

The IFO Board Response to *Charting the Future (CTF)*

The IFO strongly supports Minnesota State Colleges and Universities' (MnSCU) strategic framework:

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

However, the IFO rejects the strategic recommendations of *Charting the Future*:

1. *Charting the Future* promotes centralization—a goal the IFO fundamentally rejects. According to *CTF*: "Our system values institutional autonomy and decentralization.... This culture is out of sync in a world where collaboration and synergy are needed...." (*CTF*:9). The *CTF* document is filled with proposals that promote centralization—for example, a statewide academic planning and program review process; a statewide facilities master plan; a statewide certification of competency based award of credit; a comprehensive statewide e-strategy; and continuing education and customized training through statewide collaboration.

Instead, student and community needs are best achieved through competitive and highly autonomous institutions that can quickly and nimbly change to meet local and regional needs. We oppose moving toward a Soviet-style management structure with centrally controlled decisions made by bureaucrats who are far removed from the classroom. Multi-layered, centralized bureaucracies tend to be self-perpetuating, and consume financial resources that could be better spent on student learning.

2. *CTF* fails to address the most pressing higher education issues on the minds of students, their families, and the legislators who represent them: student debt and the affordability of higher education. MnSCU sought a 3% tuition increase in 2013, a goal the IFO successfully opposed during the 2013 legislative session. In *CTF*, MnSCU pays lip service to affordability, without supporting policies to accomplish it. IFO supports efforts to reduce the cost of higher education, which is best accomplished through local control.
3. The MnSCU state universities have been a critical socio-economic asset for over one hundred years. The liberal arts university promotes the development and practice of analytical and critical thinking skills. The state universities provide an affordable and accessible four-year education for all Minnesotans, representing diverse and underserved communities and groups throughout the state. *CTF* does not sufficiently

recognize or value the long-established universities, and the communities within which they are located, particularly in Greater Minnesota.

4. Academic offerings should be driven by the demands of students and their families—not the demands of the business community. Businesses should fill their workforce needs by offering livable wages and benefits, quality in-house training, and desirable working conditions to attract the best employees. If employers offer attractive wages, benefits and working conditions, students will invest in the education necessary to obtain those jobs. Diverse education for a diverse community of employers strengthens Minnesota.

Finally, the IFO urges Chancellor Rosenstone and the MnSCU Board of Trustees to reject the *CTF's* recommendations—including statewide academic planning and union consolidation that simply increase bureaucracy and centralization—and instead promote a vision for the future that provides student-driven choices for all Minnesotans. The IFO encourages legislators and Governor Dayton to oppose administrative strategies that lead to larger, costlier, and more centralized management structures. Instead, Minnesota leaders should continue to support efforts to work with faculty to ensure access to an extraordinary and affordable education for all Minnesotans. Far from resisting change, state university faculty are on the front lines of educational innovation, helping to ensure students, employers, communities, and taxpayers the highest value and most affordable option for higher education.