

MSCF Minute



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REIMAGINING MINNESOTA STATE

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The Reimagining Minnesota State process includes briefing papers that will be made available prior to the forum sessions. The briefing paper for the December 10 session is available and can be found here <http://www.minnstate.edu/board/reimagining/docs/BriefingPaper-121018.pdf>

As you read this briefing paper and listen to/attend the forum session on December 10, MSCF invites you to consider what unexamined assumptions are being made and how we might question these assumptions as this process moves forward. For example, this briefing paper frames declines in public support as unavoidable, inevitable, and related to the most recent recession. This is one narrative.

There is also evidence that declines in public support are a direct consequence of decisions made by policy makers – and that these decisions were being made well before the most recent financial crisis.

We also invite you to consider what ideas might be missing in this text and in the conversations ahead. For example, as officers of a union that provides a united voice for public education, we observe one thing notably missing in the briefing is the clear and present need for public reinvestment in higher education. This is a curious omission, especially given that the report from the Commission on the Future

of Undergraduate Education referenced elsewhere in the [briefing paper](#) clearly argues that the United States should commit to a comparable reinvestment in our existing educational infrastructure, including undergraduate education, in order to realize the productive potential of all Americans.”

Finally, there is some terminology included in this briefing paper and around this initiative that not everyone may be familiar with. On the next page is a short list of terms to help provide some context and background to this text and

future conversations. In particular, please note the mention of “disaggregation” in

the briefing paper. This is a reference to the business model of Western Governor’s University, and is something we have voiced deep concerns about with the system office earlier in the semester. We will continue to update and add to this list as these conversations continue.

MSCF has always fought to ensure faculty are treated as professionals who control their own curriculum. This is a cornerstone of ensuring the high quality education that happens at the two-year colleges – and this core value of our organization will not change.

BRIEFING PAPER TERMINOLOGY:

Competency Based Learning / Curricular Modules: A theory of learning that is premised on the idea that the parts comprise the whole. In many CBL models, students are asked to complete small, often standardized skills based “modules” that—in theory—combine with other modules to eventually achieve mastery of a subject. Often, students individually move through the modules at their own pace, meaning technology is often necessary in such a completely individualized learning environment. In a “disaggregated” learning model like Western Governor’s University, the standardized CBL modules are designed by a few high-level subject matter instructional designers, and implemented by a larger number of mentors/tutors.

Disaggregation / Unbundling: Online learning model developed by Western Governor’s University that divides the labor involved in teaching/learning into separate jobs. For example, a few PhD holding “subject matter experts” design the curriculum for the learning modules, and separate instructors with lower levels of expertise called “student mentors” work more directly with students as they complete the learning modules. This model is in contrast to our current model whereby highly skilled faculty are responsible for both the design and the delivery of course content in the learning environment. Analogous to the shift from highly skilled craftspeople who performed all parts of creating an object to the de-skilled factory model in which workers were responsible for only a single aspect of production and had no control over design/implementation.

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For a more in-depth exploration of how this works at WGU, see <http://www.nea.org/archive/53413.htm>

Disruptive innovation:

A theory introduced in the field of business management by Clayton Christensen that describes a scenario in which an innovation (often technological in nature) allows a new company to gain a competitive edge over existing businesses with well-established products/services (think: Uber). Whether or not the new product/services in the markets that were “disrupted”

are better than the ones they replaced is a matter of some controversy, and some even question if the theory itself is

sound (See especially: <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2014/06/23/the-disruption-machine> and <https://sloanreview.mit.edu/article/how-useful-is-the-theory-of-disruptive-innovation/>)

Just In Time Training / Teaching:

A model of teaching arising in the 90’s that uses pre-class meeting assignments, activities, and feedback to guide the content of the class when students and instructors convene. Usually done on a continual, cyclical basis, and requires a high degree of subject area expertise, flexibility, and creativity on the part of the instructor. More recently, the model has reappeared and morphed as

training developed for workplaces through which employees are given the bare minimum of training via modules that they need to complete a specific task/project at the precise moment they need the training. This concept is sometimes connected with CBL and to the ideas of learning badges, micro-credentials, and nano-degrees.

Southern New Hampshire University:

A private, non-profit university that has dramatically expanded its online education, following a “business model” that is similar to Western Governor’s University. One of the articles cited in the briefing paper is authored by Paul LeBlanc, president of SNHU.

Western Governor’s University:

A private, non-profit, online university who introduced the “disaggregation” or “unbundled” model of education delivery designed around competency based learning. A recent federal audit concluded that the school did not deliver “regular and substantive interaction” with faculty. (

See <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2017/09/22/education-depts-inspector-general-calls-western-governors-repay-713-million-federal> for more information)

Register for Reimagining MinnState

As you have heard, the MinnState Board of Trustees have initiated a process called “Reimagining Minnesota State.” More information about this initiative can be found here: <http://www.minnstate.edu/board/reimagining.html>

Because faculty are at the heart of the educational mission of the colleges, we believe we have a very important role in monitoring these conversations. Your presence—virtual or in person—establishes our presence in these conversations.

The first “forum session” is Monday, December 10, 8am at Minneapolis Community and Technical College. You can RSVP for the event at the MinnState website above.

Further, if you plan on attending or watching the live stream of the event, please also let us know through this [link](#). This helps us identify members who will be in attendance so we can reach out later for feedback about the event.

If you cannot attend or watch the streaming of this first event but would still like updates and opportunities to be a part of this initiative as it unfolds, you can still sign up on this page <http://www.cvent.com/d/vbqvxi>