



MnSCU Chancellor Steven Rosenstone

MnSCU working to prepare a highly skilled, competitive workforce

A Civic Caucus Focus on Competitiveness Interview

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Present

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Summary

To successfully compete in the global economy, Minnesota must have the right number of people in the right places, prepared with the right knowledge, capabilities and skills, says Minnesota State Colleges and Universities (MnSCU) Chancellor Steven Rosenstone. He contends that if the state does not have the world's best workforce, it will not be in a position to compete for the best work in the world, putting at risk Minnesota's ability both to retain businesses and industries in and attract new ones.

Rosenstone says MnSCU works hard, in partnership with the state's businesses and industries, to align its programs with the state's current workforce needs. But he says the system must work harder with its partners to get more forward-looking information and visioning, so it can prepare students for *future* workforce needs. He is concerned about the amount of developmental education postsecondary students who are not college-ready require. He believes K-12 schools must assess students earlier for college-readiness and intervene earlier to assure that high school graduates are college-ready.

Because of population shifts within Minnesota, Rosenstone proposes starting to reduce space at some of MnSCU's institutions, so the system can focus its resources where they are most needed. At the same time, he says, MnSCU is dedicated to continuing to provide access to students in sparsely populated parts of the state in the most efficient ways possible.

He notes that 74 percent of all jobs in Minnesota in 2020 will need postsecondary education, but only half of those jobs will require a bachelor's degree or more. He contends that everyone has a place in MnSCU's system to start on a postsecondary path and that Minnesota cannot afford to leave anyone behind.

Biography

Named chancellor of Minnesota State Colleges and Universities (MnSCU) in February 2011, Steven Rosenstone began his term in August 2011. As chancellor, Rosenstone is responsible for leading the seven state universities and 24 community and technical colleges in Minnesota that serve more than 430,000 students in 47 communities across the state. He has led the development and implementation of MnSCU's new strategic framework to enhance the role its colleges and universities play in growing Minnesota's economy through commitments to:

- Ensure access to an extraordinary education for all Minnesotans;
- Be the partner of choice to meet Minnesota's workforce and community needs; and
- Deliver to students, employers, communities and taxpayers the highest value and most affordable higher education option.

Rosenstone was professor of political science at Yale University until 1986, when he joined the University of Michigan to serve as professor of political science and program director in the Center for Political Studies. He came to the University of Minnesota in 1996 to serve as dean of the College of Liberal Arts. He was awarded the McKnight Presidential Leadership Chair in 2004 and was promoted to vice president for scholarly and cultural affairs in 2007.

He received his *summa cum laude* bachelor's degree from Washington University in St. Louis and his Ph.D. degree from the University of California, Berkeley.

Background

Minnesota State Colleges and Universities (MnSCU) is the state's largest higher education provider and one of the nation's largest higher education systems. Fully 58 percent of the state's undergraduates study at a MnSCU college or university, 88 percent of MnSCU students are state residents, and 80 percent of the system's graduates stay in Minnesota to pursue careers or continue their education.

MnSCU comprises 24 community and technical colleges and seven state universities, operating on 54 campuses in 47 communities and enrolling about 430,000 students every year. MnSCU institutions serve 62,000 students of color and nearly 103,000 low-income students, both more than all other higher education providers in Minnesota combined.

MnSCU is committed to providing an opportunity for all Minnesotans to create a better future for themselves, for their families, and for their communities by preparing graduates who will enable Minnesota to successfully compete in the global economy. To compete, Minnesota must have the

right number of people in the right places, prepared with the right knowledge, capabilities and skills. MnSCU's strategies to do that include: (1) Aligning higher education with the future workforce needs of Minnesota; (2) Focusing on the capabilities of its graduates; (3) Ensuring there is a pipeline of high school graduates who are college-ready and heading towards programs that will lead to careers enabling Minnesota to successfully compete; (4) Ensuring access and affordability; and (5) Redesigning MnSCU to improve the quality of its graduates, increase the effectiveness and efficiency of its operations, and keep tuition affordable.

In November 2013, the MnSCU Board of Trustees adopted recommendations for that redesign from the report  *Charting the Future for a Prosperous Minnesota*.

Issues to address:

Prior to his Civic Caucus interview, Rosenstone was asked to give his insights into several issues: how to deal with people entering or about to enter the workforce who are not adequately prepared for available jobs, how to address the skills gap, how to align MnSCU's postsecondary graduates with what the state's workforce needs and how MnSCU can add to Minnesota's economic competitiveness.

