A Look at the History of Metro State

The first of a series

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We all know the expression “Live in the present.” It’s great advice. But sometimes a visit to the past can help us see how we arrived at the present and even shed some light on the future. Other times, a look back can be a pleasant escape. While celebrating its 40th anniversary in 2011, Metro State paid a visit to its past.

Originally, the school was called Minnesota Metropolitan State College, and its first class in 1971 consisted of 50 students. The school was founded in an effort to offer a college-level education to non-traditional students. Classes convened in a small office of a bank building in downtown Saint Paul. After changing its name to Metropolitan State University and moving around to a few different locations downtown, Metro settled into its present Dayton’s Bluff location at the site of the former Saint John’s Hospital.

Metro’s Minneapolis campus went through several moves as well. A building-sharing agreement was eventually reached with Minneapolis Community and Technical College (MCTC), and both institutions now hold classes in downtown Minneapolis. Later, the campus at Midway Center was established, and the School of Law Enforcement & Criminal Justice was founded at the Brooklyn Park campus.

In its early years, Metro offered individualized degrees rather than predefined majors. Nursing was the first major offered by the school, and then other majors were developed, including Accounting and Human Services. Initially, Metro utilized a competence-based grading system, but today the more traditional style of letter grading is in place.

As more of these conventional practices and major programs were incorporated, an educational study called for Metro State to become a comprehensive university. Metro began admitting students for traditional four-year programs.

Today Metro State boasts an enrollment of over 11,000 students. The student body includes a full range of age groups, and ethnic minorities comprise over one-third of enrollees. Women make up over half of the population. Metro State is a shining example of diversity and vital asset to the community.