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**To:** MSU Board of Regents  
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Mr. Jesse Brown, Student Regent

**From:** Jesse W. Rogers  
President

**Date:** November 5, 2014

**Subject:** Top Ten Priorities for Midwestern State University

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A President's Cabinet Retreat was held October 28, 2014, to discuss the university's top ten priorities that will ensure the university's growth, quality, and adequacy of the campus. Each cabinet member submitted priorities and all related to the Strategic Master Plan. Several of the priorities listed below will be conducted simultaneously and others will be determined by adequate funding and new funding models. Some will be made available through gifts to the university and changes promulgated by the Texas Legislature and the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board. Consequently, the priorities are presented as Top Ten with annotations related to timing, availability of funds, and urgency of completion. Some priorities are interrelated but all will be critical to the future of Midwestern State University (MSU) and should be maintained as ongoing projects. The Top Ten Priorities are related to:

- Campus Master Plan
- Parking
- Enrollment
- New Interdisciplinary Academic Programs
- Distance Learning
- Student Engagement and Retention
- Athletics
- Branding of MSU
- Financial Planning and Budgeting
- Information Technology

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### Campus Master Plan

After a thorough review of the Campus Master Plan (Building Plan), it was unanimous among the Cabinet that the building of new campus housing and facilities for the Mass Communication and Music Programs be placed as high construction priorities. Completion of these projects should serve to increase MSU's enrollment, student retention, and will provide much needed space and quality equipment for Mass Communication and Music.

Additionally, it was decided to place parking issues as a separate top ten priority that will be determined by enrollment and campus development. As planning proceeds, attention needs to be turned toward a new and expanded tutoring center. If funds are available for the new health sciences building, a desirable location for a new tutoring center will be Bridwell Hall where the Dental Hygiene Clinic now exists. External parking, entrances, and space will allow the renovation of this building into an accessible university tutoring center.

Also, it was determined that Ferguson Hall, which would be vacated after the West College of Education moves into a portion of the Bridwell Hall following the construction of a Health Sciences and Human Services (HSHS) building, could possibly be used as space for Information Technology (IT) and possibly for some of the offices currently located on the second floor of Hardin South. An analysis of the space requirements for IT will be accomplished to determine how those could be met by the space in Ferguson. Further, it was decided that completion of the Moffett Library update should take precedence over construction of a Welcome Center in Hardin South. The Library should be renovated to make it inviting and more effective as a study center. A minor reconstruction and renovation of Hardin South will suffice for a Welcome Center. These recommendations will be made to the university's architect as planning continues.

### Parking

As a consequence of the building of new campus housing and the HSHS building, the reconfiguration of parking on the campus will continue. The comments made herein are based upon the assumption that a new HSHS building will be built in the parking lot south of the Prothro-Yeager building. Several pertinent variables still exist before the current parking plan in the Master Plan can be refined. In the meantime, an interim parking plan will be in place for the 2015-2016 academic year. Depending upon enrollment, commuter demand, approval of construction of a HSHS building, and funding factors that will be known after the legislative session, the administration recognizes the necessity of a parking garage in order to save campus space and provide adequate parking for resident students near student housing.

Additionally, the administration concludes that future parking should be based upon residential, commuter, faculty/staff, commuter remote, and faculty/staff remote alternatives with varying costs. It is unanimous among the President's Cabinet that such a parking plan must be devised for the short-term and long-term future of the university's wise use of space.

### Enrollment

The prediction of enrollment in any one year and in future years is possible within reasonable limits. However, so many factors affect headcount enrollment and credit hour production that it is a difficult proposition. The natural tendency of any administration is to be optimistic but it is more fiscally responsible to temper that optimism with the real factors that affect

enrollment. Enrollment growth with the normal associated number of credit hours per student in the next five years is critical to every aspect of MSU, from campus construction to the university's operating budget and to the Athletics Program. In order to achieve most of the university's goals, enrollment needs to expand to 6,400 within the next five years and to 7,000 within the next fifteen years.

