

Determining Our Destiny A New Era – Our Next 150 Years

Introduction

Good morning everyone. The start of a new year is always refreshing. I just wanted to comment if you a look around the room you will see panels that are just incredible. You will see them everywhere around campus this year. I hope everyone will do a 'photo op' out in the hallway with our birthday cake. We celebrated this weekend at my home the University's 150th birthday.

We are so happy to have our good friend and colleague Dr. Jane Earley with us today. She's a special friend to me and so many others. She has been there for a lot of difficult times, as well as celebrations, and we are very happy that you are joining us. Jane, thank you very much.

Thank you Provost Wells and not just for such a glowing introduction and recognizing everyone, but for your amazing academic leadership working to achieve our exceptional university goals. Having been a provost myself for 12 years before I came here, I can say with some bias that not many work harder than the provost...it is a grueling and rewarding job. Moreover, we have a tremendous team of administrative deans and vice presidents who are exceptional and do an outstanding job as well. Today, I stand behind my early observation 15 years ago that our faculty and staff are among the best anywhere in American higher education no matter the type of institution. So thank you to all of our faculty and staff for the great job that you do. You are the heart and soul of our university!

I want to take a moment to acknowledge Presidents Emeriti Margaret Preska and Richard Rush. Margaret is recovering nicely from a stroke a few months ago and sends her best wishes. Margaret recently lost her loving husband, Dan. And, Dick Rush retired this past year from CA State University at Channel Islands, a brand new university he helped to get off the ground. I know if President James Nickerson could have held on a bit longer until he was 110 years old he would be enjoying our celebrations this year. I know Jim is with us in spirit and we plan to celebrate his book about the Viet Nam era during his days here in higher education. They will all be remembered for being outstanding presidents! And it's

one of the reasons I came, because there were good presidents here and not a lot of problems. Many of you have heard me say that and it's true. I just want to add that we want to honor them always and I look forward to welcoming Margaret and Dick back to campus this next year to help us celebrate our Sesquicentennial. So you will get a chance to see them and talk with them, and to see what life was like back in the days when they were here.

I hope you take notice the title for my university address, "*Determining Our Destiny: A New Era,*" is truly fitting as we celebrate our Sesquicentennial and embark on the next 150 years.

In my speech this morning, you are going to learn about our recent retreat, last year's accomplishments, both new and ongoing goals and objectives, challenges facing us in our dear state of Minnesota, and the bigger challenges facing higher education on a national scale. You are also going to hear a lot of numbers. And I'm going to tell you my speech will be posted so don't try to write them down. But I love metrics and it's because of Dr. Lynn Akey, AVP for Institutional Research, that I have these numbers. So if you don't like the numbers, blame her. [Laughter] That's a good way to introduce her!

In addition, Provost Wells will follow with an address later this morning that speaks to the specific ways we will manage the headwinds of higher education and expand on our ambitious university agenda.

Overall, while almost every university is struggling to keep their heads above water, Minnesota State Mankato has fared pretty well. Our enrollments have not taken a permanent nosedive like so many other institutions and we have been able to maintain a fairly steady and balanced enrollment after recovering from a drop of a several hundred students a few years ago.

Unfortunately, the same cannot be stated for some of our peer institutions in Minnesota who have essentially lost thousands of students over this same period, setting a new and lower enrollment base for themselves.

I referenced a minute ago the struggles we are having in higher education. To illustrate my point the news media is replete with stories and commentaries that

are not always very positive for the academy. Let me take a minute to cite just a few headlines that I reviewed over the course of a few weeks:

- ***The Decade Ahead Promises Great Change in Higher Education***
- ***Declining International Students and its Impact on Your Enrollment, Retention & Revenue***
- ***Why Should We Invest in New Americans***
- ***The Assault on Colleges and the American Dream***
- ***Here's How Much College Will Cost You This Year***
- ***Promises and Pitfalls of Online Education***
- ***Proposed Federal Policy Would Cripple University Research***
- ***Report Shows Extent of Campus Cyber Attack Activities***

I am positive that all of you could add many other stories and headlines to demonstrate our public and internal challenges in higher education. Fortunately, there are segments of higher education that are fighting back and taking a very proactive approach to addressing the increasing criticisms and misrepresentations of higher education.

I would add one more issue, perhaps the biggest elephant in the room, **financial sustainability**. This is perhaps the most challenging goal for our System and other universities around the country. I will talk more about our goals a little later this morning.

