Hello, everyone! Spring break is here and, despite the weather, M State continues to progress in accomplishing its mission and vision. Speaking of which, I certainly hope that you have had an opportunity to participate in the strategic planning sessions conducted with almost every internal and external constituent that we can think of. The review of our mission, vision and strategic goals is an important first step in developing a roadmap for the future of M State, and you want to be sure to participate and provide your input. Please see Jill Abbott or Dana Haagenson to get an update or share your thoughts. Note that the strategic planning process was scheduled for FY18 prior to our notification of the Higher Learning Commission visit. The timing could not be better, as we can now add HLC input into the planning process, as well.

I will be visiting with the Student Government Association on each campus again this term. I try to provide them with an update of how M State is doing from several different perspectives. I have wonderful news to share with them this year, as the data from several sources is most revealing:

- System metrics indicate that M State is improving in nearly every metric that we can control, as compared to other system colleges.
- Summaries from the CCSSEE, PACE, and strategic planning external constituent (students, business and industry, general advisory council) surveys have all come back very positive.

These improvements are all a result of the outstanding work that YOU do every day. Thank you so much for your time and efforts. As a continuous improvement organization, that effort will continue to help M State stand out now and well into the future.

Things are happening in the Legislature, also. A $329 million surplus for the current biennium was reported recently due largely to short-term stimulus from federal tax changes. Minnesota State will present its $224.5 million bonding request, of which $130 million is for asset preservation. The supplemental budget is also important, as it contains funding for NextGen Enterprise Resource Planning. If the Legislature does not fund NextGen, then each campus will need to budget approximately $225,000 for the next six years! Please let your local legislators know how important funding is to our colleges and universities. I will, as well.

Also, a reminder that the HLC will be visiting us April 23-25. A summary report of the process and our responses will be published for your review prior to the visit.

Have a happy March! As my time with M State draws to a close, I am reminded of how much I have enjoyed working with all of you these last seven years. Thank you for everything you have done that has led to student success and organizational excellence!

Dr. Peggy D. Kennedy
President
Academics

Aren’t Students Our Customers?

If you want people to scrunch up their noses, or if you want to get into a healthy debate in higher education, you simply need to call students “customers.” Customer service is not a popular phrase in higher education because it implies the student is always right. In higher education, talking about customer service brings up questions about fairness, rigor and quality. Or at least it did.

The article “Open for Business” in the February/March issue of Community College Journal aligns with a renewed interest in discussing customer service in community colleges around the nation. Community colleges are hiring consultants from large corporations to align organizational policies and practices to “put students back at the center of everything a college does.”

At M State, we may not be ready to call our students customers, but I am certain we all recognize the benefit of students having a student-focused experience at M State. What if the college could focus on fairness, rigor, quality and student-focused service in all aspects of our work? A blog post in Inside Higher Education suggested five ways to increase customer service:

**Think like them.** Understanding their perspective allows you to turn the focus from you to them. It helps you understand what needs to be on your home page and what doesn’t. It allows you to put less emphasis on the things that matter to your institution (like the number of buildings you have) and more emphasis on the things that matter to your students.

**Consider the full journey.** We tend to segment and “hand off” different parts of the student journey from prospect to enrolled student to alumna. That makes sense internally, because different staff members handle admissions versus orientation versus financial aid. The problem is that this artificial segmentation leads to disjointed messaging and communications for your target audience.

**Eliminate unnecessary obstacles.** Segmentation of the student journey doesn’t only result in inconsistent communication. Because higher ed institutions tend to be siloed, we often fail to look at ways to simplify processes across departments.

**Talk like a human.** One of the biggest problems with any type of organizational communication is that it sounds like organizational communication, complete with jargon, buzzwords and overly stuffy language. Edit your communications with an eye for simple language and short words. Your audiences will thank you.

