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A tale of two decades

by Jon McGee

***“It was the best of times,
it was the worst of times...”***

Dickens' introductory passage to *A Tale of Two Cities* describes the current environment for higher education in Minnesota with remarkable accuracy. Though experiences certainly varied greatly by institution, taken as a whole, the 1990s and the early part of this new century will almost certainly be looked back upon as tremendously positive for higher education. Economic and demographic trends converged to create a historically favorable environment for the state's colleges and universities, who in turn provided the state with the resources it needed to sustain its economic growth.

However, as we look forward, it is clear that the landscape for higher education is changing in dramatic and difficult ways that threaten to seriously disrupt our general sense of optimism. Unfortunately, like the burst in the stock market bubble, we find ourselves by and large unprepared or under prepared to address the challenges of a new and more uncertain future. The demographic and economic forces that provided us with opportunities for success over the last decade have taken decidedly different turns. The ability of higher education, and the leaders and policy makers who influence it, to recognize and respond to these changes has significant implications for our ability to meet the economic, social, and cultural needs of Minnesota for years to come.

“It was the epoch of belief...”

The convergence of two critical factors—an increase in high school graduates and an economic expansion of historic length and breadth—created significant opportunities for colleges and college students in Minnesota during the 1990s. Not since the 1960s had postsecondary institutions in

the state simultaneously benefited from the combined benefits of these powerful trends for such a prolonged period of time.

Between 1978 and 1992, the number of high school graduates in Minnesota and nationally declined dramatically and nearly continuously as the baby boom generation aged to adulthood. Though reports in the early 1980s suggesting the eminent demise of higher education turned out to be false, it clearly was a challenging period for most colleges, and caused many to think about their mission, market, and future in very different ways.

The early 1990s and the arrival of the children of the baby boom signaled a return to better days. Between 1992 and 2000, the number of high school graduates in the state rose from about 46,000 to 57,000, a gain of 24 percent. For institutions that weathered the 1980s with primarily traditional-age students, including most of the four-year colleges in the state, this had the makings of a bonanza.

Economic incentives to enroll in college were powerful during the 1990s. The earnings premium for those who completed a college degree rose substantially during the decade and was highest for those with a four-year degree. Fueled by a tight and increasingly skill-based labor market, the estimated lifetime earnings for those with a baccalaureate degree rose by an astonishing 20 percent in inflation-adjusted dollars between 1991 and 2000.

Colleges in the state clearly benefited from, or at least had the opportunity to benefit from, these trends. But Minnesota businesses and families benefited, as well. The state today has one of the most highly educated populations in the nation and, consequently, a workforce that can

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serve an economic base that is unusually diversified and sophisticated among mid-western states. The sophisticated economy and well-educated workforce produced clear results for individuals and families. In 2000, median four-person family income in Minnesota was \$70,500, 13 percent higher than the national average and a gain of 64 percent over 1990. In 1990, Minnesota's family income was 17th highest nationally. By 2000, it had risen to fifth highest.

"It was the epoch of incredulity..."

In spite of generally favorable conditions, several warning signs have developed and evolved over the last decade that signal change and challenge—both for postsecondary institutions and for the state. The cumulative effect of those changes seriously threatens the enrollment euphoria many colleges currently are experiencing and, in the absence of real solutions to address them, could undermine the economic potential and prosperity of the state.

Even though economic returns to higher education increased substantially, high school-to-college participation rates in Minnesota changed little during the 1990s, even sagging in the middle part of the decade. Today, college participation rates in Minnesota are about equal to the national average. The state's sophisticated, "brain power" economy was apparently more successful attracting highly educated people from other states than in producing them itself.

In spite of significant evidence of income and asset gentrification, the gap between family ability-to-pay and willingness-to-pay has widened considerably in the last 10 years. The result is that students and families of all incomes today are more price sensitive, but less value conscious—oftentimes not only unaware but uninterested in the relationship between the price and value of a college education and its cost. The art of the deal has become an axiom in many, and perhaps most, admission offices not only in Minnesota, but around the country. For that, colleges locally and nationally must accept some share of the blame. Even though the number of high school graduates rose generally throughout the last decade, competitive pressures among col-

leges—public and private—have increased significantly as colleges have raised the ante for enrolling students, particularly high achieving students. Colleges today compete ferociously not only on core educational services, but also on amenities and net price, a trio of values that most institutions will find extraordinarily difficult to balance financially over the long-term.