Retreat

It has become somewhat of tradition for the President to host a fall retreat at Gustavus Adolphus College. The retreat is attended by more than 100 campus leaders, including administrators, bargaining unit leaders, student government and other faculty and staff. This year we also had special guests, Interim Chancellor Devinder Malholtra, and Mr. Tim Huebsch, President of the MSU Foundation, join us for this special day.

We heard from attendees that this particular retreat was one of the more highly engaging and thought-provoking.

I give Provost Wells much credit for organizing the event along with other Cabinet members. The major theme of the retreat involved discussing the changing national higher education landscape and how our university must 'determine our destiny' relative to these challenges. And that's what I am going to be spending a lot of time talking about today.

- We began the day with a panel discussion by our Cabinet Members. The panel questions focused on how each division is responding to current trends, how we are looking to implement strategic plans for continued success, and what 'big ideas' we can generate after looking at our peer, competitor, or aspirant universities.
- A team from Institutional Diversity facilitated a very positive interactive session on micro-aggressions.
- We had many stimulating speakers and themes at the 12 round-table discussions. There were a variety of subjects discussed, touching each area of the university.

A highlight of the day was our special afternoon speaker, Chancellor Malhotra. We were honored to have Devinder join us. He shared his perspective on the changing national landscape noting that to navigate the new higher education environment, institutions will need to be more flexible and adaptable than ever before!

He also outlined his priorities for the Minnesota State system this year – which include:

1. the success of our students,
2. our commitment to diversity and equity,
3. and, the financial sustainability of our colleges and universities.

He opened the floor for questions and we had the opportunity to engage in a robust conversation on many important topics.

I thank the many presenters and organizers for making the retreat highly successful again this year. I always appreciate how we can come together to

discuss current issues, which then positions the University to implement initiatives for success.

So my speech today, is based in part from the feedback I received at the retreat. I really want to underscore one or two really important topics. Before I get into that really serious part of my speech, let's talk briefly about everyone's achievements. Of course we have the newspaper ad, a full one or two pages, acknowledging the accomplishments of our faculty and staff and others. It's never enough room!

Achievements

Now, as is our tradition, it is my pleasure to share with you a number of notable achievements from this past year. Please know that if your achievement isn't recognized it is not because it was not noteworthy. It would have meant that you would have to be here another 60 minutes and I still would not have been able to cover all the noteworthy accomplishments occurring on campus!

- We opened two new spectacular campus buildings in January, the \$31.4 million University Dining Center and the nearly \$28.9 million Clinical Sciences Building.
- The Dining Center has seen a 20% increase in the number of meals served. Additionally, the space was featured in Food Service Director's Magazine highlighting our open layout and fresh sustainability initiatives. If you have not yet seen this new space, you need to go over there. It is quite spectacular!
- Speaking of spectacular, I bet many of you have not yet seen the new Clinical Sciences Building; a state-of-the-art facility housing the departments of nursing, dental hygiene, and communication disorders. This building is a great partnership area where community members can come to campus and receive services, education or training in these three areas. Plus it has, probably the most beautiful views of campus from the third floor. You really need to check it out!

- Well, it was another accomplishment-filled year in Theatre and Dance, highlighted by senior Claire Clauson being named the top musical theatre actor in the nation at the Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival in New York. Congratulations Paul and your theatre program. We have the most incredible theatre and dance programs right here at our home institution.
- Additionally, our Dance Program has been featured at the Kennedy Center in Washington D.C. for the last three national dance festivals of the American College Dance Association. And, we have just run away with all the prizes, haven't we?!
- We can't talk about accomplishments without also talking about athletics. We are all very proud of our Women's Softball team who became NCAA Division II National Champions. Governor Dayton will be seeing them this Friday to recognize them at the Governor's mansion. It's just an outstanding feat on the part of our women's softball team and coaches.
- Additionally, in the area of athletics we scored 2nd place in the Northern Sun All Sports trophy and placed 8th nationally in the highly coveted Learfield Director's Cup. A lot of people might not know what that is, but it is probably what every university in the country wants in the area of athletics.
- We had 7 teams that won NSIC Championships in regular season and/or tournament play; 7 coaches received 'Coach of the Year' honors; and a remarkable 28 student-athletes achieved 'All American Status.'
- And I just want to say the grade point average of our student athletes is about 3.20 overall compared to our regular student body of 3.04. So, Kevin, you and your team, thank you for making sure that academics comes first.
- Thanks to the hard work of University Advancement, led by Vice President Kent Stanley along with our Foundation Board. Kent has been with us for just over a year. He set the bar pretty high in that we raised a record \$17.4

million for the University from over 6,900 donors. \$17.4 million was the highest of any institution in MinnState.

