MARCH 2021

PROJECT REPORT

NORTHEAST HIGHER EDUCATION DISTRICT COLLEGE MERGER VISION NORTHEAST

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Interim NHED President

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CURRENT STRUCTURE OF THE NHED COLLEGES

The Northeast Higher Education District (NHED) was established in 1999 and currently consists of five independently accredited community colleges (Hibbing, Itasca, Mesabi Range [campuses in Virginia and Eveleth], Rainy River, and Vermilion). The five colleges share a president and other non-instructional services such as: human resources, business services / VP of finance, institutional research, financial aid services (4 of 5 colleges), TRIO SSS grant, and customized training (Advanced Minnesota). Academic areas shared across colleges are limited but include a unified summer online schedule (NHED Online) and a minimal number of courses/programs offered across colleges during the remainder of the academic year. The colleges operate independently in areas such as: enrollment management, marketing, services to students, college-in-the-schools, budgeting, HLC and other accreditations, athletic programming, and most academic offerings.

RATIONAL FOR CHANGE OF STRUCTURE

The rationale for pursuing this change of structure can be summarized in two broad categories: improved services to students and other stakeholders and operational efficiency. Most importantly, services to students and stakeholders will be improved in a one-college model. Students taking courses across our campuses (instead of across colleges) will have a single transcript and single bill as well as a simplified registration and financial aid process while still benefiting from local, on-campus services. Students will have easier access to and a more robust selection of courses and career programs when we remove the silos associated with independent colleges. Operating as a single college will lead to more clear and consistent collaborative efforts with regional K-12 and industry partners. The single college model will lead to improved operational efficiency allowing resources to be further focused on mission-centric functions. Conducting business out of five separate student and employee databases, staffing and financing five separate accreditations, competing for student enrollment, and generally duplicating efforts in areas that could be combined are all examples of practices that can be addressed in a single-college model. The NHED colleges have experienced significant enrollment declines since 2011, and the five NHED colleges are now all among the smallest of the 30 two-year colleges in the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system as measured by student enrollment. NHED enrollment projections remain challenged in the near future as regional demographic data indicates flat population growth in our region over the next decade. The demographic challenge is made worse for our colleges because the region's traditional college-age population is projected to decline while the population of people 65 and older will increase for the next several years.

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ONE-COLLEGE MODEL PRINCIPLES

The following list represents the general principles of a one-college model and are foundational in the planning/action taking place in the VisionNE process.

- All six campuses will remain open operating under one academic calendar
- A new name will be established for the college along with a new mission/vision an core values.
- Designated leaders will oversee campuses and be assigned college-wide responsibilities
- The president's office will remain centrally located on the Hibbing campus
- A comprehensive/coordinated enrollment management plan will be enacted
- Non-instructional services will be consolidated keeping face-to-face service on all campuses in areas such as counseling/advising, admissions, and financial aid. We will share expertise across campuses
- Athletic programs will be maintained at all campuses to drive enrollment and keep strong community identities as long it remains operationally prudent to do so
- A single transfer curriculum/AA degree will be established by creating common course outlines and standardized goal areas for transfer courses. As many liberal arts courses will be offered face-to-face as enrollment dictates. Courses will be shared among campuses in cases such as low enrollment, online/specialty courses, where faculty credentialing is limited, etc.
- Niche career and technical programming will be kept at the campuses where they currently exist. Programming will be expanded across other campuses based on student/industry demand where possible. Duplicate programs will work together
- The college will work with local and statewide bargaining units to address the effects of merger on employee seniority lists and other bargaining rights
- Auxiliary functions & foundations will continue to operate at each campus. Expertise will be shared and efficiencies taken advantage of where possible

MERGER TIMELINE

The merging of services and programming have been and will continue to be evolutionary and ongoing. We intend to officially operate as a singly accredited college beginning in August 2022.