Competition for state dollars is often more intense during periods of budget expansion and surplus than during periods of budget stress. The last 10 years have been no exception, as record surpluses piled one on top of the other. Unfortunately, higher education generally cannot be counted among the winners in the budget competition. Though general fund support for postsecondary education in Minnesota did, in total, keep pace with inflation during the 1990s, the percentage of general fund appropriations allocated to higher education has declined every year since 1987. Taxpayers became a more tenuous financial partner in spite of clear signals of the increasing need for a highly educated workforce and the rising accessibility needs of a changing student population. While it is easy to heap the blame on elected officials for being shortsighted, higher education in Minnesota must accept responsibility for its own failure to create a unified and compelling social and economic case for support.

"We were all going direct to Heaven, we were all going direct the other way."

Total enrollment at public and private colleges in Minnesota has risen sharply in the past few years. Unfortunately, those gains are likely to be only a temporary calm before a protracted period of change. It is not at all clear that we are prepared to address the realities of this new and more difficult future.

In spite of rising enrollment, signs of change have been in the making for a number of years. Two will have particular impact on the future of higher education in Minnesota: the ability and willingness of families to pay for college and the changing characteristics of Minnesota's population.

While average income and wealth grew rapidly for many families during the

1990s, their desire to use past, present and future income for current consumption was apparently insatiable, leaving them remarkably unprepared for college expenses. In our super-size-it economy, people purchased (or, more often the case, borrowed to purchase) bigger homes, bigger vehicles, and lifestyle amenities as if the future did not matter. In 2000, aggregate personal saving in the United States, as a percent of total income, was just 2.4 percent, the lowest level in 40 years.

In spite of rising income, personal savings rates declined every year between 1990 and 2000. The Federal Reserve's 1998 Survey of Consumer Finances indicated that only 57 percent of all families, and just 36 percent of those with children under age 18, saved anything at all. Among families with children, the median value of non-property financial assets totaled only \$12,900, not much higher than just one year of expenses at a public college and significantly lower than the average annual cost at a private college. In 1992, the Minnesota Private College Research Foundation found that less than half of all parents of public and private college students in the state had saved anything for their children's education, a stunningly dismal finding.

People not only spent current income, they happily borrowed from the future as well. In 1990, outstanding monthly revolving consumer debt (which excludes home mortgages) totaled about \$800 billion, or approximately \$8,600 per U.S. household. By 2001, consumer debt topped \$1.6 trillion, or nearly \$15,000 per household. Average debt grew about 10 percent faster than income. Colleges and policy makers have great reason to be concerned by these trends. They diminish ability-to-pay, particularly among those who would or should otherwise be expected to contribute significantly to their children's education, and they create enormous pressure for additional financial aid spending, already the fastest growing portion of budgets at private colleges and certainly an expanding budget line at public colleges.

Perhaps more significant, though, will be the impact of changes in the state's young population that have been gaining steam for more than a decade. Not only

Viewpoint

Public transportation: small steps can be beautiful

by Lyle Wray

The attention paid to the \$1.5 billion cost of Hiawatha and the University Avenue light rail lines has eclipsed discussion of more mundane, but arguably more cost effective, transportation alternatives. But the recently announced delay in the completion of the Hiawatha light rail line, due to state budget cuts, affords Minnesotans with a natural opportunity to look at what else we can do to provide alternatives to driving alone in a car.

Here are five relatively small steps that could help reduce the number of single-occupant car commuters.

▲ Enforce carpool parking privileges.

As a case in point, ensuring proper use of heavily subsidized parking for carpools could add almost half as many net new “non single car” riders as the LRT for almost no cost. Three Interstate 394 garages were built with mostly federal funds on the northwest edge of downtown Minneapolis. Carpoolers pay \$40 per month to park, compared with a market rate of \$130 per month. There are about 2,200 carpools registered to use the three ramps, but a spot check by the city in December 2001 found that between 68 and 72 percent of registered carpool cars

arrived with one person in the car. While some drivers may have dropped riders off before heading to the ramp, a good guess is that many did not.