Discussion

At the beginning of the discussion, Steven Rosenstone took note of the sad deaths in the past week of two great contributors to education, civic life and business in Minnesota, David Lilly and Dale Olseth.

Minnesota is a set of regional economies. "We either figure out how those regional economies thrive or Minnesota doesn't thrive," said Steven Rosenstone. "With colleges and universities in 47 communities around the state, we have built the partnerships needed to ensure the economic success of regional economies throughout our state."

"We must build relationships that are the right partnerships for each of the industries in the state," he continued. "Minnesota's economy is less tied to our natural resources than it was a century ago. Many businesses can move somewhere else. If Minnesota does not have the world's best workforce, it will not be in a position to compete for the best work in the world. That will put at risk our economic growth and ability to attract high-paying jobs. It will put at risk our ability both to retain businesses and industries in Minnesota and attract new ones."

MnSCU is building the right partnerships, core to Minnesota's economic vitality. "We're working in partnership with all the players that need to be at the table and we are doing so in new and more powerful ways," Rosenstone said.

MnSCU must better align its programs with Minnesota's future workforce needs. Rosenstone said current efforts often rely on data from the federal Bureau of Labor Statistics that are between a year and 18 months old. "If we align our programs to those data and if students graduate from the program two years later, we're skating where the puck was three years ago," he said. "Not good enough. We've got to be skating to where the puck *will* be."

"That requires thinking in new ways and working with business and industry to be thinking out a bit not just about technical skills, but about the more foundational skills (creativity, critical thinking, communication, analytical capacity) that will be needed for the jobs of tomorrow," he continued.

"We're trying to cut out some of the time lags between what we're hearing and our ability to turn out the right kind of graduates with the right kind of capabilities."

MnSCU develops leadership within its system. Rosenstone said that MnSCU has "great intentionality" about developing its future leaders and has several leadership development programs for its faculty and staff. "We are doubling down on that," he said, noting that in higher education, a 50 percent turnover in leadership is expected over the next eight to 10 years. Fully 84 percent of college and university presidents are anticipated to retire by 2016. "There's going to be a feeding frenzy for talent," he said. "We need to develop our own talent or we're not going to get the job done."

MnSCU faculty and administrators make commitments to the communities where they are located. "MnSCU faculty members understand that our colleges and universities were built to serve students, communities and our partners," Rosenstone said. "Students are served and phone calls from community partners get returned, because people understand that's why we're here."

He said almost every program has an advisory committee comprised of business and community leaders who meet regularly with college and university faculty and staff. "Presidents, deans and leaders of customized training programs are deeply embedded in their communities," he said. "That's part of what it means to be a leader in our system. We hire the right people: people committed to serving students and their communities. They succeed as leaders when our students and community partners succeed."

MnSCU connects with business and industry. An interviewer commented that the connection between business and industry and MnSCU is "phenomenal," but pointed out that the system is connecting with today's businesses, when the businesses it has to plan for haven't been created yet. He asked how MnSCU brings in visioning for the future.

Rosenstone replied that one of the lessons from the Itasca Project Task Force is that "we can't be in sync with what we need to do to prepare our graduates, unless business and industry start to think out more than six months." He said the health industry has probably done a better job thinking about those issues than other sectors. "Part of it has to be all of us being more forward-looking," he said. "We need to know how to identify new sectors and we are just beginning to figure that out."

Business wants the full package of liberal arts foundational education, along with technical skills. An interviewer asked about the future of liberal arts education. Rosenstone said, "This is not either-or. The foundational skills imparted by a liberal arts education are a key part of the future. We hear loud and clear that business wants the full package. They want all the capabilities that come from a liberal arts education: creativity, innovation, and the ability to think in new ways, to do research, to make generalizations, to work across cultural and geographic boundaries. They want all that, but they also want a set of technical skills. Our goal is to turn out the full package: to have both the more foundational skills and the more technical skills in each of our graduates."

He said part of the challenge is to ensure that there is a better understanding back in the high schools about the careers of the future and the capabilities needed to be prepared for those careers.

The latest data show that 74 percent of all jobs in Minnesota in 2020 will need postsecondary education. "There's no state in the nation that needs a better educated workforce than Minnesota," he said. But only half of jobs in 2020 will require a bachelor's degree or more. "We have careers in Minnesota where after 18 months of technical training, you start at \$50,000 or \$60,000, with full benefits," he said. "We need to do a better job of laying out the portfolio of options and a better job of aligning students' passions and skills to the careers of the future."

