

Midwestern State University Administrator's Statement Legislative Appropriations Request

Most state-funded universities are facing new and unprecedented educational and fiscal challenges. Universities must deal with the cost of higher education without jeopardizing the quality of a college degree. Universities have embraced new educational strategies using communication technologies, while continuing to provide the most current and sophisticated equipment, laboratories, and classrooms. Midwestern State University (MSU) faces its own particular challenges if it is to maintain the ability to deliver a high-quality baccalaureate and master's education to its students at a reasonable cost. The MSU administration and faculty understand the changing environment of higher education and, consequently, our institution is completing a new five-year strategic plan and a ten-year facilities plan consistent with the internal and external challenges faced by the university. One of the strengths of the university is that its faculty, Board of Regents, and administration have supported its stated mission consistently for many years. MSU is the only public liberal arts university in Texas. It was accepted as a member of the Council of Public Liberal Arts Colleges (COPLAC) in 2006. Georgia College and State University, Keene State College, Sonoma State University, Truman State University, MSU, and others distinguish themselves through a commitment to provide a superior liberal arts and sciences core education to undergraduate students. We further distinguish ourselves through innovations in teaching and student research with full-time, tenured and tenure-track faculty. Affordable tuition rates and cultural and intellectual diversity are also integral to the educational program.

MSU reached an enrollment of 6,426 in the fall, 2010. The slow but steady growth that brought the university this enrollment was gratifying since MSU sits in the center of a large geographic section of North Central Texas that has been slowly declining in college-going population since 1950. A number of factors resulted in an enrollment decline in 2011 and 2012, including record graduating classes and a change in admissions standards. However, aggressive student recruiting and scholarship efforts aimed at STEM and health science students resulted in the 2013-2014 entering class being the largest since 1992. Thirty-seven percent of the 2013-2014 freshman class came from the Dallas/Fort Worth area. Owing to many factors including academic program mix, membership in the COPLAC, a successful Division II athletics program, and the size of the university, MSU has no competing public university in the Dallas/Fort Worth Metroplex of similar size, scope/mission, and/or extracurricular offerings. Additionally, MSU's mechanical engineering program and programs in nursing (BSN, MSN), radiologic sciences (BSRN and MSRN), and respiratory care (BSRC) have shown significant growth during the past ten years. Private gifts from foundations and individuals in the amount of \$11.5 million have allowed the building of the McCoy Engineering Hall, the mechanical engineering program, and the establishment of the Robert D. and Carol Gunn College of Health and Human Services. MSU wishes to admit more students into these high demand fields, but this is not possible due to a lack of physical space and teaching equipment.

Beginning in FY 2015 MSU's tuition for new students is guaranteed for four years. While legislation passed by the 83rd Legislature required that such a plan be offered, MSU determined it best to develop a mandatory plan for our students. Similar two-year and three-year guarantee

plans will also be offered to current juniors, seniors, and graduate students. It is hoped that this new tuition plan will attract students to our institution and encourage timely graduation.

Academic Expansion and Revitalization Project – Capital Funding

Midwestern State University (MSU) requests capital funding in the amount of \$73 million to provide expanded and revitalized academic space. This request was developed following an in-depth master plan study that analyzed existing campus space and academic requirements. This capital request includes a new building for the Gunn College of Health Science and Human Services, including an annex for athletic training and exercise physiology. Enrollment in the Gunn College of Health Sciences and Human Services represents 39% of the university's total student population while existing facilities provide less than one-half of the needed space when compared to similar colleges at Texas peer institutions. A new 98,500 gross square foot (GSF) building would accommodate programs in respiratory care, radiologic sciences, social work, nursing, and dental hygiene, as well as the Dental Hygiene Clinic, the Simulation Center, and multiple classrooms and health sciences laboratories at an estimated cost of \$49 million. A \$12 million, 25,750 GSF Health Sciences and Human Services Annex Building would accommodate the athletic training and exercise physiology programs with a Didactic Lab, Biochemistry Lab, Bio-Mechanics Lab, Cycling Performance Lab, strength and conditioning space, and two classrooms.