Compare this to the LRT. The Hiawatha corridor is expected to add 6,200 new transit riders per day, at a cost of \$750 million. Enforcing the carpool parking discount program and getting real commuters in those carpool slots could yield about half as many riders for a capital cost of zero.

▲ **Beef up security on buses.** One of the top concerns of public transportation riders is safety. They want to feel safe while waiting for and using public transportation. A September 2, 2002 *Star Tribune* article described steps Metro Transit has taken to improve safety in the two core cities, including a new 10-person team of full-time transit officers hired to supplement the dozens of part-time officers who patrol bus routes throughout the seven-county area. Metro Transit officials added the new full-time shifts in May, partly in response to allegations that the part-time officers spent more time in patrol cars than on buses or at bus stops. If public transportation is to remain or become a viable alternative to the car, the riding public needs to feel secure. Beefing up the security staff and adding video cameras and mobile phones for drivers are low cost steps we can take to improve safety.

▲ **Get rid of fare boxes.** Cities as varied as Rome and Amsterdam do without fare boxes on buses. Riders purchase a ticket from a vending machine in advance, and there are stiff fines for anyone caught without a valid ticket. This strategy has great potential to dramatically reduce the “dwell time” at bus stops as people fumble for tickets, money and student passes. A good spreadsheet analysis could show us how many more turns of a bus we could get during the day by abolishing the fare box entirely. While Metro Transit has been cool to this suggestion for buses, this is exactly the strategy planned for light rail.

▲ Increase use of van and carpools.

In the city of Seattle, at least 5,000 people a day use vanpools, and both Seattle and Portland boast per capita rates of carpool usage about double the Twin Cities. Another small step we can take is to challenge the Metropolitan Council and Minnesota Department of Transportation to meet the Portland and Seattle ridership levels. These two inexpensive options would cost hundreds of thousands of dollars, not millions, and yield more net new riders than the light rail line.

A spot check by the city in December 2001 found that between 68 and 72 percent of registered carpool cars arrived with one person in the car.

▲ Develop a coherent transportation policy.

One not so small step is to get a clear and coherent policy framework in place for public transportation. In the 82nd legislative session, budget cuts lead to fare increases, route cuts and reduced ridership at the same time we were spending hundreds of millions of dollars to add commuter rail and a second light rail line. We need a coherent transportation policy.

While none of these five steps alone provides a “big bang” solution to reduce traffic congestion and improve commuter rates, the list offers cost-effective, doable strategies to move us toward those goals. We should move on them aggressively and immediately.

For more detail about transportation alternatives, visit the Citizens League ‘Pulse’ weblog at www.citizensleague.net. MJ

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Improving criminal court response to the mentally ill defendant

by *Lawrence Panciere*

Approximately 16 percent of the population in our nation's jails and prisons has some form of mental illness, according to published reports. The Minnesota Department of Corrections estimates that about 25 percent of adult prisoners take psychiatric medication. Twenty-five to 40 percent of people who come through adult courts in Ramsey County are believed to have some type of mental health problem. Hennepin County has found that a significant number of chronic offenders have a mental illness.

The criminal justice system is not well prepared to respond to this population. Jails often have difficulty properly managing and treating the mentally ill defendant. Judges are usually not trained to assess their needs or to develop dispositions that address those needs. The mental health system typically does not offer the

There are ways to effect this improvement in the way criminal court adjudicates these defendants that are well within the reach of Hennepin County District Court, even at a time of tight budgets.

range of services required by individuals with mental illness who end up in the criminal justice system.

All too often, defendants with mental illness are arrested for minor offenses, appear in court and are released only to be rearrested weeks or months later. If they are not receiving treatment at the time of arrest, either no effort will be made to arrange treatment or an order is issued for treatment without support or follow-up. The end result is that the defendants often don't receive treatment or services.

If the defendant happens to be receiving treatment when arrested, the arrest can result in a disruption in ongoing treatment when the defendant becomes lost to the mental health providers who have worked with the defendant. These outcomes are

not good for the defendant. Nor are they good for the society that bears the increasing cost of caring for these individuals.

