

Meeting Notes and Recommendations, January 12, 2006
Minnesota State Colleges and Universities
Transfer Oversight Committee Workgroup

Participants: Ray Anshel, Nancy Black, Monte Butte, Joan Costello, Debra Japp, Dan Sperling, Steve Whipple, Louise Hoxworth, Lynda Milne, JoAnn Simser

Purpose of the meeting:

10/21/05 Transfer Oversight Committee members recommended that a small workgroup be formed to provide recommendations to the Transfer Oversight Committee on the following items:

1. Develop framework for system discussions on general education to occur in FY07 including processes to engage faculty in series of conversations, expected outcomes, facilitation, role of CTL and costs; request funding for initiative.
2. Review Proposed Institutional Self Evaluation for the MnTC steps and timeline including general education discussion and review of Guidelines
3. Prepare recommendation to Transfer Oversight Committee for review January 20, 2006.

Meeting notes:

The group discussed the purpose of the workgroup meeting. Was it to create a framework for general education discussions or to discuss whether or not the institutions should do a self review of the Minnesota Transfer Curriculum? In September 2005, the TOC revised the Proposed Institutional Self-Evaluation for the MnTC timeline to delay the institutional self review until FY2007 and approved the “Checklist of Evaluation Criteria for Courses to be include in the MnTC”. The evaluation criteria included the institution’s definition of general education, guidelines, competency/goal areas and a comparison with other institutions. The 10/21/05 TOC recommended a cover letter from faculty to educate faculty and provide background regarding the MnTC. The draft “Background for the MnTC” provided by Steve Whipple MSCF with comments from Brian Donovan IFO indicates that history is an important part of how we proceed with review and that there are points of contention and 4 yr and 2 yr differences. Do we want to evaluate, find ways to agree, and move ahead or not? Some thought it was Item 1 and 2 and 3 together—general education discussion and closure on MnTC review. Does a general statewide conversation drive MnTC review or does TOC’s view of MnTC drive state process?

The group agreed to go ahead, the question was how to proceed.

- What we have is different campuses with different versions of the MnTC and of general education—individual campuses understand their own version. We need to bring faculty off campuses and meet centrally, like they did the first time; if we start on campuses, will we get different versions?
- Are we going to take centralist or federalist approach? The agreement for self-review in September 2005 TOC was that each institution would use its own general education definition aligned with Higher Learning Commission criteria. It is helpful to have general questions and discussions about general education as well. This is the core tension. If we have discussions--what is general education, etc; when we go to the federalist approach, we will do it with knowledge.
- There was a concern whether discussions would lead to an imposed view—not necessarily so. By having conversations we will find out we differ on some things and some we all value. The group expressed appreciation to Steve for doing background on the cover letter and to Brian whose comments illustrate differences that need to be discussed.

- Education is changing and can't be static.
- The University of MN will have general education/core review in FY07; ours is more complicated. It is difficult to find a common voice due to the variety of institutions, missions and turf or FTE and other concerns.
- Is general education determined by guidelines or competencies? It is both. All items must be considered on checklist—we could send checklist to campuses as criteria to review their courses.
- There is the same tension on the campus. One campus was able to move forward by putting the focus on what students should do and asking the questions: What should students know? What should students be able to do? What should students value?
- A discussion of general education could help us to determine of what we value in common and where we differ; build on things we value in common; and provide a process for change. AASCU, AAC&U (Great Expectations) and others are talking about changes in education.
- The 1994 MnTC agreement was faculty-developed with general education as the premise. Faculty representatives in every discipline agreed system-wide on what goals would be and worked out what courses would satisfy what goals. However, individual institutions didn't agree. As each institution developed its MnTC, the MnTC was influenced by a variety of factors including credit restrictions, enrollments, failing courses, courses developed to fit MnTC competencies. The Omnibus Bill of 2001 expanded the MnTC agreement from the entire package to individual goals and courses.

What if we say “the system works”? The MnTC Agreement is implemented at all MnSCU institutions. Due to the legislation, courses are transferring as well; students have stopped going to the legislature. Is the issue bigger than whether credits transfer; is it whether students can do what they need to be able to do? There are some problems, inconsistency in goal areas for courses among institutions and how to transfer out of state courses. It would help if each institution fully utilized DARS and CAS. Students want to know what counts. Mission differentiation is important. It is healthy to have general education discussion, CTL could bring us together. It is our responsibility as faculty to make sure students receive quality. Goals/competencies; master courses, online courses drive a tendency to homogenize courses—faculty have different philosophies to try to meet needs of students; others not in classroom cannot impose it. A narrow focus has developed—how can we open it up and see how to do it better? If we have discussions on campus—how can we operationalize it to make it productive? We are still trying to find out what it means as a system. Can we somehow create a larger umbrella for transfer students? Is there a way we can facilitate discussion across system to help with determining what's in or out of MnTC; go back to goal areas; how we change it? The MnTC is 14 years old—there is the idea that computer and business can't be in there.