- So Kent has raised the bar pretty high and wouldn't you agree that for next year it should go up a little higher? I'm thinking for next year we should be at \$25 million. Kent, what do you think? Where is Kent? Oh, he is passed out over there! He's nervous now because it is public. [Laughter]
- I am pleased to share that this year our Campus Drive will be taking on a new format and will focus on raising support for student scholarships and emergency student needs. That's important. More students drop out of college because they're missing a few hundred dollars or a thousand dollars to keep them in school or to pay their rent. So, we are really refocusing that effort. There is more information to come regarding the Campus Drive!
- Thanks to Vice President Rick Straka and his team. You may have noticed the lighting in your offices and departments look a little different! We have completed over 75% of our Guaranteed Energy Savings Project agreement for lighting improvements campus wide that pay for themselves over approximately 15 years through savings on utility consumption.
- IT Solutions has been selected to present their cutting-edge work at a national conference called Fusion 2017. This is the leading organization on IT service management and it is a tremendous honor to be selected. So Mark Johnson, thank you to you and your team of moving us forward in our IT initiatives.
- Institutional Diversity provided personal and group visits for 2,264 prospective students and additionally made 2,223 follow-up phone calls to develop further relationships with prospective students. Some of you have heard this before and I really don't know of any university or campus that hosts approximately 250 campus diversity events throughout the year and had over 10,000 people attend. This is amazing; thank you, Henry, and your team.

- Our Diversity and Inclusion Plan was selected by the system office as a model plan for other Minnesota State universities to emulate.
- And, we completed our campus climate-study, the results of which will help us rewrite our three-year Diversity and Inclusion Plan this coming year. Everyone will be involved in that initiative.
- Our Student Affairs & Enrollment Management division continues to serve and support our students in a variety of ways, both 'behind the scenes' and through public activities and events.
- Some major accomplishments in Student Affairs includes an after-hours online chat-feature, to support student success.
- Dr. Jones also led his division in the development of the 2017-2022 Student Affairs Strategic Plan. I hope you all get a chance to take a look at that and provide input.
- Strategic Partnerships under Vice President Mike Gustafson has had a tremendous year. The Small Business Development Center serves 400 current clients with 198 new clients for the year 2017. Of these new clients, 30 started their own business. \$15.0 million was issued in loans to these new businesses. What does that mean? That means because of our program right here, the SBDC and the work of that division, we created 832 new jobs. That is important for the State of Minnesota and reflects well on our University.
- In addition, our Continuing Education & Professional Development team increased revenue generated from operations over 94% in one year and served almost 8,000 individuals through non-credit classes. We thank Director Lou Dickmeyer for turning this around. It is really important because this is one of the metrics used in the allocation formula and determining our future.
- I could go on and on, but instead I have asked Provost Wells to talk about academic affairs initiatives and accomplishments in her address.

As you can see, there are an incredible number of university accomplishments to be proud of – and this is just the tip of the iceberg! We have so many more wonderful achievements that are occurring each and every day. I am very proud of our University and all of your achievements.

I encourage you to read our Campus Newsletter throughout the year, which highlights upcoming university activities, announcements, and department, faculty and student achievements.

Institutional Evaluation

Now I want to talk about institutional evaluation.

When we consider institutional evaluation, it is important to look at our progress through many different lens. In June, I met with the outgoing Chancellor to discuss both my annual performance evaluation and our institutional review. As a part of this meeting, we reviewed our university goals and the corresponding metrics used to evaluate institutions within the System. Our University has clear areas of strength, including:

- The number of students we serve and the certificates and degrees we award. We are now the largest university in terms of full time students and FYE in the MinnState System.
- Our University continues to become more diverse. Last year, the percentage of our employees that identified as a racial or ethnic minority increased to 11.2% and the domestic Students of Color that we serve grew to 14.5% of the student population.
- This past year, we also increased, in one year, the number of students enrolled in customized training and continuing education by 46% to 2,574.

