

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

BOARD OF REGENTS

Work Session

October 6, 2005

A work session of the Board of Regents was held on Thursday, October 6, 2005, at 9:45 a.m. in MacMillan Auditorium A/C, Minnesota Landscape Arboretum.

Regents present: Patricia Simmons, presiding; Clyde Allen, Peter Bell, Frank Berman, Dallas Bohnsack, John Frobenius, Steven Hunter, David Larson, David Metzen, and Lakeesha Ransom.

Staff present: President Robert H. Bruininks; Executive Associate Vice President Al Sullivan; and Executive Director Ann Cieslak.

Regent Simmons commented that the work session will provide an opportunity for the Board to discuss how the University will monitor the effectiveness of the Strategic Positioning Plan, approved by the Board in June 2005. She introduced President Bruininks and Executive Associate Vice President Sullivan to present their thoughts on identifying the appropriate metrics for the strategic positioning effort.

Bruininks opened the presentation by making the following observations about rankings and metrics in higher education:

- The goal is substantial performance improvement over a period of time rather than incremental rankings gains;
- A few powerful measures of success should be the focus;
- No single existing ranking system is sufficient – all have flaws;
- Improved performance will lead to improved rankings.

Sullivan explained that as the strategic positioning task forces undertake various efforts, the following questions will guide their work:

- How will we know we have become one of the top three public research universities in the world?
- How will we measure progress on the University's five action strategies?
- How will we track performance leading to improved outcomes?
- How will the Minnesota Legislature's higher education accountability project help the University achieve its aspirational goal?
- How will the University's accountability report be modified to reflect our aspirational goal and strategic positioning efforts?
- How will the University gather, analyze, and report information more effectively for planning and decision-making?

Sullivan provided preliminary plans and a timeline for how the task forces will work through each of the six guiding questions.

Bruininks commented that while no single ranking system is perfect for the University, the University of Florida measurement system is relatively sufficient for the Twin Cities campus because of the focus on such research-based measures as doctorates granted, faculty awards, and research expenditures. He added that the Florida rankings have only one category, median SAT/ACT scores, measuring the

quality of the undergraduate student population. Therefore, the University must look at other ways to assess the quality of students during and after their time at the University.

Sullivan noted that metrics need to be tied to mission-oriented goals and aligned with resource allocation. Bruininks added that a focus on system-wide continuous improvement is as important as the ultimate goal of the strategic positioning effort.

In response to comments from several Regents, Bruininks emphasized that no single ranking system is sufficient to track the progress of the strategic positioning effort. He cited the Florida rankings as paying insufficient attention to student learning and the total financial picture of an institution. Regent Ransom pointed out that the Florida rankings do not account for student and staff diversity.

In response to a question from Regent Hunter, Sullivan reported that capturing student outcomes is extremely difficult, but that they are examining methods such as studying civic engagement. Regent Frobenius urged the administration to focus as much on the student academic experience as on qualitative research results.

Responding to a question from Regent Berman, Sullivan explained that although improvement in business practices can yield important results, sufficient financial investment is critical to achieving the strategic positioning goals.

Simmons summarized the work session by making the following observations:

- It is critical to identify the correct metrics;
- Reports to the Board are expected throughout the process;
- It is important to measure how the University is fulfilling its commitment to the public;
- Monitoring how the University is branded is significant;
- The University needs to recognize diversity goals, especially in light of the changing state demographics;
- Academic outcomes and experience must be measured;
- Faculty and staff performance evaluations must be linked to metrics;
- Monitoring efficiency is a requirement;
- External ranking systems should be challenged;
- Financial resources are critical to the process;
- Cultural change is necessary in some areas for success.

The work session adjourned at 11:05 a.m.

ANN D. CIESLAK
Executive Director and
Corporate Secretary