

Minnesota State/MSUAASF Meet and Confer

December 4, 2020

ZOOM Meeting (COVID-19)

Present: Devinder Malhotra, Tracy Rahim, Ann Maile, Rachel Tanquist, Jim Jorstad, Ron Anderson, Lori Wynia, Kristy Modrow, Chris Dale, Jaime Simonsen, Victor Cole, Sami Gabriel, William Maki, Nate Hallanger, Eric Davis, Stephanie Bard, Mandy Weister, Joshua Lease, Layne Anderson, Jillian Quandt, Jim Anderson, Teri Hinds, Tim Alcorn

1) Spring 2021 Enrollment Update

The system is planning on a 6.3% FYE enrollment decline (universities down 4.3%, colleges down 7.4%). Spring enrollment numbers have been improving. Systemwide, enrollment is down 15.2% for spring, universities specifically are down 11%. Graduate enrollment is trending ahead at over 3%, so most of the reduction is in undergraduate enrollment. Bill Maki hopes that the spring enrollment will reflect fall with significant amounts of later enrollments to bridge this gap. We are currently 5% down in headcount systemwide, which trends with students taking less overall credits this year.

Residential Life Housing numbers are extremely volatile since students may be waiting until the last minute to make housing decisions. From a system perspective, housing is down over 15%. There have been over 850 housing contract cancellations between the universities, which is a net loss of 500 students including the new spring contracts, but these numbers may change.

Bill Maki discussed the budget and having to take money from the general fund if this trend continues to next year. Currently colleges are using reserves to cover these deficits. Bill Maki is closely monitoring the revenue fund since the shift in our delivery methods have had a significant impact on this.

2) Budget/Financial Update

Enrollment numbers ended up being better than expected so we had to rely on the general fund less than we expected. Many universities are in the process of making reductions due to structural issues that were in place well before COVID-19 occurred.

The state economic forecast provided better news than was expected in May. We were concerned of a budget reduction after the current fiscal year, but that does not seem to be the case. The outlook of 22-23 went from a 4 billion-dollar-deficit to a 1-billion-dollar deficit, which is much better than expected. Bill Maki also hopes that we will receive additional federal dollars to address our budget shortfall. Most campuses are expecting enrollment to level off in 2022 but there are a lot of unknowns right now.

Paul Stern asked if there are state initiatives that we should be looking at when crafting our local budgetary plans due to the 10-year projected decrease in enrollment nationally. Bill Maki answered that they are looking at system-wide resource allocations. NextGen as a driver to state appropriations since funding the new ERP system is critical. Bill Maki added that they are

looking at a system-wide way of projecting 3- to 5- years in the future, specifically regarding variations between campuses and to implement tools and models that allow us to do so.

There are multi-faceted activities to address this concern. Ron Anderson noted that our guided learning pathways' goal is to both obtain and retain students. We are also building analytic tools and increasing access to data for campuses to improve their enrollment management. The goal is to increase sharing of resources across campuses for our interconnected work. Another goal is to increase our workforce development, specifically through addressing the healthcare sector deficit. There is also a statewide group comprised of legislatures and statewide representatives to address students' transition from K-12 to higher education. Chancellor Malhotra noted that Equity 2030's goal is to increase retention and diverse student enrollment. We currently only capture 30% of students transitioning from a two- to a four-year degree so we need to look at transfer pathways to increase this number.

3) COVID-19 Plans and Preparations

Nate Hallanger noted that every week the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) has a call to all providers on campuses to provide updates and take questions. Bill Maki and Brian Yoltz also lead a weekly call with all COVID-19 campus contacts to discuss our campus responses to COVID-19. MDH updated its recommendations to higher education campuses in response to the new executive order. The campuses were recommended to move to scenario 4 mitigation efforts by moving coursework online after Thanksgiving, dialing back extracurricular activities, and possibly implementing a campus curfew. Campuses are doing a great job of following social distancing and masking which has meant a low-level of on-campus transmissions compared to the broader community. MDH recommends that campuses start the spring term with similar guidelines to now and that campuses implement a phased in return to activities. The uncertainty of vaccine distribution is a significant unknown to campus operations in the upcoming terms.

Tracy asked what the deciding factor is on college campuses when dashboard colors change regarding what items are being followed. Nate noted that campuses are in conversation with the system office regarding their procedures and that flexibility is a part of the original guidance. Tracy also asked about flexibilities after winter break since some campuses have received messaging regarding returning full time in-person after winter break when students return. Chancellor Malhotra responded to Tracy that they will be constantly in touch with the campuses to update their guidance in accordance to MDH guidelines and what is occurring at each area. Tracy asked if all campuses are required to be at a level 4. Nate Hallanger responded that campus mitigation efforts are the most important response to the updated MDH guidelines. Tracy noted that it would be helpful for public communications, transparency, and consistency to have the campus dashboards reflect the campuses color distinction. Chancellor Malhotra responded that the campus may have different community numbers and mitigation efforts which are accurately reflected in their color coding.

Chris Dale addressed the possible COVID-19 leave policy extension. The extension will depend on if federal guidelines are extended since MMB will update their policy to reflect this extension. Chris Dale hopes they will extend the current provisions and provide funding for this change.

4) Equity 2030 Update

Chancellor Malhotra noted that at the system level, they are talking about Equity 2030 in a facilitative mode and assisting with foundational work. Equity 2030 is about creating a cohesive and unified vision. Teri Hinds added that Equity 2030 is about creating a culture of equity on our campuses. Teri is working on coordination and communication between campuses. They recently updated working groups across divisions to learn what is happening across campuses and to address any gaps that are occurring.

Ron Anderson added that they brought forward the Academic and Financial Aid SAPS policy changes for a 30-day review and comment period in response to Equity 2030. The major change is including developmental credits. Ron Anderson noted that they are also reviewing the current financial aid hold policies regarding dollar amount thresholds. Finally, they are addressing transfer practice policies and developmental education policies to examine how we can help students overcome the barriers and complexities of our institutions. Chancellor Malhotra added that we are working at increasing transparency and creating an equity scorecard. Tracy stated that we have noticed significant variations between campuses regarding how they are addressing Equity 2030. Jill Quandt added that many on-campus staff have limited exposure to the Equity 2030 plan on the ground level. Chancellor Malhotra agrees that there needs to be broad engagement, and notes that Jill is correct that COVID has been a significant factor in the delays of the Equity 2030 plan. Ron Anderson asked if equity is being discussed broadly on the campuses. Jill answered that while equity is being discussed she does not see specific initiatives that address the equity gaps.

5) Transfer Pathways Survey Results/Update and Next Steps

We now have pathways in 26 disciplines. The first pilot transfer pathways are in their first round of evaluation. The goal is to simplify and streamline the pathways to eliminate complexity and improve alignment and consistency working towards best practices. There are faculty communities of practice in each of the four disciplines. They are creating a robust transfer database for campuses to analyze transfer behavior and pathways. The intent is to repeat the review steps with additional programs next year. Jim Anderson asked how we are going to continue marketing transfer pathways. Ron Anderson stated we are going to look at broad systemwide marketing and campus-based marketing

Future Meetings:

■ February 19, 2021 – 10:30-12:00 ■ April 30, 2021 – 10:30-12:00

Notes recorded by Rachel Tanquist, MSUAASF State Secretary