K-12 and postsecondary education both need better information to deliver the workforce Minnesota needs to compete globally. "We must make some changes to what it means for our colleges and universities to deliver the world's best workforce," Rosenstone said. "It means moving students through faster and better. It means raising the bar and asking graduates to demonstrate what they have accomplished. We have to move forward on certifying the capabilities of our graduates. It means that students should not have to take the same course twice. If they can demonstrate they have mastered the material, they should be able to get the credit and move on."

"There's lots of work for everybody to do," he said. "The secret sauce is people working together in new ways."

There is no other state in the nation that has made the changes Minnesota has in creating an alignment between secondary and postsecondary education. "There is no other higher education system in the nation that has taken on the set of changes talked about in the  *Charting the Future* report, changes we're going to deliver on," Rosenstone said. "We're aggressively ahead of where many states are in putting the pieces together that need to be put together. Now it's just a matter of keeping our focus and driving the changes we need to make."

He said each element of the plan enacted by the 2013 Legislature to better align K-12 and postsecondary education is designed to address the challenges education leaders were observing. "For example," he said, "we found that the assessments we were using in high school didn't match up with college readiness. Minnesota is now going to have a set of measures starting in eighth grade that will be normed to college readiness. If students are not on track to be college-ready, we want targeted interventions while students are in high school so everyone will be on track for postsecondary education."

There are deeper issues, like graduation rates and the achievement gap, that can't be solved starting in ninth grade, he said. "There are also issues in making sure we've got the right capacities and the right strategies in the classroom to deliver better outcomes."

He said students who are college-ready should have more flexible pathways for earning early college credits. Students need more information about programs like the state's Postsecondary Enrollment Options (PSEO) program, through which 10th-, 11th- and 12th-graders can earn college and high school credits by taking free college courses at public or private postsecondary institutions in Minnesota.

He noted that two years ago, the Legislature opened the PSEO program, which had previously been limited to just 11th- and 12th-grade students, to 10th-graders, who can enroll only in postsecondary career and technical education courses. He said this change would help improve the linkage between high school and technical colleges for students who aren't seeking baccalaureate degrees.

"Every student needs a plan for what postsecondary path makes sense for them and how that will help prepare them for the hot careers of the future," he said.

Developmental education for students who are not ready for college needs to be moved back to the K-12 system. An interviewer asked what MnSCU is doing about kids who are graduating from high school reading at the second-grade level. "What we're doing now is not what we should be doing," Rosenstone replied. "What we're doing now with students coming to our colleges who are not college-ready is putting them into a sequence of courses to get them to college-level reading, writing and math. Too many students get discouraged or tap out their federal financial aid before they actually get to the starting gate."

Rosenstone said faculty and staff are developing new models for developmental education, such as mainstreaming students into regular college classes, while still providing the academic support necessary for their success. "Our work with the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) and Commissioner Brenda Cassellius is to get it right the first time: to have fewer students leaving high school unprepared for postsecondary education, to diagnose earlier whether they're on track to be college-ready and to intervene long before they get to our colleges and universities," he said. "The hope is that over the next four or five years, we'll have more students leaving high school who are ready for college classes, because we've diagnosed it and intervened earlier."

MnSCU has strong relationships with the Governor, with the Legislature, with DEED and with MDE. "We're working more closely with the Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED) and with MDE than ever before," Rosenstone said. "We have a governor who is deeply committed to solving this puzzle and making investments to help us prepare the world's best workforce. I think there's great legislative leadership on these issues. We have legislators who believe we must create the world's best workforce. The state has made great investments to try to move this forward."

"We also need to be doing some things differently within our colleges and universities," he continued. "I've seen the Legislature as a great partner in helping us get this done. Everybody has a stake in it. This is not a left/right issue or a GOP/DFL issue. It is a Minnesota issue."

For-profit colleges in Minnesota are roughly four to five times the cost of MnSCU colleges and universities. Rosenstone said the for-profits' completion rates are lower and their placement rates are lower. "As the U.S. Senate reported several years ago, many for-profits spend more on marketing and recruitment per student than they do on instruction per student," he said. "We won't go there." He said at MnSCU colleges and universities, students pay a fraction of the price charged by the for-profits; many graduate with no debt; and those who do have debt, have a fraction of the debt that students at for-profit colleges have. "This being said, we remain vigilant in controlling costs, minimizing tuition increases, raising scholarship dollars, and holding the line on tuition and debt," he said.

