

University of Minnesota Board of Regents

Educational Planning and Policy Committee

Campus Report and Strategic Positioning Update

University of Minnesota, Crookston

Thank you for the opportunity to report to you on progress at the University of Minnesota, Crookston.

I'd like to introduce Mr. Pete Wasberg, Chair of the University of Minnesota, Crookston Advisory Council. Pete is Human Resources Manager of Ottetail Power in Fergus Falls. He and other members of the Advisory Council have been very helpful to me. I appreciate his taking the time to be here today.

I'm pleased to report we are off to a great start for what we anticipate will be an exceptional year. Faculty are teaching and doing research, students are going to class and learning, and our campus community is reaching out and adding value in the community and the region. We know what land grant means.

I begin by noting that the mission, vision, and core value statements included in your docket material are the foundation for the work of our campus.

Our campus mission is to deliver applied, career-oriented learning programs that combine theory, practice, and experimentation in a technologically rich environment. At the same time, we connect our teaching, research, and outreach to serve the public good. This is what Strategic Positioning at Crookston is all about. We are committed to help the University achieve its aspirational goal.

Let me start with our exceptional students -- more than 1140 degree-seeking students enrolled this fall, up almost 90 students from last year, an 8.5% increase. This is more than anytime since 2003.

We are especially encouraged that there are more than 400 freshmen -- a 35% increase over last year. This positions us well to reach our goal of 1200 students by the end of the decade -- commendable given the demographics of the region, and the leadership challenges of a few years ago. As good as this news is, it doesn't mean we can ignore the reality of a declining number of high school graduates in this part of the state. Now that students have enrolled our challenge will be to retain and graduate them. I'll talk more about that in a few minutes.

Exceptional students expect exceptional programs. Program investment has been a challenge, and likely will continue to be -- requiring us to make choices and set priorities. Your docket material lists the ten programs we are targeting for investment -- each has specific enrollment goals charted to 2011.

Another strategy for program investment is to use internal reallocation, state funded capital investments, and compact dollars to make improvements in classrooms and laboratories, purchase new equipment, establish an honors program, and support undergraduate research. Our program investments are strategic as we strive to prepare graduates to get good jobs and also create good jobs. I'm proud of the success of our students after graduation, and even more proud that the salaries of our graduates compare favorably with the other University of Minnesota campuses. The fact that 60% of our graduates stay in Minnesota, and another 20% in North Dakota, affirms our commitment to partner to prosperity in the region.

Looking ahead, we are focusing more attention now and into the future on creating a global and diverse cultural experience. We are bringing more international students to campus, and encouraging more students from our region to study in other countries. Students of color make up over 10% of our student body – a significant accomplishment considering area demographics.

Exceptional programs help us retain more students and improve graduation rates. We are optimistic that 40% of the 2008 entering class will graduate in 4 years. To reach this goal, we are actively working to increase retention. We are working hard to improve advising, are part of a 6 campus project working with the Minnesota Campus Compact to increase retention through civic engagement, and in the process of developing an Honors Program. Our Academic Assistance Center is a tremendous resource as evidenced by the accolades from the Higher Learning Commission in their accreditation report. They have added resources to help students succeed as well.

Now on to our faculty. We know the reputation of our campus stands on the reputation of our faculty, and we are committed to building a strong community of scholars at the University of Minnesota, Crookston. Recruiting exceptional faculty is a challenge for us. In some disciplines, we face challenges similar to the other campuses when it comes to recruiting and retaining talented faculty. Salaries, location spousal hires, and private sector competition all present challenges.

To overcome these, we are exploring new ways to attract talent to several open positions we intend to fill this year. We are investing in professional development, and I'm especially pleased that 9 Crookston faculty and staff traveled to China this past May to help faculty colleagues there develop curriculum and teach courses. And, I'll be returning to China at the end of the month to take our partnerships to the next level.