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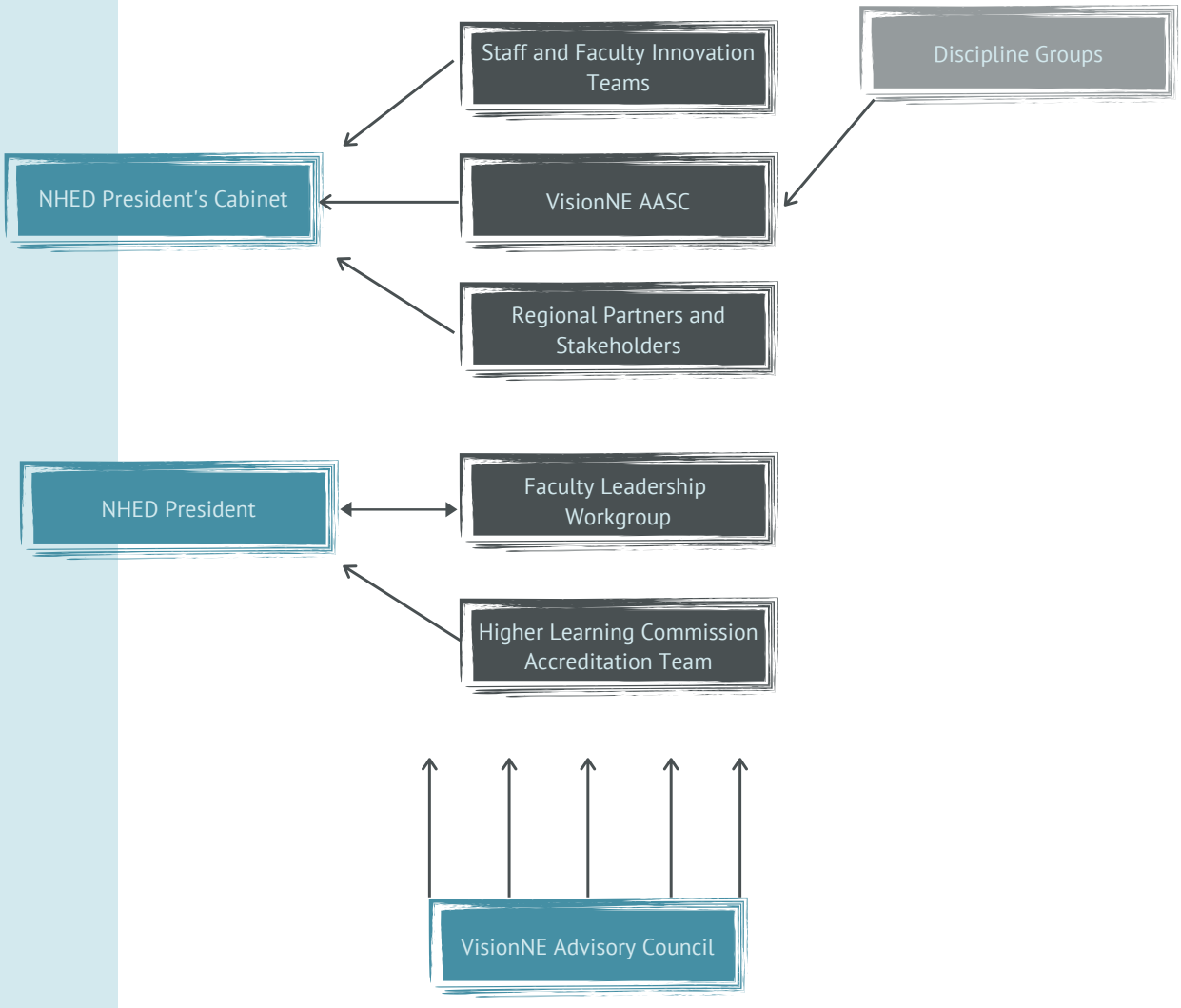
VISIONNE ORGANIZATIONAL PLANNING STRUCTURE:

The VisionNE Project includes multiple workgroups. These workgroups are tasked with specific focus areas of the college merger work.