The project additionally would address rehabilitation needs across the campus totaling \$12 million. This includes the relocation of the university's Information Technology operation from a 1945 army barracks building to a more secure location, at a cost of \$3 million. Facilities included in this project would be MSU's Moffett Library, built in 1965 and expanded in 1986; Hardin Administration Building, built in 1937; and Fain Fine Arts Theatre, built in 1978. The project would also concentrate on the Bolin Science Hall, built in 1966 and refurbished in 1997. Bolin Science Hall houses the College of Science and Mathematics and has a rich history of producing graduates who become medical doctors, dentists, Ph.D. qualified chemists, biologists, and physicists. The college is a leader in the fields of ecology, environmental science, petroleum geology, and pre-medical study. Bolin Science Hall must be reconstructed in order to modernize all biology and chemistry labs to improve air quality, safety, and accommodate modern teaching equipment. The project would also address electrical infrastructure upgrades, HVAC upgrades, improved egress, the addition of fire sprinklers in two auditoria, and improved accessibility to include elevators, ramps, and restrooms throughout the buildings mentioned.

Hazlewood Waiver Reimbursement

Midwestern State University appreciates the Legislature's approving a \$30 million supplemental appropriation during the 83rd legislative session to reimburse higher education institutions for costs associated with the Hazlewood Program. This resulted in a much-needed allocation of \$269,753 to MSU. We are proud of the veterans and their family members who choose to attend MSU. Wichita Falls is home to Sheppard Air Force Base and many former servicemen and women remain in our area when they leave the military. While the program greatly benefits our veterans and their dependents, the growth in program participation has placed a financial burden on our institution. In FY 2008, MSU enrolled 116 Hazlewood recipients and the cost of the waived tuition and fees was \$271,000. In FY 2014, the program provided waivers to 245 Hazlewood participants at a cost of \$1.24 million. This represents an annualized growth rate in the number of participants and cost to the institution of 11% and 24% for each of the six years respectively. The university estimates the size of the program will continue to grow at this rate

or greater owing to the military draw down. More than one-third of the students attending Midwestern State are classified as low-income (eligible for Pell grants). The university and the Board of Regents have restrained the amount of tuition and fee increases during this time period in order to maintain the university's affordability. However, the continued absorption of these waivers without additional state funding is unsustainable with the current tuition and fee levels. The university respectfully requests the state consider fully funding the Hazlewood Waiver program for Midwestern State University at an estimated cost of \$1.82 million in FY16 and \$2.07 million in FY17.

College Access and Success Program for Economically Disadvantaged Students

With the well-documented need for the state of Texas to educate underrepresented groups, primarily Hispanic, and as evidenced by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board's Closing the Gaps by 2015 initiative, MSU requests assistance in funding additional recruitment and support of Hispanic students in higher education. This request represents a partnership between MSU, Vernon College (VC), and the Wichita Falls Independent School District (WFISD). Specifically, this request seeks \$250,000 for the biennium to engage Café Con Leche, working with the Zavala Hispanic Cultural Initiative, in four areas: (1) community events outlining the paths to college (Community Cafes); (2) financial aid workshops; (3) early intervention programs targeting middle school students and their families (Road to College); and (4) a mentoring program for college students. With this request, MSU and its partners will be in a better position to affect Hispanic access and completion at college.

Effects of Budget Reductions

The university has previously reduced or deferred administrative, faculty, and staff positions, as well as reduced funding for maintenance, operations, travel, and deferred maintenance projects. An additional ten percent reduction in appropriations would require Midwestern State University to use planned faculty and staff reductions as well as examine the need to reduce or possibly eliminate academic programs. It is not possible, nor is it desirable, that the students of MSU bear the burden of balancing the university's budget through higher tuition. In summary, additional appropriations reductions will significantly affect the quality of education provided to MSU students.

Conclusion

As President of Midwestern State University for the past 13 years, and as one who has taught at this university for over 35 years, I am very proud of this institution. Midwestern State University has expanded its outreach to employ capable senior administrators and qualified faculty to ensure its future. As part of the hiring process the university's faculty, administration, and Board of Regents have shown the best judgment in not only seeking the best prepared faculty, staff, and administrators, but determining their qualifications beyond academic credentials. The university requires that all new faculty, staff, and administrators undergo criminal background checks prior to being hired. They are also vetted thoroughly through professional background checks.

I extend my thanks to the Board of Regents, the faculty, the staff, and the benefactors who have been involved in the development of MSU. Additionally, I thank the State of Texas for the underlying support that provides a high quality education for the students of Texas through Midwestern State University.