Campus Colleagues,

With disbelief that August is already behind us and in anticipation of an eventful September, I am writing with my second monthly update.

It is difficult to believe that two weeks have passed since we began the academic year together in Hansen Theater. For those of you who were unable to attend my opening remarks to the campus community on August 20th, you can find the video recording at http://www.mnstate.edu/president/news-notes/fall-address.aspx

In my opening remarks, I outlined steps we are taking to strengthen our campus culture and improve the work environment for all employees. These include administering the "Great Places to Work" survey within the next few weeks and using the results to guide and track the results of our improvement efforts. Watch for information about the survey and how you can participate. We've also begun a process of refining and focusing our core values and strategic priorities so that they more clearly delineate what is distinctive about MSUM. Initial ideas will be shared with the campus community soon.

As we continue our longer term planning efforts, we must also focus our attention on what is most important right now: enrollment management. As I noted in my August 20th remarks, retaining our students and ensuring their graduation from MSUM is as important, if not more important, than recruiting new students to the university. During the next year, I will hold the members of our senior executive team accountable for accomplishing seven key objectives to grow enrollment. These objectives are outlined in the slides from my presentation, available at the above link.

I anticipate that enrollment will be down approximately 4.0% for the year. Because we planned for a decline in revenue, and because we are holding in reserve approximately $500,000 in unspent dollars from last year’s budget, there are no plans to cut this year’s operating budgets. While I have faith in our recruitment and retention efforts, it is also encouraging to note that the steady decline in the number of high school graduates in our region is expected to reverse beginning in 2015. Certainly, there is evidence in our local community that there are increasing numbers of students in the pipeline: Moorhead public schools are reporting their highest enrollments in decades, particularly at the elementary levels.

Given the challenges of our current budget environment, fundraising is more important than ever to our efforts to provide a transformational educational experience for our students. That's why, in addition to seeking support from friends and alumni of the University, I have personally pledged $50,000 to the "Laps for the Long Run" fundraising event during the week of Homecoming and my inauguration ceremony. Within the next few days, you will receive information about our annual fundraising campaign for faculty and staff. This year's theme is "Giving with Pride." Please join me in demonstrating to our students, alumni, and friends that we believe in the future of MSUM and the transformative power of higher education. As always, our goal is 100% participation from our faculty and staff. Every contribution
makes a difference in the lives of our students and demonstrates our pride in the work we do together.

While MSUM has certainly received a lot of positive press recently, you may also have seen news reports alluding to the possible closure of the Ponderosa Golf Course, which has operated on land adjacent to our Regional Science Center and owned by our Alumni Foundation. The land was originally given to the University for the purpose of scientific research and education. It has been held in trust by the Foundation and leased to Valley Golf Management until the funds become available to use the land for its intended purpose. If we are successful in our efforts to secure a $500,000 grant from the Legislative Citizens-Commission for Minnesota Resources (LCCMR), the University will finally be able to realize the land's potential as a site for research on prairie restoration and conservation. Indications are promising that we will receive funding during the upcoming legislative session.

Finally, yesterday’s brief campus lock-down was a reminder that it is important to have a clear and readily accessible protocol for how to respond in emergency situations. I have asked our VP for Finance and Administration, Jan Mahoney, who oversees our Office of Public Safety, to send a brief summary of our lock-down protocol to the campus community within the next few days.

As always, I welcome your feedback, questions, and concerns. In particular, I welcome your suggestions about information or updates you would like to see in these monthly emails.

With Dragon Pride,

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