But around the country, courts are changing the way they deal with mentally ill defendants. Several criminal courts have created special courts, called mental health courts, to improve the response to defendants with mental illness. Efforts to study the feasibility of a similar system are nearing completion here in both Ramsey and Hennepin counties.

The challenges of working with mentally ill defendants

The primary impediments to working effectively with defendants who have a mental illness are lack of information concerning the mental health needs of the defendant, lack of established court procedures for using and communicating the information, and the lack of resources in the provider network. Lack of information is partly the result of data privacy laws that make it difficult for providers to share mental health information with the court. But lack of information also results from inadequate channels of communication among the various relevant agencies. It must also be recognized that the defendant with mental illness is often one of the more difficult clients with whom to work. He or she is often resistant to traditional efforts of help. Fortunately, innovative programs, such as one in Milwaukee, have shown that assertive and creative approaches in case management and treatment can significantly improve the rate of compliance with treatment and treatment success.

Existing mental health courts, such as one in King County, Wash., have demonstrated that the criminal court can work more effectively with defendants suffering from mental illness. A typical mental health court identifies candidates early in the judicial process for whom mental illness or disability is viewed as related to their tendency to commit crimes. The court has a system in place to screen the defendants and to assemble information about the defendant's mental status and potential resources for the defendant in the community. The defendant must agree to voluntarily participate in the program. The court considers the information provided by the

screener in weighing options such as offering treatment instead of jail time, allowing defendants to have a crime erased from their records if they agree to treatment, or making treatment a significant part of the disposition. In making decisions, the court keeps in mind the public safety implications of its sentences. Target populations include misdemeanor offenders and some low-level felony offenders.

In Hennepin County alone, over 70,000 misdemeanor cases are filed each year. If even a small percentage of these cases involve defendants with mental illness, Hennepin County would have a significant number of defendants for whom mental illness is a factor in their offending and for whom public safety concerns do not require a primarily correctional response to the offense.

Improving communication

There are ways to effect this improvement in the way criminal court adjudicates these defendants that are well within the reach of Hennepin County District Court, even at a time of tight budgets. It does not necessarily require the creation of a separate mental health court, although that has been the typical approach in other jurisdictions. More specifically, Hennepin County District Court needs to develop a means of rapidly screening individuals arrested to assess their psychological functioning and determine any history of treatment and it needs to develop a procedure to share that information during deliberations. And the mental health provider network will obviously need to develop treatment options to meet the needs of this population.

The cost of the program would depend on the extent of change implemented. A significant improvement in the way the court responds to this population could be achieved with minimal additional funding by changing the customary expectations and practices of the court and the parties that participate in the court proceedings. For example, improving the flow of information between the existing mental health system and the court would likely reduce the repeat arrests, resulting in reduced costs to the criminal justice system, and reduce the total time in hospital-

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The coming hydrogen economy

by Rolf Nordstrom

Imagine a form of energy that is clean, inexhaustible, and so abundant that Minnesota could forever meet its energy needs.

Imagine a technology that can power your house, car, business or bus and emit only water vapor.

What if your car generated profitable electricity for the local grid from the parking lot at work and helped power your home while sitting in the garage?

What if this energy could be produced from common fuels in the short term and wind, water, sun, biomass and even algae in the long run?

If this sounds fanciful, consider that we already have two central features of such an energy system, fuel cells and hydrogen.

Hydrogen is the lightest, most abundant element on earth, and is thought to make up 75 percent of the mass of the universe and 90 percent of its molecules.

When hydrogen is combined with oxygen in a battery-like fuel cell, it produces electricity, heat and water vapor. Fuel cells are in use at more than 200 military bases, hospitals and office buildings around the world. Hydrogen-powered fuel cells provide electricity and drinking water to astronauts aboard the space shuttle.

Hydrogen can be stored as a gas, a liquid or a solid, and used in much the same ways as conventional fuels but with little or no pollution. Although it is abundant, hydrogen must be produced because it does not occur naturally in its elemental form. It is considered an energy carrier, like electricity, rather than a direct energy source such as oil.