We also saw improvements this past year in two important institutional measures:

- Our six-year undergraduate student completion rate increased from 52.3% to 54.8%, showing positive progress. I should mention that our graduation

rate is on par with the national average. However, that is really not good enough. Significant work is still required, to bring our six-year student completion rate above our System set target of 60%.

- I have goals for going way beyond that. I have told a lot of people the story of when I met the president of the University of Minnesota. The U's graduation rate at that time was about 65%. The president, Bob Brunicks, told me, "Richard, this is not acceptable. I am going to spend the rest of my time here moving those graduation rates up." And, guess what, they're about 75% today. It can be done! So, we are going to work really hard and get our graduation rates up at that level.
- Here is a reflection of our budget side of the institution. Our Composite Financial Index increased from 1.31 to 2.5, and remains above the System Universities' average of 1.63. Unfortunately, do not expect that to be the same next year. We added 2 new buildings and that certainly always influences our CFI.

Weaknesses that we must continue to address this coming year:

- Increasing the persistence and completion rates of all our students and reducing the persistence and completion gap between Students of Color and White students. We must identify ways to support success and timely degree completion for all our students.
- Finally, we continue to be challenged on demonstrating high student achievement on licensure exams compared to MinnState System peer institutions. Student performance and achievement on licensure exams provides a critical reflection on our University. We keep working on this goal every year, yet, we are still falling short in some disciplines.

PAUSE

In addition to looking at our institutional evaluation, our report card of our System goals and metrics for the year, we also have additional internal goals and metrics that are factored into our overall evaluation. For instance:

- In addition to successfully completing and opening the University Dining Center and the Clinical Sciences Building, we mitigated the Ford Hall water damage that occurred over winter break and reopened the building in time for classes in January. This was an incredible effort by our facilities staff, as well as the faculty and staff in Ford Hall – thank you all for your efforts.
- The Cabinet also reviewed our existing campus master plan to determine if any changes are necessary as we move forward with future projects. This year discussion centered around pending campus improvements including;
 - A new Armstrong Hall. Replacement of Armstrong Hall appears to be the preferred approach. A new building would cost us less money, but the downside is it would mean 60,000 square feet less of space than we currently have. Therefore, we need to figure out how to maximize our space here on campus.
 - We also looked at our campus master plan to see where we would locate a New College of Business. This is about the 10th time we've tried to find a different site!
 - We are working on Theatre improvements.
 - We need to take a look at our Indoor Student Recreation, Fitness and Athletic Center and other athletic field improvements.
 - In addition, we reviewed the pedestrian campus idea that would include a major enhancement of our University mall area.
- These are all issues that need additional planning and discussion this year.
- On the bonding side, unfortunately we were passed over by the Minnesota Legislature for our Phase II Clinical Science bonding project during this past session. The bonding project has a good chance of being supported this coming year if both political parties agree to support a bonding bill. On the Minnesota State System list we are pleased to be ranked #4.
- Another area that came under evaluation was making certain we are implementing the new Minnesota State brand. The new Minnesota State brand implementation is on schedule and we continue to work with the System Office on this Board initiative.

- IT Solutions - Numerous IT initiatives were addressed including the introduction of our “*Concierge Model*” for service delivery to provide improved communication and issue resolution for users. IT Solutions moved to the Academic Computer Center and Wigley Center Kiosk to enable service closer to the customer. These are just a few examples of the numerous achievements in IT Solutions.
- I talked a little bit about the Student Affairs Division – This past year was another banner year for Student Affairs and our University’s enrollment management. Beginning with Undergraduate Admissions welcoming our third largest “first-year class” in our history, the year progressed quite well. Nearly 13,000 jobs and internships for our students from over 6,750 different employers were posted through the Career Development Center.
- Both the Counseling Center and Student Health Center were fully reaccredited.
- New Student and Family Programs launched a new online orientation and began implementation of the new MavConnect student support and early alert software.
- And this one is very important to me. A new part-time Military and Veteran Student Success Coordinator was hired to serve our students. Thank you David Jones and your team for your hard work to make this a friendly place for our students.
- Our newest division, Strategic Partnerships, headed up by Vice President Michael Gustafson, has been working on a number of ground-breaking initiatives, including – The downtown Hubbard building, now known as the Center for Strategic Planning and Partnerships was opened and includes several important areas to serve Mankato and the greater Southern Minnesota region. The following is located downtown:
 - College of Business Entrepreneurship Center
 - Small Business Development Center
 - Continuing Education and Customized Training Center
 - College of Extended Learning and
 - The Vice President’s Office

- As we look at this division we are also focused on the Twin Cities and serving the populations in the Metro area. A new lease is close to being finalized for the 7700 France Center where we will move all operations to the 5th floor of the building. This will result in a more compact and reduced footprint. This move will also save more than \$150,000 annually and provide much-needed exterior signage.
- The Strategic Partnerships Division is also working closely to strengthen our ongoing partnership with Normandale Community College. A lot of hard work has come out of this division and we are thankful for their efforts.