**Own the problem.** Don’t you hate that experience of being handed off from one person to another? Students do, too, whether they’re prospects or enrolled “customers.” Train staff to own the problem rather than handing it off to someone else. Not only will students and their parents be happier, it will also help with cross-training staff, as they have to learn about other areas in order to solve the problem.

Students cannot always get what they want. But what if we could ensure them that every employee is empowered to do absolutely everything they can to help them achieve their dreams? I believe that every employee is empowered to make things happen for students. Let’s make a commitment to start asking questions about processes and practices that impact the student experience. That is what it will take to achieve our vision of being a “success story for every student and stakeholder,” but I believe we can do it.
In previous newsletters, we’ve focused on criteria for institutional accreditation from the Higher Learning Commission and asked you to consider how your work supports these criteria:

- **Criterion 1. Mission** – The institution’s mission is clear and articulated publicly; it guides the institution’s operations.
- **Criterion 2. Integrity: Ethical and Responsible Conduct** – The institution acts with integrity; its conduct is ethical and responsible.
- **Criterion 3. Teaching and Learning: Quality, Resources, and Support** – The institution provides high-quality education, wherever and however its offerings are delivered.

This month, I invite you to reflect on how your daily work helps M State to meet:

**Criterion 4. Teaching and Learning: Evaluation and Improvement** – The institution demonstrates responsibility for the quality of its educational programs, learning environments and support services, and it evaluates their effectiveness for student learning through processes designed to promote continuous improvement.

The core components of Criterion 4 include:

a. The institution demonstrates responsibility for the quality of its educational programs.
b. The institution demonstrates a commitment to educational achievement and improvement through ongoing assessment of student learning.
c. The institution demonstrates a commitment to educational improvement through ongoing attention to retention, persistence and completion rates in its degree and certificate programs.

The criteria for accreditation, core components and sub-components are available at [hlcommission.org/Policies/criteria-and-core-components.html](http://hlcommission.org/Policies/criteria-and-core-components.html).

Here are your reflection questions regarding Criterion 4.

1. How do we evaluate the success of our current students and graduates, and what data shows evidence of their success?
2. Share a favorite example of how you changed your approach in your class or in your daily work to more effectively address a student need or question.
3. What retention and persistence initiatives are you contributing to, and what data is being used to help evaluate and shape the initiative?

Thanks for taking time to think about how your daily work contributes to M State meeting Criterion 4. Email me by March 29 with your response to any of the reflection questions for a chance to be featured in the April newsletter.
Last week I went in for a 4 p.m. dentist appointment for a filling. Nasty bit of business, that; at least my dentist is quick with the drill-to-fill and manages to inflict the least amount of discomfort and pain as possible.

What surprised me most was the pre-appointment wait in the general receiving area. I counted nine patients, all of advanced age (I probably represented the median). Every one of us sat, heads-down, eyes locked on our smart phones. We were all in the same age bracket, and yet … this wasn’t the way we used to spend our time waiting to see a dentist.

When folks my age were kids, we used to wait in the dentist’s office reading Highlights for Children magazine. Highlights had this one cartoon feature called “Goofus and Gallant” that ran a full page in every issue. Goofus and Gallant represented the archetypes of goodness and badness, which brings me to the points I want to make about higher education in the comparative states of Minnesota and Maine.

In the March 2 issue of The Chronicle of Higher Education, one article, “How Maine Became a Laboratory for the Future of Public Higher Ed,” presents the very bad, Goofus-like scenario facing public colleges in that state. The population in the Maine has a median age of 44.2 (the oldest in the nation). The projected number of Maine high school graduates will decline 14 percent by 2032, and with its 47th-in-the-nation ranking for fertility and immigration, enrollment at public schools has been in a considerable decline for the past decade and is headed for a cliff.

One Maine college president was quoted as saying, “We’re in the worst corner of the worst corner in the country for demographics” for traditional-age students. All of which had made Maine – according to the article – not only “the canary in the coal mine for the challenges that public colleges face in many states,” but also “the de facto laboratory for the future of sustainable public higher education.”