Hydrogen can be harvested from many common fuels, such as natural gas, but getting it requires energy in the form of heat, light or electricity. Among the most harmless ways to produce hydrogen is to use a renewable form of energy, such as wind, to split water into its constituent parts—oxygen and hydrogen—in a process called electrolysis.

Fuel cells run the process of electrolysis in reverse by combining oxygen and hydrogen to produce electricity and water. Fuel cells can be made in any size to power everything from cell phones to power plants, making them ideal for a decentralized energy infrastructure.

If derived from water using renewable

forms of energy, hydrogen offers an inexhaustible, clean and secure domestic energy supply.

Hydrogen may make you think of the Hindenburg, but according to NASA scientist Addison Bain, hydrogen was not to blame. The blimp's shell was coated with a cousin of rocket fuel, which ignited the fire. The hydrogen burned too, but because it is so light it quickly dispersed. Hydrogen poses roughly the same risks as existing fuels and is actually safer than gasoline and natural gas in many ways.

A study commissioned by Ford Motor Company evaluated the risks of the most likely hydrogen accidents and concluded that a catastrophic event is highly unlikely. The study found that the greatest potential risk would be a slow leak in an enclosed home garage, where an accumulation of hydrogen could lead to fire or explosion if there were no detection or ventilation system in place.

In May 2002, former General Motors chairman, Robert Stempel, wrote in a *USA Today* editorial, "It's time we embrace the hydrogen economy." He argues that those who say that hydrogen-powered automobiles are decades away "are simply wrong" and that the transition to a hydrogen economy is already underway. With the right government incentives to help defray costs of a transition to hydrogen, Stempel says that the United States could become nearly energy self-sufficient in the next several decades.

Mr. Stempel is not alone. Countries and companies around the world are aggressively pursuing hydrogen. Canada, Japan, and the European Union all have hydrogen initiatives.

Major automakers are racing toward the first commercial fuel cell vehicle and Honda, Nissan and Toyota plan to lease such vehicles to business fleets in 2003. Residents of Vancouver and Chicago have boarded fuel cell buses. Iceland will open the first public hydrogen refueling station in the world by next April and has vowed to have the first hydrogen economy by 2030. The European Union is building its first large-scale hydrogen plants and introducing 30 fuel cell buses in nine cities. China has more than 20 organizations specializing in fuel cells and is investing \$120 million in fuel cell vehicle research.

In the United States, a report by the

National Renewable Energy Laboratory found no technical barriers to establishing a hydrogen fuel infrastructure for fuel cell vehicles. The Bush administration has added momentum by announcing the fuel cell Freedom Car initiative.

The President's National Energy Policy directed the Department of Energy to explore the potential for a hydrogen economy. In April 2002 the department convened business executives, federal and state officials, university leaders, researchers and environmental experts to develop a national hydrogen road map. Minnesota will participate in one of several meetings the department is holding across the country aimed at charting the infrastructure transition.

The implications for Minnesota are enormous. Today, we are largely dependent on foreign energy and thus vulnerable to price shocks and volatile markets. A shift toward fuel cells and hydrogen would offer:

Energy independence. Producing sufficient domestic energy would free us from relying on oil from unstable parts of the world.

A more flexible, adaptable energy system. Hydrogen production and use can be diverse and geographically distributed, and therefore more adaptable to changing circumstances than today's highly centralized energy production.

A homegrown source of economic development. Minnesota could conceivably become a net energy exporter, turning wind and other renewable energy sources into hydrogen and selling it. Fifteen other states are already vying for fuel cell leadership with various incentives.

A cleaner environment and more stable climate. Shifting as soon as possible to renewable energy sources as the means for producing hydrogen would reduce air and water pollution and mitigate against climate change.

Renewable energy is often intermittent—hydrogen solves that problem. By storing energy and making it available when needed, hydrogen would allow Minnesota to fully exploit its vast renewable energy potential.

