

Minnesota State Colleges and Universities
Board of Trustees and Leadership Council
Study Session
Strategies for Addressing the Impact of Poverty on Our Students
January 26, 2016

Convene and Introduction

Board Chair Michael Vekich and Chancellor Steven Rosenstone convened a joint study session of the Board of Trustees and the Leadership Council on January 26, 2016, at 10:00 am at Minneapolis Community and Technical College. The session was on strategies for addressing the impact of poverty on our students.

Chair Vekich explained that this is the first of what will be several sessions this year to better understand the needs of our students and how our colleges and universities can do a better job of serving our students. At last month's Academic and Student Affairs Committee meeting we learned of some of the consequences of the Great Recession:

- x Fully 36% of our students (92,000) are Pell eligible – meaning that over 1/3 of our students come from families of very modest financial means. This compares to 23% a decade ago.
- x Fully 62% of our students receive some form of financial aid – up about 10 points over the past decade.

Students with high financial need are less likely to successfully complete their degrees than those with little or no financial need:

- x students with high financial need are about 14% less likely than those with no financial need to achieve their associate's degree within 3 years of beginning their program;
- x they are about 8% less likely to achieve their baccalaureate degree within 6 years of beginning their program.

Questions for us to consider are:

- x How hospitable are our campuses to students living in poverty, who are homeless and/or hungry and are struggling to hold body and soul together while pursuing their education?
- x How do we better understand the struggles of students in poverty?
- x What do our colleges and universities look like from their point of view?
- x What do we need to change to do a better job?

Introduction of Dr. Donna Beegle

Chancellor Rosenstone introduced Dr. Donna Beegle. Her life work has focused on these kinds of questions – questions we need to address if we are going to “break the iron cage of poverty,” as she puts it.

Guiding questions include What are we taught to believe about poverty? How do the different life experiences of poverty impact educational opportunities? What are three practical tools leaders can use right now to improve outcomes? What proven next steps can leaders begin to create poverty competencies and improve outcomes?

What does poverty teach? Constant Crisis: People are sick more and in survival mode. Two strategies: 1. Examine policies/practices to ensure they are serving students/families in the crisis of poverty. 2. Make it a priority to know about local resources and opportunities for breaking poverty barriers.

Work to understand and build in supports for students who live in the war zone of poverty.

Poverty Impacts: Hopelessness. Purpose of education or job unclear. Not knowing subjects/norms/vocabulary. Stereotypes, myths, and judgments internalized personal deficiency. Poverty realities pull and demand attention. Trained incapacity: expectations

Dr. Beegle outlined three essential tools for leaders:

1. Conceptual: Ensure poverty competencies