Maine is in the process of pursuing a number of sustainability-focused initiatives that may sound familiar: consolidation of back-office operations at the system level; ramping up retention efforts; reaching back to high school popula-
Student Development Services

Tale of Two States ... continued from page 4

The challenging news for us is that the growth will come in demographics that we may not be entirely prepared to successfully serve and teach. In Minnesota, the number of white high school grads will decline by 5 percent in the next 15 years, while the number of black high school grads will increase by 47 percent and the number of Hispanic grads will increase by 15 percent.

In North Dakota, the number of white high school grads will increase by 68 percent in the next 15 years, while the number of black high school grads will increase by 523 percent and the number of Hispanic grads will increase by 363 percent. Such dramatic shifts in the composition of our student body should call attention within our strategic planning processes to intentional consideration of our curriculum, learning outcomes, support services, co-curricular programming, facilities and, perhaps most of all, our own intercultural development. Enrollment growth is within our reach, though we’re going to need to be gallant about it.

For more detailed information on the high school projections data cited in this article, see Appendix C Technical Information and Methodology at knocking.wiche.edu. Source: Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education, Knocking at the College Door: Projections of High School Graduates, 2016.

Minnesota State Community and Technical College Music Department presents

J. Mark McVey

A Broadway Singer

11-11:50 am
Monday, March 26
Waage Theatre

Free to M State students, faculty, staff and the community

minnesota.edu/arts
1414 College Way, Fergus Falls, MN 56537

Learn more. Earn more. minnesota.edu
This Month’s Hot Topics

IT Training

Kudos to the Computer Help Center staff for providing One-Drive training recently and to the CTLT team for partnering with IT in our first cross-college training event held Feb. 27 to learn more about Adobe Connect. We appreciate everyone who was able to attend these trainings and look forward to your feedback. Look for other great training opportunities throughout spring semester.

Office 365 Unified Tenancy on Track

It won’t be long now and our IT team will be engaging in conversation with the system office IT team as we plan the migration to Office 365 Unified Tenancy. This move will unify our Office 365 applications (including email) with all other Minnesota State colleges that have already made the switch. To PREPARE for the migration, we are asking users to clean up their email, empty deleted and sent items, etc. The cleaner things are, the faster they will migrate and the fewer issues that might arise. If you are still using the old GroupWise Retain archive, it will be going away when we move to the Unified Tenancy. If you need help retrieving any data, please submit a ticket.

NextGen Planning Site

In a March 2 statement, Chancellor Malhotra said, “Today we embark on a much-needed process that is both exciting yet challenging and will greatly enhance our ability to provide an extraordinary education to our students. The project is foundational to the work for our colleges and universities in supporting student success and ensuring programmatic and financial sustainability.”

This semester Minnesota State began the first phase of a two-phase, 7-10 year ISRS replacement project call NextGen Enterprise Resource Planning. The goals are to: 1) enhance student outreach and engagement, 2) eliminate technical problems and 3) provide Minnesota State with the flexibility and scalability to support its mission for the long term.

Phase 1 includes:

- business process review to address human resource, financial and student administration requirements
- establishing application and data governance
- legacy technology refresh
- establishing and conducting an ERP request for proposal and vendor selection

Phase 2 is expected to begin in July 2020 and continue through 2025 as Minnesota State works with the implementation/change management and ERP vendors to develop and implement the new ERP solution.

D2L migration to Cloud Hosting

Minnesota State has self-hosted D2L Brightspace for its 37 schools since 2004, maintaining the hardware and software where the D2L Brightspace application, course materials and course data reside. In addition Minnesota State has been responsible for purchasing, configuring, updating and expanding that hardware and software, including the application servers, utility servers and database, as well as monitoring overall performance. With the move to the cloud, the D2L company will be taking over those responsibilities.