We are doing more to support faculty research, and at the same time strengthen the intellectual capacity across the disciplines. We initiated a competitive process to award stipends for faculty research proposals, and we will begin the process of hiring a half time Director of Research this year. Interdisciplinary research is especially important as we strengthen our relationships with neighboring universities and University of Minnesota partners.

Exceptional staff are partners with the faculty at Crookston. I'm pleased to report that we hired outstanding people into several key leadership positions this past year including the Associate Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs and Enrollment, the Director of Admissions, and the Director of International Programs. We have a good balance of experience from long term employees and new ideas from recent hires.

Moving on to the topic of Exceptional Innovation. The Crookston Campus has a history of creativity, innovation, and service. It was the first campus in the country to provide laptop computers for all students with a goal of integrating technology into teaching and learning across the campus. Today, we continue to lead in the area of technology enhanced learning. We established a Center for Teaching, Learning and Technology to support faculty innovation in teaching. I would indicate that keeping up with the new innovations in technology is a challenge.

Our aspiration for exceptional innovation extends to and engages the Crookston community, and the broader region. I've cited several examples in the docket material, and could cite many more. I'm especially proud that our campus is home to the Minnesota Rural Health Association, and that together we collaborated with colleagues in Montana and North Dakota to host the Upper Midwest Rural Health Policy Summit in August of this year. We were honored that Dr. Frank Cerra provided the key note address, and that 125 rural health leaders attended.

I'm also proud of our partnership with RiverView Health that secured Crookston as the site for the Northwest Minnesota Area Health Education Center. Our relationship with regional health care providers helped influence the decision to establish the center in Crookston. Our pre-professional programs stand to benefit substantially from this effort.

Online learning and College in the High School programs are two other examples of exceptional innovation and engagement at the Crookston campus. Our Center for Adult Learning is taking leadership in the region for reaching out to place bound students with aspirations for a University diploma. We have been aggressive in marketing the two new online degree programs and see the opportunity to enroll additional students.

College in the High School reaches close to 1500 students from 40 schools, which helps many rural school districts provide options that they otherwise could not afford. We are evaluating the cost of providing the CIHS program and will focus our efforts in schools in this region.

In closing, I will quickly review five issues that I know interest you: campus climate, athletics, interdisciplinary efforts, partnerships, and branding.

In my inauguration speech I mentioned administration and faculty weren't perceived as working together toward a mutual goal. Today I can report I have worked hard to change that perception. I know more needs to be done and I am working actively with the campus governance groups to foster more and better communication across the campus—working especially hard to strengthen relationships and build trust. I'm confident that the campus community is moving on, working together, and making the University of Minnesota Crookston an exceptional organization.

On the subject of athletics, let me comment that the review of Golden Eagle Athletics resulted in a decision to stay in NCAA Division II and the Northern Sun Intercollegiate Conference. At the same time, we decided to make investments in athletics to improve the student athlete experience. I'm convinced these decisions for our campus were the right ones.

With regard to interdisciplinary activity, I have come to appreciate even more, what I already knew, that small works to our advantage. Collaboration is important to our success – collaboration among departments on campus and with other academic units at the University and with other higher education institutions in the region.

Partnerships have always been important, but never more important than now as we aspire to serve as the regional hub for entrepreneurs, creative talent, applied research, technology transfer, and economic development. Toward that end, we are fostering relationships with public and private sector partners in the region, and beyond to places as far away as China.

Finally, on the subject of branding – an easy subject for me. Simply said, the University of Minnesota ***IS THE Crookston Campus brand.*** We are maroon and gold. Without reservation, we support the University’s branding efforts. Our vision promotes the campus as a regional hub for undergraduate education leading to a University of Minnesota degree. We adopt the block M and incorporate the *driven to discover* campaign in our publications. We are proud to be the small personal campus of the University of Minnesota offering a world class degree. Listening to the radio in our region you hear our ads with powerful testimonies from our students, ending with a very compelling, yet simple four word message: ***Small campus – Big degree.***

Thank you for allowing me this opportunity to report on the progress at the University of Minnesota, Crookston. I will be happy to respond to questions or comments you have.