FINAL REPORT TO LUMINA FOUNDATION
Citizens League & Minnesota Office of Higher Education
Postsecondary Education Workgroups Project, October-December 2014

Central to Minnesota's history is the belief that a postsecondary education offers individuals the opportunity for social and economic mobility. As a result, postsecondary education policy has always been student-centric, with the goal of providing Minnesotans with a pathway to a sustainable wage, improved quality of life and the ability to constructively participate in Minnesota's civic culture. Minnesota's longstanding commitment to providing access to a postsecondary education for its residents is evident in the educational attainment rate of the state's adult population. In 2012, Minnesota led the nation in the proportion of its adult population (age 25-64) with at least some college[1] or above (70 percent).[2] The future presents opportunities as well as challenges.

- Significant disparities exist in educational attainment by race and ethnicity. Only 28 percent of Black adults and 21 percent of Hispanic adults have obtained an associate degree or higher compared to 44 percent of White adults.[3] The disparity starts in elementary school, continues through high school graduation, initial college enrollment and college graduation.
- Minnesota is in the midst of key demographics transitions – by race and age. The Minnesota State Demographic Center (2014) currently projects Minnesota's minority population will grow from 14 percent to 25 percent by 2035. Around the same period, the total number of adults 65+ is anticipated to double according to projections.[4]
- The Georgetown Center for Education and the Workforce projects 74 percent of jobs in Minnesota will require education or training beyond high school by 2020.[5]

To meet projected workforce demands within changing demographic trends, Minnesota's postsecondary education system must identify and implement effective strategies to increase completion and attainment for underserved populations. While ensuring equitable access to postsecondary education for all citizens remains a priority, providing access to a postsecondary education without facilitating completion is neither affordable nor efficient for students, institutions, or taxpayers of Minnesota.

Establishing a Consensus Agenda

In the fall of 2014 the Citizens League partnered with the Minnesota Office of Higher Education (MOHE), with funding from the Lumina Foundation, to convene a series of three postsecondary education workgroups. The goals of these workgroups were to discuss an expanded definition of "affordability" beyond tuition, one that

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[1] The American Community Survey's educational attainment categories include, "Some College or Above," which does not distinguish between individuals who obtained a postsecondary certificate or diploma and those did not obtain either credential.

[2] U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 1-year estimates

[3] The Hispanic origin category represents individuals from all race categories, The Hispanic category reported should not be compared to the Caucasian population. Understanding this definitional difference further highlights the disparities that exist across race/ethnicity groups.

[4] Minnesota State Demographic Center, http://mn.gov/admin/demography/data-by-topic/aging/

[5] Carnevale, A. P., Smith, N., & Strohl, J. (2013). Recovery: Job growth and education requirements through 2020.

included student success as a key metric, and to generate specific goals for improving retention, completion, attainment, and creating a culture of success in Minnesota.

Participants representing a broad range of postsecondary education stakeholders were invited to discuss critical questions, build consensus around issues of postsecondary education attainment and affordability and clarify which administrative policies and practices should be expanded and/or changed in order to support student success. Lastly, the Citizens League wanted to identify ways participants could apply their knowledge and networks to advance the agreed-upon agenda.

The initial proposed outcomes for our work included:

- Expand the definition of affordability to include elements other than tuition/fees.
- Generate awareness and buy-in among key stakeholders about the relationship between attainment and affordability and administrative policies.
- Arrive at a shared understanding of the key student demographic groups – who they are, why it is important to reach them, what their needs are around affordability, and how to help them complete.
- Craft an attainment and affordability agenda for Minnesota, with clear priorities and ways to measure those priorities within a context of student success.
- Strategies to advance or address the prioritized elements of affordability.

Workgroups

In Workgroup #1 held on October 1, 2014, national speakers David Longanecker, President of Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE) and Jolene Koester, former President of California State University (CalState), Northridge addressed critical issues facing postsecondary education in the nation and in Minnesota. In Workgroups #2 and #3, held on November 5 and December 5, 2014 respectively, participants discussed these issues and formulated the workgroup's recommendations.

In addition to the planned workgroups, the Citizens League partnered with several organizations (the Minnesota Legislature, the Minnesota Chamber of Commerce, Midwestern Higher Education Compact, Growth & Justice, Minnesota Minority Education Partnership, Minnesota Business Partnership, MSPWin, and the Bush Foundation) to convene the *North Star Summit*—a one-day gathering of over 300 individuals on December 8, 2014—to discuss statewide postsecondary education attainment goals for Minnesota.

Throughout this process, participants said change was urgent and necessary. They not only supported establishing statewide postsecondary education attainment goals, but made it clear that established goals should focus on educational disparities by race/ethnicity. Minnesota has one of the widest achievement gaps in the U.S. The top two strategies for advancing these goals proposed were investing in "intrusive" advising and mentoring in postsecondary education and enhancement of K-12 readiness initiatives.

