

October 16, 2013

To: Faculty Senate Executive Committee, Cabinet

From: Dick Hanson, President

Re: Student Preparedness for University Success

The preparedness of incoming university students is becoming a bigger and bigger issue for colleges and universities around the country. There is evidence that greater sensitivity to, and a better understanding of these issues will enable better-informed curriculum, (and) . . . aiding students' transition to higher education and leading to higher quality learning.¹ Other writers are more succinct and suggest that approximately one-half of the nation's entering postsecondary students do not meet placement standards and are not ready for college-level work.²

In a 2010 study of developmental education in Minnesota, we learned that within two years of high school graduation, 53 percent of the class of 2008 enrolled in a Minnesota public higher education institution. Of these public higher education students, 40 percent took one or more developmental courses during that period.³ Further, most students who enrolled in developmental courses took only one course. However, 12 percent of the class attending public higher education took three or more courses.

Developmental enrollments are concentrated in Minnesota State Colleges and Universities, particularly within the two-year colleges. Of the 12,997 graduates who enrolled in developmental courses, 99 percent attended an institution within Minnesota State Colleges and Universities; 87 percent attended a two-year community or technical college.⁴

¹ [A study of accounting students' motives, expectations and preparedness for higher education](#). Marann Byrne, Barbara Flood, *Journal of Further and Higher Education*, Vol. 29, Iss. 2, 2000

² Improving College Readiness and Success for All Students: A Joint Responsibility Between K–12 and Postsecondary Education An Issue Brief for the Secretary of Education's Commission on the Future of Higher Education . Michael W. Kirst and Andrea Venezia . adapted from their report, from their work on Stanford University's Bridge Project, and from their March 10, 2006 piece in the Chronicle of Higher Education entitled, "What States Must Do."

³ "Getting Prepared: A 2010 Report on Recent High School Graduates Who Took Developmental/Remedial Courses, State-Level Summary and High School Summary. January 2011, Minnesota State Colleges and Universities.

⁴ Ibid.

On the website for the National Center for Developmental Education we read,

*The field of developmental education supports the academic and personal growth of underprepared college students through instruction, counseling, advising, and tutoring. The clients of developmental education programs are traditional and nontraditional students who have been assessed as needing to develop their skills in order to be successful in college.*⁵

Finally, it is important to include thought about the concept related to preparedness: habits of mind.⁶ She argues that one way to make procedural knowledge (the how) visible to more students is to explicitly teach habits of mind – “curiosity, engagement, persistence, flexibility, and metacognition – that support learning within and across disciplinary and institutional contexts.” (page50)

It is time to address both readiness and preparedness and to make these institutional priorities. Specifically, I am asking the faculty at BSU to form a Student Readiness, Preparedness, Awareness and Action Taskforce charged with the following tasks: (1) help the campus better understand the developmental needs of the students we admit to BSU; (2) contextualize our concern about the academic strengths of students we admit to BSU; (3) discover more ways to assist our students in their social awareness of a university environment; (4) help the campus understand the impacts of admitting under-qualified students; and finally, (5) help us understand the needed links between developmental education, liberal education, and the academic major (or minor).

My recommendation on who should populate this proposed taskforce includes a faculty representative from each college/school, an academic dean, and two students. Please let me know your reaction to this proposal. I will help the process in any way possible.

⁵ <http://ncde.appstate.edu/>

⁶ Liberal Education, Volume 99, No 1, Winter 2013, by Jennifer Fletcher entitled, *Critical Habits of Mind: Exposing the Process of Development*