The significant transition costs involved in changing Minnesota's energy infrastructure must be weighed against those of reinvesting in the existing system, which will

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Electing judges, DWI felonies and the digital divide

The **Red Wing Republican Eagle** (8/26) argues for a change in the system of electing judges. "Though election of judges may appear to be a testimony to democracy, it also prompts concern that judicial independence might be compromised. And 87 percent of the nation's 30,000 judges at the state and local levels are elected. The debate over whether to elect or appoint judges was renewed earlier this summer when the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that Minnesota judicial candidates are free to speak their minds and seek support from political parties and other organizations. One method of selecting judges warrants further discussion: Appoint judges and have periodic elections where voters must affirm a judges' performance with only the single name on the ballot. If a judge fails to receive majority support, an election would be conducted."

In reviewing the writings of several national political columns, the **Rochester Post-Bulletin** (8/21) finds the major political parties are fighting what might be a losing battle. [The columnists] "basic conclusion is that there are more and more moderate, mainstream voters who find the Democratic Party too far to the left and the Republican Party too far to the right. Results of the last three presidential elections point to a similar trend on a national basis. In the last three elections, no presidential candidate has won a majority of the popular vote. That is the first time that has happened in the past 100 years. They attribute the changes in

Minnesota in part to the influence of suburban voters who are conservative on economic issues but more liberal on social issues and thus do not fit exactly into the pattern for either of the major parties."

The **Fergus Falls Daily Journal** (7/31) thinks the new DWI law might help eliminate a threat to society. "There's no question individuals who are alcoholics have a disease. However, such individuals also should recognize that they have a problem, and seek treatment. Maybe a felony conviction and time spent in prison will help them see the error in their ways. Regardless, a person with four DWIs is a threat to society, no different than those who steal or harm others. Whether they have a disease or not, many deserve more than a year in jail..."

The **Red Wing Republican Eagle** (8/2) also supports the new law. "Minnesota's jails and prisons already are crowded without a new stream of inmates. And a new batch of enrollees almost guarantee the tougher drunken-driving sentencing that went into effect... In this case, the costs of incarceration are a worthwhile deterrent to the often long-lasting and tragic social costs borne from DWI violations... A total of 387,000 Minnesotans have been convicted of DWI, according to 1999 figures, the most recent statistics available. Of those, 80,000 have at least three convictions. About 1,500 three-time offenders were arrested in connection with DWIs in 1999."

The **St. Cloud Times** (8/2) does not think the new DWI law is strong enough. "Putting it in context of felony criminal behavior is helpful, but allowing a person to do the crime four times to achieve that doesn't necessarily show it's a high priority. Indeed, why not make it a felony for a person who gets two DWIs in five years? Yes, that might overload the courts and corrections systems in the short term, but it certainly would send a message to all people that the state is serious about ending repeat drunken driving. Of course, the four-time law sends that message, but perhaps it's just not as loud as residents would like – and need – to hear."

The **Rochester Post-Bulletin** (8/8) turned its attention to the impact of the digital divide on the state's rural communities. "In recent years, there has been a push to make high-speed Internet access available throughout the state," the paper notes. "But the effort is handicapped in rural areas by cost of service, since high-speed connections are more expensive than dial-up connections... Difficult as it may be to believe here in high-tech Rochester, there are small towns in the region where people who don't have Internet access at home have to wait for time on one of the three or four computers at their local library. Within the past decade the Internet has gone from a curiosity to a virtual necessity. Unfortunately, too many have-nots are doing without this must-have." MJ

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also have a significant price tag with few, if any, of hydrogen's benefits.

The shift toward hydrogen as the world's energy source seems nearly inevitable. The relevant questions are how fast and at what cost. The state of Minnesota could launch an energy security initiative to answer these questions and move as quickly as possible toward a clean, domestic energy system.

As a first step, the Citizens League, the Minnesota chapter of the American Lung Association, several state agencies and civic groups, the Minnesota Corn Growers, Xcel Energy, the University of Minnesota and others have begun an informal working group. Others are encouraged to join the conversation.

Without a consistent and sustained commitment to hydrogen development in

Minnesota, we risk falling behind and losing out on the benefits of a secure, domestic hydrogen-powered economy. MJ

Rolf Nordstrom, Critical Issues Research, Minnesota Planning. This article is based on an upcoming report by Minnesota Planning on the coming hydrogen economy, due out in fall 2002. www.mnplan.state.mn.us

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will the high school age population begin to level off, but the characteristics of that population will change dramatically over the next decade.

