

MnSCU System Office

Update to 2010 Evaluation Report

Problems Identified

- **Growing System Office with Mixed Views on Its Performance.** Expenditures for the “system office”—which provides centralized oversight and management for the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities (MnSCU) system—grew faster in recent years than expenditures for the rest of MnSCU. Campus officials expressed support for some of this office’s services, but they were critical of others.
- **Difficulties with Student Credit Transfer.** Improved credit transfer was a key goal of the creation of the MnSCU system in 1995, but our 2010 report indicated continuing concerns about credit transfer problems and the transfer-related information provided to students.
- **Ineffective Selection and Oversight of Information Technology (IT) Projects.** IT spending accounted for much of the system office’s recent growth, but the office did not effectively set priorities among projects and its project management practices were weak.

Changes Implemented

- **Staffing and Organizational Changes.** In late 2010, MnSCU said it would reduce the annual system office budget by \$4.2 million, eliminating 41 positions by July 2011. MnSCU will modify several system office functions the OLA report said needed review.
- **Credit Transfer Improvements.** Changes initiated by MnSCU have included: adopting a common format for course outlines; requiring institutions to evaluate equivalencies of all courses by mid-2012; improving information for students regarding their rights to appeal transfer decisions; and designating additional system office staff to work on transfer issues. The 2010 Legislature required MnSCU to report annually through 2014 on achievement of credit transfer goals.
- **Changes in IT Project Management.** MnSCU says that changes in staff training, user testing, internal communication and reporting, and project tracking have improved project management. Also, MnSCU recently conducted a survey of campus IT users.

Action Needed

- **Foster Changes in Delivery of Certain Administrative Services.** MnSCU intends to develop a plan by mid-2011 for expanding the use of shared administrative services among MnSCU campuses. By late 2011, MnSCU intends to delegate system office authority for job classification to some campuses, and it will pursue alternatives to current system office credentialing practices for two-year college faculty.
- **More Performance Measurement.** MnSCU intends to develop a plan by mid-2011 for measuring system office and institutions’ administrative functions against benchmarks.