

President Hammersmith's Testimony to the Minnesota House of Representatives Higher Education Committee

January 26, 2010

Thank you, Representative Rukavina.

For the record, I am Sue Hammersmith, President of Metropolitan State University. With me today is Murtuza Siddiqui, our VFO/Vice President for Administration and Finance, and Dan Hambrock, Associate Vice President for Capital Planning and Campus Services.

Mr. Chair and members of the Committee, thank you for this opportunity to describe Metropolitan State University's two bonding requests. I understand that both requests were also discussed during Commissioner Hanson's testimony before the Capital Investment Committee on Thursday.

We appreciate the Legislature's continued interest in providing Metropolitan State University with appropriate facilities to enable us to contribute to the highly-skilled and diverse workforce that Minnesota needs to prosper in the future.

Metropolitan State specializes in offering high-quality programs that meet the needs of working adults, other nontraditional students, business, and the professions. That is a growing market and one we are meeting with both online and face-to-face education.

We currently enroll 10,000 students a year and Chancellor McCormick has challenged us to grow to 20,000 by the year 2020. Our enrollments have grown over 20% in the past 3 years.

Ninety-five percent of our students are transfer students. Our largest feeder schools are the University of Minnesota and MnSCU's metro area 2-year colleges. Two-thirds of our students are part-time students, mostly working adults. Thirty percent are students of color. Our graduation rates exceed those of Minnesota and the nation, and our graduation rates for students of color are on par with our graduation rates for white students.

As we look to the future, we see a huge, swelling pipeline of students here in the Twin Cities. MnSCU 2-year colleges in the Metro currently enroll 150,000 students a year. Over half say they want to continue for a bachelor's degree.

We offer baccalaureate and graduate level programs in the Liberal Arts; in the professions such as business, nursing, law enforcement, or social services; and in individualized majors that are specifically designed to meet the needs of the individual student or employer. Many of our courses and degree programs are available online as well as in the classroom.

SMART CLASSROOM PROJECT

Our first bonding project is ranked #5 in MnSCU's capital budget request. It is for a new classroom building with state of the art technology to replace a 90-year-old condemned building which is on 7th Street right in the middle of our St. Paul campus. This new building will be modest in size but much-needed needed to provide classroom space and offices for faculty and advisors.

Let me tell you a bit about the current structure. It is the last remaining portion of the old St. John's Hospital. As I mentioned earlier, this building is condemned. Consequently it cannot be used even for storage or for overflow, temporary work space. It has a leaky roof, and the pigeons have found a way into the building. My staff tell me

there are pigeon carcasses and guano in the building. It also has a 90-year-old smoke stack that is losing bricks at the top. The mortar joints are opening, allowing more water to enter and continue the deterioration of the bricks.

Unfortunately, the condemned structure sits directly on top of our state-of-the-art heating and cooling plant, which is below grade. The new building will be built on the same location. Completing the project is necessary, not only to bring more classrooms online, but also to better protect the heating and cooling plant below, from potential failure due to degradation of the empty structure above it. And the 90-year-old smokestack that I mentioned earlier still serves as the smoke stack for our new main boiler, which is in the lowest level. If construction does not begin this year, we will be forced to invest state resources in reinforcing the 90-year-old smoke stack to avoid a structural failure, and then later to replace it.

Completing this project will remove \$3.9 million from the system's deferred maintenance list. In short, this building's deferred maintenance needs are 2/3 of the the amount requested to build the new building.

The State has already provided demolition funding for the old hospital structure. We had planned to combine demolition and construction, back-to-back, in order to save the cost of designing and building a temporary cover over the boilers and chiller plant that are below the condemned building. The demolition money is not sufficient to both demolish the existing eyesore and also construct a temporary roof over that plant. Unfortunately, we hear now that MMB wants to retract the demolition funds, as well.

The legislature has already approved funding for this project three times. And it's been vetoed three times. Consequently, this project is very shovel-ready. We estimate it would take only 30 days to complete the bid documents after the funding becomes available, and that construction would begin in August 2010 and be completed in December 2011. This would create construction jobs very quickly and would remove almost \$4,000,000 from the state's deferred maintenance list.

This project would also enable us, immediately upon its completion, to decrease the amount of public dollars we are spending to lease classroom and office space. In FY 2009, Metropolitan State leased 145,000 square feet of space for a cost of about \$2 million.