Lynda Milne provided information on related system approaches and initiated discussion concerning the role of CTL. The Senior Vice Chancellor was concerned about a commitment to faculty unions to make sure the system didn't lose focus on liberal arts. The liberal arts conference in 2001 in St. Cloud was a beginning to celebrate liberal arts. CTL was asked to take it on; the unions didn't want another conference at that time. The bigger question to think about is if we're producing liberally educated students. CTL could be a facilitator. There may be faculty resistance that O of C is trying to impose something. There is a need for a facilitator of conversations and for a listener; someone should listen to conversations and report them;

synthesize and disseminate. Results may be of help to curriculum committees and work groups. It would be very tough for synthesizer—so much suspicion.

The value of the conversation is to raise important questions. The Board of Trustees has a desire to quantify things, but this is open ended discussion. Why have the conversations? Is the conversation more about vision and mission rather than specific outcomes? HLC requires institutions to tie general education/liberal education to vision/mission. The Board has been talking about system mission, vision and guiding principles—one reason to have conversation is to provide information to the Board of Trustees. Purposes are to launch/stimulate conversations in system wide committees, the Board and to inform campuses themselves.

Northland asked: Why are core competencies appropriate to our students? What should we be doing in classroom? Some faculty were excited about this; others felt they had done it before and did not see the need for it. Conversations could be adapted for each campus according to their needs. One way to reduce CTL role is to help campus CTL leaders facilitate their own conversations; the CTL office could facilitate the process and listen to the conversation. It is important to articulate the purposes for the discussions.

A CTL proposal to Ford Foundations to fund conversations was not submitted but it provides some examples of questions to be considered based on AAC&U Presidents' Campaign for the Advancement of Liberal Learning (CALL). 2010 discussions held at several campuses were to look at the future of education to provide information for the Board for strategic goals. When the Board talks about future they look at economics, building a bigger base of technology and Centers of Excellence. The concern was expressed that liberal education/general education doesn't have a place in this; we've been quiet about the place of liberal education and how it enhances success of students. Personal and career goals will be focus; and not a liberal education. How do we communicate to students, as system of individual institutions, that this is what we value for them? How do we get students to realize the value of liberal education to "enhance quality of life for all Minnesotans" (from mission)? Perhaps discussions about liberal/general education can be done in parallel with those about MnTC. Maybe the core concern we have is that the current configuration of MnTC doesn't reflect any values, but reflects institutional concerns about jobs and political issues. We are undercutting ourselves with this without a vision or picture for our students and community. Maybe conversations can get us back to whether liberal education is reflected in MnTC. We could use vision and mission to mobilize the faculty. The vast majority of faculty believe in liberal arts.

The group needs to provide recommendations to the Transfer Oversight Committee which is scheduled to meet 1/20/06 and 4/28/06—if we want to get any recommendations into the budget requests, they need to be considered at the January meeting. More students are presenting more transcripts to evaluate credits for transfer, often from two to five institutions some from out of state. The nature of higher education is changing. What would younger faculty believe about this? There is a desire to involve more faculty in the conversations. There was discussion about who should lead this effort—academic affairs committees of the unions, chief academic officers, consultants, faculty—the consensus was that the TOC needs to take a leadership role. They understand the issues and would not need to start from scratch. We need to find a way to add to the Board's mission, vision and guiding principles as expressed in the strategic plan. What can we do that's most productive to move this ahead to accomplish goal? There is power on individual campuses—faculty can structure and put together programs and attitudes. They have students in their hands every day. We need to be proactive; articulate our values, take things we believe are important and promote them. We need to begin conversation about liberal education and how it fits into vision/mission of MnSCU. General education is too limiting.

The TOC should continue oversight e.g. upper division, world languages. We need to continue TOC commitment to practical issues, logistics of transfer between institutions; standardizing guidelines across state or not, and to suggest processes for courses that come from outside MnSCU. Transfer Specialists see a broader range of problems, call attention to things that need to be considered to meet students' needs. The recommendations are a quick plan as a starting point.

It is easier to get faculty together on campuses, but we need collective outreach—whatever discussion needs to go beyond individual institutions; individual institution has own view; needs to go broader. What do terms mean in Board vision and mission: “quality of life”, “enable people of Minnesota to succeed”, “highest value education”, etc.