PRESIDENT'S KEY MESSAGE

I want to share with you this morning some general thoughts about a few select and important issues at this time.

Enrollment Management

I recently had an interesting conversation with Vice President, David Jones, regarding state demographics and enrollment issues. It was informative and fascinating to learn that recent Minnesota demographics have been revised.

Minnesota's Higher Education Commissioner, Larry Pogemiller, noted, high school graduation rates are at an all-time high. That is, the actual percentage of students graduating versus dropping out of high school is higher. Yet, because of demographic trends, Minnesota is actually graduating fewer students. Even though a higher percentage of **students graduate**, last year's high school class was 6 percent smaller than the class of 2010, to illustrate my point.

The college-going rate among new Minnesota high school graduates fell slightly in 2016 for a third straight year to 69.6 percent. Previously it had been at 71.5 percent in 2013. It is expected that approximately 62,700 high school students will graduate each year. These students will be recruited by dozens of colleges and universities in the multi-state area.

The percentage of non-White public high school graduates will increase from 20% to 29% during the next 15 years. So, we need to be prepared to welcome all students and to recruit those students as well to our campus.

With the economy going so well, there is going to be an increased number of students electing to get jobs right out of high school, according to Commissioner Pogemiller. It is anticipated that 50% of the students who elected to enter the workforce right after high school graduation will come back and they will enter college by age 24.

These new demographics and statistics are interesting and revealing. The higher education commissioner noted that Minnesota State System enrollment has declined each year since 2010 as the U.S. economy has recovered from the Great Recession.

The University of Minnesota System is down less than 1 percent today in total enrollment compared with six years ago. Pogemiller expects the “other” flagship institution will gain 400 students this year.” As the University of Minnesota continues to grow their university numbers the competition for new students will increase dramatically!

Closer to home, the MSU enrollment indicators continue to look relatively positive. Vice President Jones mentioned that overall applications to MSU for graduate and undergraduate students will reach our second highest level with over 17,139 applications received for Fall 2017; which is actually -1.7% less than last year.

We received 14,968 undergraduate applications, which is 0.6% less than last year. This includes fewer students who intend to enroll including a decrease in undergraduate first-time students by 6.7%; undergraduate transfer students are down 4.9% and Graduate first-time students are up 17.8%. Our enrollment of Students of Color is also up by 1.8%. This is good news for us right now.

In regards to international students, Dr. Stoyhoff, Dean of International Affairs, reports that since the fall of 2010, international student enrollment has more than doubled reaching a record high this spring of 1,238 and placed us 23rd among our national peer institutions. While the growth in our international

student population is impressive, the diversity in our international student population is extraordinary. Our international students come from 97 countries and from every region of the world. A recent survey of U.S. colleges and universities found that forty percent of the institutions experienced a significant decline in international student applications for this fall. Minnesota State Mankato was not among them. Thank you, Dean Stoyhoff, for your hard work.

International student applications were up 25% over last fall and, as a result, we will welcome more than 400 new international students to campus this week. New international academic pathway programs were established recently with institutions in China, the Ivory Coast, and Malaysia. That extends the global reach of the University. We plan to explore more opportunities for international experiences and study abroad partnerships around the world.

Now, back to overall enrollment figures, comparing System universities, Metropolitan State and Bemidji State University are seeing very slight increases amounting to only 20-25 FYE students each. St. Cloud State, unfortunately, continues to drop enrollment with 5% fewer FYE, or in real numbers 236 fulltime students less.

As of this date, MSU is down 73 FYE for the fall. Those numbers can change, as Dr. Jones always points out to me. Our new International student enrollment could move us close to last year's total enrollment depending on whether all the interested applicants enroll. The same is true for all regular new students as well. These numbers aren't firm right now, but it should give us a good indication of our fall enrollment.