#### Interdisciplinary Academic Programs

There should be a constant effort at all institutions of higher learning to maintain a curriculum and programs with modern content as the knowledge in all subjects expands and changes. MSU has a history of engaging successfully in such an effort. However, it is always a challenge to add new academic programs that do not simply pull students from existing programs and ultimately do not increase enrollment. Consequently, it is of highest priority that MSU study and find ways to combine existing courses and faculty into interdisciplinary programs that are and will be in high demand. These possibly include:

1. Programs with current faculty involved
  - a. Health Care Administration (Health Sciences and Business)
  - b. Health Care Education (Health Sciences and Education)
  - c. Bioinformatics (Biology and Computer Science)
  - d. Health Informatics (Health Sciences and Computer Science)
  - e. Energy Management (Business and Petroleum Geology or Engineering)
2. New programs
  - a. Computational Sciences (Computer Science and Biology, Chemistry, or Mathematics)
  - b. Genomics (Molecular Biology and Biochemistry)
  - c. Proteomics (Protein Biochemistry and Computer Science)

#### Distance Learning

Related to enrollment and, consequently, income, Midwestern State will expand its Distance Education Program. MSU has a large Distance Education Program since all health science programs, with the exception of Dental Hygiene, are offered online. Additionally, the BAAS, criminal justice, and most of the core curriculum are offered online. However, expansion is possible with the investment of funds and time. It would be necessary in the future to hire experienced faculty who can and will teach using distance education methodology, and to place the new core curriculum online alongside the old for three to four years.

#### Student Engagement and Retention

Surveys of MSU's freshmen indicate the need to increase the engagement of students at MSU. The retention of students from the freshman to sophomore year has remained at 70 percent for decades. This retention rate must be improved and a newly designed, required freshman seminar program will be considered for incoming students. Learning communities are currently being built and these strategies have been shown to increase student retention and to increase student engagement or attachment to the university. This matter is of highest priority and will demand attention from the university's administration and faculty for the foreseeable future.

### Athletics

Athletic programs are an essential part of today's university and, in fact, educational environment. MSU is proud that its NCAA Division II program continues to compete at the most competitive level of the Lone Star Conference. After conversations with student representatives, it was decided that an increase in the university's Athletic Fee at this time is not prudent. However, we believe that an Intramural/Athletics Facility Fee if the university would commit to establishing artificial turf fields that athletics would share with students, and improve the soccer and softball stadiums that are not up to MSU's standards. The Intramural/Athletics Facility Fee could be approved as a fee that increases to \$100 per student per semester or \$10 per semester credit hour in the next three to five years depending upon enrollment and other developments. This would allow for the further expansion of athletic facilities including such major projects as the building of a tennis center or a football stadium on campus.

At the heart of the athletics program is enrollment and the university's continued competitiveness at the Division II level, as well as the stabilization of the Lone Star Conference into a conference with a greater number of schools.

### Branding of MSU

It is a necessity to expand the recognition of MSU, not only in the Dallas/Ft. Worth metropolitan area, where progress has been made, but throughout the state of Texas and even the southwestern United States. It is clear to the administration that funds should be spent on consultants who specialize in branding colleges and universities. Further thought will be given to the branding of MSU and the use of these funds for assistance in such a project.

### Financial Planning and Budgeting

All universities, from the smallest to the largest, struggle to develop a comprehensive model of fiscal stability. The reason for this is that the state's formula system demands a continuing expansion of enrollment in order to cover the cost of academic inflation, which normally runs slightly above core inflation. An expanded enrollment even negates significant increases in tuition and fees. A comprehensive model of fiscal stability must be developed for MSU because of the university's modest enrollment outlook. The university has dramatically slowed its hiring and held open positions over the last several years following the economic effects of lower enrollment and reduced funding from the state of Texas. Financial stability and predictability are critical and must remain in the forefront of the thoughts of the MSU Board of Regents and the administration.

For the near-term future, the university awaits the Legislative Budget Board's base budget which will be revealed in January as the legislature begins working on the 2015-2016 and 2016-2017 state budgets. As I have mentioned previously, this legislative session has more pending economic issues than any that we have noted in the past several decades. MSU must wait on the legislature for (1) formula amounts, (2) incentive funding appropriation amounts, (3) possible funding to offset Hazlewood tuition and fee waivers, and (4) a possible increase in the Higher Education Assistance Fund. These matters could determine millions of dollars of funding even for a school the size of MSU. When the base budget is presented in January, the budgets for the next two years will become the highest priority demanding the attention of the administration.

### Information Technology

Additional funding is needed to provide for staffing as well as the purchase and implementation of the necessary technology to support faculty, students, and staff. This would include appropriate monitoring and upgrades to the university's wireless coverage, internet band width, the Campus Portal, classroom technology, and the security system as warranted, as well as additional components to the Banner system such as Degree Works. Careful consideration must be given to Information Technology staffing levels to meet additional workload demands.