- VisionNE AASC
- Staff and Faculty Innovation Teams
- Regional Partners and Stakeholders
- Faculty Leadership Workgroup
- Higher Learning Commission (HLC) Accreditation Team
- VisionNE Project Coordination
- NHED President's Cabinet
- VisionNE Advisory Council including Student Stakeholders



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KEY PROJECT ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

As of March 1, 2021, the VisionNE project has accomplished a number of critical steps for the college consolidation.

- Formation of the VisionNE workgroups and ongoing progress within each group (an update on each group is provided in this report, see pages 6-10)
  - Athletics
  - Enrollment Management
  - Counseling, Advising, and Retention
  - Information Technology
  - Business Services and Institutional Research
  - Policy
  - Distance Learning
  - Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion
  - AASC
  - Faculty Leadership Workgroup
- Project funding secured
- Leadership hiring including Vice President of Academic and Students Affairs, Dr. Bart Johnson, and Vice President of Advancement and Effectiveness, Shelly McCauley Jugovich
- Approval of a new one college name as well as mission and vision statements

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ATHLETICS INNOVATION TEAM

Key Accomplishments:

- Identified three major goals:
  - Propose leadership, organizational structure, and financial models to the President's Cabinet
  - Promote equity of access and support for academic student-athletes
  - Propose a plan for team names and colors
- Completed process mapping of the five NHED colleges - journey mapping student-athletes from prospective student to graduate. Then utilized Cause and Effect Matrices to prioritize process steps and identified five key components of student-athlete success.

Current Focus:

- Developing athletics operations proposals related to funding and leadership model
- Creating an Athletics "Dashboard" to evaluate student-athlete success and athletics budgets at each campus

Upcoming Work:

- Evaluate how current athletics branding will fit into the new Minnesota North College branding

ENROLLMENT MANAGEMENT INNOVATION TEAM

Key Accomplishments:

- Identified three team focus areas:
  - Admissions Processing
  - Recruiting
  - Marketing
- Completed process mapping of the five NHED colleges for admissions processing - tracking of the student from prospect to registered
- Developed an internal benchmarking spreadsheet, including categories for applicants, enrollment, and departmental budgets
- Created proposals for aligning campus practices related t the handling of transcripts and fees

Current Focus:

- Participating in the selection of college marketing firm
- Using the results of process mapping activities to further align college admissions practices

Upcoming Work:

- Collaborate with the marketing firm on the the development of a brand identity system for Minnesota North College

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COUNSELING, ADVISING, AND RETENTION INNOVATION TEAM

Key Accomplishments:

- Identified purpose and specific outcomes of Onboarding and Orientation sub-workgroup
- Surveyed current practices across five NHED colleges including registration processes and FTE
- Developed preliminary recommendations

Current Focus:

- Completing a Strengths, Weakness, Opportunities, and Threats Analysis of the counseling and advising model
- Identifying critical questions for new Minnesota North College advising and counseling model

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY INNOVATION TEAM

Key Accomplishments:

- Technology Support Survey – IT Team (internal survey on how IT supports campus)
- Campus Inventory
- Recommendation of one Active Directory and new email accounts
- MIM Project Completion - Microsoft Identity Management
- Vermilion server upgrade
- Vermilion wireless upgrade

Current Focus:

- MFA rollout and timing (Multi-Factor Authentication – Security)
- Request to standardize equipment purchases (current ordering)
- Technology Planning – District Plan
- D2L – Planning for the new college site (technology lens)
- System Office Innovation Team subgroups - Eleven System Office IT teams
  - System Office ITS subgroups – some groups are on pause
    - Advanced MN/CET
    - Admissions
    - Marketing & Communication
  - End-User Services - Network Team (AD, network) -Desktop Support
  - IAM (Identify, Access, Management) Security
  - Infrastructure Server and Data Access
  - IT – ASA
  - IT – Core Products
  - IT – Finance
  - IT - HR
  - Office 365
  - Online Learning Environment
  - Reporting and Analytics