Finally, as I previously noted, every Minnesota institution and surrounding states are going to be fighting for the diminishing pool of new students wanting to enroll in Minnesota colleges. It continues to be very, very competitive.

PAUSE

The reason I have elaborated extensively today on the topic of enrollment management is that it is crystal clear after reviewing state and national data that everyone's enrollment challenges are becoming more, and more difficult to achieve. And, understanding this fact can easily affect our financial sustainability.

While I have adopted a mantra over the years that “it is everyone’s job to help increase our enrollment, student retention and graduation rates,” it couldn’t be more obvious today. This goal is first and foremost to assist our students in being successful without diminishing our standards and educational quality. That’s why I have made this the centerpiece of my speech today. And, if you go back and look at my university addresses for the last 5 years, there was not a time that I did not emphasize the importance of successful enrollment management.

In retrospect, I think one of the reasons that our university is fairly stable and consistent in enrollment is that we have made greater strides than our competitors. But we haven’t achieved enough. Considering the thousands of students we serve, almost 40% have failed to graduate from this institution. Where are those students going? We have only graduated 6 out of 10, if you look at a 6-7 year graduation rate. I know you understand why we have to make this our top priority and that is going to require everybody working together.

How we assist all of our students is important. Unfortunately, our underrepresented student populations continue to fall even further behind their white counterparts by approximately 10 percent in reaching graduation hurdles.

Everyone, I cannot emphasize enough that success in achieving these challenges will dramatically influence our future as a university.

We have not been sitting still, or ignoring this challenge, however, for various reasons we are not being successful at moving the persistence needle at the undergraduate level.

I urge everyone to double his or her efforts and “work smart” utilizing whatever tools you have at your disposal in order to succeed. This is essential for our future.

PAUSE

Sesquicentennial Planning

Moving to a lighter topic, something a little more fun. I am happy to talk about our Sesquicentennial celebration. The planning has been underway for a full year.

Dr. Paul Hustoles, is leading the celebration planning and has provided me with an update on our progress. To quote Paul, “We intend to spend the next academic year celebrating our upcoming Sesquicentennial through October 2018. Hundreds of volunteers have been working for the past 16 months to find big and small ways to remind us about our rich and diverse history.”

You have already seen our sesquicentennial branding on our documents, publications, parking permits, and even some town buses. Keep your eyes open in the next few days for the new bus wraps that are about to be unveiled. They are pretty fantastic!

Throughout this year, you will see historical information in the Reporter and The Free Press, and in front of all events, we hope to have historical information panels, highlighting certain aspects of the university such as student life, athletics, the individual colleges, etc. You can see the panels displayed here in the ballroom today and aren't they great?

We have republished President James Nickerson's compelling story retelling of the turbulent Vietnam War era at MSU, entitled ***Out of Chaos***, and that will be used as our common read for this academic year. We will be publishing, this January, professor emeritus William Lass's history of the university all the way up to the present time. In the meantime, we still need your help to tell our story.

Throughout the year, we will feature Mav Talks, based on Ted Talks that either tell our story or just share our work. We want to record oral histories. Every college has a designated month to sponsor a signature event as well as many smaller adventures into our past and present.

We are also planning a magnificent homecoming parade in 2018 involving the City of Mankato, North Mankato and the University. This parade is going to be downtown and promises to be one of the largest and most colorful in the history of Mankato.

All of this activity will culminate in the fall of 2018 during the first week in October, leading to our official birthday, **October 7, 2018!** This will be a joyous

time for all of us, and please bring forward your fun ideas so we can include them in the celebration.

Online Learning

Now I would like to share a few of my thoughts regarding another emerging topic in higher education, online learning. Online learning has moved forward over the last few decades from an experimental model of delivering education to a format that is more mainstream than our traditional higher education classroom delivery model. If you look around the country and you read the headlines about Purdue and possibly even Harvard developing online programs, you know that it's probably here to stay. Online learning is providing an alternative pathway for earning a degree.

The results of a study jointly conducted by Quality Matters and Eduventures, and published last month on the changing landscape of online education, clearly demonstrates the enduring presence of online learning on a national level. As of Fall 2015, national figures show this:

- 12% of undergraduate students enrolled in post-secondary education are enrolled as fully online students.
- 26% of graduate students enrolled in post-secondary education are enrolled as fully online students.
- At public, four-year schools, one in 14 students are enrolled fully online.

Here at our own University, we also have experienced growth in the number of students that enroll in online courses and pursue online programs.