After rising consistently for a decade, the number of high school graduates in Minnesota has nearly peaked and will remain generally stable between now and 2010. By 2010, the number of public high school graduates in the state will be about equal to totals in 1999 (about 57,000). In other words, the sharp growth that fueled enrollments in the 1990s and the early part of this decade has disappeared.

More significant than the numeric change in high school graduates, though, is the changing racial and ethnic composition of high school graduates in the state. Between 2000 and 2010, the number of white high school graduates in Minnesota will decline by more than 11 percent. Over the same time period, the number of graduates of color will more than double. In 1985, young people of color made up just 4 percent of the state's high school graduates. By 2010, they will comprise nearly 20 percent of the total.

The rising number of students of color in Minnesota presents a tremendous diversity opportunity for higher education. However, for widespread postsecondary opportunity and diversity to become a reality will almost certainly require a

stronger public and private commitment to student financial aid. As the Minnesota Private College Research Foundation, the Minnesota Minority Education Partnership and others consistently have noted, young people of color in Minnesota have been disproportionately likely to come from lower-income families. Not only do students from lower-income families often lack the resources to pay for college at any price, local and national research also indicates that lower-income students are less likely to aspire to college, less likely to take college entrance exams, and less likely to have successful high school academic experiences—each a significant barrier to college attendance.

While these trends play out, the state's economy will not stand still. Recent economic projections suggest that occupations requiring a college degree will continue to grow the fastest in Minnesota. At current rates of degree production—which may be optimistic in light of changing population characteristics—Minnesota's colleges will produce less than half of the new degree holders required between 1998 and 2008.

Where will we go?

A number of important questions must be addressed to insure that higher education continues to meet the social and economic needs of Minnesota:

For whom will postsecondary opportunities be available? In an environment of increasingly scarce resources, how will colleges and policymakers work together to insure access and opportunity?

After more than a decade of ferocious competition for the hearts and minds of students, families and policymakers, how will public and private colleges and universities collaborate to insure that they collectively serve broad public purposes?

How will colleges and policymakers work to close the gap between willingness-to-pay for college and ability-to-pay for college to insure that scarce public and private resources flow to those who need them most?

How will higher education leaders work with leaders of elementary and secondary education to insure that increasing numbers of students are aware of, aspire to, and prepared for postsecondary opportunities?

Much is at stake and the cost of failure to address these important issues will certainly be high, not only for students but also for postsecondary institutions and Minnesota. We have a rare opportunity to align our self-interest with our collective interest. Are we up to the challenge? **MJ**

Jon McGee is Vice President for Planning, Research and Communication at the College of Saint Benedict/Saint John's University.

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ization and the frequency of emergency room visits. These efficiencies would offset the costs of screening the defendants.

These changes to the court system are particularly complex because they require coordination with the police, the sheriff, prosecutors, defense attorneys and the mental health system. Change will require leadership on the part of representatives from each of these agencies and a general willingness of affected employees to try something new. Hennepin and Ramsey counties' district courts have begun a preparatory process of making these changes. The two district courts received a \$27,725 planning grant from the State Justice Institute in Virginia to develop

proposals along the mental health court model. Both counties have formed committees to develop recommendations for specific changes to their respective systems. In addition, Hennepin County has initiated a pilot project in community court to screen misdemeanor offenders and develop ways to use that information to inform the court process. The planning grant is due to expire at the end of September at which time the committees will arrive at the final recommendations. At that time there will be an opportunity to seek additional grant support. The U.S. Department of Justice has announced funding for up to 20 demonstration mental health court projects. This is one-time

money that would assist in the start-up of a program.

