

# MSCF Minute



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## REIMAGINING MINNESOTA STATE UPDATE

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Since first hearing about Reimagining Minnesota State, we've had two clear questions: what is this, and where is this going.

We have been told this is not Charting the Future 2.0. We have been assured there is no predetermined outcome. However, over this past week, two significant events have occurred that have given us a better understanding of what this is and where this is going, and it doesn't look good. The first was the briefing paper we alerted you to last week, which omitted calls for a reinvestment in higher learning but included references to the disaggregation/unbundling model of Western Governor's University. The second was the Forum Session at Minneapolis CTC on Monday, the first public event of this initiative.

Up until now, we have been – cautiously – in a wait-and-see stance. Our caution is a direct result of how Charting the Future unfolded. Students, faculty, and staff initially engaged in that process in good faith believing their participation would inform the final recommendations, only to discover that a \$2 million contract had been secretly given to consultants from McKinsey to produce their own recommendations behind the scenes. This bombshell derailed the entire process. For the sake of our students and the integrity of our profession, we are interested in rebuilding trust with the system office and in pursuing true shared governance on our campuses. We have thus been open to the possibility that this new process--Reimagining Minnesota State--could be an avenue for those goals.

Additionally, we know higher education faces challenges. In our classrooms, we see our students struggling to pursue their hopes at a time in which we have fewer resources to support them. If the Reimagining Minnesota State process sought to improve the system itself to better support faculty in our work to educate students, then we want to be a positive, productive part of those conversations.

However, this past week gave us a clear indication that only certain narratives would

be accepted, only certain questions would be asked, and only certain perspectives would be invited. The eventual result? Only certain solutions will be provided to pre-identified problems.

For example, in the Forum Session, the discussion of demographics portrayed the situation as not just having fewer students to enroll in the future, but that the students we *will* have will face more challenges, requiring more resources help them achieve success. Instead of using this to argue for a reinvestment in public higher education, the participants mostly focused on ways, in their view, to deliver education at a lower cost per student.

Nothing could illustrate this more dramatically than what happened to the students who attempted to ask questions at the end of the presentations. The first student was a veteran in their last semester at MCTC. This student correctly pointed out that at no time during the three presentations or the Q&A with the advisory committee did anyone talk about *why* we were facing such a crisis. They were cut off by the moderator and told by one presenter that their question was one of ethics and politics, not economics, and “outside of the scope of what we’re trying to accomplish today.”

In other words, there was a recognition that people need to be helped, but that how we do so shouldn't ask more of us as a society. Given the attendees in the room, what this student did is one of the clearest examples I've witnessed of speaking truth to power. And they were not alone. Another student rose to call out the inappropriate use of a psychological illness, schizophrenia, as an adjective by one of the participants, pointing out that the very students the presenters talked about in the abstract were actual persons, many of whom were in the room. They were similarly cut off by the moderator.

If you want to learn about someone's intentions, pay attention to how they act, not just their words. Treating the experiences and perspectives of our students as a disruption to be dismissed speaks volumes.

To those who have never worked in the classroom with the students we educate, some of the ideas and concepts introduced so far in this process may sound reasonable, modern, needed. But these are solutions isolated from the actual problems we face. We've heard from many of you that, after witnessing the way the students were cut off, you didn't trust that your feedback sent to the system office would be taken seriously.

Accordingly, we have set up our own brief, informal survey where you can share your reactions, thoughts, and feedback with us. We will use your feedback to ensure your perspectives of the challenges we face are not dismissed in this process so we can continue to push for real solutions to real problems.

You can access this survey via this link: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/ZYPJW3Q>

### Future Planning Forums

On December 7 the MSCF Board heard a presentation about potential changes to our dues structure. Board members were charged with bringing the information back to their chapters, combining it with the information and discussions from last year regarding organizational structure, and initiating local conversations in preparation for the Delegate Assembly.

To assist in the process, we will be holding a series of three forums to answer questions and provide additional information. The first two forums, scheduled for January 10 and January 28, will be in question and answer format. Chapters will be invited to submit questions in advance, and MSCF officers will provide responses during the forums. The third forum, scheduled for February 12, will be a presentation of a draft budget and proposals for organizational structure change(s), based on the feedback received from members and input from the Executive Committee.

The forums will be held at the Education Minnesota building and will be available online via Go-to-Meeting. Individuals wishing to submit questions for the forums should do so through their Board member. Additional information, including online connection information, will be emailed to Board members soon.