

May 31, 2016

Dear Chancellor Rosenstone and President Hanson:

We write as people throughout Minnesota who are deeply committed to Minnesota students and deeply concerned about recent Minnesota State Colleges and Universities' decisions regarding concurrent enrollment. We hope you will share our concerns and suggestions with your colleagues, and that together we can meet to discuss and hopefully refine and revise your recent tentative decisions regarding concurrent enrollment. We share with you the goals of increasing the number of Minnesota students who are successful in K-12 and higher education. By providing financial incentives to MnSCU for increased degree and certificate attainment, the Minnesota legislature has shown its explicit intent.

To help accomplish these important goals, many of us have been delighted to work with various MnSCU institutions on concurrent enrollment courses. However we are disturbed about recent tentative MnSCU decisions that we believe will hinder the ability of many high schools to continue offering these courses at current or increased levels. Moreover, as some leaders note, your policies may have the ironic result of pushing more schools away from collaboration with MnSCU, toward Advanced Placement or IB courses – neither of which have taken the actions MnSCU has. Therefore:

**We urge that your MnSCU Leadership Council table action on these items and meet before final decisions are made with representatives of high schools, business and community groups to discuss and demonstrate MnSCU's stated desire to partner with local school districts, high schools, students, families, and communities, in making these decisions.**

We are especially concerned about:

- The MnSCU decision to increase costs, by up to 100% over the next several years to school districts and charter schools, of concurrent enrollment courses offered with MnSCU two-year colleges.
- Details of your proposed “tested experience” policies regarding high school faculty who would be allowed to teach these courses.

We are aware, as you are, of the considerable research, both here in Minnesota and throughout the country, showing the value of concurrent enrollment. This research shows that participation in concurrent enrollment can help produce significant increases in both high school and higher education graduation rates. For example, the non-partisan, highly respected Education Commission of the States has written, **"Research shows that students who participate in dual enrollment are more likely than their peers to finish high school, enter college and complete a degree."**

Researchers at Teachers College, Columbia University concluded, "**Males, low-income, and low-achieving high school students all appear to benefit from participation in dual enrollment to a greater extent than their dual enrollment peers who enter college courses with more social, economic, and educational advantages. These findings indicate that dual enrollment can benefit a range of students, and may have the greatest positive impact on those students who are often excluded from participation.**"

The Minnesota State Colleges and Universities System and the Minnesota Department of Education have produced research showing dramatic differences between students who have participated in at least one concurrent enrollment/College in the Schools course. As of 2012-13, your statistics showed:

- 58% of African Americans graduated from high school in four years, but 88% of African Americans who took 1 or more PSEO or concurrent enrollment course graduated in four years.
- 49% of American Indian students graduated in four years, but 88% of American Indian dual-credit participants graduated in four years.
- 78% of Asian Americans graduated in four years, compared to 96% of those who participated in these dual credit programs.
- 59% of Hispanic students graduated in four years, compared to 93% of CE/PSEO participants.
- 64% of economically disadvantaged students graduated in four years, compared to 93% of CE/PSEO participants.
- 85% of white students graduated in four years, compared to 98% of CE/PSEO participants.

We know of youngsters who changed their self-concept and aspirations after successful participation in concurrent enrollment courses offered in cooperation with your institutions. Researchers call this "academic momentum. "

We share your goal of increasing degree and certificate attainment, especially among low-income students, American Indian students, and students of color. Minnesota Office of Higher Education statistics show that, as of 2013, amongst Minnesotans age 25 and older, 51% of Asian Americans in Minnesota and 45% of white Minnesotans have earned at least an associate arts degree, but only 23% of American Indian and Hispanic, and 29% of African American Minnesotans have earned at least an AA degree.

Four-year graduation rates at MnSCU State Universities were only 23% in 2014, and only 48% in six years. (*Minnesota Measures*, Office of Higher Education, <https://www.ohe.state.mn.us/pdf/MinnesotaMeasures2015.pdf>)

We believe that expanding and refining concurrent enrollment courses can help increase Minnesota high school and MnSCU graduation rates. However, a number of Minnesota K-12 leaders believe that significant price increases will make offering these courses more difficult. We also believe that some of your proposed policies on tested experience go beyond what the Higher Learning Commission is requiring.

Thus, we request the opportunity to meet with you before final decisions are made. These meetings would involve perhaps 5-10 representatives of the k-12, business and community groups, and 5-10 representatives of MnSCU to discuss these issues. We hope you will see these discussions as serving the needs of k-12 schools and students, MnSCU, and—most important—the citizens of Minnesota who support, participate in and benefit from education.

Sincerely,

Gary Amoroso, Executive Director, Minnesota Association of School Administrators

Malik Bush and John Miller, Co-directors, Joe Nathan, Senior Fellow, Center for School Change

Vern Capelle, Superintendent, Upsala Area Public Schools

Melanie Crawford, Director, Talent Development & Advanced Academics  
Minneapolis Public Schools

Julia Espe, Superintendent, Princeton Public Schools

LaTasha Gandy, Executive Director, Students for Education Reform, Minnesota (SFER-MN)

Phil Grant, Supt, Graceville Public Schools

Willie Jett, Superintendent, St. Cloud Public Schools

Jim Johnson, Supt, Monticello Public Schools

Stephen Jones, Little Falls Public Schools Superintendent

Tammie Knick, Dream Technical Academy, Willmar

David Law, Superintendent, Anoka Hennepin Public Schools.

Alberto Monserrate, Cofounder, CEO, New Publica

Randy Paulson, Principal, Chatfield High School

Nekima Levy Pounds, University of St. Thomas and Mpls NAACP \*

Fred Nolan, Executive Director, Minnesota Rural Education Association (MREA)

Jon Peterson, Executive Director, St. Paul Public Schools, Office of College and Career Readiness, St. Paul Public Schools \*

Eugene Piccolo, Executive Director, Minnesota Association of Charter Schools

Ray Queener, Superintendent, Cambridge-Isanti Public Schools

Cara Quinn, Executive Director, and Tim McGowan  
7-12 Principal, Community of Peace Academy, St Paul

Louis Porter, Executive Director, Council of Minnesotans of African Heritage

Elaine Salinas, Migizi Communications

Dan Sellers, MinnCAN

Dane Smith, Executive Director, Growth and Justice

Vanessta Spark, Executive Director, Spectrum High School, Elk River \*

Cam Stottler, Executive Director, North Lakes Academy, Forest Lake

Brandon Wait, Executive Director, Paladin Career and Technical Academy,  
Blaine.

George Weber, Superintendent, Pierz Public Schools

Bob Wedl, former Minnesota Commissioner of Education

\* Signing as individuals, organization listed for identification only