

University of Minnesota Board of Regents

Friday, October 13, 2006

Charles H. Casey, Chancellor

University of Minnesota, Crookston

Thank you for meeting on the Crookston Campus of the University of Minnesota. We take great pride in the campus, and welcome every opportunity to show it off, especially to Regents and central administration.

I provided a brief update for you in the docket material. What I would like to do this morning is to provide additional information on five topics.

1. Academic Programs
2. Public Engagement
3. Facilities
4. Recruitment and Retention
5. Strategic Positioning

I'd like to start with:

1. Academic Programs

Surveys tell us that students choose the University of Minnesota, Crookston because of our faculty and the programs we offer. We know that the quality of the education students receive is directly related to the commitment of our faculty.

Knowing this, I am pleased to begin my remarks today by telling you about the commitment of the faculty on this campus - commitment clearly demonstrated in the classroom and laboratory by faculty with full teaching responsibilities. In addition, faculty generously give of their time to support student organizations. And, many engage in research projects and outreach activity.

Over the next few months, we will be developing proposals for a limited number of focused program areas that will complement our current program portfolio, build faculty capacity, and recruit and retain more students. Our faculty have taken leadership in identifying the areas with most potential, and we look forward to bringing proposals to Senior Vice President Jones and Provost Sullivan.

High on our list of accomplishments for the last year was the full ten-year accreditation from the Higher Learning Commission. This affirmation of the quality of teaching and learning at the University of Minnesota, Crookston was the result of the commitment and hard work of faculty and staff. It's great affirmation of the future of the campus.

We're also happy about U.S. News & World Report naming the University of Minnesota, Crookston as number two in the category "Top Public Midwest Comprehensive Colleges – Bachelor's for 2007."

My second point is:

2. Public Engagement

The University of Minnesota, Crookston is committed to adding value to the University and to this region of the state. We do this through teaching and learning and through research. We also do this by engaging with people, organizations, agencies and institutions across the region. Our students are involved in numerous service learning projects and internships in the community, region, and beyond, which add value to the communities they serve and value to the student experience.

Partnerships provide us opportunity to fulfill the University's land-grant mission. A shared faculty position with the Natural Resources Conservation Service and joint appointments with the Northwest Research and Outreach Center and the University of Minnesota Extension Service help us leverage our resources and better serve the public good. Next Monday, October 16, we look forward to cutting the ribbon on the administrative office of the Minnesota Rural Health Association. We're providing the space, and a grant from the Bremer Foundation is supporting professional staff and expenses.

Our partnerships with high schools in the region are important to us, and even more important to the families of students who benefit from the College in the High School and Post Secondary Education Option programs. This fall we enrolled more than 1,300 students from forty schools in the College in the High School program which translates into over \$1.3 M of tuition savings for the families of participating students. We are making a concerted effort to attract a greater share of these talented high school students to the University of Minnesota, Crookston as their choice for a four-year degree.

I'd like to share with you another example of how our campus contributes to the long-term regional sustainability. A faculty member has helped develop a gluten-free cereal product marketed to individuals with Celiac disease. With support from the campus and the Agricultural Utilization Research Institute, the product has gone from being available in two retail stores in 2004, to more than 300 retail stores today. Online sales make the product available across the country. The value to the region is significant. However, the value to the campus is equally important in that students helped to conduct market research, develop Web-based tracking systems, and formulate efficient distribution strategies.

My third topic for today is:

3. Facilities

This campus is beautiful every time of year. At the time I prepared these remarks, I wasn't sure if the flowers would still be in bloom, so let me just say that people come to campus just to see the beautiful grounds, regardless of the season.

Eleven beautiful U projects were awarded grants last year and have added a range of assets from an oriental garden by Dowell Hall to a life-size sculpture of a quarter horse by our equine facility.

The dedication of Centennial Hall yesterday was a time to also celebrate that the number of students living on campus increased 25% compared to Fall 2005, which we anticipate will help us improve our retention rates. Centennial Hall and a new sprinkling system in Brink Hall mean more students on campus. Thank you for supporting these projects.

Other improvements over the summer included the upgrade of a number of classrooms. Fresh paint, new carpet, the latest technology all contribute to improving the quality of the student experience.