MnSCU's *Charting the Future* plan calls for substantially more collaboration and cooperation across MnSCU institutions. Rosenstone said greater collaboration among colleges and universities will make students' experiences more seamless and will result in sharing successes, so that the very best that faculty and staff do at any of its institutions can be available across the state. We need to create better incentives to reward collaboration, he said.

MnSCU and MDE are trying to broaden the notion of what the next step is for high school graduates. Students who are interested in robotics and computers "have no idea what a modern manufacturing firm looks like," he said. "Educators and industry must communicate to students that, if that's what their interests are, there are a whole range of other opportunities available for them in addition to a B.S. in engineering."

An interviewer observed that using "postsecondary" instead of "college" might open people's thinking to options other than four-year degrees. He also suggested using former Governor Rudy Perpich's term of "the brainpower state" rather than just talking about "the world's best workforce."

MnSCU must balance the population shifts that have occurred within Minnesota with its commitment to serve communities across the state. An interviewer called drawing up MnSCU's budget "an impossible problem." With money tight, he asked whether the MnSCU system should be left as it is in terms of locations or whether there are too many institutions.

Rosenstone replied that there have been population shifts in Minnesota since the MnSCU institutions were built. But, he said, people in the metro area need to understand the power of geography. For example, there are four colleges on the Iron Range covering 13,000 square miles that are led by one president. It's an hour-and-a-half drive between these colleges. "We have no plans to back off on our commitment to providing access to higher education to these communities," he said.

MnSCU students' average age is 26. Usually they have a job or two and often a family. "We have to balance how to meet the challenge of geography and our commitment to meet the regional needs of our state with the costs of doing so," he said.

MnSCU's capital budget proposes a net reduction in the square footage of its system. The proposal calls for a net reduction of 250,000 square feet. "We need to eliminate obsolete facilities that no longer serve students, yet continue to drive costs, affect affordability, and limit our ability to target resources where they are needed most," Rosenstone said. "If we are committed to affordability, we have to be willing to make some tough decisions to ensure that we are using scarce resources as efficiently and effectively as possible."

An interviewer commented that 250,000 square feet would equal about one-third of Hamline University's space on its St. Paul campus. Rosenstone said if MnSCU can right-size its facilities, over time it will help reduce costs and advance affordability.

MnSCU must also look at where new technology will work for offering classes and where it won't. "Online won't work in many of our technical programs," Rosenstone said. "Many of our programs require space and place." He went on to say that "the evidence is also compelling that those who struggle academically are least successful in an online environment. We have to find the right balance of technology and in-place education."

About 20 percent of all of MnSCU's course delivery is online. "We've made huge changes in the last four or five years in that direction," he said. "Getting the right mix of online and face-to-face education is a challenge going forward in each of our programs." He said MnSCU is looking at how it can meet its responsibility to deliver an extraordinary education throughout the state in the most effective and efficient way.

Developing the best teaching in Minnesota will require tackling several issues. An interviewer asked what kind of strategy is necessary to ensure we can become the brainpower state by producing the best teaching. Rosenstone said, "There are two parts to the puzzle: one is the kinds of people who go into the teaching profession and the other is how we develop them and their capacity to be great teachers. New models by which we develop teachers are key; making sure we get the best and the brightest to go into teaching is also key. Another part of it is the autonomy and opportunities teachers have in their schools to do the best they're capable of doing."

MnSCU invests in development of its faculty, but needs to do more. An interviewer asked what MnSCU is doing to assure it is developing its own teachers and educators. "We invest a lot in the development of our faculty," Rosenstone said, "and wish we had the resources to do more."

Conclusion

"I'm often asked, 'Can we really do this? Can we pull this off?'" Rosenstone said in conclusion. "We have to; we don't have an alternative. The secret to the economic vitality of communities across our state is our people. We either get this one right or we're in deep trouble." He said that's why MnSCU partners with business, with government agencies, with civic organizations and with the K-12 education system. "This is an imperative. If we screw this up, we're in deep trouble as a state."

"To get us there, we must lead not by doing a little better the same things that everybody else is doing," he continued. "We must lead by creating the innovative models that enable us to do much better things. Our colleges and universities are a place of hope and opportunity for all Minnesotans to create a better future for themselves, for their families and for their communities. Everyone has a place in our system to start on a postsecondary path. Minnesota needs all of those students to be successful. Minnesota cannot afford to leave anyone behind."