Preliminary Findings from Participant Surveys

1. **Participants expressed concern about retention, completion and creating a culture of success in Minnesota.**

   When surveyed about how concerned they were with the issues, Ninety-seven percent of participants said they spent a "moderate amount of time" or were "very preoccupied" with issues of retention, completion and preparing students for life and the workforce.

2. **Participants stated a willingness to dedicate themselves and resources to change postsecondary education.**

Seventy-five percent of participants said they were expecting to stay involved with workgroup recommendations or that the group should stay connected and work together to advance goals and strategies. Sixty-three percent of participants said that participants have a responsibility to "lead where they can" in advancing the workgroup's recommendations. (n=35)

Findings from Final Follow-up Survey of Participants (n=84)

3. **Broad support for setting attainment goals exists.**

Approximately 85% of participants indicated support for statewide postsecondary education attainment goals. Sixty-one percent of participants supported a goal of 60% attainment (certifications and degrees) by 2025; another 18% of participants indicated support for setting a statewide attainment goal, but said the target should be higher; another 5% said it should be tied to workforce needs.

4. **Broad support for reducing educational disparities exists.**

Participants strongly supported addressing the disparities in the state's educational outcomes. Almost 85% said the state needed to set a goal around reducing the attainment gap by race/ethnicity. Approximately 55% of survey participants said reducing the gaps in attainment by race/ethnicity for Minnesotans ages 25-64 by 75% by 2025 was a good target; an additional 14% said that percentage was too low a target and another 10% said it was too high (another 7% suggested other changes to the wording, framing, etc. of the goal).

5. **Participants emphasized a student focused initiatives.**

Approximately 65% of participants supported a goal that would measure the extent to which Minnesotans (our example was age 30) have accomplished or are accomplishing their educational aspirations. This perspective focuses on the student and how he/she defines success. It also redefines "completion" away from the traditional time-based system, which ends when a student graduates. This perspective will require a more thorough discussion of appropriate metrics. For example, if a student enters a program of study, but receives and accepts an employment offer to their satisfaction prior to completion, is there a way to measure this as a success?

6. **The top two strategies to increase attainment and narrow the attainment gap were investing in: (1) "intrusive" advising and mentoring (27%) and (2) readiness (24%).**

Participants recommended investing in "intrusive" advising and mentoring. Intrusive advising is a form of academic advising that involves the advisor reaching out to the student, as opposed to the student taking the initiative themselves.[6] Each student is assigned a professional advisor to assist with program modifications and classroom based issues. The advisor helps develop the student's problem-solving and decision making skills by working through problems together.[7] Mentoring offers a learning partnership between the student and a more experienced individual (peer, adult) that encompasses emotional and

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[6] Earl, W. R. (1988). Intrusive advising of freshmen in academic difficulty. NACADA Journal, 8, 27-33.
[7] King, M. C. (2005). Developmental academic advising. NACADA Clearinghouse of Academic Advising

instrumental (information, coaching advocacy) support. Both intrusive advising and mentoring offer structure and support to students as they navigate not only academic challenges, but also financial, social, mental, physical or emotional challenges. Former CalState Northridge President, Jolene Koester, cited advising and mentoring as a critical element leading to the success on her campus. Research also shows mentoring to be beneficial in middle and high school.

The group defined readiness as encompassing both career and college readiness. Participants recommended focusing on reducing the achievement gap in K-12 and investing in dual credit programs. Dual credit programs include Post-Secondary Enrollment Options (PSEO), International Baccalaureate (IB), Advanced Placement (AP), and College in the Schools among others. In addition, participants noted a need for additional and ongoing training of teachers and counselors to ensure they understand the spectrum of college and career options. Furthermore, a college and career readiness curriculum should be offered starting in elementary and middle school.

Guiding Principles

Over the course of the workgroup meetings, several principles emerged to guide actions aimed at increasing retention, completion and student success in Minnesota.

1. **Focus on the student, not just the institution.** Design the system around students and enlist them as central planners. Develop student-centric metrics that measures success as defined by the student including whether individual aspirations are being met.

2. **Support every student in reaching their full potential.** Focusing broadly on production of four-year degrees ignores the diverse interests of students and labor market needs. Certificates, diplomas and two-year degrees are valuable options. Minnesota needs a well educated population with a range of meaningful postsecondary credentials. Students should be provided good information about potential career choices, and once made, be encouraged to pursue their interests and aptitudes. In addition, encouraging traditional students to attend full-time, but respecting the legitimate needs of working learners who need to move in and out of formal education, is critical.

3. **Find a way to measure and reward the value added by individual institutions**. Value added models have often a controversial approach to measuring effectiveness. However, it is important to reward institutions which provide access to students who have greater or more challenging needs and support them to achieving success.

4. **Start early.** Many of the strategies proposed would have more potential for impact if implemented early on in K-12.