Migration to the cloud is a natural progression and is in line with the industry shift to a Software as an Application Service (SaaS) model for online learning platforms. Most of D2L’s formerly self-hosted clients have already moved to the cloud. A major advantage of cloud hosting is that D2L’s most current software updates and fixes will be provided to us on a regular basis.

The migration is scheduled to take place from 8 p.m. Friday, June 1, through noon Saturday, June 2. D2L will be unavailable during this time (approximately 16 hours).

After migration to the cloud is completed on June 2:

- Each school retains its same unique login URL and logo/branding
- Each school retains the ability to manage its roles and tool and feature permissions
- Users will continue to use StarID credentials to access D2L Brightspace
- Minnesota State will be caught up to the most current features available in D2L Brightspace
- All course materials and course data will still reside on servers that are located in the U.S.
- D2L monthly software updates will be performed live, typically with no downtime
- Maintenance will be performed live, with the expectation of very few and limited planned downtimes
- D2L will publish documentation on its community site for new Brightspace features prior to each monthly update

If you have any questions, please email the NextGen Project Team at NextGenERP@minnesota.edu and/or visit the NextGen SharePoint site.

Lisa Ziegler
Computer Help Center Director

Information Technology ... continued on page 7
Budget Planning Continues to Move Slowly

As we move through spring, the variances that will affect our FY2019 budget planning continue to unfold very slowly. We are beginning to see the first iterations of the allocation formula; however, the salary settlements are still an unknown. The Cabinet is using our best estimates to build a budget with the complete understanding that changes to our projections will continue to happen throughout the spring. As noted in prior communications, the budget planning is calling for a 2 percent enrollment reduction. That, along with the additional system-wide assessments, will require corresponding reductions on the expense side. Communications will continue to come from my office as the budget document becomes clearer.

Financial services division transition

I write this newsletter with a heavy heart while preparing to attend the funeral of our dear friend, Al Behr. Al’s passing leaves a tremendous hole for many of us from both a personal and college perspective. His hearty laugh, quick wit, astounding accounting knowledge and dedicated service will truly be missed by all of us. As I think about what is next, I am electing to take some time, reflect and visit with many of you to determine the best direction to move in regards to the organizational structure of the financial services division. As we move through this transition, please contact me if there are finance-related items that you need assistance with, and we will work through it together.

Severe Weather Awareness Week is April 9-13

According to the National Weather Service, Minnesota experiences an average of 40 tornadoes per year. In 2012, 37 twisters touched down. A record was set in 2010 with 104 tornadoes across the state. Understanding this threat and knowing what to do when a tornado is approaching can save lives.

Severe Weather Awareness Week is designed to refresh, remind and educate everyone about the seasonal threats from severe weather and how to avoid them.

The most important events during the week are the two annual statewide tornado drills. These drills are scheduled for Thursday, April 12, at 1:45 and 6:45 p.m.

Outdoor warning sirens and NOAA weather radios will sound in simulated tornado warnings. The first drill is intended for institutions and businesses. The evening drill is intended for second shift workers and families.

M State will participate in these statewide drills. Please take some time to review your emergency plans and maps prior to April 12. This is also a good time to review your own and your family’s emergency procedures and prepare for weather-related hazards.

Finance and Facilities ... continued from page 4

- Knowledge articles about D2L Brightspace will continue to be created and maintained specifically for Minnesota State schools and will be available to faculty, staff and students via Minnesota State’s D2L Support SharePoint site

Training sessions will be offered to campus site admins, campus trainers, faculty and students from March to May to prepare for the new features. There will be a variety of venues, with dates, times and locations to be announced in advance – watch for more details to come!

In the Spotlight

Ken Iverson
ITS2 Lead - Moorhead Computer Help Center

When it comes to my career, I absolutely love: Helping people and seeing others get excited about technology.