- To date, we provide 50 online programs: 11 Master Degrees, 30 Graduate Certificates, 5 Undergraduate Degrees, and 4 Undergraduate Certificates.

To understand Minnesota State Mankato's future online learning choices and opportunities we need to develop a plan to go forward. This past summer, I asked the Cabinet to work with Dr. Lynn Akey to engage in identifying best practices, methods, and models in online learning across the country that are successful.

In addition, I charged the Cabinet with identifying initial areas of work that would be required to enable the expansion of our online program offerings.

Areas such as market research methods; program capability and capacity models; instructional development, design, and support structures; fiscal models; and program marketing and demand creation models.

The work completed by the Cabinet this summer will provide a rich foundation for faculty, staff and administration working together to consider the future of our online learning initiative. If we're going to engage in online learning, let's make sure it is the best and meets our quality standards.

The University & System agenda is large this year, almost overwhelming with a focus on enrollment management, sesquicentennial planning, online education, diversity and inclusion, financial sustainability, as well as other pressing goals, all of which I won't talk about today.

Looking toward the future, I am pleased to finalize the Strategic Directions that will guide our University through 2021.

1. Enhancing Student Success and Completion;
2. Elevating Distinction and Academic Achievement;
3. Expanding Regional and Global Impact;
4. Leading Equity and Inclusive Excellence;
5. Advancing a Culture of Evidence and Innovative Organizational Designs;
and
6. Leveraging the Power of Partnerships and Collaboration

Our six strategic directions are intentionally broad in nature and consistent with the many challenges of higher education. I want to thank the six University Strategic Task Forces that came together last year and worked diligently to identify Strategic Goals and Objectives. I look forward this year to the implementation of our new University Strategic Plan and the action steps and measurable outcomes that will result.

In addition to the Strategic Directions that will guide our actions over the next several years, additional priorities for our University this year include:

- The development of a three-year Strategic Diversity and Inclusion Plan. This past year, Dr. Henry Morris, our Dean of Institutional Diversity, collaborated with the President's Commission on Diversity to implement a one-year Strategic Diversity and Inclusion Plan that included the administration of a University-wide climate study. Over 1300 people completed the survey. We look forward to working together with the campus community and using the results of our climate study to guide develop of our next Strategic Diversity and Inclusion plan.
- Dr. Wells will continue to visit with the campus this year about college and departmental reorganization, as well as promoting more agricultural-related programs.
- Later this morning, Provost Wells will discuss the importance of implementing a new advising system here at Minnesota State Mankato.
- In addition, she will share with us the urgency to update and revitalize our Graduate College, graduate assistantships, sponsored research and grants. The timing could not be better to chart our course for the future in these areas while revisiting earlier doctoral program goals.

SUMMARY

I truly believe we have the opportunity today, if we think and work smart, to make a significant difference in the face of enormous headwinds in higher education. We can make a difference.

In the stormy days ahead, we must seek support from our political, financial, and national thought leaders, and society as a whole. The future of our society depends on everyone working together to address educational and global challenges.

And let me just pause for a second, and say to everybody that what is happening in Charlottesville, Virginia is something that we cannot let happen here in Minnesota. It is something we must address. It is a serious crack in our culture that we must repair. I know all of you believe that. We will have a message later

today from our Interim Chancellor that I will share with you. This situation has taken the country by storm in cities across America and I just want to say that our multicultural focus, what we stand for as an institution known for promoting diversity, will continue to be addressed.

Serving as a proud member of the Minnesota State System, we enjoy a reasonable amount of autonomy to direct our future. As long as that opportunity exists, we need to do everything we can to set our course going forward. Enterprise leadership is essential for our university and system success

The complexity of our world and the changes we are witnessing understandably leaves doubt about everyone's future.

Whether we are talking about global ecological changes, threats of nuclear war, starvation and disease, water shortages and contamination, protests and riots around the world, ISIS threats, or the uneasy world of politics on an international scale...one cannot help but feel today that our world is in a state of catastrophic turmoil...out of control. For example, what we are seeing in Charlottesville and other cities around the country.

If we think and plan in that global context, we can make a difference. It is even more important today that Our Big Ideas and Real-World Thinking is relevant and emphasized to the students who will be our future leaders at this institution.

Thank you everyone for making Minnesota State University, Mankato...the "Other Great University" in the State of Minnesota!