessment tool, including resources from the Association of Governing Boards (AGB) and the Association of Community College Trustees (ACCT). The self-assessment tool asks trustee to rate performance in key areas such as mission & strategy, system oversight, board performance, board culture & trustee development. This self-assessment will be administered by the Board office via an online survey tool within the next two weeks with a report-out at the board training scheduled prior to the September Board retreat. Individual trustee responses will be confidential; the summary report can be made publicly available. Ongoing, the Board will conduct such assessments on a regular basis to ensure continual assessment and improvement.

Trustees Nishimura and Williams both emphasized the importance of national conference attendance as an important opportunity for trustee development. Trustee Sundin noted that this year's ACCT Leadership Congress will be virtual which should allow more trustees the opportunity to attend.

Board retreat on September 22-23

Chair Cowles reviewed the major elements that are currently planned as part of the annual Board retreat. Day 1 will begin at 10:15 with remarks from the board chair and chancellor after which we will focus on an update on enterprise risk management and will also hear from presidents on the Leadership Council Executive Committee. Day 2 kicks off at 8:30 with remarks from the board chair and chancellor. Chair Cowles has extended an invitation to student associations and bargaining units to join at the beginning of Day 2 to share their focus for the coming year. We will also receive an update on Equity 2030 & the chancellor's work plan and then will turn our attention to the FY2021 board work plan and committee topics.

Trustee Sundin noted the upcoming presidential searches within the system and the potential challenges of ensuring a quality candidate pool and successful search in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. Chancellor Malhotra and Vice Chancellor Davis emphasized the importance of the search firms in ensuring quality candidate pools.

Chair Cowles also noted the upcoming legislative session and the need to provide trustees with a summary of the system's financial position relative to the stresses that the legislature will be addressing. Chancellor Malhotra noted that the internal conversations have started around the biennial budget request and the timeline for that work will be clearer in the next few weeks.

Trustee Williams noted the issues related to enrollment of international students in light of COVID-19. Chancellor Malhotra acknowledged that international students have been significantly impacted by the pandemic particularly at our universities who have been trying new and creative approaches to support these students to continue their studies. Nate Hallanger, Special Assistant to Senior Vice Chancellor Anderson, noted that over the summer we were faced with shifting guidance from both the CDC and State Department so our campuses and system office were constantly monitoring these changes in order to determine the best approach to continue to serve international students. Mr. Hallanger also noted ongoing advocacy with government agencies to underscore the importance of having a diverse student population that includes international students and enriches the whole student population.

Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 9:19 am.