A piece of advice I received that has served me well: On the tech side, try a different web browser and reboot. Outside of work, take time to do the things you enjoy.

My favorite gas station goodie grab: Coffee and something sweet.

People might be surprised to know: I was on the NDSU bowling team for three years while I was a student there.

Most memorable experience at M State so far: Getting to know and building trusting relationships with faculty and staff.
U.S. Has a New Fundraising Landscape

The landscape has changed in the fundraising field. The 2018 federal tax reform bill has brought changes that impact nonprofits and charitable giving patterns. According to Mike Geiger, president and CEO of the Association of Fundraising Professionals, the tax reform bill and the changes in corporate and individual tax rates, along with the doubling of the standard deduction, may impact how mid-level donor giving patterns will continue to support organizations. It may also mean that corporate and major giving will flourish and new opportunities are over the horizon.

As Geiger states, donors do not give only because of tax policy, but history has proven that tax incentives have an influence on a donor’s capacity and frequency of giving. When the standard deduction was expanded, the incentive to give was removed for about 30 million taxpayers.

Across the country, nonprofits are gauging the impact on organizations in 2018. Organizations such as the Association of Fundraising Professionals and other national, regional and local professional organizations are working closely with lawmakers to communicate the effects of the tax reform bill. It is expected that new opportunities will develop over the course of the year to reduce the implications created on January 1.

Below is part one of a two-part series from the Minnesota Council of Nonprofits - Understanding the tax law change. It is reprinted with the permission of the MCN.

MCN Releases FAQ of 2018 Federal Tax Law Changes Affecting Nonprofits

These questions provide a brief overview of the major changes impacting nonprofits and charitable giving: changes in income and estate taxes that may impact charitable giving, and issues related to taxes nonprofits pay and remit as employers.

1. When will we know what kind of effect the new federal tax law is having on charitable giving?

2018 individual income tax returns will not be due until April 15, 2019, and then cumulative reported effects of the changed tax laws will not be evident until late 2019. Giving USA, the most widely used comprehensive report on philanthropy, published annually by the Giving Institute, will report on 2018 numbers in mid-June 2019. Individual organizations will likely be able to share some information on how their level of contributions are changing under the new tax code.

2. How will the tax bill effect the amount of individual charitable giving in Minnesota?

1. The federal tax code will continue to allow an itemized deduction for charitable contributions, but because of other changes in the tax law, fewer people are likely to itemize. According to the Tax Policy Center, about 11 percent of U.S. households are projected to itemize deductions, down from 26 percent under the prior law. In Minnesota, the Department of Revenue has projected that 13 percent of Minnesotans will itemize deductions, down from 36 percent. Many nonprofit organizations are concerned about the potential impact of fewer donors itemizing, and therefore fewer with a direct federal tax benefit for charitable giving.

2. Several national organizations have attempted to estimate how the reduction in the number of taxpayers itemizing their deductions will reduce contributions. Some overall estimates project about a 5 percent reduction in individual charitable contributions. (Of course, donors contribute because of the cause they are supporting, not solely for the tax savings, making it difficult to predict how individuals will adjust their contributions based on tax changes. After the last previous major tax overall, in 1986, billions in charitable contribution reductions were predicted but did not occur.)

3. Minnesota taxpayers who do not itemize deductions on their federal income tax return may subtract a portion of their charitable contributions on their state income tax return. Minnesota’s charitable deduction, also known as the non-itemizer charitable deduction, provides a tax deduction of 50 percent of total charitable contributions over $500. Contributions to any 501(c)(3) organization are eligible for the deduction including all public charities and churches/faith organizations. Coupling Minnesota’s Charitable Deduction with Minnesota’s long tradition of giving and volunteering puts Minnesota in a better position than most other states.

4. The tax bill increased the charitable giving limits for taxpayers who itemize deductions from the current cap of 50 percent of adjusted gross income (AGI) to 60 percent of AGI. This change will enable higher income taxpayers to deduct a higher percentage of their overall income for contributions to charitable nonprofits in 2018.

