

# **INTERVIEWS W/ STATE UNIVERSITY VICE PRESIDENTS ON EXECUTIVE DEVELOPMENT**

## **Summary**

*6 Interviews: Feedback is aggregated*

### **INTRODUCTORY REMARKS**

Prior to focusing on specific professional development opportunities, the respondents discussed the context for the need. The following observations emerged:

- Every person brings a unique background to the specific position at his/her institution. There are gaps in the fit and in the preparation which need to be filled by professional development. Professional development needs change with experience.
- Often the reality of the job differs from the position description (e.g. personnel challenges, union constraints, budget dilemmas, etc.) Professional development is needed to address these realities.
- Learning and growth matter, especially in learning institutions.

These observations led respondents to comment on the core/mandatory nature of some development and the individualized, unique preference nature of other types of development.

### **PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT NEEDED TO LEAD EFFECTIVELY WITHIN INSTITUTIONS (#1)**

Respondents identified the need for “new administrator” training and development in the system which would delve into core areas of institutional life – academic and student affairs, finance and facilities, human resources and personnel, information technology, and legal issues/legislative issues. These issues should be addressed at both the system and the institutional levels. (Some institutions and presidents do a better job of this than others.)

Development opportunities should prepare vice presidents for change and assist them in learning different ways to lead/facilitate change within the campus culture and collective bargaining environment. Personnel management issues dominate so much of vice president’s work time. Training is needed in intervention techniques.

In addition, pragmatic networks of colleagues in similar positions in similar types of institutions were identified as very important to one’s development. While some of the benefit of such networks is informational, there should be a mentoring dynamic which is cultivated – either in connection with or away from the institution. This can provide perspective.

Suggestions for format included:

- Systematic schedule where 4-year student affairs vps can meet and talk – quarterly or every other month
- Want to receive regular executive summaries of the important parts of the bargaining unit agreements administrators must know
- Regular audio briefings from the Office of the Chancellor (monthly)
- Monthly meetings with other provosts and 4-year vps for academic affairs
- Regular networking with peers at 4-year campuses
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### **PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT NEEDED ON A PERSONAL LEVEL TO FEEL EQUIPPED TO DO THE JOB (#2)**

Several interviewees mentioned that these jobs can be “killers” or can be lonely. To survive that, the following elements were identified as important for a vice-president/provost to acquire:

- Work-life balance; personal caretaking strategies
- Wellness; Exercise Classes
- Time-Management ⇨ What is most important to do for how long
- Comfort in the tension between role and person
- Developing trust through authenticity, genuine interaction
- Gaining a sense of proportionality
- Discovering what rejuvenates you; finding outlets that can help

These areas seem to be missing in much of MnSCU professional development for vice-presidents/provosts.

### **PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT EVENTS WORKING WELL AT CAMPUS OR SYSTEM LEVEL (#3)**

Respondents thought the current CAO-CSO-CFFO meetings were meeting needs are seen as valuable. Positive remarks came forth about other training from the Office of the Chancellor – specifically about the Luoma Leadership Academy and the New Administrators Program. Decision maker and Investigative Training are also seen as excellent. Art and Science of Supervision has received excellent feedback.

Campus efforts vary quite a bit depending on the president of the college/university. Team-building was appreciated as a campus effort.

Respondents wanted more informal time with peers. They also want more time to structure “sector conversations” with peers in comparable positions.

Suggestions to improve what is working well included:

- Add video sessions for new administrator orientation
- Encourage leadership within discipline or functional area where people are at just as much as we are preparing them to move up the ladder

### **CAREER GOAL/POSSIBLE PRESIDENCY (#4, #5)**

Respondents had a career goal of doing constructive, productive work. They, by and large, had found that in their current positions. They enjoyed the problem-solving nature of the current positions.

Of the six respondents, only one had the slightest interest in a presidential position. The presidency with its emphasis on fundraising and external relations was seen as less rewarding than campus-based, student work.

Concerning career development assistance, one opinion surfaced that MnSCU should not enter that domain. Rather, that presidential preparation should occur under the auspices of national organizations.

### **RIGHT OR WRONG TIME TO ADDRESS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT NEEDS GIVEN CURRENT ECONOMIC CLIMATE (#6)**

The shared opinion was that it is always the right time for professional development. Vice-presidents and provosts need their learning networks now more than ever. MnSCU and its leaders need development and plans to implement through investment especially in times of economic downturn. Training needs to be manageable and relevant and should match the issues that vice presidents are dealing with now. One interviewee commented that development should be contracted out to appropriate organizations and associations.

Given the budget cuts, attention needs to be paid to the perception of lavish activities and steps taken to avoid that perception.

### **IDEAL VISION (#7)**

A comprehensive resource development menu should be developed. This would include the current efforts from the Office of the Chancellor – new administrator training could be tweaked

to new vice-president/provost training similar to new president “onboarding,” creating a stronger focus for developing new vice presidents and provosts. The CFFO-CAO-CSO-CIO conferences and meetings are valuable.

In terms of new directions, respondents thought more investment and time should be given to the following efforts:

- Encourage sector networks, especially with those in comparable jobs. Design more informal time for sharing with sector network individuals.
- Create the structural option of learning cohorts with peers.
- Support and facilitate increased mentoring, especially in onboarding new vice presidents.
- Work with presidents to create institution-based professional development expectations (e.g. team-building). Share best practices.
- Consider the expectation of Individualized Development Plans (IDP's) for vice-presidents/provosts. These could be grounded in the comprehensive resource development menu.
- Contract with AASCU for the 4-year campuses for development
- Replicate something like ACE fellows within MnSCU

#### **QUESTION WISHED ASKED (#8)**

None