

MnSCU Occupational Programs

Update to 2009 Evaluation Report

Problems Identified

- **Inconsistent Consideration of Market Needs for Workers.** Although MnSCU's two-year colleges are required to periodically review their occupational programs, not every college analyzes current or forecasted job openings in these reviews. Colleges we examined rarely considered job prospects for students when deciding to close occupational programs. In its decision to cap electrician-program enrollment statewide in 2007-08, MnSCU did not sufficiently consider local economic conditions.
- **Ineffectiveness of Some Program Advisory Committees.** Colleges have relied on program advisory committees to identify employer needs, but not all such committees have been working effectively. Some committees had too few or too many members, met too infrequently, or had rosters with too few business people holding relevant experience.
- **Questionable Accuracy in Surveying Graduates.** Each MnSCU college surveys graduates to determine whether they found jobs related to their programs of study. But the validity of some surveys is in question because faculty may respond on behalf of graduates when colleges have difficulty locating graduates to determine their employment status.
- **Insufficient Oversight of Career and Job Information.** MnSCU has no centralized oversight of colleges' information on career exploration and job opportunities. Variation among colleges has led to gaps in information on job prospects for students.

Changes Implemented

- **Improved Consideration of Labor Market Information.** The Office of the Chancellor is requiring colleges to consider labor market information when they review their academic programs. The Office of the Chancellor lifted its electrician-program enrollment cap in one region of the state where local market conditions warranted the change.
- **Improved Advisory Committees.** MnSCU's Board of Trustees clarified its policy on expectations for program advisory committees. The chancellor now monitors compliance with the revised policy and evaluates college presidents accordingly. MnSCU revised its handbook on advisory committees and is holding workshops on effective committees.

Action Needed

- **Track Results of Upcoming Review of Graduates' Placement Rates.** An advisory group will review MnSCU's procedures for monitoring graduates' success at finding jobs related to their programs. It is expected to recommend changes by the end of 2010.
- **Monitor Expected Policy Changes.** MnSCU's Board proposed a policy requiring colleges to offer career and job information for students in occupational programs. If approved, the policy would also require the chancellor to evaluate colleges' efforts on this matter.