5. The incentive to make major charitable bequests will be reduced as a result of the Federal Estate Tax threshold doubling to $11 million single/$22 million couple, indexed, with the tax rate staying at 40 percent. (Minnesota’s state estate tax threshold increased from $2.1 million in 2017 to $2.4 million in 2018, with a top tax rate of 16 percent.)

President Finalists Visiting Campuses March 27-29

Finalists for the M State president will be visiting the college Tuesday through Thursday, March 27-29. Finalists will visit all four campuses, and an open forum will be held. The specific details will be forthcoming, but you are encouraged to keep these days in mind.

To prepare for the college visit, review the M State Presidential Profile page.

M State Diversity Plan

The M State Diversity Plan has been updated to reflect key activities accomplished over the last two fiscal years, in addition to what’s planned for the remainder of fiscal 2018 and 2019. Check out the progress and what is ahead!

Worksite Wellness

Walk the Walk at M State update! Registrations for the walking challenge have been terrific. Ninety-plus employees are registered for the challenge which will “run” from March 19-April 22. Watch for weekly updates … get those tennis shoes and put some miles on!

AFSCME and MAPE Frontline Conference

The annual Energizing Our Frontline Network Conference will take place Wednesday and Thursday, May 23-24, at Normandale Community College. Registration information will be coming soon.

Dacia Johnson
Chief Human Resources Officer

STAFF CHANGES

NEW HIRES
Detroit lakes
• Jamon Wouter Friendshuh, WDS Administrative Assistant

MINNESOTA STATE COMMUNITY AND TECHNICAL COLLEGE PRESENTS

M State Invitational ART SHOW

MARCH 5 - MAY 6
Charles Beck Gallery

There will be a public reception from 3-5 p.m. Sunday, May 6

DEADLIEST ENEMY
Our War Against Killer Germs

Osterholm warns in “Deadliest Enemy” that infectious diseases have the power to disrupt everyday life on a global scale, overwhelm public and private resources, and bring trade and transportation to a halt. In his “crisis agenda,” he lays out a realistic response that addresses these challenges.

Doors open at 6:30 pm, Lecture begins at 7 pm
Light refreshments available
Spartan football players pitched in to help local families dig out from a recent snowfall.

Ruby’s Pantry, cosponsored by M State in Detroit Lakes and Moorhead, is having an impact in the lives of our students and community members.

The M State Theatre Department’s production of Nunsense got great play in the Daily Journal.

Environmental activist Winona LaDuke plans a presentation this month on the Fergus Falls campus.

There was plenty of energy when middle school students visited the Wadena campus this month.

An evening with internationally acclaimed indigenous environmental activist

WINONA LADUKE

5 PM MONDAY, MARCH 26
Legacy Hall - Fergus Falls campus

5 Viewing of the film “First Daughter and the Black Snake”
Winona LaDuke believes Big Oil is the black snake predicted in indigenous prophecy to bring the earth’s destruction.

6:30 Visit the booth of Honor the Earth, a Native-led environmental organization

7 “The Seventh Fire,” Keynote address by Winona LaDuke

“Ojibwe prophecy speaks of a time during the seventh fire when our people will have a choice between two paths. The first path is well-worn and scarred. The second path is new and green. It is our choice as communities and as individuals how we will proceed.”

M State cafeteria will be open for those wanting to eat on campus
Sponsored by the Minnesota State Community and Technical College Sociology Department and the Underwood Unitarian Church
Freewill donation to support the work of Honor the Earth
RELATED APPEARANCE: The Underwood Unitarian Church will host LaDuke at 10 a.m. Sunday, March 25, in Underwood. The event is open to the public.

Learn more. EARN more. minnesota.edu

Minnesota State
Community and Technical College
A member of the Minnesota State system, is an affirmative action, equal opportunity educator and employer.