These conversations could be a central theme or initiative of the system next year with outcomes in April/May 07; then move to next step—look at MnTC and see if it fits outcomes of conversations. One way to proceed is to take flash words like general education or liberal education out. “What does it mean to be educated?” is the broader question. We need to ask about values. When we have conferences, we seem to talk to one another— we need to build into audiences outside of faculty; include students, business leaders, board members, etc. We need a theme or a title—it was suggested we consult the Transfer Oversight Committee.

The workgroup felt it had broken a language barrier today—we have same values, goals, concerns; are on the same side. The subcommittee is effective, suggest subcommittee meet again. The workgroup set up a follow-up meeting in February-- Feb. 7th 8:00 am (2) , Feb. 16th 8:00 (3) , Feb. 6th 1:30 (1) for 2 hours to consider Transfer Oversight Committee discussion, and work out details, process, budget and timeline for conversations.

Recommendations to Transfer Oversight Committee

- 1) Delay a Transfer Oversight Committee initiated Institutional Self Evaluation for the MnTC until after the conversations in FY07. Continue the ongoing institutional MnTC reviews and determination of courses included within the MnTC with input and advice from the Transfer Oversight Committee and the Office of the Chancellor transfer staff.
- 2) Conduct system-wide proactive larger conversations
 - Questions:
 - What roles do general education/liberal education/core values have in the System Strategic Plan 2006-2010 Mission, Vision and Guiding Principles, Directions and Goals (see attached draft 1/04/06 on the AdHoc Committee, Educational Policy and Board of Trustees agenda January 18-19, 2006)
 - How does what we share in common in general education/liberal education/core values fit into the System Strategic Plan 2006-2010 Mission, Vision and Guiding Principles, Directions and Goals?
 - How are the system mission, vision, principles and goals reflected in MnTC?
 - What do we mean by a successful Minnesotan and quality of life?
 - How does a MnSCU education contribute to those ends?
 - What do we mean by an educated person?
 - What are our core values in respect to an educated person?
 - Promote an FY07 theme or initiative around <title for the discussions> in academic and student affairs, CTL, transfer, system committees, etc. Involve faculty, CAO's, CSAO's, deans, Leadership Council, students, business leaders, community representatives.

- Conversation informs review of MnTC and provides common system core values as a basis for institutional determination of MnTC.
 - How do we engage faculty and others in the conversation?
 - Sept 07-Kick off event early fall, educate participants, set the stage for conversations
 - Conversations throughout the year, institutions/regionally--invite public, business and community leaders, students to discuss these questions. CTL to facilitate and listen.
 - April 07-Culminating event to celebrate what we've done, share excitement, and communicate outcomes-invite public other constituencies.
- 3) Continue Transfer Oversight Committee commitment to addressing transfer issues, logistics of transfer among MnSCU institutions and from other public and private higher education institutions, and the operationalization of the MNTC; suggesting processes that might work and identifying systematic approaches to common and emerging transfer issues to meet student needs.

FY06 Transfer Oversight Committee Meetings: Friday, January 20, 2006, Friday, April 28, 2006

Additional references provided at the meeting:

Background for the Minnesota Transfer Agreement, Draft 11/7/05 Steve Whipple with Comments provided by Brian Donovan 11/15/05.

Bok, Derek "The Critical Role of Trustees in Enhancing Student Learning", The Chronicle of Higher Education 12/16/2005 Web reference for subscribers:
<http://chronicle.com/weekly/v52/i17/17b01201.htm>

Cronon, William J. "Qualities of the Liberally Educated Person", Liberal Education , Vol 85:No. 1 Winter, 1999.

Handouts:

Proposed Institutional Self Evaluation for the MNTC-revised plan and timeline (after 10/21/05)
 Checklist of Evaluation criteria for courses to be included in MnTC
 Guidelines for the Review and Design of a Minnesota Transfer Curriculum
 Commission Statement on General Education, February 13, 2003,
http://www.ncahigherlearningcommission.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=57&Itemid=80
 Ford Foundation Notes and draft of a proposal (not submitted)
 Questions 12/16/05 email from Lynda Milne
 2010 Conversations: asa-mscf-conversations-2010.doc
 Northland College conversations facilitated by AAC&U consultant, Barbara Hill northland-notes.doc
 "Background Brief for Campus Conversations on Liberal and General Education." libgened-conversations.doc
 Normandale liberal ed/general ed discussions <http://www.normandale.project.mnscu.edu>