

The Visitor

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WHERE HAVE ALL OUR STUDENTS GONE?

By

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In education, as well as any business, we deal with a major commodity or service. Without students in education, we are out of business. Since the middle 1950's, the Area Vocational-Technical Institute System of Higher Education has experienced phenomenal growth in Minnesota. This growth was stimulated by the steady expansion of business and industries' need for trained employees with the proper combination of skills and knowledge.

The student pool was available for training due to the population explosion after World War II, the Korean veterans, and the educational deferments of the Vietnam War. We experienced the trend toward higher education on the part of high school graduates with approximately 65 to 70 percent electing to enroll in such institutions.

The Area Vocational Technical Institute system continued to expand through the '70's until it reached 34 institutions in 33 districts throughout Minnesota.

In the early '70's, the educational community experienced a downward trend in elementary enrollments. During the late '70's, this trend moved through the senior high school system. Having experienced the largest high school graduating class during the 1978-79 school year, the reality has reached the post-secondary sector that enrollments are shrinking.

Our recruiting effort has primarily been directed toward the high school graduates. Diagram 1 identifies the projected decline in potential post-secondary population in Minnesota. This decline will range from 25 to 45 percent with a state average of 30 percent from 1980 to 1995. The competition for the potential students increases when you consider all the other institutions of higher education who are recruiting from the shrinking student pool. Table 1 shows the Minnesota population projections through the year 2000.

A profile of student population of our Area Vocational-Technical Institute System indicates approximately 62 percent fall into the 16 to 21 year age bracket. As this age group declines over the next 15 to 20 years, some drastic changes are going to have to be made in building the educational population pool. There are several other factors which influence the scope of the population pool which higher education draws from.

Over 32 percent of AVTI enrollments withdraw from the system without completing their training objective. Considerable effort will have to be made to retain a greater percentage of the students through completion or pick up the dropouts for retraining or upgrading in the future.

Table 2 indicates 97 percent placement of students the year of graduation. However, Table 3 shows only 69 percent of the graduates employed in closely and broadly related industries one year after graduation. The data suggests that 97 percent of the enrollees completing their training objectives (67 percent of the enrollees) are employed during their first year after graduation and 69 percent of these are employed in an occupation for which they were trained.

It is fashionable these days to discuss education for people in non-traditional jobs. Forty-six percent of AVTI enrollment is female and 54 percent male. Specific program data shows that males and females continues to gravitate toward the traditional program.

Considering the data that have been reviewed, some predictions and suggestions must be considered if the AVTI System is going to survive and flourish in Minnesota.

In all post-secondary programming the most desired student was the good old farm boy or girl because they were willing to work, follow directions and make decisions. This population pool is shrinking over the next 15-20 years by approximately 40 percent. With the total population pool shrinking by 30 percent, we should be alerted to the fact that all the institutions of higher education will be recruiting from the decreased student supply. This information should alert us to the realization that enrollments are going to be recruited from other population groups or face considerable decline.

In the AVTI's, we must recruit from a larger portion of the female population, larger metro population, and an older population.

As the student population is restructured, we must restructure the delivery system to meet the educational needs of people and industry. The metropolitan student may have to be offered a longer educational program to attain some knowledges and skills that the farm background student has experienced outside of the structured program.

The older student may only require various portions of the on-going program to acquire the skills and knowledges needed to perform adequately on the job. The curriculum will have to be made available on an open entry, open exit basis for upgrading and retaining.

With the age of specialization here, segments of the curriculum will need to be expanded to meet the needs of the specialist. As an example, the swine production portion of the production agriculture program should be expanded from an elective to a nine to twelve month program.

With the variety of people we will work with, we must package the curriculum differently. The skills and knowledges needed by the people of an ever-changing highly technical industry must be made available on cafeteria style delivery system. Many of the people who need the basic upgrading and retraining education may not be

aware of such needs. This will require a serious media campaign and out-reach effort. The AVTI district must recognize it is an area institution and must get into the business of extension in education.

The AVTI must be willing to utilize consultants to reinforce their instructional staff. A cadre of specialists may have to be developed and utilized to strengthen our technical knowledge base. Cooperation with other institutions of higher education may be advantageous to a broadened delivery system.

In the future, it will be the obligation of the AVTI's to identify the potential student and offer them the programming they need to acquire the skills and knowledges in the form they need them to meet the changing needs of a rapidly changing agricultural industry. For those AVTI's that can't make the adjustment, another institution will have your potential student.

TABLE 1. Minnesota Population Characteristics by Age 1975-2000.

