



NEWS RELEASE

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Metropolitan State Releases 2009 Civic Confidence Survey Results

Metropolitan State University Civic Confidence survey reveals confidence in public officials, coupled with concerns about accuracy of voting records, increase in traffic congestion and crime.

Saint Paul, Minn. – June 15, 2009 – The 2009 Metropolitan State University Civic Confidence survey, released today, revealed a greater concern about the economy than in prior surveys but optimism about the country's ability to meet the challenges. However, respondents expressed a greater uncertainty about the accuracy of vote counting in the metropolitan area.

“For the first time since the Civic Confidence survey began, residents identified the economy as the metropolitan area's biggest problem,” said David O'Hara, professor of Economics at Metropolitan State University, who has led the survey since its inception in 1996. The economy was cited by 31 percent of area residents. However, almost a quarter of Twin Cities residents said they strongly believed that the country was in a better position to face significant challenges ahead, compared to only 8 percent in both 2005 and 2007.

When asked about voting and election reform, 42 percent of respondents said they were somewhat unsure or not at all sure their votes were being accurately recorded. This compared to 18 percent in 2007. In 2009, only 15 percent of respondents said they were very sure their votes were being accurately counted, compared to 42 percent in 2007. “It appears that the still unresolved U.S. Senate race in Minnesota has done some damage to public confidence in our election process,” said Frank Schweigert, assistant professor of Nonprofit Management and co-director of the survey.

Traffic and transportation were cited as concerns by 25 percent of respondents, making it the second greatest problem revealed by the survey. Specifically, respondents identified “drivers using cell phones” and “too much traffic on the road” as the two greatest traffic problems. When asked to select their first choice for reducing traffic congestion, 45 percent said “light rail,” 30 percent said “construction of more roads,” and 17 percent said “improved bus service.” Residents of Minneapolis favored expansion of light rail and improved bus service, while St. Paul residents favored additional roads. “One of the most important reasons for continuing the survey is to maintain a focus on public confidence in local public

institutions and public leaders, no matter what challenges the region faces,” said Roger Israel, professor of Public Administration and co-director of the survey.

Additional highlights of the survey:

- Support for the quality of local government services remained high. 74 percent of respondents said they were “satisfied” or “somewhat satisfied” with city government, and 73 percent said the same for county government.
- 58 percent of Twin Cities residents now “agree” or “somewhat agree” that most government officials are responsive to their needs and concerns.
- Fear of crime continued to be greatest in Minneapolis and St. Paul, and much less so in the suburbs. But only 16 percent of Twin Cities residents rated crime as the #1 regional problem, the lowest level since 11 percent in 2001.
- In spite of the grim economic news and strong concerns among regional residents about the economy and their personal financial situation, 60 percent of respondents said they felt the Twin Cities area was headed in the right direction. This compares to 53 percent in 2007.

“Metropolitan State University has been committed to improving the professional and community life of the metropolitan area since the university’s founding in 1971,” said O’Hara. “We hope policy makers, civic organizations and citizens will use the survey’s findings to improve the performance and accountability of our public institutions and to consider new ways in which Twin Cities residents can become more engaged in community affairs.”

About the Survey

The Civic Confidence Survey solicits attitudes on the economy, government and civic life from residents in the seven-county Twin Cities area. It was conducted annually between 1996 and 2002, and is now done on a biannual basis. Results of the 2009 survey were gathered through telephone interviews with 500 randomly selected adults from February 17 to March 2, 2009. An executive summary of the Civic Confidence survey can be obtained from Shana VonRuden at shana.vonruden@metrostate.edu or 612-659-7290 or on the www.metrostate.edu Web site.

About Metropolitan State University

Metropolitan State University (www.metrostate.edu), a member of the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system, provides high-quality, affordable academic and professional degree programs at the bachelor’s, master’s and doctorate levels. It is the only state university in the Twin Cities metro area.

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