5. **Think long-term.** The rapidly changing nature of our economy means students will likely move in and out of postsecondary education over the course of their lives. Students should expect support and access to education even after they attain their first degree. Employment over the course of one's life requires a changing set of skills.

6. **Start small and scale up.** Strategies probably should not be implemented system-wide immediately. Establishing pilot programs with a coalition of the willing – a few campuses, school or students – to try, evaluate, try again and then scale up based on success is most effective.

Conclusions & Final Recommendations

These final recommendations are intended to help guide policymakers as they consider educational attainment goals for Minnesota. The Citizens League and the Office of Higher Education drafted these educational attainment goals based on the findings from the workgroups and survey responses. These proposed goals also represent the work groups' efforts to expand the definition of affordability beyond just tuition to include elements that would encourage student completion such as intrusive advising and alignment with employer needs. These goals represent a starting place for discussion and action. While efforts were made to open the process to as many stakeholders as possible to get diverse perspectives, we know that not all voices were represented. Given this, we encourage policymakers to be open to other stakeholders as they come forward to test and provide additional insight that will strengthen these goals.

Goal 1: Attainment of Certificates and Degrees

A. Increase the number of Minnesotans age 25-44 who hold postsecondary credentials (degrees or certificates) to 70 percent by 2025.

   o Latest data: In 2013, 52 percent of Minnesotans age 25-44 had earned an associate degree or higher.[8]

B. By 2025, Minnesota should increase the percent of adults who hold a certificate or degree to 75 percent.

   o Latest data: In 2013, 48 percent of Minnesota adults age 25-64 earned an associate degree or higher. NOTE: 23 percent of adults age 25-64 in the "some college, but no degree" category may have some certification.[9]

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[8] Minnesota Office of Higher Education, Educational Attainment Data: http://www.ohe.state.mn.us/fc/1873/pg.cfm
[9] Minnesota Office of Higher Education, Educational Attainment Data: http://www.ohe.state.mn.us/fc/1873/pg.cfm

Goal 2: Educational Disparities by Race/Ethnicity

C. By 2025, Minnesota should reduce the gap in educational attainment rates by race/ethnicity for Minnesotans age 25 to 34 by 75 percent.

- o Latest data: Data available for the age bracket 25-34 is from 2005 and 2007.
  2005 Data[10]
    - 53 percent of White adults age 25-34 with Associate degree or higher
    - 28.5 percent of Black adults age 25-34 with Associate degree or higher
    - 16.9 percent of Hispanic adults age 25-34 with Associate degree or higher
    - 61.9 percent of Asian adults age 25-34 with Associate degree or higher
    - Note: No data for Native Americans was represented in this particular Census Report.*
  2007 Data[11]
    - 55 percent of White adults age 25-34 with Associate degree or higher
    - 24.3 percent of Non-white adults (Black, Hispanics, Native American) excluding Asians age 25-34 with Associate degree or higher.
    - Note: Data for Asians were omitted in this particular Census Report.*

D. By 2025, ensure that all students, including underserved students, have access to and knowledge of dual credit programs such as concurrent enrollment and PSEO.

- o Latest data: Currently, there is no formal metric for measuring access and knowledge of dual credit programs, but participation rates do exist.
    - Statewide Student Demographics, Participation Rates in Dual Credit Programs, FY 2013[12]
      - AP programs
        - o 38,769 total
        - o 3,671 (9.5%) low income
        - o 6,642 (17.1 %) minority
      - IB programs
        - o 3,150 total
        - o 622 (19.7%) low income
        - o 1,194 (38%) minority
      - Concurrent enrollment
        - o 23,583 total
        - o 3,859 (16%) low income
        - o 2,368 (10%) minority
      - PSEO
        - o 6,915 total
        - o 1,319 (19%) low income
        - o 1,197 (17%) minority

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[10] NCHEMS. Educational Attainment of the Population Age 25-34 by Race/Ethnicity and State, 2005 Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2005 American Community Survey Public Use Microdata Sample File.

[11] Source: NCHEMS U.S. Census Bureau, 2010-12 American Community Survey (ACS) Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS) File.

[12] Dual Credit Programs in Minnesota, Participation Rates, 2007-2013, http://centerforschoolchange.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/RigorousCourseTaking2014-Data-Table.pdf

* Moving forward, we will want to ensure data for all race/ethnicity is represented.

Goal 3: Education Alignment with Workforce Needs

    E.   By 2025, 75 percent of employers are satisfied with skills from their employees who participated in Minnesota's postsecondary institutions.

        o   [No current data. New metrics required for this goal.]

Goal 4: Meeting the Needs of Students

    F.   By 2025, 70 percent of students say their postsecondary institution met their needs.

        o   [No current data. New metrics required for this goal.]

    G.   By 2020, 75 percent of colleges will utilize intrusive advising and/or mentoring programs to support student success and increase retention and completion rates.

        o   [No current data. New metrics required for this goal.]

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