

**CITIZENS LEAGUE  
HIGHER EDUCATION STUDY GROUP  
April 30, 2004**

My name is Linda Baer, Senior Vice President of the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities. I'm pleased to be here today to share some thoughts regarding the role of public education, the Minnesota State Colleges and University campuses, and how we make a difference in the lives of people of the state, the communities, and the businesses and industries.

Included in your packets are copies of the following:

- Data Profile of the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities
- Go Places publication which features all of our campuses and a map the inside cover.
- List of Reforms and Efficiencies
- Report from the Citizens Advisory Commission
- Learner Segment "puzzle"
- Minnesota State Colleges & Universities Annual Report
- Key trends and issues

### **Introduction**

I'd like to begin with a snapshot of people we serve.

The Minnesota State Colleges and Universities have served the public good from the early days when forward thinking leaders of Minnesota determined that investing in higher education was critical to a strong future. Institutions served agrarian interests in the days of agriculture (labor and the land) and then served industry as the state and country industrialized. Today the challenged is to serve the knowledge age (through expanding intellectual capital).

In 1858 MN Territory recognized need for education for children of pioneers and established Winona Normal School "to prepare teachers for the common schools of the state." Writing about the issue of whether schools should be supported by the taxpayers or by the students who attend them, D.S. Burt, a Minnesota Superintendent of Public Instruction, suggested,

“The skill of the engineer who plans our bridges, of the pilot who guides the steamer into port, of the chemist who Ás-says our ores, or the linguist who translates foreign literature into our language, is more valuable to the public than profitable to himself, and it amply compensates the state for supporting the schools in which it was acquired.” [Repeat underlined.]

The Minnesota State Colleges and Universities System is deeply rooted in the history of Minnesota and its evolution into the economic powerhouse it is today. Throughout this timeframe, the purposes of our campuses have been closely tied to the public good. We serve 67% of the state’s undergraduates. The System has comprehensive universities in most of the regional hubs that are critical to the vitality of Greater Minnesota. These colleges and universities are located in 46 communities statewide – in many cases we serve as the only provider of education and critical services to community, business, and industry partners. The System is the primary provider of education in areas that make Minnesota work; such as teaching, law enforcement, nursing, and other critical healthcare areas. We serve as the primary location for dislocated workers for retraining. We work with business and industry to develop customized and accessible training for employees.

More than ever, higher education is the key to a better future for individuals, for families, for employers, for taxpayers, for society, for our democracy.

The Governor and the Citizens League have acknowledged the importance of higher education for the continued prosperity of the state and its residents and we thank you for that.

Mr. Kershaw asked us to respond to the question. Why is Minnesota State Colleges & Universities so important to Minnesota and its residents? Let me start with our mission:

- Minnesota State Colleges & Universities has a very important public purpose – to provide access to higher education and a better life for people of Minnesota. Some of those we serve have limited options – like the rural, place bound single mom; or the under prepared – like the Somali refuge who needs both English language and skills training. And we serve the full-time accountant attending an evening MBA program.
- We also serve business and industries that look to us for worker training, from the automotive technician who repairs your car to the x-ray technician who works in your local clinics, the teachers in our schools, engineers in our companies, and entrepreneurs who grow the innovations.

- We are “Campuses of the Community.” We bring service and expertise to communities in the form of applied research, public service, civic engagement as well as economic development.

1. Why is Minnesota State Colleges & Universities important NOW?

- The answer is simple—we serve more people wanting more education, more often and in more ways.
  - i. We serve a wide range of learners from traditional college-age students, to adult and corporate learners. We serve high school students in the PSEO and Tech Prep programs.
  - ii. We serve students of color: 60% of all students of color enrolled in college in Minnesota are enrolled in our institutions *[repeat]* — something not everyone knows.
  - iii. We serve young people: High school is not enough any more for economic prosperity. Jobs of today and tomorrow require more.
  - iv. We serve current workers: Those needing updating and training to stay current, to advance, or to change jobs.
  - v. We serve displaced workers: We provide 95% of the training to displaced workers in our state.
  - vi. We serve online Learners: Today, students are increasingly online and digital learners. Through online learning, students are provided access to quality programs and services delivered with convenience and flexibility, anytime and anyplace. In 2003, we served over 17,000 distance learners with 70 programs. That number has grown this year.
- Only one-third of our students fit the “traditional” description of the 18- to 24-year-old college student. Many of our students are older adults who are working fulltime and going to school part-time. They have children, jobs and other responsibilities.