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BUSINESS SERVICES AND INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH INNOVATION TEAM

Key Accomplishments:

- Aligning efforts with the System Office Finance Workgroup

Current Focus:

- Focusing on the critical path for college merger related to business services including:
  - coding structures such as Institution and Campus ID's
  - Chart of Accounts
- Identifying data migration process and needs for the new RC_ID
- Supporting other innovation teams where alignment with business services exists

Upcoming Work:

- System Office IT will implement a test environment where various transactions will be piloted

POLICY INNOVATION TEAM

Key Accomplishments:

- Created Policy Development process
- Assigned a leader for each System Office Policy section to follow the process using three principles:
  - Include all relative system policies/procedures as written whenever possible
  - Consolidate, adapt, and adopt existing policies from NHED colleges as necessary
  - Benchmark against other colleges (Northland, Alex Tech, Rochester, etc.) to determine other best practices for policies and procedures development

Current Focus:

- Align college policies/procedures design with system office protocol including naming/numbering/layout. Note: MRC and VCC already use system office template for policy layout.
- Use System Office Policy Development Guideline as a resource.
- Distinguish between Policies and Procedures within NHED colleges' existing 'policies'. (Some of our current policies would likely be more appropriately labeled as procedures)
- Cross-reference with other team-leads to ensure consistency and to avoid overlap
- Design using an equity lens wherever relevant. Minn State EDI office will provide "policy with equity lens" training to all team leads. System policies are under review by EDI office already

Upcoming Work:

- Utilize a review process for policies that differ from system office. (Cabinet/FLW reading; to 14-day college-wide review; to cabinet for adoption with edits if appropriate).
- Establish NHED President's Cabinet as overall project owner

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DISTANCE LEARNING INNOVATION TEAM

Key Accomplishments:

- Development of a Faculty Survey to gather input on technology-use experience over the last year; survey results were used to develop team's next steps and evaluation of best practices and lessons learned

Current Focus:

- Planning to attend virtual professional development activities related to technology use and enhancing teaching and learning through different modalities

EQUITY, DIVERSITY, AND INCLUSION INNOVATION TEAM

Key Accomplishments:

Recommend a Campus Diversity Officer (CDO) and Committee Structure.
The team proposed the college hire an Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Director and continue to have a campus CDO to continue the EDI work on each campus. A subcommittee created a position description for a new EDI Director. Our proposal for a new EDI Director and continued work on each campus with a CDO leading a committee was presented to President's Cabinet and was approved. This new position will be part of the leadership team hiring process as we move into one college.

Determine EDI Strategic Plan.
The team had a discussion around incorporating into the one strategic college plan or develop a separate EDI Plan for on college incorporating the equity 2030 and equity by design approach. The team determined we should have a separate EDI plan. A draft plan was developed and given to Interim President Mike Raich for review. We determined it would be best for the new EDI Director to have input into the plan. Once the new EDI Director is hired, we will finalize the plan to guide us as one college.

Create a process in which all policies and procedures created by VisionNE innovation teams is reviewed with an equity lens.
The team has provided an 'equity liaison' to each innovation team leader to provide assistance as their team looks at policies and guidelines.All team leaders and CDO's are participating in an Equity Lens Training on Thursday, February 25.The policy review committee will be provided equity lens policy review training by our system office Interim Director of Equity.The new EDI director will be responsible for equity lens policy and procedure review going forward also.

As of February 2021, the EDI original innovation team work is complete. The Equity by Design teams are going to be working together going forward as one team and the CDO's will continue leading their committees at each campus.

AASC WORKGROUP

Key Accomplishments:

- Framework for AA degree completed. Faculty Shared Duty Day 2/26/21 where faculty discipline groups worked on aligning courses and Program faculty reviewed program plans and course outlines to move to MN North College.

Current Focus:

- AA disciplines are aligning coursework across the district and Program faculty are updating program planners and course outlines for the new college.

