

**MINNESOTA STATE  
BOARD OF TRUSTEES**

**BOARD INFORMATION ITEM**

The Pandemic Impact on Students: Equity and Access

**BACKGROUND**

**Enrollment and Access**

Since the peak of enrollment in fiscal year 2011, colleges and universities have been experiencing a continued, decade-long enrollment loss, which the pandemic has exacerbated. Although a few colleges and universities are projecting slightly improved enrollment in fiscal year 2023, most are continuing to project decreases. Between fiscal years 2011 to 2020, colleges and universities enrolled 35,419 fewer students (157,903 versus 122,483 full year equivalent) or 22.4 percent. Recently, enrollment loss has averaged approximately 2.5 percent each year. Enrollment loss since fiscal year 2020 is partially explained by the pandemic. The system's enrollment loss between fiscal years 2020 and 2021 was 5.5 percent. Our most recent fiscal year 2022 projections are from March 2022, which show the current fiscal year enrollment down by 6.8 percent from fiscal year 2021. As spring term numbers have solidified, there is indication that this projection will be fairly accurate with a slight improvement possible. Nevertheless, our system will have experienced a total enrollment loss of approximately 12 percent or over 14,000 FYE in a two-year period.

As of July 18, 2022, year-to-date enrollment for summer term 2022 is 5.1 percent below what it was at the same time last year, and year-to-date enrollment for fall term 2022 is down 2.6 percent from the same time last year. These numbers demonstrate a continuation of long-term trends in enrollment decline, though at a slower pace than the past few years.

Primary factors contributing to enrollment decline continue to include nation-wide economic changes and declines in the size of relevant age groups, such as recent high school graduates. To mitigate this risk, colleges and universities engage in a variety of strategies to improve recruitment and retention, such as enhancing outreach to underrepresented populations and supporting current students in persisting to completion. Addressing both potential and current student concerns promptly as they arise, carefully monitoring enrollment activity, and preparing contingency plans in case enrollment projections are not met are also important strategies.

Other challenges for enrollment success include economic recovery patterns that continue to surge in some areas and remain slow in others, and changes in instructional delivery preferences as some students who were forced to take online classes found them to be more rewarding, desirable, and flexible than they had thought, while for others the online experience reinforced the value of in-person learning, especially for technical programs. Additionally, some students may still hesitate to return to the classroom due to lingering health concerns.

Access to higher education as measured by enrollment had expanded among historically underrepresented student groups prior to the pandemic and has declined at differential rates during the

pandemic. The greatest declines have been observed among American Indian and Alaskan Native student groups, as well as Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander student groups.

### **Equity in Student Success**

For more than a decade Minnesota State has actively monitored student progression, persistence, and completion rates at campus, sector, and system levels. This examination includes not only a review of aggregate success rates, but also gaps between outcomes for students of color and American Indian students and the outcomes for white students. This examination is completed within the context of current student demographics and the factors known to impact persistence and completion at our colleges and universities, and is undertaken as a means of gauging the impact of campus and system efforts to improve student success and informing our future efforts.

The monitoring framework for student success metrics consists of two types of metrics: progression measures (which provide early indicators of student success) and outcome measures (which are time-bound indicators used nationally to gauge student persistence and completion). Minnesota State tracks five progression measures and two primary outcomes measures:

#### *Progression Measures*

- Enrollment in developmental-level courses
- Completion of developmental-level courses within the first year of enrollment
- Completion of first college-level courses within the first year of enrollment
- Credit momentum as measured by successful completion of 20 credits within the first year of enrollment
- Credit momentum as measured by successful completion of 30 credits within the first year of enrollment

#### *Outcome Measures*

- Second fall persistence or completion
- Completion (measured at 3<sup>rd</sup> spring for colleges and 6<sup>th</sup> spring for universities)

Within each of these measures, data are disaggregated by race/ethnicity, Pell eligibility, and first-generation college student status, and the gaps between student groups are monitored and examined.

The most current data available show the following aggregate results:

- Enrollment in developmental education coursework continues to decline, in alignment with system efforts to redesign developmental education and accelerate entry into college-level courses
  - Gaps by race/ethnicity and Pell eligibility status have narrowed, though remain large
- Completion rates of developmental coursework within the first year of enrollment have increased steadily in both mathematics and writing, while vacillating in reading
  - Gaps by race/ethnicity have remained stable in mathematics while increasing in writing and reading
  - Gaps by Pell eligibility status have narrowed
- Completion rates of first college-level coursework within the first year of enrollment have increased steadily in mathematics but remained relatively flat in writing
  - Gaps by race/ethnicity and by Pell eligibility status have narrowed markedly

- The proportion of students successfully completing 20 credits in their first year of enrollment has remained relatively stable over the past decade
  - Gaps by race/ethnicity have narrowed slightly
  - Gaps by Pell eligibility status have increased slightly
- The proportion of students successfully completing 30 credits in their first year of enrollment has increased over the past decade
  - Gaps by race/ethnicity remain stable
  - Gaps by Pell eligibility status have increased
- Second fall persistence/completion rates have declined slightly over the past six years, and show a steeper decline at the universities in the previous year
  - Gaps by race/ethnicity have narrowed slightly overall
- Completion by third spring of enrollment at the colleges has increased over the past five years
  - Gaps by race/ethnicity remain relatively unchanged
- Completion by sixth spring of enrollment at the universities has similarly increased over the past six years
  - Gaps by race/ethnicity have increased

While aggregate measures provide an overall snapshot of progress in moving student success metrics, they mask significant differences between campuses performance and need to be viewed within the deeper context of individual institutions. During this study session more detailed background information on enrollment and monitoring measures will be provided, followed by small group discussions with campus presidents to better understand local dynamics and strategic responses employed at the campus level.