Based on the initial work of the steering committee in Hennepin County and the initial results of the pilot screening project, it is highly likely that at least some changes will be instituted. We will have to wait to see how far the courts and the related systems can change in the way they respond to the mentally ill defendant. **MJ**

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TakeNote

Policy Tidbits

Small nuggets of knowledge from around the globe

Honolulu busway nets 46,300 new daily riders. A \$648 million bus rapid transit project in Honolulu is projected to yield 46,300 new riders daily. This is a capital cost of about \$14,000 per net new rider compared with the \$150,000 cost per rider of the Hiawatha and proposed University LRT projects in the Twin Cities. The project is 32.2 miles long and has 31 stations, dwarfing the combined reach of the two Twin Cities projects. Description of the Honolulu Primary Corridor Transportation Project is online is at: <http://www.fta.dot.gov/library/policy/ns/ns2001/ns2002s/honpct.html>. ~Lyle Wray.

First automated convenience store opens in U.S. The Shop 2000 automated convenience store is now open in the Adams Morgan neighborhood of Washington, D.C. The store is similar to multipurpose vending machines already operating in Japan and some cities in the Netherlands, Belgium and other European countries where labor is expensive and real estate is scarce. Both factors are beginning to impact American retailers as well. A study by the National Association of Convenience Stores suggests that a shortage of labor will be one of the industry's biggest problems in coming years. "With this machine, you eliminate most of your labor costs as well as problems with theft," said Hettie Herzog, president of Automated Distribution Technologies of Exton, Pa, the machine manufacturer. Read more about it at: www.nytimes.com/2002/08/28/national/28AUTO.html. ~L. W.

More black men are in prison than college according to a report by the Justice Policy Institute in Washington, D.C. The institute reports the number of black men enrolled in college in 2000 totaled 603,032. During the same year, 791,600 were in prison or jail. That's a significantly different picture from just two decades ago. In 1980 there were 143,000 African-American men were incarcerated and 463,700 were attending college. According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics, between 1980 and 2000 the number of Americans in prison quadrupled, from 502,000 to 2.1 million. During the same time period, the number of Americans attending college grew from 12.1 million to 14 million. ~Scott McMahon.

Singapore ranks number one. The "Global IT Report," issued by Harvard University's Center for International Development and the World Economic Forum, ranked Singapore number one worldwide in e-government, the use of the Web to deliver public services.

Researchers studied the infrastructure and network readiness of 75 countries and concluded: "Singapore is one of the few countries in the world where e-government services have not only provided more efficient access to the government but have also contributed significantly to the way government operates." The report is available in book form with description at www.oup-usa.org/isbn/0195152581.html. ~L. W.

Deregulation derailed! Arizona will not be the next state to deregulate its electrical system. The Arizona Corporation Commission voted unanimously to halt a six-year process of deregulation because of a shared view that it would expose consumers to the same dangers California experienced—price gauging and market manipulation. Ratepayers may experience increases to help cover the costs the utilities incurred over the past few years as they reorganized for deregulation and costs associated with returning to a regulated industry. ~S.M.

City proposes tightening carpool rules for I-394 garages. In an August *Star Tribune* column, Laurie Blake wrote about "cheating" on carpool discount parking in Minneapolis. Three Interstate Highway 394 garages were built with mostly federal funds on the northwest edge of downtown. Carpoolers pay \$40 per month to park, compared with a market

rate of \$130. About 2,200 carpools are registered to use the three ramps, but most of the cars entering as carpools have only one person in them. A spot check by the city in December 2001 found that between 68 and 72 percent of cars registered as a pool arrived with one person. While some may have dropped other occupants before heading to the ramp, a good guess is that there are many who cheat.

To put this in perspective, LRT in the Hiawatha corridor is expected to add 6,200 new transit riders per day, at a cost of approximately \$675 million in infrastructure investment. (See Pulse entry 97). Enforcing the carpool parking discount program alone might yield half as many riders for a capital cost of zero. Read Blake's column at: www.startribune.com/stories/462/3186078.html. ~L. W.

Should we quit voting for judges? A new report recommends it. The Center for Economic Development (CED) recently called for all state judges within the United States be appointed rather than elected. The center's report argues "the need for judges to appeal to voters and seek campaign contributions to finance their quests for office is antithetical to the ideal of an independent and impartial judiciary." CED is an independent, nonpartisan organization of business and education leaders dedicated to policy research on the major economic and social issues of our time and the implementation of its recommendations by the public and private sectors. The full report is available at www.ced.org. ~S.M.