Data for questions on the Smart Classroom Ctr

Request: \$5.86M

The Smart Classroom Center will include technology-enhanced classrooms, faculty offices, work areas, and support services.

16,500 sq. ft.

8 Classrooms and seminar rooms

21 academic offices.

Costs to demolish the existing building and add a temporary protective roof over the lower level: In excess of \$500 K (plus additional A&E costs to prepare

the construction documents). We have about \$380 K remaining.

Time line:

Bid within 30 days (June-July 2010)

Construction: Aug. 2010 – Dec. 2011

SCIENCE EDUCATION CENTER

Our second project, which is Project #28 on the System’s list, is a request for \$3.44 million for land acquisition and design funds for Metropolitan State University’s first Science building. This will be located on the St. Paul campus, and it will provide space for classrooms, labs, research, and faculty in the natural sciences.

Metropolitan State is the only university in MnSCU without a dedicated science facility. We teach as many classes and labs as we can, and our enrollments have been growing in recent years, but our lack of science facilities really limits what we can do. (We’ve gotten really good at field biology because you can do it outside!) We also are not able to give our students the hands-on research or laboratory experience that is so important in today’s market.

We have converted two of our classrooms into science labs, but they are very limited. The chemistry lab only has one fume hood, and students tell us that their high schools had better-equipped labs.

A science facility is necessary to enable us to produce the graduates Minnesota needs in the sciences, technology, engineering, nursing, health care, and education. As such, it addresses state workforce priorities. We also expect to use the new facility to launch a “Professional Master’s in Science,” a program being requested by the private sector as better preparation for their advanced workforce needs than the traditional doctoral degrees in science fields. Finally, a science facility will enable us to fulfill our responsibilities for the sciences in general education for our growing enrollments in all majors.

We ask for your support for the land acquisition and design funds to move this Science Education Center forward as promptly as possible, in light of growing student demand and workforce needs.

Last Thursday, Representative Mahoney asked Commissioner Hanson about this project, and the Commissioner responded that students can drive to other institutions if Metropolitan State cannot add capacity. As you have heard from President Davis and other metro area college presidents, the MnSCU colleges here in the Metropolitan area do not have capacity to accommodate our need for additional classrooms and labs. They are experiencing the same market demand enrollment growth that we are.

And the private institutions that have capacity in this region charge an average of six times our tuition. Adding thousands of dollars to students’ debt loads is not an economically viable strategy. Public higher education is supposed to meet that need, and we are eager to do so.

Again, this year’s request is for land acquisition and design work. If funded, we will come back in 2012 with a request for \$32.8 million for the actual construction. The building would then open in 2014.

Data for questions on the Science Education Center

Request: \$3.6M.

The site planned for the Science Education Center is next to our St. Paul campus; the Center will include approximately 59,000 gross square feet.

It will be connected to the campus by a skyway across E. 6th St.

We currently offer two science majors—Biology (BA); Life Sciences Teaching (BS)—and their enrollments are growing.

A science building would allow us to add additional science major and also to conform with MnSCU’s policy about the natural sciences in general education..

(cont.)

Time Line:

Schematic design: June-Dec. 2010
Design development: Jan-March 2011
Contract documents: April-Sept. 2011
Down time: Oct. 2011-June 2012
Bid and Construction: July 2012-July 2014?

SPACE UTILIZATION DATA

Finally, I would like to comment on our space utilization data.

Last Thursday, Rep. Hausman asked the Commissioner why the administration did not recommend construction funding for this project, which is now being proposed for the 5th time. The Commissioner suggested that we have surplus classroom capacity on our St. Paul campus. I suspect there were some old data that he had in mind, and I hope to have an opportunity to discuss that with him.

Two years ago, our utilization rate was 80%, but with our enrollment growth that's no longer the case. If you actually look at the data, our classroom utilization rate for the St. Paul campus this year is at 94%,. This is equal to or higher than every other MnSCU university except Mankato. Even with our leased space, and even with our teaching on all the MnSCU college campuses as well, our deans were not able to schedule all the evening classes that they needed, our classes were full, and some of our students were turned away. Moreover, the growing enrollments at the ten MnSCU colleges here in the metro area is reducing their space available for our use. We are currently teaching on 17 different sites, which is a tremendous challenge for both students and faculty/staff. We have no surplus capacity at this time.

Thank you for your attention, and, Mr. Chair, I will be happy to respond to any questions.