2. You may want to ask about results – What outcomes do you achieve? Here are a few:

- In a nut shell - Minnesota State Colleges & Universities is a great investment – for policy makers, for society, for businesses, for families, for individuals. The return on investment is significant- Higher education attainment correlates positively with higher income,

greater productivity, more civic engagement, higher educational attainment of children, and lower risk of criminal behavior.

- Every one dollar of net state appropriation invested in the Minnesota State colleges and universities, returns \$6.14 to the state's economy. How many stocks can claim that?
- In addition to 240,000 students enrolled in credit programs, we have 130,000 in non credit instruction.
- We produce Minnesota's workforce; 80% of our students stay in Minnesota. Each year, we graduate 78% of the new nursing graduates, 53% of the new teacher graduates, and 92% of law enforcement officers.
- Our students get jobs in their fields. Our related placement rates are 90+ % overall - with many 2 year programs at 98 -- or even 100%
- Let me give you just two examples of the kinds of programs we deliver:
  - i. Guard Online - Designed to meet needs of our soldiers/students in Bosnia and Kosovo – 390 Guard members signed up for 540 courses offered by 9 of our colleges and universities. Last August, staff went to Camp Ripley and signed them up and counseled them - from a tent wired for phones, faxes and computers. This may become a national model.
  - ii. Nursing - To meet needs we have increased the number of nursing grads by 14% in past two years with plans in place to do even more. Programs are more integrated to provide options and pathways. Nurse assistant to LPN to RN to Bachelor and Masters. We offer LPN completely on line- RN very soon as well. We have some state of the art virtual labs where a student can simulate working on patients.

3. We were asked to identify the major issues/trends that we believe are important for you to consider. There is a longer list in the packet but let me highlight just four which all fit under a general but profound statement:

Society is changing – Higher education must be more nimble, more flexible and more responsive to the demographic, economic and technological changes

- The demographic changes – more immigrants, more persons of color, more first generation students - all coming to our colleges and universities. We have had booming enrollments [up 24% since 1999]
  - The increased competition for public funding - health care, homeland security, resulting in decreased public investment in higher education.
  - An increasingly high tech, information-based, knowledge-based society which requires investments in technology – to remain competitive and to address the digital divide
  - An increasingly global world ---- and economy where we must be able to compete
4. You asked us what question[s] do you think are most important for this committee to ask/answer?
- What education is needed to maintain and grow the competitive position of the state’s citizens in the future?
  - How should Minnesota deal with the pressure to cut costs and close campuses at the very time when more and more people are seeking higher education to ensure a better life for themselves and their families and where business and industries all over the state are looking to us as part of the economic recovery/prosperity of the state and region?
  - Where is the balance between access and efficiency?
  - How will we balance the finances – given decreasing public support, and increasing tuition?
  - Is open access, the cornerstone of our two year institutions, sustainable?

## **Conclusion**

We believe the citizens of the state need the commitment to the public good of higher education started by those pioneers in Winona in 1858. Today’s “new pioneers” are:

- New workers – some who are dislocated due to plant closings and business downturns, in need of ongoing education and training
- New Learners - people who a generation ago would have not considered – or maybe even needed a post-high school education
- New Immigrants – requiring education and training to join the labor force where we need them as resources
- With new modes of learning – “cyber pioneers” living and learning in this rapidly changing environment of online and technology enhanced education

Just as we served the territorial pioneers, we must serve these new pioneers. That has been a hallmark of this state and the pre-eminent reason for the economic success and quality of life that we enjoy.