AGE	POPULATION					
	1975	1980	1985	1990	1995	2000
0 - 4 Years	280249	325290	354107	352180	324350	300921
5 - 9 Years	331119	279655	324618	353370	351423	323649
10 - 14 Years	407519	335119	283036	328547	357614	355690
15 - 19 Years	414825	405643	333588	281748	327034	356020
20 - 24 Years	366843	407405	398350	327578	276674	321155
25 - 29 Years	290855	365421	405850	396881	326359	275689
30 - 34 Years	257717	299614	377336	419377	410142	337267
35 - 39 Years	206460	257351	299150	376774	418739	409576
40 - 44 Years	190932	204404	254786	296195	373010	414555
45 - 49 Years	198643	187103	200273	249615	290280	365480
50 - 54 Years	197009	192821	181660	194463	242265	281912
55 - 59 Years	185221	188115	184125	173468	185659	231214
60 - 64 Years	165193	172906	175570	171862	161899	173284
65 - 69 Years	139511	148293	155280	157605	154318	145376

TABLE 2. Employment During First Year of Graduation

Status	Percent
Employment at time of follow up	90.99
Employment prior to/not at follow up	5.99
Never employed/no response	3.01
	<u>100.00%</u>

TABLE 3. Employment Status One Year After Graduation

Status	Percent
Employment closely related	59.65
Employment broadly related	9.90
Employment unrelated	16.09
No present job information	5.76
Military	0.12
Unavailable for employment	5.13
Unemployed	3.32
	<u>100.00%</u>

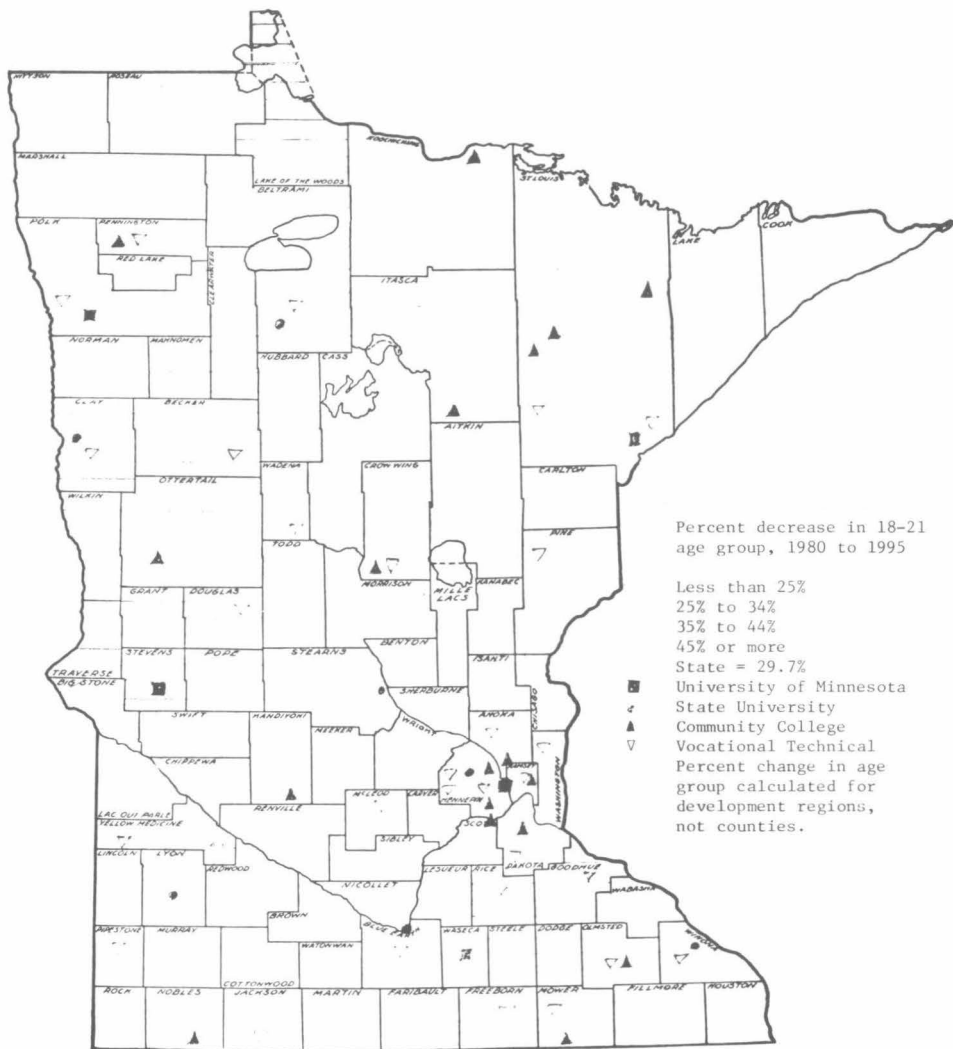


DIAGRAM I.
Projected Decline in Potential Post-Secondary Population in Minnesota.

SIGHT OF AMERICA*

You cannot see America. It's not hot dogs; they eat hot dogs in Russia. It's not baseball either; they also play baseball in North Korea. It's not even motherhood. Even though China didn't invent it, they've got it just like we have. America isn't something you see, but something you do. It's not being well governed, but governing well. It's not being told what to do, but doing the telling. It's not merely voting for somebody but helping the somebody you want to get the votes. You can't see America because America is a feeling. It's a feeling that you can be anything you want to be...that there's really no other right way for you and your children and their children to live. To be an American is to be America. For America is the total of all strivings for justice and freedom by every single American. In America, to be is to do. The things we believe in most sincerely are the things we cannot see. And we cannot see America.

*From Area Ag Coordinators Newsletter (Staples, AVTI, Staples, MN) from William E. Guelker.

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