My fourth topic is:

4. Recruitment and Retention

I know how important increasing graduation rates is to you as a Board. You want students to graduate, parents want students to graduate too; and we are responding to the challenge to improve our graduation rate at the University of Minnesota, Crookston.

Here are five examples of what we are doing:

1. We have in place a 3-year retention plan as a result of faculty and staff attending a weeklong retention workshop this summer
2. Retention was the focus of welcome week workshops for all faculty and staff
3. We have started a mentor program for all new freshmen
4. Advisors are now meeting at least monthly with each of their advisees
5. We are establishing baseline data for our retention efforts

Retention is important to our future. Equally important is our ability to attract new freshmen and new transfer students to come here in the first place. With that as our goal, we are focusing our effort in ways that will reverse the decline in enrollment of the past couple years. And we have made progress toward involving more of the campus community in recruiting. Admissions staff of course, but also financial aid staff, faculty, coaches, and others.

I'm pleased to report that our Fall 2006 enrollment of full time degree seeking students is 1,053 students, essentially the same as a year ago. What is especially encouraging for the future is:

- our new freshman number is up 9%
- new transfers are up 45%

- international students have increased from 30 a year ago to 56 this year
- and, online credit hours have increased by more than 10%

My fifth point is:

5. Strategic Positioning

Strategic positioning has been a high priority for us over the past year, just as it has been across the University. The Crookston Campus Strategic Positioning Task Force is to be commended for the report and recommendations forwarded to Central Administration last spring.

I want to especially commend Dr. Chuck Muscoplat, co-chair of the Task Force for his steady, yet forward looking leadership. I also want to express my appreciation to Dr. Robert Jones for his support and encouragement.

As noted in the materials provided for your docket, adding value to the University and the region is central to my vision for the Crookston Campus:

- a vision that is evolving as the work of our strategic positioning task force nears completion
- a vision of the University of Minnesota, Crookston as unique in the region, providing access to world class teaching and research, and serving as a **REGIONAL HUB** for:
 - Undergraduate education leading to a University of Minnesota diploma
 - Technology applications in higher education
 - Regional sustainability
 - Leadership development
 - Global and diverse cultural experience

President Bruininks and Vice President Jones held a campus forum here on Wednesday and there have been additional opportunities for them to interact with faculty, staff, students, and the community during their time here this week. This interaction will help inform the work we do to complete our final report by mid-November.

While the final report is still in progress, we are implementing several of the recommendations where there is consensus that we move forward. Here are five examples:

1. We have identified retention strategies and begun implementation as mentioned previously
2. We identified ten program priorities where we have faculty capacity and potential for growth
3. Initiatives are underway to recognize faculty and staff accomplishments
4. I have taken responsibility for confronting issues related to the campus culture
5. An athletics task force has been appointed and begun work

I'd like to close by sharing with you an experience my wife, Barbara, and I had last week. Sadly, we mourned the death of a young woman, Laural Capistran Murphy. Laural was 18 when she died as a result of an accident while driving her car south of Crookston. We attended the service in Ada, her hometown, along with several University of Minnesota, Crookston faculty. We were there because Laurel was enrolled as a post secondary option student on our campus.

Little did we fully understand what her connection to the University meant.

Her parents, David and Sheila, helped us understand. They told us that Laural's chef's coat and hat from her restaurant management course were in the car, and they showed us how they had displayed it by her casket after washing it bright white and ironing it to a crisp finish. They told us how excited Laural was to be taking college level courses toward a degree from the University of Minnesota, Crookston, and that it meant everything to her because she had trouble fitting in at a traditional high school. They also told us about how important 4-H and the University of Minnesota Extension Service was to her, and that was evident by the crowd of 4-H and Extension friends who came to the service from all across Minnesota.

It really struck me how the University had such an impact on this young woman through 4-H and her experiences on our campus.

We were so glad we took time from what we thought we were busy with. Especially when we saw Laural in her casket wearing a University of Minnesota, Crookston T-shirt.

It was the University at its very best, at that point in time we truly were the best public research university in the world, and I thought you should know.

Again, thank you for meeting on our campus, for allowing me this opportunity to speak, and for your support of the Crookston Campus.

I'd be happy to respond to any questions.