Minnesota State Adopts Comprehensive Plan to Strengthen Developmental Education

ST. PAUL, Minn., Jan. 24, 2018 – The Board of Trustees of Minnesota State adopted a plan for re-envisioning and re-designing developmental education, a critical component of student success for thousands of students statewide. The plan is based on best practices that have been shown to reduce the number of students that take developmental education courses and improve the rate of success for students who do enroll in such courses. The plan is outlined in the 2018 Developmental Education Report that will be delivered to the Minnesota legislature in February.

“The colleges and universities of Minnesota State are open to all Minnesotans, and this means that we attract students with a broad range of academic preparedness,” said Ron Anderson, senior vice chancellor for academic and student affairs at Minnesota State. “To help all of our students be successful, it is critical that we offer courses, support services, and interventions that help students develop skills, prepare them for college-level coursework, and overcome gaps in academic readiness.”

A workgroup whose members were drawn from across Minnesota State’s colleges and universities developed the plan, titled the Developmental Education Strategic Roadmap. The strategic goals in the roadmap include:

1. Improve completion of developmental education by redesigning curricula to include an acceleration option;
2. Improve the accuracy of course placement by implementing a multiple measures placement program;
3. Improve student success in developmental education by developing a comprehensive student support system;
4. Improve the college readiness of high school graduates by working with secondary partners;
5. Increase affordability by implementing student cost-savings approaches;
6. Improve student success in developmental education by expanding professional development for faculty, staff, and administrators;
7. Improve student success in developmental education by strengthening evaluation and continuous improvement efforts.

The workgroup based these goals on national evidence-based practices and best practices that have been implemented at Minnesota State campuses and have shown measurable results in reducing the number of students who take developmental courses and improving the success of students who do. The plan calls for scaling these practices across the system and identifies key action steps, timelines for implementation, and measurable outcomes.

Developmental education consists of precollege-level courses in reading, writing, mathematics, and English for Speakers of Other Languages, as well as support services and interventions designed to develop skills and prepare students for college-level coursework. The open access
and inclusiveness that Minnesota State provides to Minnesota residents means that its colleges and universities serve a substantial population of students who face academic and other challenges. Developmental education serves as a critical bridge between the academic readiness of new students and the skills needed for college success.

Students are awarded credit for successfully completing developmental education courses, however, these credits do not count toward degrees, diplomas, or certificates, so reducing the number of students who need these courses can also decrease the cost and time required for students to complete a degree. Minnesota State has shown considerable progress in this area: between Fall 2009 and Fall 2015, the percent of undergraduate students enrolled in developmental courses during their first two years decreased from 41.8% to 33.0%.

Innovations in developmental education have also led to increases in student retention, persistence and completion of developmental education courses. For example, the rates of students completing developmental courses in mathematics, writing, and reading in their first and second years are all increasing, and the college level course completion rate is also increasing.

“We are very proud of these accomplishments,” Anderson continued, “but challenges remain. For example, disparities persist in enrollment and completion by race and ethnicity and by income, so we still have work to do to not only narrow these gaps, but eliminate them. We will continue to improve student success in developmental education with the broad goal of significantly increasing student success.”

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*Minnesota State includes 30 community and technical colleges and seven state universities serving approximately 375,000 students. It is the fourth-largest system of two-year colleges and four-year universities in the United States.*