February 11, 2015

Campus Colleagues,

After reviewing the results of the ModernThink campus climate survey, it seems clear we agree there’s a need to improve our internal communication systems. This task is complex and will require our creativity, persistence and collaboration. We'll need to be better at talking with each other. We'll need to make sure people have access to information. We’ll need to aggressively seek the opinions, perspectives, and ideas of others. And we’ll need a shared understanding of our values and priorities. I hope these updates help.

The ModernThink survey was an initial step in our collective effort to improve our campus culture. An important next step is conversation about the campus climate we want to create. To that end, I encourage you to participate in the roundtable discussions that are scheduled during the next few weeks. The dates and times have been publicized in Dragon Digest (http://news.mnstate.edu/2015/02/campus-climate-survey-results-roundtable-discussions-scheduled/). Registration is required so we can ensure adequate space and a sufficient number of handouts.

The roundtables will be solution-focused conversations about how we can work together to improve our campus climate. Three roundtables are scheduled, each with the same agenda, so please sign up for the one that best fits your calendar. We will add roundtables as needed so everyone has an opportunity to participate.

Last week, I spent several days in St. Paul meeting with our local legislators, including Representatives Ben Lien, Bud Nornes, and Paul Marquart, and Senators Kent Eken and Bill Ingebrigtsen. The purpose of the meetings was to ensure that our regional legislators understand the local impact of MnSCU’s budget request and the potential implications for MSUM if the request is not funded. Our share of the $142 million request is approximately $6.5 million. While $6.5 million is a significant amount in the university’s overall budget, it is much too early to predict the outcomes of the legislative session. Rather, we will prepare—and share—various budget scenarios for the next biennium and fine tune them as the session progresses.

Even more important to our university budget than our state allocation is our tuition revenue—and, thus, enrollment. Based on our 10-day numbers for spring semester, it appears that enrollment for the full academic year (FYE) is down 5%. Although this is a bit more than we projected, our budget is balanced for the current fiscal year, primarily because of an increase in graduate enrollment and the higher per-credit graduate tuition rate.

You should know that MSUM is in the midst of the most successful fundraising year in
the history of the university. Within the next few weeks, we will be announcing several large gifts to academic programs, each of which has the potential to be transformative. While such gifts are increasingly important to our financial stability, they are important for another reason: They demonstrate that others believe in us and are willing to invest in our future. I hope you will join me in celebrating these gifts when they are announced.

Finally, I encourage you to look for and appreciate the many examples of our core values of grit, humility, and heart that are evidenced on our campus every day. One place to look is the homepage of our website, where we’ve featured alumnus Ken Jaeger, CASE Professor of the Year Kyja Kristjansson-Nelson, and Founders Scholarship recipient Rebecca Garvey. Each story is a vivid example of our core values in action and all three inspire my Dragon Pride.

As always, I invite your questions or comments and I thank you for everything you do to transform the lives of our students.

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Anne Blackhurst
President
Minnesota State University Moorhead