Upcoming Work:

- End of Spring Semester, all AA course offering will be aligned and updated to new college course outline. Programs will have a upated program completed and begin work on updating course outlines

FACULTY LEADERSHIP WORKGROUP

Key Accomplishments:

- Established Discipline Workgroups to assist with the merging of curriculum

Current Focus:

- Under last summer's MOU/MOA, the FLW has established a faculty shared governance process for the merger, where items specific to the merger will be discussed

Upcoming Work:

- The first FLW shared governance meeting will be Thursday, March 4th

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HIGHER LEARNING COMMISSION PLANNING

The HLC Innovation Team (HLC Writing Team) met to review the HLC Change of Control application and outline its application requirements and timeline. Team members include Krisit Ongalo, Mesabi Range College; Megan Heiman, Vermilion Community College; Tammy Cook, Rainy River Community College; Lisa Marcis, Itasca Community College; and Shelly McCauley Jugovich, Mesabi Range College.

On February 18, 2021, HLC leadership, Minnstate System Office leadership, NHED District leadership, and the HLC writing team met fo the HLC Initial Interaction Meeting, a first step in the Change of Control process.

The Change of Control application is due to HLC on August 1, 2021, with a visit from the HLC Review Team sometime during Fall term 2021.

ONE COLLEGE NAME, MISSION AND VISION DEVELOPMENT:

The strategy for the new one-college Name, Mission, and Vision Statements followed a thorough development process starting in September 2020. NHED hosted five stakeholder input sessions with staff, faculty, community representatives, and students; and a VisionNE Advisory Council meeting to gather input on the priorities in a one-college model name, mission, and vision, and hopes for the future.

The results of these sessions were used to create draft names, mission, and vision statements by development teams composed of NHED staff and faculty. Surveys for input on drafts were collected from stakeholder groups before approval at the NHED President's Cabinet.

NHED President's Cabinet revised a final draft proposal for the new Name and Mission and Vision statements, which were then submitted to the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities Board of Trustees.

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APPROVED NAME, MISSION AND VISION:

> **ON WEDNESDAY JANUARY 27, 2021, THE MINNESOTA STATE COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES BOARD OF TRUSTEES (BOT) APPROVED NHED'S PROPOSED NEW NAME, MISSION AND VISION**

Name
Minnesota North College

Mission
Minnesota North College prepares lifelong learners and engaged citizens through inclusive, transformative experiences reflecting the character and natural environment of the region.

Vision
Minnesota North College will be the premier provider of life-changing education and the catalyst for regional prosperity.

Official adoption of the new one college model means that final Higher Learning Commission (HLC) and BOT approvals are required toward the conclusion of the VisionNE process. Therefore, the new approved name, mission, and vision do not go into effect until those approvals are secured in 2022

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A LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

Thank you to everyone who contributed to the development of this VisionNE summary document. VisionNE was chosen long ago as a moniker for the process of merging the Northeast Higher Education District's five colleges (six campuses) into one college (six campuses) as a recognition that significant opportunities exist for more than just operational consolidation.

Through the active involvement of several dozen faculty, staff, students, and community members, a shared vision of higher education's future in our region is truly emerging. As evidence, the newly minted name, Minnesota North College, proudly captures who we are and where we serve. The recently approved Minnesota North mission and vision statements declare our plan for an inclusive and proactive approach to serving our region's students and stakeholders. Minnesota North's core values will soon be established, which along with the mission and vision, will drive the development of a robust and forward thinking five-year plan succinctly laying out what we plan to accomplish as Minnesota North College.

Merging colleges is a complex process, and I am grateful for the time, energy, and ideas that all of you have contributed to VisionNE. Our collective work today will be the cornerstone for Minnesota North's vision to be the premier provider of life-changing education and the catalyst for regional prosperity in the decades to come!

Sincerely,
Dr. Michael Raich
Interim President
Northeast Higher Education District