NORTHLAND
COMMUNITY & TECHNICAL COLLEGE

"CHARTING THE FUTURE"

FEEDBACK

Northland Community and Technical College sought input on the "Charting the Future" document in several ways:

Community Advisory Committee meetings

These groups have representatives from business, education, and government. Twelve to fifteen individuals attend each committee meeting. After a brief introduction that included the slide deck that was presented to the Board of Trustees, attendees were broken into small groups, each with a Northland dean as a facilitator. The facilitator guided the discussion to focus on each of the six recommendations and recorded input. The cumulative input is presented below.

Community Advisory Committee Meetings
   Thief River Falls Campus, Friday, September 6, 2013
   East Grand Forks Campus, Friday, September 13, 2013

Recommended Strategic Priorities
1. **Better align our program offerings and services to state, workforce and learner needs by developing and implementing a statewide academic plan and a statewide master facilities plan:**
   - Concern that a master statewide plan may focus more on the Metro and less on the rural areas
   - A master plan must allow flexibility to allow local institution to address the needs of local individuals
   - Minnesota is a very diverse state and one size does not fit all
   - Going to a master plan that may limit local college offerings may impact college/ employer relations; it is essential that the local college be able to meet the needs of local areas without system mandates
   - It would be a challenge to combine areas of Minnesota if they don't have like needs
   - Possibility – could online learning have one centralized home? - much like Distance MN, but for all MnSCU online programs?
   - What is the role of the legislature in a statewide plan?
   - What is the role/limitations of union contracts in a statewide plan?
   - Is there a R&D fund now available for schools and faculty to design and deliver new courses and programs? If not, can there be?

- There is a tremendous need for these discussions and plans to include middle and secondary education leaders. Build plans on developing career paths from middle and secondary courses into higher ed.
- Along with business and industry, involve parents in planning development.
- Consider core institutions with specialized centers
- How do we retain 54 campuses?
- Consider using high schools as central spot for online availability to rural communities
- Aging infrastructure was built for the 60s and 70s
- It will take political courage to reduce campuses or reorganize
- Agriculture support was also discussed. Several ideas included GIS, UAV and the technology support for ground equipment
- Better collaboration and development for statewide programs and coursework. This effort needs to provide a general core of transferrable courses/curriculum
- Don't repeat learning unnecessarily; there should be an opportunity for past learning to be credited
- We did discuss developmental learning and both community participants seemed to understand it is a problem. Not sure they know what that means down the road, though.
- Four-year institutions need to be more realistic about what the area and students need
- Cut non-producing programs
- Colleges need to visit with industry more; look at pipeline opportunities
- Develop meaningful advisory committees – not just a place to get a meal
- Evaluate needs on a more formal basis
- We have to figure out ways to standardize courses and programs system wide with automatic transfer acceptance. The MnSCU transfer concept is broken right now.

2. **Certify the competencies our graduates have mastered**
   - It is important to ensure we take the time to find out what our local employers want students to know to help determine what competencies would need to be focused upon
   - Work with the community
   - Find out what skills are needed and/or are essential to do the job
   - How is the system going to determine how we assess skills and/or certify competency? Not everyone does well on tests; don't want to shift to having educators "teach to the test"
   - A question to determine the focus or direction of this strategy would be to think about "What does the system want to do with this, is it a certain level of quality they are striving for? What are the outcomes/goals of this initiative? Will this bring more students to MN schools?
   - Continue to emphasize business and industry partners in determining competencies
   - Connect with high schools as well
   - Critical information and skills for first career; critical information and skills for career shifts
   - Students today want just what they need to be employed because of the cost; it is hard to "sell" the soft stuff
   - Explore internships more thoroughly. Could these be used in the local area more productively?

- We have to move to an outcome-based curriculum. Time in the seat is not the crucial part and by not effectively doing prior learning assessment on ALL of our students, we will be turning some of them away
- We have to do a better job of matching and surpassing our competition. Maybe we should guarantee our students – it's already being done by at least one other college I'm aware of

3. **Increase access to our colleges and universities and accelerate the educational success of diverse students**
    - The group felt that this is something that Lincoln High (TRF) is currently doing with their college and career readiness program. This program allows them to reach out to all students to make sure they are informed and given the opportunity to plan for the future
    - The group felt that the partnership that currently is going on with NCTC and Lincoln is a huge asset and working very well
    - As a whole, the State of Minnesota does a good job of allowing high school students to work on college level work
    - In looking at expansion of scheduling, it would be important to shape it around what businesses need and what would best work with their employees' schedules
    - Partner with high schools for delivery of evening classes
    - Pursue more dual credit
    - Need to educate parents and students regarding quality and cost of Minnesota's 2-year colleges
    - There might be liability and security concerns if high schools are used for higher ed.
    - Social media in the work place was well understood by the marketing individual and she was interested in how we could better use that information for recruiting and integrating it into programs.
    - Colleges have an inherent inability to adjust curriculum where needed. For example, EPIC software used in healthcare could have been taught by a college but the inflexibility of colleges prohibited the use of this software in established curriculum
    - We are getting/forecasting an older/part-time student into an area with specific needs. We have to tailor our delivery and services for these students and industry
    - Look at joint ventures in recruiting starting in 8th or 9th grade with an industry service area partner
    - Add 102 credit summer classes

4. **Create a comprehensive, statewide e-education strategy**
    - This should really focus on transferability and finding a way to clean up admissions between colleges. Could there be a centralized admission of all MnSCU colleges?
    - One web site would be much easier for students to use
    - Flipped models could be good or bad
    - Demographic of students demands cyber access and information available 24/7
    - Look at example of Kahn Academy – all is available online
    - Need a revolution in the competencies of instructors to match the learning styles of students
    - In order to meet the needs of the community and our own expectations, we have to have much more adaptability for students, programs, and processes

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- The predominance of e-learning is here. We have to be able to look at course delivery, shifting from the 25% online goal to more than 50% online in the next few years or we will be destined to limited classes, enrollment, and completion. We must roll toward instructor and course certification for online delivery

5. **Deliver leading edge continuing education and customized training to students and employers through statewide collaboration**
   - This should be the #1 priority
   - This is where the growth is, what the community and employers are wanting
   - With the focus on lifelong learning, it is essential to have a way to meet the community's needs
   - This must be CUSTOMIZED; it can't be a one size fits all approach
   - The challenge would be the unpredictability of what and when businesses may need the training
   - Could MnSCU have consultants trained on a variety of areas and then deploy them when needed?
   - Should also be cognizant of the resources that are out in our society – recent retirees, for example. Is there a way to tap and utilize those resources?
   - Address all the businesses in the area (Central Boiler, Polaris, Marvin Windows were specifically mentioned)
   - Oil production support services should be addressed such as geology and engineering technology
   - College needs to visit with industry more, look at pipeline opportunities
   - Customized training needs to be better, including e-learning; don't try to twist existing programs into a custom fit unless they actually fit
   - We have to work much more tightly with industry. Yes, they need to participate as a customer, assessor, funder, etc., but they cannot feel like they are doing our job. We have to maintain the professional piece of this and work with them to be their "go to" education/training contact

6. **Enable recommended strategic priorities to be realized by redesigning the system's financial and governance model**
   - Need to look at ways to create more efficiency
   - Extremely limited by the inflexibility of the contracts
   - The reality is that we are going to have to do more with less, so everyone has to be willing to give
   - Faculty need to be more entrepreneurial – out in industry/business/profession