

Remarks before the Board of Trustees
February 9, 2017
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Chancellor-Designate

Chair Vekich and Trustees, who said you can't go home again?

It is great to be here, and it is a delight to be with all of you, as well as all my colleagues in the audience. It will indeed be an honor and a privilege to serve Minnesota State and the citizens and residents of Minnesota in yet another capacity. Thank you for this opportunity.

Minnesota State is a large and complex organization, where each university and college has its unique mission and its unique local and regional impact. Yet these individual institutional missions and the resultant operational frames are woven into a mosaic of strong – I may add wonderful – systematic patterns that harken to our commonality and to our collective steadfast focus on providing all Minnesotans with an affordable, extraordinary education that will prepare them for work and life, and will enable them to make significant contributions to the economic and social vibrancy of the communities in which they live. In short, the whole is greater than the sum of the parts.

Under the leadership of this board, Chair Vekich, we have in the past few years pursued a very aggressive change agenda, and we are in the midst of rethinking our focus and purpose, our organizational culture, and our modes of operation in order to effectively prepare all Minnesotans for a rapidly changing world around them. It will be fair to say we are rethinking our profession. What I admire about our approach is that rather than focusing solely on the resource constraints of the day, as important and as challenging as they are, we are committed to pursuing strategic goals to fulfill our innate promise and potential. I firmly believe that this approach is helping us to identify operational paths that are both growth-oriented and sustainable.

I am under no illusion that we have reached the end of the journey and the work is done. We have only just started, and the task before us will not be easy. There will be many challenges and attendant risks of failure. Hopefully, we will learn from our failures and use these lessons to increase the efficacy of our strategic approaches.

In my interim role, I want to make sure that there is no deceleration in the change momentum and that, through the leadership transition, continuity and stability is preserved both at the individual college/university level and at the collective system level.

Pursuit of our change agenda will require continuing focus on building organizational capacity and on the reprioritization and reallocation of resources. We want to make sure we have the capacity to change and the resources available to undertake the necessary tasks. In the coming months, I will seek clarity and guidance from the board, engage presidents and system staff, consult with union leadership, faculty, staff, and – most importantly – students to identify the capacity gaps and the areas where reprioritization and reallocation are needed. We also need

to continue to ramp up our engagement with the broader community, with government officials, and with legislative leaders. Hopefully, as we continue down this path, it will increase the level understanding, both externally and internally, regarding our strategic approaches, and our operational paths.

I do not want to leave you with the impression that I have all the answers. In fact, I do not.

However, I do not want to assure you all, Chair Vekich and members of the board, that I will work hard and engage with you extensively to fully understand your strategic imperatives and follow your guidance as I work with our colleges and universities to continue delivering on our compact with the citizens and residents of Minnesota.